

Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society and Vladivostok Mission

Issue Number Eighty Five January 1, 2009



Our Parishioners

Emilia Dyachkova

By Tatyana Shaposhnikova

“My whole life I’ve been on the move!” says Emilia as she begins to tell her life story. “I don’t remember my mother—She died when I was three—and they shot my dad in 1935. He was Polish and Catholic, so he was branded ‘an enemy of the people.’ My two nieces and I were raised by my aunt whose husband also served time. ‘They’ took everything from us, our property, our faith in God, and accused us of spying. There was hunger, and none of us, adults or children, could find work. People were against us, as we were a family of ‘enemies of Soviet power,’ but we still had to live with them.” And tears appear in Emilia’s eyes.



Even though she lives quite far from the church, Emilia never misses Sunday Mass.

“When I was 16 they gave me work in the coal mine in Donbasse. Together with the adults I did all my work. Within a month war began, so they closed the mine. Without money and without help it took me several months to walk back to Verbka, the little village where my aunt lived. I walked home already by December, and in May they moved us all to Germany.

“For three years I worked for a German farmer doing all the dirty work on the farm. The boss treated us well and fed us, and on Sundays we prayed.

“We were freed by American soldiers on the 9th of May of 1945, and already on May 10th they sent us to the transfer point and took us back to Russia. We got back to our village. The house was in ruins, and some of the villagers had been killed and some had died of hunger. We scrapped together boards and whatever we could find to make a hut to live in, and we had to work sometimes twelve hours straight on the collective farm without a rest.”--it was sad for Emilia to remember. “I didn’t have a childhood, and my youth was spent in a different country.”

“I got married, but didn’t live with my husband very long when they took him and shot him because he lived for several years as a prisoner in Germany. And again there was hunger and heavy work on the collective farm. People always looked at us with suspicion--My father was shot; my husband was shot--But in what way were we “enemies of the people?” she asks herself--“We worked honestly, went to church, prayed about love and happiness. It was a difficult time for us, but God helped us. Sometimes there wasn’t enough energy or time for prayer, but we never went to bed without praying.

“When my son finished school he couldn’t go for higher education because my father and grandfather were “enemies”. My son was very anxious to study further, so he had to travel far away where they wouldn’t know him. He came to the Russian Far East, and enrolled in the university in Vladivostok and graduated, so I came to live with him.” (She doesn’t mention that her son was beaten and brutally murdered by a band of thugs several years ago—Perhaps it is too painful to remember.)

“Would I have been able to endure everything and still have love for people without God’s help?” she asks. Emilia comes to every Sunday Mass. You can read wisdom, love, and endless hope in her eyes in God’s mercy to herself and her neighbor. Even with her tiny pension, she always finds something to sacrifice for charity and for the Church. And how many such

grandmothers there are! They all have wounds from what they have experienced in life, so that any jogging of their memories brings out the hurt and tears. We have something to learn from them—their patience, their resolve, their love of God and neighbor.



Emilia typifies our elder generation of Catholics.

Our Parishioners

Our 10th Parishioner Takes Religious Vows

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

December 8, 2008, our parishioner Sr Oxana Constanza Peretruckhina, MSC, took her first religious vows at the novitiate house in Rome, Italy. She is our tenth parishioner to become a religious in the 16 year history of the re-establishment of our parish. She was baptized and confirmed by me in 1995. She has told us that she knew it was God’s will that she become a sister in a community dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so she sought them out, where the sisters were working in Prokopievsk, Russia ten years ago. She subsequently moved to Rome to learn Italian and entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. At last this year she was admitted to temporary vows. Sister came home for Christmas, but I didn’t have a chance to speak to her before the deadline of this issue of the *Sunrise*. Naturally we are thrilled to have another religious among our parishioners. Congratulations Sr Oxana!

The Seal of the Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus



Sr Oxana entering the church to take her vows.

After reciting her vows, Sister is clothed with a veil to symbolize her dedication to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.



Sr Oxana lays her lamp on the flag of Russia to symbolize her dedication of the light to Christ to the peoples of Russia.



