



# Vladivostok Sunrise Russia Mission



Mary Mother of God Mission Society: Reviving the Roman Catholic Church in Eastern Russia

Number 132 November 2016



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## 2016's Youth Conference

*By Brother Nikita Kusharev, C.J.D.*

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy!”—  
These words from the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew were presented to the Catholic youth from the whole world as the theme of their reflection for those who answered to the call of Pope Francis and travelled to Cracow this summer. But we gathered in Vladivostok to share with one



*The Beautiful location on Russian Island was part of the advantage of this year's conference.*

another according to the tradition established 20 years ago as the "Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference." On the same dates as in Poland, we pondered the Lord's Mercy toward us, and felt our unity as brothers and sisters in Christ, even with those gathered with the Pope. With us Russians were American student members of FOCUS, the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, who already for the fifth time have come to Russia to be with us, to pray, to laugh, to help, and to give advice. How wonderful it is that our world, so full of borders and warnings, conflicts and antipathies, can still experience that Christ breaks down the barriers that divide people.

Some participants spoke English, some Russian. Some knew very little about their faith, while others had a lot of experience to share. Some came from half a world away to be with us in Vladivostok (and some of the American even flew across the Atlantic Ocean, and then across all of Russia to be with us!) and some just needed a ride on the city bus to be on Russian Island at the Sisters' in Jesus the Lord's convent to hear the words of our Teacher, "Blessed are the

merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Each day of the conference we had a chance to open for ourselves some new aspect of the mystery of God's mercy, in the sacraments of the Church, in the lives of our brothers and sisters who have already become saints, in the aid we



*The Sisters congratulate Fr Myron on the founding of the Youth Conference 20 years ago.*

give to those in need with the works of our hands. As this was the 5<sup>th</sup> international conference, we had the chance to share with participants from Russia, America, India, the Philippines, Spain, and Indonesia, showing the universality of the Church.

Thank you, *Renovabis*, of the Bishops' Conference of Germany for sponsoring our Conference.

**Mary Mother of God Mission Society**

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*Some points are best illustrated with a skit.*



Our Parishioners:

## **Pavel Savchenkov, M.D.**

Born in 1986, son of a kindergarten teacher and a navy captain, he was baptized at age 14 in the Orthodox Church, but did not find what he was looking for. At age 15, a Catholic friend invited him to church, and after a while, he started attending the catechism classes for adults. This helped him so much—everything made sense. He decided to enter the Church at Easter. He started training as an altar server every week before Sunday Mass. He attended the diocesan training program to become a certified catechist, and he was invited to teach Sunday school, to prepare the oldest group of kids for confirmation. By now he is a pro, as he's been preparing young adults now at the parish for about ten years!

Father Myron encouraged him to go to Austria to learn English, and so he attended the Language and Catechetical Institute (LCI) in Gaming, Austria, 2007-8.

Pavel showed his sense of service by going to the village of Romanovka every Saturday with the Sisters of the Charity of St. Ann for several years, assisting the sisters in their work at the home for the elderly, visiting shut-ins, and leading communion services on the weeks when there was no priest. Eventually, he took charge of the charity work at the home for the elderly.

In 2011, Father Myron invited Pavel to organize the annual Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference. This was the first international conference, with a mission team from the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) attending. Father told him that he would need to plan ahead for the bi-lingual aspects. Pavel loves challenges and being creative, and the conference came together very well. Regarding the annual conference, Pavel says that it is “a chance for us to practice our faith every minute.” The challenges involved include the language barrier and different levels of faith among participants, but the traditions of the conference, such as all-night adoration and a closing campfire draw everyone together.

Meanwhile Pavel had continued his higher education. In 2011, he became a licensed medical general practitioner, and in 2013, a brain surgeon with regular duties at the Thousand Bed Hospital in Vladivostok where he is greeted by accident victims nearly every day where he struggles to save their lives and health.

In 2015, he was married, and now has a little son, just baptized on September 4, 2016. Pavel is grateful to God for the Church and for his faith, and we are grateful for Dr Savchenkov!



