



Vladivostok Sunrise Russia Mission



Mary Mother of God Mission Society: Reviving the Roman Catholic Church in Eastern Russia
the
Issue Number One Hundred Fifty Five September, 2020



The Priesthood is My Vocation

By Brother Peter Nsamba, C.J.D.

I was raised in a loving and supportive Catholic family in Migeera Catholic parish, Uganda, and I learned to love and serve God throughout my Catholic education. Even through the difficult moments of life, my parents taught me to trust in and stay patient with the Lord’s ways and always to seek for his will. I was blessed with parents who were

devout in their faith. I come from the family of five and we were all raised in the catholic faith.

Being born to the family of medical practitioners, I really witnessed and experienced the love and passion they had for their work and this made me desire also to become a doctor. From my childhood I had a strong desire to become a doctor. But as time passed a turning point came in my life to consider priesthood as my vocation. It all began as a joke when my classmates and teachers at school used to call me by the nickname “Faaza Omuto,” literally meaning young servant of God. This was because after receiving my first communion I immediately begun serving at mass at the parish and at my school, and this roused in me a high admiration of priests and their ministry. I really begun to love the great works our priests used to do. After mass for example; they visited the sick and elderly, taking care of and feeding the orphans, involving youths in environmentally friendly projects. It implanted in my mind always to look at a priest as a tremendous man of joy, love, peace and self-giving. I tried to resist my classmates, but they persisted then I was left with no option apart from giving it a thought considering how God sometimes uses other people to bring us to himself. I shared my

desire for the priesthood first to Fr John Wakube my parish priest [now pastor at Immaculate Conception Parish, North Little Rock AR] who really supported me with all the necessary support. We came



Holy Mother of God Pray for Us

from an African back-ground where marriage is seen as a blessing. At first I met some resistance from some of my relatives who had high reverence for marriage but through Fr John's constant explanation to them and through strong prayers, God was able to convert their hearts. This is because in my tribe a child belongs to the community, so I needed to seek the approval of all my relatives. Through my journey of formation, I have discovered that God knows how my heart is made and he always knows the best for me, and that is serving all his people.

I strongly feel satisfied with the vocation I chose because I realize that when one is a priest is able to help treat the soul and reintroduce God into people's lives. Priests are the eyes, legs and hands of Christ whom he uses to help heal the spiritual, social, moral, and personal wounds of people. I continue witnessing the great works of love, mercy, dedication, and the great zeal of our Fathers here in Vladivostok, as God uses them to bring healing and conversion to his people. This is because our Lord can transform the life and refine the soul of even what we might consider the most distant of his sheep.

By Brother Joseph Tran Ngoc Nhat, C.J.D.

I was born and raised in a Catholic family in Vietnam. Over time, my faith in the Church flourished and developed with the help of my family and the parish where I was born. Faith and love in God just grew. This made me unable to resist God's call. It is to follow Him. And these are the two main reasons why I should become a priest:

Love for God. I feel so proud and happy to be able to live in the CJD congregation because here I learn good things from the Fathers and the Brothers. Especially, I learn from them how to love God through prayers and community life. And, I have watched, heard, and imitated them in prayer in order to practice my love for God, which has become deeper with the help of the Holy Spirit and the community's activities. Though I don't yet understand the Russian language when I pray, it doesn't affect my love for God. Indeed, I can't give what I don't have; I can't convince others to believe and love God if I don't have love for God. When I chose to give up the vocation of marriage to live my priestly vocation, I gave up a covenant to choose another covenant. Covenants are unique and eternal.

When I choose the vocation to be a priest, I choose God as my only inheritance, and only God--there is no duality. To be able to bravely give up everything to choose God, I need to have true love, to love what I choose, even though I know it will be difficult and challenging, because love is an option, not a momentary emotion. Emotions come and go, but choices are decisive and enduring. Therefore, the love of God is the source of my life and the strength that helps me to endure in my vocation to become a priest.

