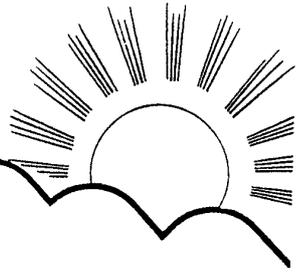


Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society Vladivostok Russia St Paul Minnesota

Issue Number Sixty One January 1, 2005



To Russia with Love

By Sr Mary Catherine Shambour, OSB

This summer—thanks to the support of friends—I was able to return to Vladivostok, Russia, to assist in the charitable works of the recently restored Mary Mother of God Catholic parish, staffed by two American priests. Because I speak Russian and belong to a group that helps support the parish, I hoped to spend the summer, but a one-month tourist visa was the best I could obtain from a Russian government currently denying visas to “religious workers”.

Why did I go, and why should I be concerned



Rev Myron Effing, CJD, Babba Gelia, an elderly parishioner, and Sister Mary Catherine Shambour on the outskirts of Nakhodka, Russia. Gelia remembers the day in Omsk when the communists took the Catholic priest and the Orthodox priest to the woods and shot both.

about Russia when there are so many areas of the world in greater need? I went because over the years of my many travels to Russia my heart always went out to a great people caught in a horrible system in which the only thing that mattered was the state and power. I dreamed of the day the church would once again be free and people could come to know God and His love for the. Seventy years of atheistic indoctrination and military persecution of all religions for over three generations produced hundreds of thousands of martyrs for the faith as well as millions today who know nothing of God and the meaning of human life. I believe that we owe it to the martyrs to help this generation rediscover their Christian roots and build a new society. Though Russia is stabilizing economically, the social needs of a majority of the population grow worse each day.

The moral vacuum left by communism with its old evils of corruption, bribery, alcoholism, rampant abortion and abuse of human rights has made a ready home for the worst elements of capitalism where greed supercedes all else and the poor grow poorer as the oligarchs thrive. When I heard that American priests had volunteered for the Russian Far East, I wished to help them. In addition to converting hundreds, rebuilding a neglected cathedral, and forming new parishes, they have organized Catholic Charities and begun a host of outreach services for the needy and brought new hope to the population. On my first visit to the parish in 1992, it was the needs of the

elderly that haunted me most, and on my return I chose to devote most of my time to them. In addition to visiting and bringing communion to homebound parishioners, I went regularly to the nursing division of the city's poorest hospital where many with no one to care for them were brought, often to die.

It is difficult for us to conceive of the conditions into which these helpless people are placed. Four to five people confined to one room in small beds that touch each other, mats instead of mattresses, dingy bedding, no closets or furniture other than commodes to sit on, personal belongings under one's pillow, one grimy toilet for 30 people, windows without screens. No dining room, no lounge, no baths. When overcrowded, some lie on wooden benches in the hall in the dirty clothes in which they came even when dying.

What could I do for these people? I could visit them, listen to them and their life stories, and pray with them. How they loved to talk about God and were eager to have me pray with them, since few knew any prayers. I could help feed them (the main meal invariably soup and bread), do small errands for them, assist with bedpans, cut nails, comb hair, wash feet, drink tea with them, bring them small gifts of basics they were lacking. I only regretted that I could not take them out of this environment or bring them the care they needed and deserved.

But what I did was deeply appreciated, and the love I received was far more than I gave.

Although life expectancy in Russia (50s and 60s) continues to decline, I saw little evidence of anyone's being concerned to make life easier for the handicapped and elderly. The attitude of many people is "Why don't you just die so that someone else can have your apartment?" They count for nothing. "Here is where we need a Benedictine Health System," I kept telling myself, and if it were possible I would want to be the first to bring about the changes in priorities, beginning with love and compassion and the simple essentials such as disposable diapers, walkers, wheelchairs. In the meantime, I will continue to do what I can to support the work of this parish through prayer and fund raising, and if visa regulations should permit, I would love to show these people God's love for them manifest through my personal caring.

