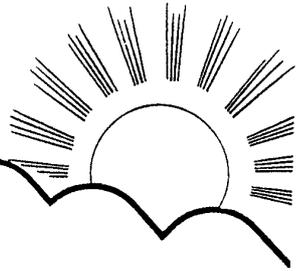


# Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society Vladivostok Russia St Paul Minnesota

Issue Number Forty Six July 1, 2002



"Our" kids getting a square meal from the back of a van.

Soup or Borscht  
Porridge  
Hot tea (winter)  
or cold fruit juice (summer)  
Prepared fish or sausages  
Sweet rolls

Only we Catholics add the sweet rolls to the menu, so the kids call the Catholics "The Sweet-Roll People." It is also interesting to note that the children refer to the volunteers as "mamas."

**Why are there street children?** The problem originates, not merely because of alcoholism and drug abuse by parents, but also because many adults, having been raised in a socialist environment, simply don't know how to cope in a market economy, especially when the new economy is still so hampered by high prices, low wages, extreme taxes, and, worst of all, unrelenting government bureaucracy which simply forces all but the strongest to admit defeat, including parents. The government of Russia has become more acutely aware of the problem of street children, and President Putin has made prominent comments about it in various addresses.

In response, the government has tried to make some changes, noting that projects like ours do not solve the problem of homelessness. We maintain that homeless children need help now—even before the problem can be solved. The local government's initial response was to have the police collect the children and take them to their homes or to

## The "Street Children" Project in Vladivostok

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

Rachael Hughes from New Zealand was the first person who began to work with street children in Vladivostok. The problem was too big for her to handle all by herself, because there were too many children. Two years ago she asked all the churches in Vladivostok if they could extend a hand to help. Initially various Protestant and our Catholic church each took a day of the week to feed the children, which, at the beginning, was about 20 children per day. It means that volunteers travel to the food collection point to buy the food, and then go to the five places in the city where the children collect to serve them. Since that time, one Protestant church left the program because they could not provide the funding. Our parish has taken their night, so that we now have two nights of the week, and our volunteers have increased from one person to six. The number of children varies from 20 children per night in the coldest days of the winter to 110 children per night in the summertime, when there are many children who have run away from their homes in other parts of the state and take the railroads to the "Golden Gate of the East"—Vladivostok.

At the present time, the foods we give to the children are usually:



"Mama", our parishioner Larisa, dishing up the soup for the kids.

orphanages. The police did not have the funds to take children home to other cities, so they began to simply ignore those foreign children on the street. There is no additional financing from the government for the police to operate these programs, so the children simply run away again. The police are not able to feed them, clothe them, or even give them a bath and rudimentary medical help at the present time. While the government is looking for a more systemic solution, our program continues to be extremely important for these kids. Now it is spring again, and we are expecting the onslaught of children from other cities and states of Russia.

**Future Prospects.** Perhaps a significant step could be made by opening a “home-away-from-home” for street children where they could come to bathe, to eat, to get medical help and counseling, perhaps temporary living space, and encouragement to continue to go to school and to succeed at planning for the future. Such a plan would again depend upon generous benefactors, local and international, as well as government agencies.

The City of Vladivostok has expressed interest in providing premises for such a program. Likely premises would probably be former kindergarten buildings which are not now needed because of the low birthrate of these last ten years. In that way the city could preserve them for future use again as kindergartens without paying for their maintenance, which would be taken care of by the street children programs. One might expect that the work with street children itself could eventually be taken over by the government if the economy continues to improve, but there is very little expectation that this might happen in the foreseeable next few years. The contribution of the churches is now very important, and probably always will be. Governments just don’t provide the love and care that churches do. It is interesting to note that during the Russian Revolution there were also many, many street children in Vladivostok who fled from the war in Europe. Our Bishop Slivovsky and parishioners had a large program to find and care for these children. We are following his footsteps!



*Sister Evgenia (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) also works with the children.*

**Some Stories about Street Children.** The legal age of consent for sexual activity in Russia is 14 years of age. Some street kids pretend to be 14 years old, and so some of the girls work as prostitutes. Fourteen-year-old “Veronica” became pregnant, and turned to our “mama” for help. They went to the CARITAS Women’s Support Center where Veronica received counseling and prenatal care. Veronica decided to keep her child, and CARITAS helped her to find an apartment which she could afford to rent, now that she is old enough to work. She received training as a cook from a grant from CARITAS, and now has a regular job. She shares her apartment with other pregnant women in need of temporary shelter, which gives her additional income, and help in caring for the baby. Thank you, benefactors in Dayton and Kettering, Ohio for your financial support of the Women’s Support Centers.



