

Vladivostok Sunrise Russia Mission



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

Issue Number One Hundred Sixty Three January, 2022

Because of Covid Travel and School Restrictions,
some of our seminarians were delayed in their programs, but they committed themselves to ministries they could do anyway. Here are two stories.

A Journey Home

*By: Br Edwin Intan, C.J.D.**

Sometimes, we don't really think about things that we are used to. We can be stubborn in continuing things that slowly and slowly don't make sense, because it is all we know. It is home. It means that we missionaries must listen to the stories of the people whom we want to lead to their true home. These are my thoughts as I reflect on my journey in leading someone to the Church. It's not easy to say, but I will always think of that journey as someone's journey back home, not only of my listener, but also mine.

This journey of mine started upon hearing of the beauty of Consuelo village and Unidos village in San Francisco, Cebu, Philippines. They are the literally "the ends of the earth"--hard to access and so far away from the center of things that we take for granted. Though accessible by motorcycle, the paths towards these villages are challenging. I was told that a formidable sect of Rizalistas--those who profess the godhood of Dr. Jose Rizal--is based in these villages. [Jose Rizal was a hero of the Philippines' revolution against Spain.] Even though I am trained to be a missionary, I was drawn to these places because of my interest in the place, not because I wish to preach the Faith to the sect members. God works in funny ways indeed.

I am thankful that I have a motorcycle which makes access to the villages more convenient for me, especially since I wear now the habit. I asked permission from the local government to visit these places and I am thankful that they granted it.

So I embarked on what would become a spiritually nourishing journey. The difficulty of the travel is offset by the surprisingly calming presence of nature all around me, as if it's a whole new world that I am entering. To the inhabitants, it seemed also that I came from a different

world. Their eyes widened when they saw me. It seemed that they sensed that I am more than a stranger, a threat to their status quo. Maybe not wearing my habit at that time saved me from more hostile reactions, as there was this one family whose gestures are so unwelcoming. Yes, the ambiance was hostile, but I thank God that they did not act on it.



Bro Edwin and his motorcycle supplied by an American benefactor.

My attempts to break the ice consisted of appreciating the beauty of their place and some remarks about COVID-

Most Holy Mother of God Pray for Us

19. Not surprisingly, they were not aware of the pandemic. They really seem to live in another world. Even though their leader expressed a dislike of being visited, I made up my mind to visit them again, as my fears of being chased away did not materialize. I spent the first visit taking note of their condition and enjoying the view. I think it ended on a hopeful note, as I got them to talk, even if no one invited me into their homes.

My second visit was more fruitful. I brought a gallon of rubbing alcohol, which I gave to the inhabitants. Then one man invited me to his home. Upon entering, I noticed the image of Jose Rizal set upon his altar. This confirmed what others have told me about Rizalistas in this place. I became curious about their faith. Careful not to offend them, I asked about how their beliefs came to be, and why the national hero became the center of their worship.

My curiosity was the driving force in my subsequent visits. In the course of my inquisitiveness, I was able to open up the topic of our own Faith, that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, this dialogue with my host had argumentation here and there. Although Rizalista is a form of folk Catholicism, he did not know much about Jesus Christ, but more of our national hero Dr. Jose Rizal as divine and as sent by God. His grandchild did tell about Jesus Christ as she learned from school. This is surprising for me, since I assumed all the people here are



Elements of a Rizal altar

solid Rizalistas. Our discussions gave way to genuine explanations about the Catechism of the Church. I did not expect it, but he gradually became interested about being a Christian.

What promised to be a little trip to see a beautiful view became a conversion journey. My host eventually accepted the teachings of Jesus Christ and professed his willingness to be baptized. In a way, this confirmed what Pope Francis said: God is a God of surprises. But the surprise did not only affect my host, but it also affected me. We had parallel journeys. For him, it would be a journey towards the home promised us by Jesus. For me, it would be a journey back to my heart, to think about what my vocation means and what it would require. It is a

heart prepared to become a dwelling place of God. We were both coming home to Jesus.

