

Vladivostok Sunrise Russia Mission



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

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The Mystery of Consecrated Vocations:

The First Vows of Brother Vincent Khoa, C.J.D. in Vietnam on January 15, 2023.

By Brother Joseph Thành Nguyễn, C.J.D.

A vocation is a gift from God, whether it is a prophetic vocation as in Old Testament times or a priestly vocation in New Testament times. Indeed, Jeremiah was deeply convinced of this: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you" (Jeremiah 1:5). Because it was a favor, Jeremiah didn't need to be concerned with his abilities. "Ah! Lord God, I said, I know not how to speak; I am too young" (Jeremiah 1:6). Young or old, good or ignorant, talented or foolish, agile or slow does not matter because once God has chosen you to use, He will give the ability to carry out the mission.

The experience of Jeremiah's vocation is also the experience of the disciples recorded in the Gospel of John: "It was not you who chose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain." (Jn 15: 16) Jesus himself loved his disciple first. He called and chose them as apostles, elevated them to friendship, shared with them both his mission and his power, invited them to stay in love, and showed them how to stay in love "Love one another as I have loved you." (Jn 15: 12) Jesus's love for his disciples is the Father's love for Jesus, for you and I and all humanity: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you" (Jn 15: 9), a love so intent that He sacrifices his life for us. "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." (Jn 15:13) This is also the experience of St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, "Therefore, since we have this ministry through the mercy shown us, we are not discouraged." (2 Cor 4: 1)



Fr Mark Dao and Brother Vincent Khoa at Brother Vincent's First Vows as a religious.

Yes, a vocation is God's gift and it always goes hand in hand with a mission. The greater the gift, the more important mission, and the more demanding it is. Indeed, when he gave Jeremiah the great gift of being a prophet, the Lord asked him to speak His word to the people, a requirement that was not easy to do. "To whomever I send you, you shall go, whatever I command you, you shall speak. I set you over nations and kingdoms, to root up and to tear down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant." (Jeremiah 1: 7, 10) When He chose to call his disciples and treat them as friends, Jesus asked them to remain in His love by loving their brothers as God Himself loved--loving to the end, sacrificing their lives for friends, which is not easy. Moreover, in choosing them as disciples, He sent them to bear many fruits that were good works, a work that required great

effort and sacrifices, demanding to abandon oneself carrying the cross daily and, accordingly, accepting the loss of one's life in this world. according to St. Paul. God lovingly chooses to call whom He wants, and he also gives them the mission of proclaiming the Gospel-- "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel," (1 Cor 9: 16) a mission that requires the utmost effort: persecution, beatings, imprisonment, and eventually death for the faith.

When God calls someone He wants them to be "His friend. "I call you my friends." (John 15:15) Few are called who do not deeply experience the love of God. For those who are very ordinary, limited, and weak, there are times when it seems that the vocation is completely deadlocked and met with the last step; the darkness is

Most Holy Mother of God Pray for Us

thick, and God opens up to the caller a path, another path. He gave them the ability, gave them the means, gave them the zeal and the patience to walk with peace of mind during the darkness of life, of the journey of vocation.

A vocation is indeed a mystery, one that is bestowed but not regardless of who and what the chosen one calls it. That lofty mystery is linked to a noble but equally difficult mission that can only be accomplished by the grace of God and the best efforts of the chosen one. The chosen are ultimately convinced that God calls them to become friends of God, to share with God their destiny, mission, and glory. May many young people hear God's call, open their hearts to the mystery of vocation to become a reality, and strive to make it bear a lot of fruit to glorify God and bring salvation to others.

Our Parishioner:

Stanislava Stanislavovna Yerilina

By Tatyana Shaposhnikova, Parish Archivist

Stanislava Stanislavovna Khotin was born on December 5, 1936 in the Polish town of Skidel on the Skidelka River, 25 km from Grodno. This area has long been involved in endless territorial disputes. In the 17th century Skidel was part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, but already in the XVIII century passed into the possession of the Russian Empire and became the administrative center of the Grodno district. Since 1921, Skidel belonged to Poland, but in 1939 the Belarusian population of the city raised a violent uprising against the Polish authorities, and this territory was ceded to Belarus.

