



# Vladivostok Sunrise Russia Mission



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

Issue Number One Hundred Seventy Six March 2024

## The Fateful Year of 1921 as Seen in Church Records

By Parish Archivist Tatyana Shaposhnikova  
(translation by Google)

Let's go back to 1921, the year when the Most Holy Mother of God Church in Vladivostok was consecrated on October 2. It was the time of the Communist Revolution when the Reds and Whites were fighting it out in Siberia and the Far East. Let's feel and understand that difficult time--a time of tragedy and trials, filled with the unpredictability of events and the joy of anticipation.



The Oasis Café on "Main St." run by the American Knights of Columbus where any "ally in uniform" could get a free meal.

In Vladivostok in 1921, desolation and criminality reigned. Kidnappings, bomb threats, attacks and murders had become everyday occurrences. Many townspeople tried to stay at home, and those who went out risked not returning home. According to available data, up to half a million refugees had gathered in the city and its surroundings. Foreign soldiers and soldiers from all over the world dominated--the Japanese, Czechoslovaks, Turks, American, Canadian, and European units who arrived in the city back in 1918, and who arrived in large numbers, and also the released German prisoners of war from WWI, White Guards and Bolshevik partisans. Foreigners

introduced their money into circulation in the city. Solid yens, dollars, and pounds stood against the ruble, devoured by inflation. This explains why many parish financial documents include foreign currencies, mainly Japanese yens and American dollars. The city was rocked by endless strikes, store closures, regular power plant shutdowns, and frequent blackouts. Vladivostok was plunging into the abyss of chaos and it was already an abandoned city with appalling unsanitary conditions, plagued by hunger, typhoid, cholera, and lack of medicine. The curtain fell over Golden Horn Bay, which still reminded visitors to Vladivostok of an amphitheater. But the city was only 61 years old, and just by this time it had become a powerful, heavily armed outpost and a first-class international trading harbor. Conceived on the edge of Russia as a window to the world, it turned into a remote outback for many, many years.

As a consequence of all this, large-scale emigration of the urban population by sea to Japan and China began. They took with them everything that could be taken and that was valuable as a memory of a past life. It was completely unclear whether this departure was temporary or permanent. According to eyewitnesses: "It's as if the entire population of Vladivostok is moving to new apartments with all their household belongings." Emigration of unprecedented proportions also spread among the Polish population of Vladivostok. Rumors, rumors, rumors... No one could really say what awaited the Poles, the citizens of an already free Poland. Pastor Slivovsky maintained the spirit of his flock as best he could. He blessed those departing: "Always be worthy members of the world family," he said, and gave the sacraments to those who remained, because life continued--young people got married, children were born, and they said goodbye to the dead. And of course, the parish and the Vladivostok dean's office was preparing for the long-awaited celebration of the consecration of the new church.

The ceremonial consecration of the Church at last took place on October 2. Numerous guests gathered--the clergy of Far Eastern parishes: Fr Georgy Yurkevich from Khabarovsk, Fr Kaminsky from Blagoveshchensk, Fr Mirzhvinsky, military chaplain of Nikolsk-Ussuriysk. A

Most Holy Mother of God Pray for Us

whole delegation of clergy arrived from Harbin, China--the rector of the Harbin parish, Fr Vladislav Ostrovsky, vicar priest Fr Alexander Eisymont, Fr Marius Kluge, parishioners, consuls, business representatives, foreign guests. And on the same day, in the new, already consecrated church, the first sacrament of baptism took place. Let's look into the historical registry books and read what has already become our history.

On October 2, priest Alexander Eisymont, who came from Harbin for the celebrations, baptized the baby Jadwiga Leshchinskaya, less than 3 months old. The parents are citizens of Poland Andrei Osipovich and Florentina Kazimirovna (Alexandrovich) Leshchinsky. Godparents Joseph Kop and Alexandra Kozlovskaya were present at the sacrament. On Tuesday, October 4, Pastor Slivovsky baptized two twin babies: Mechislav and Stanislav Musteikis, born on September 4 in Nikolsk-Ussuriysk, parents Joseph Martynovich and Maria Vladislavovna (Korsak) Musteikis, citizens of the Kovno province. The next two baptisms took place on October 9, Sunday after mass. The children were baptized by Slivovsky.



