



Vladivostok Sunrise Russia Mission



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

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Classmate of Pope Leo XIV

by Fr. Daniel L. Maurer, C.J.D.

Pope Leo XIV and I were seminarians and friends during our time in major seminary at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago (CTU) - 1978 to 1980! In 1978 when I began my major theology studies there it had the largest enrollment of any Catholic major seminary in the United States. I was a member of the Canons Regular of the Order of the Holy Cross (O.S.C.). Brother Robert Privost, was a member of the midwestern province of the

Order of Saint Augustine (O.S.A.) We were classmates beginning our Master of Divinity seminary program in September.

During our two years together, we took the same academic classes, and during the second year we were the only

two CTU seminarians to participate in a ministry training program at the Catholic Parish of St. Victor in the Chicago suburb of Calumet City. During one of those drives we stopped at Br. Robert's family home in Dalton, Illinois, another Chicago suburb. During those two years I would often attend daily Mass at the Augustinian St. John Stone Friary in Hyde Park where Br. Robert and four of our Augustinian classmates lived.

Bro. Robert was 5 years younger than I, but we came to be in the same CTU class because he started his M.Div. shortly after receiving his bachelor's degree; but after my bachelor's degree at a secular university, I got a

job and worked for two years, and then studied one more year of philosophy before beginning the M.Div. program at CTU.



Seminarian Daniel Maurer in 1978

I have very many fond memories of my acquaintanceship with the young man who would become the first American pope: extremely bright and academically gifted, very polite, a good sense of humor and a great love for the liturgy and for his Augustinian religious community life.

The future pope and I did not keep in touch. I did hear about his long list of achievements when I would occasionally check the CTU website. When he was created cardinal by Pope Francis in 2023, I sent him a letter of congratulations and best wishes at the Vatican

"Dicastery for Bishops" where he had been appointed the Cardinal Prefect.

May God bless and protect our new Holy Father Pope Leo XIV and keep us all united in Faith, Hope and Charity.



Sr. Dianne Bergant, C.S.A., their favorite Old Testament teacher

Most Holy Mother of God Pray for Us

A Pilgrimage in Vladivostok

Fourth Station: The Mass Reburial Site

In 2009, a mass grave containing human remains with a distinctive bullet hole in the head was discovered near our mass grave monument during construction of a new federal highway from Russian Island to Sedanka. Specialists from the Primorsky Regional Bureau of Forensic Medicine confirmed that the remains found belong to victims of political repression. On November 3, 2010, 495 skeletal remains with a total weight of about 1.7 tons were reburied in 56 coffins in a mass grave in the northern section of the Forest Cemetery in Vladivostok. A cross was placed on the grave.

In August 2013 A Memorial to the Victims of Political Repression was opened at the reburial site. In addition to the monument, the memorial complex at the forested cemetery includes a Chapel of the Resurrection of Christ. Our pilgrims lit candles in the chapel and laid flowers at the memorial. (To be continued.) *“Eternal Rest, Grant to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.”*



The new burial place for those whose remains were exhumed. Moving the remains for the sake of the highway at least confirmed that the mass gravesite in the forest is authentic. It is not known how many remains still lie beneath the forest floor.

Pre-Russia Catholicism in the “Russian” Far East (1850-1862)

*Translated from French to Russian by Alexander Litavrin;
from Russian to English by Google. Contributed with
notes by Tatyana Shaposhnikova, VVO Parish Archivist.
Edited by Sunrise editor, Fr Myron Effing, C.J.D.*

In his issue of the Vladivostok Sunrise we offer you little known pages of the presence of Catholic missionaries in the Far Eastern region of what is now Russia. The information was found in the National Library of France. This is a book by the priest, historian and archivist of the Paris Society of Foreign Missions (hereinafter POZM) Adrien Launay, published in 1895 (Adrien Launay. Msgr Verrolles et la mission de Mandchourie. May 17, 1895) about Bishop Verrolles and his mission in Manchuria. The article also used materials about priests from POZM who served in Manchuria in the 19th-20th centuries, found on the website of the Institute of Franco-Asian Studies POZM. The originals are available at the link https://irfa.paris/en/missionnaire/?_region_missionnaire=4372. An audio recording from the POZM YouTube channel about the martyrdom of Father Maxime Delabruniere in the territory of today's Khabarovsk Krai was also found there)