Stanislava's childhood fell at the time of these events. Her father, Stanislav Mechislavovich Khotin, graduated from the Polish high school in Vilna and served as an accountant at a local plywood factory. Mom, Emilia Avgustinovna, was a housewife, took care of the children, of whom there were four in the family--the eldest Stanislava and the younger Maria, Anton and Yana.

Grandmother Anastasia on her father's side, a very devout Catholic, devoted a lot of time to raising the children. She taught the children to pray and took them to the city church. Often the whole family went to the church in Vilna. There were many churches in the district--in Grodno, Vilna, Druskininkai. They were ancient, majestic and always filled with parishioners. And in our time in Skidel with a population of 10 thousand people there are two Catholic churches and two Orthodox churches.

The inhabitants of Skidel did not face the political repressions of the 1930s. Here they still spoke the Polish

language and lived according to Polish customs and traditions, despite the influence of Belarusian culture.

After the end of World War II, Stanislava went to an elementary Polish school, as there were no other schools in the district, even though some of the Poles had already left this territory. Two years later, the Polish school switched to the Belarusian-Russian curriculum. At first, it was difficult to study, since Stanislava did not know the Russian language, but the desire to learn helped her to cope with the existing language barrier. Soon she had a dream to become a doctor. After successfully graduating from school, Stanislava left for the far north to Arkhangelsk, where she entered the medical institute. It was interesting to study and she did not regret for a single



day that she had chosen the path of a doctor. "I just missed my home a lot and was looking forward to the holidays in order to leave the cold and cloudy Arkhangelsk for sunny Skidel to my parents." Then they gathered with the large family--relatives from Poland and friends came. Many delicious dishes were prepared--cheeses, omelets, homemade sausages, pies with mushrooms, and berry jelly. She plunged into her usual life, where faith, family prayers, and masses in the church were still in the first place. In Arkhangelsk, there wasn't enough of a spiritual program.

While studying in Arkhangelsk, Stanislava got married. "My husband had a maritime profession as a radio-electric navigator and was sent to work in the city of Donskoy, Tula Region, at a closed military plant as a radio

engineer.” The young family had to separate for a while. After completing the basic course at the institute, Stanislava began working as an intern in Kharkov, Rostov-on-Don, and Tula. Only after having received a diploma as an obstetrician-gynecologist, was she able to come to her husband in Donskoy. Her son Oleg was born there. Then her husband was sent to work in the city of Severodvinsk. It was a time when the city was developing rapidly, strategic enterprises and residential areas were being built, and young specialists were coming. For several years, the young family settled in this ascetic northern port. Stanislava worked in the maternity hospital, her husband worked in the port. According to the already established tradition, holidays and vacations were spent in the circle of Stanislava's family. Only with each visit, family disagreements began to arise. Stanislava Stanislavovna says: “For me, my family has always been a



Her Anointing of the Sick in 2018 by Fr Daniel

Divine Hearth. I grew up surrounded by icons, prayers and churches.” After the death of her grandmother, faith did not leave the family of her parents. “I missed all this already in my family life. My husband was an atheist and raised his son that way, too, laughing at my faith. In the family of my parents they always spoke Polish, but my husband did not know Polish and felt embarrassed, so we began to travel to my homeland less and less. And in 1974, my husband was transferred to work in Magadan. I

never got to see my parents again.” She was able to come to the funeral of her father and mother. “In memory of my parents, I keep family rosaries and icons.”

It was difficult for Stanislava to live thousands of kilometers from Belarus. “I got a job in a city hospital. Often I had to go to emergency calls to small villages, mines, camps 200 km away. Alone, in bad weather, I had to go to save women who, in terrible working conditions, got serious illnesses. Sometimes, while you get to your feet, you collapse from fatigue, but you need to urgently provide assistance. And here there are no doctors, no equipment, and a person is dying in your arms. I had to operate in unsuitable rooms, with the materials that you take with you, but how much can you bring? You take on a lot of responsibility. What helped me? Of course, only faith, prayer and the words of my grandmother: “God will always help us.” Not always everything ended well. There were cases when I could not do anything--Just pray for the unfortunate.” How difficult it was for her to come to terms not only as a Catholic, but also as a doctor with the murder of unborn children. Sometimes women listened to persuasion, but still more often at night Stanislava atoned for other people's sins and mourned the unborn. And how many newborn children and women came to Stanislava in Magadan: The city is small, they often recognized her on the streets, sincerely thanking her.

