

# Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society and Vladivostok Mission

Issue Number Eighty Eight July 1, 2009



*The morning sun shines on the steeples, as seen from Beauty Street.*

## **Crosses Flying High Over Golden Horn Bay!**

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

I'm excited to tell you that the crosses are now flying high over the Golden Horn Bay on our new steeples! It was on Friday May 22 that the crane working on the bridge across the Bay was able to be free for a couple of hours to come to the church and raise the last top spire and place the crosses! Already there are more people aware of the existence of the parish now that the two steeples are up. A young lady came to ask for mass times. She had tears in her eyes. She said she didn't know there was a Catholic church here in Vladivostok! Every Sunday we've had more unknown people in church. Many, many thanks to those who contributed to the steeple project! Next they will place the remaining small spires on the steeples and transept. We are hoping for a September date for the official completion of the project, and a Mass of Blessing by our Bishop Kirill Klimovich. The bells blessed by Pope John Paul II are waiting to peal!



*In this photo, you see the golden cones below the crosses flashing in the sun.*

*The gleaming stainless steel spires make a great appearance on the skyline for the center of the city as this view from downtown shows.*



*The topmost crosses before gilding.*



And inside, it was a full house four times for this year's series of Easter concerts. We were happy with the return to Vladivostok of our parishioner Andre Mirgorodsky who just finished his studies in Moscow. He will help us as an organist and Liturgical Choir director



*The Concert Choir at Easter with a full house.*

## Vocations in Russia

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

When the Iron Curtain fell we saw lots of men entering the seminary in traditional Catholic countries where their entrance had been restricted by the Communist governments. But Russia is not a Catholic country.

Recently there was a meeting with the State committee responsible for visas for missionaries. They invited all the major denominations. The topic was, "After 20 years of freedom, do we still need foreign missionaries in Russia?" And "Are there Russians ready to take over the care of the religious organizations? If not, why not?" We each had a chance to speak. Here is what some said:

**Mormons:** Missionary work is part of the nature of our Church. We are happy to say that Russian boys are beginning to be missionaries in other countries. So we will always "need" foreign missionaries as a general part of who we are.

**Evangelicals:** We now have many Russian ministers, but they have a poor education. We want to educate our ministers within Russia and in the Russian culture, but for that we need professors. The only way to have professors is to import missionary professors to work in our Russian schools, at least for the next generation.

**Lutherans:** Since Lutherans have been in Russia since the Reformation, we don't consider that any foreigners we invite are missionaries. They are basically just our guests.

**Baptists:** We existed for long years in the USSR, so we can do without any foreigner missionaries if necessary, but when we do have them, it is a refreshment for us, and they do bring monetary and humanitarian help.

**Presbyterians:** We came to Russia for the long haul. Our work isn't done yet, so we are still needed as a foreign missionaries.

So what did the Catholics say? I said that we are a long way from having enough of our own priests. Even now, because of the lack of even foreign priests, our parishes in Nakhodka and in Lesozovodsk are currently without any priest at all, let alone other cities that want to have a Catholic parish, like Dalnegorsk and Artyom, and other cities beyond our state. So we expect to need foreign missionaries for a long time to come.

And why are there so few Russian priests? Because:

1. The educational process for a Catholic priest is too long, as we expect all our priests to have a higher university education and then seminary, and then, if men aren't mature enough, more years are demanded, as if more time in solitary will help. So far, permanent deacons haven't been organized by the Catholic bishops of Russia.
2. Since all of our priests of Russia were killed during the Repression in the USSR, the young men have no local priests to imitate or follow, and we foreigners struggle with the Russian language.
3. When we came, the largest number of parishioners were already elderly. They remembered their faith from their grandparents. But they were not able to pass on their faith during the days of the USSR. Thus there is a much smaller number of young parishioners.
4. Roman Catholic priests have to be unmarried. This is a discouragement for some, especially considering the presence in Russia of pornography and the atheist teaching that having sex is just natural for everybody, anywhere, anytime. Permanent deacons could be a partial solution. More Greek rite priests would also be a solution. And more commitment to celibacy in the general Church would help.
5. We have no local seminary. The nearest one is in St Petersburg eight time zones away. Many seminarians from the backwoods of Siberia lose their vocation when they are so far from home and in the big city. Europe itself is becoming more and more atheist.
6. The destruction of the family means that boys have a poor image of what it means to be a man and take responsibility for such an important thing as the Church. Many boys have never met their living fathers.
7. Alcoholism is very, very common in Russia. Some of our seminarians have had genetic factors that encourage the development of this disease, coupled with a lack of family values which encourage sobriety.
8. Local young men see how expensive it is to support a parish. They don't see how they could possibly take on that responsibility seeing that there are so many poor people among parishioners.
9. The politics of the Orthodox Church is negative to Catholics more so than against anyone else, and there is always an anti-Catholic stripe to the media. According to pro-Orthodox propaganda, to be a Catholic is to betray your country. Boys are sensitive to this propaganda. (And this in spite of the fact that we have had so many heroes and



veterans of WWII among our elder parishioners.) Thus our freedom to develop our Church along normal lines is somewhat restricted (but not by the government—though the government could help by discouraging the anti-Catholic hate literature in the Orthodox churches and media outlets.)

