



The Witness of Religious Life in All Its Fullness: Public Profession of Perpetual Vows

by Fr Daniel L Maurer CJD

Saturday, July 31, 2010 marked another first for our Russian Mission, the first ever public profession of vows of the Sisters in Jesus the Lord. The Mass of profession took place at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Raytown, MO, a suburb of Kansas City. It was an immense joy for me to be able to attend, made possible simply by prolonging my usual 6-week fundraising tour in the USA by one more week.

Vladivostok Sunrise readers will recall that the Sisters In Jesus the Lord were unofficially founded in August, 2003 in St Paul, MN when Sr Julia Kubista, MM, a Maryknoll Mission sister and a young lay woman, Kelly Whittier received permission from St Paul-Minneapolis Archbishop Harry Flynn to live together as sisters at St Agnes Convent in what is known in the Church as a “private association of the faithful”, the first step toward becoming an approved religious order. Members of a private association are permitted to wear their habits only inside the convent and to make private vows, not public solemn vows.

Last year, thanks in part to a good word from “Mary Mother of God Mission Society” board vice-president Mr Terry Kopp, the Most Reverend Robert Finn, DD bishop of the Diocese of Kansas City-St Joseph invited the Sisters in Jesus the Lord, who by then had increased to four members, to take up residence in his diocese under his sponsorship. He asked pastor Fr Steven Rogers and parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Raytown to provide the sisters with a new home in the parish’s unused old rectory next door to the church. They readily agreed, welcoming the sisters warmly and heroically helping them get settled.

In a surprising development, the day before the profession Mass Bishop Finn called Sr Julia to tell her that the next day he was going to make public his official decree raising the community’s status to that of “public association of the faithful”. When the bishop made the announcement at the end of the profession Mass the people greeted it with

joyous applause. This was the next step in the process that made possible the **public** professions of vows.

As a sign of respect and love for the sisters and his fervent hope for their future growth, Bishop Finn himself celebrated the Mass of public profession during which Maria Stella Whittier, CJD made her solemn profession of perpetual vows, and Sr Maria Damiana Lee, CJD, completing her novitiate, made her first profession of



Sr Maria Damiana Lee, Bishop Robert Finn, and Sr Mary Stella of the Merciful Heart of Jesus, after the sisters’ profession.

temporary vows for three years. The two sisters were radiant with joy on the day that marked the lifetime commitment to Christ of one and the first espousal to Christ of the other. For the happy occasion members of their families came from Virginia, the District of Columbia, California and Minnesota.

Concelebrating with Bishop Finn were this author and Sr Julia's nephew, newly ordained Fr Paul Kubista of St John the Baptist Church in Vermillion, MN. (The host pastor Fr Steven Rogers was unable to attend because he was called away to minister to dying parishioners.) Also in the sanctuary were three presiding deacons; three masters of ceremony and eight altar servers (four of whom are diocesan seminarians and four are servers from the parish).

An Honor Guard of Knights of Columbus led the entrance procession and filled the long aisle of the large church with pomp and plumes. Over 400 guests gathered to rejoice in the celebration, a surprisingly large number considering that the sisters had only been living in the area for one year. Guests included family and friends of the sisters, many of whom, like Terry Kopp, flew or drove (seven hours) from Minnesota; members of the host parish and several members of Coronation of Our Lady Parish in Grandview, MO, which has been a sister parish of the Vladivostok mission since 1995. Among the "Coronation Delegation" were Sister Parish committee members Glenda Merten, Kathleen Daniels, Bernard Lohcamp and Albert St Germain who all took turns driving me to various scheduled events during the profession weekend.

Lasting two hours, the multi-faceted profession Mass was a powerful channel of grace. Being a parish music director myself, I was especially pleased with the choice and quality of the sacred music, from the four preludes before Mass to the closing hymn and rousing postlude. With the help of a printed booklet all who gathered were able to join in singing all of the hymns in English and the ordinary parts of the Gregorian chant *Missa de Angelis* in Greek and Latin. The responsorial psalm and meditation hymns were sung by Sr Maria Stella's sister Meghan Whittier, a soprano with the national U.S. Army Band Choir. Other hymns for the rite of profession and meditation by composers J. Palestrina, W. A. Mozart and C. Franck were sung from the choir loft by the Benedictine Sisters of Mary (another new diocesan religious order). Instrumental musicians included violinist and diocesan seminarian Ryan Koster; parish organist Catherine Thiel and violist Therese Bart.

