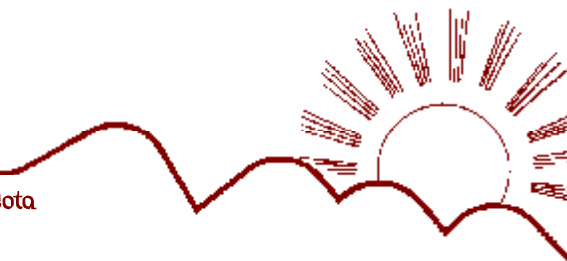


Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society Vladivostok Russia St Paul Minnesota

Issue Number Seventy Two November 1, 2006



Keep your hats on at our Soup Kitchen for the elderly poor pensioners so that no one will steal them. This program, sponsored by the Sisters of St Anne of Saragossa, Spain, feeds 50 people five times per week. There are "no homeless" in Russia, because having a home is a Constitutional right of every citizen.

Here is a typical meal. This year for the first time we can actually buy lettuce and celery in Russia! This meal needs to be greened up. Now the Sisters are organizing social outings for these elderly poor who otherwise are pretty well trapped in their apartments.



Our Benefactors...

The Story of "Joan"

[Here is a short version of a real winner! Drop me a note if you would like to read the whole letter. All the names have been changed at the request of the writer.—ed]

Dear Fr Myron, There was an old woman by the name of Joan Dickson here in my hometown. I usually saw her in the convent chapel. She shared an apartment with another old woman friend named Ann. When Ann died, Joan went into a tailspin and let the apartment go to a pigpen. Joan was an ornery sort, but for some reason Joan liked me. I had given her rides to our parish once and she appreciated that very much. She also found out that I could speak some Russian and she liked to greet me in Russian. When she was young, she had started to learn Russian and she always regretted not being able to continue with it.

About three years ago I saw Joan sitting all by her self at a little table in the Sweet Street Bar & Grill. She looked awful. Unwashed. I wasn't sure she would recognize me, but I touched her shoulder to greet her and she yelled, "Leave me alone!!!" I decided it seemed wrong to pass her by, so I said "hello." At first she didn't recognize me through her thick glasses, and then she did and she became very animated and she was SO happy to see me and wanted to know what I had been doing! When I was beginning to leave, she said so pitifully, "Oh, I hope you will come see me again. Please come again!" The next time I came, the proprietor, George Gold, followed me out and told me that he was worried about Joan because she was in terrible condition and getting worse. It turned out that she had been coming to the restaurant every day when they opened around noon and would sit there all day by herself until closing time at

which time George would call a cab for her to go home.

She smelled bad, she had lice, and she was often cranky and demanding, but George knew she needed help and refused to turn her away, even though other restaurants had turned her away, and even after some of his own patrons had complained about her. He was making sure that her rent was getting paid, that she got her medications. He said that Joan had plenty of money, but what she really needed was some help—She needed to go to an assisted living home, but she refused. She wanted to stay “independent”(!) George said that Joan had a house in Santa Barbara that she was renting out to a family.

Finally I talked her into letting me come over to her apartment so that I could help her "tidy up" so that she could possibly get a live-in aid. She didn't want to go to a home--and it turned out that the only place she would consider going to was the Little Sisters of the Poor which was not far away, but Joan didn't qualify because she wasn't poor enough! She had the home that she was renting to the struggling family for minimum rent. She didn't want to sell it and turn them out. Her apartment was a TOTAL disaster. There were mice droppings everywhere. There was left-over food in bags, rotting.

Finally Joan said that the only other place she would consider going to was the Convent Sisters' nursing home in Sacramento. I jumped on that and called the good sisters up and arranged for it, but it was all talk on Joan's part--she got cold feet and changed her mind.

Then George gave Joan an ultimatum for her own good. Both George and I would be away for three weeks and his staff didn't think they could handle Joan by themselves. He told her that she had a month to decide where to go. George and a lawyer that Joan knew and liked, who used to be her favorite waiter at the restaurant, would help her put her things in order and find the best place possible for her.

