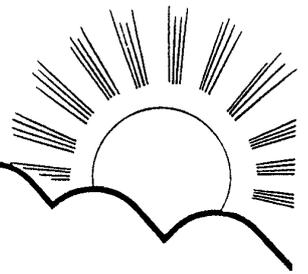


# Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society Vladivostok Russia St Paul Minnesota

Issue Number Fifty Four November 1, 2003



## Women's Support Centers' Fifth Anniversary

This issue of the *Vladivostok Sunrise* is especially about our Women's Support Centers. The first center is celebrating its 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary. On our video production by Ted Lewis which many of you have seen, Kristina Pavlova says that the birth of little children in our parish makes us know that God is present. It is a wonderful Christmas thought for us all! Merry Christmas to all our benefactors!—editor.

### Mary, The Mother of God, Brought The Women's Support Centers to Russia

*By Kristina Pavlova  
tr V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.*

They say that nothing happens accidentally. I believe it. God and his saints act in our lives bringing together very different people. God isn't a magician. He doesn't need to shock our imagination with remarkable miracles in order to make a difference in our lives. But whatever happens, happens in accord with His designs. We usually simply don't notice those "happy coincidences".

Long ago in 1995 a young American deacon Jim Kelleher, at that time a theology student, wrote a paper, "Mary as Co-Advocate and Co-Redemptrix in the Works of Pope John Paul II." Among several American universities where he might do research he chose two, one of them being the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. where he had many friends, and the other was the Marianist Library in Dayton, Ohio, where he knew no one.



*Christmas bags of goodies for needy children sewn by our CARITAS volunteers with cloth donated from American benefactors. The bags will continue to be useful to the kids in the orphanages as a "safe" for their school supplies.*

*CARITAS Director Anastacia Potapenko and George Riess during his recent visit to the Women's Support Centers.*



At about the same time, just after the unexpected fall of the Soviet Union, in the south of the Russian Far East, in the rather unfamiliar city, at least for foreigners, of Vladivostok (which translates to “Rule the East”), an American priest, Fr Myron Effing, began his pastoral work, together with a young deacon, Daniel Maurer. They had to start practically from nothing. But there was the “happy coincidence” that the Church of the Most Holy Mother of God still existed, though it had been reconfigured into a State Archive.

Jim Kelleher finally decided on the Marianist Library in Dayton. There he got acquainted with elderly Catholics George and Joan Riess, who live not far from Dayton in Kettering. Jim liked to visit the Riesses, especially because Joan was such a good cook! He was thinking at the time that he might like to go to Russia to speak about Mary, and shared his idea with George and Joan. They greeted the idea without enthusiasm, and simply replied that Jim should go: “Why not? It’s your work.”

Soon the deacon became Father Jim, and he was assigned two parishes in Texas. But the idea to go to Russia never left him, and he left to check things out by sending two of his helpers to St Petersburg who came back with their report.

When Fr Jim happened to be a guest again in Ohio in 1995, George happened to mention that when he was a student he studied Russian. “It’s a sign!” replied shocked Fr Jim. “You have to go to Russia with me, to St Petersburg!”

Even in his worst nightmares George never dreamt of going to Russia! “I studied Russian in 1952, and I’ve forgotten it all!”

“All the same, it’s a sign”, Fr Jim answered, sure of himself. George had to give in and agree to a trip to St Petersburg.

By that time the Catholic community in Vladivostok grew, and the government already returned their church. I myself joined the parish in 1994, and in 1995 when I was 16 years old I was confirmed, taking the Confirmation name of the patroness of our parish, Mary. At the time Fr Myron took care of several other parishes, too, including Blagoveschensk, Khabarovsk, and others, in each of which were young people who needed spiritual nourishment. So in 1997 Fr Myron decided to hold the first “Far Eastern Catholic Youth

Conference”. He needed young people who could share their spiritual journey with other Russian young people. So in February Fr Myron sent an invitation by e-mail to Mary parishes in the United States asking for young participants for the Conference.