*The sisters are great musicians, here playing for Christmas Midnight Mass*

## **The Story of the Canonesses in Jesus the Lord in Vladivostok, Russia**

*by Sister Maria Stella, CJD*

The Canonesses in Jesus the Lord sent two sisters from Kansas City—Sister Maria Stella and Sister Catherine Marie—for the first time in November, 2009, for three months. We were here on humanitarian visas, and we went regularly to the orphanage and hospice, helped restart Rachel's Vineyard retreats (for healing after abortion) with Natasha Anisimova, helped with the parish music programs, including St. Joseph parish in Artyom and Visitation Parish, Lesozavodsk. From 2009 to 2013, we came six times to Russia, returning regularly to America to renew our three month visas. In 2011, a third sister joined us for the summer, Sr Faustina. With the help of some volunteers and a Fellowship of Catholic University Students' mission team (FOCUS) we organized the first annual Lesozavodsk children's gathering—a 5-day affair. Since 2014 we sisters volunteer regularly with preschool children at Parus Nadeshdi [children's home] using the Montessori Method; we help at the hospice for the poor elderly, direct the parish choir, coordinate the young adult group, and help with a parish Bible group.

On June 9, 2013, we sisters received a green card, and came to Vladivostok to stay, and in January Sr. Faustina joined us. We moved to the convent on Russian Island, a part of the city of Vladivostok. The Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference was held at the convent in July, 2014, with 25 women staying there, and the 25 men commuting each day from the parish center in the city.

How did we Sisters happen to come to Russia? In 1999, Sister Julia Kubista, MM, of St Paul, Minnesota, met Fr

Myron Effing and Fr Daniel Maurer at St Agnes Parish Convent, where the American office of Mary Mother of God Mission Society was located at the time (now in Modesto, CA). Sister Julia helped them in any way she could, such as sewing Boy Scout scarves, and one day found out that Father Myron's greatest expressed need was sisters for the Russian Far East. He was always trying to find communities of sisters to help in the various parishes in his deanery. For quite some time, Sr Julia had been hearing in prayer something about starting a new religious community, but could not picture what it would be like. She knew that many times in history, new religious communities have formed in order to respond to a new need in the church or in society. She offered to try to start a sister community for Fr Myron, in the canoness tradition. In July, 2002, she put a flyer into the English version of the Vladivostok Sunrise. Kelly Whittier saw that flyer the day after returning from World Youth Day in Toronto, Canada, and responded, entering the new community in August, 2003 as me--Sr Maria Stella. I had first learned of the mission in Vladivostok several years before, when Fr Daniel Maurer was the guest speaker at mom's prayer group. Sister Catherine Marie came in 2005, Sr Maria Damiana in 2007, Sr Faustina Marie in 2011, and Sister Gemma Maria in 2013.



*Mother Julia, Sr Maria Stella, Sister Catherine Marie, Sr Maria Damiana, and Sister Faustina Marie.*

The Canonesses in Jesus the Lord are a sister community for the Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord (CJD). The sisters began community life together in 2003 in St Paul, Minnesota, and in 2010 were established in the Diocese of Kansas City-St Joseph, Missouri. They became officially part of the diocese of St Joseph in Irkutsk, Russia, in 2013, when their residency permits were granted.

What are canonesses regular anyway? It means that we sisters follow the Rule of St Augustine, and sing the Liturgy of the Hours together with the faithful, when possible. We

also have the tradition of stability, which means that once a house is established, the sisters will not be transferred to other locations, and intend to stay in that particular place for life. We sisters make a daily silent Holy Hour, and pray the rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet together. As a community, we especially pray for church unity, for pro-life intentions, vocations for all religious communities, the Catholic parishes in the Irkutsk diocese, and for the sick each day, through the intercession of Our Lady, St Joseph, and the Sacred Heart. Our patronal feast is the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The sisters help build up the faith of the parish, which includes inviting parishioners to join us in prayer and works of mercy. Our spiritual intention is to live in Jesus, to be more conformed to Him each day, in order to "bring Jesus to others, and others to Jesus." (St. John Paul II) We are contemplative-active sisters, which means that in addition to praying together, we serve actively in the wider community several hours each day. Community life is important and we have daily recreation together. We make a monthly one-day retreat and an annual week-long retreat as well. Currently we are six sisters, three in America and three in Vladivostok. The sisters in America are also helping to build up their parish according to the needs of the pastor through prayer, sacred music, pro-life work, including Rachel's Vineyard Retreats, vocation work, catechesis, and bringing Holy Communion to the sick.