**Taken from Pathways, the newsletter of the Benedictine Sisters of Duluth Minnesota, Fall, 2004, vol 6, no 1.*

The "Broken" Kid

*By Larisa Kalinichenko
Tr V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.*

I've been busy feeding the street kids here in Vladivostok four years already. During that time almost anything that could happen did, but here is an event which literally shook me up.

I got acquainted with "Viktor" at the beginning of my work with the food wagon. He has a momma somewhere--at least as far as I know she is still alive. He also has a dad and a stepmother.

Viktor often came to us to eat. He was always clean and his clothing was in order, so at first sight he didn't seem like a street kid. But like most of the kids he burgled when he could and took drugs. For two years he used hard stuff, but then he was able to wean himself from them to more mild and cheaper narcotics.



Several times he was arrested, and the last time he was accused of a series of burglaries and auto theft. He was locked up with others like himself, as usual.

But then for some reason he was moved to the solitary cell, and in the morning they found him hanging

from his neck. I don't understand what happened. What, how, or who was able to break a guy who was independently able to withdraw from hard drugs? He had great strength of will. They say that somebody tried to hang a murder on him. Did he hang himself or did they hang him? And why had they put him in solitary?

But nobody cares about the street kids. They are easy tools and handy weapons for some. Viktor was only 16 years old.

Meet Our Stateside Staff

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

When we first began our mission we had only a volunteer staff in the States, and you may remember especially Ray Rzeszut in Anchorage who took care of almost all our Stateside needs except the *Vladivostok Sunrise*, which was produced by volunteers Mr and Mrs Robert Flynn in Washington State. As our mission grew, so did our Stateside needs and it became necessary to have a full-time coordinator and gradually we've needed to add other staff members, too.



Mission Coordinator Sandra Sonnen. Sorry, David, I couldn't find a photo of you in time for the deadline!

As Stateside Mission Coordinator we asked the chairman of our sister-parish committee at Nativity Parish in St Paul to take the job: Mrs Sandra Sonnen. She's done a wonderful job and continues today. We asked David Sonnen, Sandie's husband, to be

Chairman of the Board, and he has taken over all the financial tasks of banking and bookkeeping for our not-for-profit corporation, Mary Mother of God Mission Society, which is incorporated in the State of Minnesota.

Rebecca Henneman is now our Office Manager at St Agnes Parish in St Paul, Minnesota. She's there regularly to answer the phone and deal with all the day-in, day-out activities. She grew up in rural northern Minnesota and attended Franciscan University of Steubenville, and graduated in 2003 with majors in Communications and Theology. Rebecca participated in NET Ministries in



Rebecca Henneman, Office Manager.

2003-2004. With her team she was able to visit a variety of states including her favorites: South Carolina and Louisiana.

Our part time people are Susan Gray of Cabot, Arkansas, whose main work is writing children’s books. She is currently working on a children’s dinosaur encyclopedia. Susan helps us with major grant proposals. For 2004 she had the distinction of a 100% success rate-- Every grant proposal she submitted was funded!



Susan Gray. Want to know about dinosaurs?

Anne Weatherly has just begun doing some grant writing for us, but she and her husband Jim have a long history with the mission because Jim was our first webmaster.

Melanie Targia helps us deal with the data system, keeping track of donations and providing address labels for the *Sunrise* and

IRS matters.

Finally I’d like to mention a good employee who had to leave us for health reasons, Gail Gavin. She worked for us for nearly two years as Mrs Sonnen’s office assistant. She was an excellent employee that we will miss.

“Thank you!” to all our staff members who make daily sacrifices for the mission. You are our missionaries, too.

The pay isn’t much, but the “retirement program” is “out of this world.”