One of the invitations came to Fr Jim, one of whose parishes “just accidentally” was named in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. Fr Jim wrote Fr Myron, “I was planning to go to St Petersburg. Why should I come to Vladivostok?” Fr Myron answered, “Everybody wants to go to St Petersburg or Moscow because they are the centers of Russia, and everything there is beautiful—they have museums and money! But nobody wants to come to our part of Russia! Exactly for that reason, you are more needed here—in Vladivostok!”

Feeling responsible, Fr Jim spoke to the Riesses on his next visit in March of 1997 about his dilemma: “What do you think? Where should we go?” George replied, “I think we ought to go where we are needed most”.

So in July of 1997 Fr Jim, Sr Mary Kathryn, George Riess and a young American named Matthew arrived in Vladivostok for the Youth Conference. Their presentations made a big impression on the Russian youth. George simply admitted that he fell in love with the Russian people, and ever since that time he comes nearly every year to Russia.

Recently when I was working on the report of our branch of the Women’s Support Centers in July, I suddenly remembered that October 1 is the fifth anniversary of the beginning of our work in this first center. It was a moment of joy, and my first thought was, “We have to celebrate!”

I told all the other volunteers and they concurred in my idea. We decided that we had to invite all the volunteers of all the centers so that we could together celebrate this wonderful occasion. There was even another reason to get together, to celebrate our move into new and bright quarters which we share with the Catholic Youth Center in the former convent of the Sisters of Charity of St Anne.

George Riess and Tony Staub came to our parish this September to help Fr Myron refund the St Vincent de Paul Society which, before the Russian Revolution, had a large influence in our parish. George announced that he planned to visit all eight Women Support Centers.

I told him, “George, do you remember that this year will be the fifth anniversary?” “When?” – he asked. “October the First”, - I answered. “We have to celebrate it!” – he announced.

Never in my life have I had such pleasure from the business of getting ready for a party. We decided to do the celebration on the eve of George and Tony’s departure on September 29.

During the party we remembered the many good things that had happened. George recalled how, during this first visit to Vladivostok it happened that he was able to speak at a meeting of Planned Parenthood. He spoke just after some doctors spoke about the necessity of “forestalling abortions” by contraception, and how “important” were early abortions rather than late ones. George stood and said, “You are saying that you are taking care of these women. But why aren’t you simply helping them to give birth to their children?” He finished his talk with the words, “I promise you that next year I will return to Vladivostok, and I will bring with me people who will help to



*George presented a new image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Patronness of Pro-Life work, to the leaders of our Women's Support Centers. Kristina, our author, is holding the image with George Riess.*

organize the first center to support women.”

Like a real man, George kept his word. (Keeping their word is one of the main virtues of men.) In the summer of 1998 he came back, with his wife Joan, who was a volunteer of the Women Support Center in Kettering, with Rose Bucher who for many years was the director of that center, and also with Dr Christopher Kallenborn, a now world famous investigator of the relationship between breast cancer and abortion, and between contraception and cancer—also an admirer of Joan's cooking (especially her pies and apple sauce!)

It was these folks who did the first seminar to prepare new volunteers for the first Women's Support Center in Vladivostok (and in Russia!) The seminar showed us how to be of real help to women, not merely spiritual help, but also emotional, informational, and material help for women whose pregnancy was a problem for them. I attended the first seminar, really only out of curiosity, because it hadn't even entered my head what kind of result my curiosity would have. When the seminar was finished, we happily received a certificate, and I quickly forgot about it all.

But Fr Myron didn't—He never forgets his plans. In September he came to me and said, “Kristina, are you planning to work in the Women's Support Center?” I said, “When is it opening?” and heard the answer, “In October.” To tell you honestly, I didn't especially want to. It is one thing to listen to Rose's interesting lectures, and quite another to go and help with one's own knowledge. I understood that a Center was needed, and the Center would need consultants, but I was only one among several who had undergone the special preparation. But I accepted.