*Without love, the street is a breeding ground for crime and wasted lives.*

Alexei was killed on the street and his body was left to be found by other street children. Those kids appealed to Rachel who helped to find the parents to notify them of his death. The parents were completely uncooperative and disinterested, and Rachel eventually paid for the funeral expenses and buried the body herself.

Roman was accused of stealing and felt completely defenseless against the accusations. He went home, but his parents were drunk. Feeling helpless and alone, he hanged himself. Suddenly he was found while still alive. No one wanted him. Rachel took him home to live with her until the problems could be resolved. He had no place else to go.

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

## News Notes

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

• On March 8 & 9 in Khabarovsk we held the first couple's retreat in the Far East. It was a joint project of all the parishes of our Vladivostok Deanery. We have to say that it was a great success, and the couples recommended that we expand the retreat. Because of travel problems considering the huge size of our deanery, we could only be together for a day and a half. A three day retreat would be better. Perhaps the next retreats will be more localized to reduce travel problems and make the retreat more accessible to couples.



*Father Viktor Tkach, a Marian priest, came from the Ukraine to help us with our first experience with a Couple's Retreat. He has given retreats for over a thousand couples.*

*Eleven couples made this first retreat which was in the style of a preached retreat..*



*Group picture at the end of the retreat. Maria and Nicolai Bovsunovsky (right end) celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday during the retreat.*

• On April 28 the Youth Group from Most Holy Mother of God Parish in Vladivostok produced a play for the parishioners. It was entitled "King of the Jews", and had been written long ago by K. Romanov, the uncle of Czar Nicolas I. The play is about the crucifixion of Jesus, but Jesus never appears in the play. The action is about how others reacted to what happened in those days in Jerusalem. It was a challenge for the youth to edit the 6-hour play down to 1 ½ hours for our audience.

Since that time the play has gone on the road to Romanovka, and there was an encore production here in Vladivostok. The cast even made a special modification to do the play for children, who also enjoyed it. The project was so successful that the cast is thinking to do another one. Perhaps it will be possible to make a combined play-concert production.



*Pontius Pilate, played by our Russian webmaster Victor Anisimov, confers with a Centurian, played by one of our altar servers, Nicolai Perminov*



*Joseph of Arimathea and Mrs and Mr Pontius Pilate.*

*The cast takes a bow at the end.*



- We received by mail from Regina Stanko of Tomsk, Russia, a former parishioner, two more personal items of Bishop Karol Slivovsky's. Bishop Slivovsky was the last priest in the whole of the Far East of Russia, so he had to be buried by his lay parishioners. Regina's father Stanislav Stanko buried Bishop Slivovsky's body after his death of old age in 1933 in the local village cemetery of Sekanka to which the bishop had been exiled. A funeral mass was celebrated in Harbin, China after the European community there got word of the bishop's death. Stanislav saved the bishop's effects. The family was threatened with death during those Stalinist years, and Mr Stanko was arrested, at which time some of the bishop's things were taken by the KGB, including his photo album (which might be used to identify people), his Latin-font typewriter, and his binoculars.

After he was most miraculously released, Stanislav immediately gathered his family, and the remainder of the bishop's belongings, and left for Tomsk in Siberia, hoping that no one would know them there so that they would be safe from arrest. They immediately had new identity cards made so that they could get rid of the old cards which had a black stripe



*Rita Stanko, her son Andre, and Regina Stanko, a physician veteran of WWII. It was her father Stanislav Stanko who took care of Bishop Slivovsky. She saved the bishop's personal items through the years.*

*Stanislav Stanko, who buried Bishop Slivovsky and saved his personal belongings.*



which identified them as "enemies of the people". After Regina's father's death, she saved the bishop's effects all these years in a wooden box under her bed, but is now giving them to our parish.

During my last phone conversation with Regina, she was thinking about coming to Vladivostok to go to the cemetery where Bishop Slivovsky was buried to see if we can locate the

grave. What a miracle it would be if we found it and were able to bring the remains to be buried in our cathedral!



*My helper Alexei Hartman and our parish archivist Miroslava Efimova were present to witness the opening of the historic parcel from Regina Stanko.*

*Inside were the Bishop’s cupholder, and a notions box labeled “KS” for Karol Slivovsky.*



• Congratulations to Mr George Riess and our benefactors who have donated to our “Adopt-a-Birth” program! More than 300 Russian children have been saved from abortion and helped to have a healthy birth through this program which was George’s brainchild. Many more children have been saved by our Women’s Support Centers, but the “Adopt-a-Birth” program is the key for Russian women who consider abortion just because they can’t afford the expenses of giving birth (Abortions are nearly free!) We could expand this program if there are interested benefactors.

