

Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society and Vladivostok Mission

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The Svitalskys: Vasili Ivanovich and Yadviga Sigismundovna

By Tatyana Shapozhnikova

At one of the Sunday Masses in February the Parish of the Most Holy Mother of God honored two Caritas volunteers who have taken an active part in the rebirth of our parish since the first days. Vasili and Yadviga Svitalsky are members of the parish from the beginning. "That was in 1991," he says, "we heard on the radio an invitation for Catholics to come to a mass to be held near the old cathedral. It was a cold and windy day when a little group of like-minded Catholics gathered by the wall of the church, mostly folks of the elder population. So, from that very day, Yadviga and I found our vocation to serve in the church."

Vasili was born in the Ukraine in a small village called Kolodrub near Lvov in a Greek rite Catholic family, where they suffered from a long time from the War and from the German occupation. "I got interested in photography already as a pupil. In 1954, right after my service in the Soviet Army, I left for the Russian Far East to look at the wonderful nature and brave people of the area. My camera was always beside me on the trip. When I saw Vladivostok and walked the hills and seashore, I decided to stay here permanently."

How many unique pictures Vasili took as he worked on ocean-going vessels! His talents developed with time, so that his photos have been featured in many displays and expositions. His photographs captured the most important moments in the



Vasili and Yadviga receiving their certificate of appreciation from Caritas Director Lilia Timofeevna

Letter from a Benefactor about the Guardian Angel Program:

Dear Fr Effing,

Thank you so much for your e-mail. I am moved to tears in reading about the situations that these families are in, and am feeling very ashamed for all the money that my husband and I waste on needless things when our brothers and sisters in Christ are living in such need. Of course we know there are MANY people in the world that are in dire circumstances, but it's one thing to know it abstractly, and another thing to see their faces and hear about their own situations... Such is the powerful and beautiful thing about this new Guardian Angels program that you're starting!!

I've forwarded your e-mail to some of my family and friends and hope that some of them might also feel called/moved to sponsor one of these families. We've all been given so much. May God have mercy on our souls for our selfishness and greed, living in our own small little world, as if we aren't all part of the Body of Christ.

I will be showing this e-mail to my husband so that we can talk about which family we'd like to sponsor. And in the meantime, be assured of my prayers for all of these families.

God bless you abundantly, Father, and your important ministry. Thank you for saying "yes" to God in your vocation and in your call to serve the people in Russia. May God reward you.

(signed).

Dear Benefactor, Historically, it happened this way: We were struggling to find ways to help in some of these bad home situations, especially where there were kids in real need. I have been telling benefactors that the orphans in Russia are basically well taken care of (except socially)--that it is the kids from poor families who need the help. So we wrote up some of these stories about kids we knew. The "Guardian Angel" theme seemed appropriate for people who would be looking after kids in need. (I remember a very liberal priest once said in a talk that he DID believe in angels, and he said why he thought so: "Kids need them!") So I named the program "Guardian Angel Program" and started with the parish in Nakhodka whose trustee was also looking for some way to help poor parish kids. That is how the program began. Thanks for your help. God bless you.

--Fr Myron

(Continued from Page One, first column)

history of our parish, and imaged our guests, our friends, and our parishioners. He uses his photos to speak about the joys and sufferings of those parishioners who have already died. But he often comes back to his memories and photos of his beloved Ukraine and his little village.

But today Vasili has his digital camera and his computer and printer which have taken the place of the old ways. In spite of his age, he is up on all the new technologies related to photography, and one can see the results in his most recent exhibition which was held in 2007 at the Arsenyev Museum.

Yadviga found her “second career” in her work with Caritas. Charitable service always takes a lot of love and sympathy for those in need. Her first career as a physician followed her childhood when she played nurse for all the animals in the neighborhood. But we’ll let Yadviga tell her story in her own words: “My parents, Poles, were very pious people. We lived in the Ukraine in Proskurov. From earliest childhood I remember going with my folks to the big, grand Catholic church, and we kept all the holy days. My grandfather was a contractor who built churches, although his ancestors were all in the military. My dad, Sigismund Julianovich Yushevski was a policeman. His brother fought in the Duden Army and my uncle was a military pilot. My dad was an honest, well respected man. But in 1937 he was arrested by the Communists and died in prison. In the 1950’s he was exonerated. In fact, many of our relatives were arrested.

“After dad’s arrest things were very difficult for us. Mom often was sick and hungry, and people treated us as “enemies of the people”. I was in the ninth grade. Grandma, who supported us with her intense prayers and holy faith, died. The churches were destroyed. To survive mom grew vegetables, made pancakes, and produced soap. How much I wanted to have just a taste of real bread! Our neighbors taught me to knit and crochet. Mom and I began to sell these things so as to not die of hunger.

