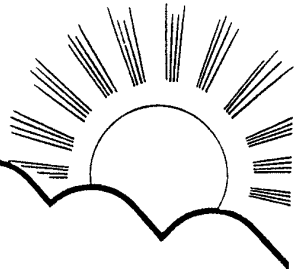


Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society Vladivostok Russia St Paul Minnesota

Issue Number Forty Four March 1, 2002



“Would you build Me a house to dwell in?” (2 Samuel 7: 5)

by Rev Daniel L. Maurer, CJD

Romanovka Catholics have formed a steering committee to plan how best to build a church in their small, economically depressed village located almost three hours by electric train from Vladivostok.

After I wrote the above sentence I stared at it - almost in disbelief. A church – in ROMANOVKA! Faithful readers of the *Vladivostok Sunrise* will remember that Romanovka is not exactly the hub of the Russian Far East. It is not even the largest parish with no church building. Because of the total destruction of the once thriving Roman Catholic Church in Russia during the communist persecutions of 1917-1937, today there are many large cities of over 200,000 people in Russia with no Catholic church buildings. Romanovka, a village of fewer than 2500 people, would be almost last on some peoples' list of places to build a church. But Romanovka is different. (My understatement of the new millenium.) Romanovka Catholics have a way of going against the odds. Romanovka is going to build a church.

Trying not to count our chicken before it hatches, still even the most reluctant of absentee pastors must plan for the future of his flock. Through the very generous offer of financial aid from Father Elmer Torburg, retired priest of the diocese of St. Cloud, MN, it has become possible to begin the planning and construction stages for the first ever Catholic church for the parish of the Most Holy Trinity in Romanovka.

Fr Torburg visited our Russian Far East missions in October 2001 at the instigation of one of our very first and dearest, most creative U.S. mission helpers, Mr Lee Larkey of St Anna, MN. With Fr Torburg as traveling companion was another of our creative and active mission helpers, Mr Ray Metzger of Little Falls, MN. Fr Torburg and Ray spent 10 days with us, visiting all of our Vladivostok mission activities (crisis pregnancy centers, Caritas offices and project sites, wood processing factory, etc.), and traveled to all of our outlying parishes. It was a whirlwind tour of ten years of frontier mission work.

Seeing so many needs in the struggling Church in the Russian Far East one might wonder what it was about the Romanovka parish that moved Fr Torburg to make a major donation to begin the construction of a church building there. It will be only the second new building that we will have begun to build since arriving here in February 1992. Yet since that date we have revived from the ashes of communism four pre-revolutionary parishes and founded another seven – all completely from scratch, except for the pre-revolutionary church building in Vladivostok which Divine Providence so graciously preserved and returned to the parish remnant. The needs of any one of these parishes are almost overwhelming. 8 of the 11, some in cities one hundred times larger than Romanovka, do not have their own place to meet for Mass. Like Romanovka they are still using rented halls.

Why a church for Romanovka? Why, indeed? Fr Torburg simply says that the parishioners there “touched my heart.” Ah, well. That is understandable, if one has been to Romanovka, and if one has met the people and seen their living conditions - and experienced their hope. Whose heart would



Some members of the Romanovka Parish Building Committee: (from l.) Natalia Karelina, Lyubov Ribina, Ludmilla Sidorenko (parish trustee), and Vladimir Kanarsky.

not be touched by their joy at gathering in a shabby, cold classroom to celebrate the Holy Eucharist; by their zeal in

spreading the Good News to almost the entire village; by the poor and the crippled and the halt and the blind among the parishioners; by how well they sing the Gloria; by how graciously they receive guests and share with them from their poverty?

Fr Torburg's donation, though very generous for one person and sizeable enough to begin planning and construction, may not be enough to complete a suitable building. If one is going to build, one must not only build for the present but also for the future. The planning committee began its work of investigation of building sites and construction costs in early February. No one, least of all the pastor (this author), has any experience in building anything. The process of gathering information is slow. We are at the stage of commissioning a first draft from the regional government architect, through whom, by Russian law, all building projects in Romanovka must be directed and by whom they must be approved. We do not yet know what the total cost of the project might be. My best guess is that we still need to find about \$15,000-\$20,000 more to insure that we can build something usable. Insulating the roof alone, something Russians rarely think of, may cost \$5,000-\$10,000.



Where to build the church? This photo shows what is left of an old outdoor theatre—one of the possible building sites.