Joan agreed to go to the Convent's home in Sacramento. Her home in Santa Barbara was sold. The family living there was given moving expenses. They realized that it was best for Joan, too, but a hard situation for them. The night before Joan left, George and the waiters had a going-away party for her. She was to be driven down by her lawyer friend, Billy. She was appreciative. I was hoping that she would find the extra special love and care she needed from the sisters.

She made it down to Sacramento, but she died about a month later. I was not privy to her medical condition. We

all tried our best and had the best intentions. Joan looked forward to heaven--she was admittedly miserable here.

Joan's estate was finally settled last month, almost 2 years after her death. George called me out of the blue and asked me to come down to the restaurant to talk to him. What was left in the trust, George distributed and some was set aside for an annual scholarship in Joan's honor. George gave some to everyone that he knew of who had been kind to Joan. George said that because I was one of the people who helped Joan the most, he wanted to give me \$20,000. After thinking about it, I agreed to accept the money and to distribute it in way that I thought Joan would approve of. I remembered her interest in Russia. I had told her about the Vladivostok Mission, and she approved of what you're doing. I showed him a picture of the abandoned street children, shown on your website, outside the restaurant vent, who went just to "smell the food they couldn't have" because I knew he could relate to that as a father and a restaurant owner. He was very glad to hear that the money would be used for good.

Pray for the soul of Joan Dickson. Pray that she will finally be HAPPY! And you--use the money in the way you think best. I hope some of it will be used for the poor street children and the other needy poor.

Yours truly, [a long-time benefactor]

[In honor of "Joan" we are placing half the donation in the Hospice Program for abandoned elderly, and half in the "Street Children Rescue Program." Eternal Rest grant to her, O Lord!—ed]

[Our Benefactors:](#)

My Work in Vladivostok

By Lynn Grandon of Peoria, Illinois

[Lynn is a specialist in pro-life work, and especially works with students in schools. She came with her family to help us in the summer of 2006. This is a report of her work while she was here.—ed]

The Russian Far East is especially challenging on a number of fronts. My first meeting was with a long – time bureaucrat from the city offices. They sense the need to open a shelter for abused women. He explained their current and feeble efforts, which amount to “checking on” families that have previously reported problems. He admitted the ineffectiveness of that method. We discussed the successes of centers in the U.S., and that methodol-

ogies, policies, and procedures could all be translated and explained for their consideration. We also explained that we have a Russian woman prepared to translate information and documents who had been trained at a shelter in our home town of Peoria. His final comments were, "Well, then, we shall look seriously for a suitable building. If that is found, could "your organization" come and run it for us?" Of course, I told him I was not a spokesperson for the Catholic Church, but that there could be possibilities for help from a number of angles.

The second meeting was an all-day-long seminar explaining sexually transmitted diseases to directors and representatives from the women's centers that have been started by the mission. I would describe the sessions as "full of lively discussion" and "genuine concern" for their youth. Their comments were as follows: "We knew a little bit about these diseases, but now our understanding is crystal clear,"... "This will help us explain even more the reasons for a pure lifestyle." Some of the women were post-abortive themselves and intimately shared their experiences and heartaches. There were many tears. The finest compliment received was, "You've been with us all day, yet it only felt like one hour."

My final meeting was at the Children's Hospital #3, chaired by the head doctor. At this meeting were a number of representatives from each borough of the city, the Superintendent of Schools and the assistant, along with the administrator of the hospital. This meeting was quite agitated – with questions being yelled out 4 and 5 people at a time. The topic was AIDS-children interacting in the school system with non-AIDS children. Many families are frightened to have these children near their own, so the questions were mainly related to practical application of transmissibility. I showed them our school system's rules and explained that these were rescinded in 2002. We discussed all the possible ways to contract the disease, and also, concretely, how it cannot be passed on. Also discussed were guidelines for caregivers and family members. I challenged them to translate all of the information that we brought that day – to create brochures and handouts for the populace, for their school families, and to educate their city. The Superintendent of Schools said, "It does seem like we are about 10 years behind the U.S. in our understanding and attitudes." They were extremely grateful for all of the printed material and responses to their questions. The head doctor reinforced our comments. These officials were then given a tour of the toddler AIDS ward.