* Brother Edwin finished his religious novitiate in Vladivostok, and has subsequently finished the seminary in Cebu, Philippines. An additional Footnote from Bro Edwin:

“Yes Father, this year is the best year of my life while I’ve been waiting for ordination. Every time that I am out there, “roaming around” going house to house visiting, climbing up hills and valleys, it was worth the effort and so edifying.

Oftentimes I had teary eyes when I recall that I have been “here before” with my grandma. I owe to my grandma the idea of what ‘*missio ad gentes*’ is, of what missionary life is all about, what it takes to be out and assertive of our Catholic faith. When I was young (elementary years in school) back when Holy Mass was only celebrated once a month in our chapel, and a day before that, me and grandmother would go to the villages, climb mountain and hills to inform the villagers about the Sunday’s Holy Mass. It is still vivid to my vision how we did it. She instilled into me the wisdom and courage to be a missionary. I miss my grandma--She was such an inspiration. God bless her. She is now in heaven for sure. All those experiences helped me prepare for a mission in the city soon, in America, in the ministry of Christ.

Go Preach the Good News

My Pastoral Work in St Mary’s Parish, Derickabad

By Bro Rajnal Rehmat, C.J.D.

The missionaries who left their homes and families for the sake of the kingdom of God have really lived according to Jesus’ mission mandate. The tireless efforts of missionaries have planted the seed of the Catholic faith in our country of Pakistan. After completing theological studies I was waiting for my visa to travel. Since the Covid-19 made the process slow I planned to start my pastoral exposure in a desert parish.



St Mary's Parish in Derickabad is far away from the city. This parish is run by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate priests. I got a chance to get involved in different ministries in this parish. I volunteered to teach children at school. I teach English, Urdu, Social Studies, and Catechism. I go to visit the sick in the hospitals and also in their homes especially those who are bedridden. Every Sunday I go to different substations of the parish to give Holy Communion to the people. Since this year is the year of St Joseph, I got involved in organizing youth programs in the parish to tell our Youth about wonderful life of St Joseph.



The life of the people in this desert area is really tough and difficult. Most of the people find it difficult to educate their children because of two reasons; either the school is far from their homes or they do not have financial resources for their children. The heat of this area burns the skin especially during the summer so people work early in the morning and in the evenings to survive in such a climate. The people who live near their fields do not have electricity in their homes so they use batteries and switch on lights during night or they burn lamps. Beside all these difficulties and challenges imagine how missionaries came to this land and sowed the seed of faith in the life of the people, and it continues today with the missionary spirit of the Church.



In spite of the challenges, I found joy and happiness in this pastoral exposure. I enjoyed the warm welcome of the

native people of this village. They are always available for any church programs and activities I enjoy teaching our young ones in the school and offer them faith through the catechism and through different programs. When I take Holy Communion to the people I see the smile on their faces. The people are loving and welcoming. I enjoy their hospitality. I like the fresh air and the green fields, the cattle in between the sandy hills. It is wonderful to go and walk on the sand barefoot in the evenings because the sand gets cooler during the night. Sometimes I get a chance to play cricket with school children and it is so much fun to play with them and see them enjoying the games.



I am very grateful to God who Has brought me to this land not only to get pastoral experience, but rather I would say this is a faith enriching experience. I am grateful to my superior, Fr Myron Effing CJD, who allowed me to gain such a wonderful experience. I thank Rev Fr Khan Paulus OMI, the provincial of OMI community who accepted my volunteer request to live in this parish and learn more about pastoral life. I am grateful to Fr Maqsood Nazir, OMI the pastor of St Mary's parish who is my guide and coordinator for this mission.

News Notes

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



The ten adults to be confirmed

● A big event happened for us on October 3! Our Bishop Kirill came to Vladivostok to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first consecration of our church! At the same mass he confirmed 10 of our members and also anointed 20 of our elderly and sick! Then we had lunch, and finally an organ concert by our own Sister Maria Stella, C.J.D.! The 100th anniversary was the theme of *Vladivostok Sunrise 162* which you can download from our website if you didn't see it. Here are some photos of the 2021 event.

