

# Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society and Vladivostok Mission

Issue Number Ninety Two March 1, 2010



## First Steps in the Caritas Development Program

By Olga Berdnikova

On December 15 we held the first Caritas Development Reception to which we invited local benefactors and beneficiaries of the Caritas programs. They would be able to meet each other and see the value of the programs that they have been involved with. In attendance was the leader of the Office for the Realization of Social Projects of the City of Vladivostok, the Director of Children's Hospital #3, the Director of the Hospice Program of Dalzavod Hospital, the President of the organization "Women of Vladivostok", the leader of the Council of Honorary Citizens of Vladivostok, and business men and women who have been donors to our projects. Lilia Silina introduced the chief doctors at the various hospitals where we work, and each was able to summarize and laud the participation of Caritas in their work.

Olga Berdnikova, Caritas Development Director, prepared a great powerpoint presentation about the various Caritas programs which enabled everyone to get a "bird's eye" view of just how broad and significant are those programs, and how necessary they are for the poor who are the recipients. Some business leaders expressed surprise at how many programs we have and how many volunteers are involved. It was an eye opener which invites further participation. (Continued on Page 2.)



Fr Myron welcomes the guests.



City Fathers and guests at the event.

## First Pathway in Primorsky Krai Opens in the Village of Romanovka\*

Tr by Fr Daniel Maurer, CJD

Tuesday, November 17, 2009. A remarkable event took place last Saturday in Romanovka. The festive grand opening of the *Tropinka* (Pathway) Children's Center was celebrated in the premises of the former Romanovka housewares store after a complete reconstruction and remodeling of the building.

The center became a reality thanks to the support of the Juan Bonal Foundation of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Anne (Spain) and also of benefactors from Saint Philip Benizi Catholic Parish in Redland, Oregon (USA) who selflessly responded to the needs of disadvantaged children Russia far away from them. It is the first center of its kind in all of Primorsky Krai (translator's note: the southeasternmost state in Russia with a territory equivalent in size to the state of Wisconsin in the USA).

The Grand Opening was attended by Sister Matilda, HCSA, procurator of the Pacific vice-province of the

\* Text of an article published in the official weekly newspaper, *Sea Shore* (formerly *Lenin's Ray*) of Shkotovsky County, Primorsky Krai (State), Russia

Sisters of Charity of Saint Anne. She was representing the provincial superior, Sr. Milagros, HCSA, who was unable to attend because of a similar previous engagement in China. It was this vice province of the international congregation of Catholic religious sisters that was most responsible for seeing the creation of the *Tropinka* Center through to completion. Also in attendance were members of the Sisters of Saint Anne's community in Vladivostok and Catholic priests from Romanovka, Vladivostok and Nakhodka. Government representatives of Romanovka village, Shkotovsky County and neighboring towns and villages also took part in the ceremonies.



*Up to 60 children per day have been gathering at the new facility.*

With the help of a slide show specially created for the occasion, the director of the new center Sister Marina Malinina, HCSA related how over the course of 13 years the sisters have worked in the village of Romanovka, offering their help to disadvantaged families and children. She stated that this help has never been dependent on the religion of the recipients, and that the children's center will not be used for only specifically religious activities. Rather it will be at the service of all children from the ages of 6 to 16. Here the children will be able to be fed, to relax, to study, to read and to play. Because the village has wanted to widen and to improve its after-school activities for children, the center's staff also plans to provide lessons in art, music, foreign languages, interior design and handicrafts.

As he inspected the kitchen, cafeteria, activities rooms, library and recreational facilities Shkotovsky County Board president Viktor Mikhailov voiced his strong approval of the pedagogical and social-work aspects of the center's program and also of the renovation of the building that is now available for the county's children.

Joyful emotions, even to the point of tears, were common among all who were invited to speak formally at the opening ceremonies. One of the older speakers reminded the assembled crowd that many years ago this same building acted as a temporary sports center for the village school located next door before the present school gymnasium was built, so it is suitable that the building has now been returned to the use of the children of the village. Here they will not only find a warm welcome and much needed extra nutrition for their growing bodies but also they will be able to receive additional skills and grow in their intellectual pursuits.

At the opening ceremonies many warm words were addressed to Lyudmila Esen, volunteer member of the village's Women's Council, who for many years has worked with disadvantaged children, caring for their nutritional and clothing needs with resources from charitable foundations. For her dedication, care and guidance of village children she was called forward by Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Primorsky Krai Viktor Gorchakov to receive a special certificate of commendation.