It was a real privilege to share these truths in a city trying to sift through the fears of a possible epidemic.

How to Communicate with Us

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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 tax purposes by return mail. Please be assured that we do not sell our mailing list or any other donor information to other organizations.

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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St Paul, MN 55103

English: www.ejd.cc

Vladivostok Sunrise Edited and produced in Russia by V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D. Assembled for mailing by Nativity Parish, St Paul, Minnesota.

Please remember Mary Mother of God Mission Society in your will.

News Notes

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

- **Canadian donors!** We've been working to set up the system for acknowledging your donations. If something is amiss, please let us know. Thanks!
- Never a dull weekend for **Fr Elmer Torborg!** He is one of our "missionaries for the mission," taking regular speaking engagements and weekend masses throughout the United States for us. Father lives in Holdingford, MN or in Mesa, AZ, depending upon the season, but he is always ready for a new experience for the mission. In spite of his retirement years, he doesn't take any medicines, and is in great health! Thanks, Father, for your help!



Fr Elmer Torborg, leaving for another mission assignment.

- Saturday, September 16, was the first **moving day** for our parish to the new Our Lady of Fatima rectory and parish building. 33 parishioners gathered to begin the process. The next two Saturdays we also gathered to hand carry things from the church to the rectory. On Sunday, October 1, we moved the Blessed Sacrament in procession to the temporary chapel, so that we can begin to tear out the last added floor from the church.

The parish is now having Sunday Mass in our temporary chapel in the new rectory building. Here is a photo of the end of the procession when we brought the Blessed Sacrament to the temporary chapel. We are looking forward to the day when we can have the new consecration of the cathedral after it had to be abandoned by our ancestors in the 1930's because they were not able to pay the exorbitant taxes that the Communist government levied on religious buildings as a way of

destroying religion. The church was preserved by building floors inside of it, which we are now removing.



Those who gathered to help move the parish were mostly the young, of course. The golden generation prepared dinner for us all after all that hard work.

A view of the temporary chapel in the new rectory.



The 90-year-old architect who built the floors told me, "I guess it was a sin to build those floors inside the church!" I said, "No, I don't think so, because if you hadn't made the building useful, they would have torn it down!" The new day of consecration will be the day of the complete rebirth of the parish, and we hope it will be a celebration both on earth and in heaven, and both in America and in Russia! We'll let you know the date, but probably not until next summer. Is it too much to hope that we can move the Sunday Mass back into the church for Easter? Or maybe by Pentecost? We are planning to have the blessing of the rectory and the consecration of the restored church at the same time—probably next summer—so that foreign benefactors can attend.

- **Myra Schatten** is a perky Canadian who volunteered to work with us for a year. She did a great job helping the elderly at the hospice, re-editing many of our brochures and creating new ones, writing grant proposals, and working with the kids in Romanovka. She completed her year with us very successfully, and also managed to adopt a child while she was here. Here's a photo of Myra and her new daughter who now make their home in Manitoba.



- **Sisters in Jesus the Lord** have a new postulant as of August 15, 2006. Now there are four members! The sisters have a bi-monthly "Desert Day" at St Agnes Convent in St Paul--an overnight and day of silence for prayer, with opportunity to talk with the sisters. Please see their website for more details: www.cjd.cc. The next "Desert Day" is November 11-12, for single women ages 17 and older.