Love for God also helps me to draw closer to all people and to all creatures, because I believe that God exists in everyone and all things. And of course, love for God must be nourished and developed by a life of diligent prayer and a close relationship with God. Indeed, prayer is an invisible bond of my intimate union with God. And only by prayer I can maintain my love for God.

Love the Church. My homeland has a long religious and faith tradition. This faith is to love the Church, for the Church is Christ. The Church represents God in this mortal world. When I was baptized. I am allowed to become a Christian. I call the Church Mother, Who gave birth to me in faith. That is why I also have a responsibility to protect and love the Church. And, here, once again I am called to be a disciple of Jesus, to guide people to profess a single belief in God and love of the Church.

To sum up, it is with love for God and for the Church that I want to become a priest. I think it is not easy to become a priest because there are many sacrifices and challenges that I will have to face. I believe that love will help me be loyal in my vocation. God is love because He created us out of love, to live and share that love. I will love God and the Church and love to the end.



By Brother Kiran Chinthapalli, C.J.D.

I am from Infant Jesus Parish, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India. Once, there was a retreat in my parish led by Fr Kristhraj. At 4 years old, I was so impressed by the way he was praying, singing, preaching, and healing. I also heard him saying, “Only a priest can bring Jesus down to the earth, in the form of simple bread and wine.” And these words I have heard many times, in various occasions, and during ordination masses. I confirmed to myself that I want to be a priest, to ‘HIS’ people and for ‘HIS’ people. I continued my studies, pondering on the word of God and listening to various sermons by different priests. I was so motivated and encouraged. At the age of 14--it was in the summer--I heard a voice talking to me and asking me “What will you give me?” Not knowing who it was in the dream, I didn’t answer. I heard again on different days in the same week. So, I spoke to my spiritual director, and he said, “It might be a weird dream, don’t bother.” Later when I attended a retreat at the Divine Retreat Center in Kerala, Fr Augustine said to me that it was the Lord who wants you to work for him in his vineyard. “If again, you hear Him, answer Him that you will give your whole self.” That was when I realized that I am truly called by God to love Him more closely and to serve him more faithfully.

When I completed high school, and I was wondering where to join the seminary, whether diocese or congregation, as I didn’t really know the difference yet. The assistant priest of my parish was from a religious congregation, so seeing my spirituality and interest, he asked me to join in his congregation. Then I joined and completed by philosophy studies.

But that was not to be my congregation. I said, “I shall never turn away from the Lord.” I asked my parish priest to help me join the seminary again. “I want become a priest, please help me. I visited another congregation,

but I was not really happy with the charism and the formation, so I was praying for a sign where I am to go. Then I met Brother Kumud Nayak, C.J.D. [presently a deacon working in the Diocese of Madison, Wisconsin.] He introduced me to the Canons regulars of Jesus the Lord, their founders and the formation. I was really amazed and inspired by the history and the work that the fathers do in far eastern Russia. I prayed whether I am called to be a canon. I wrote to Fr Myron, and he immediately answered me and the process took place according to the canons’ formation rules. All things happened with God’s grace. It was my first time to fly, and I reached Vladivostok February 27th, 2019. I was initiated into the novitiate on 5th of April, and I professed the simple profession of vows on 23rd of May, 2020.

I have 2 elder sisters, one of whom is a religious. My elder brother is married with children. I am the youngest in the family. We are staunch Catholics from our forefathers. The faith of my parents and their prayers are the pillars to our religiosity. My parents are laborers who through daily work were able to feed and educate us. But religious life is something precious that we offer to God and that sacredness motivated me to become a religious. I am aspiring to be an instrument in the hand of the Lord, serving and going wherever he asks me to go, doing what is His will.



How to Communicate with Us

Internet

Russian language: www.catholic.vladivostok.ru

English language: www.vladmission.org

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The color theme of this issue is from a geranium in the social hall of our parish in Vladivostok.



