



Mary Mother of God Mission Society

Reviving the Catholic Church in Eastern Russia

Happy New Year to you and all of yours!

Dear Benefactor,

January 15, 2024

With the new year 2024, I want to wish you and yours a happy new year and say thank you for your prayers, help, support, and donations this past year! January 1 was the Feast of the Most Holy Mother of God, our parish feastday, but we don't get many people at mass because the Russian tradition is to celebrate the new year from midnight to sunrise, so they sleep on that day. Because most Russians aren't Christians, they celebrate the New Year with gusto, including decorated trees and presents, and even "Grandfather Frost. So we celebrate the Virgin Mary on another day, too--August 15 as a special day for our parish, or the closest Sunday to that date--the feast of the Assumption. God bless you for your financial support during 2023, and now during 2024!

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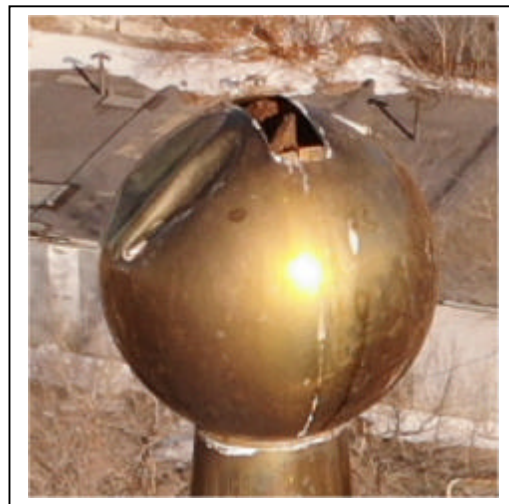
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On Friday before Christmas yet another cross fell from the second steeple of our church, and fell on the roof! I don't know if the roof was damaged yet, but the fact that the second one fell suggests that the problem is inadequate mounting, as why else would two crosses fall within such a short period of time? We have to see what the building engineers will say. It seems that the crosses suffered from wind damage. Here is a photo taken from a drone of a steeple ball. Clearly the metal wasn't strong enough to battle the winds that high up, and notice that the solder or weld joints were also broken. So we have two crosses to fix and mount more

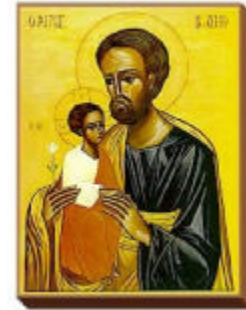
strongly. It's a long way up there!

In the spring, we may start a Tagalog mass, as the number of Filipino parishioners is increasing. They already have a social gathering on the DeFriese Peninsula (part of Vladivostok), and one of our Filipino brothers, Edwin Intan, C.J.D. will be going there regularly, too, to begin some prayers and spiritual recollections. Hopefully he will be ordained a deacon in the Spring, and then a priest. He finished the seminary several years ago already, and had been doing great missionary and charity work on the Philippine Islands, waiting for us to begin working there, which didn't happen so far because the bishops there say they have plenty of vocations. He speaks Tagalog (as well as Russian, English, Korean, Japanese, and Cebuano). It is never a dull moment around here as our vocations from many countries keep things hopping!

On Saturday, December 23, I had an unusual experience! The Vladivostok Lutheran pastor, Pastor Manfred Brokmann, died on December 15. We had both come to serve in Russia in February of 1992, so we became friends. He was older than I. He often asked me to perform his funeral service if he should die. So, even though there is another Lutheran pastor now, and even a bishop, they decided to honor Pastor Brockmann's wishes, and invited me to perform the funeral service. It was the second time in my life that I led a service in a Protestant setting. The previous time was when I was a chaplain

on-call at Castle Airbase in California. When all the airmen left for the Middle East, so did their chaplains, so I had to do all the services at the base. It was pretty difficult to stay focused with all the “Halleluiahs” and “Tell it like it is!” that were shouted during the sermon at the Baptist service! But it was also kind of de zha vu! When I was a boy, my favorite aunt often took me to her Baptist church on Sundays.

Recently we’ve had requests to open a Women’s Support Center in Artyom, a suburb of Vladivostok. And I’ve been dreaming of opening a site in Artyom for St Joseph’s Parish. St. Joseph’s has existed for a long time already. We used to have Mass in the Second River section of northern Vladivostok. But when we finally had the historic church of Vladivostok renovated and opened, St Joseph parishioners preferred to attend the sparkling new church instead of Mass in an apartment. So we had St Joseph’s Sunday Mass in a café owned by the father of a parishioner. The café was located closer to Artyom. But when Fr Mark Dao, C.J.D. was ordained, we began having Mass in Vietnamese in Vladivostok, so all but one of the St Joseph’s parishioners began attending the Vietnamese mass in Vladivostok—They were Vietnamese. So we began a monthly St Joseph’s Mass for the one Russian parishioner as she was handicapped.



St. Joseph icon from St. Joseph’s Parish, Artyom

But now Artyom is growing rapidly, and also is the whole area around Artyom because the Vladivostok Airport is there, located on the continent instead of on the peninsula like Vladivostok (to avoid sea fog.) So land prices there are better than in Vladivostok, so many companies are locating there, so that the number of Russian parishioners is growing again. What I would like to do is to buy a commercial property on the first floor of a building in Artyom so that the Women’s Support Center could be located there, and on Sundays we could start having Holy Mass there, too. No use thinking about a church building until the parish grows significantly. So we’ll be looking for donors for the St Joseph’s Parish in Artyom to buy such a premises. Currently Mary Mother of God Mission Society helps support five parishes, and offers priestly support to about seven more (depending upon the season of the year), in addition to the Women’s Support Centers, and to seminarians who want to work in Russia after their ordination as priests. My home parish in Indiana and Fr Dan’s in Michigan were both St. Joseph’s Parishes. And St. Joseph’s Parish is our sister parish in Modesto where Mary Mother of God Mission Society’s offices are located. Maybe it will be our Giving Day project this year on March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation. We hope St. Joseph will pray for this project!

Thanks be to God that we have more priestly vocations, so I have proposed to our Bishop Kirill that we could take on more parishes now here in Russia. It also means we need more mass intentions and stipends.

Thanks again for your great help! **God bless you in the New Year!** Yours truly,

V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

To make a donation or order a Mass using your bank card, go here:
<http://vladmission.org/get-involved/donate/>

To read the November 2023 Vladivostok Sunrise 175, go here: <https://vladmission.org/s/175>