Some invited guests came with gifts for the new center, among which was a new computer for the children's use. Speaking of gifts, the center is still in need of furnishings, books, appliances, musical instruments and many other items. Therefore gifts from individuals, charitable organizations and business enterprises will be gratefully accepted.

Notwithstanding these needs, this coming week will see the beginning of the planned programs for children that will be implemented by the center's professional and volunteer staff. This newspaper will be sure to carry further articles about the first steps of *Tropinka*, the only center of its kind in the entire state.

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(Continued from Page 1)

Money collected at the event was used to buy a patient transportation cart for the Hospice, and will be used for transportation costs for the training seminars for Women's Support Centers volunteers which is scheduled for July. The next program for the Caritas development project will be a charitable auction in connection with the Universal Children's Day in June.

At the end of the program the participants were treated to refreshments and a private organ concert in the church.



*The Hospice Director thanking Caritas Director Lilia Silina (l.) for the work of our volunteers.*

*There were refreshments before the concert.*



## **Four Long-Term Volunteers Brighten Kids' Winter**

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

This winter we've had four long-term volunteers, including Sisters Mary Stella and Catherine Marie of Sisters in Jesus the Lord from Kansas City, MO. The lay women are Mary Slattery from Wisconsin, and Jenna Himsl of Golden Valley, MN. They were here for some of the coldest weather with high winds that we can remember, and for the biggest snowfall in years. What heroines!

Mary put it this way: "Hi, my name is Mary Slattery. I'm from southwestern Wisconsin. In November, I came to Russia to spend three months volunteering. I initially wanted to go to Africa to work at an orphanage, but felt

called to come here. God has a strange sense of humor for me and my hatred for winter! While in Vladivostok, I have spent time at orphanages, as well as at a hospice in the city. My favorite group of kids has been the IHIV-positive toddlers. They are so animated and energetic! They have been a delight to spend mornings with, as they fight over my lap and shout out, "Auntie!" in Russian. After three months here, I am very much ready to go home. I am grateful for the graces I have been given during my time here; the beautiful infants, kids and elderly I've been able to come to know; and the realization of all I've taken for granted back in the states. May God Bless Fr Myron, Fr Dan, and all other religious who have dedicated their lives to bringing Christ to the people of Russia."

And Jenna said, "It's hard to believe that my three months in Russia are already coming to an end! After studying Russian history and the Russian language as an undergrad, I was eager to put my Russian to some beneficial use. This desire—and a lot of internet searching!—led me to Vladivostok. The experience I have had here is one that I will remember for all of my life. The challenges and joys of working in the orphanages and hospice of the city have broadened both my understanding of Russia and my understanding of myself. Moreover, from singing in the Sunday Mass choir to trying my luck at Russian baby talk at the orphanage, I think I can claim that my years of learning Russian verbs have been put to good use. Thank you, Most Holy Mother of God Parish for giving me this chance, and May God Bless you all!"



*Mary Slattery with her hands full.*

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



*Jenna Himsl speaks Russian, which didn't exactly help with communications with this young contingent.*



*Floor puzzles brought by other American volunteers were great for the boys.*

*New Year's party, anyone?*



*These older kids are from "Sails of Hope" Children's Home. This is Sr Catherine Marie with new friends.*



*The floor is the best place to play.*



*Sr Stella working at the Hospice.*

## News Notes

by V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D

- We decided that "The Last Supper" by Leonardo DaVinci would make a fitting connection between the stained glass window of the Crucifixion and the tabernacle for the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel. A California donor was happy to pay for the copying process. Fr Daniel hung the painting in January, in time for the consecration of the chapel altar which we expect Bishop Kirill will do when he visits in March. During the day, the window dominates the space over the tabernacle. At night, the painting dominates.



*"The Last Supper" when Jesus instituted the Blessed Sacrament and dedicated himself to his Crucifixion for us.*

- The Federal Government of Russia is talking about returning all church property that was confiscated during the Communist regime. Perhaps we will receive the churches in Blagoveschensk and Khabarovsk back!
- The Evangelization Department was complaining that the computers in their offices were too old, too slow, and often broke down. But we didn't have the resources to upgrade to better equipment. Then at Christmas a benefactor wrote to say that she was sending us a Christmas present of \$5000 to buy whatever we needed. Now all the computers in the offices are new with flat screens and more memory! A couple of the old ones will still get some use, though. Thanks, Dee!

- On Sunday January 31 Vladivostok parishioners had a 10th anniversary "pomenki" (Remembrance Meal) in honor of a very influential parishioner who died ten years ago, Yadviga Frantsevna Zelinskaya, so helped with the process of the return of the church building to the parish. They enjoyed the pomenki so much that now they want to do all the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversaries--Sort of Russia's answer to the parish spaghetti supper.