- **Sisters in Jesus the Lord** are inviting all who are interested to come meet the Sisters at St Agnes Convent in St Paul, Minnesota on December 2. You and your family are cordially invited for a Saturday afternoon from 2 PM to 5 PM. "Sisters in Jesus the Lord" is currently a private association of the faithful, hoping to be approved as a religious congregation as soon as the number of members is sufficient. Join us for a tour of the convent and sung prayer in the convent chapel, followed by insights into our future plans and news on the Russian mission in Vladivostok, including the Milk and Fruit Program and the Grandmother Mentor Program for orphans. Plus music and refreshments in the convent dining room. See the beautiful Austrian baroque Church of St Agnes at the 5:15 PM Mass. We would love to meet you! Please bring your friends! RSVP by November 17th, 651-291-7777.

- Oct 13, 1917 was the date of the last apparition at Fatima. On that date in 1999 **Sandra and David Sonnen** began their great work for our mission. Sandie says, "It has been a wonderful glorious ride! Whoever thought

Dave and I and our family would be a piece of the puzzle towards reviving the Catholic Church in Russia. Amazing. After all those years of praying by the Catholic world we are a part of it. Thank you Lord!" Congratulations on your 7th anniversary of working for the mission, David and Sandie. It's been a very difficult job, and I hope part of your consolation is that it has been very hard for us, too, not just seven years but 15 already! Let's hope that your 8th year and our 16th will bring many blessings and consolations!

David Sonnen, Chairman of our Board, at home.



- Free at Last! Hard to believe, but at last **Fr Myron** has received the possibility to drive a car in Russia! Especially after the car accident in which my leg was hurt, I've been rather "imprisoned" by my handicap because I can't walk long distances as I used to. Earlier, too, I worked in a variety of cities, and it was most convenient to travel either by train or to have a driver accompany me on those trips so that they could deal with the car and help with food and shelter and liturgical matters, while I attended to confessions and spiritual matters. Now, after being in Vladivostok for 15 years, I can at last drive myself to events and home visits and to hospital visits!

It seems that foreigners were considered "rich"—never mind that I have a vow of poverty and live on donations! Several Americans have been in accidents here, and it always seems to turn out that it is the Americans' "fault" when they get to court. Until recently there was no normal auto insurance or health insurance here. To forestall a problem, Fr Dan and I have just never driven here, so as not to endanger either our financial situation, our health, or our possibility to have a visa and work here. But now there are very wealthy Russians, so I'm looking poor in comparison!

It is hard to imagine an American without a car. I've been driving since I was 15½ years old. Fr Joseph Fessio S.J.

bought our first car for us in the summer of 1992 soon after we arrived. But in those days we didn't have a secure place for it, and it is impossible to leave a car in the open in Russia without it being stolen or having parts stolen off of it. So we always had a driver to care for the car. In fact, the first car that Fr Fessio gave us so often had parts stolen off of it at night that we could hardly ever use it until we got a garage! Even so, we've had to do so much traveling through long distances on bad roads that we've ruined and wrecked several cars. Many thanks to our benefactors who have always come though to keep us moving.

Now I can drive myself! My secretary Nicolai worries that the Vladivostok traffic is too dangerous for my older reactions. St Christopher, Pray for us! Here I go! July 23, 2006.

- God bless **Ron Mitchell** and his family! Ron has served as our webmaster for quite some time from his home in Phoenix. The job has gotten more time consuming as the website has grown—and maybe overgrown! Now our Russian office staff will be taking over the website, and we'll reduce it to make it more efficient. Thank you, Ron, to you and for family for long-suffering with us.

- A group of our parishioners at St Joseph's Parish in Vladivostok have started a **prayer group** for grandmas and grandpas whose children or grandchildren are out of the Church or still atheists. It is a wonderful thing to support one another in hope before God in this way. If it was Russia's official atheism that took people's kids away from God and the Church, in America and Canada it was the sexual revolution, and secularization. Our university "Omega" program is hoping to attract people back to the Church, so we are praying for success. It will not be easy, especially since there are still many at the universities who hate religion and who take down any announcements we try to post (sound familiar?). If we hand out invitations, we will be accused of "proselytism." What to do? Pray for us.