We envision a simple brick structure with space enough in the nave for 100-150 people at Mass. The same space will also be used for parish social functions, so the sanctuary should be able to be closed off by a sliding partition or curtain. There should also be a vestibule, public bathrooms, a kitchen, a sacristy and a room for a watchman to live in. Since catechism classes can continue to be held in the parish apartment (purchased more than a year ago with help from Romanovka's sister parish St. Philip Benizi in Redland, Oregon) we will not need to build classrooms in the new structure. That will cut down on the cost considerably.

Fr Myron has given his blessing to open up the fund raising for this building project to our present and future benefactors. As pastor of the parish of the Most Holy Trinity in Romanovka, I feel certain that if you, the faithful friends of our mission, like Fr Torburg, could come to Romanovka, your hearts would also be moved to donate to this project. At the same time, however, our benefactors



The ruins of an old apartment building that was at first considered as possibly suitable to remake as a church. The specialists say that the bricks have been too ruined by water and freezing to use again as a building.

must realize that our Vladivostok parish and projects and all the other outlying parishes and projects are just as worthy of your financial support. Please do not direct a donation that you would have given to our missions in any event to the construction of the new church in Romanovka. If possible, please help us to find other, new donors who have not been involved in the support of our Russian Far Eastern missions. Or failing that, to sacrifice a little more than planned and give the additional to Romanovka. That way we will not be taking money away from the Blessed Mother (or St Joseph, etc.) to give to the Holy Trinity! (Parishes, that is.) All are equally worthy and all are equally in need. Although, as pastor of Romanovka, I have to say, perhaps not all can touch your heart as the dear Catholics of Romanovka can!

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

News Notes

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

• On February 11 the Holy See formally established four new dioceses in Russia—the former four apostolic Administrations. The news gave an excuse to the ultranationalist groups to complain. Most of the “facts” they quote are completely false, so there was a furor of activities in the news media. The Patriarch and Archbishop Kondrusevich were invited to a talk show on national TV, but the Patriarch did not show. Archbishop Kondrusevich took calls from rabid callers, and handled them very well. The creation of the four new dioceses still leaves unclear our situation, the Diocese of Vladivostok, and that of the Apostolic Administration of Karafuto (South Sakhalin Island). Naturally we are hoping that the Holy Father will name a bishop to the See of Vladivostok, but so far we are still like orphans. The official documents do not include us in any of the new dioceses as such. Probably we continue to be supervised by Bishop Jerzy Mazur of the new “Diocese of St Joseph in Irkutsk.”

• On January 18-19-20 our staff in St Paul, Minnesota, gathered for training and coordination of work, or as Sandra Sonnen, the Stateside coordinator of our mission called it, “a weekend of fun, work, hospitality and volunteerism at its height.”



(l to R) Marcia Rumens our new volunteer desk top publisher from Grandview MO with Kathleen Daniels our lay missionary from Grandview, Kathy Lindner our new office staff person, and Jim Weatherly our volunteer web master, of St Paul MN.

Not pictured were our volunteers Father Elmer Torborg and Ray Metzger who were attending the SW Liturgical conference in Colorado Springs, driving from Phoenix to help out with our mission table. Ed Winkelman and Francis Kennedy attended the Marian Conference in St Louis the weekend before. Sister Mary Catherine Shambour, OSB, Russian Instructor at the University of St Thomas, St Paul, MN was in Russia for a month helping to start the University parish, and Father Dale Edwards was preparing to go to Vladivostok for a visit. He will join Fr Torborg as volunteer priests of our mission who will be traveling and speaking for the mission. No retirement in this operation!



• Thanks to Fr Benedict Groeschel of EWTN fame, Father Myron appeared on national TV to speak about the work in Russia. Actually, it was fun to speak to Fr Groeschel, and it seemed that the 28 minutes just flew by. Before that event I was also invited to appear on EWTN Radio by Mr Steve Wood of St Joseph's Covenant Keepers to speak about family life in Russia. Those 45 minutes also went quickly. While I was in Florida I was able to rest for some days on the beach in Fort Myers Beach, thanks to our friends Dee and Terry Baltes of Dayton OH who have a condo there.



Fr Benedict Groeschel, a member of our National Board, and Fr Myron.