“The occupation began, and in order not to be exported to Germany I had to hide several years in cellars, in country huts, and in the villages. Mom died at the end of the War. I was 16 years old and already had grey hair. The War scattered our relatives, some died and others were killed. I lived alone for a while and worked in Lvov. In 1946 my aunt Maria Josephovna Plotnikova and her husband Gregory Samoilovich, a military pilot, took me in. He had served in the Russian Far East from 1933, and they lived in Vladivostok! My best memories of pre-War Ukraine were related to my aunt—the greenery around the Bug River, the flowery gardens, and lively songs, our friends.”

When Yadviga got to Vladivostok she had to attend the Brown Women’s High School on Uborevich Street to finish the 10th grade. She was sick a lot, probably because of the War and the change of climate. She decided to become a physician to give people attention, love, and charity. In 1956 a medical institute was opened in the Pedagogical Institute (which is now the Far Eastern State University) and Yadviga was among the first class. “I remember that the entrance exam was given to me by

Dr Dubinin, who later founded the famous Dubinin Institute in Sunrise,” smiles Yadviga.

Even today Yadviga reflects the Hippocratic Oath bringing health and life to people. Warm-hearted, intelligent, responsible—she tirelessly worked for many years in her profession. She was well-loved by her patients and respected by her peers. But how could it be otherwise when faith opens one heart?

Now Yadviga is still trying to help people, although she is confined to their apartment by her health. How many knitted things have been passed on to the kids at the orphanage! She makes sure all 80 kids have knitted multicolored booties, and even sends things on to the Mary Mother of God Mission Society office in America, like booties, table settings, and doilies. Her joy and love for God is reflected in the multitude of warm items that her benefactors wear.

Our hats are off to Yadviga and Vasili for their long service and charity. We are praying for you, that God will give you patience in current difficulties, and yet a long life and love for times to come.

Remembering Heroic Missionaries – Fr Kazimierz Radziszewski (1838-1893)

The following is adapted by Geraldine H. Kelley, Ph.D., from Harsh Vineyard: A History of Catholic Life in the Russian Far East. Mirosława Efmowa, archivist for Mary Mother of God parish Vladivostok, Russia, has collected the stories of the priests who served the Roman Catholic population in the Russian Far East from 1860 to the present, in an effort to preserve history that was of little interest to Communist historians.

Kazimierz Radziszewski was only twenty-nine years old when he volunteered for an assignment that would take him to the ends of the earth in the service of the Gospel. He would remain there his whole life, dying unexpectedly at the age of fifty-five in Blagoveshchensk, Russia.

Born in 1838 in present-day Belarus, the young Kazimierz enrolled in the Mogilev-Minsk Seminary in 1858, and in 1863 was ordained a priest for the Mogilev Diocese, which at that time extended all across Russia out to the Pacific Ocean. Although other priests had served in Siberia, Fr Kazimierz was the first priest to serve in the Russian Far East. He was not sent to the Far East to convert the indigenous population, but rather to tend to the pastoral care of the thousands of Polish and Lithuanian Catholics who had been forcibly resettled in the Far East following the partitions of Poland in the late 1700s. The Russian czars would probably have been content to ignore the spiritual needs of these resettled Catholics – except for the threat of their contact with French Catholic priests

News Notes

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

serving across the border in China, where there had been French missions since the 1600s. Better to pay a stipend for Catholic priests from Belorussia than chance such contacts between “politically unreliable” Poles and French Catholic priests!

Russian settlement of the Far East had begun in the late 1500s with fur traders advancing to the Pacific in the mid-1600s. By the late 1700s, the northern Pacific had attracted the interest of a number of explorers from America as well as western Europe. Russia eventually had outposts in Alaska, with the ultimate reach of settlement extending into northern California. And while the main theatre of the Crimean War (1853-1856), fought by the Russians against the French, British and the Ottoman Empire, was the Black Sea, the navies of the belligerents battled in the north Pacific as well. In short, there was ample need for border patrols, soldiers and sailors to defend the Pacific interests of the Russian czars – and Polish men conscripted into the Russian Army and Navy would meet this need.

Fr Kazimierz established the first parish in the Russian Far East in 1867, in Nikolaevsk-on-Amur, the base of the Amur Flotilla. He named the parish in honor of Sts. Peter and Paul, and it served as the base from which he traveled extensively over a territory larger than the state of Texas. His diaries describe the difficulties of his travels – what with the Amur River being navigable only half the year and having to travel to Sakhalin Island by dogsled over the frozen Tatar Strait.