Naturally, we'd be happy for more young women to join us! [srmariastella@gmail.com](mailto:srmariastella@gmail.com)

## News Notes

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

- Recently I got a letter from Fr Inosensius in Maumere that the state power company has **installed electricity** at our seminary—We had been using our own generator! The payment for the installation was 35,000,000 Indonesian Rupiahs, or about \$2692. It involved running a new major cable and transformer to our facilities "in the jungle". Fr Ino says, "Now we have the electricity day and night. It will help our seminarians and me to do our work and our prayers and our studies." He said that when the generator was the source of electricity, all the receptacles in our small buildings were full of people's cell phones and computers being recharged! A modern jungle, I'd say, where even all the kids have cellphones!
- Fr Sebastian is worried a lot that there have been **cost overruns** on the church construction in Nakhodka that he wasn't planning for, so things will be more expensive than the original project. It would be great if they could have the first mass there on December 8, the parish feast day of Our

## Caritas Charitable Works Summary

1. **Six Women's Support Centers** (crisis pregnancy centers) throughout our state are very busy, including the new one in Romanovka. With the reduced economy of Russia due to low oil prices, the tendency toward abortion is increased, so that the Centers are busier than ever. There were 665 clients served in the first quarter of 2016 alone!
2. There are 73 children currently sponsored by our benefactors in the **Guardian Angel Program**. This is a regular monthly donation to help poor children.
3. **Trapinka** is the after school program for kids in Romanovka. Currently about 40 kids participate. This is a joint program of Most Holy Mother of God Parish and the Sisters of Charity of St Anne.
4. **Soup Kitchen**, a program for the elderly poor currently can serve about 40 people with a pack of food for them to take home.
5. **Sunday Club** is the tea and coffee program after Sunday Masses in Vladivostok to allow parishioners more social time together. Otherwise the city is too big for parishioners to get to know each other. It is also a time for parishioners to share events, like birthdays, anniversaries, weddings.
6. **Lesozavodsk Kids**. Currently the Parish of the Visitation in Lesozavodsk serves a meal to about 50 children every weekend. As a parishioner observed, "We got tired of seeing the kids rummaging through the garbage bins for something to eat."
7. **Aid to Elderly Handicapped**. This includes a variety of aid, depending upon need and what we have available. Usually food, clothing, wheelchairs, walkers, and sometimes volunteer sitters.
8. **Project Hope**. This program, started by Blessed Sacrament Parish of Dayton, Ohio, provides medicines for those who cannot afford them. A recent case was a father of seven children who died of Leukemia.
9. The **Hospice** is located at Dalzavod City Hospital. Volunteers from our parish visit the sick, help at feeding time, and provide pastoral care when needed. 126 visits totaling 378 hours were provided in 2015, including 2580 sandwiches served by our volunteers. Recently one patient was baptized and one patient received the anointing of the sick before death.
10. **Grandma Mentoring** is our program to help orphans and institutionalized kids by providing volunteers, especially elderly who need additional income, to be with them. We help all year, but help is especially needed to supervise kids on sunny summer days when the children can go outside. In 2015 128 visits were made by 208 people to the orphanage. Sr Faustina also provided 79 Montessori classes to preschoolers in one institution, *Parus Nadezhdi*.
11. We should also mention our priests who provide the **Sacraments of Healing** for parishioners of six parishes regularly and daily feed us with the Bread of Life?—These priests and parishes are also supported by our benefactors.

**Benefactors are welcome to make donations to these charity programs.**

**Remember Mary Mother of God Mission Society in your will!**

Lady of the Pacific, even if some parts of the construction would be still raw! We will count on the Virgin Mary to help!

