



Vladivostok Sunrise Russia Mission



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

Issue Number One Hundred Seventy Three September, 2023

The Children’s Gathering, 2023 Lesozavodsk, Russia

By Fr Vicky Samuel, C.J.D.



“Fr Kiwi” and kids at the Gathering

Great things happen when God mixes with us.

Like last year, I arranged a children’s gathering at Visitation Parish. I must say it was not easy for me to deal with it because last year the CJD sisters were with me and they helped me a lot during the gathering, but this year I was the only one there on the staff who could speak Russian! There were four CJD brothers with me, but their Russian language was not good enough because they just started their Russian language course. But with the help of God everything went well.

I started this program on the 19th of June and ended on the 23rd. At the beginning of the program there were very few children, which concerned me, but on the third day there were almost 21 children. There were children from 8th years to 16 years old.

We had many activities and talks on biblical parables. I shared with them the parable of the Lost Sheep, with the moral that God takes care of us even we are lost. The Samaritan woman who came to the well to get water gave me the chance to add the moral that God wants to know us and wants to have friendship with us, even He know everything about us. The story of ten lepers, but only one

of which returned to Jesus to thank him, with the moral “Should I give thanks to God in my daily life?” On the fifth and last day I showed the children the video of Nick Vujcic in the Russian Language. In this video he shared how almighty God changes our lives and helps us to grow because he has plan for us all. Even if we have sinned and made many mistakes, He leads us in every second of our lives.

Every day we had singing practice with children. During the indoor activities we made many toys from different things. With the help of plastic binders and frames we also made many designs and figures of animals. For small children there were puzzles game which they enjoyed a lot. After lunch we used to go to the playground and play different games like, football, volleyball, basketball, hula hoop, badminton etc. The children enjoyed all the games and had fun.



Time to be creative and have fun

A funny thing happened during the program: they started calling me Kivi instead of Vicky—I don’t know why. [Kivi = Vicky backwards, probably a sign that they really liked you.—ed.] The sad thing that happened this time was that some of the children were having terrible experiences at home. I could see that some of them were

Most Holy Mother of God Pray for Us

very poor and hardly getting daily nutrition. Some of the children started asking me to give them money. Especially I was really sad to see children whose mother died in a car accident so their grandmother was supposed to take care of them, but they are doing whatever they wanted. They started stealing money and things from the shops. Once they were caught, but the shop owner did not complain to the police, knowing their situation. One of our trusted

Lesozavodsk parishioners came to know about it and dealt with all kinds of situations for them. After hearing all this I was really sad about what will be their future. I wish I could do something for them so that they may have a good future and better life.

As I said in the beginning “great things happen when God mixes with us” everything went well and I am hoping to do better and better next year.

Nourishing Hope: Feeding My Fellow *Cebuanos* on the Street

By Vladivostok Seminarian Edwin Intan, C.J.D.

HOPE is a much stronger word in the Bible than it is for most of us today. The hope of deliverance and resurrection is based solidly on the promise of an almighty-truth telling, covenant-keeping God who never fails and is never thwarted, who always keeps his promises. Whenever we hope for what God has promised, we don't wish for a possibility; we anticipate a certainty.

In the bustling city of Cebu in the Philippines, where the disparity between the rich and the poor is evident, there are many individuals who struggle to have access to basic necessities, including food. Witnessing the plight of my fellow *Cebuanos*, I felt a deep sense of empathy and a strong desire to make a difference. This led me to embark to be part of a mission to nourish hope by feeding those in need on the streets of Cebu.



Raising a child on the street?

The inspiration to start this initiative came from a personal experience. I was abandoned by my parents due to an unfortunate and tragic circumstance, and in those days



These people experience joy not just from the temporary help they receive, but also from the human connection that accompanies it.

before I was sent to my grandmother on another island, I felt I was left behind without the support of any immediate relatives within the city and so I had to fend for myself, facing unimaginable challenges on a daily basis. One of the most pressing issues I had was hunger. Without a stable source of food, I was relying on the kindness of strangers on the street and these constant pangs of hunger not only weakened my physical health but also took a toll on my mental and emotional well-being.

So with much determination, remembering that, I decided to take action. I started by reaching out and collaborating with my former theology classmate, now a priest, Fr. Rey Vincent Bahian, SVD in his Bread for Life Program whose primary initiatives were aimed at

addressing hunger in Cebu. Through these interactions, I gained valuable insights into the challenges faced by the group and the individuals that we served.



A recipient of food package from Bro Edwin with a smile of a humble yet radiant, reflecting the immense appreciation for the simple act of receiving sustenance.