In 1872 the naval squadron was transferred to Vladivostok and the military garrison to Khabarovsk and Nikolsk-Ussursk, leaving Fr Kazimierz nearly alone in Nikolaevsk. He began the tedious bureaucratic process of trying to transfer the parish to Vladivostok, but met with resistance from the Russian Orthodox patriarch, who would not permit the building of a Roman Catholic church in Vladivostok until the Russian Orthodox church had been completed. Permission was finally granted in 1890, nearly 20 years later. The Vladivostok Catholics built a small wooden church dedicated to the Nativity of the Most Holy Virgin Mary in 1891, but Fr Kazimierz was not to enjoy his new residence for long, as he died unexpectedly in 1893 while on a routine pastoral visit in Blagoveshchensk.

The book can be ordered from the Mission’s website, www.vladmission.org or by calling Vicky Trevillyan, 209-408-0728.

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

- The mayor of Lesozovodsk has agreed to give us the building in Lesozovodsk in which our parish center is located, a former barber shop, in exchange for a debt that the City of Lesozovodsk owes us! It will mean that we will be able to repair the whole building, and rent out most of it to businesses in order to have an income in the parish. The rest of it can be used by the parish for expanding our current chapel there, and for a new area for working with the children of Lesozovodsk. We are currently feeding 50 needy children there every Saturday, and providing some auxiliary educational opportunities with classes and Boy Scout activities.



Some Lesozovodsk “Visitation” parishioners with guests in the chapel.

We will need to work on the building. Here is the proposal about costs:

- Replace the roof on the parish building \$20,000
- Replace the heating system in the building for gas \$60,000
- Renew all the doors and locks. \$3,000
- Prepare a new chapel. \$10,000
- Prepare other rooms for renting or for children’s social activities. \$10,000

- Fr Sebastian D’Silva is back from Sakhalin Island where he was the substitute pastor for a year and a half. Now he can return to his post as pastor of Our Lady of the Pacific in Nakhodka. He has to leave for India again to renew his visa in early November. Hopefully when he returns he can complete his residency application, and thus not have to go to India again for a year. It is very expensive for us to send him to India every three months to renew his visa, as we used to have to do.



Fr Sebastian visiting with his parishioners in Nakhodka.

- Annunciation Parish in Arsenyev has a new pastor, Fr Elliot, OFM. He will be installed soon.

- When our workers were removing a metal spire from the façade of our church they were surprised to find a letter hidden beneath it! It is a letter from the last men who worked on the church building in 1919! It was in German. They said that they were German prisoners of war (WWI) who had been in a Russian camp, but were released on condition that they work on the church building! There is a list of names. There was also included a newspaper from 1917. It is all very fascinating for us. I've asked Pastor Brockmann, the Lutheran pastor who is German to translate it for us. I'll try to have a fuller report in the next *Sunrise*, as I didn't get it in time for this one. Stay tuned!

- Our Russian charitable organization Caritas is trying to raise more money in Russia for the work of the Women's Support Centers. To help get the ball rolling, one of our American benefactors said, "I'll match whatever they raise during November up to \$1000!" What an exciting way for that benefactor to participate in our mission work—Not just the donation, but helping to get the job done! God bless her! (The other eleven months are also available, if you take a notion! ☺) And that's not all!

- Recently a whole truck load of women's shoes were donated to us. They had been confiscated at the border as illegal, and the border guards hosed them down so that they couldn't be sold as new. So Caritas has grabbed this opportunity to make it a development project, too! The shoes will be given away free, but donations will be accepted! So many poor and needy women will be getting new practical Spanish shoes, and the Caritas Women's Support Centers will have this source of donation income.

- Sr Evgenia Lazaro has decided not to continue working with the Women Support Centers--She is having to do more work in the village of Romanovka where the sisters have a program for poor children. Our new coordinator for the Women's Support Centers will be Mrs Nadezhda Morozova, who is the leader of the Center in Lesozovodsk. She has many years of experience, and her Center is one of the best, with a myriad of contacts and cooperation with various government offices, and with all the departments of the City Hospital. Meanwhile Olga Berdnikova has accepted the appointment as Caritas Development Director for a three year term. She is going great guns getting out new PR materials, and working on getting Caritas better known in the cities where it is working.



Nadezhda (right) and two of her Center volunteers

- Speaking of the Women's Support Centers, Olga Berdnikova, the Caritas Director of Development, has made a wonderful presentation about the work of the Centers. Here is a photo of the first page. It is a great powerpoint presentation, and we could even send it to you if you have occasion to speak for us.



The title page of the powerpoint presentation.

- The steeples are done and the scaffold is down. Because either Fr Dan or I are gone this Fall, we think we can't invite the bishop until around New Years to bless the steeples.