- In Vladivostok we were **struck by lightning** during a storm in late August!--probably through one of the bell towers of the church, or maybe through the high tension lines that run near the church. About 30 light bulbs were blown out, the internet connection was ruined, the telephone system was damaged, some electric receptacles were blown off the walls, and the electronic keys for the church doors didn't work. The transformer for the electronic organ was damaged, so we'll have to replace it. Thankfully, it seems that the organs and my computer weren't damaged! Lightning is really rare in Vladivostok, so it was quite a sudden surprise. At least it was nice that the storm brought cooler weather. Meanwhile our electrician is scrambling to restore all the services.

- In September I was happy to visit St John the Baptist Parish in Edgar, **Wisconsin**, the sister parish of Visitation Parish in Lesozavodsk, and Immaculate Conception Parish in Springville. It had been four years since I last visited Edgar, and I was really pleased by the development of the parish and its plant. The Springville parish is also an active parish, growing rapidly and thinking about expanding their facilities. Northern Wisconsin is so like the area in Primorsky State where we are located—beautiful woods and many grain fields! They invited me to speak to the students at their schools, which was also fun and interesting. Thank you parishioners!

- Our new **Diego Cera pipe organ** was featured in an article in *The American Organist* journal (page 104). The article was written by Jennifer Pascual of St Patrick's Cathedral in New York, who was with us at the special concert for the dedication of the new organ this spring. (See *Vladivostok Sunrise* #130, pg 6.)

- On October 5 we held our annual **executive board meeting** of Mary Mother of God Mission Society at our sister parish of St John the Baptist in Hot Springs, Arkansas. The board members come from all over the US, and it was fun to review our work in Russia and America, and study the situation of our seminarians and novices, our Russian parishes and our American sister parishes, and our financial situation. A big group of parishioners came to the evening program to view our new video. They also had a chance to buy "Made in Russia" items and items made from old vestments by our volunteer in California, Barbara Fitzsimmons, and even items made by our Vladivostok parishioner, Yadviga Sigismundovna. Our biggest financial need is the education of our seminarians for future priests for Russia, and the completion of the new church of our Lady of the Pacific in Nakhodka. I challenged the St John's school kids to

produce my play, "The Annunciation" as a winter project. (See our website for the libretto.)" Next year's board

meeting is tentatively planned for Sacramento, California in conjunction with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fatima.



*St John the Baptist Church in Hot Springs with Fr James West, pastor, Vice President of Mary Mother of God mission Society*

- On October 11, I had the joy of attending the appointment to minor orders of lector and acolyte in Las Vegas of two of our seminarians, Bro Jose Unlayao C.J.D. and Bro Luis Van Dam C.J.D. by Bishop Joseph Pepe! Hopefully their ordination to the diaconate will be this year, too. Stay tuned! Many thanks to our sister parishes of the Diocese of Las Vegas for years of support, St Joseph Husband of Mary Parish, and St John Neumann Parish. Bro Jose will be working at St Anne's Parish and as a teacher in their school, and Bro Luis at St Joseph Husband of Mary Parish, especially with the Vietnamese community.



*Bro Jose, Bishop Pepe, and Bro Luis*

## Opportunities

♥ A new school year has begun! We have been blessed with many vocations our order of **Canons Regular In Jesus The Lord** ([www.vladmission/vocations](http://www.vladmission/vocations)) as well as our sister order ([www.cjd.cc](http://www.cjd.cc)). We have **40 seminarians** to support now. Thanks be to God. Please consider one time, monthly, or yearly sponsorship of one of our seminarians. You'll receive personal email news and communication from your seminarian. Each one of our seminarians is in need of individuals or groups who can sponsor them through prayer and financial support while in the seminary. The annual cost for 1 seminarian for education, books, transportation, and humble living expenses is **\$10,774**.

♥ Please help our growing number of priests while giving an eternal gift! **Mass requests** celebrated in Russia and may be sent to the mission office for your loved ones or special intentions. Suggested stipend is \$15 per mass.

♥ Ask your pastor to place a few copies of our bi-monthly **Vladivostok Sunrise** at your parish to share the news of the important work of the Catholic Church in Russia. We'll be happy to send them.

