



Vladivostok Sunrise Russia Mission



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

Issue Number One Hundred Sixty Two November, 2021

100th Anniversary of the Blessing of our Church

October 2, 1921-2021

By Tatyana Shaposhnikova, Parish Archivist

Let's go back to 1921 to feel and understand those difficult years of tragedy and trials, unexpected events, and happy expectations.

1921 in Vladivostok was a year of emptiness and criminality. Kidnapping, explosions, personal attacks, and murder were everyday events. Many just tried to stay home, and many who went out never returned home. According to statistics, in the city and its surroundings half a million refugees had gathered. Most common were foreign military men and soldiers in big numbers from the whole world including Japanese, Czechoslovaks, Turks, Americans, Canadians, and other European troops who had come already in 1918, and even German war prisoners, White Army members, and partisan Bolsheviks. The foreigners came with their own money—Yens, dollars, and pounds opposed the dying, inflated ruble. That's why in many parish documents foreign currency is often mentioned, mostly Japanese yens and American dollars. The city was shaken by endless strikes, closed stores, electricity blackouts. Vladivostok was immersed in chaos, with terrible sanitation, suffering from hunger, typhus, cholera, and lack of medicines. The Golden Horn Bay, which had always seemed to those arriving by ship as a huge amphitheater, looked closed by a big curtain. The city was only 61 years old and in that time had become a powerful, fortified citadel and a first class international commercial center. She was thought of by Russia as a window to the world, but she became for many years a far "black hole."



The new church, still without windows, and the old church below it

As a result there began a mass emigration of citizens by sea to Japan and to China. They took everything with them that they could and what would remind them of their former lives. They didn't know if their absence would be temporary or permanent. The impression of the eye-witnesses was, "It was as if the whole population of Vladivostok simply moved to empty apartments with all their stuff."

The emigration process also affected the Polish

Most Holy Mother of God Pray for Us

population of Vladivostok. Whispers, Whispers, Whispers—Nobody could say what would happen to these new citizens of newly free Poland. Pastor Slivovsky tried to give spiritual support to his people. To those who left he always gave a blessing, “Try always to be a good citizen of the world family,” and he gave them the sacraments, and as life continued the young were married, babies were born, the dead were buried. And, of course, the Vladivostok deanery was getting ready for the long-awaited event of the blessing of the new church.

The ceremonial blessing of the Church of the Most Holy Mother of God finally happened on October 2. Many guests gathered, including the clergy of the Far Eastern parishes, Fr George Yerkevich of Khabarovsk, Fr Kamensky of Blagoveschensk, and military chaplain Fr

Mirzhvinsky of Nikolsk-Ussuryusk. A whole delegation of clergy from Harbin came, including the pastor of the Harbin parish, Fr Vladislav Ostrovsky, assistant pastor Fr Alexander Eizimont, Fr Marius Kluge, many parishioners, consuls, representatives of the various businesses, and foreign guests.

And on that very day they had the very first baptism in the new church. We can see it in the baptismal register which has become part of our history. “Fr Alexander Eizimont, from Harbin, on October 2 baptized the baby Yadviga Leshinsky, 3 months old. Parents, citizen of Poland Andre Osipovich and Florentina Kazimirovna (Alexandrovich) Leshinsky. Present were godparents Joseph Kop and Alexandra Kozlovsky.”



The Solemn High Mass of the dedication, October 2, 1921

On Monday, October 3, they cleaned up the church, the guests left, and the priests rested. On Tuesday, October 4, pastor Slivovsky baptized twin girls Mechislava and Stanislava Musteikis who were born in Nikolsk-Ussuryusk from Joseph Martinovich and Maria Vladislavovna (Korsak) Musteikis, citizens of what is today’s Latvia.

The next baptisms take place on the 9th of October by Pastor Slivovsky, baby Vladislav Visotsky, born August 9. The parents are local citizens Anton Dominikovich and Elizabeth Illinichna (Tishchukova) Visotsky. Baby Emilia Kunts, born July 8 in Vladivostok to Andre Bogdanovich and Antonina

Timofeevna (Goeletskaya) Kunts, who were from Samara in Tartarstan. In all, Pastor Slivovsky baptized twelve children born in Vladivostok and Nikolsk-Ussuryusk before Advent, four during Advent, and two on Christmas day.