- From Dr Gerri Kelley: "After the last Roman Catholic priest in Vladivostok was arrested in December 1931 and sent to the gulag, a small number of parishioners continued to gather to pray the rosary. In the autumn of 1937, five of them were arrested, tried on charges of espionage, and executed at 6:00 pm on February 3, 1938. Miroslava Efimova describes these men, their families, and the harrowing events of their arrest in *Harsh Vineyard: A History of Catholic Life in the Russian Far East*", available at our website.

If you're interested in learning more about the history of the Russian Far East, a very good place to start is *The Russian Far East: A History*, by John J. Stephans (Stanford University Press, 1994). Stephans gives the following description of the broader context in which our Catholic parishioners died:

"The precise magnitude of the human toll in the Far East during 1937-38 is unlikely ever to be known. According to Lyushkov, about 200,000 were arrested (7,000 shot) or deported during his ten-month sojourn in Dalkrai [Far East] (August 1937 – June 1938). These figures do not take into account deaths in NKVD-administered labor camps [gulags] in the Northeast. Nor do they include the victims of his predecessors [early 1937] and successors [late 1938]." p. 220

"Terror cut down thousands of nameless victims tagged as enemies of the people as a result of personal scores, quota-filling zeal, and mistaken identities. Vladivostok old-timers recall how each night corpses were dumped into mass graves near Egersheld Cemetery. A Far Eastern Katyn awaits excavation at Glukhaya Hill near the Ussuri Line." (p. 221)

Thousands will unfortunately always remain "nameless victims," but thanks to the Vladivostok parish, five of them are known and honored each year on February 3. (The five "last parishioners" were Jan Strudzinski, Marcin [Martin] Malinewski, Sigizmund Brzezinski, Antonij

[Anthony] Gerasimuk, and his son Walerij [Valerian] Gerasimuk. Their death sentence reads that they were members of a Polish religious-nationalistic anti-revolutionary organization, which is how the Communist authorities viewed the Catholic parish.)

- *Hide Me Within Thy Wounds: The Persecution of the Catholic Church in the USSR* by I.I. Osipova, translated from Russian to English by Malcolm Gilbert, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, Fargo, North Dakota, 2003, 219 pages, illustrated, softcover. The book is available at the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection website: <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/general/osipova.html>

I recommend this book, and am so happy it is now available in English! In 1917 there were approximately two million Catholics in Russia. By 1939 the Catholic Church in Russia had for all practical purposes been annihilated. This spiritual holocaust is described in this book.

- Last Fall, the Challenge Girls Club from Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Manassas, VA organized a wonderful Walk-A-Thon fundraiser for our mission. Here's what Elizabeth Block, President of the Gainesville Chapter wrote: "The girls did a lovely job of raising \$2001 for your mission, despite bad weather and the swine flu running through the club. The girls are praying for you and the work you do, and hope the money raised will go to help the salvation of souls and the care of the needy under your care." Many thanks to The Challenge Girls Club, Elizabeth and Fr. Francis Peffley, Pastor of Holy Trinity, for your hard work and prayers.



*Challenge Girls Club from Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Manassas, VA: Clare Starrs, Bridget Nelson, Fatima Charlotte Davies, Kristen Davies, Cecilia Starrs, Melanie Lawrence, Ashley Maxson. God bless you!*

- For my birthday in February my helpers gave me a box of building blocks. It's time for my second childhood, do you think? (69 year old.)



*Happy Birthday, Fr Myron!*

The parish kids sang me this song, or something similar:

Once upon a time on Tver Street walked an angel all in gold. How strange to see a sad angel! Strange indeed to behold!

He had had a fight, yes, really! With the one he always saved. They just couldn't get together, Though the street with gold was paved.

Then a cat stopped him, and said, "You're an angel gone berzerk! Angels just can't be sad or drear! You're not an angel but a jerk!"

It happened that a boy on Yam Street Was walking sadly, too. "Where is my protector, my guardian? I just don't have a clue!"

At the corner the sad boy and the sad angel—Bang! They hit each other hard. Sudden light and lots of motion. Pain has such a great reward.

"Where have you been, my favorite friend?" "I was so alone and it was so scary," "without you, my old pal and bud, I just never could be merry!"

Even today they stay together, The angel always flying near Just where he should be, too, Guarding his favorite dear.

