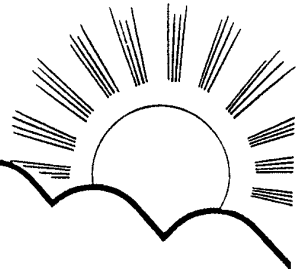


Vladivostok Sunrise



Mary Mother of God Mission Society Vladivostok Russia St Paul Minnesota

Issue Number Fifty Nine September 1, 2004

Rectory Construction Begins!

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

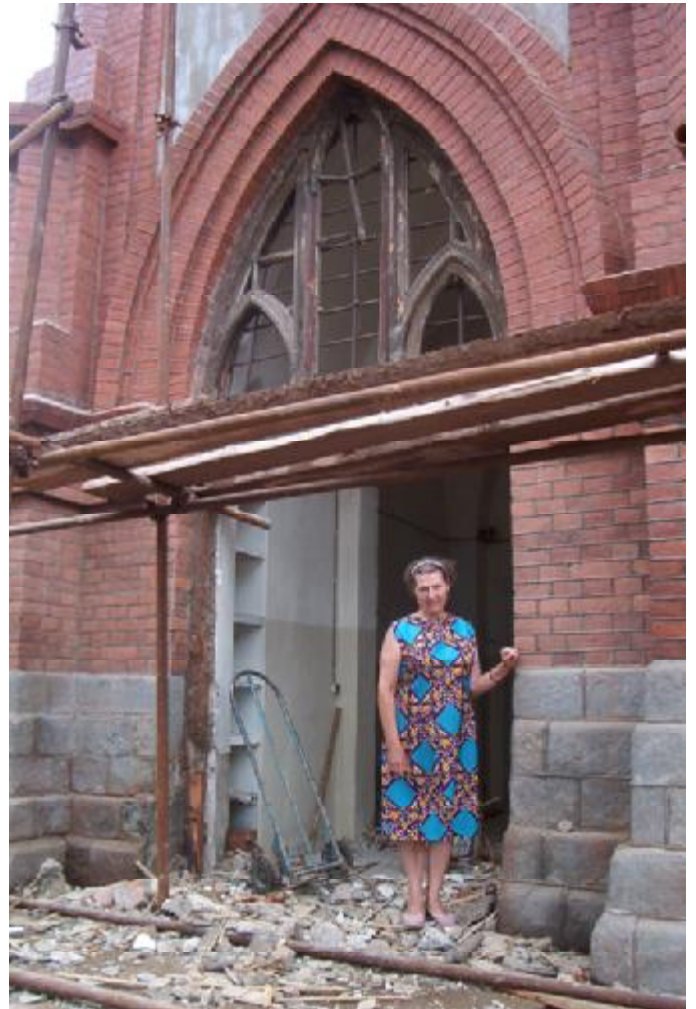
We at last received the building permit for Our Lady of Fatima rectory and parish office building on August 6! And the Chinese workers went to work on the new building almost instantly. They want to see how much they can get done before their visas expire. The first task was of course the foundation, but that took just about a week and then began the pillar and wall construction. We will let you know as the work progresses, and we hope to have a list of benefactors for the project ready when the construction is complete. Here is a photo of the first “vertical” part of the construction.



The first pillar of the two-storey building and basement is rising toward the sky.

A funny thing happened after we received the building permit and the workers jumped to begin digging for the foundation.

Continued on Page 3, second column.