The number of births with baptisms in 1921 were many—170 children. One could say it was the boom of the Catholic Church in the Russian Far East when the city took in tens of thousands of Catholics. Of the 170 baptized, 49 were citizens of Poland, 12 from Czechoslovakia, a few from Hungary, Italy, Austria, Germany, France, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and even Japan and China.

The first wedding in the new church took place after the blessing date on Sunday, October 9. Fr Slivovsky married bachelor Frantz Artz to Natalya Ivanovna (Babenko) Kostenko. Frantz had lived in Vladivostok already 22 years, and was 42 years old at the marriage, and he was originally from Seidlitz. He was the brother of the well-known Boleslav Artz, a Vladivostok entrepreneur and charity benefactor. The bride was from Kiev and had lived in Vladivostok three years; she accepted the Catholic faith on her wedding day.

Altogether in 1921 there were 89 weddings, 11 of them in the new church. Again the nationalities were registered: Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Moravia, Alsace, Czechia, Romania, Silesia, West Galicia, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Tirol, Bohemia, Latvia. They were former war prisoners making their way home through the East, military people of foreign governments running away from the western areas, trying to save themselves from the Red Terror by moving on to Manchuria and China. And of course some of them were local Catholics. It is interesting that the grooms coming from



The huge windows in the church were of clear glass, but these rosettes were atop each of the main windows. We saved them when we replaced the windows with stained glass. They are now on the clear sacristy windows.

foreign countries took to themselves Russian girls for wives, some even only 16 years old. Dispensations about faith were dispensed by the bishop. They even tried to marry quickly, even during Lent which again required a dispensation. They didn't hang around long in Vladivostok, sometimes only 4-6 months. Going to sea to reach their foreign homelands, they took their young Russian brides along. What happened to those girls we don't know, but one can surmise that there is Russian blood in the veins of many Europeans.

But not only these happy events happened in the Vladivostok parish in the Fall of 1921. Other events continued, too. What do the registries say about funerals? First we notice that in Vladivostok and its surroundings we find Catholics being buried in 13 different cemeteries!—at the city cemetery in Pakrovsky Park, on Russian Island, on peninsula Egersheld, in Sobol Bay, Churkin peninsula, Diamid Bay, at the military Sea Cemetery, in cemeteries in First and in Second River Regions, in Sedanka, Sadgorod, and in Ugolnaya. And there are burials related to the city cholera cemetery, now in the area of Nerchinskaya.

The first funeral mass in the new church took place on October 4 for 40 year old engineer Joseph Gularevich Bruzhinsky. He died of a heart attack, leaving widow Olga Bruzhinsky, and was buried in Second River Cemetery.

On October 9 was the funeral of 22 year old citizen of Poland, Yan Eduardovich Gombitsky who died of tuberculosis and was buried in Pakrovsky Park. And then on October 10 the funeral of 76 year old heart attack victim Emilia Davidovna Yanytsik, a citizen of Grodno, leaving her husband Adam Yanytsik and their son Vladislav. Her body was buried in the Park.

Funeral masses in the church were held for parishioners and city residents. In 1921, 47 Catholics died. The military personnel and war prisoners had their own chaplains who buried these people in the military cemeteries. In the First River valley, where a multitude of camps for war prisoners were located, there were two cemeteries which no longer exist with a huge number of burials. Many were also buried in the now-gone cemetery on Egersheld peninsula, and in the military and navel cemeteries which are now part of the Sea Cemetery.



Before then end of 1921 there were 13 funeral masses, including two on December 31. These two were 20 year old Vladislav Rimsha from Poland, and 43 year old Yan Vashuk who died of gunshot wounds, and buried by Fr Slivovsky in the Park.

The Death Register, more than any other source tells us of the events of the day, in the city and in the family. From 1918 through 1921 parishioners died of heart attacks, gun fire, and infectious diseases at increasing rates, but childhood deaths decreased during that time.

The Church of the Most Holy Mother of God, during those distant and painful days was a spiritual refuge for many Catholics, not just the local citizens but also for the citizens of Europe and Asia, refugees from western parts of the Russian Empire and

