



Mary Mother of God Mission Society

Reviving the Catholic Church in Eastern Russia

Dear Benefactors,

May 15, 2008

Thank you and God bless you for your contribution! There seems to be two dynamics working just now: We've had four funerals this month, and we've had four vocation inquiries this month! It means that we have to increase our evangelization work, and it means maybe we'll have more hands to help!

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So you see your spiritual and monetary help is most important to us! We can't live without it! Just now a man came to the door who had taken our "Christian Faith by Mail" course while he was in prison. He was just released, and is anxious to visit his son for the first time who was placed in an orphanage in Ussurysk (two hours from here). He said they gave him 100 rubles (\$4.20) when he was released, and, unfortunately I could only give him 100 rubles, too, because it is all we have right now! So he'll have to beg somewhere for another 100 before he will have enough to visit his son. Luckily people are looking for workers now, so I think he will be able to find a job. So thank you for your monetary help, and please pray for vocations!

Russia has a new president now, and people are hopeful that he will be able to deal with all the problems he spoke about at his inauguration ceremony, especially dealing with the strangling bureaucracy, which, after alcoholism, is Russia's #2 problem. Of course our serious problems also continue, but we are hoping for the best, especially as the Blessed Virgin is our patroness! As is usual for this time of year we are scraping the bottom of the barrel, but we are in the midst of planning our summer activities which are so very important because people have more time for God when there is more light in the day, and when they often have their vacation time. You know we especially appreciate your contribution and your prayer support. Perhaps some people think that with the completion of the rectory and the dedication of the church we don't need financial help. Actually, it is the opposite! We had to finish those projects or lose the property to the government! And they were completed with funds that were specified for that purpose by donors. Meanwhile, our work with orphans, the elderly, students, Crisis Pregnancy Centers, and evangelization continue, and we still need regular financial support for all these things.



Maybe talking about funerals isn't too fun, but these four people were remarkable: Yadviga Yakimovna was 87 years old. She lived on the 6th floor of her apartment building where there is no elevator, so she didn't get out very often. She would always come to church for holy days, even if she couldn't make it every Sunday. She always sat in the very first pew so as to see and hear everything. Her nephew always brought her, but never himself came into the church. When I would visit her at home, she always greeted me with three kisses, a sign that she was greeting Christ in me. She was always cheerful and helpful, and always promised her prayers for us and for the parish. Her daughter and granddaughter came to the funeral mass, and both said that they felt at home in the church where "mom" had been at home. We hope they will begin to follow her example, and I'm sure she is praying for them and for me from a better place in heaven.

Bozhena Frantishek was born in Czechoslovakia when it was part of the Communist block. She fell in love with a Russian soldier, and came with him to the Russian Far East. He became the head of the "Radiopribor" factory in Vladivostok which made a variety of



radio equipment. She became the head of the factory archive where she served until her death. As is usual in Russia, the funeral began with a wake at the factory where about 100 of her fellow workers and friends gathered around the coffin. (There are no funeral homes here, and it is hard to carry coffins up stairways in apartment buildings.) Fr Dan had the wake service there in the open air, where he was careful to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to folks who perhaps have never heard it before. Bozhena's Catholic faith impressed her husband, who also was baptized and received the last rites at his death several years ago. Bozhena has a son and grandchildren who still have not been baptized. Hopefully the funeral helped them to "seek the Lord while He may be found."



Malvina Stanislavova was 76 years old. She was a regular churchgoer, and suffered greatly from the death of her only child, a son, several years ago from brain cancer. She died working in the garden at her dacha, which she dearly loved. She always brought us canned vegetables from her garden, carrying huge, heavy gallon containers on the bus through the city to bring to us, and then climbing all the way up the hill with them. I decided to use the Gospel which read, "As long as you did it for the least of my brethren, you did it for me!" God give her a reward for her labors!

Lydia Pavlovna (72) was ill for some time, although she died suddenly. She always received the Sacrament of Anointing every Fall when we offer the Sacrament for those seriously ill, but who are still able to come to church and are not bedbound.



All four women had to live many years without the Church and without the sacraments. We are happy to be here for them, and for all the elderly Catholics who hope and pray for their children, that they, too, will accept the faith. I'm sure many of our benefactors have the same prayer intentions!

Fr Sebastian, who currently is pastor is Nakhodka, had an emergency call from the Bishop to go to Sakhalin Island, because all three parishes there are currently without a priest. They need an English-speaking priest because of all the American and Filipino parishioners who are working on the gas fields there. So we will have to stretch to help take care of Nakhodka for a while. We need vocations, and the means to support them!



Last Sunday our parish librarians had a housewarming and open house for their new library space near the entrance to the church. It was a joyful even where they gave prizes to those who frequent the parish library. I got the prize for the "most beloved reader." It was fun!

Yelena Andreevna, the librarian noted that this was the 6th time that the library had moved, because of all of our building moves and floor removals. I told her not to get too comfortable in the new space, as it might also soon get too small! The parish library is more important than usual here in Russia because there is almost nowhere else that you can get theological texts, church encyclopedias, lives of saints, religious videos, and prayerbooks, after all the years of atheist propaganda. We have many students from the universities who come here to use the library. And then there is collection of historical materials about our parish, some of which you might have seen in our Sunrise articles about the blessing of the rectory and the re-consecration of the church.

Yelena Andreevna, parish librarian and readers.

God bless you, and thanks for all that you do for us and for the missions! Of course Jesus did everything for us, so it is the least we can do to repay something in exchange for so many great gifts. Happy Month of Mary, Month of May!

Yours truly,

V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.