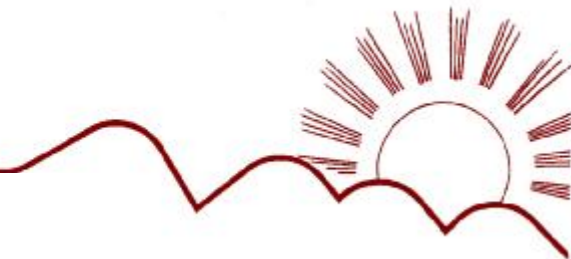


# Vladivostok Sunrise

Mary Mother of God Mission Society and Vladivostok Mission

Issue Number Ninety Four July 1, 2010



## Rachel's Vineyard Retreats – Real Healing Through Faith and Hope

by Father Daniel L. Maurer, C.J.D.

Between November 2009 and April 2010 I participated as priest-chaplain in 3 retreats called *Rachel's Vineyard*. They took place on weekends from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon.



*Sometimes couples ask to do their wedding photos in our church because they like it so much. This couple really impressed us with their upward gaze to God in the Gothic church which calls our minds and hearts upward.*

The purpose of *Rachel's Vineyard* is to aid the processes of forgiveness and healing from the pain and devastation of abortion. Almost all of the participants in each retreat were mothers who themselves chose to abort their own babies. At the time of their pregnancies none of them were told by medical service providers that their babies had genetic defects, nor were any of the mothers in danger of death or even of a serious health problem because of their pregnancies. A few participants were people who were not dealing with the pain of their own abortions, but had either advised or pressured someone else into having an abortion. For the participants who had chosen to have abortions, the average range of abortions per woman was 7 to 11. Over the three weekends a total of 15 women came to grips with the reality of having killed almost 150 children. Hearing their stories, I was hit full force by the magnitude of the tragedy of the sexual revolution in Russia. My heart ached for each participant as she sought relief from the chronic suffering that her own decisions had caused her.

*Rachel's Vineyard* is not an easy retreat to make. It requires boxes of Kleenex to wipe away the tears that are shed by the retreatants, who may never before have allowed themselves to cry over their departed children. Through the sympathy of a supportive peer group and trained team members, retreatants become able to tell the details of each one of their abortions or the connection with abortion that brought them to the retreat.

Like men everywhere I am uncomfortable in the presence of women crying, but because I wanted to experience the entire process of *Rachel's Vineyard*, on the first of the three retreats, after

asking permission from all participants, I attended all the sessions where these personal histories are retold. As the women spoke of abortion after abortion I was amazed that all of them, even those who had had as many as 13, could remember exactly what they were thinking and feeling and all of the circumstances and all of their reasons for deciding to undergo each one. It was clear that these women were honestly pouring out all these painful memories that were seared into their consciousness and had remained with them as gaping wounds. They were finally bringing out into the light the painful reality that they had lived with daily and had carried alone for years.

It is precisely through the tears of recalling so much suffering that the healing process begins. To start it the wounds need to be lanced, which finally happens when the mothers are able to talk openly to a group of people just like themselves about the children they aborted and the reasons why they thought they had to do it. This healing is not the result of a psychological catharsis. It is based on the God-given graces of repentance, confession and forgiveness, which require faith in order to be accepted.

Toward the end of the retreats there comes a time for the mothers to give each of their lost children a name, as they would have done if they had bore and baptized them. It is an intense exercise, yet the retreatants did not flinch from it because they intuitively understood its value. They knew that they had never forgotten what they did, no matter how hard they may have tried, which means that they had never forgotten these individual children. Giving them a name helped the mothers to relate to them as real people whom one day they hope to meet in heaven with God and from whom they needed to ask forgiveness. On the morning of the last day of the retreat there is a memorial service for the children, which includes a printed program with the names of all the children listed on the cover. During the service each participant reads publicly a letter that she has written to her children in heaven and lights a candle for them as the symbol of the baptism that the parents would have wanted had their children been allowed to be born.

The *Rachel's Vineyard* retreat is openly Christ-centered. It uses various exercises taken from Gospel stories in which the Lord Jesus is presented as a living, healing, forgiving Person. It has prayers addressed to God the Father and to Jesus Christ. The purpose of these exercises and prayers is to open the retreatants first to FAITH in God's mercy offered to sinners by Christ on the Cross; and then to HOPE in the Resurrection of Christ which makes accessible to each person the promise of their own resurrection and their children's, and together their happiness with God in heaven.