#1 Baby Valerian Vysotsky's baptismal day. Father Vladislav Vysotsky is standing, godmother Eva Stashevskaya is sitting with her daughter Yadviga. Vladivostok. 1921

Before the advent season began, Pastor Slivovsky baptized 12 babies in the new church, born in Vladivostok and Nikolsk-Ussuriysk. During Advent, the Sacrament of Baptism was performed for four more children and two were baptized on the bright holiday of the Nativity of Christ.

(See Photo 1) There were many births and baptisms in Vladivostok in 1921. Just think about it--170 children! This is understandable as this was the heyday of the Roman Catholic Church of the Far East, when Far Eastern cities received tens of thousands of foreigners of the

Catholic faith. In 1921, out of 170 baptismal records, 49 listed citizens of Poland, 12 listed citizens of Czechoslovakia, and slightly less citizens of Hungary, Italy, Austria, Germany, France, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and even Japan and China.



#2 Jan and Maryana Lisovsky. Parish of the Most Holy Mother of God. Vladivostok. 1921

The first wedding in the new Church of the Most Holy Mother of God took place on the Sunday following the consecration, October 9. Pastor Slivovsky married Franz Artz, 42 years old, single, originally from Sedlec, who had lived in Vladivostok for 22 years. By the way, this is the brother of Boleslav Artz, a well-known businessman and donor in the city. The bride of such an eminent groom was a 36-year-old widow, Natalia Ivanovna Kostenko (nee Babenko), originally from the Kyiv province. She lived in Vladivostok for 3 years and on her wedding day she converted to the Catholic faith. In total, 89 weddings took place (See photo 2) in 1921! In the new church, 11 couples got married before the Nativity of Christ. And again, the registry records of those married are replete with the nationalities of many European countries--Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Moravia, Alsace, Czech Republic, Romania, Silesia, Western Galicia, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Tyrol, Bohemia, Latvia. These are former prisoners of war returning to their homeland through the eastern lands of Russia, military personnel of foreign states on a special mission, refugees from Western

provinces fleeing the Red Terror and moving on to Manchuria and China, and of course local Catholics. It is interesting that the grooms, who were representatives of foreign countries, took Russian girls as wives, some were only 16 years old. Obstacles to the faith were removed by a bishop's dispensation. They got married urgently, in a hurry, even during Lent, which was again permitted by the dispensation. They did not stay in Vladivostok for more than 4-6 months. They departed by sea to their historical homeland, taking with them young Russian wives. One can only guess what the fate of these girls was, but Russian blood is present in many generations of Europeans.



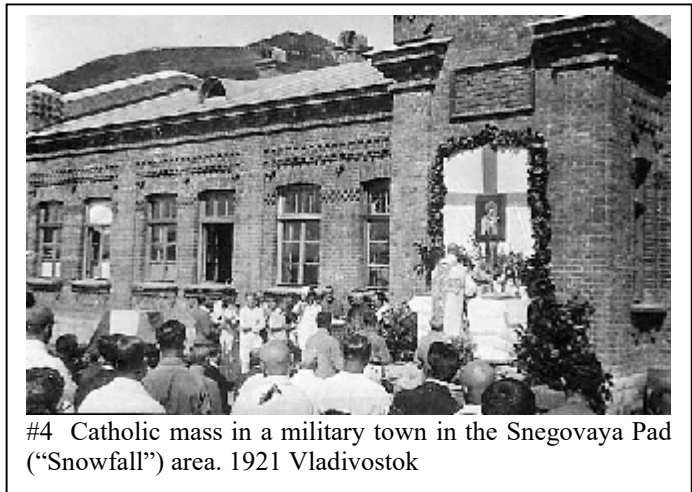
#3 The Catholic Mass for a deceased prisoner of war is celebrated by a military chaplain. Soldiers' cemetery in the valley of the 1st River. 1920 Vladivostok

