

Vladivostok Sunrise Russia Mission



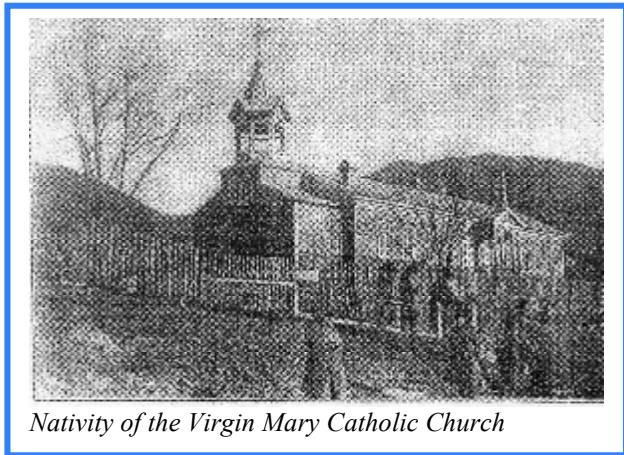
Mary Mother of God Mission Society: Reviving the Roman Catholic Church in Eastern Russia

Issue Number One Hundred Seventy Seven May, 2024

St. Mary's Church

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

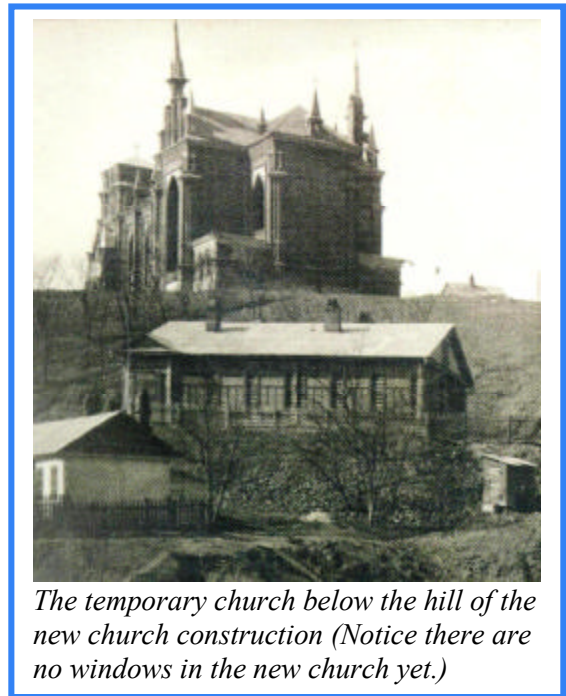
When I first came to Vladivostok in 1991 I was happy to meet with Catholics who wanted to found a parish here. Among those folks were elderly men and women who were members of the local parish as children before it was closed by the Communists in 1923 and who remembered Bishop Karol Slivovsky. But they had been children then, and told me that the name of the parish was "Most Holy Mother of God" (which is only two words in Russian). We took them at their word, and the parish was officially registered again on January 3, 1992, just before Archbishop Francis Hurley from Anchorage arrived in Vladivostok after his visit to the parish he was founding in Magadan—Nativity of the Lord-- probably partly as an act of welcome for him to Vladivostok, the local government being aware of charity work he had done in Magadan, a sister-city of Anchorage.



Nativity of the Virgin Mary Catholic Church

Only later, when we could do more archival work, did we find that the original parish name was "The Nativity of the Virgin Mary." And we found photos of the first parish church, a wooden building that was blessed on September 8, 1899, but which burnt down in 1902, during the night of February 1-2—Candlemas Day. After that, the parish was able to build a smaller temporary church on the site, but in anticipation of building a larger brick church in the future. The parish struggled to build the new church and Bishop

Slivovsky was able to consecrate it, but without its proposed steeples on October 2, 1921. It became the cathedral of the diocese of Vladivostok on February 2, 1923, only to have it confiscated by the Communists for non-payment of taxes after a majority of parishioners fled the country due to the atheist and confiscatory regime. That was on September 17, 1935. The "last" five parishioners were executed by firing squad on February 3, 1937.



