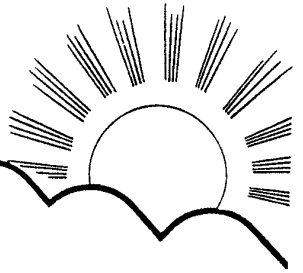


Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society Vladivostok Russia St Paul Minnesota

Issue Number Forty Three January 1, 2002



Christmas scene painted by our Arsenyev parishioner Natasha Dunets.

About Bogdan

by Olga Berdnikova, Volunteer
First River Women's Support Center of Vladivostok

One day in February, a young lady Irina came to our Center. She was aware that she was pregnant but she wanted to share her problem with someone. Unfortunately her boyfriend was at sea and so she couldn't talk him about her pregnancy. As for her mother, she suggested to Irina to have an abortion. She said that an abortion was the only way to solve her problem--Irina was not married.

I remember well that first visit to the Center--she was really depressed and frightened, and her first words were, "Please, help me! I don't know what to do. My boyfriend is not here, but my mom is trying to force me to have an abortion! Besides that, I don't know how my boyfriend will take the news about my pregnancy." During our talk, we found out that only Irina's youngest sister was glad there was to be a baby. Her sister had even shared the good news with her girlfriends at school and told them she would be an aunt soon. I tried to calm Irina down and told her about the stages of growth of her pre-born baby, and I suggested we send an express message to her boyfriend.

Two weeks later Irina finally got his response to her message! Arthur was really happy to learn he would be a father soon and asked her not to have an abortion!

For her whole pregnancy we tried to be beside Irina because her mother (the prospective grandmother) wouldn't accept her pre-born grandson. Our Center's counselor went several times to Irina's home to talk to her mother, asking her do not disturb Irina any more. It took the counselor two long months to convince the prospective grandmother to accept the baby.

By summer Irina had been sent for sonography. But the sonographer and Irina's attending gynaecologist told her that they had found some deformation in her growing pre-born baby, and suggested that she have an abortion. We told Irina not to listen to those doctors and their advice about her child because when we were pregnant our attending told us the same terrible things about our

babies who, in spite of all difficulties, were born lovely and healthy and normal. We also referred Irina to a different sonographer.

Late in summer, Arthur returned to Vladivostok from his shipboard work. Considering what the attending gynaecologist said about their baby and our referral, they decided to do sonography again. But the new sonographer did not see any deformation in their baby! One month later, September 18, they became father and mother! On this happy day their son was born, and they named him Bogdan. In October Arthur and Irina got married.

Now Arthur's and Irina's mothers appreciate us for the great work we are doing to save the lives of pre-born babies. Both of them say that they can not imagine life now without their beloved Bogdan.



Bogdan and Mama Irina

News Notes

by V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

- Welcome, Franciscans, to our State of Primorye! At last more priests are coming to our state to help share the burden that Fr Daniel and I have shared alone for ten years. The Franciscans (OFM), including a priest and a brother from Seoul, South Korea, and a priest from Byelorus, are scheduled to take over Ussurisk's Nativity parish in February. Meanwhile Father Dominic and Brother Peter have arrived from Korea to begin acclimating, and to look for living space in the city. They have agreed to take



Father Dominic Kim and Brother Peter Shin in Nativity Parish, Ussurisk

over the parish as the first foreign mission for the Korean Franciscans. It is still unclear whether they will also take over the Parish of the Annunciation in Arsenyev, The Visitation in Lesozovodsk, and the proposed new Parish of The Presentation in Pokrovka. Fr Myron and Fr Dan will continue



Pokrovka parishioners after home mass.

to serve these parishes as long as necessary, as well as both parishes in Vladivostok, the parishes in Nakhodka, Bolshoi Kamen, Romanovka, and other new parishes which are

beginning to form in Olga, in Slavyanka, and in Pogranichny, and the new university student center in Vladivostok. We are happy to have more priests in our state.