The Vladivostok parish experienced more than just joyful events in the fall of 1921. Life went on as usual. What do the registry books tell us about the deceased? Burials of Catholics can be found in 13 cemeteries--the city Pokrovskoye cemetery, in the cemeteries of Russian Island, Egersheld Peninsula, Sobol Bay, Churkin Peninsula, Diomed Bay, at the Military Cemetery and Sea Cemetery, at cemeteries in the area of the 1st and 2nd Rivers, in Sedanka, Sadgorod and Artyom Coal Fields. In addition, there are burials dating back to 1919 in the city's cholera cemetery (now in the area of Nerchinskaya Street. (Photo 3)

(See photo 4) Requiem masses in the church were held for parishioners and newcomers. In 1921, 47 Catholics died. Military personnel and prisoners of war had military chaplains in their units, who performed funeral services and buried servicemen in military cemeteries. Thus, in the valley of the 1st River, where there were numerous camps for prisoners of war, there were two cemeteries with a large number of burials, which have not survived to this day. There were many burials in the military cemetery of the Egerschöld Peninsula (not preserved) and in two

cemeteries of the Military and Naval Departments (now this is the combined Naval Cemetery).

By the end of the year, 13 funeral masses were held in the new church. Two took place on December 31st. Polish citizens Wladyslaw Rymsha, 20 years old, a bachelor, and Jan Waschuk, 43 years old, a bachelor, died from gunshot wounds. Both were buried by Pastor Slivovsky in the Vladivostok cemetery.



#4 Catholic mass in a military town in the Snegovaya Pad ("Snowfall") area. 1921 Vladivostok

Records about the dead are more eloquent than any historical documents. They tell about events taking place in a country, city or family. Since 1918, including the year 1921, deaths from cardiac paralysis, gunshot wounds, and severe infectious diseases had increased significantly. But against this disappointing background, infant mortality decreased significantly.

From the day of its consecration, in the long-suffering city of Vladivostok, the Church of the Most Holy Mother of God has been a refuge, a place of spirituality and support for many Catholics--the local Polish diaspora, foreign citizens of Europe, Asia, and America, refugees from the western regions of the Russian Empire and Soviet Russia. Having gone through the Soviet years of backwater, devastation and lack of faith, today it is again a spiritual center for Catholics of many nationalities, just like Vladivostok, conceived on the edge of Russia, which has become the eastern gateway for business and friendly relations.

See also Wikipedia: **American Expeditionary Force, Siberia**

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**CARITAS's 2023  
Adopt-a-Children**

# My trip to Lesozavodsk

By Novice Sandeep Golla, C.J.D.

The idea of going for a trip always gives excitement, especially when you live in another country. Going to new places gives us an opportunity to experience new phenomena in life.

I recently visited a place called Lesozavodsk in the far eastern region of Primorsky Krai, Russia. It is almost five hours to reach there by car from Vladivostok. Wow, what an awesome experience this trip left with me! On the way I witnessed changes in the weather. In some places I went through snow and hail and in some, rain, and in some sunrays touched me. I enjoyed this moment thoroughly, and also traveling with my fellow religious brothers added more joy to this trip.

I spent two days there where the climate is cold, and I had enough winter clothes to keep myself warm. All the parishioners said “Hi!” to me with big smiles and they asked whether I’m okay with the cold climate. I felt very welcomed by their caring words. I participated in the holy Eucharistic celebration with parishioners, and we celebrated an elderly woman’s birthday who turned 94, and she seemed to me to be as strong as I was. I hope I’ll see her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and I can celebrate it with her as a priest.

After the Eucharistic celebration we all had lunch together and we shared our faith experiences. Some elderly people shared stories about how the parish was started by Fr Myron twenty four years ago. The sharing enkindled my zeal to become a missionary priest with C.J.D. and to work for people and to share God’s word and spread the Catholic faith. Was it all a thrilling experience? I say yes and I came back home with many positive thoughts and I thanked God for this opportunity.