When studying **early Catholicism in the Far East**, researchers have always encountered the problem of a complete lack of primary sources in Russian archives. But the French sources mentioned above have opened previously unknown pages of history, which immerse us in the atmosphere of the "old" China and Manchuria with a complex internal political situation and a special role in relations with Russia. But the main interest is still aroused by the missionary service in the Amur region at the end of the 19th century. French Catholic missionaries from the Missions Etrangères de Paris (MEP) or the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, were the first whose selfless service carried the banner of Christ on this land, which sometimes ended tragically. They developed a mission statement to teach catechism and ensure the observance of church discipline for missionaries, catechumens and new converts. They translated, interpreted and disseminated the Christian message in the special conditions of Northeast China. The first Apostolic Vicar of Manchuria from the beginning of the 19th century was Bishop Emmanuel-Jean-François Verrolles. With his blessing, Catholic



A village on the Amur River

missionaries were sent to the territory of Manchuria, to settlements and military posts to minister to Catholics who had not been able to participate in the sacraments of the church for years.

Four expeditions took place, undertaken by missionaries from Manchuria to the Tartar tribes and to the Russian possessions in the Far East: the first expedition of the missionary priest Father Paul-Maxime Labruniere (1845-1846) to the banks of the Amur River ended in bloodshed; the second - with the participation of the missionary priest Father Charles-Joseph Venot (1850) had no other goal than to find out the truth about the death of Labruniere; the third, compiled by missionaries Charles Joseph Venot and Jean-Baptiste Frankle (1861-1862) to the Amur region and, finally, the last, fourth expedition of missionaries Joseph-André Boyer and Constant Dubel to the Russian Far East in 1862.

If the merits of the apostles were measured by successes, then the missionaries who undertook these undertakings would have the right to only modest rewards, but God crowns the struggle, not the victory. The preachers of the Gospel faced this struggle everywhere. Everywhere they suffered from nature and people. Long and difficult marches, meager food, cold climate, careless Christians, hostile Orthodox, indifferent pagans--this is what they encountered. "O poor and holy missionaries! The Lord saw your suffering in Manchuria and Russia, he counted your steps on the icy roads of the Sungari and Amur. How beautiful are the feet of those who evangelize, bringing peace to the whole world" - we read in the notes of the Apostolic Vicar of Manchuria, Bishop Verol.

The **first journey of the preacher Labruniere** to the banks of the Saigali (Amur River) and his tragic death were in 1845-1847. Labruniere (Paul-Maxime Brulley de la Bruniere) was born on June 18, 1816 in Sartrouville (now the Ile-de-France region). Having begun his medical studies, he decided to devote his life to the calling of the priesthood. He received a theological education at the seminary of Saint-Sulpice. In 1840, he entered the seminary of the Paris Society of Foreign Missions. He was ordained to the priesthood on December 19 of the same year, and on May 10, 1841, he went to Manchuria as a missionary from the Paris Society for the Propagation of the Faith. He preached in the south of Manchuria before the expedition to the far north. Bishop Verol wrote about him: "He is educated, pious, zealous, extremely virtuous, possesses great insight and an outstanding mind." In 1844, he was elected coadjutor bishop to exercise episcopal functions.

"In the middle of the 19th century, even before the arrival of the Russians, Catholic missionaries appeared on the Amur, penetrating from Manchuria along the Sungari

and Ussuri Rivers. On July 16, 1845, the French missionary Father Labruniere set off from Liaodong to the Amur, explaining the reason for his expedition as follows: "Last year I considered it necessary to look for a wider field, a career more independent of our apostolate." Ahead was a huge "desert", which ended only at the Sea of Japan. It was crossed by the only road leading to a small town on the right bank of the Sungari River (right tributary of the Amur) named Sansin (now Yilan--a county of Heilongjiang Province subordinate to Harbin). The road was difficult. Mosquitoes, wasps and horseflies were raging. It was necessary to walk at night to avoid many bites. After nineteen days' march, the traveler saw the houses of Sansin, a town of five or six thousand inhabitants, "which offers nothing remarkable except a large street paved with large pieces of wood six inches thick, and laid out with considerable precision." This was the extreme point which no Chinese or Manchu traveler was allowed to cross, under penalty of severe punishment for violating the laws of the state. Hither every year came the natives of the "Long-Haired" (the Ulchi, the aboriginal people of the middle reaches of the Amur River) and "Fish-Skins" (an obsolete name for the Nanai clans living on the Ussuri at its confluence with the Amur) whose tribes brought the mandarins of Sansin the furs of martens, sables, tigers, and bears in exchange for pieces of flax.

Father Labruniere had long conversations with them to obtain information about the tribes he intended to meet. Having made the necessary preparations, the missionary went to the small native village of Susu (the Manchu name, now the city of Suibin in Heilongjiang Province). His appearance caused great excitement among the "Golds"—his face that



seemed strange to them, clothes, a crucifix on his chest. Small gifts presented to the nobles of the village soon calmed the natives and allowed the missionary to talk about the Gospel.

