



# Vladivostok Sunrise Russia Mission



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

Issue Number One Hundred Forty Six March, 2019

## A Belated Christmas Report

By Rev Daniel Maurer, C.J.D.

Dear Family and Friends,

At last I can take some time to reflect and to write my Christmas and New Year's greetings. Thanks to all who have sent greetings to me. It is always wonderful to hear from each one of you.

Some general impressions about our work and our religious community of Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord (CJD) during the Advent and Christmas seasons: We do the same kinds of things each year (same decorations, same liturgies, same carols, same kinds of concerts, same charism, etc.) but each year it all seems so fresh and new and interesting and grace-filled! I love every minute of it (except shopping) - every community recreation (each evening all ten members of our religious community gather to relax and share our day together); every Mass and morning prayer and evening prayer; every homily; every Christmas carol and song and prelude; every community meal; every trip (we travel by car to care for 5 outlying parishes); every greeting; every EVERYTHING. At this time of year all of it is centered around the Incarnate Word of God; everything is a channel of His grace and a source of joy; and for everything I give thanks, especially for each one of you.



Vladivostok CJD community, Fall 2018



Fr Dan and Bro Mark and the parish Christmas tree

The biggest changes here "at home" in Vladivostok each year are in the membership of our local CJD community; and the new parishioners in the parishes. This change factor always makes Christmas time new and interesting: This year the church decorations were particularly beautiful because our seven novices and our deacon Brother Nikita worked so much and so creatively (and I was there to help "control the environment"!).

The music of the Christmas liturgies in our main parish was particularly beautiful because everybody in the parish sings!, and because this year under the direction of Sr Catherine, the choir members were very faithful about coming to practices; also Sr Catherine (an excellent soprano and flutist) and Sr Maria Stella (master organist/harpist and soprano) have developed their professional skills, repertoires, musical knowledge and tastes to a very high degree. I cannot imagine another regular parish (as opposed to a cathedral parish or a parish with hundreds of years of special music programs) which has better Christmas music than ours. (However, we cannot rest on our accomplishments. We still need to find/translate/compose some more Advent hymns in Russian. We really only have five good ones, and that gets repetitious during four weeks!)

Even our homilies have changed and developed since each year Fr Myron and I can now express ourselves in Russian more exactly, and especially with the addition of our Russian Deacon Br Nikita's insights, expressions, meticulous preparation and points-of-view.

Again this as year (as each year for the last 21 years), our community parish Christmas spirit was widely extended to the citizens of Vladivostok with three big Christmas concerts, Dec. 26, 27, 28. All 690 tickets were sold out well in advance. During the first half of each concert, our guest concert organist, Andrey Bardin from the large Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk, performed 6 solo pieces, big and small, on the organ. During the second half our Catholic Concert Choir, founded in 2001 by me and our then parish choir director Svetlana Naumova, sang three Christmas carols and then, accompanied masterfully by the organist, performed the entire "Magnificat Anima Mea Dominum" by English composer John Rutter (45 minutes). I was there for all three performances, and consider each one of them to be one of the musical highlights of my life. And because earlier this year we had such a successful organ concert season, with 6 sold-out solo organ concerts by three internationally famous organists in June, September and November, we had more than enough earnings to cover all of the considerable costs of the Christmas concerts, with still enough left over to subsidize our two upcoming gala Easter concerts. Thanks be to God!