Our Church Architect Vladimir Antonovich Planson de Rini

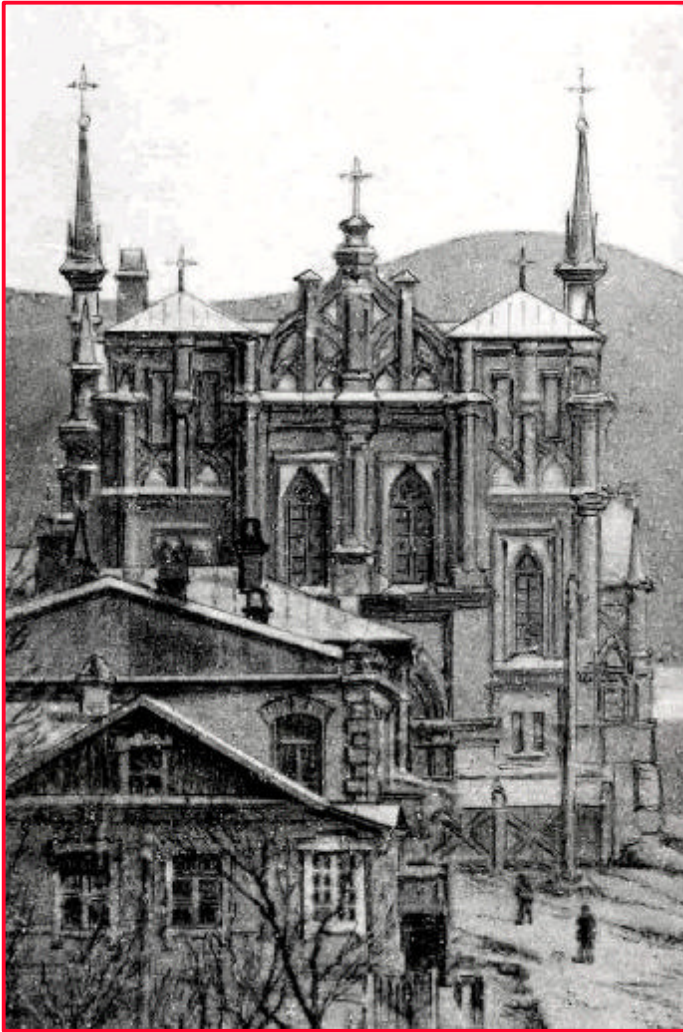
Baby Talk

From the Women's Support Centers



Oh, Oh! What have I gotten myself into?

[Little Valerian Visotsky and dad Vladisla Visotsky, godmother Eva Stashevsky with her daughter Yadviga. Vladivostok 1921.]



The finished church with the school buildings which stood before it, and the church as given to the state archive bureau after WWII.

from Soviet Russia.

Since then we've gone through the Soviet years of destruction and atheism, so once again the church is the spiritual center for our Catholics of many nationalities here in Vladivostok on the edge of Russia, once again a gateway for busy and friendly relationships.



Unidentified German prisoners of war workers who finished the church, with architect Rolf Geyling. Two workers were killed when they fell from the scaffold.

Bishop Karol Slivovsky, candidate for sainthood. He revived the building project, and blessed the church which became his cathedral. He became the last priest in most of Russia, and his diocese even included Turkestan, the birthplace of our current Bishop Kirill Klimovich.



A Concise History of the Vladivostok Cathedral of the Most Holy Mother of God

1. In 1897 land was given by the city council in the city center to build a Catholic church.
2. February 2, 1902 the small wooden church burnt down.
3. In 1904, using the money from the fire insurance of the church, the parish built a small temporary chapel and a small rectory on the original land and land donated to the parish by Ivan Mantsevich.
4. In 1909 Bishop Jan Cepliak blessed a cornerstone for the permanent brick church.
5. In 1912 construction was begun. It was halted later as parishioners fled during the Civil War between the Reds and the Whites.
6. In 1919 German prisoners of war led by architect Rolf Geyling resumed construction. Two of the workers fell from a weak scaffold and died.
7. In 1921 construction was halted with the advent of the Communists. The steeples were not built. The church was blessed on October 2 by Father Karol Slivovsky.
8. In the fall of 1921 the Vladivostok Minor Seminary of St Vincent de Paul opened in the former temporary church building.
9. In 1923 Vladivostok was created a diocese. Bishop Slivovsky was consecrated in Harbin, Manchuria. The Vladivostok church became the cathedral.
10. In 1930 Bishop Slivovsky was exiled from Vladivostok to Sedanka.
11. In 1931 Pastor Gregory Yurkevich was arrested and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in Siberia. The church was without clergy.
12. January 5, 1933 Bishop Slivovsky died.
13. Until 1934 a group of parishioners gathered for prayer in the church without a priest. They had to pay rent for using the cathedral.
14. In 1934 the city authorities raised the rent so high that the parishioners could no longer pay it, so they could no longer use the cathedral.
15. On September 17, 1935, the cathedral was taken over by the City Archive Bureau and used as an archive.
16. Before World War II the archival materials were moved to Tomsk in Siberia for fear of Japanese attack. In 1945 the reconstruction of the interior with the addition of interior floors was begun to prepare for the return of the archival materials from Tomsk.

