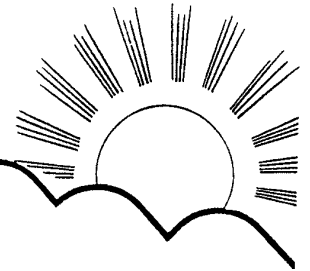


Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society Vladivostok Russia St Paul Minnesota

Issue Number Forty Seven September 1, 2002



The Pilgrimage— Time for Sun and Prayer

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

From June 25-July 3 we held our annual Pilgrimage, when parishioners from several parishes walked nine days from the Parish of the Nativity in Ussurisk to the Parish of the Annunciation in Arsenyev. For some reason there were fewer pilgrims this year, but the weather was the best ever, with sunshine every day! The pilgrims concentrated on the graces of the sacraments during their prayer, their conversations, and private prayer in the hours of travel between nights spent in tents. No one suffered from blisters this year, as a kind of miracle, because it was a great cause of suffering in previous years. Every year the pilgrims are very grateful about the graces they receive during the pilgrimage, and for the new friendships that were fostered. There is a proposal that next year there be a second pilgrimage—on bicycles. It would be fun to have some Americans join us in next year's pilgrimage.

The road is straight and the shoulder is wide for much of the distance. You can tell by the smiles that this is a great experience.



The pilgrims pass through beautiful open farm country.

Pilgrims are really hungry when supper comes from the open fire. Here it looks like they fell asleep during the Rosary!



Fr Dominic Kim came from Ussurisk for mass along the way.

Youth Conference 2002

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

One of our parishioners, Asya Shevchenko, was selected by European benefactors to go to the International Youth Conference in Toronto with Pope John Paul II. The rest of the young adults of our parishes were invited by the Parish of the Transfiguration of Blagoveschensk to hold the 2002 Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference in their city. I had founded the parish nine years ago, but the Divine Word Fathers had taken it over four years ago, and so I would be going back for the first time since then.



Morning Prayer began the day of the Youth Conference.

I could not attend the whole conference because of the need to be in Vladivostok on Sundays, but my four days there were very refreshing. I noticed that Blagoveschensk is cleaner and brighter than it was, that the Chinese city of Hai Hei just across the Amur River has also grown “up” in



Participants take a morning swim in the Amur River with the Chinese city of Hai Hei in the background.

skyscrapers, and the flowers were blooming everywhere and the air is sparkling clean. It was especially nice to see the Zeya River again—surely one of the cleanest in the world

with absolutely clean sandy beaches. The young adults also enjoyed their sometimes twice-daily swims. The city has one of the finest museums in our area, but the old Catholic church most especially invited us to visit. It had been built in two stages before the Revolution in 1917, but was confiscated as were all Catholic churches by the government in the anti-religion campaigns. After being used as a barn for horses for many years, it was given over to the Orthodox Church during WWII, and has served the local Orthodox parish church all these years. The Catholic parish hopes to again own it soon as the Orthodox complete their new cathedral. I’ve promised to return for the reblessing of the church when that happens.



The new Orthodox Cathedral, with Svetlana Pisarenko.

Mass in the parish chapel, which is an old chemical laboratory.



It is always a pleasure to visit Blagoveschensk—the city name means “Annunciation”—in order to experience a truly pleasant Russian city. The Youth Conference! We had many speakers on many topics, including our vocation in life, Natural Family Planning, alcoholism and drug abuse, but we tried to examine another really major Russian problem: How



Sister Evgenia in the role of the Good Samaritan.

Fr Vladimir Sek, the pastor in Blagoveschensk.



Roundtable discussions of the day's topics finished each day.

to promote the health and welfare--especially spiritual welfare--of the Russian male, who had been so sidelined by socialism, by easy divorce, by the abortion of his children over which he had no control, by alcoholism, and now by new economic realities that he was not prepared to meet.

I'm hoping we have some new ideas that will help bring him back to church and back to family life.



Perhaps the Chinese-Russian border will welcome us back to Blagoveschensk some day.

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

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

Mary Mother of God Mission Society
 1854 Jefferson Ave
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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.