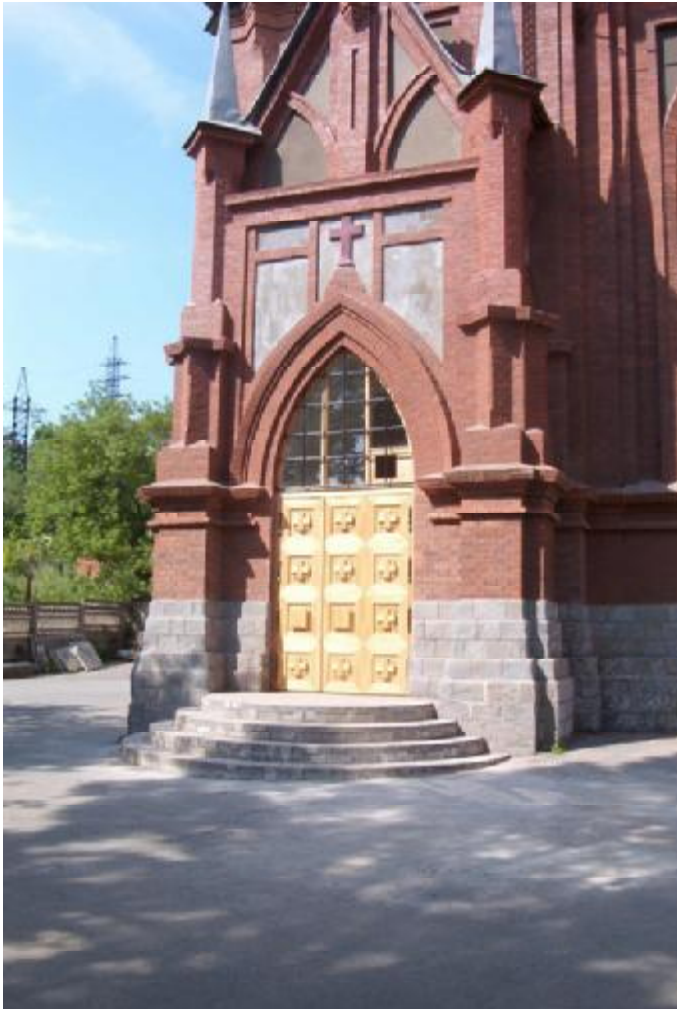
When we opened the old side entrance to repair it, we found the old window frames inside the wall! Here our librarian Yelena Andreevna shows what it was like.

Façade Is Finished!

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

The work on the façade of the church is done! And we already had a formal dinner with the Chinese workers and parishioners to celebrate this long awaited event. The church looks as it did when it was new 80 years ago!—at least on the outside. There is still an added floor inside, of course, which can't be removed until the construction of the monastery-rectory is done. We were amazed at the intensity and focused interest of our Chinese workers, who worked during the hottest part of this hot summer.

A big thanks to all our benefactors who provided their donations for the façade project. What is left to do on the church?
 1. Remove the last floor that was added inside. 2. Build the two steeples. 3. Put on a new roof and guttering.



The door as it looks now, waiting for the stained glass window above it, which will be “The Flight Into Egypt”.



The back wall of the sanctuary with extra windows and doors as it was during the archive period.

The nearly repaired back wall. There are still some light patches to be darkened, electric wiring to be changed, and stone facing to be placed over the old door opening.



Remember this old bricked-up door? Here it is now—the main door to the sacristy.



Windows which had been broken into the church walls had to be closed up.

After the work was done, if you didn't know about it you wouldn't notice the repair job.



Continued from Page 1.

The backhoe started digging a drainage ditch and suddenly found itself sinking out of sight into a small "swamp" on the corner of the property! Try as it might, it could not crawl out of its watery sinkhole. Finally we had to bring in a huge crane to extract the backhoe from its watery grave.



Backhoe going, going, gone!

Backhoe rescued, to continue its work.



One of the Chinese workers loved to work on the very highest places, and sang while he worked. The workers were grateful for our prayers for their safety while they worked high on the building.



Most of our Chinese workers are family men with their families in Peking waiting for their return.

A Novice for Sisters in Jesus the Lord!

By Kelly Whittier

As our readers know, a group of sisters is preparing to join us in Russia. Formation was begun at St Agnes Convent in St Paul, Minnesota. Kelly Whittier, a daughter of long-time Mary Mother of God Mission Society benefactors, joined with Sr Julia Kubista to begin the new community on August 25, 2003.

This year on August 15th, the Feast of the Assumption, Kelly became a novice in a beautiful mass at St Agnes convent. The mass was set for 11:15 pm in the convent chapel, so that Fr Daniel Maurer could be the main celebrant, flying in from the West Coast. Due to flight delays, the celebrant was instead Fr Elmer Torborg, a priest who devotes every weekend to speaking on behalf of the mission. More than 60 people attended this late night ceremony, as Kelly received a white veil and her new religious name, Sr Maria Stella, C.J.D. Her name is in honor of the Marian title “Stella Maris” (Star of the Sea) and Blessed Maria Stella, a Polish sister martyred for her faith by the Nazis during World War II in the town of Nowogrodek (modern-day Belarus). She and 10 companion sisters offered God their lives in exchange for the life of the only remaining parish priest, and their request was granted.



Many benefactors attended the event—and Fr Dan arrived at the last hour.



Deacon John Mangen, Fr Torborg, and John Paul Sonnen received Kelly's intentions.