Throughout the intense sessions of the retreats, I said to myself over and over, "In Cruce Salus!" (In the Cross is Salvation!) Just as the Lord Jesus had to go through the pain and suffering of His passion and death on the Cross in order to free us from our sins, so also *Rachel's Vineyard* retreatants have to go through the pain and suffering of their guilt and anguish, their cross, to come to the glory Christ's Resurrection. In the Cross is salvation, only in the Cross.

Most of the retreatants first learned about *Rachel's Vineyard* by word of mouth from fellow participants in the 12-step programs of Alcoholics Anonymous and Alanon which meet regularly in our parish center. The first AA members to make the retreat had gotten up the courage to do so almost two years ago. Evidently they then recommended it to other group members. The word spread, and a whole new avenue of real healing has opened up to people who are not members of our parish (and most of whom probably do not practice any faith regularly).

During the third retreat it struck me that here in the atheistic former Soviet Union the only programs that offer real, practical healing of the two biggest problems in Russia--alcoholism and post-abortion syndrome--are both SPIRITUAL PROGRAMS. Although AA, unlike *Rachel's Vineyard*, is not specifically a church program, it certainly is a spiritual program, and for that reason was never allowed into Russia during Soviet times. (Step Two of the 12 Steps of AA states: "We came to believe that a **Power greater than ourselves** could restore us to sanity.") These two spiritual programs have the potential to make a great impact on the day-to-day reality of life in Russia, where still after almost 20 years of religious freedom, less than 1% of the population regularly practice any spiritual faith at all.

If more people continue to experience real forgiveness and healing through AA and *Rachel's Vineyard*, someday perhaps many of them will come to understand that the spiritual aspect of their lives is the real aspect. Then many will seek practical ways to learn more about the spiritual so that they can continue to reap the practical benefits of this "life lived in the Spirit" from which they have already received so much healing and help. Some will also discover that the source of all true spirituality is the Holy Spirit, Who is God, and Who lives in the Body of Christ which we call the Church.

Real forgiveness and healing are powerful spiritual gifts. They change people's lives for the better. But they have to be allowed to grow in order to last, and this can only happen if the source of the gifts is given the chance to

continue doing its work. In AA I have seen the power of the Holy Spirit infused into the hearts of people, giving them the strength not to take that next drink and to grow in wisdom and virtue as they make their way through the 12 steps. They openly attribute their restored health to AA, which means to their “higher power”, and they are willing to tell anyone who will listen that they owe their lives to this higher power, which was made possible to them through AA. On *Rachel's Vineyard* retreats I have seen the power of the Holy Spirit descend upon retreatants, who experience real forgiveness and healing from God who is merciful and loving.

It is my hope that the people who participate in these programs will realize that the regular practice of Christianity can continuously offer them even more forgiveness and healing and even greater growth in wisdom and virtue, so that thousands or even millions of people in Russia will begin to practice the Christian Faith of their fathers regularly. For that to happen Russians have to work their way through the façade of atheism and secularism that were imposed on them by 92 years of murderous communist totalitarianism and which have been reinforced in the past 20 years by materialistic cultural forces from the West. Are these spiritual gifts of real healing powerful enough to give Russians the impetus to seek out a permanent relationship with Jesus Christ? Will many of them make the connection between real healing and the sacraments of the Church? I'm staying tuned. What an interesting time to be here!

## How to Communicate with Us

### Internet

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## Our Volunteers:

Tom and Barbara Fitzsimmons from Modesto, CA, were attending a family conference in 1993. Fr Joseph Fessio, S.J., another of our great supporters, was one of the speakers. Fr Fessio announced he had just helped a new Mission in Vladivostok, Russia set up their email and asked if someone would act as their contact in the States. The Fitzsimmons's volunteered.

In addition to being key contacts in the US in those early years, Tom and Barbara collected religious items for the mission, who at the time had nothing, would load the items on his truck and deliver to Murphy Shipping Co near the airport in San Francisco. Mr Murphy kept a container just for the Mission. When it was full, he would put it on a ship via Hong Kong to Vladivostok. The life size statue of the Blessed Mother, currently standing above the altar of the church was one of the items. Tom recalls the man sent to help load the statue onto the container was a Jewish man. He asked Tom if he should touch the statue of our Blessed Mother, as he was Jewish. Tom replied, “Why not, she was Jewish!”



*Barbara Fitzsimmons with just a few of the hundreds of book covers and markers and rosary cases she has sewn to raise money for the mission.*



Eventually the containers had to stop, because Russia began charging heavy import fees.