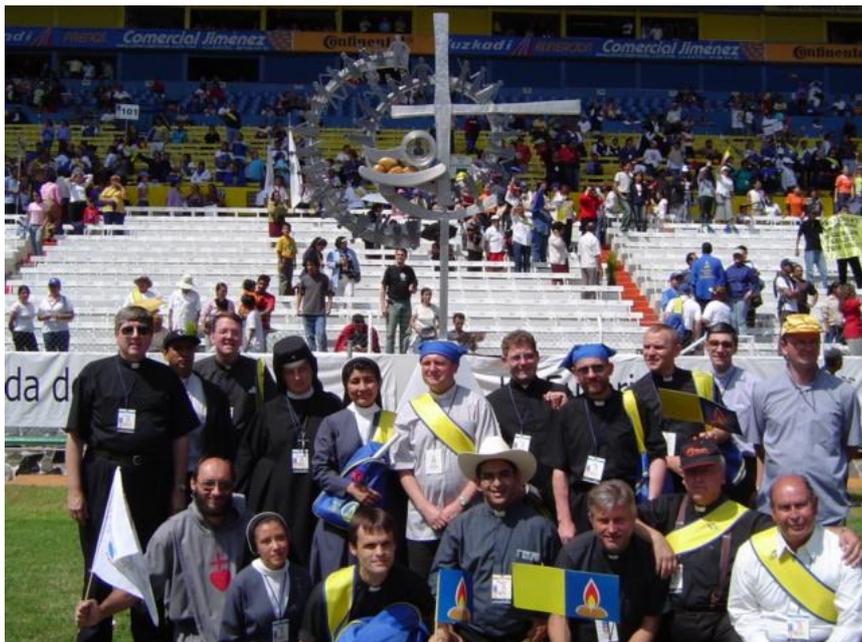
Anne Weatherly



Melanie Targia



Gail Gavin



The Russian Delegation

From our Western Siberian/Russian Far Eastern diocese of Saint Joseph in Irkutsk there were three other delegates besides me, all of whom I knew well: Fr Antony Badura, CMF, a Claretian missionary from Poland who has been working in the parish in the large central Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk since June 1992, and who for many years was vicar general of our diocese; his confrere in Krasnoyarsk Fr Darius Byalek, CMF, also from Poland; and Fr Milosh Krakovski, a Slovakian diocesan priest, who has worked in several parishes in our diocese since arriving in Russia in 1996, and who is now living with the two American priests in the parish of the Nativity of the Lord in Magadan.

My Trip to Guadalajara

By Rev Daniel Maurer, C.J.D.

In October my Bishop Kiril Klimovich gave me the privilege of being a member of the Russian delegation to the 48th International Eucharistic Congress (IEC), which was hosted by the Archdiocese of Guadalajara in Mexico from Sunday October 10 to Sunday October 17. I would serve as a Russian-Spanish translator. Our delegation consisted of 14 priests and religious sisters from all four dioceses in Russia.

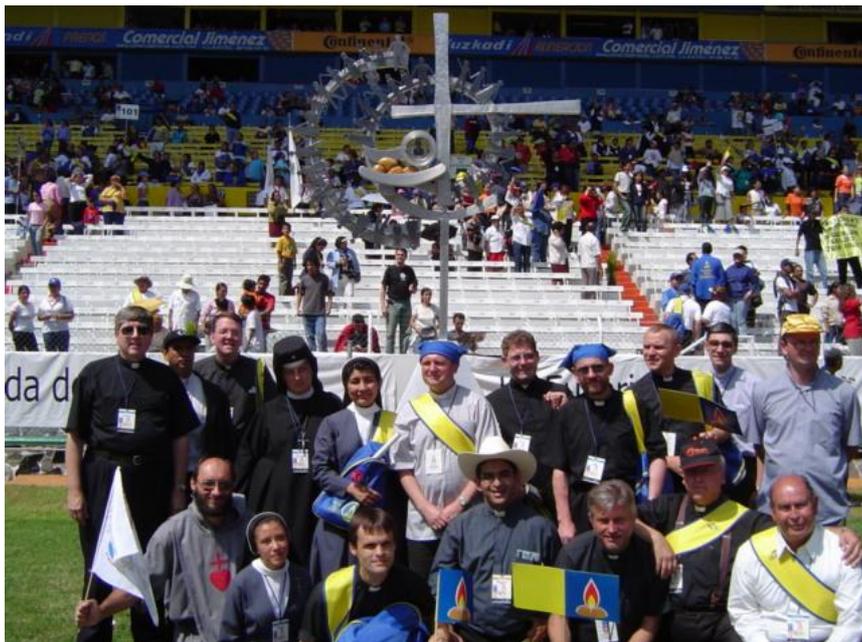
Arriving in Guadalajara on Friday, I discovered that the Russian delegation leader called from Mexico City to say that they would be arriving in Guadalajara on Sunday morning after two full days of travel. I finally caught up with them at the end of the opening Mass in the Jalisco Stadium, attended by more than 80,000 people, which included 14,000 Congress delegates from all over the world. Meanwhile I stayed at the seminary of the Xaverian Missionaries