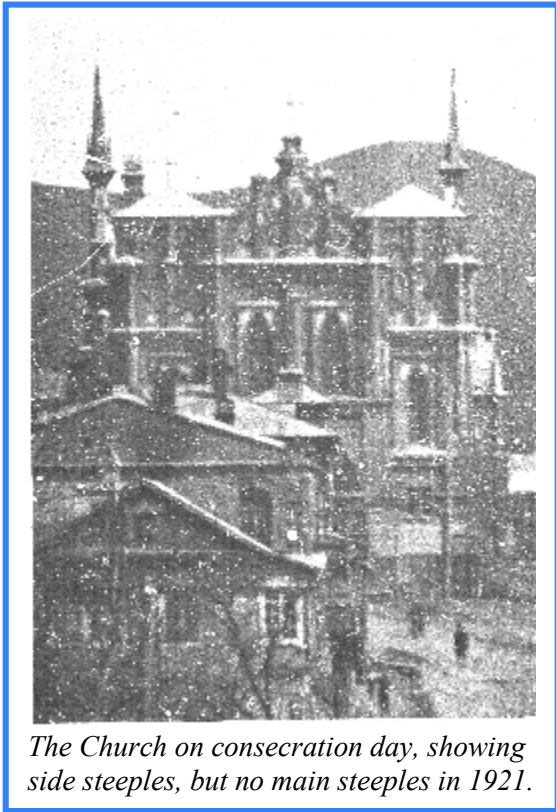
The temporary church below the hill of the new church construction (Notice there are no windows in the new church yet.)

When we came in February of 1992 the church had had three concrete and steel floors built inside, and was the State Archive, filled with documents and books, but with broken windows and birds flying in and out. It had a broken heating system so that the archival workers had to wear winter coats to do their work. But, structurally, the building was still extremely sound, built on rock, without any cracks in the brickwork.

The newly re-founded parish received the building back in January of 1994, and with the help of many benefactors it was totally repaired, the steeples were finished, and was consecrated as the Church of the Most Holy Mother of God on February 3, 2008. The steeples

Most Holy Mother of God Pray for Us

were specially dedicated to honor Bishop Slivovsky, the last pastor Fr Yerkevich, and the parish members who suffered in those bad times.



The Church on consecration day, showing side steeples, but no main steeples in 1921.

Daily now, before there are prayers or Holy Mass in the church, the parish sings a hymn to the Most Holy Mother of God. We celebrate her feast on January 1 as our parish feastday.



Most Holy Mother of God Church Today

Mary Mother of God Mission Society and the Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord (MMOG) and (CJD)

By V Rev Myron Effing, CJD

Our great supporter for the Church in Russia, MMOG, continues to be a great success, in more ways than one. It was founded when the appointment of bishops for Russia made it possible for the Catholic Church to open again here. Fr Daniel Maurer, CJD and I (also CJD) volunteered to work in Vladivostok, but, of course, there was no way for us to work here without financial and moral support from America. The first help came from Archbishop Francis Hurley in Anchorage who was also opening a parish in Russia, but maybe it was because of competition for his own work that MMOG moved to our sister parish, Nativity of Our Lord, in St Paul, Minnesota, where our development was promoted by

Sandra Sonnen and her staff and pastor and benefactors. It was a time of rapid development in Russia when we received back the Catholic cathedral in Vladivostok, when there was a very urgent need for charity work with the poor, and when CJD, with the help of MMOG, opened eight parishes in Russia and began to promote vocations to the priesthood to pastor them. So far four priests have been ordained from our region of responsibility in Russia, including one CJD priest.

Eventually Mrs Sonnen pleaded that she had too many grandchildren who needed her attention to continue working full time for MMOG! Meanwhile a volunteer from California, Mrs Vicky Trevillyan impressed us with her energy and love for our mission, so she became the new National Coordinator of MMOG and the office moved to her home in Modesto, California, but soon expanded from her garage to space at our sister parish of St Joseph in Modesto. She became aware of the need for a religious goods store in Modesto, and saw the

possibility of combining the store and the mission office which was a wonderful decision which put our store and offices in a shopping center.

Meanwhile, as the number of donors to MMOG continued to grow we established our bi-monthly newsletter, *Vladivostok Sunrise*, and our monthly thank you letters to donors, which help donors to stay abreast of developments in the mission, and also help maintain their interest.