The circumstances were such that Stanislava's family broke up. It was not easy for Stanislava, who grew up in the Catholic faith, to take such a step. A year later, she met a man who became not only a support for her on her life's path, but also shared her faith. Yuri Nikitich Utkin, originally from Ussuryysk, worked as an electrician in the port icebreaking service of Magadan. A year later, together with their son Oleg, they moved to Vladivostok. In Vladivostok, they formalized the relationship and lived happily. “Yuri Nikitich became a good father for the boy, helped him with the choice of profession and education.” Before retiring, he sailed as an electrician on the ships of the Far Eastern Shipping Company, and Stanislava Stanislavovna was still faithful to her duty as a doctor. How many little townspeople she took into her arms in the newly opened in 1978 new city maternity hospital No. 5 on Churkin in Vladivostok! Stanislava recalls: “I worked in the new maternity hospital for 20 years. Imagine how many children I delivered if there were up to 36 births per day. But in the 1990s, the birth rate fell sharply. In 1998, in the last year of my work, only 5 babies were born. The saddest thing is that earlier in my maternity hospital there were no refusals of children. You look at these little orphans, your heart breaks. They lie quietly, do not cry. We asked student interns to pick them up more often, talk, rock them. How painful it is to see refuseniks, feeling

guilty somewhere--I didn't find the right words, I couldn't convince them."

Having extensive work experience, Stanislava Stanislavovna not only worked in a maternity hospital, but also taught at a medical college, having the highest qualification category and the title of "Excellence in Professional Education". For many years she taught at the Faculty of Advanced Training of Doctors of the Vladivostok Medical Institute, engaging in professional retraining of doctors not only in Vladivostok, but also in many cities of Primorye. For more than 30 years, Stanislava Stanislavovna has been a volunteer blood donor, included in the reserve lists in case of emergency. She was awarded the badge "Honorary Donor of Russia" for her noble contribution to the development of voluntary and non-reimbursed blood donation.

At 80, Stanislava Stanislavovna still went to several maternity hospitals and city hospitals with lectures on obstetrics and gynecology, consulted in difficult situations, and taught at the colleges.



That first mass on the steps of the cathedral in Nov, 1991

Faith occupied a special place in the life of Stanislava. She grew up in a believing family, she never lived a day without faith. "It was hard to come to terms with the fact that there were no churches in those places where I had to live and work. There was no Catholic Church in Vladivostok either." What a joy it was for her when, in November 1991, an invitation to Catholic Mass at the former church was heard on the radio. Together with her husband Yuri Nikitich, they came to the first mass. Stanislava Stanislavovna: "From the moment we heard about the mass, my soul simply rejoiced. Now I can meet a priest, finally go to confession and live with God." Accepting the Catholic faith, Yuri Nikitovich was baptized by Fr Myron in 1993. Always together every Sunday they came to the cathedral. Stanislava Stanislavovna regained the faith and the church, which she prayed for for years.

Yuri Nikitich died in 2021, and a year later Stanislava Stanislavovna died, June 16. She was accompanied on her last journey by Fr Myron.

News Notes

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

● Looking back at 2022 I found these statistics for our **Guardian Angel Program** of the Women's Support Centers. 26 children were sponsored by donors at an average of \$60 per month. This is a tremendous help for the "poorest of the poor". Donors make a regular monthly donation to help a particular poor child. There are a variety of reasons for the poverty, including handicaps, triplets, parents who are ill. This program has helped over 100 children in its history. Some children have grown up supported by this program. Files of needy children are available for possible donors' interest. Write me: Myron.ewing@gmail.com

● We always enjoy "tea" after mass on Sundays because it gives us a chance to get more acquainted with parishioners, especially those who live far from the parish, including students from many countries who study at the Far Eastern Federal University. On Friday nights there is a special program for university students organized by Fr Fr Vicky Samuel, C.J.D. and Sr Faustina Geodken, C.J.D. around a theological theme or a feastday, followed by supper.