♥ We can help you organize a fun fundraiser for the mission. Ask your pastor to have a Russian Icon sale at your parish just in time for faithful gift giving.



♥ You have the opportunity to help the mission while doing your Christmas shopping. When shopping Amazon, use **Amazon Smile!** Designate Mary Mother of God Mission Society as your charity of choice. The mission will receive 0.5% of your purchase from Amazon. It costs you nothing to participate. Please see our website [www.vladmission.org](http://www.vladmission.org) for more details on how to sign on. Thanks to you, we received \$403.22 from AmazonSmile. Remember our mission web store too, [www.store.vladmission.org](http://www.store.vladmission.org)

♥ Our program to distribute take home food packets for the indigent elderly is going well. The elderly take home packets so that they don't have to come to the soup kitchen café so often, thus saving them money on bus fare which could amount to \$1.20 per day, depending on where they live in the city. Each food packet costs \$12. Would you like to help feed one of our elderly poor?



♥ Are you organizing a parish, Catholic conference, or other event to celebrate the **100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Fatima** appearances? We have a select team of representatives including our priests, deacons and board members who are available to speak at your event. Contact the mission office for information and portfolio of speakers.

♥ **You can save a life by purchasing our *Abundant Blessings Cookbook*.**

Proceeds from the 506 cookbooks sold so far have gone to our **seminarians' education fund** and our

**Women's Support Centers, including our Adopt A Birth Program to save babies from abortion.** Choose from our 498 mouth watering recipes for your holiday candy making and Christmas potlucks. Excellent for gift giving to all the cooks in your life, or better, all those who don't cook too! Many repeat orders have come in as buyers discover the diverse and beautifully arranged collection of recipes that are tab divided into 8 international geographic areas and submitted from the many cultures and countries of our priests, seminarians, sisters, and mission families in celebration of our abundant blessings. Interesting reading for your coffee table too! **\$25 per cookbook** covers cookbook and shipping in the continental USA. Our special thank you offer is back! **Receive a free *Christmas In Vladivostok* music CD with each cookbook.** Order from our mission website or contact our mission office.

Can you guess the countries of origin of these yummy dessert recipes that are found in our cookbook? Baklava, New England Squash Pie, Irish Cream Chocolate Chip Cheesecake, Tiramisu, Rugelach Pastries, Flan, Strawberries Romanoff, Barriguitas De Vieja,

For more information on all our opportunities contact our USA office [usoffice@vlamission.org](mailto:usoffice@vlamission.org), or 209-408-0728 and visit our website, [www.vladmission.org](http://www.vladmission.org)



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## From the development desk...

Dear Friends,

Happy Thanksgiving and a blessed Advent you all. Imagine moving yards of soil using only a blanket! Clearing acres of tropical jungle using only a machete! Digging out and hauling 30 foot tree trunks and their root balls with only the sweat of your palms! Not to mention pouring concrete and framing walls without power tools! Our seminarians in Maumere are so enthusiastic about the building of the new monastery they are joyfully and gratefully undertaking all the back breaking labor to see it to completion. Nobody wants to see the project come to fruition more than these future priests who will have a place to study and live once the project is complete. They need our prayers and support. Let's help our seminarians build the monastery on Maumere! Please see our website for construction and fundraising updates for our Indonesia monastery. Praying thanks for all of you.

Sincerely, Vicky Trevillyan, Mission Coordinator  
[usoffice@vladmission.org](mailto:usoffice@vladmission.org) 209-408-0728

### Maumere Monastery Project update:

| Project                   | Funds Raised to Date | Still Needed     |
|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| <b>Dorm &amp; Kitchen</b> | <b>\$66,002</b>      | <b>\$165,967</b> |
| <b>Chapel</b>             | <b>\$42,240</b>      | <b>\$143,486</b> |
| <b>Land Loan</b>          | <b>\$192,500</b>     | <b>0</b>         |



*Above: Our seminarians put in the labor. Might you please support them with the materials?*

*Below: Fr. Inosensius blesses the chapel foundation as our many seminarians prayerfully follow.*