Meanwhile, CJD continued to look for priestly vocations to work in Russia, deciding that we had to find the vocations ourselves. We established a novitiate, and began advertising for vocations in other countries because neither Russia nor America nor Europe could supply us with enough priests, as they were in a vocation “crisis”. We had lots of requests from men in Indonesia, India, Vietnam, the Philippines, Africa, and Pakistan—almost none from the Americas or Europe. After getting their documents and evaluating the candidates we invited some to come to Russia for novitiate and to study the Russian language. Some liked our mission and the Russian language, but others decided that they had a vocation, but not in Russia. In any case, they all had to return to their home countries for seminary education as there was no regular seminary education in Russia itself. We are so happy with those who gladly returned to Russia to dedicate their lives to our mission. Others were still good candidates for priesthood, but maybe somewhere else. So we decided to open other CJD communities that were not part of our mission in Russia, since, in any case, there was a great need for priests nearly everywhere.

My Experiences in the Mission

By Br Kiran Chinthapalli, C.J.D.

On December 14th, I along with Fr. Vicky and Sr. Faustina, visited Lubov, who is a very staunch catholic, who lives in Artyom, which is an hour drive from Vladivostok. She was in her wheelchair waiting, often she is visited by her son and grandchildren. We also visit her once a month and celebrate Mass with her. She has lot of stories to tell, about her life, her family stories, and her grandchildren. So, we spend more time whenever we go. Fr Vicky celebrates Mass, and after Mass, we have a small snack and chat.

The first CJD community outside of Russia was opened in Indonesia where it has grown immensely and is now even expanding into two new communities. A second community is now beginning in Vietnam. Naturally, only those CJD members who are working in Russia or are seminarians for Russia are supported by Mary Mother of God Mission Society. Each CJD community is independent and must seek its own financial support. Donors who wish to help CJD in Indonesia or Vietnam can send their donations and mass intentions to Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord of Nevada, Inc., 2915 Lake East Dr, Las Vegas, NV 89117, specifying which country. Meanwhile MMOG in Modesto continues to be our main support here in Russia.

The increasing complexity that the number of countries, languages, airlines, banks, time zones, accounting, record-keeping, and civil laws has added to the workloads of those in Russia and in Modesto is amazing. But a wonderful record of success it is, too. MMOG long ago committed to never sell, loan, or otherwise share our donor list to any other entity. So if you want to be on the CJD mailing list, too, let us know. If you want to donate to CJD, or if you want to send Mass stipends to any of these other countries, use the Nevada address above.

Currently CJD has 9 priests working in Far Eastern Russia, and 13 seminarians studying for Russia. We expect four of them to be deacons before the next “Sunrise”!

Thanks, benefactors, for all your help and prayers. Let’s keep working together for the sake of the Church in Russia, and for those in need.

Mass for Lubov at Lubov’s house in Artyom area.





This is Lubov, with Fr Vicky and our author, Bro.Kiran. Before her illness she served for many years as the leader of the Women's Support Center in Artyom.



Fr Vicky saying mass at Valerie's house.

Also, once a month, as we go to Lesozavodsk, we stop to see Mr Valerie Kurdumov on the way. So on December 22nd 2023 we visited him where he lives alone. It is a 2hr drive from the Parish of Lesozavodsk. He is a very faithful Catholic, as was his wife, but recently she died. Their children settled in cities and so, he stays alone. This time, I witnessed, how happy and joyful he was to see us and to celebrate Christmas Mass and to spend some time with him and have some dinner and chit chat. Another new thing which he showed was his storage room, which is right below the floor and explained how the Russians store their foods for winter. It was so interesting!



Valerie in the middle. He is a metallurgist by profession



Valerie always sends some homegrown food home with us.

It was a great opportunity for me to visit Lesozavodsk parish (Visitation Parish), which was founded by Fr Myron. On December 22nd, Fr. Vicky and I drove to the parish, which is a five hour drive from Vladivostok to celebrate Christmas with the parishioners. The parishioners were very happy to receive us. One of our canons regular priests go to them every month to celebrate s with them. After Mass we spend some time with them finding about their life and dealings. Because they are poor, we gathered and took a truckful of some items from Caritas, mostly clothing and baby needs which we delivered to the Women's Support Center. We do this every month and the people there are very grateful.



Barbara, birthday March 25 2023

Unusual Case--a Year Old Story from the Women's Support Center

On very cold days, a pregnant woman was walking along the highway toward Vladivostok in the village of Nadezhdinsk. Passers-by picked her up, called an ambulance, which took her to the birthing hospital. There they took tests and she turned out to be HIV-positive.