10. Small family size means that there is only one boy in a family. To have children and carry on the family name is important to people. We need larger families.

Where do we go from here? Pray for vocations. Encourage young men who might have a vocation. Hope that the possibility of having permanent deacons will open in Russia. Hope that someday there can be a Catholic seminary in the Russian Far East. God knows about all of this, of course, and meanwhile we have five young men from various parts of the world wanting to join us as novices in Vladivostok this Fall. That is good news!

## Month of May Charities

*By Olga Berdnikova*

The parish charity calendar for May was full as usual. For the big national holiday, Victory Day (WWII), Caritas provided for the elderly beneficiaries of our program a package containing canned fish for making soup and sandwiches, and a bottle of honey. 72 elderly persons who regularly attend our soup kitchen received the gift.



*Larisa Michaelovna shows us how the packages looked and what they contained.*

The folks, who often live alone and hunger for human companionship, were invited by the Sisters of Charity of St Anne to a special tea party with a holiday concert given by professional musicians who performed the songs of

their youthful times. They couldn't resist the opportunity to dance.



*The partygoers. (They will be cheerier later!)*



*The musicians made quite a hit.*

Then there was the all-Russia "Children's Defense Day." It was a time for gifts to the orphans at Children's Hospital #3. We could give them all hats and booties knitted by our parishioner Yadviga Sigismundovna. The hats were really needed, as the city heat had been turned off for the summer, but we had unusually cold weather for June.



*Olga Berdnikova and Lilia Timofeevna, Caritas volunteers, sorting the children's gifts.*



*Our volunteer Galina Yakunya feeding kids in Zavodskoi*

## How to Communicate with Us

### Internet

Russian language: [www.catholic.vladivostok.ru](http://www.catholic.vladivostok.ru)

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## Opportunities

♥ Sponsor a needy child regularly. You would be a "Guardian Angel" for doing so. Contact us for details, and we will match you up with a child in need. Christmas and birthday presents for "your child" are welcome, too! You can mail them directly once you get the photo and address of the child from us.

♥ Travel to Vladivostok in Leisurely Style  
September 19-October 5 2009  
Steamship "Diamond Princess"

HOLD SPACE FOR JUST \$300.00 PER PERSON DEPOSIT. This is an incredible opportunity to visit our mission without the necessity of a Russian visa. Sapporo, Japan, Pusan South Korea, Qindao China, Dalian China and end in Beijing! The total price for the cruise



*Sr Stella playing the harp for the orphans*

Our volunteers also work at the Children's Home in the town of Zavodskoi where they were able to bring diapers and other things for the kids for the holiday.



starts at \$1590.00 per person. For info please contact [BarbaraHouplinGarcia@aaawin.com](mailto:BarbaraHouplinGarcia@aaawin.com) or 866-756-1049.

♥ The next airline travel groups are heading to Vladivostok in August and October from Illinois and California. It is not too late to team up to visit us for three weeks.

♥ Order your *Harsh Vineyard: A History of Catholic Life in the Russian Far East* by our parishioner Miroslava Efimova with translation by Dr Gerri Kelly from our Modesto office or our website and receive a discounted price of \$18.00 plus S/H.

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

## News Notes

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

● Fr James West and four parishioners from our sister parish of the **Immaculate Conception in North Little Rock, AR** were our guests in mid-June. They were very busy, but it rained a lot while they were here, and the daytime temperature was 50°. They had to borrow some sweatshirts from the American consulate to stay warm. But now the sun is shining already!



*Our guests pointing out that Lucky Tours is a company that really does exist. Their visas were arranged through Luck Tours.*



*Arkansan Rebecca Carr with one of the kids at the orphanage.*

● Recently a young man came to me at Sunday Mass and said, “Thank you for my son!” and handed me a beautiful photo. I was surprised about how he got a son from me! He said, “I guess you don’t remember that my wife and I came to

you to say that we tried to have a family for eight years, and it didn’t happen. Besides promising to pray, you sent us to Yuri Belozorov and his wife Victoria who taught us **NFP!** It worked! Thank you for our son!”

● Our national vice president **Terrence Kopp**, KCHS, made a recent trip to see our new offices in California. “I was really inspired by my visit to Modesto,” he says. “The ‘personal chemistry’ with Vicky, with supporters, volunteers, workers is **EXCEPTIONAL**. There is a true spirit of sacrifice and selflessness that certainly inspired me. We have much to be thankful for.”

● On June 14 we held our traditional **Corpus Christi Procession**. It was a bit cold, but we had a huge crowd in church for it. The musicians were just wonderful, including the violinist who played *Panis Angelicus* while the organ was playing in the background.

● **Fr John Miller** of the Diocese of St Cloud in Minnesota was a good friend of ours who arranged one of our very first major parish collections at St Mary’s parish in Little Falls MN, and he told me at that time that we were included in his will. We received word of his death which happened last October. When we worked together, he was the diocesan Vocations Director. He always said to me, “I have such pain this week, so I know that soon I’ll have another vocation!” Eternal rest grant to him, O Lord! And Fr John, pray for us! Thanks for your support and for your lifetime of priestly service.