Armed with this knowledge, we began developing a strategy to feed my fellow *Cebuanos* on the street. We reached out to local businesses, restaurants, and individuals, explaining to them to take action and make a difference in their own communities. We received messages from people who wanted to replicate our feeding programs in their cities, and we gladly shared our experiences and advice to help them get started.

To further expand our impact, we began partnering with local organizations and businesses. This allowed us to reach more individuals in need and provide additional resources such as medical check-ups, hygiene kits, and educational opportunities. We also started advocating for policy changes to address the root causes of homelessness and hunger.

As we continued our journey, we aimed to create sustainable solutions that go beyond just providing immediate relief. We are exploring opportunities to collaborate with vocational training centers and job placement agencies to help individuals gain the skills and resources needed to lift themselves out of poverty.

Additionally, we are working towards establishing community gardens and urban farming initiatives. This not only promotes self-sufficiency but also provides access to fresh, nutritious produce for those who need it most.

Through our ongoing efforts, we hope to inspire a culture of empathy and compassion, where helping those in need becomes a collective responsibility. We believe that by working together, we can create a world where no one goes hungry or feels forgotten.

Together, we can nourish hope and create a better future for everyone. No act of kindness is too small, and every effort counts. Let's stand together and make a positive impact in the lives of those who need it the most.

Youth and Faith Formation at the University

By Fr Vicky Samuel, C.J.D.

The purpose of the Youth Faith Formation program is to help youth to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ. I believe that the youth is very special in our Catholic church and they really need faith formation by the word of God, examples and with the help of the Holy Spirit, and also, to assist them in religious, moral, and spiritual formation. Through the effort of youth, they can grow in their love for God and knowledge of their Catholic faith and tradition.

As Catholic Chaplain at the Far Eastern Federal University located in Vladivostok, Primorsky Territory,



Some University students attend the Tea after Sunday Mass

Russia, I have been working with a youth group. These boys and girls are from different countries, like India, Columbia, Brazil, Spain, Indonesia, Korea, Russia, Pakistan and some countries of Africa. Most of them are studying medicine and others are in the field of mathematics, engineering, and other sciences. Almost all of these students are far from their countries and home parishes. Therefore, Because of their study schedules, they don't have time for their faith formation and prayers.

Both the CJD sisters and I meet these young boys and girls every Friday evening. We made a WhatsApp group. During the week, we send them an invitation and whoever wants to come, we write his/her name. When they come to the parish, we welcome them and at about 7:30 PM we start our Bible studies session with students. After the session, we eat supper and during supper we invite the students to share their three moments of the week. 1. Moment with God, 2. Good moment and 3. Bad moment. After supper we play Uno cards together. All the students enjoy the game and have fun.



The students come from all over the world.

As a priest, I also help them in their spiritual growth. I hear their confessions and give them spiritual guidance. I also gave them various talks on Holy Mass, Holy Eucharist, the Rosary, Salvation story, Lent and Advent season preparation etc. On the other hand, Sr Faustina and I do Bible reading and discuss different questions. We give them the chance to talk more. So that they may explore their ideas and thoughts. All the students really enjoy all these activities.

It is very true that through our baptism Christ has called us to be disciples and follow Him as He has revealed Himself through the Sacred Scriptures and Apostolic Tradition. Therefore, our goal is to draw youth into a deeper encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. Youths can only hand on the faith when they themselves have committed to making Jesus Christ the center of their lives. We try: To help students understand the beauty of the Catholic Church. To enable each individual to nourish his/her own personal relationship with God through prayer, study, Scripture and regular participation in the

Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation. To help students recognize the Eucharistic liturgy as the source, expression and celebration of who we are as Catholic Christians. To help them to have a desire to live their faith and be involved in the mission of the church.

With these activities we also arrange a picnic program for them to enjoy life and the company of friends. We invite all students to bring anything for the picnic to share their countries special food and we also make BBQ for the students. We play, swim, and cook on the beach. They really like this picnic. I wish to continue this program to help all the students to be strong in their faith.



Fr Vicky and Sister Faustina with one Friday night's students.

Jesus Christ: The source, model and content of Evangelization

*(A reflection on Paul VI's post-Synodal exhortation,
Evangelii Nuntiandi)*

By Seminarian Lloyd A. Cabataña, C.J.D.

In the post-Synodal exhortation of Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi, he devoted much of his message in amplifying the role of Christ in the Church's mission on Evangelization. He established a link between the evangelizing mission of Jesus and the primal importance of the Church's mission that Christ evangelized and passed on the mission to the twelve, to his disciples, and to the Church, making evangelization the supreme work of the Church. In short, Christ is the source of the Church's mission on evangelization.