The woman did not know how to read or write! In the 1990s their house burned down, the parents died, and now we could not even find a street by the name she recalled. She has no relatives, and she wandered and lived in the forest, occasionally going out to people in cold winters when she begged near shops.

She had been picked up by a man who worked in a village and looked after the animals as a groomer. In a big house they gave her a room, gave her a job, clothes, and food, but she lived there for several months and ran away.

When she was brought to the hospital, she was 6 months pregnant. After an examination, she was sent to the AIDS Center for treatment, where she stayed for 3 months before giving birth. At the AIDS Center they washed her, cut her hair, and provided her with medicine. Our Women's Support Center helped her to make official documents.

The lady said that she had never been to a movie, nor could she be among people for a long time. She knew her way around the forest well; she went out and wandered far along the edge along the Ussuri forest, right up to the border with China. She didn't use public transport and doesn't need money. People feed her and give her clothes when she asks for help. And if they give her the child, she will go to live with it in the forest.

She knows the habits of animals well, can hunt, fish with available means, screams to imitate birds, and is not afraid of bears. She lived in the forest in winter, made

dens like bears, insulated them with leaves, stocked up on nuts and dried mushrooms. She dried meat and salted fish for food.

The woman's body turned out to be healthy with good teeth and hair, which was very tangled, so we had cut her hair at our Center. Her feet were very enlarged, although she is only 5 ft 6 in tall.

Her HIV tests turned out to be good. She had had sexual relations, but she didn't say with whom. As a result, she gave birth to a healthy girl and named her Barbara and left the hospital. She was never seen again. She didn't ask to take part in the fate of her daughter. The girl is in an orphanage and there are already parents up for adoption. The girl is absolutely healthy.

NEW YEAR and NEW LIFE

By Br Kiran Chinthapalli, C.J.D.

It was on January 5th 2024 when Fr. Vicky, Sr. Faustina and I had a gathering with the students of the Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU), where the international students come from various countries to study medicine and education. Some students who are catholic come to the Mass on Sundays. And so, we invite them to come for a Friday spiritual gathering, followed by refreshments. Every Friday we meet and we come up with different Bible topics, upon which we reflect, question, clarify, and grow in the faith. As students are busy throughout the week with their classes and studies, they don't have time to spend with the LORD and therefore, some love to come for Friday's meeting and spend their quality time in prayer.

We have come up with a very unique way which helps the students and all of us, to reflect upon and draw closer to God by following the simple tips which are these:

Lord, help me to remember this past year...

What happened this year?

What am I grateful for?

Who am I grateful for?

Lord, I thank you for

You lead me every day to do certain things or not to do things,

Have I followed you?

How have I not followed you?

What have you been teaching me this year?

This is a new year- 2024. You have a plan for me. You show me your plan one step at a time.

Lord, what goals do you want me to have this year?

What results do you want me to aim for? Academic?

Spiritual?

What resolutions do you want me to make to achieve these goals?

Spiritual resolutions?
What do you want me to do in order to grow in my relationship with you?
Lord, this year, I am looking forward to....

Lord, is there anything else you want to tell me?
We reflect for 30 mins, spending time with the Lord, recalling everything and sharing with the group. We had a very fruitful session.



The meeting with friends in a totally different situation is helpful to the students for a "break."

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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/>

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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.

Remember Mary Mother of God Mission Society in your will.

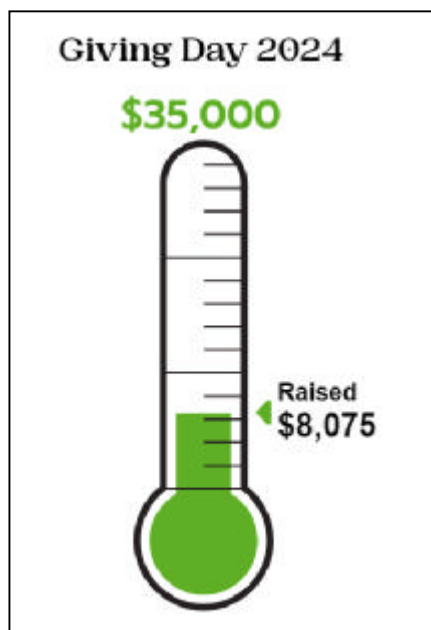
Baby Talk

From the Women's Support Centers



“Space Cadet calling Earth!!”
{Yesenia, January 7, 2024}

Opportunities



♥ **Giving Day!** Thank you to everyone who participated in our second annual Giving Day on March 25th. This year our goal of \$35,000 is to provide premises for **St. Joseph's parish and a new Women's Support Center** in Artyom. Thanks to your help, we are almost a quarter of the way to reaching our goal. If you would like to help with our fundraising for this new center, please note

“Giving Day” on your check or online donation.