• Maybe it seems like a small thing, but on May 17 the City of Vladivostok installed new road signs on Sibirtsovo Avenue which point the way to our street, Volodarskovo, and the signs indicate that the “Most Holy Mother of God Parish” is on that street. We’ve long wanted some kind of road signs, to advertise our presence, but were always deterred by the expectation that any signs we put up would be the subject of vandalism on the part of Russian xenophobes who hate the

Catholic Church. These signs are city property, even though we paid for them, so they will be a test.



*The bottom yellow panel points the way to our parish.*

• Speaking of xenophobia, when many Russians think of Catholics, they think of the Swedish Army which invaded Russia with the idea to convert it to Catholicism, and they think of the Teutonic Knights who also attacked Russia from Northern Germany. They also think of Poland as a traditional enemy of Russia. They don’t stop to think about the fact that Sweden and most of Scandanavia are now almost completely pagan lands (punished, as it were). Nor that the Soviet Union under the aegis of Russia was a great threat to all of Europe, and invaded Catholic countries like Poland and Slovakia, and killed more priests and destroyed more churches than any other force in history. Nor that Catholic Poland also fought against the Teutonic Knights. Nor about the fact that the Tsar killed many more people during the Russian “Inquisition” of the Old Believers Affair than all the other European countries during the Inquisition. “Don’t confuse me with the facts—My mind is made up!”



*The Caritas bus stop in Lesozovodsk.*

• I complained once when I was at our parish in Lesozovodsk that someone had ruined the local bus stop and stolen all the wooden parts. People had to stand in the rain to wait for the bus, and, in the winter, there was no shelter from the wind.

Our parish trustee Vladimir Pisarenko took the matter to heart, and worked to repair the bus stop. Pictured here is the result: donated steel roof, donated paint and labor, and new boards for sitting on. They still need a little gravel at the base to eliminate the mud puddle. No one knows how long the city would have taken to repair the bus stop—many other bus stops in the city are also in need of repair. Socialism takes the initiative out of people. Thanks to Vladimir and Caritas, we are trying to re-educate people in self-reliance. Then again, I might need to use the bus stop myself some rainy day!

- On June 4 I was asked to participate in the 4<sup>th</sup> International Student Conference of the Vladivostok State University of Economics and Service. I gave a talk at the general session, and then attended some of the student talks. My topic was “The Cada-Fitz Method of Analysis of Social Events”. It was fun, but time was limited. The talk was well-received. Fr Dan had been invited to an earlier conference where his talk was



*Students waiting for the program to begin.*

*Fr Myron and our parishioner who is a professor at the University, Dr Alexander Kovalevsky.*



“Science and Religion”. Our talks should be published in the official conference materials. We were both impressed with the sense of excitement at the university about the future, and especially about the future of the Russian Far East. There is the sense that the Far East is Russian’s California, and would have tremendous economic growth if Moscow would let it happen. We are located “smack-dab in the middle” of three

economic powers: Japan, South Korea, and China. There is much talent and resources here. In general, I think the students are very bright, but still suffer a bit from “Sovietization”. We are hoping to be able to work more personally with students in the future.

- The Feast of Corpus Christ was also First Communion day for one of our Sunday School classes. The children also brought up the gifts at the offertory of the mass, and helped during the Corpus Christi procession around the church building. We celebrate Corpus Christ on the Sunday after Trinity Sunday, as is done in America.



*Happy First Communion Day, children! June 2, 2002.*

- Our seminarian who is a member of our new religious community, the Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord, returned from Slovakia to renew his visa. Brother Oleg Yelchaninov really looks healthy, and seems very satisfied to be in the seminary in Kosice, Slovakia. His first assignment there was to learn the Slovak language, which he seems to have done well enough to begin attending regular theology courses as soon as returns to Europe. The Rector of the St Charles Seminary in Kosice is proposing a three-year program to prepare Brother Oleg for ordination. The program can be shorter because Brother Oleg already has university work behind him, was a business man with a lot of life experience, and has also completed two years of studies with us, including his novitiate program. Thank you for your prayers for vocations and for your support of Brother Oleg.

- Our parish library is an important part of our work, because Catholic reading material is rare in Russia. The United Bible Societies has a store here in Vladivostok where it is easy to get Biblical materials, but books about Catholic doctrine can only be found in our library. Even university students come to use our library, which has books in Russian, English, Polish, and Lithuanian, as well as videocassettes and audio materials. Some of these materials were donated by Our Sunday Visitor. The librarian who keeps track of all the books and magazines is Yelena Andreevna. Her mother was a parishioner before the Russian revolution, and is among the children in the historic

photograph of Bishop Slivovsky. Yelena also has some volunteer helpers, especially during the busy times before and after Sunday Mass. The library is very crowded and needs much more shelf space. We are hoping to have a new library in the Our Lady of Fatima rectory building, if we can ever afford to build it.



