



Vladivostok Sunrise Russia Mission



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

Issue Number One Hundred Seventy Eight July, 2024



Newly baptized Michael, showing off his baptismal garment after the Easter Vigil (The neck size is a little large, wouldn't you say?)

Eastertime in Vladivostok

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

I thought our benefactors would be interested in how we celebrate the Easter season in Russia.

Let's begin with the second Tuesday before Easter when Bishop Klimovich comes to the Russian Far East for a Chrism mass for our part of the Diocese of St Joseph. All the priests of our Far Eastern deaneries came to Vladivostok to be present and join in the blessing of holy

oils which will be used in the various sacraments that year. It is the only time of the year when we priests can see each other, so we always look forward to it!

Then comes Palm Sunday, but there aren't palms growing in most of Russia, so what to do? We do what the Orthodox do: We bless pussy willow sticks taken from the creek banks in the countryside and use them instead of palms. The pussy willows are the first sign of spring. The parishioners all gather outside in front of the church with their pussy willow sticks for the blessing, and then there is the procession into church with song, as the Lord entered Jerusalem.

Next comes Holy Thursday. The beautiful mass has beautiful flowers to decorate the altar, and at the end of mass there is the procession with the Blessed Sacrament to the chapel where it is placed in the tabernacle, and the parishioners wait there in prayer for one hour, as the apostles waited with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.



Vladivostok's Fr Vicky Samuel and Bishop Kirill Klimovich, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of St Joseph in Irkutsk

Most Holy Mother of God Pray for Us



The Holy Oils from the Chrism Mass

On Good Friday we are so blessed to have a relic of the True Cross donated to us by the mission office of the Archdiocese of St Paul and Minneapolis. We have mounted this relic in a 4-foot high wooden cross which is used in the procession. So our parishioners have the honor of kissing the relic of the True Cross when that time comes.



Michael's Baptism

On Holy Saturday evening the whole parish gathers for the Easter Vigil Mass, so it is one of the few times when the Russian and Vietnamese parishioners are together, plus many foreigners from the city and the universities. It is cold outside, and we can't have a fire outside by law for fear of starting a conflagration in the city. So Fr Daniel Maurer, C.J.D., years ago invented how to have an alcohol fire right inside the church. It is smokeless and soon burns out, but it burns long enough for the lighting of the Easter candle and the incense. The readings and songs are in two languages. The Russians are surprised at how beautifully the Vietnamese sing, and the Vietnamese admire the



Pussy Willows from Palm Sunday



Relic of the True Cross for Good Friday

beauty of the Russian hymns from our parish hymn book which was put together by Fr Daniel years ago already.

Most of the Russian hymns were translated into Russian by our own parishioners! But what is really special for me is the singing of the responsorial psalm after each reading. Fr Dan wrote the melodies for the refrains of these psalms years ago and they are super! The parishioners love to sing them. At the end of mass there is the blessing of Easter foods, and the long tables are full of the goodies brought by the parishioners to at least symbolically end the Easter fast!

On Easter Sunday we had four masses: Russian, English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The English mass is most attended by Filipinos who are working in Vladivostok, and by African students from the universities. The Spanish mass is attended by Latin American university students.

We celebrate the Feast of the Ascension on Sunday so that more parishioners can attend. It is a feast day for us Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord, too.



Easter foods waiting for the blessing

On Pentecost everything is red, and after the Communion prayer at the end of mass we sing the Te Deum in Russian to a beautiful melody to celebrate the end of the Easter season. The Te Deum is an ancient Christian hymn,

But wait—we're not done! On Trinity Sunday the parishioners carry green, leafy branches to church which we bless to celebrate God's Divine Providence! The winter is gone. Christ is Risen! And spring has sprung.

Only one more feast: Corpus Christi. We can't have a procession on the street because Volodarskogo St. is very narrow with no sidewalks, but it is one of the main thoroughfares for traffic from the part of the city on the hill and the part near sea level. So we have a procession around the church, stopping at three altars for the blessing by the Blessed Sacrament. The final blessing is on the main altar in church.

Now there is a sigh of relief—we are again in "ordinary time."



The Easter Candle and Fr Vicky Samuel, C.J.D.

News Notes

• From Russian Speaking Kazakhstan

by Fr Filipus Lasa, C.J.D.