## Opportunities

♥ The 13<sup>th</sup> Day Movie Fundraiser in your local parish hall or theatre! Three separate showings in Virginia, Indiana and California have been a tremendous success. It's really fun and easy to organize! Contact the mission office at 209-408-0728 to find out how!

♥ Mission Book Faire Event. This is a fun activity for sister parishes, youth teams or anyone who wishes to help. Ask your pastor if you can hold a mission book faire at your parish. We have many DVDs and titles from Chesterton and the writings of St Benedict XVI and Bibles. Others on the Jesus, Mary, the saints, and children's titles. A fun and easy way to help the mission! Contact the mission office at 209-408-0728 for information.

♥ Many thanks to Bruce Gnatowski for his suggestion of "City Captains". We are looking for people who would like to help us develop our Speaker's bureau within your local area. Please contact the mission office at 209-408-0728 for more information.

♥ Can you help? If you live within driving distance of these conferences, we can sure use representatives to distribute literature for us. Please call the mission office 209-408-0728

- April 6 – 8 Minneapolis, MN National Catholic Educator's Association Conf.
- April 24-25, St Charles, IL, Totally Yours Conference
- May 21-22, Seattle, WA, Northwest Catholic Family Education Conference
- April 24-25, St Charles, IL, Totally Yours Conference
- June 2 – 4, New Orleans, LA Catholic Media Convention
- June 24-26, Pittsburgh, PA, National Right to Life Convention

♥ Hooded sweatshirts available. "Vladivostok, Russia" in Cyrillic letters on the front. Heavyweight. Many colors. Sizes S – XXXL. Contact the Mission office at 209-408-0728 (Fr Myron, do we have room to add the picture of the sweatshirt from last issue here?)

♥ Many thanks to CA supporters who have used their SHARES cards at Save Mart, Luckys, SMART Foods and FoodMaXX stores. The mission received a \$2100 check for last quarter. That's over \$6000 raised so far from this program. If you live near any of these grocery stores, call

the mission office for your encoded card (no personal information is on this card) Pass them out to your friends and family. It costs you nothing! The clerk scans the card at checkout and Save Mart Corp will donate 3% of your grocery tab to Mary Mother of God Mission Society! Thank you!

♥ We have eight Guardian Angels kids sponsored. 14 are currently waiting for sponsorship. Want to sponsor a child?



*The Irresistibles.*

## How to Communicate with Us

### Internet

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

English language: [www.vladmission.org](http://www.vladmission.org)

Sisters in Jesus the Lord in English: [www.cjd.cc](http://www.cjd.cc)

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in your will.**

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## From the development desk...

Dear Friends of Vladivostok,

We are so grateful to the many ways all of you help the mission. Great or small, through your prayers, tithing and volunteer work, Fr Myron and Fr Daniel are able to continue their efforts in Vladivostok. Here are some of the ways people are using their time to help the mission.

- The sister parish team at Church of the Nativity in St. Paul, MN have been taking care of preparing and mailing Fr Myron's *Vladivostok Sunrise* Newsletter for years! It's a huge undertaking coordinated by Gerald Alfveby. Once Fr Myron sends the articles and layout, over a dozen volunteers work to prepare and mail the newsletter by our deadline.
- Julianne Immoradino from New York has created scores of lovely beaded jewelry and bookmarkers for us to sell at conferences.
- Several volunteers from our Sister Parish in Modesto, CA, including Ron Lambert, Miyoko Hansen, and Craig Trevillyan, fold thousands of our brochures each month by hand! Ron just picked up 5,000 brochures he'll fold for us within just a couple of days! Whew! (I'm sure Ron would appreciate as much as I, if anyone had a spare automatic paper folder they could send us!)

- Paul Hasselbrinck and Marilyn Wassmer from IN just organized and presented a showing of The 13<sup>th</sup> Day movie with such great success, they're hoping to do another!
- Jim Weatherly of MN offers his wonderful talent to help with some of our computer issues!
- There are over 60 lay speakers and religious who offer their time to attend conference booths to distribute information about our mission or speak at parishes.
- Bruce Gnatowski from VA and Mary Jo Peyton of CA make countless phone calls to coordinate conferences for us. (Can you help with this?)

These examples are just a hint of the work and dedication from so many volunteers to assist the mission. THANK YOU to all mentioned and unmentioned, for your prayers, hard work and dedication in helping Fr Myron and Fr Daniel continue their work in Russia. We would like to recognize our volunteers in future issues of the Sunrise. Stay tuned! If you would like to join in, or have new ideas, we would be deeply grateful. Please contact me in the mission office! 209-408-0728

God bless you and your families!  
Vicky Trevillyan