Here is a photo for you sent by a neighbor across the way who photographed the steeples at sunset. Every day we have people coming to visit the church building, now that it draws their attention because of the beautiful steeples. Sometimes people come just to pray. It is inspiring to see people cross themselves as they pass the illuminated stained-glass windows at night. We are trying to arrange it so that the building is open many hours of the day, but it will take a little more security work and personnel help to make it a reality. But that is a part of our evangelization program.

Now the workers are doing the toilets for the church building, and the library rooms.



The Steeples at sunset.

- We have another new situation here in Russia: Now people can get bank credit to help pay their bills, but our people aren't used to what that means. They think they can get a breather, but they only get further in debt, since the interest is 25% annually! Then the bank sells the debt to collectors, who make their lives even more miserable with death threats and nasty letters. Sound familiar? It's a new aspect of the new situation for Russians. We have to help by teaching them the dangers of debt and the advantage of frugality. (I sound like Benjamin Franklin now, don't I?) One family had seven different debts and suddenly the wage earner died, and the family will probably lose their apartment.

- I got the first tomatoes and peppers from my "garden," the "Garden of the Immaculata", which is in process of

being created, based on the wish of a wonderful benefactor. Finally it is coming together, and we hope to have it done completely by next summer.

- 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?

Please contact Vicky in our Modesto office if you are interested and she'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 start of a new school year always involves the blessing of students and teachers. It was held on September 6 this year.



Students lined up for their blessing.



An apple of the teacher is in order!

- We offered the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick Sunday on October 11 to those parishioners who are elderly or have serious health problems. Fr James Keenan of Dixon, Illinois, was here to help me, since our regular priests were gone. Thanks, Father, for anointing me, too, at 68 years old and counting.



Parish organist Marina Omelchenko and Dr Alexei Parshin.

- For four days at the end of July our church was packed full of people for an organ concert given by world renowned organist Aleskei Parshin from the Moscow Conservatory! It had to be the most dramatic organ concert yet, and attendees were well pleased. Dr Parshin always draws a crowd, and we are always happy when he can play in our church. He himself says that he likes the Vladivostok audiences, so it is always a treat for him to come and play.



The view during the concert.

- Just in time for the great feastday of the Assumption, the statue of the Most Holy Mother of God was raised onto the new reredos by our Chinese workers. It was “way up there”, just as Mary is, so it was quite an undertaking to raise it without damage. Naturally, we sang the “*Salve Regina*” when it was in place.



The statue in place. Sorry the lighting was so poor.

Opportunities



How the reredos looks from a distance, now completely painted and the artwork in place. Sorry that the color is somewhat warped.

The bishop's cathedra, also recently made according to the plans of our Liturgical Consulting Architect, Matthew Alderman.



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♥ Please consider having Mass offered for your loved ones. Its \$10 and will be offered in Russia by our Priests!! Did we ever in our life times ever think this would be possible? These stipends are the bread and butter for starving priests. Fr Myron has several friends who are from very poor countries who have no support either from their home countries nor the Russian parish they serve. Mass stipends are their daily bread.

Christmas is right around the corner. As a gift for children, grandchildren, friends and extended family, please consider a Mass offering as part of your gift giving.

Don't forget happy events such as Birthdays, Anniversaries, First Communion, Confirmation, Wedding, Birth, announcement of pregnancy, as well as family difficulty, job loss, education worries, impending surgery, illness, or remembrance of death date.

We have lovely cards we can send to you or we can send them to the person you are requesting a Mass for. We enclose your name on the card. See our web site www.vladmission.org or contact Vicky at the office. You may use your credit card online for fast easy quick response by our office staff. Fr Myron receives the request the same week we receive it.

A woman writes us every year with Mass requests for her family, She says " I never tell them what I am doing but I know it's the greatest thing I can do for them." She receives the card from us acknowledging her wonderful actions. Maybe someday her family will find the cards in her possessions.

How to Communicate with Us

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Happy Thanksgiving!

Thanks Be To All!

This is the time of the year when we especially reflect on the many blessings we have received and give thanks for all God has given. We remember our families and friends and how much they mean to us.

Mary Mother of God Mission Society is one big family comprised of many wonderful supporters, volunteers, and prayer warriors. We are old, young, and in-between, single, married, students, workers and retirees. We live near, far, and in all parts of the world. We are like any other family, each member is unique, each as God our Father created. Yet we share one strong and common bond – a hope for Russia and the return of our faith for our brothers and sister there. As with any family, we have our ups and downs, good days and bad days, but we are always there for one another when one is in need.

It is all of you who make up our wonderful family in Christ, helping our brothers and sisters in Russia in their need. **THANK YOU** for all you do for the

mission. **GOD BLESS YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES** this Thanksgiving and Christmas season, and always.

Sincerely In Christ, Vicky Trevillyan
209-408-0728



Canadian friends share our family Thanksgiving table.