The purpose of these beautiful pieces of sacred music was to express, surround and enhance and the main reason for

gathering--the complex and deeply moving ceremony of religious profession, which took place after the proclamation of the Gospel.

After the Liturgy of the Word the rites of profession began for both candidates together. They included: calling forth the candidate (which this author was honored to do); response of intent by the candidates; and homily by the bishop, in which he instructed the candidates and taught all present about the most important aspects of the vowed religious life.

After the beginning and the rites of the first temporary profession of vows of Sr Maria Damiana the time for the rite of solemn perpetual profession arrived. It consisted of the following nine "signs" or actions, which taken together symbolize and effect the complete and perpetual consecration of a baptized Catholic to Christ:

1- **questioning** of the candidate by the bishop, in which the candidate states publicly that she is resolved to unite herself more closely to God; to make visible the love of Christ for His Church; to undertake a life of perfect chastity, obedience and poverty; to strive steadfastly for perfection in the love of God and neighbor with the Sisters in Jesus the Lord; and with the help of the Holy Spirit, to spend her whole life in the generous service of God's people.

2- **prostration** of the candidate while the entire congregation prays for her by singing the Litany of the Saints

3- **bestowal** by the bishop of an additional title onto the religious name of the candidate, which until this moment the candidate had not known. In this case Sister became: Sr Maria Stella "of the Merciful Heart of Jesus"

4- **profession** of solemn perpetual vows by the candidate
5- **signing** and witnessing the written statement of vows at the main altar

6- **blessing** and bestowal by the bishop of the ring as a sign of perpetual virginity and chastity

7- **presentation** of the Breviary to the perpetually professed, a special sign for canonesses, whose religious duties include the daily, solemn singing of the Liturgy of the Hours

8- **hymn** to the Blessed Mother, in this case the traditional chant version of the Ave Maria sung by the Benedictine Sisters of Mary from the choir loft

9- **exchange** of the greeting of peace by all members and associate members of the community of Sisters in Jesus the Lord

The profession of public religious vows is one of the most eloquent expressions of the meaning and witness of the vowed religious life. After the Mass I told Donnita Whittier, mother of Sr Maria Stella, that this was one of



The Sisters in Jesus the Lord (CJD), Bishop Robert Finn of the Diocese of Kansas City-Saint Joseph, concelebrants and servers in front of Our Lady of Lourdes Church after the Mass of solemn perpetual profession. Front Row L to R: postulant Sylvia Suarez; newly professed Sr Maria Damiana, Sr Julia holding the official degree of the Bishop raising the sisters to a "Public Association of the Faithful"; first solemnly professed Sr Maria Stella; Sr Catherine Marie; associate member Mrs Sharon King; seminarian (?). Back row L to R: Fr Paul Kubista; Fr Daniel Maurer CJD, Deacon Michael Elsey; Bishop Robert Finn DD; Deacon Nao Kao Yang (behind Sr Catherine Marie); Deacon Martin Goedken; server John Ward; server Joshua Bonello; Cross bearer and seminarian Adam Haake.

the most beautiful ceremonies I had ever seen. She responded that she too was thinking the same thing during the Mass. Then she said that at the weddings of relatives and friends unmarried girls usually dream about their own future wedding and marriage, and that this ceremony, with so many meaningful rites and even with a bishop presiding, was more beautiful than a wedding, so she was thinking that a lot of the young girls present were dreaming about the possibility of becoming nuns. In fact several young women who were there are actively discerning their vocations and are seriously considering a calling to the religious life and to the Sisters in Jesus the Lord.

I am sure that Vladivostok Sunrise readers and Vladivostok Mission benefactors will join the Canons Regular In Jesus The Lord in congratulating our sisters on the two new joyful steps they have so recently taken: becoming a public association of the faithful in the Diocese of Kansas City-St Joseph and the public profession of vows of two of their members. Also, please pray that they will be able to open a local community of their order here in the Russian Far East as soon as possible. The witness of their consecration is needed so much here in a land where so few people know anything about Jesus Christ.