"I received a new assignment from the Bishop, namely to handle one of the parishes whose parish priest had returned to Italy because he had entered retirement and his contract with the Karaganda diocese had expired. So, currently I am helping in three parishes at once, practically serving Mass in two different parishes every Sunday and serving in the Basilica on weekdays. This task is a bit difficult for me because I have to serve in different places in one day, and so far, we don't have a car here in Kazakhstan.

"We lost two priests in this diocese. One returned to Poland last year to join one of the religious communities there. The other returned to Italy this month due to retirement age and the completion of his contract with the Diocese. There are more and more jobs, while there are fewer and fewer priests. We have difficulty managing time for our own needs in the community, such as cooking, washing, cleaning the house, etc. And you know that Father Agustin will be gone in June to arrange a permanent visa for Kazakhstan. While he is gone it will give me more jobs to do."

• A Little Story of Pastoral Ministry in the Winter of Karaganda, Kazakhstan

By Fr Agustino Brussen, C.J.D.

I would like to share a little experience especially related to winter ministry in the city of Karaganda, Kazakhstan, which consists of a huge expanse of grasslands.

The temperature in Karaganda during winter can reach minus 40 degrees F and there is a lot of snow. In this season a parishioner of St. Joseph's Basilica in Maykuduk, Karaganda passed away. His name was Nikolai. Every Sunday mass Nikolai was in charge of the collection. He was very active in attending Sunday mass and parish activities. His son called me that Nikolai passed away last night. I was shocked because I had never heard of him being sick. Then, I saw the weather forecast that tomorrow would be minus 25C (-13F) in Karaganda city. I'm already starting to get worried, because I know that if minus 25 is accompanied by wind, it must be very cold.

The next morning I went to the funeral chapel where Nikolai's body was laid to rest. Normally, the small chapel is used by Orthodox and Catholic parishioners' funeral services, before the body is buried in a public cemetery. After the service we went to the cemetery to bury Nikolai's body. The weather was cold and windy and it was snowing. After I blessed the grave, I was still waiting for the family apology ceremony for Nikolai. They came one by one to apologize near his dead body. After this apology, the coffin was closed and lowered into the grave.

It was interesting to me that after the grave was covered with soil, one of the family members distributed handkerchiefs to everyone who attended the burial ceremony. I asked them, “What did the handkerchiefs mean?” They replied that it was a sign of remembrance and asking for prayers for the dead. This is a tradition from the Soviet era. Nikolai's son invited everyone who attended the funeral to have a meal together at a pre-booked restaurant. This is one of the pastoral ministries that happened during the winter in Karaganda City, Kazakhstan.

Eternal Rest grant to Nicolai, O Lord!



Nicolai's winter burial in the snow

● Solemn Vows for Brother Kiran

Brother Kiran Chinthapalli, C.J.D., was in Vladivostok for his final vows on March 4, 2024. A native of India, he is a seminarian studying at Puna seminary in India. He received his B.A. degree in Philosophy from DeSales University in Pennsylvania while studying at his seminary in India. We are anxious for him to finish theology so he can be ordained for work with us in Russia.



Lilia received flowers on International Women's Day



Brother Kiran taking his solemn vows before Fr Myron Effing.

● **Lilia and Albert Silina** have been our parishioners in Vladivostok from even before we Americans arrived in Vladivostok. Lilia was the head of our local chapter of Caritas which did so much work during our early years because of the great poverty in Russia at that time. Now they are pretty well confined to their apartment because of their health. We are happy to visit them with the Blessed Sacrament.

● Thanks to our benefactors we are able to expand our work in Russia to two more parishes. One result is our **need for more travel**. Besides plane tickets to the faraway places, there is the cost of wear and tear on our cars! Last year benefactors helped us to buy a new minibus, which is now in constant use. We have four other cars, two of which are getting at the end of their lifetimes. The little car is used mostly for in-town work, like shopping, doctor's appointments, etc., but it already has had a change of engine! The chassis is now rusting out. The Toyota Wish is also going on its last leg. It is used for long distance travel like going to Nakhodka,

Khabarovsk, Ussuryysk, Arsenyev and Lesozavodsk. We have to replace these two cars, and we are looking for help! 😊 (Got any friends who could help, too??)



English is a multinational language.

● It is really wonderful that there are so many Catholic University students in Vladivostok, and so many Catholic foreign workers. Here is a photo of the attendees at the **Easter English Mass**.