*Yelena Andreevna amid the library's books.*

- The scandals in the Catholic Church in America were broadcast very widely here in Russia, in an attempt to discredit the Church just after there was the big to-do about the opening of four dioceses here, and the exclusion of our Bishop Mazur from Russia. It makes it obvious that sin is not just a private matter, but has social ramifications that go far beyond even the borders of the city, state, and country where the acts were committed. So our work is now doubly hard: working here in Russia where these scandals are being discussed on the street, and seeing our fund-raising drop in America, probably because American Catholics themselves are discouraged and don't know where to put their trust.

I've worked in seminaries all my life—my first assignment as a young priest was as a vocation director--and none of this is a surprise to me. It is also no surprise to me that the vocation crisis in America is at least partly artificial, as Mr Michael Rose is contending in his book, "Goodbye, Good Men." (ISBN 0-89526-144-8, Regnery Publishing, Inc., Washington DC.) When I worked as a vocation director it was almost impossible

to get any cooperation from bishops. During my deacon year 31 years ago, I preached about vocations in nearly all of the universities from Colorado to Pennsylvania, from Minnesota to Kentucky. I was amazed that bishops seemed to assign their most liberal priests to work in the universities. Even then it was obviously a mistake! Why wouldn't you assign your best priests to work with the future generation? (A good exception was the work in the Diocese of Lincoln at the University of Nebraska where a fine priest worked for many years, and the number of vocations from that University was phenomenal.)

We are struggling to build a healthy church in Russia, not forgetting the pain of our fellow American Catholics. Please don't forget our financial needs in these rough times!

## How to Communicate with Us

### Office in Russia:

**Phone:** (011-7)-4232-26-96-14

**FAX:** (011-7)-4232-26-96-16

**E-mail:** [myron@catholic.vladivostok.ru](mailto:myron@catholic.vladivostok.ru)

[daniel@catholic.vladivostok.ru](mailto:daniel@catholic.vladivostok.ru)

[CARITAS@mail.primorye.ru](mailto:CARITAS@mail.primorye.ru)

**Internet:** Russian language:

<http://www.catholic.vladivostok.ru>

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](mailto: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. Please contact Mrs Sandra Sonnen at the Mission Office in St Paul giving a complete list of items.

**Vladivostok Sunrise** Edited and Produced in Russia by V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D. Printed by the Sisters of St Peter Claver, St Paul, Minnesota. Assembled for mailing by Nativity Parish, St Paul, Minnesota. Mailed by Mary Mother of God Mission Society, St Paul, Minnesota. Authors are noted if other than the editor. A full color version of the *Sunrise* is available at <http://www.vladmission.org>

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

Non-Profit Organization U.S. Postage Paid St Paul Minnesota Permit No. 6732
---

Address Service Requested

## From the development desk...

Dear Mission friends,

- Donations have dropped since 9-11 and now the scandals, so donations are way down...Please consider a small sacrifice of some kind for Russia. If we don't expand and developed new parishes another religion will fill our spot.
- Please put our business card in your local newspaper both Catholic and civic. Tell the world in your area what the Catholic Church is doing in the Far East of Russia. Look in your papers to see that we have had generous people doing this already.
- Fr Myron needs to open a parish near the university. There are 39,000 students in a small area. Please know how loyal and genuine the Russian people are. They are filled with the faith from the blood of their martyrs and the Fatima rosaries for the last 85 years to such an extent that they have become good helpers for Father, so he is able to extend himself by their generosity in volunteering, becoming parish administrators where there is no priest, catechism teachers, Legion of Mary supporters, and fill many roles in the building of new parishes.
- Several of the Catholic Russian Far Eastern youth are going to Toronto for World Youth Day with Pope John Paul II, thanks to European benefactors who donated for this specific purpose.
- Fr Dan will be in the States from July 16 to Aug 18. He will be in Michigan, Boston, St Paul, Chicago area Lake Zurich, IL, Las Vegas NV, Modesto CA, and San Francisco.
- This summer we have speakers in Boston, Scranton, Bellville, Michigan, Green Bay, St Paul-Minneapolis, Reno, and Santa Rosa. See our web site for exact dates and places.

God love you and your family,  
Sandra Sonnen  
Mission Desk, St Paul, MN 651-227-0208  
E-mail: [usoffice@vladmission.org](mailto:usoffice@vladmission.org)  
[www.vladmission.org](http://www.vladmission.org)