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

Our Benefactors:

Coronation of Mary Parish in Kansas City, MO has been a sister parish for many years already. Every spring they have their annual fundraiser for the benefit of Vladivostok Mission--a plant sale and bake sale. Now that the Sisters in Jesus the Lord live in Kansas City, contacts with Coronation are even more frequent and fruitful. Thank you, Coronation!



Glenda Merten with baked goods and Bernard Lohcamp, "chief gardener" for the Mission.



Bernard's daughter—actually, his entire family helps with the sale. What a great Spring project!

14th Annual Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference

By Dmitri Kamil

The 14th Annual Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference was held in Khabarovsk July 25 through August 1. Youth participated from Vladivostok, Nakhodka, Dalnegorsk, Romanovka, Khabarovsk, Blagoveschensk, Aldan, and South Sakhalinsk. And for the first time it was attended by four priests and four nuns! Besides the parish pastors, the sisters were from the Incarnate Word community in Khabarovsk and the Sisters of Charity of St Anne from Vladivostok. And Brother Patrick of the Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord also attended. There were many familiar faces, and many new faces.



Sr Roberta and Br Patrick were among the attendees at the Conference.

The theme developed this year was “Christ—The Witness of Divine Love”. About how Christ, by coming in the flesh and dying for us showed forth God’s love for us. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a source of strength for every Christian. It is a great witness: how God gave his only Son so that we could come to eternal life. Of course we also have to be witnesses of God’s love as was Christ, by our life style, by our good deeds, and by our Christian joy, no matter where we go, to school, to work, at home, with friends—wherever we go.

For the talks at the Conference, the speakers tried to establish an atmosphere of a courtroom, with a dispute between God and the world in which the participants were to propose arguments on God’s side against the opinions of the world. And there was group work to see how well the arguments had gone and what results were reached.



Valery Titov and Fr Harry Menezes, pastor in Blagoveschensk, show off their Conference t-shirts.

Everybody liked the actors group which prepared several scenes for us reflecting the theme of the day. The blogger’s group kept up with events in real time with their website <http://vk.com/club4078481>. The liturgical group under the direction of Sister Roberta from Vladivostok gave everyone a lot of joy with the hymns and psalms they sang during mass. Psychologist Natalya Voitsel also did some great training on the subject of “How to be Yourself”. Of course there was Morning and Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours, and Holy Mass at the end of each day. There was some praise sessions, and



Some of the participants gathered for a group shot.

prayers of healing for each participant by the priests present, made all the more memorable by a sudden downpour of hail! Every day ended with a roundtable discussion of the day's events.

We had a spiritual day in the middle of the Conference, with the Khabarovsk sisters speaking about repentance, and we had a chance to go to confession. Afterward we went to the Amur River for a barbecue, but unfortunately we couldn't swim because of a chemical accident across the river in China.

A nice surprise for the participants was a gift of special t-shirts and Christian symbols. Then Fr Marcelo took the participants on a hike into the city to try to get some experience of witnessing to others, as it was the theme of the Conference. We didn't intend to confront people and ask questions. When people saw our t-shirts they naturally came up to us to ask questions, and to find out where the church was located and when they could come for a visit. It was a very interesting experience for us.



Holy Mass is on the schedule every day. Fr Harry, Fr Marcelo Brandon, Pastor in Khabarovsk, and Fr Christopher Koval, Pastor in Petropavlovsk, Kamchatka.

As usual for the end of the Conference, participants wanted a longer conference next year—ten days or two weeks. It was good to see how God worked with the energetic youth, and their interest to know more of God and about God, and of their witness to others. If Christ didn't die and rise for us, we also wouldn't know how much God loves us.

News Notes

by V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D

- Many people have asked us to **communicate with them by email**, but I'm sure our mail often winds up in their spam boxes because of our ".ru" extension on our own email address. If you've asked us to write you by email, please see that your email program will accept our mail. Thanks!
- It finally happened! After nearly 20 years of working in Russia, I have at last received a "green card" from the government! It is permission to live in Russia without any visas for five years, at which time I have to extend it, or become a Russian citizen. It will save us a lot of red tape and useless trips to Korea or America to renew my visa! Now we are expecting Fr Dan and Fr Sebastian to receive theirs, too! The parish applauded when they heard the news. Thanks be to God!