News Notes

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



Photo of the church interior from the book about Geyling.

● In the July 2020 issue of *Vladivostok Sunrise* (#154) we reported on the history of the construction of our cathedral in Vladivostok. In the January 2010 issue (#91) we reported on the discovery of a letter hidden in a tower of the church by the Austrian war prisoners of WWII who were the last to work on the cathedral before the Communists came to Vladivostok.

I just became aware of an article in the Russian version of *Vladivostok Sunrise* (#2015-2) that I hadn't seen before for some reason. It has fascinating details from the diary of the Austrian war prisoner Rolf Geyling who headed the construction brigade, and some new pictures. The information is from the book in German "*INGE SCHEIDL Rolf Geyling (1884-1952) Der Architekt zwischen Kriegen und Kontinenten. 2014 z.*" about the life of Rolf Geyling who was an accomplished architect in his own right, and who went on—after escaping from Vladivostok and Communist Russia—to become a famous architect in China, helping rebuild the city of Tianjin in the aftermath

of the destruction caused by the Boxer Rebellion, until his death in China in 1952. Here is what his journal says about Vladivostok after arriving here as a prisoner of war:



The incomplete church standing in scaffolds

“October 16, 1918 We arrived at the camp in First River in Vladivostok. Maybe there will be a need for an architect or builder here.

“October 17. Early in the morning Serbs attacked us in the camp and stole everything, in spite of the guards. Afterward, they took us to another camp which the Czechs run. They didn't like us. To get food we had to make oak kindling from the nearby trees. Every day the Czech officers watched us. No good clothing or shoes—we had to share shoes. One Turkish prisoner died under a falling tree.

“November 21. They moved us to the Japanese camp. The conditions here are better. Here we even have wash basins and running water. There is a railroad nearby where there is always water and produce. They gave me work to repair the communications.”

The Japanese, seeing Rolf's capabilities continued to give him more freedom and he worked on various projects around the city. One of those projects was the incomplete Catholic cathedral of the Most Holy Mother of God, which was surrounded by scaffolds which were beginning to fall, due to the work stoppage on the structure. In a letter of recommendation written by the camp director, we find this: “In Vladivostok you built the Japanese headquarters building. It was your great service to finish the building of the Polish church whose construction was started before the Revolution and for a long time has stood in a condition of abandonment so that even the scaffolds were falling.” “All your difficult work on the different projects deserves great gratitude and admiration because they were done in such difficult circumstances when there weren't enough supplies and tools. I want to note the fact that you kept alive your artistic talents and your contractor's planning and theoretical abilities.”

In Geyling's letter to his wife in Austria we read: "Concerning my health, I was sick only when I first got to Vladivostok. In the spring of this year there was the epidemic of the Spanish flu. I caught a cold, but on the 5th day I could return to work."

In 1919 he writes, "The Polish church, the city buildings, the Japanese warehouse for weapons and military supplies—The most attractive is the Polish church. It is designed in Gothic style with a high nave, transepts with accompanying round columns." He also says on September 17: "In church two workers fell and died when one of the broken scaffolds gave way."

What a miracle the church is, and what a miracle God arranged that it be completed, and then saved for us!



Church nearly done, with small steeples, crosses, but still some scaffolds.

Geyling (on right) with his church crew (picture from the book).



- Our parish house in Vladivostok is really full of **seminarians** these days. On June 26 four new novices joined us. Novitiate lasts a year and the novices all study

the Russian language. We are hoping that after they finish seminary, some will want to return to work in Russia. We foresee a big need for priests in Russia as the current priests age and there are fewer vocations from the European and American original source countries. There are many vocations in Asia and Africa.



Four new Vietnamese novices in the front row in white. The second row contains novices who entered last Fall, and those in black are the members of our Vladivostok C.J.D. community.