After that I was with the Russian delegation each day for the plenary sessions of the IEC held in the morning in the huge conference center called Expo Guadalajara and for the other liturgical and prayer gatherings. It was a great pleasure to get to meet several priests and sisters from Russia for the first time and to renew acquaintances with others.

Delegates also came from the other three dioceses in Russia: from the Archdiocese of the Mother of God in Moscow were several priests including the delegation leader, Fr Jerzy Stetskevich, the pastor of St Adelbert Parish in Kaliningrad, where our former parishioners Laima and Slava Meshherakov and our former choir director Svetlana Naumova now live. I was able to send them my greetings through Fr Jerzy. From the Southern European Diocese of St Clement in the city of Saratov on the Volga River there were several priests, one Mexican sister and one Polish sister.

From the Western Siberian diocese in Novosibirsk there were also several priests. Long-time *Vladivostok Sunrise* readers will remember that before 1997 Vladivostok used to be included in the territory of the former Apostolic Administration centered in Novosibirsk and administered by Bishop Joseph Werth, S.J. As one of his delegates to the IEC he sent Fr Tony Corcoran, S.J., a young American Jesuit from the Texas Province, who for many years was the vice rector of the Minor Seminary in Novosibirsk. I had heard about Fr Tony very often from our seminarian Brother Oleg, who spent a year at the minor seminary in Novosibirsk, but this was my first opportunity to meet him. We had a wonderful time getting acquainted, attending the conferences, processions and liturgies of the Congress, and doing some sight seeing making short pilgrimages to churches in the Guadalajara area.

Among the 14 delegates four of us spoke fluent Spanish, so we acted as translated for the other delegates. This was a difficult but very gratifying job, especially for the major talks given at the daily plenary sessions of the Congress.



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All of the members of the Russian delegation for whom I translated thanked me profusely for helping to make their time at the Congress not only visually meaningful but theologically and spiritually meaningful.

On the last Saturday of the Congress the archbishop of Guadalajara had planned a special Youth Day at the basilica of Our Lady of Zapopan (patroness of the archdiocese), which is located about 15 miles north of downtown. At the announcement period in the Guadalajara Expo Center early that same day, they asked for priests to volunteer to go to the Youth Day gathering to hear the confessions of the young people. Since we both speak fluent Spanish Fr Tony and I decided to go. It is a good thing we did, because only four priests showed up to hear the confessions of all the young people who wanted to confess their sins that day. Since more than 50,000 young people attended the gathering we priests were kept busy for hours.

At the opening Mass there were 80,000 participants, and at the final closing Mass of almost 100,000 participants the holy father Pope John Paul II made a special closed circuit television appearance from St Peter's Basilica in Rome. Major highlights were the Eucharistic procession of over 100,000 people for 7 miles following the Blessed Sacrament exposed in a beautiful monstrance over 12 feet high, mounted on a moving platform; the procession from the cathedral to the Basilica of Our Lady of Zapopan (16 miles) in which over 3 million pilgrims participated; and all the daily masses for the 14,000 congress delegates. An army of seminarians must have worked for a full year to prepare for these beautifully done liturgies. (The Guadalajara major seminary has over 400 philosophy and theology students!)