Vladivostok Deanery Family Life Commission

- On February 1 and 2 the Vladivostok Deanery Family Life Commission met in Khabarovsk to study the result of our Family Life Conference, and to create a plan of action for helping heal family life in Russia, which has been so affected by abortion, divorce, and socialism. Our two days of deliberation were very fruitful, and we produced a four year plan. The first two steps will be the first Couple's Retreat in our end of Russia, and we will invite the St Joseph's Covenant Keepers to begin a three year program of working with the men of our parishes. During the last year of that work, we will begin, hopefully, to open four "Family Centers" in our huge deanery. The centers will have a five-fold mission: 1. To help Russian society in general to improve family life by offering services and literature available to all; 2. To lobby with the government at various levels to improve the legal defense and development of the family; 3. Concrete aid to family where people can come for advice and help; 4. Aid to help parishes support the family life of Catholics, like helping prepare for marriage, Natural Family Planning services, couple's retreat, as well as a source of teaching and printed materials; 5. A development department to seek funding for the various works of each center, and to coordinate prayer activities in support of the mission of each center..

- It was Christmas in Lesozovodsk all over again when our parishioner Terza Ewing, a Peach Corps volunteer from Columbia, Missouri who is teaching English in the public school in Lesozovodsk, arranged to have a shipment of Christmas presents sent to the kids in the orphanage there. Sending the presents was a project of Terza's mother's 6,7, and 8th grade classes at Columbia Catholic School, which is the parochial school of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Columbia. The presents were donated, wrapped, and sent by parishioners and the kids at school. Terza's mother, Mrs Marie Ewing, said that it was a wonderful project which captured the interest of the kids at school—so much so that they are planning a bigger program for next year! Maybe other Catholics schools would like to try?



Terza in the background with the kids of the orphanage.

Only you have to stand in line and wait your turn!



How much fun it is to get!



- Alcoholics Anonymous is making strides in our Primorsky State of Russia. Sergei Yakovlev, a doctor of biological science, has been instrumental in getting many groups started and in encouraging them to continue. He often works as a consultant at the government alcoholic and narcotic treatment centers, which are trying to use more spiritual and psychological methods of treatment rather than relying on purely physical methods which were in vogue during the

Communist era. Dr Yakovlev has incorporated the Vladivostok branch of a Moscow organization named “Say No to Alcohol and Drug Abuse”. The organization is trying



Dr Yakovlev speaking before students in Ussurisk.

to open an office for consultation, and to promote a rehabilitation program based on the 12 steps of AA. Recently it was proposed that “Say No” might be able to acquire a building on the former military base on Russian Island to use for a rehabilitation center. It is located in a beautiful woods just a block away from the ocean. The building currently has eight apartments, of which only three are in use due to the closing of the base. One apartment is occupied by an elderly lady on pension who could easily continue to guard the building from the theft—a real problem in Russia—and have some additional income. Another lady, herself a member of AA, also lives there, and she would be very capable of serving as the local contact person and as building superintendent. That leaves six apartments which can be reorganized to serve for client living space and program space. We are all hoping that these dreams can be realized. Some funds will be needed for converting the space for use as a rehab center, especially upgrading the bathrooms and kitchen, as well as buying furniture.



The Proposed AA Rehabilitation Center as seen from the beach.

The apartment are very pleasant and warm, complete with fireplaces.



Vladivostok as seen from Russian Island across the ice of Eastern Bosphorus Strait.

- An anonymous Minnesota donor was decided to help us with our problem of finding a place for our children’s camps and conferences. He has donated more than half the cost of buying a camp for our use on a permanent basis! On February 26 Fr Dan signed a contract for the purchase of a camp in Sod-Gorod (Garden City), a suburb of Vladivostok easily accessible my car and by train. It is also accessible for all of our other Primorsky parishes. The cost is \$200,000, so we still have to raise \$87,000 to complete the purchase. The property will serve us many years, not only as a camp for our children and youth programs, but also as a place for conferences, meetings, rehabilitation programs, and retreats. We are hoping that we can make the camp self-supporting by also renting it to other groups when we are not using it.

The donor said that he read about us in the local Catholic diocesan paper and has never been involved in mission work before. We have yet to meet this generous person. Those wishing to donate to this project can mark their donation “For the Camp.” As we deal with beginning to manage and prepare the camp for use, we wonder what to name it? Perhaps in honor of our Bishop Slivovsky who lived and died and was

buried not far from the camp? Perhaps name it in honor of St Nicolas, who is a Russian favorite and patron of children?



Main building in Sod-Gorod. "Slivovsky House"?

How to Communicate with Us

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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:

Most Holy Mother of God Catholic Parish
Volodarskovo 22
690001 Vladivostok RUSSIA

Office in America:

Phone and FAX: (651)227-0208 and (651)690-5139

E-mail: usoffice@vladmission.org

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

Donations of money and **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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A Story from Women's Support Center #2

by Olga Berdnikova, Director

"Natasha", a 21 year old girl, came to our Center in early spring seeking help and condolences. Her boyfriend left her as soon as he knew about her pregnancy. Fortunately the girl's mother was religious woman, who also went through the same situation at her early age and had had an abortion. She asked her daughter to save the life of the baby.