As always this year our order's novitiate program located here in our monastery in Vladivostok has been a great source of joy for me. So many novices (13 from 5 different countries - India, Indonesia, Philippines, Timor-Leste, Vietnam)! Brothers Rajnal and Pradeep, who professed in August; then new novices - Brothers Adi, Aldo, Edy, Galileo, Octo and Vicky; then again more new novices - Brothers Dominic, Lloyd, Mark and Peter! Such a richness of personalities, gifts, talents, cultures,

faith experience, work experience! Edy and Octo returned to our largest community, in Maumere, Flores Island, Indonesia. It is always difficult for me to say goodbye; but I rejoice in their vocations and in the gifts that they are to our order. Attached is a photo of all of us who were here at the investiture of new novices in March 2018. It does not show the four newest novices who arrived in September. Also attached is a photo of Br Nikita and our archivist Tatiana Shapochnikova teaching the novices how to preserve sour cabbage the Russian way. In German it would be called sauerkraut. The



*Tatiana and novices making Russian sauerkraut*

Russian version is considerably less sour and more to my taste. In only one day they sliced, salted, seasoned and mixed 180 pounds of cabbage to begin the short 3-4 day fermentation process. Delicious!

So much work to do and only two priests! But help is in sight: Our Bishop Kirill has decided on the date of April 10 here in Vladivostok for the priestly ordination of our Brother Nikita. This is wonderful news. Besides being the first Russian priestly vocation for our order, his will be the first priestly ordination by our bishop - ever. The bishop has been the ordinary of our diocese for 15 years. There will be great rejoicing in our community, in our parishes and in our diocese on that happy day!

I again want to express my love for each and every one of you who is receiving this letter as you continue your pilgrimage on this earth. I regularly pray for you and rejoice in knowing you. I hope and pray that our paths may cross in this year, the two thousand nineteenth year since the birth of Jesus Christ (minus perhaps 3-4 years due to the error of someone in the middle ages who was as mathematically challenged as I.)

Best belated wishes for a Merry Christmas Season (what is left of it) and a very Happy New Year! With love and prayers, --Fr Dan Maurer

## An Interview with Fr Myron

by Anastasia Yaroshenko, journalist

Before Christmas the website [www.VL.RU](http://www.VL.RU) interviewed Fr Myron about questions that interested them. Here is a translation of the interview:

**Q.** You live in Vladivostok more than 20 years. You get around the city. What do you think? Are residents of

Vladivostok Orthodox or atheists? **A.** I think they are convinced Orthodox but they rarely go to church. It is already their culture. Most think of themselves as Orthodox because they are Russians, and they have a tradition of many years. I sometimes doubt whether people understand what Christianity is, and if they did understand they would be going to church. I don't see many atheists. Few are atheists. In general people can presuppose that there is a God, that there is something higher, but to know about that takes time and effort.\*

**Q.** You were 51 years old when you came to

Vladivostok. Weren't you scared? **A.** No. You know why? My dad worked in a factory that built wings for Soviet aircraft during WW II. I was always interested in Russia. I subscribed to the USSR magazine. I always loved Russia. We were allies. Russia suffered more than we did, but America tried to help.

**Q.** You came in the '90's—How did they take the news that the USSR became the Russian Federation? **A.** I don't get involved in politics here, and it isn't important how they name a country. What was important to me was that freedom of religion was restored.

**Q.** In the '90's not only Catholics appeared in Primorye, but also various sects, including Christian

sects. **A.** There was a spiritual vacuum, so various sects came to fill it. Too bad, of course, but I think that Russians are educated people and they soon see where there is truth and where it is not. First the Hare Krishna group appeared in the city. How they got here first I don't understand. I remember that the first to be registered were the Mormons—after they gave the bureaucrats three weeks of vacation in America, which others were not able to do.

The Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses [forbidden in Russia as an extremist organization] are not Christians. A Christian is someone who believes three things: Christians believe in the Trinity--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; they believe in the incarnation of the Word, and they believe that Jesus suffered for our salvation on the Cross. The Mormons and the Witnesses do not believe in any of these three things. The Baptists and Lutherans are

Christians. So are the Catholics, Presbyterians, and Orthodox. Maybe we don't agree on some small details, but those three points unite us.

**Q.** What is the basic difference between Catholicism

and Orthodoxy? **A.** In doctrines we are practically the same. It was the same church in the first millennium. The difference is mainly cultural. We Catholics are Westerners, while the Orthodox are from Constantinople, an Eastern culture. When I meet an Orthodox I receive him as a brother—we are both Christians. But sometimes the Orthodox think that only they are Christians. There are even priests who call us a sect.