Baby Talk

From the Women's Support Centers



“Don’t I look like Moses?”
(Timothy, April 4, 2024)

● Saturday, June 1 was the **annual pilgrimage** to the cemetery where our Bishop Karl Slivovsky was buried in 1933, after his death on January 5. Fr Daniel Maurer, C.J.D., Pastor in Vladivostok led the group of parishioners and guests to see and do spring cleaning at the places dear to our parish because of the sufferings of those buried there. First there is the mass gravesite where those shot by the authorities were buried, probably including our “five last parishioners” who were arrested after saying the rosary together when there was already no parish, no priest, and no sacraments. We have their arrest documents, and they are on our list for proposed canonization as saints, together with the last pastor, Fr Georgi

Yerkevich, and Bishop Slivovsky. The pilgrims also visited the new mass grave site where the unearthed bones were moved during the construction of the new highway around Vladivostok. These bones are now in the 14th Kilometer Cemetery. Fr Yerkevich died in Siberia in a prison camp, but the location of his grave is unknown. Likewise with Bishop Slivovsky—We only know the cemetery and the number of his grave, but we can’t find a map of that cemetery which long ago was closed and the tombstones removed. Thankfully the little cemetery chapel where the parishioners laid out the body before burial to pray for the bishop still exists.



Some of the pilgrims at the cemetery chapel where Bishop Slivovsky was waked.



● *Our church of the Most Holy Mother of God in Vladivostok is an official government architectural monument, so we get tour groups who want to come and see the church. Recently we had a group of 90 tourists. Sr Stella, C.J.D., attended to play the pipe organ for them. Organs are a rarity in Russia.*

The Path of An Odyssey to the Novitiate Program in Vladivostok, Russia

By: Brother Joseph De, C.J.D.

As a novice of Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord (CJD), I offer a poignant reflection on the enigmatic path of vocation that has guided me from the pulsating streets of my hometown Vietnam to the tranquil landscapes of Vladivostok, Russia.

"Vocation, a Mystery Unveiled," echoes the timeless wisdom of countless priests, encapsulating the divine calling that beckons humanity to participate in God's grand design. As a native of Vietnam, I find myself immersed in the profound mysteries of vocation amidst the captivating landscapes of Russia.

In a country where Catholicism accounts for a mere 8% of the population, I hail from the northern region, born into a bustling family of nine – my parents and seven brothers. Among them, one brother has answered the call to a monastic vocation at Chau Son Monastery, O.C.I.C.T., while I myself stand as a CJD Novice, stationed in Vladivostok, Russia.

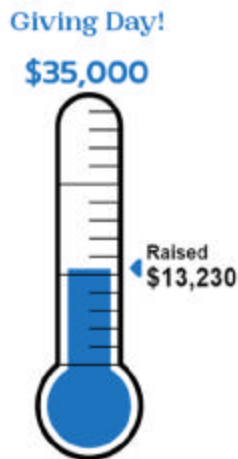
The mysterious journey of vocation began when I crossed paths with Father Daniel during the latter's brief visit to Vietnam for a priestly thanksgiving mass. Father Daniel's presence left an indelible mark as he celebrated Mass and graced my family with his visit. Departing, he solemnly promised to reunite with me in Russia. True to his word, at 2 a.m. on October 19, 2023, he awaited me at Vladivostok airport, a gesture that filled my heart with gratitude for his unwavering commitment.

Upon arrival, I was enveloped in warmth and affection. An elderly priest, the founder of our community, greeted me, having meticulously prepared all necessary documentation for my relocation to Russia. Amidst the tranquil surroundings, I found profound joy and a sense of belonging. Each day was adorned with liturgical prayers and Mass, while communal meals and recreational activities fostered a familial bond among us.

Trusting in God's guidance, I surrender myself to the journey of vocation, particularly within the CJD community. I beseech the Lord to illuminate my path through the wisdom of my superiors, the guidance of my priests, and the camaraderie of my brothers in the Vladivostok community.

Opportunities

♥ **Giving Day!** Our goal this year for our Giving Day fundraiser was to raise \$35,000 to establish a new **Womens's Support Center** in Artyom and provide space for St Joseph's parish there. Thank you to everyone who has donated since March. We have raised more than a third of our goal. We will continue with our fundraising until our goal is met. To donate for the new center please note "Giving Day" on your check or online donation.



