



Mary Mother of God Mission Society

Reviving the Catholic Church in Eastern Russia

December 31, 2024

Dear Benefactor,

Happy New Year! And Merry Christmas!

Our Christmas “midnight mass” (actually at 8:00 pm) was really unique this year! All the electricity was out on Volodarskogo Street where we are located, so we had to have **mass by candle light** (and telephone flashlights)! Of course the organ didn’t work, so we sang to the tune of Sr. Stella’s harp and a parishioner’s violin! The church was packed to overflowing. It was really a unique event, but nobody cared—It was great! The children put on their skit well, too. Near the end of mass, the electricity came back on, so the Christmas tree lit up in time for the kids to get some candy beneath it from Pastor Fr Daniel Maurer, C.J.D. His sermon about our Christian vocation was very nice, too, so I repeated it at Christmas Day’s daytime mass, which was also very well attended, even though it was a workday in Russia.

Then Fr Dan had two more masses, one in Spanish and one in English. They were also well attended, especially the English Mass. So, over all, it was the best Christmas mass attendance we’ve ever had here in our Vladivostok parish. We are waiting to hear how things went in our other five parishes, when the priests get home after New Years. The Orthodox Church celebrates Christmas in January. Maybe our attendance was better because of the war??

Fr Sebastian from Nakhodka checked into the Thousand Bed Hospital on Christmas Day. We are hoping for the best for him. Prayers!!

Our three novices for this year have done a good job of learning the



Brothers De, Arslan, and Hein

Russian language, and they took their **first religious vows** on the First Vespers of December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. So now they will continue their seminary studies. Brothers Joseph Nien and Joseph De will be attending seminary in Vietnam, and Brother Arslan Piyara in Pakistan. Seminary is always a “long road”, so please keep them in your prayers!

If you receive this letter with **American stamps**, it means that the sanctions are still in place, so we can’t send your letter directly from Russia. Let’s hope the problem will soon be solved to the satisfaction of all.

How about a footnote to **brag** about how our Russian community has effects elsewhere in the world? In this month two of our “alumni” who got their first training in religious life here in Vladivostok were ordained for service elsewhere! Brother Peter Cao, CJD was ordained for service in his

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Fr Justino in native costume with his parents at his first mass in Timor Leste, the first ordination in his home parish in 27 years.

home country of Vietnam, and Brother Justino Marquez, CJD, from the country of Timor Leste, was ordained for service in Indonesia or Timor Leste, depending upon further developments.

We are considering what should be the plan for the **Romanovka Parish of the Holy Trinity** which Fr Dan established 30 years ago. With Fr Sebastian's illness, our Father Marcus David, C.J.D. has been serving the parish on weekends. Our Spanish Sisters of St Anne have been working with children there, daily, for 15 years, in an after-school program called "Trapinka" which the local population appreciates very much, since there are many single parents who don't get home from work until too late for the kids from school. The sisters own the premises where the program is held. We have two apartments in Romanovka and the Women's Support Center is located in one of those apartments, as is also the parish chapel in the other where mass is said, but it is against government policies that chapels be in apartments. We also have a grassy field where

we could build a church. How to make sense of it all and make a plan for the future! The complication is that the city was part of a military base where foreigners were forbidden to live. The base is long gone, but traditions continue. Come Holy Spirit! Meanwhile, I am writing to say "Thank You!" for your donation and your prayers. **God bless you** for your financial support! We'll use it as wisely as we can! But I wanted to tell you the news, too, so you know how things are going.

Yours truly,

V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

P.S. We need more mass intentions, too!

To make a donation or order a Mass using your bank card, go here:

<http://vladmission.org/get-involved/donate/>

To read the November *Vladivostok Sunrise* 180, go here: <https://vladmission.org/s/180>