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

News Notes

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



● **Paul Weyrich**, a member of our board for many years, has died on December 18. Paul was a protodeacon of the Melkite Catholic Church and a member at Holy Transfiguration Parish in McLean, VA. He was a leader of many

political movements, and cofounder of the think tank Heritage Foundation, the Free Congress Foundation, and coined the phrase, “Moral Majority.” Originally from Racine, Wisconsin, he proposed home schooling as the best that Americans can do for their children. He was an advocate of light rail transportation. He was interested in Russia, and opposed Communist infiltration in the U.S. He spent the last years of his life in great pain from a spinal injury, in a wheel chair. We send our condolences to his wife Joyce and their five children. Thanks, Paul for your support. RIP.

● A parishioner from **Our Lady of the Pacific Parish in Nakhodka** called to beg for help. She said that she couldn’t afford to buy cordwood to heat her home this winter, and decided to use just an electric heater. But after we’ve been having temperatures here in the 10’sF, she realized that she couldn’t live in the cold any more or she would ruin her health. Thankfully she called the trustee of the parish, and we were happy to deliver a truckload of firewood to her! It only cost about \$22, but it was a matter of life and death to her! Thanks for your help! Here’s a photo of her cabin with the truck delivering the wood.



● A letter from **Fr Sebastian on Sakhalin Island, Russia**: “We have to pay the heating bills. We have a meter in the church and we pay as much we use. We pay one month advance before they come to turn the heating system on. We need over \$1000 per month for our church and other chapels in Holmsk, Aniva and Korsakov. So I am asking if I could borrow \$4000 from Mary Mother of God Mission Society, which will be enough to pay up to January. All other expenses I can manage, since I am trying to collect more contributions from the English-speaking community on Sakhalin. But sadly many are leaving as their work contracts finish. (They are constructing the new natural gas fields off-shore of the island.) By the end of the year I expect that all Filipino workers will be leaving. Now there are only 10 of them remaining among the church goers. Thank you, Yours truly, Fr Sebastian” I’m sure Fr Sebastian will try to pay back the debt, but I’m also sure that he won’t be able to.

Benefactors, please note that we are currently completely caring for eight parishes, including the pastors. Thank you for helping! Our finances are stretched to the max.

● Fr Dan had occasion to visit our sister parish of **St Anne’s in Porterville, California**. He said, “Now that they have the new church open the parish is growing by leaps and bounds. They have four weekend Spanish Masses: two in the old church downtown and two in the large, new church. I could not preach at the two downtown Masses because of schedule conflicts with English Masses at the new church, but I did preach at the two main Spanish Masses at the new church. The church seats 1300 people. The people continue to be very supportive of our Mission, and finally they have a guy who has been delegated by Pastor Fr Scott Dougherty to look into a mission trip for St Anne’s parishioners in 2009.”



St Anne’s Parish’s new facility, the “Church of the Holy Cross.”

● When I was in Minnesota in October, I attended the special mass at the **St John Vianney College Seminary** in St Paul where the seminarians who visited us last spring are students. It is a special “witness mass” where one of the seminarians tells his vocation story, and Catholic

young people from all over the city attend the mass to hear the vocation stories, and, of course, most of the visitors were young men of high school age. After mass they can come to the lobby for snacks and for talking to the seminarians personally. Needless to say it was a wonderful event, and one can see many vocations beginning to bloom among the young men who were in attendance. Obviously, many of the young ladies were also thinking about a vocation. It really gives a boost to our hope that there will be many new vocations in America, and it seems that there are new pockets of vocations beginning to bloom in many parts of the U.S.A. Pray for vocations! What is clear is that these new vocations are very dynamic young men, who, at the same time, fully uphold the teachings of the Catholic Church, and who are very mission-minded, even in the USA. They even have a special mission in Minnesota: Witnessing to fallen-away Catholic students at the University of St Thomas where they attend classes. It's a new day!



Some of the St Paul Seminarian (and a guest).

- After 17 years of living and working in Russia, I have at last received permission from the government to stay here as a **temporary resident** without a visa! It will be a big money saver for our mission, because, as you can imagine, having to return to San Francisco for a new visa every three months is not only expensive, but hard on my health. After a year, I'll be able to apply for permanent residency status ("green card"). Meanwhile, I continue to be a resident of Modesto, California. Fr Daniel and Fr Sebastian are both applying for their residency permit, and they should know by summer.