♥ Come hear our **Mission Appeal** speakers, including Fr. Dan Mauer, speak about the Church in Eastern Russia ,at a parish near you! More dates to come.

- 7/7 Holy Trinity, Azule TX - Mr. Jacobsen
- 7/7 St. Thomas Aquinas, LV NV- Fr. Luis
- 7/14 Saint Joseph, York PA- Fr. Doug
- 7/14 Holy Spirit San Diego CA- Fr. Dan
- 7/14 St. Jude, OL Help of Christians Mountaintop PA- Bruce Gnatowski
- 7/21 Church of St. Mary + Church of St. Michael + Church of St. Paul, Sleepy Eye / Morgan/Comfrey MN- Terry Kopp
- 7/28 St. Brigid, Wadsworth IL- Ally Heck
- 7/28 OL of Lordes, Indianapolis IN-Fr. Doug
- 7/28 St Martin de Porres, Prosper TX-Fr. Dan
- 8/4 St. Mark + St. Paul, Tell City IN- Fr. Steven Baurer & Marilyn Wassmer
- 8/4 Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, San Angelo TX - Fr. Dan
- 8/4 Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich, Bayonne NJ – Bruce Gnatowski
- 8/4 St. James, Arlington Hts IL, Ally Heck
- 8/4 St. Bernadette + Nativity of Mary, Kansas City / Independence MO – Fr. Luis
- 8/11 St. Gregory the Great, Bluffton SC - Fr. Dan
- 8/11 St John, McAlester OK – Mr. Jacobsen

- 8/18 Our Lady of Victories, Harrington Park NJ - Fr. Doug
- 8/25 The Catholic Parishes of Brookfield, West Brookfield MA- Fr. Doug

♥ We are collecting new or used **Priest Vestments** to provide our priests and seminarians the needed liturgical clothing during Masses. In past years, if the vestments received are too worn out, stained or damaged to use during Mass, we have recycled those pieces! Those that can't be worn by our priests are crafted into prayer book covers, rosary cases, book marks and more. Proceeds from selling these very popular items go to support the mission. If your parish has new or used vestments no longer needed or too damaged to use, we can make use of them! All items are prayerfully handled. Please send them to the mission office in Modesto, CA or contact Vicky, 209-408-0728. Thank you!



♥ When we visit a parish or attend a conference, we meet many people asking how they can support the Mary Mother of God Mission Society. One of the easiest ways to do so is by checking out our **Gifts of Faith**



Online Store! There we have rosaries, statues, bibles, books, and more! Some of our favorite items are the hand-crafted rosaries. Each one is made with heart and intention, whether made from precious stones or wood, our materials are chosen for their beauty and durability. In so many different colors, shapes, and sizes, you'll be able to find the perfect one for someone special in your life. Support the mission by picking one up for a loved one, and give the gift of the rosary! Be sure to visit us at www.store.vladmission.org and sign up for emails to get exclusive news and offers.

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From the development desk...

Dear Friends:

We have some exciting news in the mission office in Modesto, CA! For the last 20+ years we have been using the same Access donor database. And although it has served us well, it was time for an upgrade. Over the last several months we have been working on migrating our old donor database to our new one with Bloomerang. This new system allows us to accept donations not only from all major credit cards and debit cards, but directly from your bank account, with PayPal, Apple Pay, Google Pay, or Venmo. It also allows you to set up recurring donations and to cover the processing fee from your donation if you should choose. To make it even easier to designate where your gift goes, the donation page now has a drop-down menu where you can choose what program you would like your donation to fund.

This new system also allows you to create an account which gives access to your previous donation records as well as your yearly tax letters, making it more convenient for our donors to access information on their contributions. Your account will also update

as check/cash donations are received and processed in office. For your newly created account to link with previous donations, the information used in set up (name, address, email) should match what you have used for previous donations. If it does not, as you have moved or had a name change, just give our office a call and we can merge your account with the previous one.

As with all new technology, there is a learning curve and bugs to work out. Thank you for your patience, as we navigate our way through this new system and customize it to fit our mission's needs. If you receive an acknowledgement letter when normally you wouldn't please disregard it as we are working on getting all the mail preferences corrected.

You can create an account while making a donation on our Donate page on our mission website, www.vladmission.org or visit https://marymotherofgodmissionsociety-bloom.kindful.com/users/sign_up

God bless you! Jessica Trevillyan,
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