*Sandeep (tallest) and parishioners visiting the sick in Lesozavodsk*

# News Notes

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

● On Friday before Christmas yet **another cross fell** from the steeples of our church, and fell on the roof! I don’t know if the roof was damaged yet, but the fact that the second one fell suggests that the problem is inadequate mounting, as why else would two crosses fall within such a short period of time? We have to see what the building engineers will say. It seems that the crosses suffered from wind damage. Here is a photo taken by a drone of a steeple ball. Clearly the metal wasn’t strong enough to



battle the winds that high up, and notice that the solder or weld joints were also broken. So we have two crosses to fix and mount more strongly. It’s a long way up there!

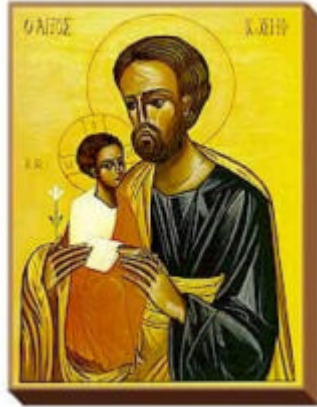
● In the spring, we may start a **Tagalog mass**, as the number of Filipino parishioners is increasing. They already have a social gathering on the DeFriese Peninsula (part of Vladivostok), and one of our Filipino brothers, Edwin Intan, C.J.D. will be going there regularly, too, to begin some prayers and spiritual recollections. He speaks Tagalog (as well as Russian, English, Korean, Japanese, and Cebuano). It is never a dull moment around here as our vocations from many countries keep things hopping!

● On Saturday, December 23, I had an unusual experience! The Vladivostok Lutheran pastor, **Pastor Manfred Brockmann**, died on December 15. We had both come to serve in Russia in February of 1992, so we became friends. He was from Germany and older than I. He often asked me to perform his funeral service if he should die. So, even though there is another Lutheran pastor now, and even a bishop, they decided to honor Pastor Brockmann’s wishes, and invited me to perform the funeral service. He was given permission by the City of Vladivostok to be buried near the Lutheran pastor from before the Communist Revolution in the Sea Cemetery.

- Bishop Kirill Klimovich, D.D., our bishop of the Irkutsk Diocese of St Joseph is expected so say the diocesan **Chrism Mass** here in Vladivostok on March 19—It’s the Feast of St Joseph!—a good day for us to pray for all the benefactors of our March 25 Giving Day.

- **March 25: Giving Day 2024.**

We’ve had requests to open a Women’s Support Center in Artyom, a suburb of Vladivostok. And we’ve been dreaming of opening a site in Artyom for St Joseph’s Parish, which has been having its monthly mass in a variety of places. But now Artyom is growing rapidly, and also is the whole area around Artyom because the Vladivostok Airport is there, located on the continent instead of on the peninsula like Vladivostok (to avoid sea fog.) Land prices there are better than in Vladivostok, so many companies are locating there, so that the number of parishioners is growing.



*St. Joseph icon from St. Joseph’s Parish, Artyom*

We would like to buy a commercial property on the first floor of a building in Artyom so that the Women’s Support Center could be located there, and on Sundays we could start having Holy Mass there, too. No use thinking about a church building until the parish grows significantly. So we are looking for donors for the St Joseph’s Parish in Artyom to buy such a premises.

Fr Myron’s home parish in Indiana and Fr Dan’s in Michigan are both St Joseph’s Parishes. And St Joseph’s Parish is our sister parish in Modesto where Mary Mother of God Mission Society’s offices are located. It will be our **Giving Day project this year on March 25**, the Feast of the Annunciation. We hope St. Joseph will pray for this project as he found a home for the Blessed Virgin to give birth to Jesus! Don’t forget Giving Day, March 25! St Joseph, pray for us!

- Sister Faustina, C.J.D. ran a parish workshop before Christmas to teach parishioners about **advent wreaths**, (see photo) and then they made wreaths for their own homes. It was a success. Sr Faustina is also busy with workshops and supper every Friday night for university students, helping university chaplain Fr Vicky Samuel, C.J.D.. So far, up to 40 students, mostly from the medical college, attend. Recent topics were from “The Theology of the Body” by St John Paul II. Most are Africans.