Natali Josephovna with godmother Lyubov Sadovnika

- Recently a lady from **North Sakhalin Island** came to see us in Vladivostok. She remarked that she is very poor and cannot ever get to South Sakhalin where the Catholic parishes are, but that she was from a Catholic family from Kazakstan. She was not sure if she was baptized or not, but was quite sure she had never received Holy Communion or been to Confession or been confirmed. But since she had a very rare chance to come to Vladivostok, could we please take care of her concerns, even if on such short notice? I gave her a Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church for her to read for several days while I contacted the pastor of all the parishes on Sakhalin, Fr Sebastian. He readily gave me permission to baptize her and give her First Communion. So we carried out her wishes several days later at St Joseph's Parish in Second River. The parish catechist Lubov Sadovnika was able to teach her and pray with her for several hours while they waited for me, and then she became her godmother.

- In my childhood Parish of St Joseph's in Vanderburgh County, Indiana, we had beautiful **altar angels**. These angels represent the Seraphim which were placed over the Ark of the Covenant in Old Testament times. So now they are often placed to each side of the tabernacle, which contains the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. So I was delighted when our Minnesota benefactor Maryanne

Mersch mentioned that she wanted to buy altar angels for us. Now they have been installed. The off-white color goes well with our historical huge white marble crucifix.

One of the altar angels keeping watch at the tabernacle.



● **Alcoholics Anonymous** is growing rapidly now, and the number of groups meeting in our new rectory has grown to five. It is wonderful that we now have rooms that we can offer to such groups.



One Alanon group also uses our rectory space.

● A parishioner has been trying to raise her **five children** alone after her husband left them. This week she will be in the hospital, as her health has suffered from stress and malnutrition. She is asking if we can help her with food, medicines, and vitamins for the whole family during the

time that she is hospitalized. Naturally we'll help! She said, "Many thanks to your sponsors!"

● There is a **Baby Boom** here in Primorye. It's the highest level of births in 18 years. Over 17,000 babies were born in the first six months of 2008, putting Primorye first among all the provinces of the Russian Far East. Frankly we think that it is at least partly due to the great work of our Women's Support Centers, which are mostly located in Primorye.



There is a baby to be baptized inside all that winter apparel.

So we've also had a rush of people coming to baptize their children. Here is a photograph of little Simeon's baptism. His folks said that they didn't even know there was a Catholic church in Vladivostok until they saw the sign on the road made by our California sister-parish visitors last summer. Simeon's family is from Kazakhstan where the Catholic Church was functioning during most of the Soviet period, and where there are many German immigrants who were sent to Kazakhstan during WWII. Simeon's dad works many hours overtime for the VVO water department because the city's piping is badly in need of repair, and in many places, it needs total replacement. It could be Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus!

● Everybody wants to know how the **steeple**s are progressing! "Slowly," is the answer. Currently we have ordered the special crosses which will stand on top, the workers are busy applying the metal to the spires which are currently standing on the ground, and the carpenters are busy painting and installing the jalousie panels that will shield the bells from birds and rain. We are looking forward to the completion. God willing, we will ring the bells for the first time on February 3, our special Feast of the Vladivostok Martyrs.



The last layer of brickwork waiting for the metal spire.

I thought you might enjoy this picture with me. It was taken at the very top of the brick part of the steeples. I get acrophobia just thinking about being so high up, so it isn't me in the photo! Sergei, who helps us with AA work climbed up there with the Chinese workers!

Sergei is pretty fearless. He even swims across Peter the Great Bay to Russian Island! (which is the farthest visible land on the horizon on the left of this photo.)



View of the downtown from the steeple. Andre,

who is in charge of the building project, said that the two metal crosses for the top of the steeples will cost \$2500 each, according to the final bids. Someone will get the honor of donating those crosses. Wonder who?

- I am again pastor in **Lesozvodsk**, due to a lack of priests in our diocese. Of course I'm excited to be pastor again of the Parish of the Visitation that I founded years ago, and for which I found myself in three separate traffic accidents due to the bad roads and bad weather that one often encounters while travelling there. We are trying to make up for lost time with the development of the parish. Recently I baptized two adults who had been waiting for several years for baptism!



Peter's godfather had just been baptized a month before.