Nonetheless, today, Tom and Barbara continue to work hard for our mission. They can always be counted on to help with the many mission activities of one of our sister parishes, St Joseph in Modesto, CA and in the Mission's national office in Modesto. Barbara bakes wonderful goodies for our volunteers! She has used her wonderful talents to sew hundreds of Bible and Magnificat book covers and rosary cases. These are made from old and discarded priests' vestments, donated by parishes across the country. Barbara also makes lace chapel veils for the Traditional Latin Mass. These are sold through the Mission website and various functions. She has sewn the habits for our priests, and vestments for mass in Russia.

Tom faithfully collects toner and ink cartridges and cell phones from a basket in the sister parish vestibule each week and sells them to a recycler. All collected funds go to the Mission. On top of everything, the Fitzsimmons have graciously hosted sister parish meetings and receptions for our priests when they visit.

Thank you Tom and Barbara! God bless you for your years of service to the mission!

If you would like to share activities you have had with the mission, please email Vicky at the mission office [usoffice@vladmission.org](mailto:usoffice@vladmission.org). We'd love to hear your stories!

## News Notes

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

- On the Feast of Corpus Christi we had **First Communion** for three of our Most Holy Mother of God kids. And next will be First Communion for two more from St Joseph's parish. All the Sunday School kids helped at the Sunday Mass, doing the readings, the Prayer of the Faithful, and the collection. Here is a photo of the three.
- Thank you to **Ted Lewis** from Wichita, KS. Ted edited down our mission DVD to 4 1/2 minutes for showing this brilliant short version just before our movie presentations so our audiences may see and hear about our mission. Ted also updated the long version of the DVD so our new copies contain updated contact information. Thanks, Ted!



*Anastasia Civukhova, Kirill Anisimov, and Angelina Zamoshina celebrate their First Communion. Donat Pavko and Evgenii Gregorai will soon celebrate theirs.*

- **1000th adopt-a-birth!** Congratulations to Mr. George Riess of Dayton, Ohio who founded and our benefactors who have donated to our "Adopt-a-Birth" program! We've just passed the 1000 mark! 1000 Russian children have been saved from abortion and helped to have a healthy birth through this program which was George's brainchild. Many more children have been saved by our Women's Support Centers, but the "Adopt-a-Birth" program is key for Russian women who consider abortion just because they can't afford the expenses of giving birth. Adopt-A-Birth is a program where a woman who comes into our crisis center is offered help to deliver her baby rather than seek an abortion. The current amount is \$20, which pays for a packet that CARITAS gives her to take to the hospital for delivery. It consists of sutures, cleansing preparations, anesthetic, antibiotics, soap, etc. The Centers also offer diapers, toys, infant formula, and help women with problems nursing their children. The Centers also offer NFP instruction, school instruction in chastity, Rachael's Vineyard Retreats, abuse support, AA and Al-anon introductions.



*Anastasia received the Precious blood from the chalice.*

- As you know, our **bells** were first rung in connection with the blessing of the steeples on March 21. You can now hear them ring!—on the opening page of our website: <http://www.vladmission.org/> They still need a little work, like electrification, but at last we can call the people to worship with bells, and celebrate weddings and funerals with bells! Thank you, benefactors of Poland.

- Brother Patrick Napal gave me his bill from the university for his Russian lessons for the next 7 months: \$1522.29. He is a very good student, and his Russian pronunciation is wonderful. The university does a good job.

- We just heard of the death of **Sr Leta Zeller** from St Francis Xavier parish in Poseyville, Indiana. She visited us last summer and made a donation of a clothes drier from the hospice, which suffers in the summer from too humid a location for clothing and bedding to dry. I'm sure she will have plenty of people to recommend her to St Peter at the gates. Eternal rest grant o her, O Lord!



*Seminarian Br Patrick Napal in the parish library.*

- I've been busy working for AA. We are trying to work toward having a 12-step rehabilitation center here in Vladivostok (the nearest is in St Petersburg, 8 times zones away.) And I'm also serving on the governor's committee to make recommendations about what to do about alcohol and alcoholism in our state. It's a huge problem, of course. My interest is on the two "ends" of the problem: education and rehabilitation. I think that if kids are taught the scientific basis for alcoholism, and the symptoms and early warning signs they can begin to deal with the disease themselves. And then there should be programs of help for those who do get addicted. I always say, "Too bad I'm not an alcoholic!--If I were I probably would understand the disease much better." Meanwhile AA celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a movement, and I attended the Open Meeting and celebration here in Vladivostok, which was attended by about 159 people from Siberia and the Far East, with the largest delegations from Khabarovsk and Vladivostok.