Many African Students are among our parishioners. They study medicine at the Far Eastern Federal University.

● Our 97-year old parishioner in Lesozavodsk died on March 20, 2022. **Lydia Postuhova** was a famous poet who was in demand to read her poetry at all kinds of social events in Lesozavodsk. Here is a sample of her poetry (though it rhymed in Russian.)

About Mommas

Mom got sick and that same night
The telegraph screamed
“Kids, hurry up, come quickly.
Mom is sick.”

From Odessa, Talin, Igarka,
Putting aside their deeds,
The kids got together, but sadly
Around the bed, not around the table.

They smoothed the wrinkled hands
And the little silver ring.
How did you allow such distance
To come between?

Mom waited for us in rain and snow
And in dark, dreamless nights.
Did you have to wait for sorrow
To come to your mother’s side?

Surely not just a telegram
Brought you a sad trip.
Listen! While there is a momma
Come visit without a telegram!



- **Sister Mary Stella, C.J.D.**, had a successful operation to remove a benign tumor from her chest behind her heart. She is recuperating in Kansas City, but will hopefully soon be well enough to return to Vladivostok in time for the blessing of the sisters’ building on Russian Island which has been under major repairs. The building with St Paula Chapel is near the Far Eastern Federal University, and so the site of a lot of work with university students. The building can also be used for retreats and meetings, such as the Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference.

- March 28 was the **Bishop’s Chrism Mass**. He celebrated it this year in Khabarovsk after they have had major repairs on their chapel and building. So we all made the 10 hour drive to Khabarovsk for the ceremony. It is the only time of the year when all the priests, deacons, and sisters can meet with the bishop as a group. The best part was the announcement of the ordination of two of our CJD brothers to the priesthood on April 23! Fr Marcus David, C.J.D. will be helping Fr Sebastian in Nakhodka for a while. Fr Vincent Pham, C.J.D., will be working with the big Vietnamese community here in Vladivostok. I’ll send you pictures when it happens! Here is a photo of the sanctuary of the parish church of the Immaculate Conception in Khabarovsk, with the bishop and all the priests of the Russian Far East.



● Fr Dan has been busy planning for **organ concerts** for this Spring and Summer. The artists are the best Russia and the world have to offer, as they are on a circuit for many concerts elsewhere in Russia, too. Usually it is classical and religious music. The concerts are important for us, as they bring people to visit the church who otherwise would never come. So it is an evangelization program for us. During covid we couldn't have concerts, but now again, the last seat is always taken. So it is an income source, too. I'd like to see the day when we could have a concert of American spiritual music—O Happy Day!



March 7th and 8th concerts featured Dmitri Muren, a classical guitarist, who featured many Spanish composers.

(*Con't from page 8*) conference in 1993. Over the years Barbara has volunteered to help with just about everything. She and her family have hosted receptions for our priests during their USA mission appeals in California, she's offered up her delicious desserts for our fundraising dinners, and is a core member of our newsletter crew in Modesto! She has helped fold, stuff, seal and label thousands of the *Vladivostok Sunrise* newsletter. Barbara is the gifted seamstress behind hundreds of the handmade book covers, rosary cases, and tote bags that are made from retired priest vestments and sold through our mission's physical and online store, and at the Catholic conferences we attend. In fact, Barbara is responsible for the habits Fr Dan and Fr Myron wear in Vladivostok as she has sewn most of the parts including the band cincture, cassock and mozzetta.

Barbara is heading off to be closer to her family and we are so very happy for her. Thank you Barbara for all that you have done for the mission. You will be deeply missed!

Thank you all for your kindness and generosity. God bless you and your family.

Sincerely, Jessica Trevillyan, USA Mission Desk
usoffice@vladmission.org, 209-408-0728

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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: <https://vk.com/public211190633>.

Internet

English language: www.vladmission.org

Russian language: www.catholicvl.ru

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

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Mary Mother of God Mission Society is listed in the Official Catholic Directory under the Diocese of Stockton, CA.

Baby Talk

From the Women's Support Centers



It takes a lot of work to look
 this cute!

[Andre May 5 2022]

Opportunities

♥ Give the gift of eternal life! **Request Masses** for your loved ones or special intentions. Masses will be celebrated by our Canons Regular In Jesus The Lord priests. You or your designated recipient will receive a Mass card and prayer card. Suggested Mass stipend is \$15.