Now, being the source of evangelization, it is natural that how Jesus evangelized becomes the model of the Church's evangelizing. Jesus was a perfect witness of the Father's love. His approach to salvation was wholistic; he healed the sick, he fed thousands, He stood for what is just, and preached the Kingdom of God. He attended to the material and spiritual needs of man. He completed it, sealed

it by the salvific act of giving his life for mankind. Jesus is the ideal and model of Evangelization.

Jesus' life was a complete evangelizing activity. From the Incarnation to the resurrection, He delivered a message of change, of conversion of the heart. He set a standard of living without making it hard for man to analyse what and how. Jesus told and showed man the content which was Himself. More to that He never really left. He continues to evangelize with us His body

As a body, unity is required so that it will function smoothly. The work of evangelization of the church who is the body of Christ requires all members to function in the same direction. Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi* nicely outlines the source, method, content, the meaning, the beneficiaries, the workers, and the fuel who is the Holy Spirit as essential elements to make the Church's mission on Evangelization work. But Christ points out to the individual Christians comprising the whole. He points out to you and me who has heard his evangelizing call to be witnesses of God's love to the world of today.

In the context of the modern world where philosophies and ideas of secularism result in new forms of atheism, wherein man thinks that he does not need God in the attainment of his pursuits, he relies on his own capacity to attain his needs and wants. This selfish notion would make him believe that violence is justifiable in his attainment of his purely worldly views; a world without God, without hope, a world that tramples on dignity and morality.

This is why the call for Evangelization which is the primary mission of Jesus and the Church demands from every member of the Catholic church, of you and me, to utilize every available tool like catechesis, the pulpit, mass

media, and to constantly update effective means to evangelize. Above all it calls for the authentic witnessing of the Gospel of Love that promotes justice, human dignity, liberation, human development and above all salvation. To be authentic witnesses the need for metanoia or continuous conversion of the heart is imperative because it is only when consciences are good that man is able to stand and defend the truth.

The sacred duty to perform as evangelizers in whichever role, be it a pastor, a lay person, a member of the family, or a youth of today, requires a life where Christ is alive and Christ can only be alive in us if we live like Him who prayed and asked the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who preached the truth in his homilies that are always rooted in scriptures, who respected people regardless of culture or walk of life, who was an exemplar of charity in healing the sick and feeding the hungry, and who gave hope to the world in both material and spiritual that inspired following.

With the Holy Spirit as the fuel, He needs His engine to be of prime condition. The message of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* reminds us of our individual roles and duty to water the seed Jesus has sown and bring it to growth. Understanding that we are Jesus' hands in His continuous work of evangelization is a call for renewal that we need to be worthy vessels of Christ who is the source of evangelization. We shouldn't forget that we don't need to invent anything because we have Jesus as our model of life. And, being called to evangelize, our lives must be a reflection of the content of our evangelization who is Christ.

News Notes

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



● Here it is! Our "Giving Day" Toyota microbus fresh from Japan. It is parked on church land so that we don't have to pay for a parking space in the port, but we still don't have the keys because we haven't paid for it yet! It is difficult to get money from America because of the sanctions. Working on it! I'm in the picture so you know the car is here in Russia!

● We have more priests, and more coming, so we really are in need of mass stipends. Mass stipends are meant for the daily support of the priest. We usually ask \$15 per mass, as I'm guessing that is about the cost of daily upkeep of one person. But since I currently have zero stipends to give our priests, any amount would be appreciated. We are grateful, too, for parish priests who sometimes send us their backlog, since they usually can only take one intention per day, and their parishes sometime supply more than needed

● Here is a picture of Fr Dan Maurer, C.J.D. and Fr Mark Dao, C.J.D. with parishioners of St Boniface Parish in Cleveland, Ohio. Fr Dao, from our Vladivostok

Community, is the new pastor of the parish which has 500 Vietnamese parishioners.



[continued from page 8] particularly the martyrdom of the Catholics of Vladivostok, and the wicked grip the practice of abortion holds in Russia. I believe the facts of this latter point especially galvanized those listening, as they are a fiercely pro-life parish. At each of the masses the mission received a generous outpouring of charity in prayers and donations, and I was quite moved by how freely they gave of themselves to the purpose of the church. I owe great thanks to Most Sacred Heart parish, not only for their charity to the mission, but in the outstanding example they were of Christian hospitality. I offer a special thanks to Fr. Leo and a number of kind parishioners. I departed with a full




This picture was taken from the streaming of one of the masses from Most Sacred Heart Parish. You can find it on their Youtube channel!

heart of hope for the mission. Surely if we have such supporters as I met in the midwest praying for us, we can win many hearts in the east.