From that moment everything started to happen. As Russian's say, “Punished by initiative.” In other words, if you begin to show some kind of initiative, you will have to bear responsibility for its completion. Since I am a creative writer, I immediately thought, “Shouldn't we do a special newsletter for the Women's Support Centers?” The answer was, “Why? But if you want to, go ahead.” That is how the newsletter “To Receive Life” began, which we now regularly publish for 800 readers and which quickly makes its round of all the parishes of the Far East and of Russia.

The next year Mary brought to us still another woman from Dayton, Ohio—Dee Baltes. Dee, as an interior decorator, transformed our Center's office at the City Birthing Hospital into a thing of beauty. (I have to say that the rooms of Russian hospitals are made in such a way that it makes you wonder how anyone could be healed here, so gloomy are they.) All our clients loved our office, and this encouraged them to continue their visits.

During these five years, 2000 women came to our center for help. On the average 1 or 2 women each day work at the Center. We count 194 children to be “our children”. 790 women received continuing care from us, since care continues for a year and a half for those who give birth. There is even an unexpected consequence which we didn't anticipate: Some women who came to us for help then decided to have yet another child since they now felt more sure of themselves, knowing that there was a place where they could get help.

140 couples studied NFP from us. I'm genuinely glad that there are now more families founded on real values.

Men have also begun to look into our Center, as many as seven per month. They had questions like, what does a woman feel like after an abortion? How can you help her? What to do if she gets pregnant? Several men even became our “agents”. They take our brochures and our “tiny feet” pins and pass them out to their acquaintances. The male support of our Center is very important.

For example, one of our parishioners, Viktor Anisimov, the husband of one of our volunteers, has created a internet site for our Center. Now we can help not only women in Vladivostok, but Russian speaking women in all of Russia and throughout the world. One example: I carried on correspondence for a long time with a Russian lady who was pregnant and lived in Korea, and she turned to me with many questions because she couldn't understand the Korean doctors. Another couple wrote me from Germany about their unplanned pregnancy. We became friends after our lengthy correspondence. Now I'm writing to one woman in Germany who very much needed advice during her pregnancy and after giving birth. In general, we've “gone global”. In April of 2000 12,000 people visited our site.

All of the volunteers of our Center happen to be Catholics, so the missionary aspect of our Church is understandable for us. So we don't just sit in our Center expecting that people will come to us for help. And some Russian women simply don't realize that not everything is okay in their lives or that they need help, so we have to go outside the confines of our Center, not only via the internet, but also into schools and institutes of higher learning and to various conferences. I've had experience with teaching schoolkids of 9 and 10 years old, and also 20 year-old college students. Each time I see the astonished eyes, because the information that I am giving is absolutely new for them! The Russian media, like the Russian health ministries and the high schools rarely go outside the framework of their policy: “Abortion is bad, so everybody must use contraception.” Our country has become a market for contraception, and, worse yet, the market includes older children whose bodies are not yet mature, when it is possible to ruin a person's health for the rest of life.



*The staff of the First River Women's Support Center which is located inside the government's First River Women's Consultation Center.*

It is pitiful that many schools have been "accredited" for the Russian Planned Parenthood Association. In Vladivostok, for example, there are workers from Planned Parenthood who make presentations to school kids, workers who are representatives of Gedeon Richter, a company which produces contraceptives. Some principals in some schools simply don't accept any alternative information for their students (and perhaps the pharmaceutical companies pay the principals something.) We go where they will let us speak, understanding how Christ taught us though he was rejected by many. Truth just needs some pairs and ears and sooner or later it will triumph.

We also speak before the gynecologists of the Women's Consultation Centers of our city. They understand right away what we are talking about. But, a mystery to me, why do the majority still continue to encourage women to have abortions? Maybe it is because in Russia today there is a big market for embryological cosmetics. One of the most beautiful Russian actresses advertises on TV a "miracle-acting" mask for the face made from placenta.