The Congress was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see and experience the strength of grace that comes to all who believe in and participate in the Eucharistic life of the Church. International Eucharistic Congresses are held every four years, but the one in Guadalajara may go down in history as one of the largest. The city itself, counting over 9 million Roman Catholics, is beautiful and very historic. Combined with typical Mexican piety and hospitality, its International Eucharistic Congress has made the eyes of the Universal Church focus in gratitude and awe on Guadalajara, Mexico.

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

Upcoming event: A vocations retreat with Sisters in Jesus the Lord!

March 4-6th, 2005 in St. Paul, Minnesota, for single women ages 17 and older. Cost is only \$65.00 and includes all meals. Live in the convent for the weekend, pray with our new community, and learn more about religious life and our mission. Please contact Sr. Julia Kubista at (651) 230-3337 or at info@cjed.cc to register. See our website to learn more about the sisters (currently a private association) at www.cjed.cc

How to Communicate with Us

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daniel@catholic.vladivostok.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.

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

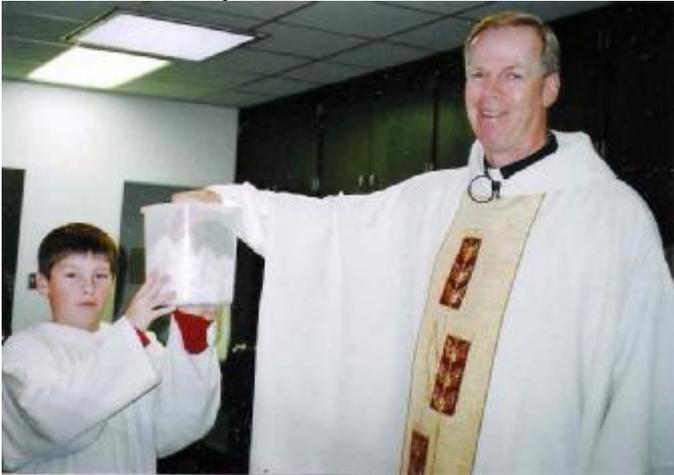
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News Notes

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

- Three benefactors won a free week at a Florida condo again this year. This is a project of Terry and Dee Baltes of Dayton, Ohio, who offer their Florida home as a prize for our benefactors who support our Women's Support Centers which they were instrumental in helping to found. The happy winners this year are Ann Zirkelbach of Evansville, Indiana, Tom and Joann Bohman, friends of the Baltes', and Sharon Goebel, Fr Myron's cousin from Poseyville, Indiana. Everyone was so excited to hear that they won! The raffle was very successful - as of today there were \$7575 in donations in the raffle. Praise be to God! Thanks, Terry, Dee, and benefactors.



Fr Lawrence Mierenfeld pulled the winning ticket on Thanksgiving Day at Incarnation Church in Dayton.

- I've been in the hospital and home recuperating after our traffic accident on December 4. My secretary Nicolai Dorodnov and I were traveling the five hours between the parish in Lesozovsk and Vladivostok when our car skidded out of control on the icy highway near Michailovka and hit an oncoming car which was also skidding out of control. Nicolai was not hurt; one person in the other car suffered a broken arm. But I had a concussion, broken leg, three broken ribs, and a major gash in my forehead which required 14 stitches. They took me to the hospital in Ussurysk for emergency surgery and general anesthetic. There were complications of pneumonia and a staph infection under the cast on my leg which has taken quite a time to heal. The worst part was the first night after the operation in the hospital, but after that I was at home in Vladivostok being taken care of by my doctor, Irina Udovichenko. Fr Daniel sent word of my accident to many of our friends and benefactors, and so

there is a whole constellation of people praying for me. Thanks for your support! Our car was totaled.



Fr Sebastian D'Silva also helped to take care of me, especially with the Anointing of the Sick and daily Communion.

- It turned out that mine wasn't the only accident. Another pioneer here, Fr Ignatzi Pavlus from Irkutsk, also had an accident the same day! In Eastern Siberia his car rolled over in the taiga. He broke his collarbone, and had to walk over a mile to the nearest settlement to find help. He is also recuperating fine.