● **Father Chris Zegger's** new book, *Finding a Hidden Church*, is the result of eight years of interviews and research covering the history of the Ruthenian Greek Catholic church in the USSR and independent Ukraine. Here you will find not only background history of the

Church before 1945, but the heroic witness of Blessed Theodore Romzha (killed in 1947), Bishop Petro Oros (executed 1953), Bishop Alexander Klaira who died in Kazakhstan, and scores of priests, their wives, their children, and other people who fought to keep their beloved Church alive in a hostile society. For ordering information, see <http://www.olphnm.org/>

- Wow, the orphans got a treat in June! Sister Maria Stella and two women **volunteers from St Paul MN** are here, and they are spending three hours a day in Hospital #3. They say that the kids are really well behaved, but surely look forward to time outside and with the volunteers--especially the boys. One child is a challenge because he is blind and deaf from birth, the result of fetal alcohol syndrome. I know they would appreciate your prayerful support while they try to figure out how to help him.

In the States they take part in the collection of funds for our "Fruit and Milk" program for our orphans. They brought 117 knitted hats with them which will be great for the kids in this cold summer, and have been most helpful in "taking up the slack" this summer when Fr Daniel was away.



*Volunteers Theresa Kocan, Sr Mary Stella Whittier, C.J.D., and Sharon King.*

They are also spending some time three days a week at the hospice. Sr Stella says, "I had my first experience playing the harp at the hospice. At first I played a couple of Irish tunes and more classical melodies, but when I played and sang the two Russian songs I know, they all sang along! The older women especially knew all the verses by heart, and many had tears in their eyes. I promised to learn more songs--Thank goodness I have a Russian folk music book with me from my mother. Several women talked about how much they love music--one of them, Susanna, used to

attend the concerts at the Catholic Church here, and another used to go regularly to the symphony."

- On May 1 there was a big parade for the "Day of the Worker" (**Labor Day**) in Vladivostok. Thousands of people, especially students, carried banners and flowers for May Day. This holiday started as a result of the Haymarket Riot in Chicago in 1886. There was a small group of Communist party followers carrying red signs with pictures of Lenin and Stalin. Their group was grim and joyless in comparison to the other participants. The Navy band marched and the atmosphere was festive! The number of people was impressive unless you know that the universities were mandated to supply a high quota of students and faculty for the parade on their day off. Still, it was an interesting event.

- Sr Maria Stella says: "May 8-10, was a **Rachel's Vineyard retreat** weekend for women who have had abortions. It was a great blessing to be a part of this--I've been active with this retreat ministry for the past five years in St. Paul, and it was moving to see how well the same retreat format works in Russian. There were eleven women on the retreat, with three leaders (I was one of the three). These retreats were introduced to Vladivostok in 2004 by a woman from Alaska, but it had been almost two years since the last one. This May retreat was very well received, and now we've decided to have a second one June 26-28. They're also planning a third one for October in Khabarovsk. I was so glad to have my harp with me--It turns out that the organist keeps the electric cords for the keyboard at home with her, so it would not have been possible to play the organ for the closing Mass on Sunday!"



*The Rachel's Vinyard retreat gang with Sr Stella in the back, right.*

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

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## From the development desk...

Dear Friends, God Bless America!

We've added a few names to our Speakers'/Mission Bureau recently! Thanks be to God for all 66 laity, religious and priests who continue to give of your time speaking at parishes and/or representing us at conferences and Catholic organizations. Becoming a member of our Speakers' Bureau is quite simple:

► **Parish speaking** - We pray continually to be invited to as many parishes as possible to speak about our mission. Most times a second collection is taken that enable the parishes in Vladivostok going. Our speakers have a few minutes during each Mass to talk about our work in Russia.

► **Catholic conferences or club meetings** - you and at least one other representative man a booth or table at a conference in your area to distribute mission literature. This year we have added selling our book Harsh Vineyard, Russian icons and religious goods at some conferences to help pay for the conference fees. Here are a few

upcoming conferences. If you live in these areas, would you like to help?

- **August 7-9, 2009 - Mid-West Catholic Family Conference, Wichita, KS**
- **September 20-23, 2009 - National Catholic Development Conference, Arlington, VA**
- **September 24-27, 2009 - National Council Of Catholic Women, Jacksonville, FL**

Please contact me if you are interested and we'll send you a Speaker's Information Packet. The packet is simple and easy to read information with sample talks for parish speakers. In addition to providing a critical lifeline of help for our mission, you meet many wonderful people and have lots of fun!

The Save Mart, Lucky, Smart Foods and Food Maxx SHARES card program in California is going great! We are raising an average of \$500 per month! By presenting a SHARES card at the check counter, Save Mart Grocers donates 3% of your total grocery bill to the mission. **IT COSTS YOU NOTHING!** The program is continuous so **please keep using your cards!** Contact the me if you would like a card for yourself, friends and relatives.

Thank you for all you do for our mission! God bless you,  
Vicky Trevillyan 209-408-0728 [www.vladmission.org](http://www.vladmission.org)