Thus maybe the Women's Support Center disturbs somebody's business and so its program doesn't find a large following in society as a whole. Often I feel like a little speck or ant which is crawling in the bottle of some billionaire who has purchased for himself public opinion. It seems that the abortion magnates and the contraception industry easily cripple me and my Center. But then I remember how much bigger God is in comparison with these businesses, I recover my joy, and I crawl further together with the other "ants" of our Center.

The results of our work really please us, though we try to be humble about it. Our program has been greatly broadened. We now have eight Centers in our region. We gave a good example to the whole diocese, and our program is now become officially diocesan.

Who has done all of this? God, first of all. He gave our country to His mother. She brought people to our city who were inspired and blessed to serve God here among us. Also the American priests who for so many years have been here to help with finances, prayers, advice. Our parishioners. The volunteers and leaders of our Centers. And even our clients

who took our viewpoint about human life and dignity. Mary gathered us into this parish where we serve God at mass and at works of charity together.

Every year now there are many Americans who come to visit our parish. Probably most of them never thought that they would actually visit the Pacific coast of Russia and the city of rather unknown city of Vladivostok. But the sun rises in the East. And here Mary shines and beckons Catholics from the whole world. She is the Morning Star in her own parish.

## **A Summary of Last Year's WSC Activities**

*By Sergei Akulenko, Coordinator  
CARITAS Primorye's Women's Support Centers*

### **Website of the Women's Support Centers**

Our site has become popular. Every month we do about fifteen consultations by electronic mail. This allows us to serve more women, not only in our region, but also throughout Russia and even outside Russia. The questions which come from these consultations are so special that our volunteers have to constantly improve their knowledge and skills, and this has a positive effect on our general readiness for our work.

Thanks to the site, many other Christian organizations which would also like to open similar centers in their region. They ask for our help, and we never refuse, because one of our goals is the formation of a chain of similar centers, at least one in every large city, so that women can find real alternatives to abortion. We help other centers with our advice, our printed materials, and even by training their volunteers.

### **Ukraine Cooperation**

We also have begun cooperation with the pro-life movement in the Ukraine which is already ten years old there. Our textbook for volunteers of the Women's Support Centers, and other printed materials and brochures are very popular there.

### **Ecumenical Effects of our work**

Our experience has shown that the defense of life movement can have its place in the promotion of ecumenical dialog between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Every week the Life Orthodox Center in Moscow publishes an electronic newsletter with all the current news. They regularly use material from our newsletter "To Receive Life" (about 30% of each of our issues), information which is also to be found on our site. Our relationship with the Orthodox Center has undergone a pleasant change. They have begun to regularly write about the activities of the Catholic Church in the area of the fight for life and human dignity, even quoting the words of the Pope and Catholic bishops. If earlier they were categorically opposed to Natural Family Planning, now they have changed their opinion. Now there are people in their group who regularly write articles about the proper role of NFP. It was a pleasant surprise for us, because earlier NFP was divisive theme between Catholics and Orthodox.

### **Work with the State of Primorye's Anti-AIDS Center**

Our Women's Support Center has also begun to cooperate with the State Anti-AIDS Center, especially with those who work with children born of AIDS-infected mothers. Their attitude to the work of our Center is just great. We have agreed to provide material aid in the form of baby food to these women, given that they can't feed their children from the breast.

### **Working with Men**

The Women's Support Centers have taken into account the important role that men play in the abortion problem. So we also cooperate in the activities of our parish aimed at working with men. In our newsletter "To Receive Life" we now regularly publish articles for men and about men. We also try to shed light on questions raised by radical feminism and resulting problems for life. Actually, many women who come to the centers got into trouble exactly because they didn't have a proper relationship with men because of their distrust of men.

### **Increased interest in NFP**

Often the problem which we have to deal with at the Women's Support Center is the inability to get pregnant, contraception, post-abortion syndrome, and more recently there is more interest in NFP.

### **Lectures to School Groups**

We regularly give lectures to young adult groups and school groups. In this year our parish will begin to work with university students, and our Center also wants to participate in that work.