Sr Maria Stella with Sr Julia Kubista, the novice mistress.

Sr Maria Stella sang the Gregorian chant “Ave Maris Stella” after receiving her new name, and at that moment the church bells tolled midnight—despite the late night ceremony, she became a novice

while it was still the Feast of the Assumption. Fr Dan spoke after the mass at the reception about the significance of Mary’s assumption into heaven and that in moving forward in religious life, Sr Maria Stella is “betting everything on heaven”—a sign of hope for the world. Since Sisters in Jesus the Lord is at the “private association” stage, for the time being, Sr Maria Stella may use her religious name and wear the veil in the convent building only. In public, she will still be “Kelly” for now.



The new novice with Mr and Mrs Sonnen. Happy event!

Do you know of any women with a pioneering spirit, ready to embark on the adventure of becoming sisters and traveling to the far-away city of Vladivostok? Sr Julia and Sr Maria Stella hope to go to Russia two years from now with at least two other sisters. Please look at their website: www.cjd.cc and call 651 230-3337. Also, come to meet Sr Julia and Sr Maria Stella at the mission retreat this October at St Agnes Parish in St Paul, MN.

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

News Notes

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

• I was the only guest priest to attend the consecration of the new Church of the Nativity in Magadan, Russia, on July 4. The building is beautiful and spacious, and was completed fairly inexpensively, considering that a lot of things had to be brought in from America, and considering that Magadan is not connected by roads to the rest of Russia—only sea and air—so prices are high. Besides the church, there is a lot of office and class space, a library, and the “Mercy Center”, a multi-purpose retreat center with space for meetings and up to 30 overnight guests. The Pastor Fr Michael Shields is from Anchorage and the Associate is Fr David Means from St Louis. I could hardly sleep there because Magadan is close to the Arctic Circle, so the sky is bright all night. Bishop Kirill Klimovich presided at the ceremonies, together with Archbishop Roger Schweitz of the Archdiocese of Anchorage, which sponsors Nativity Parish. The parishioners said that it was a miracle that there was perfect shirt-sleeve weather for the whole week. (Magadan only has two seasons: Winter and the Fourth of July!) The whole parish went on a picnic at the beach on the Sea of Otkhotsk, where fish could be scooped from the water by hand. It was the first sultan of the season for many, including our bishop! Another day was spent touring what remains of the Soviet camps where several million people died. There are still some 200 survivors remaining, many of whom attended the parish events.



Chapel of the Martyrs in the new church in Magadan.

• July 9 Today’s news: Our children’s camp facility in Sod-Gorod (which we call “Slivovsky House” in honor of our bishop who lived and died not far away) received its health permit for housing and feeding up to 40 people. Now it will be possible to rent the facility to other groups, and thus to earn some income to support and pay taxes for it.

• The university program is gathering steam toward the new school year. Thanks to the Koch Foundation, to The Loyola Foundation, and to our Canadian benefactor Marguerite Oberti, we now have a small apartment near the universities where we can hold our activities. The group of parishioners who are

working in this area have proposed a ten-point program for the school year, in addition to our regular parish youth programs. The points are:

1. Personal Development programs (such as Myers-Briggs Personality Typing, programs about chastity, alcoholism, drug abuse, NFP, Marriage Preparation, etc.)
2. A regular prayer group
3. Regular pilgrimages and outings-hikes
4. Educational programs of current interest, such as meetings with concert masters, scientists, monks, politicians, etc.
5. Attempts at a Christian youth radio program.
6. Films with discussion, criticism.
7. Project Omega meetings: Witness of faith and catechetical lessons.
8. Alanon meetings.
9. Women’s Support Center
10. Theological library

Dima Kamil will operate the “Omega Student Center”, with help from other parishioners, including our theologian Kirill Voitzel, and other students and university teachers who are our parishioners. Thanks, Benefactors: We’ve wanted to do more work at the universities for so long.

• This note from Lindsay Adams of Texas: “I wanted to update you on the Kohl’s Cares for Kids Contest. I was named the regional winner for my fundraising for the orphanages in Russia and now move on to the national level. If I win, Kohl’s will donate \$1000 to the Mary Mother of God Mission. I am very excited and hope to know in a couple of weeks. I am also asking our parish priest Father Tim Church if I can continue my fundraising efforts through our middle school youth program JYM next year. I hope to know more soon! God Bless! Lindsay Adams.” Congratulations, Lindsay!