The actual date of the original consecration was October 2, which was Saturday this year, so we celebrated it on Sunday so that more people could attend. I have a theory that the original consecration date was meant to be September 8, 1921, the Feast of the Birthday of the Most Holy Mother of God, since that was the original name of our parish, but the construction wasn't complete enough, so the blessing was delayed until October. In the intervening years it was forgotten that the original name was the "Birthday", and people just said "Most Holy Mother of God" so we celebrate our parish feast now on January 1. Happy Feastday! Happy New Year!



Bishop Kirill Klimovich, D.D. at the sermon



Fr Nikita announcing the Gospel

● October 7 was the joyful day for the final vows of Brother Rajnal Rehmat, C.J.D. from Pakistan. Because of COVID, none of our superiors were able to travel to Pakistan, and Bro Rajnal was not able to travel to us! Providentially, our newly ordained priest, Fr Vicky Samuel, C.J.D. was in Pakistan for his First Mass, so Bro Rajnal took his solemn lifetime vows before him. Bro Rajnal studied at the National Institute of Theology in Pakistan, and graduated with honors. Because of travel restrictions he has been working at a minor seminary in Pakistan and helping in the local parish, waiting for his



chance to come back to one of our communities. We are waiting to say "Welcome home, Bro Rajnal!"

- I had the chance to speak to the “**Ladies of Charity**” in Evansville, Indiana during my trip to the States. Here is a photo, with my sister, Marilyn Wassmer sitting at my right. Some others are relatives of mine, or women who have visited us in Vladivostok. They have made a commitment to continue support for our Women’s Support Centers in 2022. The Ladies of Charity were the first charitable organization founded by St Vincent de Paul.



- Our **Sisters in Jesus the Lord** are busy! They just had the first Rachel's Vineyard retreat in St. Petersburg, Russia, Sept. 3-5. They already have a list of interested people for a future retreat. Invitations to lead Rachel’s Vineyard retreats are coming from Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ulan-Ude near Mongolia and from towns near Vladivostok as well. Their work with students from the Far Eastern Federal University on Russian Island has begun again with the new school year with participants from Russia, Colombia, Vietnam, and China.



Sr Faustina, C.J.D. (under the Divine Mercy) and other sisters serving in Russia on retreat with Bishop Kirill Klimovich

- **Fr Sebastian D’Silva**, pastor of Our Lady of the Pacific Parish in Nakhodka had a stroke during mass in late November. After treatment in the Nakhodka City Hospital, he has been rehabilitating with us in Vladivostok. We are hoping for his complete recovery, and he has already returned to his parish. During his absence, we Vladivostok priests had been helping with his parish and with his other parish, Holy Trinity, in Romanovka. We will continue caring for Romanovka for some time. I’m sure Fr Sebastian will appreciate your prayers. He is really anxious to complete the construction of the church in Nakhodka, and see the consecration of the church soon.

- Recently we were saddened by the death of Fr Daniel’s mother, **June Maurer**. She was 97 years old, living under care in Florida. She was always a supporter of our mission, even loaning us the money to buy our first tickets to Russia thirty years ago! Fr Dan says, “She always had a strong faith in God; was always a faithfully practicing Catholic; and had an especially close devotion to our Blessed Mother. And she was always very thankful. My mother lived an ordinary life; but she lived it extraordinarily well, with many advantages and blessings and with the constant consolation of her faith.” Eternal rest grant to her, O Lord!



June on her 90th birthday

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

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

English language: www.vladmission.org

Russian language: www.catholicvl.ru

Sisters in Jesus the Lord in English: www.cjd.cc

Office in Russia: Phone +7-423-226-9614

Fr Myron: myron.effing@gmail.com

Fr Daniel: vladcanonsregular@gmail.com

Office in California: Phone and FAX: +1-209-408-

0728 Mary Mother of God Mission Society

1736 Milestone Cir

Modesto CA 95357

usoffice@vladmission.org



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The color theme of this issue is from the St Nicolas stained glass window of Our Lady of

the Pacific Church in Nakhodka.



My One Story

In 2014 you allowed me to stay with you in Vladivostok for about a week or so. It was the most special trip I have ever taken, not only because not many Americans get to visit the city, but because going to church those Sundays, visiting a hospice, an orphanage, meeting and spending time with the Sisters on Russian Island, and Brothers over meals, and seeing what you do in Lesozavodsk were all very memorable experiences. It was certainly the most meaningful trip I have ever had. I feel like words can't express how thankful I am for the time I spent there with Fr Myron, the Sisters, and Brothers. I will always remember the Vladivostok Mission and pray that your work there will continue and grow.