### **Formation of Volunteers**

This year we established an Expert Council consisting of four instructors whose task it is to provide regular formation for new volunteers, and to improve the knowledge and skills of experienced volunteers.

### **New Financial Initiatives**

This year each Center has undertaken to generate by its own efforts a certain percent of our budget. Various projects have been tried, from cottage industry type projects to direct fundraising in Russia. The results will be evaluated with the beginning of the new budgetary year in October.

## **How You Can Help**

Of course pray for the success of our Centers, but besides direct donations to us to help the Women Support Centers, you might want to consider the following possibilities:

**Adopt-a-Birth--**\$20 pays for the birth expenses of a baby. For those wishing to do more for the baby after birth, we propose:

**A \$100 Set for a Newborn Baby--**Your donation of \$100 buys the following items for a poor mother in Russia through

the eight CARITAS Women's Support Centers. (Current Russian-equivalent prices)

Baby's plastic bathtub – \$10.56 Baby shampoo – \$4.00 Baby oil – \$4.00 Baby powder – \$2.24 Diapers, cotton, small size, 5 pieces – \$3.04 Diapers, cotton, big size, 5 pieces – \$3.52 Diapers, flannelette, small size, 5 pieces – \$5.60 Diapers, flannelette, big size, 5 pieces – \$6.72 Box of Pampers – \$5.92 Baby pacifier – \$1.02 Baby bottle – \$1.38 A set of warm baby's loose clothing – \$3.20 Baby's loose jacket, stockinet, 2 pieces – \$1.60 Baby's loose jacket, thick flannelette, 4 pieces – \$5.12 Baby's loose jacket, cotton, 4 pieces – \$1.28 Baby's romper suit – \$0.51 Baby's suit – \$4.64 Dress for baby-girl or suit for boy – \$12.16 One used stroller – \$23.84

## **How to Communicate with Us**

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**Internet:** Russian language: [www.catholic.vladivostok.ru](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: [www.vladmission.org](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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## News Notes

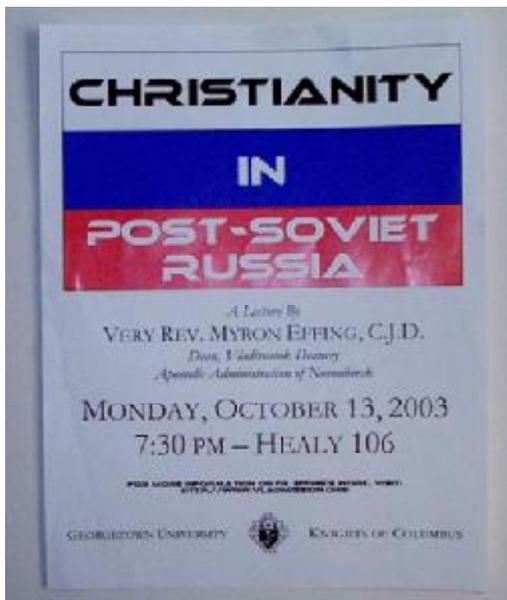
by V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

- We were so grateful that at last a Papal Nuncio come to see us in Vladivostok! Archbishop Anthony Mennini came to Vladivostok to participate in a Globalization conference. His visit was a hurried one, and he managed to have mass with our parish only on a Friday evening, on September 26. He promised to return after the first of the new year, probably for the parish feastday, January 1.



Archbishop Mennini with a conference organizer.

- On October 12, Columbus Day, I was invited to give a talk to the Knights of Columbus students at Georgetown University. It was really a very pleasant experience.



Poster announcing my talk.

- On October 14 I was again at Georgetown University with Dr & Mrs Alex and Amy Pruss. Dr Pruss is a professor of philosophy there. I was invited to the International Foods night in the dorm where they serve as a resident faculty

couple. It meant that I had to fix Russian dinner for a planned 20 students, but about 35 hungry students showed up! The menu was borsch, steak rolls, potato salad, garlic canapés, tea and cookies with lemon wheels. I had a ball, and there were no leftovers!