## Baby Talk

From the Women’s Support Centers



You think you’re so smart!  
[Valeria March 15 2023]

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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/>

**Internet:** English language: [www.vladmission.org](http://www.vladmission.org)

Russian language: [www.catholicvl.ru](http://www.catholicvl.ru)

Sisters in Jesus the Lord in English: [www.cjd.cc](http://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.**



## Opportunities

### ♥ Day of Giving! Day of Giving! Day of Giving!

Last year we were able to purchase a much needed van for our Vladivostok parish after the success of our very first Day of Giving! This year we are hoping to establish a new **Women's Support Center** in Artyom. We hope you will participate in our **Day of Giving on March 25<sup>th</sup>**, the Feast of the Annunciation. Please see our Day of Giving insert for additional information.

♥ Please help us to continue our work with our current Women's Centers as well, through our programs, **Adopt A Baby** or **Adopt A Mother**. Your gift of \$50 to the **Adopt A Birth** program will pay for the medical supplies needed in the hospital to deliver the baby. Often times, the cost of these supplies is the deciding factor for a mother to have an abortion or let her child live. Fr Myron will send you a picture of the newborn you helped save to keep or pass on. Over 2900 babies have been saved from abortion to date! Your \$125 gift to the **Adopt A Mother** program will provide help to the mother and baby in the first weeks supplying them with nutritious food, formula, diapers, baby clothes vitamins and medical aftercare. General donations to the Women's Centers will help us continue to serve women in crisis pregnancies, children, and men and women suffering from post-abortion syndrome, and many other services offered to families.

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

My Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

♥ The mission office in Modesto is still looking for volunteers to join our newsletter crew! Help us process our bi-monthly *Vladivostok Sunrise* newsletter by inserting collection envelopes, sealing and addressing our thousands of newsletters. If you are in the Modesto area and interested, please contact me at the national mission office in Modesto.

♥ As Spring approaches, so do the **Catholic Conferences!** Are you interested in helping us spread the news of our mission at a conference near you? Pass out our mission literature and sell religious gifts from our booth and even get to hear great Catholic speakers! If you are in driving distance of any of these conferences, we ask for your help!

- 4/5-7 IRL National Meeting, Mundelein IL
- 4/20 Men's Conference, San Antonio TX
- 4/26-27 Ignited by Truth, Raleigh NC
- 4/26-27 Marian Conference, Nashville TN
- 4/26-28 Young Cath. Professionals, Frisco TX
- 5/10-12 Marian Eucharistic, Ave Maria FL
- 5/17-19 Marian Conference, St. Louis MO
- 6/9-12 Life Teen Catholic Youth Ministry Convention, Phoenix AZ
- 6/14-16 Power & Purpose Conf., Steubenville OH
- 7/25-27 Chesterton Conference, Philadelphia PA

♥ Are you looking for a book to help you reflect deeper during this Lenten Season? Maybe a religious themed **Easter gift**? Head over to our **Online Store** to browse our unique and faith based gifts. Use the coupon code **EASTER** to save.



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## From the development desk...

Dear Friends:

It has been just over a year since the first **CJD World** newsletter was sent out to all of you officially announcing the Canons Regular in Jesus the Lord as its own 501 (c)(3) non profit corporation, supporting the many CJD seminarians from all over the world.

Mary Mother of God Mission Society continues to support **10 Priests, 4 seminarians ready for ordination**, including Br. Edwin Intan from the Philippines, **9 seminarians in different levels of their education** and **4 Novices** all of whom are currently or will be serving in Russia.

All other CJD seminarians in Indonesia or Vietnam or elsewhere who are not slated for Russia are now wholly supported by CJD-NV. Please continue to send donations intended for seminarians and priest for Russia to our mission office in Modesto. If you would like to support the seminarians for Indonesia or Vietnam, donations must be sent to the CJDNV address:

Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord  
2915 Lake East Drive  
Las Vegas, NV 89117



*Br. Peter Nsamba, C.J.D., a seminarian for Russia, ready for deacon ordination.*

Many blessings to all of you. God bless you!  
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