Seven Facets of America: What do Russians see when they visit?

by Kristina Pavlova

CARITAS Women's Support Centers of Vladivostok
tr by V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

This year God gave me a special gift through the Virgin Mary (I believe it was exactly through her.) During the summer a friend of our parish Dr Chris Kahlenborn sent me notice by electronic mail that in October the international organization Heartbeat would have its annual conference for directors of crisis pregnancy centers. He advised me to write to them, even though he wasn't sure something would come of it. I wrote, and immediately they replied not only with an invitation but with a promise to pay for my expenses including the long flight. Without that, of course I couldn't go. Up until the last minute I didn't believe I'd go, especially after the events of September 11.

But on October 20 of this year I successfully landed at the Los Angeles International Airport where Lloyd and Kathy, a handsome elderly American couple, met me and took me to their home in Torrance where I spent the weekend.

My **first impression** which struck me already in the airport was all the American flags. They were everywhere, from trucks on the runways to clothing to cars in the street, on the homes, stores, and schools, and even on agricultural instruments. Patriotism in America is emphatic. I asked Lloyd why, knowing that many non-Americans don't understand American pride in themselves and their country and are thinking the same thing. Lloyd said, "We simply are proud of what we have."

After having lived three weeks in the USA and having felt American life itself, I understood that that pride is simply love for one's country, something like the love of a mother who puts all her strength into the development of her child and is glad to see his achievements. American patriotism also shows itself in connection with its history. Every American airport has its own museum display of its own development, something you won't find in a single Russian airport. Actually all museums in America are in excellent condition, and families visit them on weekends. That isn't a typical service of Russian museums.

The ecology of America was my **second impression**. You can find dirt even in America, especially in certain parts of the cities which remind me of my own country. But in the parts where regular Americans live you right away see high standards. Most families live in their own homes, around which they mow their lawns and plant a sea of flowers. Nobody waits for somebody else to care for their yards. Every week each family cleans its own area independently. Each home has its own style where each homemaker shows his taste and imagination, something not possible in Russia where only the very rich can own their own homes and

where most families live in apartments and struggle with their neighbors because of the tight quarters and noise heard through thin walls. And so in Russia there aren't beautiful homes and innovative homeowners.

In America high standards exist also in connection with nature. Every plot of land is cultivated. In Dayton, Ohio where I spent the third week of my stay, for example, squirrels run in the yards like cats do in Russia. Every home has its "family" tree which the family takes care of for decades. In California at Lloyd and Kathy's home it was a great palm, and in Kettering, Ohio at George and Joan Riess' it was a big bushy pine. In general, America loves flowers. Never in my life did I see so many flowers, eucalyptuses, palms, and orange trees.

My first week of my visit I was in Glendale, California not far from Los Angeles where I attended the conference. My general impression of the conference can be summed up in two words: Lots of information and lots of new experiences which



Kristina edits the newsletter of our Women's Support Centers "To Receive Life". This issue's feature article was about the importance of fatherhood to children.

I'm still continuing to brew over, but things had a Protestant slant. I experienced the spiritual hunger of hours of loud hymn-singing—that is not the kind of practice of prayer that

I'm accustomed to. It doesn't mean that I'm judgmental about others' means of prayer, but I'm left with a question: If Heartbeat International is an interdenominational organization, then why don't they respect the Catholic tradition of prayer? Two 30-minute morning masses during two weeks simply don't stretch across all those hours of loud "worship" and hand-clapping.

Now is the time to tell about my **third** and strongest **impression** of America: American Christians. I had the good fortune of seeing this facet of America from several sides. We Russians are accustomed to judge America by television, which speaks very little about the spiritual life of the country. This aspect has deep Christian roots when you consider that the country was founded by Christians. I've heard a lot about liberalism in Christian circles, and I saw such things as girl altar servers in Catholic churches (because many bishops insist that priests choose girls to serve at the altar, and so many boys leave that service because they don't want to be "with girls." I saw Catholic churches that remind me more of aircraft hangers or some kind of factory than houses of the Lord.

On the other hand I met very many really fine orthodox Catholics and beautiful churches where everything speaks of God and where one can almost touch the Holy Spirit. One of those churches is Emmanuel Church in Dayton which became like my own home. They even prepared and sang at mass our Russian hymn "Hail, Mary" for my visit, which, of course, brought me to tears. When I went into that bright church and saw all the people on their knees praying the rosary before mass I understood that God loves America. In spite of the liberalism there are many deep believers here, and the pro-life movement is very strong. I never came in touch with such deep faith as in the U.S.A., and I think America continues to exist thanks to these believers.