- Our Vladivostok parish continues to have influence even outside Russia. Here is a photo showing our **first two Vietnamese Sisters in Jesus the Lord!** They received their habits in Vietnam because of the travel restrictions. When they can, they will go to Indonesia for their novitiate training. Perhaps some day some of the sisters will be coming to Russia to help us with our Vietnamese parishioners, especially the kids who don't speak Russian.



- The **lockdown** has had something of a good effect for us. We started to upload our Sunday Mass on facebook, and we got hundreds of people watching. It means that we should continue to do it, even after the virus is done. It will be a new way of evangelizing for us. People throughout Russia and even throughout the world can watch our masses and sermons in the Russian language. We can offer our catechetical course on the air. Maybe we can do it all better. To watch our Sunday mass, (9:00 pm American Central Time Saturdays) go here:

<http://CATH.BOLGOFF.RU/>

- July 31 was the funeral mass for our first translator and helper **Igor Davidov**. Here is his photo from my very first public mass in Vladivostok on November 11, 1991, which was held on the front steps of the State archive—the former and now present parish church of the Most Holy Mother of God. Igor had attended high school specializing in English here in Vladivostok. When Pope John Paul II went to Poland, Igor was inspired to help locate and promote Christianity in our region. He placed radio and newspaper ads, collecting lists of Christians of various denominations which he shared with Christian pastors who came to the city, among them was us, the Lutheran pastor, the 7th Day Adventist pastor, the Christian Science representative. His English was excellent, so we hired him full time to

translate Catholic catechetical materials into Russian, and to help us with correspondence. He interpreted our Sunday sermons until we could speak Russian, and sometimes travelled with me to our outlying parishes. He eventually accepted the Catholic faith and joined our parish. He was found dead in his dacha [garden house], having been stabbed fatally in the back and several times in the heart. The killers were apprehended by the police because they stole and used his cell phone, which allowed the phone company to pinpoint their location. The motive was probably theft, as he had just returned from the market to make purchases. **Eternal rest grant to him, O Lord!**

Igor Davydov at the first mass on November 11, 1991



Baby Talk

From the Women's Support Centers



Now for a nice nap!
[Alexander April 17, 2017]

- Speaking of vocations, here is a picture of our **Indonesian C.J.D. community** of Our Lady of Vladivostok in Maumere, Flores Island, with their very first two novices. They also began novitiate on June 26. All the members of the community studied with us in Russia. Now they have become a fully mature house with their own superior, Fr Yohanes Marinus, C.J.D. (middle back), so they now have their own novitiate. Two of our Indonesian brothers are now working in Russian-speaking Kazakhstan.



Opportunities

- ♥ Please **pray** for our mission and our world.
- ♥ Want a way to make a difference and cost you nothing? Share your copy of our bi-monthly *Vladivostok Sunrise* with your friends and family. If they wish, we will send a copy directly to them. Let us know!



♥ Enter to win our beautiful “**Falling Leaves**” **Queen/King quilt**. Hand-crafted by Donna Hamilton of Evansville, IN. Suggested donation is \$10 per entry into our raffle. Receive 15 entries for a suggested \$100 donation. Enter as many times as you wish. Send your name, address, phone and email to the mission office. Please print. Photo copies accepted. Drawing will be held **December 11, 2020**. Thank you Donna!

♥ Give an eternal gift. Remember loved ones in this special way. Masses celebrated in Russia may be requested. **Mass stipends** support our priests. 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.

♥ Our priests are getting older. Fr. Myron will celebrate his 80th birthday next February and Fr. Dan will celebrate his 70th next March. We’ve set up a **Priests’ Medical and Retirement Fund**. If you’d like to help care for Fr. Myron and Fr. Dan in their retirement years, please note, “Priests’ Retirement Fund” on your check or donate online at www.vladmission.org. Thank you.