• On July 21 we won the lawsuit against the people who wanted to take back the apartment they sold to our parish 12 years ago but recently decided they didn’t want to sell it after all, now that the prices are higher. It will take a year yet for administrative wrap-up of the case. Thanks go to our lawyer Vladimir Pisorenko. Remember that we lost the first round, but now won in the appeals court.

The former owners cooked up a scheme to say that the sale was illegal because the wife didn’t have the former husband’s permission to sell it. She admitted in court that she lied about her husband’s permission 12 years ago! We think she lied to the court now, and did have the husband’s permission 12 years ago which is what our agent who helped us with the purchase says. It was a long process involving many documents. They waited to set their trap until the number of years required to be sure that the fishing fleet where the husband worked would have destroyed all documents related to whether he sent a message to the wife from ship or not, and waited until the border patrol no longer saved records about whether he was abroad at the time. In any case, we were completely exonerated and get to keep and use the apartment, which is where most of our guests stay when they visit us. The now-divorced husband can sue the wife for half of the original purchase price if he wants to. It was a

typical Russian mafia scheme to get rich twice, once 12 years ago when they sold the apartment to us at a very high price (but we were desperate!), and now again when, had they received it from the court, they could sell it again. If the court had sided with them, we would have received only the original purchase price as devalued by the Russian inflation, which means we could now buy a pizza with that money.

- Our parishioner Natalya Zhgiliva is an art teacher at a public school in Vladivostok. She worked with her students on a project to design a memorial for Russian children killed by abortion. She and her students are hoping that the city will build such a memorial, but I also asked her if she would allow our parish to build one on our church grounds, as is often done in America. Perhaps this project will especially interest Knights of Columbus groups, considering that the abortion rate and number of children killed in Russia is the highest in the world! Here is the prize winner for the planned monument. Don't you think it is just exquisite?



Model for a monument to the aborted children of Russia.

- As of this writing the eight Women's Support Centers in our state are \$13,000 in the red. It means that we have had to take \$13,000 earmarked for other projects and use it

(hopefully temporarily) for the Centers. We need to find more regular sources of income for this important program whose main purpose is crisis pregnancy situations.

- But we still don't have good news about visas! What should we conclude?—that there really is an on-purpose delay just because we are Catholics? Or just that the Russian bureaucracy is slower than usual? Please pray about this for us. How long can priests and sisters wait in foreign countries to be admitted to Russia? Fr Sebastian is waiting seven months already. He is bored stiff in India which has many priests!

- Our Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference in Khabarovsk went well. The young folks are quite different now than when we came 13 years ago. They have better formation as Catholics, and the Russian theologians that we have trained or hired are really developing. It is a good sign for the future. I had the feeling that they could now manage the Conference all by themselves, so I can retire—Just kidding! It was the 7th annual conference.

- After fighting the “great virus wars of 2004”, we decided it was time to bite the bullet and buy virus protection for our Russian website and our e-mail addresses. So far things have really calmed down. Next we will need a “despammer”.

- The Sisters in Jesus the Lord are leading a group for young single Catholic women now, biweekly, at the convent of St Agnes in St Paul, Minnesota. The focus is to grow in holiness through studying the lives of the saints and growing in prayer. Every other Sunday night, from 7-9pm at St Agnes Convent. Call 651 230-3337 for more info.

- The last of our summer programs has been completed—the boy scout camp. How we would like the scout program to work, to help especially all those boys who are fatherless and who don't have a masculine image in their lives. Russian culture, despite appearances, is very matriarchal. Women control the homes, small as they are. There is no public area “outside the house” where the men can exert their masculinity, so the only “image” left for men is the military. Now President Putin is trying to promote sports, for men especially, but all the doping shown by the Olympics leaves a bad taste in the mouth. We hope that the scouts can fill a real need.

- Our young adult parishioner Stanislaus Tenkovsky has been working at our sister parish of St Anne's in Porterville, California this summer, polishing up his English. According to reports, he is doing a good job. He has gone with the parish youth to the Steubenville conference in San Diego in July, and has had a chance to see some of the sites in Southern California. “I have met him and he is a fine young man,” says a St Anne parishioner.

- We continue to work toward building a church in Nakhodka. Here is a photo of Our Lady of the Pacific, the patroness of the parish and of those who work on the Pacific Ocean. The original statue is in the cathedral on the Island of Guam. It was from the Spanish galleon “Immaculate Conception”.

Our Lady of the Pacific.