- On October 17 we had our first foreign pilgrimage visit us. It was a cruise ship with 55 Marian pilgrims aboard who were visiting Marian shrines in Japan, Korea, and Vladivostok. We spent the day together, visiting the Orthodox convent, praying and having mass at our Cathedral of the Most Holy Mother of God, and buying souvenirs. We put out some of the knitted and crocheted items made by our elderly parishioners, and they sure sold like hotcakes! The sales gave added income to those who otherwise live on a small Russian pension. In fact, Lilia Timofeevna, who coordinates the project in the parish, was so excited to tell me that, due to the sales, CARITAS had "covered all our Christmas needs for children in our parish!" I'm really happy that our Russian parishioners are starting to collaborate in fundraising. Wow! Will we see the day when we could be financially independent? It is going to take a while, but it has to be the ideal for every missionary. The day has to come when any parish is no longer a mission parish, but self-supporting in its own right. By the way, most of the pilgrims were Canadians, Mexicans, and Americans.



Cruise Ship pilgrims were met at the warf by a Russian Band.



Mother Superior Maria of the Orthodox Convent in Sedanka welcomed the pilgrims with flowers and told them the history of her convent.

- On December 10 officers from the Vladivostok Police Academy came to offer their thanks for our help to the

academy. It seems that over a year ago their clinic's dentist's drill broke, but there were no funds to replace it. The cost would be about \$500. So for over a year they weren't able to tend to the teeth of their students and faculty, and of other police in the city. What to do? When Roberto Gutierrez was visiting in Vladivostok from our sister parish of St Joseph's in Modesto, California, he took the problem to heart, and, after returning to America, sent a donation to fix the equipment. Now there is a sign in the Academy operating room thanking the Catholic Church for help for all the police of the city. They also expressed their interest to exchange teaching specialists with American police departments, especially an instructor in crime detection. Know anybody? Thanks, Roberto.



Police representatives making the presentation.

- In early October I received an SOS from the Dalzavod Hospital in Vladivostok. They have had to open a new geriatrics unit because of the demand for these services, but they do not have any of the necessities like lifting apparatus and special beds to prevent bedsores. Most of all, they had little resources to pay the staff which was necessarily small, nor to feed the patients a nourishing diet. Our Sister Evgenia has been working there, and now three parishioners have begun to work there without pay as nearly full-time volunteers. I forwarded the SOS to the Daughters of Charity in my hometown of Evansville, Indiana, who very quickly issued a grant to help with the equipment and feeding needs. Thank you, Sisters, for your support for these poor, elderly people!

- November was a very special time for one of our parishioners. Christina Pavlova, 22, the chief local expert on policies and volunteer training for our Women's Support Centers, as well as the editor of our Support Centers' bulletin *Receive Life*. She was invited to America to speak at the convention of Heartbeat International in Glendale, California, an umbrella organization for American

**Remember
“Mary Mother of God Mission Society”
in your will.**



Kristina Pavlova and Vivian Skovgard, a protestor in front of the abortion clinic in Dayton, Ohio where partial birth abortion was invented. Vivian is here daily to pray.

pregnancy support centers. She was then invited to Heartbeat's headquarters in Columbus, Ohio, for some on-going education and experience, and then she went on to Dayton to be with our friends George and Joan Riess who are volunteers at the WSC in Dayton. She also was able to speak in Ohio to high school and college audiences. Christina declared that Emmanuel Catholic Church in Dayton was the most beautiful church that she had ever seen. Christina was also impressed with the spirituality of the American people, with so many people attending Mass. One of Christina's most vivid impressions was of the American family. During her week in California, she saw mothers and fathers in the early evenings walking along the sidewalks, holding their children's hands, with the father sometimes pushing a baby carriage or carrying a youngster on his shoulder. "We would not see this in Russia", Christina said, "because of the high divorce rate and because Communism destroyed the family by sending mothers to work in factories, putting children under the control of the state, and giving fathers cheap vodka." It surely was the experience of a lifetime for Christina. We happened to fly together to Seoul as she was on her way to California, and I told her as we flew into the Seoul airport that she should brace herself, because she was about to go 50 years into the future! In Russia, things are like in my grandmother's day—outside toilets, no phones, carrying water from a pump. When we entered the airport she

looked around and broke into tears. Her experience was good for her and for the Americans she met. The parish choir at Emmanuel had prepared a treat for her the Sunday she went there to mass—they sang the *Ave Maria* in Russian, using our Vladivostok melody!