Catholicism, like Orthodoxy, came down from Jesus Christ. We were together undivided a thousand years. In 2054 there will be the thousandth anniversary of our division. That would be a very sad year. But in 2033 there will be the two thousandth anniversary of the Redemption!—the death of Jesus on the Cross. Wouldn't it be possible and desirable to celebrate that year together?

**Q.** Do you have a relationship with local Orthodox

Archbishop Veniamin? **A.** The first time that he came



*Fr Myron answers the questions. Photo by Anton Balashov*

to Vladivostok, before he stepped down from the train car, he scolded his priests who had a relationship with us. We accept him and respect him, but we would like a better relationship. Before him was Bishop Nicolai. We had a very good relationship with Bishop Nicolai.

**Q.** You never celebrate Easter together? **A.** It was possible with Bishop Nicolai, but we don't want to aggravate Archbishop Veniamin. Let him live as he wants. He doesn't need to see us if he doesn't want to. Sad, of course. The young priests say we should wait for a time of change. The young think somewhat differently. Not long ago, for example, I was at the crematory for a

funeral and there were two young priests there. They said with joy, “Oh, you are Fr Myron!” It was a normal conversation as itless should be. We are all Christians.

**Q.** There is a very difficult situation now for the Russian Orthodox Church in connection with the independence of the church in Ukraine. What do you

think of that? **A.** It is a problem for the Orthodox Church, and better for me not to get involved. Of course we all hope for a good solution to the problem. It is not a simple situation for the Church nor for the government. It is like a painful wound. It is painful to me, too. There are many Catholics in the Ukraine, and in our parish, too. While not getting involved, I am hoping for a good solution.

**Q.** Now there is a Russian law against offending the feelings of believers. Can someone offend your feelings?

**A.** Don’t think so. Actually the law affects offending faiths: the church, the Jews, the Moslems.

**Q.** Does it personally offend you when someone puts jokes about religion on the social media? **A.** I don’t look at those things, and don’t think about it. I heard that there have been cartoons against Mohamed. In the modern world there is a problem concerning Moslems. Praise God that here in Russia we have a peaceful people, but there are places in the world where it is scary. Christians suffer in those places.

**Q.** Do you watch television? **A.** Yes, I like to watch the nightly news, but it is clear that there is a lot of fake news. I think people generally get the idea of what is fake and what is real. We have fake news in America, too. What I like best about the Russian news sources is that your reporters are on site where the action is. If there is talk of Syria, you have a person there in Syria speaking. In America we tend to get the talking heads and old photos. You can watch CNN and you don’t see anything of the real action. So Americans know less about what is really going on, like in the Ukraine, for example. But on Russian news you see the bombs going off, you see the buildings falling down.

**Q.** Should government interfere in religious things?

**A.** In America it is written in our constitution that the congress can make no law about religion. Russia doesn’t have that. So the Duma approved a law about the five religions of Russia. We have to live with that. I’ve always said that the government must defend religious buildings and people like anyone else. The government of the USSR didn’t do that; they exploded churches and killed believers. So now the government should help

rebuild those churches—that is justice. But politicians shouldn’t get mixed up in religion.

**Q.** What kind of people come to your church? **A.** Catholics! I suppose when I first came I would have answered “Our parishioners” who were mostly those who either were Catholics or whose grandparents were Catholics. Earlier there were many visitors and inquirers. The first generation of parishioners have already died—those who were Catholics before the USSR. And the next generation—It was hard for them to believe, because they were brought up in atheism in a system which considered faith stupid, even though Communism itself is a faith. So the parish got somewhat smaller, and now there is a law against missionary activities, which curtails activities to attract people. Now the parish is growing again, partly because of the large influx of foreign Catholics, especially to the university.