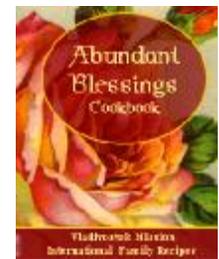
♥ **THANK YOU** for continuing to help us with the **rectory land purchase**. The collection for the land is slowly increasing but we are very far from our goal. We

have raised \$16,474 of the \$41,100 needed. Find out more on our website, www.vladmission.org

- ♥ Giving Tuesday is December 1. Please remember our mission and give online or by mail. Thank you!
- ♥ Please consider **supporting our vocations programs**. We have many qualified candidates and the costs for education and living expenses are growing. 10 new priests have been ordained in the order of Canons Regular of Jesus The Lord. We have 29 seminarians, 3 Deacons and 3 Brothers and we support them all. They need your prayers and financial help to continue their journey. Yearly costs are \$10,700 for each seminarian so you can see the need is very great. Please go to our website www.vladmission.org for more information about our seminarians.

♥ Shopping on Amazon? Please remember to type in **Amazon Smile** in the search bar and select Mary Mother of God Mission Society as your charity of choice. Amazon will donate **0.5% of your cart** total to the mission at no cost to you! To date the mission has raised over **\$3000** from Amazon Smile. You are helping our mission and it costs nothing extra to you.

♥ Only a few copies of our **Abundant Blessings Cookbook**. cookbook remain. We’re not sure when we may re-order. Our cookbook makes a unique and beautiful Christmas gift. Plus, receive a **FREE** copy (up to \$14 value) of one of several



Vladivostok Concert CD’s with your purchase of our cookbook. 494 International recipes from our priests, seminarians and mission families fill the pages! Proceeds from our cookbook go to our **seminarians’ education fund** and our **Women’s Support Centers** helping pregnant women and families. **\$30 per cookbook** covers cookbook, CD, and shipping in the continental USA.

♥ We now have **face masks** made from recycled liturgical vestments. A beautiful gift for your priest or friends. Triple layer with filtered lining (not PPE). Reinforcement added to shape along your nose for secure fit. Many thanks to Barbara Fitzsimmons of Modesto, CA. To date, Barbara has prayerfully sewn hundreds of beautiful Magnificat, missal and bible covers, rosary cases, stunning totes and now face masks from discarded priest vestments. Barbara donates 100% of proceeds to the mission. You can purchase her work on our Vladivostok mission store site, www.store.vladmission.org or call the mission office. Thank you Barbara!

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

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From the development desk...

Dear Friends,

I am happy to be able to tell you about a most recent demonstration of incredible dedication and sacrifice from Donna Hamilton in Evansville, IN. Donna has used her wonderful talents to hand craft an exquisite (and in my opinion, priceless) **“Falling Leaves” quilt**. The quilt has 168 leaves in vibrant fall colors cascading along an ivory background. The quilt is being offered as a fundraiser gift for the mission. (See picture on pg 7.)

Donna shared with me that the quilt took about a year to complete as she worked on it a little every night. It is made from Calico cotton, machine stitched and hand quilted. The quilt measures 104 x 120, fits a Queen/King for a bed or can be hung as a stunning wall piece.

John Hamilton, Donna’s husband, and Fr Myron were classmates at Mater Dei High School in Evansville. Donna and John became very interested in helping the mission after hearing Fr.Dan speak at their parish in the early years. Fr Dan passed out one of our first prayer cards depicting himself and Fr Myron in front of the Most Holy Mother of God church before any renovations had begun.

Donna was deeply touched and will never forget Fr Dan’s story of the cathedral and how the communists had chipped away the crosses from the outside of the

church in order to eliminate all visible signs of religion. She has followed the church renovations over the many years and marveled at how striking the church is now. The restoration back to a beautiful church building was completed thanks to the help of many friends and family like you. How we are blessed!

We thank Donna for the great love and many prayers sewn into the beautiful quilt on behalf of the Vladivostok mission. We thank all of you for all you do. God bless you. Sincerely,

Vicky Trevillyan, Mission Coordinator
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