The whole country prays. Children pray before their classes in school. Parents pray with their children and they pray for children. Many Americans told me that it became like that only after the events of September 11, but I answer them this way: "If you didn't have your family's faith in your heart you wouldn't pray even now. You would simply be afraid." I never noticed that after terrorist explosions and other cataclysms which happened in Russia people went to church!

My **fourth impression** about America is Hollywood and Halloween, although I only got this impression in California and nowhere else. People get ready to celebrate Halloween long before October 31. It seems that this is the most important holiday of the year for California. When I flew in on October 20 there were already decorations of pumpkins, scarey figures, witches on broomsticks, skeletons, mini-graveyards, and cobwebs in the yards. At first it was fun, but then I saw a fat lady with a tight mini-skirt and her face painted with red scarey makeup, and I thought I must be the most intolerant person in the world.

On my last day in California we went to Hollywood. I looked at the houses where famous stars live, walks in their footprints, stared at the fancy store windows of their expensive shops, but I felt a strange emptiness of spirit. How that life is not real! It is like eating a shiney red apple made from papier mache. When I returned to my hotel I was tired of it all.

But thank God that that isn't all of America! It was good that I spent the next two weeks in Ohio which seems to me to be a place of normal life for normal Americans. I was one week in Columbus where I attended an international seminar for director of crisis pregnancy centers, and another week in the home of our friends George and Joan Riess in Kettering near Dayton where I visited the local women's support center which is of major support to our center in Russia.

Here I'd like to speak of the **fifth impression** of America—the wellmeaningness and respect for the person. (Unfortunately not everybody there considers the child in the womb to be a person worthy of respect, just like in Russia.) During my first days in America I felt strange because so many unfamiliar people greeted me on the street. Clerks in stores are crazy to see me and drip with friendliness. After breakfast the waiters in the cafes wish me to have the happiest day of my life. But one quickly gets accustomed to such courtesy, and now back in Russia I miss it. After all, a smile and a kind word don't cost anything, but give so much! I know that in Russia "life is difficult" people are consumed with their problems. People justify themselves that there is nothing worth smiling about. But they are very mistaken. Is it possible to escape from trouble with an ugly expression on your face? It seems to me it is the most irresponsible side of Russians—we don't give a smile.

And we don't respect the dignity of one another. We mob each other on buses. We judge how others are dressed even though it is none of our business. We talk and gossip about the fault of others as if we had the right to speak ill of others. And all the while singing, "I don't know of another country where a person can breathe so freely." In America I rested away from Russia.

My **sixth impression** of America is the attitude to the elderly and the handicapped. In America, age doesn't mean poverty and humiliation as it does in Russia. In fact it is difficult to consider those elderly people to be old since they are so full of life and joy with their 70 or 80 years. They don't stay home "marking time". They are very busy in their churches, they go to restaurants, they are busy with their kids and grandchildren, have their own fine home and car, they travel and plan parties with their friends (who aren't necessarily old). It is difficult to say that there is old age in America. I didn't see any. And I never saw a young person offend an elderly lady, and never saw any strife between generations. I saw many handicapped people who don't hide at home. They are also active and joyful like normal people.

And finally my **seventh impression**: the American family. I know that Americans are very concerned about divorce and the

absence of fathers in the home. But their problems can't be compared to Russia where three fourths of all marriages end in divorce soon after the wedding and where one can hardly find a father in a family. The American family had a very favorable impression on me. Fathers play with their kids. Husbands and wives kindly and respectfully refer to one another. There are walls of family pictures in every home. There are family holidays and traditions.

Maybe I can say that this trip was like marriage preparation for me for the future. I lived with fine families. I saw what it meant to be a good wife. I saw that it was worth waiting for the right kind of relationship before I would choose my husband. I learned what a good relationship between siblings meant. I saw how parents need to teach responsibility to their children. I saw how a good family must participate in the life of society, and not merely live in the shadows of their home. (Yes, I saw counterexamples in Russia, and how can young couples build their future on such counterexamples?) I participated in such family events as cooking Christmas candy with George and Joan and their kids and grandkids, where there was lots of fun and powdered sugar everywhere.