- **Ksenia Mintukova** came to see me when I was in Lesozovodsk. You may remember she is the little girl who needed open heart surgery. She is back at home after the surgery and she and her mom are doing fine. Here is a photo I took during their visit. Their thanks goes out to those who helped pay her mom's stay at the hospital with her for the operation.

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





*Ksenia back from the hospital in good health. Thanks everyone!*

- Any day now we are expecting the final **registration of Caritas** as a charitable corporation. You may recall that it was incorporated earlier, but there was a lot of disappearing funds, as was happening all over Russia. The only way to put an end to it was to disincorporate with the bishop's permission, since we had no official control of the organization. In the new corporation, Fr Myron will have direct control. It is called "Caritas of the Far East", and will include all of the Russian Far East. In the future we could work anywhere in the whole region without making any changes to our articles of incorporation. Also, the previous corporation had a religious charter, which made it difficult to work in schools, and made it difficult to ask for money in many places, as the organization was officially Catholic. The new corporation will not have a religious charter, so it will not be able to teach religion or run religious projects, like catechetical camps (but parishes do this themselves now.) As representatives of a non-religious organization, our volunteers will be able to speak in public schools and participate in other non-religious programs. Naturally, we will still have our own policies, like our pro-life policies following the teachings of the Catholic Church. Most of our volunteers are Catholics.

- **Sister Roberta**, who was the main musician at the cathedral in Irkutsk, has come to work with our Sisters of Mercy of St Anne. She will be our Sunday organist when Marina Omelchenko is absent. She will also reedit the parish hymnbook incorporate a lot of new materials that have been collecting. I'm pushing for her to continue work on sung Sunday Morning Prayer. Perhaps it will happen soon.

- The **steeple**s continue to have a good effect. There are new Catholics in church every Sunday. Of course they are out of the habit of going to church, but we can hope many will continue. A car stopped on the street to ask me "What time is mass Sunday?—We are Catholics!"

- The **Caritas development program** is planning its summer fundraising events. One is an auction, and the other is a program to help orphans with the cooperation of the motorcycling community of Vladivostok.

- We are considering starting a monthly mass in the city of **Artyom**. Naturally there should be a parish there, and it is currently in the territory of St Joseph's parish. Perhaps a monthly mass will develop into a parish, as was the case of our other parishes. We already have a Women's Support Center in Trudovoe, which is a suburb of Artyom.

- We continue to meet and study what we can do on **Russian Island** in terms of a Newman Center for the new university, and a rehab program. Bridge construction to the island is moving along at quite a pace. They have just unveiled the plans for the new airport in Vladivostok, including jetways and dual runways.

- Bishop Klimovich has assigned every parish in the diocese a **day of prayer for vocations** every month. We continue our weekly mass for vocations during the "green season".

## Opportunities

♥ If you're interested in a fun and easy **summer fundraiser** for the mission, our movie showings around the country have been a HUGE success. We have the licenses for the following movies for one year. How about having a movie showing in your parish hall or even local theatre?

The 13th Day  
 Maria Goretti  
 Father of Mercy (Venerable Fr. Carlo Gnocchi)  
 Jesus of Nazareth  
 Left To Tell (Immaculee)  
 Padre Pio - Miracle Man

St Bernadette

We're working on getting the license for The Scarlet and the Black. Great classic! Contact the mission office in Modesto for more info.

♥ Please use **GoodSearch** as your internet browser! The mission will receive 1 penny for every search you do! Go to GoodSearch.com, add Mary Mother of God Mission Society as your charity, and start using GoodSearch. See our website for more information. [www.vladmission.org](http://www.vladmission.org)

♥ **Catholic Conferences** are an important way to educate communities about our mission. If you'd like to offer your time to distribute literature, and maybe sell religious articles for our mission, please contact the mission office about being a booth representative! With your help, we can attend the following conferences:

- July 9-10 – Rocky Mountain Home Educator's Conference, Centennial, CO
- July 23-25 - Holy Spirit Conference, Fresno, CA
- August 3 – Catholic Marketing Network, King of Prussia, PA
- August 6-8 Mid West Catholic Family Conference, Wichita, KS
- September 2-3 Serra International Convention, Anchorage, AK
- September 3-5 – Winnipeg Marian Eucharistic Conference, Beausejour, Manitoba, Canada
- September 10 – Eucharistic Congress of the Diocese of Charlotte, NC
- September 24-26 – Marian Eucharistic Conference, Fresno, CA
- October 1-3 - Marian Eucharistic Congress, Fargo, ND
- October 2 – Diocese of Arlington Catholic Heritage Festival, Arlington, VA
- October 8-10 - Serra Ohio Valley – Great Lakes Regional Convention, Cincinnati, OH
- October 15 – Marian Conference at Boyne Mountain, Petosky, MI
- October 16 – Syracuse Catholic Women's Conference, Syracuse, NY
- October 23 – Connecticut Catholic Men's Conference, Wallingford, CT
- October 28-31- United States Catholic Mission Congress, Albuquerque, NM
- November 10-13 - National Catholic Conference of Catholic Women Annual Convention, Wash, DC
- December 9 –12 - National Conference on Catholic Youth Ministry, New Orleans, LA

♥ Right now we need a team of two men and two women to work for a month in Lesozovodsk with the 40 children that our parish there feeds every Saturday. Hopefully the

men can do a Boy Scout camp as part of their program. We have a special request from the County of Lesozovodsk Social Services Department to help provide some summer activities for these poor children in the part of the city where our parish is located. A Russian man and woman will join your team as interpreters. The boys mostly don't have dads, so some good Boy Scout experience would be good for them! The girls need help to understand how to be a young lady in a society bent on pornography and bad girls' magazines. Please pray that we get those volunteers and that we have the funds to support them while they are here.

♥ **California** – By shopping at Save Mart, Lucky, Smart Foods, and Food Maxx, and using your SHARES card at check out, our mission can earn \$\$\$ **It costs you nothing!** Save Mart stores will donate 3% of your grocery bill to MMOG. Contact the mission office for your free cards. Pass them out to friends and family.



*(Continued from Page 8)*

sons. No video game player, I-pod, bike, computer, even clothes or another pair of shoes, or favorite candy, could possibly provide the complete joy and the all encompassing satisfaction that comes when one shares LOVE - God's LOVE – in fully giving yourself to your neighbor in friendship. In my heart, all that was worth "buying" for my sons were airline tickets to Russia to experience life without the "things" that distract us from the real happiness that only our Father in Heaven can provide.

You are invited to visit Vladivostok with any of our **mission teams**, or form your own parish or University team! Contact the mission office and we'll send you information. I'm going with a team in September - there's still time to join us!

Thank you for your prayers and dedication to God's work in Russia.

God bless you! Vicky Trevillyan 209-408-0728  
[usoffice@vladmission.org](mailto:usoffice@vladmission.org)

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## From the development desk...

Dear Friends of Vladivostok,

We've all heard of Christmas in July, so let's jump on the bandwagon and talk about the real Christmas!

Some years ago, after our family grew so large (my husband is from a family of 7 children), our families decided not to exchange Christmas gifts. We decided to concentrate on giving more, rather than receiving to understand more fully this Holy season. Each family has been blessed in Faith and comfort, and we wanted to share our blessings. Instead of exchanging gifts to one another, we began doing something for others less fortunate throughout the year as our Christmas gift. Whether working in the missions serving food to the poor, providing gifts and Christmas dinner to families who could not afford to celebrate, "adopting" a child overseas to help ensure they eat an adequate diet and could go to school, we all focused on others, rather than ourselves in thanksgiving for all we had been blessed with.

Our **Guardian Angel Project** is a way to give to a child or family that has almost nothing. You may choose

a child or family to sponsor in Russia to celebrate your Christmas giving this year. You may even write to your family, and they can write you. We have volunteer translators here in the US and in Russia to help with this project. We are very fortunate in the US for all our opportunities. Sharing just a little of our abundance and most of all the spirit of loving our neighbor, will go so very far. Contact the mission office for the names and pictures of the children and families who desperately need your help, but most of all have lots of love to share with you. If you decide to help, Fr. Myron will provide more detailed information about your child or family. Make this an extra special Christmas!

One year, after returning home just before Christmas from my first trip to Vladivostok, it was time to buy a few small Christmas presents for my sons. My heart drew a complete blank. I was completely changed. After being among those in the Hospice and the orphanages, the humble surroundings of the mission to share only ourselves - our laughter and friendship - without material wealth, no earthly "thing" felt worth "buying" for my

*(continued on pg 7)*