Blessings from
Melody Sobey

Form to Request Holy Masses

My Name _____

Please offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the following people or intentions:

1 _____

2 _____

Please mail acknowledgement card(s) to:

1 _____

2 _____

Sunday Tea after mass is very important for us, because, since the city is big, we don't get to know each other unless we can meet informally after Sunday Mass.

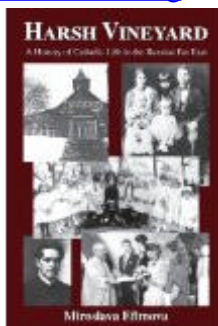
Opportunities

♥ Every novice in Vladivostok is required to attend language classes at the university as a condition of his visa. To get to school and back, the novices take city buses. The bus costs for one year for one novice are \$96.80, and are the most economical form of transportation. Please note, “Bus fare for seminarians” on your check or online donation. Thank you for your help! www.vladmission.org

♥ The Vladivostok parish maintains an emergency fund for parishioners and others who are known to us who are dealing with unexpected and dire situations. In early 2021, we helped a large family in Nakhodka that needed medical care for their handicapped child. And in Lesozavodsk, a mother of 4 Catholic boys was killed in an automobile accident. We were able to assist the grandmother, who is now raising the boys. Donations of any size to this fund are always welcome. Please note, “Emergency Fund” on your check or online donation.

♥ **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 S/H



♥ The second printing of our popular and beautiful **Abundant Blessings Cookbook** is selling fast! A unique and excellent **gift idea** for new cooks 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. \$33.99 per cookbook covers cookbook and shipping in the continental USA.



Order through our website www.vladmission.org, or our online store, www.store.vladmission.org

♥ Who doesn’t have “knots” in their lives? The beautiful devotion to **Mary, Undoer of Knots**, which has been promoted by Pope Francis, has been a blessing to people in need for many years. Our online store (www.store.vladmission.org) offers lovely statues of Our Lady under this title, perfect for meditation while praying this Marian devotion. Statues come in 8”-12” sizes, in colored resin or cold cast bronze finishes.

♥ Our priests are getting older. Fr Myron will celebrate his 81st birthday on Feb 7th and Fr Dan will celebrate 71 years on March 5th. 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 for **taking care of our elder priests!**



Baby Talk

From the Women’s Support Centers



“I’m going to be Pharaoh in the school play.”
(Valeria August 7 2020)

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From the development desk...

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year!

We are all blessed. As you have been reading from Fr Myron's news, our **vocations program** for new priests is booming! Here's how the order of Canons Regular In Jesus the Lord (CJD) founded by Fr Myron and Fr Dan has grown! (Updated December 2021)

- 16 ordained priests
- 13 members whose priestly ordinations may take place in 2022. These include 2 transitional deacons and 11 more brothers who have completed all seminary academic and formational requirements and awaiting ordination to the transitional diaconate. After a suitable period (usually from 6-10 months), they will be ordained to the priesthood.
- 20 seminarians in various levels of formation
- 12 candidates awaiting the start of novitiate

Our benefactors have been very kind and generous in their help to support our young men to the priesthood. Thank you! We depend on your help with tuition, daily living expenses, school supplies and transportation for all of our seminarians.

When our priests are ordained, they still have expenses for themselves and their parishes. A great way to support our growing number of priests is by sending

Mass stipends. You can request a Mass for special intentions or occasions such as weddings, anniversary, birthday, or for the repose of the souls of loved ones. Mass stipends are eternal gifts and help support our missionary priests all over the world. A Mass card will be sent to you or a designated recipient. You may request Masses be said on our website, www.vladmission.org, and pay with a money card or PayPal, or send a check to our mission office. Note your intentions using our form on page 6 or your own list. Suggested stipend is \$15 per mass.

Thank you for your love, prayers and support!

God bless you, Vicky Trevillyan, Mission Office
209-408-0728, usoffice@vladmission.org



*Happy New
Year
Everybody!*