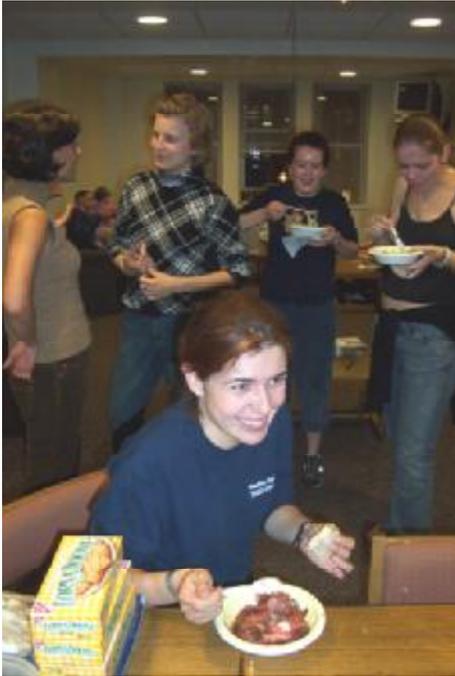


Fr Myron working on the steak rolls. Sort of looks like Colonel Saunders, wouldn't you say?

The Kitchen was somewhat inadequate, but the food was enjoyed none-the-less.



Tatyana Olbich, the Russian teacher at Georgetown University, shows her style at pounding steak.



*Would you like some borsch?*

- The St Vincent de Paul Society of St Pius X Parish in Bowie, Maryland, invited me to visit and discuss the history and activities of the St Vincent de Paul Society in our Russian parish. *Sunrise* readers know that there was a big and important role for the St Vincent de Paul Society in our parish before the Russian Revolution, and that we have been trying to re-establish the Society currently. At the end of our dinner meeting, they asked if there was anything in particular that I needed. I told them about the orphanage in Nakhoka which does not have a hot water heater, and a new one would cost \$250. So the Society donated the needed water heater. Thanks to Jim Kilough who brought me to the meeting.



*St Pius X St Vincent de Paul Society who donated a water heater to the orphanage in Nakhodka.*

- Back in 1993 when we first received our church building back from the government, two Franciscan friars came to live with us with the idea that they would like to work in Russia. After a year of work and study in extremely difficult circumstance in Vladivostok, Brother Paul Ruge and Brother Joachim Mudd returned to the States when their order's plans changed. Since then they have been ordained priests and work in North Dakota. I was happy that Fr Paul Ruge was able to visit me while I was in St Paul, and he will continue to help us by taking parishes for mission preaching when one of us "Russian" priests can't make it. Thanks, Father!



*Fr Myron and Fr Paul Ruge.*

- The St Thomas More Chapter of Catholics United for the Faith invited Fr Myron to speak about the youth of Russia at their recent meeting at St Michael's Parish in Stillwater, MN. The meeting was held on October 20 in the beautiful new parish social center. We are happy to have these mid-week meetings when we can speak for a longer time than just at Sunday mass when it seems so rushed. Also there is time for questions and answers.

*Fr Myron talking about the "problems of youth in the new Russia" for CUF in Stillwater.*



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## From the development desk...

Dear Friends and Family,

- We received 81 parishes to speak at this year, 11 from pastors who invited us. We have started putting a small business card ad in the diocesan newspapers where we have a speaker visiting. We are receiving many more contacts, although our donations are still down.
- Fr Myron will go ahead to start the construction of the rectory/monastery building in the spring as we finally have a permit to build after three years waiting. It will be called Our Lady of Fatima Monastery. Please consider a gift to complete this building. We have \$200,000 of the needed \$350,000. It's a small price to pay for a 3-story building with parish offices, library, and quarters for three priests and two seminarians.
- Please plan ahead for next summer. We need travelers to attend the summer camps and pilgrimages for the parish kids and young adults. Needed are volleyballs, basketballs, footballs. As we are severely tariffed when we ship anything, but we can buy the items in Russia, all made in China as here.

God love you all,  
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*Will you be at summer camp or on the pilgrimage in Russia in 2004?*