♥ Did you know you can set up **automatic monthly donations** via credit card or bank account? Save time and costs for mailing! Contact the mission office.

♥ Over 3900 babies have been saved from abortion through our Women's Support Centers' two programs, **Adopt A Birth Program** and **Adopt A Mother Program**. \$50 will save a baby from abortion through our Adopt A Birth Project. This small gift can make the difference for a destitute mother choosing abortion vs. paying the delivery cost of having her child. \$125 to our Adopt A Mother program helps moms get on their feet in the first few months after delivery, many of whom have just turned away from having an abortion, buying baby formula and clothes, and vitamins for mom and baby.

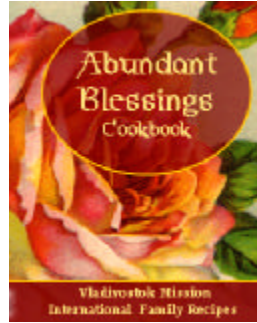
♥ Please support our **Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord (CJD) seminarians** who are or will be working in Russia. We have 8 priests, 2 deacons and 11 CJD seminarians. The yearly cost to support 1 seminarian averages \$10,700 per year. Can you help us form these young men to the priesthood?

♥ Do you know of a **Catholic conference** near you? Please let us know! Contact Vicky at the mission office. We will arrange to attend a booth to have our representatives share the news of our mission.

♥ Check out the mission's **Online Gift store** www.store.vladmission.org! David has been hard at work remodeling our store website and adding more great gifts for all Catholic and special occasions including First Communion and Confirmation. Our site offers great gift ideas including Russian Icons, Nesting dolls and of course, bookcovers and other items made from retired priest vestments. These one of a kind, handmade items are a great gift!

♥ Want to pamper mom with an exotic experience from the Mediterranean or the Caribbean? How about the South Pacific or Mexico? Show mom how much you appreciate her this Mother's Day! Make her feel like she's vacationing in another land by preparing

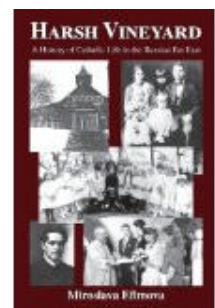
these delicious and easy to make recipes for her from our international cookbook, **Abundant Blessings**, on



Mother's Day, or any day! Start out mom's surprise with Ceviche, a marinated seafood salad, followed by Macadamia Nut Crusted Mahi Mahi with a side dish of Black Beans and Rice with Mango; or, mom will surely relish melt in your mouth Hawaiian Chicken with

Wild Rice. Top it all off with Sweet Plantain Pie! She'll love it! These colorful recipes and 434 more are found in our Abundant Blessings International cookbook. Recipes are collected from our priests, seminarians and mission families from all over the world! Each book is \$30, plus \$3.99 for S/H in the continental USA. Proceeds from our cookbook go to support our Women's Support Centers and our seminarian education and development in Russia. Order from our website or online store, www.store.vladmission.org, or contact our mission office. Thank you!

♥ **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 \$21 includes S/H in the continental United States.

♥ **Day of Giving! Day of Giving! Day of Giving!** We hope you will participate in our Day of Giving on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25th. We are praying to Our Lady for her intercession to raise funds for a van to help in our mission work. Please see page 8 for details.

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From the development desk...

Dear Friends: Thank you to everyone who participated in our very first **Giving Day** on March 25th. What a way to

celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation! Through your help, we were able to reach 68% of our goal of \$23,800. Soon we will be able to fulfill all our transportation needs in Vladivostok and the surrounding cities our priest serve. Follow us as we reach our **Giving Day** goal on Instagram @MARYMOTHEROFGODMISSIONSOCIETY

Or visit our fundraising page

<https://donorbox.org/giving-day-2>



After almost 30 years helping the Vladivostok mission, our dear friend, **Barbara Fitzsimmons**, is hanging up her volunteer hat. Barbara and her husband, Tom, started out as the USA contacts for Fr Myron and Fr Dan after hearing about their newly formed mission at a family (*Con't on Pg 6*)