- If you sell items on e-Bay, you can contribute a percentage of the proceeds to Mary Mother of God Mission Society via “MissionFish”. We're already registered, and the process is easy. For details, go to givingworks.ebay.com

Continued from Page Eight:

the rosary

10:00 Full breakfast
11:00 Reflections from Fr Myron: What MMOG is all about
12:00 PM Break out for small groups; sharing, discussing, brainstorm: Foundations, Fundraising, kids club, Trusts, investments for the future, wills.
1:00 Lunch
2:00 Eucharistic adoration for 1 hour
3:30 Fr Myron obstacles, openings and in between with the Russia government
4:30 Reports from small groups
5:00 Social
6:00 Dinner
7:30 Fr Myron's talk: Understanding the Russian culture, followed by evening prayer
8:30 Social
8:30-11:00 Vans start shuttling guests to hotel

Sunday, Oct. 24

6:30-8:00 AM Vans shuttling to Mass
8:30 Mass at St Agnes
9:30 Continental breakfast at St Agnes school
10:00 Fr Myron talk Past future for Russia and the mission
11:00 Box lunch
12:00 Farewell to all our friends. Shuttles begin to airport. Afternoon open to late travelers.

• We are starting a kids club for ages 12 to 15. Please have your interested young person contact us at the office to get on this exciting mission endeavor. It will start out as a resource of information passed between the young people on what they have done to help the mission, what can be done, and a "news note" from Fr Myron once in a while. We will start it with a yahoo group called "kids club". It's by invitation only so we need your email address and mailing address as well.

• We can now offer automatic funds transfer. Just send us by mail or fax: voided personal check, bank routing number, whether the account is checking or savings, the date each month when the withdrawal is to be made, and the amount.

God love you and your family,
David and Sandra Sonnen
Mary Mother of God Mission
1854 Jefferson
St Paul MN 55105
usoffice@vladmission.org
office: 651-227-0208
home: 651-690-5139
webpage: www.vladmission.org

Please cut this off and return this slip in the enclosed envelop. We need to know how you heard about the mission. This is vital for us to know where to spend our efforts. Thanks so much!

Church Conference diocesan newspaper
 EWTN radio
 other(what?) _____

How to Communicate with Us

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CARITAS@mail.primorye.ru

Internet: Russian language: 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

E-mail: usoffice@vladmission.org

Internet: English language: 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.

Sisters in Jesus the Lord

www.cjd.cc 525 Thomas Ave
St Paul, MN 55103 (651)230-3337

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From the development desk...

Dear Vladivostok Mission supporter

- Oct 22-23-24 is our conference with Fr Myron here in St Paul at St Agnes Catholic Church. Please send me a check by October 1 for: \$45 for meals as your registration, and \$30 for transportation with your flight itinerary. Send to: MMOG, 1854 Jefferson Ave St Paul, MN 55105.

Please make hotel reservations at Four Points Sheraton
Metrodome Hotel: 1330 Industrial Blvd
Minneapolis MN 55413
612-331-1900 or 1-800-325-3535

A women's evangelical retreat the same week end has all the rooms in St Paul and surrounding area booked, so please make your reservations as soon as possible. Mention Mary Mother of God Mission Society for a room rate of \$85 for up to 4. If you wish a room mate please call us. If you wish to stay in a private home please call us as well.

We are offering this weekend as a closed weekend. There will be a continuity that we do not want to break on this first conference. We will record on cassette the 5 talks by Fr Myron. They will be available for \$5.00 each. Please come with snacks and BYOB. We will have a social time before dinner and later in the evening. Bring your favorite recipe and ingredients if you have a delectable hors d'oeuvres you'd like to share. We look forward to seeing you.

Schedule: Weekend Conference with Fr Myron for Family, Friends, and Benefactors

Date and Location: October 22-24, 2004, at St. Agnes Church, St. Paul, Minnesota

Transportation: Transportation will be provided from hotel to St. Agnes Church.

Friday, Oct. 22 all day pick up travelers at MSP airport. Notify office as to carrier, flight and arrival time.

4:00 PM First van leaves hotel for Mass

5:15 Mass at St Agnes

6:30 Dinner

7:30 Fr Myron's talk: History of Russia and the Catholic Church, followed by evening prayer.

9:00 Social hour

9:00-11:00 Vans start shuttling guests to hotel

Saturday, Oct. 23

6:30 AM First van leaves hotel for Mass

8:00 Mass at St Agnes, followed by recitation of

Continued on Page 7.