I don't know how those three weeks will change my life. But my worldview has changed a lot. Somebody jokingly said to me, "So, you are now an American!" No, I'm not American—I'm Russian, and I love Russia and Vladivostok very much. But I also love and believe in America. The American people don't even realize their mission. All the good things they have achieved, that deep belief in God, and their experience of how to build a real democratic government where everything is done with respect to the person—that they have to give to other peoples.

I am grateful to God and to the Virgin Mary for the gift they gave me, and am awaiting a continuation of miracles.



Kristina is famous for her cakes—this one for Fr Dan's birthday.

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

News Notes

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

- On June 28 Fr Frederico Gonzalez-Fierro Botas, S.J., 59, died after being in a one-car accident on the highway near Michaelovka, Primorsky Krai, a two hour's drive from Vladivostok. He was riding in the back seat of our car with Fr Evgenie Peregudov and two seminarians. They were on their way to say mass for our pilgrims who were walking from the city of Ussurisk to the Arsenyev. The freak accident occurred when the car spun out of control after cresting a small knoll, hitting the shoulder, and then rolling over several times at the side of the road. The other three passengers were not hurt and walked away from the accident. Our car was a total loss.

Fr Frederico was on a tour of all the Catholic churches of Russia, having come to us from Irkutsk and was planning to leave for Yakutia. He was born in Spain, and was serving as professor of the College of St Thomas in Moscow. He wrote articles for a Spanish newspaper about the Church in Russia. He was very excited about our work, and was anxious to write about all he had seen. God seems to have had other plans. Eternal Rest grant to him, O Lord!

- We just opened a Women's Support Center at St Joseph's parish in Second River, but that is not all. It seems that it will be the first center to have a telephone! So CARITAS is already doing advertising, using the parish telephone as a "hotline". People can call from anywhere in the city, and the St Joseph's Center can refer women to the Women's Support Center closest to their home. Sort of an unexpected step forward.

- Wonderful news from the Leaflet Missal Company in St Paul, Minnesota. They have decided to include our Christmas CD produced by our Vladivostok parish in their Christmas catalog! Look for it, and please buy it! You will hear the wonderful quality of our Christmas concert of 2001 with the Regina Angelorum Ensemble, the Catholic Concert Choir of Vladivostok, and the Ehipany Organ.

- Renovation is rapidly proceeding on the five-room apartment that we bought for the first location of St Joseph's Parish in Second River. Orthodox priest Fr Valerie is coordinating the work of parish volunteers and professional builders who are making the necessary changes, which include removing some walls to make a chapel, moving the kitchen to the other end of the apartment, making a new entrance on the street level, doubling the restroom, and making an altar and tabernacle. Meanwhile the city is telling us that land is fast disappearing in that part of the city, so if we will want to have a church some day in that area, we must buy land now. Benefactors, this is your chance!



Mary Mother of God Mission Society

Reviving the Catholic Church in Eastern Russia

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I would like to introduce a mission society to you that I am acquainted with, Mary Mother of God Mission Society.

It is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit corporation in the state of Minnesota. The society assists American priests and their parishes in Vladivostok and other cities of Far Eastern Russia. All contributions are tax deductible.

We would hope you might suggest this mission to clients interested in charitable gift giving.

Polish people started the Vladivostok parish in Russia in the 1800's. Now it has many other European and Asian members as well.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for more information. Please visit their web site as well:
<<http://www.vladmission.org>>

Thank you,

God love you and your family,

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From the development desk...

Dear Friends of the Vladivostok Mission,

- A great way to be a lay missionary might be to copy the letter on the preceeding page and send it to your CPA, accountant, financial planner, lawyer, and estate planner.
- I am told many people are unaware that they can plan for charitable giving and receive a tax write off each year.
- I recently attended a non profit idea a seminar in which they mentioned life insurance. If you would like your monthly premium to multiply incredibly for the Church in Russia please consider taking out a life insurance policy with the Mary Mother of God Mission Society as the beneficiary.

God love you and your family,

Sandra Sonnen
Mission Desk, St Paul MN 651-227-0208
E-mail: usoffice@vladmission.org
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One good way of helping your sister-parish: Fr Daniel, holding a jar of coins donated by Mr and Mrs Atwell Richmond and family of St Joseph's Parish in Modesto, California, to their sister parish of St Joseph's in Second River, Russia.