\*Maybe the President of Belorus summed it up best when he said, “I’m an atheist—but an Orthodox atheist!” “Yes, I have known some ‘Catholic atheists’!”—Fr Myron

## Baby Talk

From the Women’s Support Centers



Now where was I when I was so rudely interrupted?

[Oleg August 3, 2016]

# Remember Mary Mother of God Mission Society in Your Will!



# ORA ET LABORA

By Bro Ofedius Bau, C.J.D.

In sharing life as religious people, a spirit of interpersonal cooperation needs to be a priority. The goal is to make it easier for every individual in the community to share in the work to realize the task entrusted. It might be hard to do, but the results are actually really satisfying. The spirit of cooperation between individuals in the life of the religious community creates an intimate relationship between the priests and the brothers, building harmony and developing the community.

This was evident in the practical life of CJD priests and brothers in the Our Lady of Vladivostok Community in the Diocese of Maumere, Indonesia. Our priests and brothers have been working together to manage a garden on the land we own. Our land is quite large. Some parts of the land have been used for buildings while the rest of the land is used as a monastery garden. The garden is planted with various flowers, fruits and vegetables that can be consumed by the members of the community, but also sold in the local market. During Advent the brothers have harvested hundreds of pounds of tomatoes and green beans. All those tomatoes and vegetables are traded on the local market to those who come to buy them. The brothers harvest, weigh and deliver the tomatoes and vegetables for sale. The proceeds we get from selling them are then given to the community as income.



Tomatoes and green beans are the most prolific.

So far the CJD Community in Indonesia does not have a steady income. We are still dependant on financial help from benefactors and those who are willing to share what they have with us. We are so grateful for all the gifts that have been given to us through the hands of benefactors who have paid much attention to our community of mostly seminarians. Realizing these limitations, our priests and brothers try hard to help ourselves financially by the work we do in the garden. Every day, right after study time, the seminarians immediately go to the garden to work on cultivating the dry land using a motored cultivator loaned by the Diocese of Maumere. The work that has been started and will continue shows that a living community of religious is not only focused on a life of prayer and study, but also work and service. It is *ora et labora*.

The CJD brothers are always reminded that to be a useful person in the future, brilliant intelligence is not the only thing that is needed. We need real actions and real works. That is why, besides studying really hard in the seminary, we never forget to do our work in the garden, and for our in livestock: chickens, goats and pigs. Each brother has his own duty to take care of something. We realize that we are the ones who are basically responsible for the sake of our community life. This simple spirit of work has been training the brothers to be always responsible for what the community has entrusted to them. This is also a way for every brother to test and show his talents and skills. Patience and responsibility are necessary and highly required from each person.

Maybe this isn't too interesting to some folks, but for us, the members of the community, this is something noble because besides expecting help from others, we also fight for the development of our community through the work we have been doing together.



The local residents know that it is the brothers who produce the vegetables.

# News Notes

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

- On December 8, four of our sisters made their **final vows** in Makassar, Indonesia before Archbishop Johannes Liku Ada, D.D. and myself, and the superior of the CJD sisters in Makassar, Sr Marthina Tongli, C.J.D. The sisters work in a parish in Parepare and in a hospital in Taraja.



*Newly vowed sisters bringing up the gifts to Archbishop Johannes of Makassar*

- With three novices from **Vietnam**, who arrived here in early October, we have suddenly discovered many more Vietnamese Catholics in both our Artyom city parish of St Joseph (45 minutes away from Vladivostok) and also here in our Vladivostok parish. Most of them work in what are locally called the "Chinese markets" or in construction, and have been here for at least a year and as many as 5 years!. They said that when they arrived they asked people if there was a Catholic church in the region, but nobody knew. Typical for Russia where fewer than 1% of the population regularly practice any religion whatsoever. We had 26 Vietnamese Catholics at our 12 noon New Year's Day Mass (titular feast of our parish)!
- Since we moved our Russian Saturday evening student Mass to Russian Island and one hour later (from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM) more Catholic students have been attending - most of them from different **countries in Africa**. They say they cannot go to Mass earlier because they all work at part-time jobs on Saturday afternoon.