- When I edited the last Vladivostok Sunrise, I didn't have a photo to tell you about the 1000th "Adopt-a-Birth" baby. So here is the photo for you. The "baby" is twins!

Here they are in the arms of their older sister. “Denis (I) is actually #1000. It means that we have helped 1000 moms give birth by offering financial support at birth time when they needed it—support which came from American benefactors like you. Of course our Women’s Support Centers have helped many more women of all ages who didn’t that that particular \$20 help at birth time. 1000 times \$20 adds up to \$20,000’s donated for this purpose! Thanks, benefactors! And thanks to George Reiss of Dayton, Ohio who started this program for us.

- Speaking of **twins**, at the Women’s Support Center in Trudovoe, two sets of twins were born in one week! The moms were happy, but feeling overwhelmed without husbands. So we bought a two-seater baby buggy to help them out. They will share it.



Australian Guest seminarian Michael Cornell playing with the orphans at Hospital #3.

Brother Patrick surrounded by orphan kids. It is always fun for volunteers to go to the orphanage.



- We are really excited that in the new school year it looks like we will have six **seminarians**! Wow! How exciting! And we’ve been getting more inquiries about young men wanting to find a religious community to join. That is sure a good sign. I’d like to tell you all about them, but that will have to wait until they take vows a year from now—hopefully. We think it is important to maintain the anonymity of seminarians until they have made a firmer decision, as they are still young people, and don’t want their names all over the internet, if it turns out that they decide not to continue in religious life, which sometimes happens. Meanwhile you can pray for them!

- Speaking of **seminarians**, their bill from the university for tuition is \$3500 per year for each. The university does a good job of teaching foreigners the Russian language.

- Happy Feast of the **Assumption**! We had our annual procession for the feast. It is such a wonderful event to recognize the great woman who sits as the queen of heaven and earth! And Fr Dan, in his sermon, just couldn’t resist pointing to the beautiful stained glass window of the Crowning of Mary, which is, in the opinion of many, the prettiest window of all! Of course the window probably can’t hold a candle to what she will look like when we actually get to see her in all her glory! During the mass we sang eight Marian hymns, and, of course, I insisted we sing all the verses! It was great!

- Since this is the **vacation season** in Russia, we are getting a lot of tour groups of people from all over Russia. Most have never been in a Catholic church before, so it is quite an experience for them. We try to accommodate them, if possible. My turn to be in the church is all Saturday afternoon. That is fine with me! If I don’t have many guests I can get prayer time in, and work on my Sunday sermon.

- The **soup kitchen** for the elderly was working in two shifts, Monday and Thursday’s group has 34 people attending, and Tuesday and Wednesday’s group have 33 people. The attendees also took food home with them for their evening meal. Of course our soup kitchen was not like in America--for the homeless. Here everyone has a home, as it is a constitutional right. The soup kitchen is for those who can’t afford to buy food, and the clients are all recommended to us officially by the county social service departments as being people really in need. Often they are elderly folks who have outlived their children, and are thus also lonely and in need of social activity.

Unfortunately the funding for this program, which came from Spain, ceased, and we have thus far not found

another funder. The Juan Bonal Foundation supported the program beginning in 2005, at about \$2000 per month.

The lack of funding is also a problem for the café where the program took place, as the number of meals they serve will be decreasing, so probably some cooks will lose their jobs. The elderly are disappointed, of course, but we've received letters from them asking "thanks for your help all these years."

- In June Fr Dan organized three nights of **organ concerts**. The organist was Dr Alexei Parshin from the Moscow Conservatory. It was his fifth concert series with us. It was a sell-out crowd, and people are very grateful. After each concert someone talks to us about how to become a Catholic. Maybe some people put off the religious questions in life, but since they were here for a concert, they have a chance to ask questions.