- On December 6 the Women's Support Center in Arsenyev had a reception for city government officials, to explain what the Center is, how it functions, and what it will do to help the city and the people of the city. Guests were at first apprehensive, because they had been invited by this "sect", the Catholic Church (the Russian Orthodox clergy often refer to us that way as a way of keeping people away from us.) But as the evening went on, they saw the really competent people who work in the Center, and the help which was being proposed, they warmed up. The Center is Arsenyev will be going to upper grades at public schools to explain the work of the Center, and to invite people to come to the Center if they need the Center's services. The talks will include information about chastity, about the child in the womb, and about Natural Family Planning. You can support these volunteers by your prayers.

- We finally started building the rectory again—after a lapse of nearly a year when we could not get a building permit because of the new state administration. It was not religious discrimination—nobody could get a building permit.



Backhoe starting to work again on the rectory building.

- On December 13—the feast of St Lucy, patroness of the blind—my Nakhodka parishioner Babba (Grandma) Gelia, had an operation to have her cataracts removed. She is 90 years old. She had gone completely blind, but still tried to fend and cook for herself in her little country home. She was frightened, of course, to think of the operation, but I always encouraged her.

- Congratulations to the Armenian Gregorian community of Vladivostok who have nearly completed their new church. We have had friendly relations with their community ever since we came to Vladivostok. They often used our church for special services because theirs was nearly destroyed like

most churches in Russia. Now we are looking forward to the dedication of their church, which will probably take place in the spring.



Armenian Gregorian Church, incorporating what was left of the old church (small gray area just left of center.)

- I had a nice visit to St Joseph Parish in Modesto, California, which has decided to be a sister-parish to our new, second parish in Vladivostok—St Joseph's. Each parish has made a banner to give to the other to symbolize the relationship, and the sister parish committee in Modesto is considering further ways in which they can help the new parish. While I spoke at every mass for the Feast of All Saints I was amazed at how eagerly the parishioners wanted candles, icons, crosses, tee-shirts, and all the other things that we had at the table from Russia. So we will need to increase production.

- The Vladivostok Polish Cultural Society has been participating in the Primorye State Cultural Department's programs. Here we see members—mostly parishioners, of course—in native costume at a recent international foodfest.



President Miroslava Igorevna Efimova (left) who is our parish archivist, and the Polish Cultural Society in native costumes.

- In *Vladivostok Sunrise* #38, we reported that we had purchased insulation to install in the attic of the church in Vladivostok. Winter temperatures in the church had been so cold that it was nearly impossible for parishioners to withstand the length of Sunday Mass. We completed the installation in time for winter, and now the temperature in the church is quite

respectable and parishioners comment about the difference. We will know how the insulation affects the heating bill a little later.

- A benefactor from England with a special interest in programs for the blind has enabled us to send some blind students to music school. Earlier they would have had to leave home to attend school in Europe because Vladivostok music schools did not have facilities for the blind. Thanks to our benefactor, two children are able to study music this year in Vladivostok, and we expect to expand the program to ten children next year. One person who cares can do so much.



Blind music students, with their blind teacher at Second River Music School.



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Please do **not** send any **donations** of any kind directly to Russia. For donation information, see below.

Letters without donations can be sent to:

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Internet: <http://www.vladmission.org>

Donations of money or **letters** should be sent to:

Mary Mother of God Mission Society
1854 Jefferson Ave
St Paul MN 55105-1662

Or you can donate from your credit card through our web site. Your donations are tax-deductible. You will receive any required receipt for IRS tax purposes by return mail.