This year at the Far Eastern Federal University there was also an influx of students from Tamil Nadu, South India at the School of Medicine--more than 250! Most of them are Hindu but at least 15 are Roman Catholic. The Catholics among them tend to come to our 2:00 PM Sunday Mass in English because their Russian language studies have just begun and their English is fluent.

With the New Year Fr Dan made a commitment to celebrate Mass in Spanish once a month near the University. We have heard that there are well over 100 students from Latin America studying there, perhaps a majority of them from Colombia, but also from Panama,

Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador. Many of them hardly ever went to church in their home countries, so our work with them is mostly like evangelization.

- Here is a photo of our new still unfinished **church in Nakhodka** which our dear friend Fr Sebastian D'Silva is building (three hours by car from Vladivostok). Building a church in this country is not the easiest task in the world! Since the photos were taken in September there has been a lot of plastering work and electrical work completed in the interior and the ceiling in the main worship space is being put up little by little. Two large images have arrived from Poland, Divine Mercy and Our Lady of Fatima. Soon work will start on the stained glass windows.



- On Sunday, January 13, the City of Vladivostok awarded Fr Myron a Certificate of Honor at Sunday Mass. The certificate reads, "The Certificate of Honor of the Administration of the City of Vladivostok is awarded to Myron

Clarence Effing, Pastor of the Most Holy Mother of God Catholic Parish for his contribution to the spiritual development of the residents of the City of Vladivostok, for his many years of honest labor and high professionalism. [signed and sealed] C.P. Sherstyuk,"



- The **color theme** for this issue is a poinsettia from our altar for Christmas.

● Fr Myron visited the country of **Kazakhstan** in February, to help prepare for the priestly ordination of our Brother Patrick Napal, C.J.D. The date will be April 2 in the cathedral of the Diocese of Atyrau. Atyrau is near the Caspian sea, surrounded by large salt wastes with camels, horses, and sheep. The city sits on the Yural River, with Europe on one side and Asia on the other. "I learned interesting things while I'm here, like about the TV serial call 'Equus,' the history of human interaction with horses which began here in Kazakhstan and spread to the rest of the world, and to the Americas only with Columbus!" The priestly ordination of Brother Nikita Kushnaryev, C.J.D., will be in Vladivostok on April 10.

## How to Communicate with Us

### Internet

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## Opportunities

♥ Want a way to involve your parish to help promote awareness of the mission and fundraise all the while having lots of fun? Ask your pastor if you can hold a **Russian Icon and Religious gifts fundraiser sale** at your parish! We provide the supplies you need. Just in time for Easter, 1<sup>st</sup> Communion and Confirmation. Contact Vicky or Jessica at the mission office in Modesto, CA for more details. 209-408-0728

♥ Become a missionary right where you are and help spread the news of our mission in Russia. Ask your pastor to place our bi-monthly **Vladivostok Sunrise newsletter** in your parish. We'll be happy to send you a few copies every two months.

♥ Can you **sponsor a seminarian** in his journey to priestly ordination? In a few short years we have seen 7 priests ordained in the order of Canons Regular of Jesus The Lord. We currently have 39 seminarians in various levels of education and formation in the Order. They need

your help to continue their journey. Might you prayerfully consider sponsoring a seminarian? Yearly costs are \$10,700 for each seminarian. Please contact the California mission office for budget information or see our website [www.vladmission.org](http://www.vladmission.org)

♥ Give an eternal gift. Masses celebrated in Russia may be requested for loved ones, living or dead. **Mass stipends** support Fr Myron, Fr Dan, and Fr Nikita. Please send your special intentions or Mass requests to the mission office. Mass cards will be sent to you or designated persons. Suggested stipend is \$15 per Mass.