To all I met in my sojourning, I thank you greatly. Everyone I met was so kind, generous, and hospitable.

For more information on becoming a volunteer speaker for the 2024 Mission Appeals, contact Jessica Trevillyan at the USA Mission office usoffice@vladmission.org, 209-408-0728

Baby Talk
From the Women's Support Centers



“They say pushups are good for you.”
[Michael December 14, 2022]

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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

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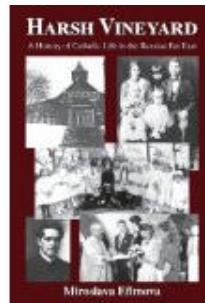
Mary Mother of God Mission Society is listed in the Official Catholic Directory under the Diocese of Stockton, CA.

Opportunities

♥ This year we have been blessed with so many **mission appeal** assignments from diocese throughout the US. These assignments allow us the opportunity to bring awareness of our mission to parishes who would otherwise not know of the struggles faced by the Catholic Church in Eastern Russia. There are still a few assignments coming up for the 2023 MCP. We look forward to seeing you at a parish near you.

- Oct. 1 Fr. Myron Effing
St. Bridget & St Patrick - Pleasant Hill MO
- Oct. 8 Fr. Myron Effing
Blessed Trinity, Greenfield MA
- Oct. 15 Fr. Myron Effing
Holy Trinity, Aurora MO
- Oct. 22 Fr. Myron Effing
St. Catherine of Vienna, Greensburg IN
- Oct. 29 Fr. Myron Effing
SS. Peter and Paul, Cary IN
- Oct. 29 Fr. Doug Grandon
St. Paul, Fenton MO
- Nov. 19 Fr. Doug Grandon
Sacred Heart, Valley Park MO
- Dec. 17 Fr. Doug Grandon
OL of the Sacred Heart, Springfield MA

♥ **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.



♥ Christmas is just around the corner and a great way to help fundraise from your own parish is by having an **Icon Sale**. Ask your pastor if you may host a weekend Russian Icon sale after Masses at your parish. The mission office provides all the religious goods needed. Sell **Russian and Greek icons and gifts**, statues, rosaries and other religious goods for all the sacraments while bringing awareness of the Vladivostok Mission to your fellow parishioners. We can also send items perfect for getting ready for the Advent and Christmas season. You and your team may also designate where your fundraising efforts go, i.e. Women's Centers, Adopt a Mother, Seminarian Education, Emergency Fund, General, etc. Please contact Vicky at usoffice@vladmission.org or 209-408-0728 or for details.



♥ 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.

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From the development desk...

Dear Friends:

Graces in the Midwest *By David Nall*

Greetings from the mission office. June and July were such a busy and blessed time of opportunities for the mission in both conferences and mission appeals! I had the opportunity to speak at two of such mission appeals, and wanted to share my experience. Another missionary, Nico Semchuck, and I set off at the start of July for a dual mission appeal in the Diocese of Saginaw, Michigan. This was a unique trip, as we would both be going to make mission appeals at separate, though nearby, parishes. Arriving, we got acquainted with the deacon of Nativity of the Lord parish, who told us much about the region and their community. That weekend after each reception of the Holy Eucharist, we gave our appeals at our respective parishes.

We spoke briefly, explaining the history of Vladivostok, the founding of the parish, communist oppression, the revival of the parish, and the great work they do today. Afterward, we answered numerous questions about the state of the faith in

Russia. So many great questions! I believe we helped illuminate many about the dramatic lack of faith in the post-soviet states, and opened many hearts to prayer.

That evening Nico and I walked the street we stayed on, appreciating the peaceful, sleepy evening, and I considered what a wonder and grace it was to see such a place and meet so many kind people. We must thank the people of Nativity of the Lord in Alma, and St. Vincent De Paul in Shepherd, and the Diocese of Saginaw for this great opportunity to see their communities and speak about the mission! Nico and I are especially grateful to the Deacons Todd and Rick for their friendship and efforts, and the Religious Sisters of Mercy in Alma for their gracious provision of a guest house for our staying. We departed Michigan most tired, but full in the knowledge we had done our part in raising awareness for the mission and its work.

Two weeks after that I set out alone to Eureka, Missouri to visit Most Sacred Heart parish. Despite some difficulties getting there, I made it just in time to prepare for the Saturday night mass. After the reception of the Eucharist, again I told the ways of the mission. I mentioned [*continued on page 6.*]