Vladimir's godparents are the founders of the parish, Nadezhda and Vladimir Pisorenko.



Opportunities

♥ Mary Mother of God Mission Society invites you to experience an unforgettable journey aboard **Princess Cruise Line's Diamond Princess** in 2009. You will cruise from Whittier, Alaska to Xingang, China. There will be a full day in Vladivostok, Russia where you will have the opportunity to visit the mission. More details to follow. For immediate information please contact Barbara Garcia toll free at 866 756-1049 or email Barbara at BarbaraHouplinGarcia@aaawin.com

♥ **Do you have time to spare for the Mission office?** Volunteers needed to help research and arrange attendance and speaking engagements at Catholic Conferences and clubs throughout the US. Please contact the mission office.

♥ **Mission Speakers needed!** We provide all the information you need to present our work in parishes and at Catholic conferences! My call to help the mission in Vladivostok began by picking up a Vladivostok Sunrise and answering an ad just like this one calling for mission speakers! You can do it too! Is God calling you?

♥ **Do you enjoy sewing?** You can help our mission with your talent! We have begun a wonderful project sewing rosary pouches, book markers and book covers from Priest's discarded vestments! These very special and unique items can be used for fundraising at parish activities or craft boutiques. All proceeds help our mission! If you wish to give of your talent to sew for us or time in fundraising, contact the mission office for more details! Old vestments needed too!

♥ **Harsh Vineyard: A History of Catholic Life in the Russian Far East** by our parishioner Miroslava Efimova with translation by Dr Gerri Kelly is available from the publisher at www.trafford.com Or you can order it from our office in St Paul, or go on line to www.vladmission.org or to www.Amazon.com or order it from any bookstore. A great Christmas present!

♥ Visitation Parish in Lesozovodsk is still looking for a sister parish.

How to Communicate with Us

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English language: www.vladmission.org

Sisters in Jesus the Lord in English: www.cjd.cc

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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 Vicky Trevillyan at the Mission Office in California giving a complete list of items.

Sisters in Jesus the Lord: Phone: (651)230-3337

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[\(Continued from Page 8\)](#)

employees and with no elevators, other resources or male employees to help, the patients live in their rooms day after day.

The mission team realized the simple acts of love they could provide are what bring Christ to the people of Russia. The team member who could not go back to the hospice, now wanted to return in renewed hope and understanding of the love of Christ. Later, when the story was told to his family, his father wisely said, "He did not know it was Christ, whom he carried down the stairs."

This is one of countless stories of your prayers and support touch that bring hope to our brothers and sisters in Russia. If you would like to know more of how to volunteer your time with many tasks in the mission office, become a mission speaker, travel to Russia, and areas of financial help, and more, please contact me at 209-408-0728 or write usoffice@vladmission.org.

God bless you. Thank you for all you can do to revive the Catholic Church in Eastern Russia. Sincerely,
--Vicky Trevillyan

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Happy 2009!

From the Development Desk...



A Happy and Blessed
New Year To All!

With the beginning of the New Year, we are renewed in our hope and trust in our Lord's plan for us. I pray this story of one mission team to Vladivostok can remind us of the hope of Christ and how our prayers and efforts do make a difference.

Our mission team in Vladivostok was assigned to work in one of the Hospice Hospitals outside the city. The women of our team were given buckets and gloves and asked to clean the floors and walls of one room. The walls were covered with human waste and dirt. The team dutifully scrubbed the room and made it as comfortable as they could.

The men of our team were asked to carry the three male patients from this second floor room downstairs to the tiny plaza outside.

One team member shared later he carried a quadriplegic patient down the stairs and onto the courtyard below. He couldn't bear the odor of urine and feces coming from the patient as he carried him. At one point the patient informed one of the attendants he needed to use the bathroom. The attendant ignored him and as if it was the norm, the patient casually proceeded to soil himself and was later simply carried back to his room in such condition. Our team member asked not to go back to the hospice as the conditions were too unbearable and sad for him.

Days later, the administrator from the hospice sent a thank note for the much needed help the team provided along with a message that changed the hearts of all in the team. When the three patients were carried downstairs and out to the courtyard, it was the first time in six years they had been outside! The hospice is understaffed with women [\(Continued on Page 7\)](#)