♥ Thank you for sending us news about a **Catholic Conference** in your area! Your eyes and ears help us a lot in extending our outreach to more and more Catholics. We still get comments from people who don't know the Catholic Church is alive in Russia. Let's get the word out!

♥ **Priest and lay volunteers** needed to speak at parishes and/or attend our table at Catholic conferences one weekend. You can help us spread the news of our work in Russia. Travel, food and accommodations covered. Contact the mission office in Modesto.

### ♥ Our Lady of Vladivostok Pendant

with Most Holy Mother of God Cathedral on back of medal. Finely detailed! Text reads, *Our Lady of Vladivostok, Pray for Us.* 3/4" Sterling Silver medal w 18" stainless chain \$65. 3/4" Pewter medal w 18" stainless chain \$35. 1" Sterling Silver medal w 24" stainless chain \$79. 1" Sterling Silver medal w 24" stainless chain with text in Russian \$79. Prices include S/H in continental USA. Contact the mission office at [usoffice@vladmission.org](mailto:usoffice@vladmission.org) to order or visit our webstore, [www.store.vladmission.org](http://www.store.vladmission.org).



♥ FREE copy (up to \$14 value) of one of several **Vladivostok Concert CD's** with your purchase of our mission's **Abundant Blessings Cookbook**. 494 International recipes fill the pages! Proceeds from our cookbook go to our seminarians' education fund and our Women's Support Centers to help pregnant women and families. 649 cookbooks sold so far! **\$30 per cookbook** covers cookbook, CD, and shipping in the continental USA.



♥ Shopping on Amazon? Type in **Amazon Smile** in the search bar and select Mary Mother of God Mission Society as your charity of choice. The mission will receive 0.5% of your cart from Amazon at no cost to you! To date the mission has earned \$1848 from Amazon Smile.

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## From the development desk...

Dear Friends,

We were blessed last year with many answering our call for prayers and funding help for several of our projects. Here are just a few of the areas where you are making a difference:

- Helping us sponsor seminarians to the priesthood! Of our 30+ seminarians, **5 seminarians are being sponsored either for a year or partial year**, through the Seminarian Guardian Angel Program. \$10,744 helps a seminarian with tuition, books, food and travel needs for one year. \$399 buys a computer for their studies.



- Keeping our Women's Support Centers open each month! We are able to be as active as ever with our pro-life work counseling women and men and providing aid to the children and babies who come to any of our 6 centers.

In 2018, benefactors provided the means to **save 276 babies from abortion** through the Adopt-a-Birth Project, bringing the overall number of babies saved to over 2800! The Adopt-a-Mother program **supported 51 families with food, clothing and basic medical needs** for several weeks pre- and post delivery.

It costs \$916 each month, per Women's Support Center to keep the doors open. This includes educational materials

and basic medical and living supplies to families, women and children. \$50 will save a baby from abortion by paying for the medication and surgical packets used by the hospital to deliver a baby. \$125 to the Adopt-a-Mother program pays for the costs during pregnancy and help to the mother and baby after delivery.

- You helped us raise **\$7,975 for the rectory land** so far. We want to purchase the land on which our rectory is built. Currently we rent the land from the city. Once we own the land we will be able to register the rectory as an official building and thus register to live on-site. The price for the 1.436 acres is \$34,250. Legal fees will cost \$6850 for a total of \$41,100 that is needed.

- We can distribute **426 monthly food packages for the elderly poor**. \$12 covers the cost of each monthly package for the elderly. The package includes beans, rice, pastas, cooking oil, oatmeal, canned milk and other protein products.

Thank you for your prayers and generosity. We will keep you updated in future issues of our *Vladivostok Sunrise*.

God bless you and your families this Lenten season.

Sincerely, Vicky Trevillyan, USA Mission Desk 209-408-0728, [usoffice@vladmission.org](mailto:usoffice@vladmission.org). Mission web store, [www.store.vladmission.org](http://www.store.vladmission.org)