- Here are our three **seminarians**. (l to r) Joseph Manguno from Atlanta, GA is a student at Mt St Mary's Seminary in Emitsburg, MD who decided to join our community and so has come to study Russian and do his canonical novitiate. Brother Oleg Yelchaninov, in final vows, is continuing his education at St Charles Borromeo Seminary in Kosice, Slovakia. He has two more years until priesthood. Sergei Fursov is our parishioner, now a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Moscow. He has three more years. Thank you, benefactors who support our seminarians.



- Last issue we showed how St Joseph's Parish from Modesto, California began the repair of our retreat building on Russian Island. Afterward, we've had several retreats there already. Here is a photo from the **children's retreat**.

Kids on retreat listening to a talk at the felt board, which was donated by Lynn Grandon of Peoria, Illinois.



- This year's Far Eastern Catholic **Youth Conference** was held in Blagoveschensk at the end of July. The topic of the conference was "Dialog with God," in honor of the Year of the Bible. Here is a photo of the participants

standing in front of the log cabin church of the Parish of the Transfiguration in Blagoveschensk. Next year it will be Vladivostok's turn to host the conference.



Young adults gathered from Far Eastern parishes.

Here participants watch a presentation in rapt attention. Father Tomas, pastor in Blagoveschensk sitting in back.



• This was the first summer that our **Boy Scout Troup** went camping for two one-week camps with boys from single parent and troubled families in our area. There were total 19 boys, aged 11 to 17 involved. As usual they were joined by kids from extremely poor families from Lesozavodsk. The first camp was on Russian Island in the vicinity of our parish's retreat center. Scoutmaster Denis Bondarev says, "It was a great time for sports and swimming, and for exploring the vast historical sites – the fortresses built and operated in the 19th and 20th century on the Island. And to learn about the history of our country. Of course, we started with our routine basic camp training – learning how to make fire in the outdoors, how to cook simple meals on fire and other necessary survival skills. The culmination of the camp was the 5-

mile march to the Museum of Battle Glory. A real difficulty was lack of drinking water – we had to buy daily and carry with us some 10 gallons of water so everyone could have enough.



July 2006 camp-out on Russian island

The second camp-out was in Slavianka Bay near North Korea – about 45 miles south of Vladivostok and less than 8 miles from the Chinese border, a 2½ hour trip by ferry boat. For two boys from the orphanage near Romanovka it was their first real camp. Also, there were kids from some poor families that the local government Social Service officer asked us to take. We hope that such boys deprived of attention and normal recreation possibilities will be joining our camps from now on. We thank our donors for the tents and the sleeping bags and for their love.”

• Mary Mother of God Mission Society is pleased to offer an **automatic withdrawal plan**. Now you can have your donation deducted automatically from your savings or checking account. And you won't have to change your present banking relationship to take advantage of this service. The automatic withdrawal donation plan will help you in several ways: 1. It saves time—fewer checks to write. 2. No lost or misplaced statements. 3. It saves postage. 4. It's easy to sign up for and easy to cancel. For more information, just slip a note asking about “automatic withdrawal” in the envelope with your next donation, or drop Sandie an email note at usoffice@vladmission.org or call (651)227-0208.

Joy to the World!

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Dear Father Myron!



Merry Christmas to you! Enclosed is a sacrificial donation to help with your work in Russia. Please apply my donation to the following work of charity.

- Street Kids Women's Support Centers Boy Scouts Hospice for the abandoned elderly
- Milk and Fruit Program for Orphans Grandma Program for Orphans
- Omega University Evangelization Program Parish Catechetical Program
- Church Building Restoration Project Wherever the need is greatest

I am praying for you and your work in Russia. Here is my spiritual bouquet:



Yours truly,



(P.S. Please send me information about Direct Deposit Donations.)