17. In 1954 the large marble Crucifix was taken from the "archive" (church) and loaned to the art school as a model.



18. On November 11, 1991, Fr Myron Effing, C.J.D. said the first public mass on the steps of the cathedral with a crowd of Catholics attending.

19. On September 30, 1992, the Vladivostok City Council approved the return of the cathedral to the parish. It would take a further decision of the Territorial Council.

20. On September 15, 1993, the Primorsky Territorial Council voted to return the cathedral to the Catholic Parish of the Most Holy Mother of God, the parish, the city,

and the archive bureau each providing 1/3 of the cost of moving the archive. The condition was that there had to be organ concerts. The parish's third was donated by the Catholics of America through the national collection to Aid the Church in Eastern Europe.

21. On October 3, 1993 the parish celebrated the first mass inside the Cathedral in 62 years, on the third floor.

22. On October 29, 1993 Governor Nazdratenko signed the decree of the return of the building to the Parish.

23. On November 9, 1993 the Territorial Department of Properties issued the order to give the cathedral to the parish.

24. On December 28, 1993, the final official signature is made to the documents registering the cathedral to the parish.

25. On December 31, 1993, Fr Myron Effing received the keys to the cathedral.

26. On January 1, 1994, the Feast of the Most Holy Mother of God, the parish celebrated its formal return to the cathedral with a procession into the cathedral and mass.

27. After major repairs, on February 2, 2008, Bishop Kirill Klimovich of the Diocese of St Joseph in Irkutsk consecrated the church for the second time.

28. On March 21, 2012 Bishop Klimovich blessed the new steeples, and the bells were rung for the first time, signaling the end of the reconstruction of the church.

How to Communicate with Us

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

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

To watch our Russian Sunday mass, (8:00 pm Central Time Saturdays) go here: [facebook.com/parishvvo](https://www.facebook.com/parishvvo)

Internet

Russian language: www.catholicvl.ru

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The color theme for this issue is from the rosettes of the old church windows.

News Notes

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

● Our **Deacon Vicky Samuel, C.J.D.** was ordained a priest in Vladivostok on August 22 by Bishop Kirill Klimovich! He will go to his family and home parish in Pakistan for his First Mass. Hopefully by then the borders will re-open and we can send him a new visa for returning to Vladivostok to help us in our work here. Fr Vicky will be 36 years old in February. He is from St Mary's Parish in Sialkot, Pakistan where from childhood he used to serve at the early morning mass. He used to enjoy going with his pastor to the various mission stations of the parish, and, of course, volunteered for all kinds of work around the parish. One of four brothers, he decided to enter the seminary from the 8th grade. He finished his seminary program at the National Institute of Theology in Karachi,



but got interested in Russia and CJD from a friend who was studying at the Loyola School of Theology in Manila. He says that "it inspired me, especially the struggle of Fr



Myron Effing and Fr Daniel Maurer. Their hard work touched my heart and raised a question within me that 'if they can face lots of hurdles and did not stop the work of God' then why not I? The fruit of their work has brought the Word of God among the Russian people. Furthermore, their determination brought the gift of faith and love of God in the country of Russia." Fr Vicky's family watched the ordination on-line.



Rev Vicky Samuel, C.J.D.

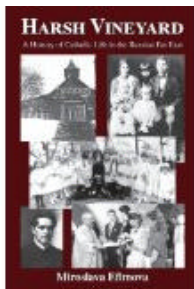
Opportunities

♥ Give an eternal gift this Christmas. Remember loved ones in this special way. Masses celebrated in Russia may be requested. **Mass stipends** support our growing number of priests. Please send your special intentions or Mass requests to the mission office. Mass cards will be sent to you or designated persons with an Our Lady of Vladivostok prayer card in time for Christmas. Suggested stipend is \$15 per Mass.