Donations in kind. If you have items that you think we can use, please contact Mrs Sandra Sonnen at the Mission Office in St Paul giving a complete list of items.

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Nakhodka kids showing their Christmas cards.

Our Benefactors...

Nativity of our Lord Parish in St Paul, Minnesota

It was a joy in November to visit one of our oldest sister parishes, Nativity of Our Lord in St Paul, Minnesota. We had a wonderful evening with a covered dish supper and show and tell with things I brought from Russia. There were also talks by members of the parish who had been to Vladivostok. Seeing



We Russian missionaries always look forward to a pot luck dinner where we find a variety of typical American foods..



The kids learn about Catholic missions, too.



In 2000, Fr Dan met with Nativity Parishioners who produce and mail every issue of Vladivostok Sunrise. Thanks, Gang!

the mission really creates a lasting impression, and helps sister parish members to better understand our situation and to know how to help us.



The central part of Nativity's window in Vladivostok.



Mission table where parishioners could get some of our missions items.



Mr Jerry Alvfeby, the chair of the sister parish committee, did a great job of organizing my visit to Nativity.

Our Benefactors...

St Joseph's Parish of Vanderburgh County, Indiana

by V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

This is my home parish, so it is nice to have the support of my home parishioners for my mission work. St Joseph's decided to work with Coronation Parish of Grandview, Missouri, and St Philip Benizi Parish of Oregon City, Oregon, to send us a container of used clothing. Grandview and Evansville supplied the clothing, and Oregon City provided transportation from the Midwest to the port in Oregon.



A truck with clothing left Grandview with the prayers of Pastor Fr Robert Murphy.



Marlene and Paul Hasselbrinck coordinate mission activities in the Evansville area, with Father Ray Brenner and a guest priest.



Mr Jim O'Donnell from Oregon City was the volunteer truck driver.



A willing crew showed up to load the clothing onto the 40 ft container for the trip across the Pacific.



Scott Hasselbrinck and others hefted the boxes into the semi.



When the goods were loaded, Father Brenner blessed the truck on its way.

Used clothing is very much available in America, and the quality of used American clothing is better than the usual poor quality of imported new clothing available at the same price in Russia. The big problem is that the clothing must be pre-sorted in America to Russian import standards, and that is a lot of work. The big expenses are transportation, and paying import duties here in Russia. God bless you, Benefactors!

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From the development desk...

Dear Mission friends,

- We are getting reports from travellers who were on the Princess Line cruise that docked in Vladivostok on Oct 15, 2001. They recommend an Orient cruise to any one for ease and convenience. There are many pilgrimage sites, Akita, Vladivostok, and reported Marian apparitions in China. The mission office is contacting Catholic tours and cruise lines. Please send us the address of any Catholic tour company in your area.
- We had representatives in Indianapolis at the National Youth Convention. Over 7000 pieces of literature were passed out. More helpers should have gone. Tom Folz and his wife from Evansville, IN were there. Tom met parishoners from Garrett, IN where he spoke for the mission last summer! And he met a member of the Coronation of Our Lady, our sister parish in Grandview MO. Tom is retiring in December and he would like to help us more. Look for us in St Louis at the Marian Conference on Jan 11-12-13. Come by to say hello and lend a hand if you are able. This is truly lay missionary work.

- Come to Vladivostok and see for yourself. We have a host person to help you get around to visit all that is going on. We need travellers to carry in baby clothes in their checked through bags and bring hand made goods out for parishes and conferences.
- On our web site is a beautiful baby's baptismal gown made by one of our parishoners in Vladivostok. We are taking orders. Also there are hand knit slippers and soon will be sweaters and mittens.
- St Joseph's Covenant Keepers sent a representative to Vladivostok. Fr Myron invited them to the Family Life conference in Khabarovsk. They would like to work with the Bishop on a 4 year plan. If you are familiar with them and you wish to help, write to Fr Myron by e-mail.
- We have only one mission preaching assignment in the States so far for 2002. PLEASE approach your Pastor to invite us.

God love you and your family,
Sandra Sonnen
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