♥ As summer approaches, so do our yearly mission appeals. Come hear our speakers, including Fr. Dan Maurer, at a parish near you.

- 6/23 Immaculate Conception NLR, AR
Fr. Dan Maurer
- 7/7 Holy Trinity- Azle TX
Michael Jacobsen
- 7/14 St. Joseph- York, PA
Fr. Doug Grandon
- 7/14 Holy Spirit – San Diego, CA
Fr. Dan Maurer
- 7/21 Church of St. Mary, St. Michael, St. Paul Sleepy Eye, Morgan, Comfrey
Terry Kopp
- 7/28 Our Lady of Lourdes, Indianapolis IN
Fr. Doug Grandon
- 7/28 St. Martin de Porres, Prosper TX
Fr. Daniel Maurer

Stay tuned for more dates as they are arranged.

♥ Our current Women's Centers need your help as well. Our two programs, **Adopt A Baby** or **Adopt A Mother**, continue to support the women and babies in the nearby areas. Your gift of **\$50** to the **Adopt A Birth** program will pay for the medical supplies needed in the hospital to deliver the baby. 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.



♥ **Abundant Blessings** has over 400 great recipes. Recipes come from all over the world, from mission supporters, priests, nuns, and seminarians. To get your copy, order online at

www.vladmission.org/cookbook or at www.store.vladmission.org under Miscellaneous > Kitchen, for \$35.99. The price includes shipping in the continental US and all sales go to benefit our Women's Support Centers and our CJD seminarians

♥ **Catholic Conferences!** Summer also brings many Catholic conferences. Conferences are a great way to not only spread the word about the mission, but a way for us to fundraise. We pass out our mission literature and sell religious gifts from our booth and even get to hear great Catholic speakers! Please contact our mission office, at 209-408-0728 or vickyt.vladmission@gmail.com, if you live near one of these conferences and are interested in helping.

- 5/10-12 Marian Eucharistic, Ave Maria FL
- 5/17-19 Marian Conference, St. Louis MO
- 6/9-12 Life Teen Cath. Youth Ministry Convention, Phoenix AZ
- 6/14-16 Power & Purpose Conf., Steubenville OH
- 7/25-27 Chesterton Conf., Philadelphia PA
- 7/26-28 Defending the Faith, Steubenville OH
- 7/27 Cath. Women's Conf., San Antonio TX
- 8/2-4 Midwest Catholic Family Conference

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From the development desk...

Dear Friends: Over the last 33 years, since their arrival in the Russian Far East, Fr. Myron and Fr. Daniel have overcome countless obstacles as well as accomplished many great feats to revive the Roman Catholic faith in Russia. One of the greatest accomplishments was the restoration of the Cathedral, Most Holy Mother of God, in Vladivostok, planned in the 1890's. The Gothic style Cathedral was taken over by the Communist government in the 1930's and desecrated. All holy and religious articles were removed or destroyed and the building turned into a government archive.

In March of this year, John Paul Sonnen wrote an article in the *Liturgical Arts Journal* about the Cathedral's interior restoration done by architect, Matthew Alderman. Mr. Sonnen wrote about the beauty Mr. Alderman was able to bring to the Cathedral.

After years of fundraising and help from donors like you, Fr. Myron and Fr. Dan were able to reach out to Mr. Alderman for his help to begin restoring the Cathedral. Sonnen wrote, "Divine Providence led them to reach out to Matthew, making their dream a reality for generations of local Catholics well into the future."

become a beacon for hope and faith, not just from the outside but from the beauty inside as well.

And boy was he right. The Most Holy Mother of God has become a beacon for hope and faith, not just from the outside but from the beauty inside as well.



Architectural watercolors by Matthew Alderman vs Cathedral when finished, Pictures Via Liturgical Arts Journal

For the full article, visit Liturgical Arts Journal:
<https://www.liturgicalartsjournal.com/2024/03/restoration-of-church-of-most-holy.html>

Many blessings to all of you. God bless you! Jessica Trevillyan, usoffice@vladmission.org, 209-408-0728