♥ ***Harsh Vineyard*** a book about the history of the Roman Catholic Church of the Russian Far East, up to and including the time of Fr Myron's arrival, is available from our office or online store,

www.store.vladmission.org

Harsh Vineyard was written by our church historian, the late Miroslava Efimova. For many years Mrs. Efimova worked to collect any information from the archives in St Petersburg, Moscow, Minsk, Warsaw, Lublin, Krakov, Khabarovsk, Blagoveschensk and Vladivostok connected with the activities of the Vladivostok Diocese. She used the historical documents and photos that she found to write ***Harsh Vineyard***. Translated from Russian to English by Geraldine Kelley. Free gift wrap upon request. Cost is \$16.50, plus \$3.99 Shipping/handling.



♥ Our priests are getting older. Fr Myron is 80 years young and Fr Dan is 70. Can you help them prepare for the future in the **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.

♥ The second printing of our popular and beautiful ***Abundant Blessings Cookbook*** has arrived! A unique and excellent **Christmas gift idea** for beginners to seasoned chefs! All will savor any of the whopping 494 local and international recipes from our priests, seminarians and mission families! Proceeds from our cookbook go to our **seminarians' education** fund and our **Women's Support Centers** to help pregnant women and families. \$30 per cookbook covers cookbook and shipping in the continental USA. We will giftwrap free upon request! Order through our website www.vladmission.org, or our online store, www.store.vladmission.org



My One Story

In August of 1996, I visited Vladivostok to give an organ performance and to demonstrate the church organ to some college-level music students. The parish had recently received and installed its first church organ—a second-hand electronic instrument with two keyboards and full pedalboard. It was time to introduce the organ around.

We first had a day—open to the public—with some basic hymns and organ pieces, showing the range and capacity of this “new” church organ.

Our second day was just for music students. About a dozen or so students came. We talked about the different sounds you could get with the different stops; how organ sheet music looked different from that for piano; and how to play the pedals. These students were not shy. They had plenty of great questions and a few tried out the instrument for themselves. Fr Dan was our interpreter. The session went on for about two hours.

As the students were leaving, one young man lingered behind. He had the most baffled look on his face. All I could think was that I had explained things too quickly or he hadn't been sitting where he could see very well. I went over to him and asked if I could explain something again. Did he want to come over to the organ and get a better look? He still had that puzzled expression, and he said to me in English, “I don't understand...” There was a long pause. “I don't understand why you came here and did this for us.”

I was floored. How do you answer something that unexpected and deep in a few words? I gave him some sort of brief, numbskull answer. It was the best I could do. That question, though, made an impression on me. In a nutshell, it showed how seventy-something years of communism had totally burned away the concepts of Christian charity, of responding to a need, of helping someone else without expecting a reward.

I think of that man from time to time. Wherever he is, I hope he can answer that question for himself now.

--Susan Gray

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From the development desk...

Dear Friends,

We have a dynamic group of **volunteers** who speak for us each year at parishes all over the USA. Their outreach in parishes is vital in helping Fr Myron and Fr Dan to educate our fellow Catholics about their work and in raising funds so the work can continue. Thank you to all our representatives, this year and in the past, for your kindness and spirit for the mission.

Fr Myron has been in the USA making his stops for the mission, to visit family and the mission office in California, and spend time with our seminarians serving in the states. Fr Myron has a few more stops in November. We hope you have an opportunity to meet him and hear him speak at these parishes.

Nov 6/7 Our Lady of the Ozarks, Forsyth, MO
Nov 13/14 Holy Spirit Parish, Crown Point, IN
Nov 20/21 St Joseph the Worker, Ozark, MO

Fr Doug Grandon, Vice President of our Mary Mother of God Mission Society, will be speaking in December. Please visit the parish if you are in the area to meet him and hear his presentation during the Masses.

Dec 4/5 Our Lady of the Lake, Branson, MO

Very busy volunteers also take the time to attend Catholic conferences for us or organize icon sales in their parishes. These volunteers distribute our literature, talk to attendees about our mission and sell religious goods to benefit the mission.

Local volunteers consisting of individuals and families around the mission office in Modesto get together to put lots of love and hard work into the **preparation and shipping** of our *Vladivostok Sunrise*. They happily put many hours in every other month to ensure you receive a *Sunrise* issue just like the one you're reading right now!

We have so many others who use their **time and talents** to craft, cook, build and above all, pray for the mission so Fr Myron and Fr Dan may continue and expand their work to revive our Catholic faith in Russia.

All our volunteers are a great bunch to work with! We are so very blessed. We give our thanks for you this season and always and continue to **pray for all of you**.

God bless you and your families. Wishing all of you a **blessed Thanksgiving** and very Merry Christmas!
Sincerely, Vicky Trevillyan, National Coordinator
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