Fr Dominic Kim, OFM and Sr Maria Kim from Ussurysk totaled their car skidding on ice in mid-December, and both are still under doctor's care, too.



Ray Metzger, with Susan Gray and Sister Mary Catherine at the recent Mission conference in St Paul, MN

- Trouble doesn't stop our benefactors! Ray Metzger from MN and Dan Meehan from Milwaukee, WI flew over to Vladivostok for a couple of days to catch up on our activities and to give us advice on our various projects. The building projects are under way; we are feeding the street kids and the abandoned elderly; we are working with the boy scouts and the university students; we are still struggling to get St Joseph's parish

underway—only the ninth parish that I have founded in Russia with your help and God’s grace.

- Fr Bartholomew Szost has arrived from Warsaw, Poland, to be the new pastor of Our Lady of the Pacific Parish in Nakhodka as of December 1. At last Nakhodka has the full-time services of a priest! A second priest is expected soon to join “Fr Bartek”, so we will have a total of seven priests here in our State of Primorye. Mary Mother of God Mission Society will continue to provide financial support for the parish and Fr Bartek. So we are moving forward with your help.



Father Bartholomew Szost, Pastor of Our Lady of the Pacific Parish, Nakhodka. Welcome, Father!

- The City of Lesozovodsk has just one hospital where there is also a birth facility. The city is poor, with a large unemployment rate. Our Women’s Support Center there does a good job of encouraging and helping women to bring their children to birth. Recently the hospital appealed to us to buy three “baby monitors”. These are



electronic devices that monitor several parameters of the life and health of new-born children. The hospital said they were sure that the monitors would save some lives of new-borns every year. The St Vincent de Paul Society in Vladivostok contacted the Society in Dayton, Ohio, who donated the monitors. Here is a photo of one of the monitors in place and working.

- In November had a good visit at George Mason University Catholic Student Center where I met student missionaries from the FOCUS program (Fellowship of Catholic University Students). We are hoping that FOCUS will train some of our student missionaries who are working in our Omega University Center.

Fr Myron and Deacon Ted Ostrom meeting with student missionaries at George Mason University.



• **Sisters in Jesus the Lord**

We greatly enjoyed hosting five young women here at St. Agnes convent in St Paul, MN, in October during Fr Myron's conference on Russia. We continue to correspond with interested candidates. Our benefactors have been so generous--thank you for gifts of a new computer, camera, a house organ and many volunteer hours! Kelly Whittier (Sr Maria Stella)'s is studying at the University of St. Thomas and at Macalester College (Russian 201). The North-Minneapolis Serra Club has adopted her as their "walk with me" candidate, until her final vows! The Knights of Columbus, Tara Council, of Jonesboro, Georgia, have supported her monthly since August 2003. Most of all we thank you for your prayers, and pray that women will answer the call to become a sister for Russia. Kelly Whittier is playing an organ concert on Jan. 9 in Owatonna, MN.

From the development desk...

Dear Vladivostok Mission supporter,

- **ULTRASOUND MACHINE NEEDED:** To all of our supporters who are physicians or health care professionals of any kind, friends of such professionals, or patients (I guess that means all of us!): Please help us find a used ultrasound machine to save the lives of unborn babies in Russia. Ask your doctor, your clinic, etc., if they are planning to buy the latest and greatest ultrasound machine, and would they be willing to donate the old one to us. It's a tax write-off, of course. If you would like to make a financial contribution towards purchasing a new machine, the cost of a suitable machine for our Women Support Centers is \$22,000
- Now we can offer **AUTOMATIC MONTHLY DONATION-**by credit card or by automatic bank withdrawal. Avoid the monthly hassle of writing checks, mailing and save the postage, too! Send us a voided check with your permission to have automatic withdrawal or call me with your credit card number, expiration date, and the amount to be donated every month.

God love you and your family,

Sandra Sonnen, usoffice@vladmission.org
office: 651-227-0208, home: 651-690-5139



*Our benefactor
Marcella Reilly, 91,
of Dayton, Ohio,
who produces warm
knitted items for
children, the sick,
and the elderly.*