- If there's a place in Vladivostok which is always busy, it is the **Omega University Program's Culture Club**. It meets every Wednesday from 6:00 to 9:00 at the sister's old apartment on Dalzavod Street. A wide range of youth gather, interested in a variety of subjects from fine arts, psychology, to current political problems. Every meeting has a theme, which is decided upon at each meeting for the next one. The discussion takes place over a cup of tea.

Sometimes the action is musical in form, or reading of literature, psychological training, spiritual reflection, and sometimes viewing a film. Then there always follows a discussion. Sometimes the participants have a read a book or article in advance for discussion, and sometimes the participants themselves perform. Sometimes they plan the meeting as a formal dance ball, and sometimes they take a hike in nature. Usually the discussions are wide-ranging and can be hot, as opinions vary. But always interesting and constructive. The Club has its own website so participants can keep up with club events.

The Club already has developed its special atmosphere and its range of interests. Here you can get acquainted with interesting and educated people. Anybody can attend, and it is free.

- **Hacienda Restaurants** in Evansville, Indiana have a "give back" night when 20% of each client's bill is donation to a charity. Benefactors in Evansville arranged a night for us—August 31. Thanks, benefactors! It made me hungry just thinking about it! I hope the response was great! Salsa, anybody?

How to Communicate with Us

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theatre. It makes a great family night! How about dedicating your fundraiser for a specific program such as the Women's Support Centers, Seminarian Support, Adopt-a-Grandma, etc.

- **SHARES Card Fundraiser** – California – We just received our latest quarterly check for the SHARES card program. To date, you have raised \$10,149.06 for the mission! Wow! That's a lot of groceries! **Thank you!** This program costs you nothing to participate. Contact the mission office for your FREE cards. When you shop at Save Mart, Lucky's, Food Maxx or Smart Foods grocery stores, the check clerk will swipe your MMOG Shares card. Nothing else to do! Save Mart Corporation will donate 3% of your grocery bill to MMOG! Pass them out to friends and family! Does your grocery store chain have a similar program? Please let us know! Please contact the mission office for more information - 209-408-0728. Thank you, and may we all continue to pray for one another and the work our missionaries are doing at home and abroad to revive the Catholic Church in Russia.

God bless you, Vicky Trevillyan
St Therese, Pray for us!

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Dear Friends,

On October 1, we will celebrate the Feast Day of St Therese of the Child Jesus, (Lisieux) one of the Doctor's of the Church, and Patron Saint of Missions and Missionaries. As a cloistered Carmelite nun, St Therese did not go out into the world to do her work, but she served as a powerful missionary through her fervent prayers for those who do. Whether through prayer, activity in our local parishes, or serving on a mission team in Vladivostok, we all serve as missionaries and ambassadors of Christ, as we help the Church in Russia. Our deepest gratitude to all our missionaries for their prayers and the many works they do!

● **Get your Womens Support Center and Caritas 2011 Calendars!** The WSC and Caritas Development staff and volunteers have come up with two wonderful 2011 calendars for their fundraising! Each calendar page is 8 1/2 x 11, saddle stitched, with previous and next month displayed at the bottom of the current month. There's a place for notes too! Each month on the WSC Pro-Life calendar there is a picture of a smiling baby saved from abortion. The Caritas calendar displays pictures each month of the many charitable works and their smiling recipients! Suggested donation is \$10 per calendar.

Contact us to request your calendars for home and office, or order from our website: www.vladmission.org.

● **Newsletter volunteers** – Minnesota - Every other month for many years, many wonderful and dedicated volunteers, mostly from our sister parish, Church of the Nativity, in St Paul, MN, prepare and mail out the Vladivostok Sunrise written by Fr Myron. With increasing numbers of newsletters going out, and many of the volunteers getting older and unable to continue volunteering, more help is needed. If you would be interested in volunteering to insert envelopes and package our newsletter every other month, please contact the mission office or Gerald Alfveby at (651) 699-4421. Many thanks to Nativity Parish and company!

● **Catholic Movie Presentations** – Volunteers throughout the US have organized fundraisers in Arkansas, California, Indiana, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, showing great Catholic movies. These dedicated volunteers have raised over \$11,000 while spreading the message of our mission to other Catholics and having lots of fun! Thank you to all volunteers and supporters of our movies! Ask you pastor to have a movie showing in your parish hall or, you can even have a showing at a local

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