Natasha live with her mother and youngest brother in a very small one-room apartment. This is very poor low-income family. Natasha and her mother work as cleaning women at a local factory. Natasha's brother is a schoolboy. When he was 10 their parents were divorced.

We tried to take care of Natasha during all of her pregnancy, buying the medicines and vitamins she needed, preparing everything for the baby (baby-carriage, baby clothing).

One day in October she came to us with the good news that soon she would become the mother of baby-girl! And she added that she was going to name the girl Katherine in memory of her beloved grandmother. It goes without saying that all of us were waiting for Katherine's birth very much, and soon the time came! On October 25, Natasha's mother called me at the CARITAS office to tell me about her newborn granddaughter (weight – 3,300 g; height – 55 cm). She is so lovely!

On this remarkable day we visited Natasha at Maternity Hospital #5 and presented a beautiful baby dress to her newborn Katherine. But we were pleasantly surprised to meet Natasha's father—he had come to see his granddaughter. Who knows may be Katherine's birthday would become the first step to re-unite their family?



Katherine and Natasha

From the Editor

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

On January 11 we celebrated the tenth anniversary of our work in Russia. We couldn't have gotten very far in our work without the great support and interest of our benefactors. And you are too numerous to name!

Especially we want to remember the kind help of Archbishop Francis Hurley of Anchorage and of Mr Ray Rzeszut who took such good care of our stateside needs for so many years. We also have to remember our first major benefactor, Fr Joseph Fessio of Ignatius Press in San Francisco who gave us electronic mail and our first automobile.

Also noteworthy is the help from the St Cloud Diocesan Mission office in the person of Fr Richard Wey, and of Virginia Murphy who helped us get official recognition by our incorporation in the State of Minnesota. And our Minnesota contacts were largely the work of Lee Larkey of our sister parish of the Immaculate Conception in St Anna, Minnesota.

After those key people, many, many others have helped us.

We should include our Russian benefactors, too, especially our first translator Igor Davydov, our faithful driver Anatoly Stashkov, Anastacia Potopenko the CARITAS director, and our helper with evangelization Yuri Byelozorov—just to name a few again! And again there are many, many more.

If the first ten years have been years of evangelization and parish formation (there being already 20 parishes in the area that we first served), surely the second ten years will be a time of building projects! Parishes simply have to have churches! Church buildings should not be in the first place in our agenda, because the Church is really the People of God, and so evangelization and catechetical work will still be in first place, but people have bodies and bodies have to have a place to be!

We have struggled to try to improve our fundraising right here in Russia—actually we have paid more attention to this than anyone else that I know, but the harvest is so sudden, so unexpected, and so promising that we simply must make progress.

I've asked our stateside mission coordinator Sandra Sonnen to begin a special fund for church building projects. 150 million people suddenly need church buildings. The Orthodox and the Protestants, as well as the Moslems are also stretching themselves to build churches, to have vocations, to educate the new generation at the same time that the old generations are still re-educating themselves to live in a post-Communist society where everything is different than they have had to deal with before.

So, while we are counting our blessings of the past ten years, we are still looking forward with optimism to the challenges of the next ten years.



A Russian child's "Thank You" to her benefactors.

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From the development desk...

Dear Mission friends,

- A donor has given us an incredible donation of \$113,000 to challenge all of us to help buy an old communist Pioneer camp!! These were used to indoctrinate the youth into the Communist way of thinking. Just think a Catholic parish would own a camp to be used for our own kids in all the parishes, families who other wise would not have any where to visit, rental income using it at specified times for an AA treatment center, orphans, hospitals, businesses, who know what else it will be used for. We expect that the purchase price will be \$200,000, and that we will need another \$50,000 for repairs. What an opportunity! Do you want to help?
- The New York Police Department has invited us to send two Police officers to train with them during June, July and August. They will provide room, board, and training. We need to provide transportation which will amount to about \$1500 for each officer to travel to New York and return. The project will help the Police Department in both cities. Several families have offered to have the Russian officers as guests, and there

are translators available to assist. One New York officer has adopted two Russian children.

God love you and your family,

Sandra Sonnen
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www.vladmission.org
Our new e-mail address is : usoffice@vladmission.org



Construction continues on the Our Lady of Fatima rectory in Vladivostok, in spite of the cold weather.