Labruniere stayed in Susu for four days. At the end of the fourth day, by the will of Providence itself, an incident occurred that especially exalted the missionary in the eyes of the villagers. Sitting on the bank of the river, he quietly chatted with the fishermen, who complained that they had caught nothing, and, discouraged by their bad luck, were gathering their long rods to turn home. "Come," said Labruniere, "let me do it." He cast the hook, and immediately a large fish took the bait. The admiration was universal. "This stranger," the natives said among themselves, "possesses secrets that other people do not have, and he is not evil." In the evening, questions about the miraculous fishing multiplied; everyone wanted to know the secret of the stranger. Without giving an answer, Labruniere asked: "Do you believe in hell?" "Yes," answered three or four of the most educated, "we believe in hell." - Do you have any ways to avoid it? "We have never thought of it." - Well, I have an infallible secret, thanks to which a person becomes stronger than all evil spirits and goes straight to heaven. Then he began to explain the dogma of the original fall, of hell, of the salvation brought by Jesus Christ.

After staying in the village for some time, the missionary decided that it was time to move on. On September 1, having made some preparations, he bought a mule, a small iron pot, an axe, two bowls, a bushel of millet and some flatbreads. He set out towards Ussuri. The distance to the river was 360 miles, which he covered in fifteen days, "having no lodging except the earth, no shelter except the sky", cutting down trees to light a fire to save him from the cold and tigers, cooking food in a strong wind.

At 90 miles from Ussuri, water became so scarce that Labruniere had to eat millet raw like birds. Finally, by the evening of September 14, he was on the bank of the river, 120 miles north of Lake Tabu (Today's Lake Khanka). There he met some Chinese and, together with one of them, went down the Ussuri for 140 miles to a miserable village that stands in the way of travelers along the river. The surrounding countryside was so wild that the lonely apostle uttered the following cry of pain in a letter to the directors of the Seminary of Foreign Missions: "Can I tell you, gentlemen, what amazement seized me and how painfully my heart sank at the sight of this land, where my anxious eyes, searching for people, found everywhere only gloomy solitude and dead silence? And of the few people whom I had the honor of seeing there, I did not meet any Christians."

He stayed there for two weeks when a strange incident occurred. It was about the middle of October. The already bare trees and dry, yellowed tall grasses announced the approach of a great cold. At midday, a huge cloud appeared on the horizon above the forest, which soon obscured the light of the sun. Everyone immediately ran out of the house screaming. "Fire, fire!" Armed with axes, they quickly destroyed all the vegetation that surrounded the houses. The cloud had already approached, but the flames passed a few steps from the village and rushed north, leaving the natives in horror, although no one suffered any losses. These fires are not uncommon in these places, and they occur because of hunters from the banks of the Amur, who cannot find a more convenient way to force the game to leave its shelter. The miracle, according to the natives, was performed by the public prayer of Fr. Labruniere and so talk about religion became popular.

In this wretched village of the Golds the preacher spent the winter of 1847, doing missionary work and waiting for the ice to melt in order to go forward, as he himself said in a letter written to the directors of the Seminary of Foreign Missions: "About the 12th or 15th of May I shall buy, God willing, a small boat, in which I intend to go down the Amur to the sea and visit the tribes of the Long-haired. I shall go alone, for fear has prevented anyone from leading me, and my companion, a poor Christian from Liaotung (province of Jilin), is returning home, sick from the dangers and the melancholy that has visited him. I feel, and everyone here says, that it will be difficult for me to escape the mandarin boats that come down the river from Sansin (meaning the Songhua), but if it is God's will, I can overcome everything, and the hand of the Lord can smooth over all obstacles and lead me safely there, and if it pleases Him that I return, He knows how to bring me back. Whatever my future may be, to go forward seems to me, in the present circumstances, the only duty of a missionary who in prayer often pronounces with lips and heart the words of Holy Scripture: "I will not give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, nor rest to my temples, until I find a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the God of Jacob (Psalm 132:4-5). "Gracious sirs, do not refuse to pray for me before the altar in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.--Apostolic missionary Labruniere." These words, filled with the apostolic spirit, were the last written by Fr. Labruniere on May 1, 1847. One day they will be engraved on his tomb, and the Tartars, whom he wanted to evangelize, will bow their heads before the victorious Cross."

To be continued.

News Notes

- Our Women's Support Centers' **Guardian Angel Program**, has now passed the 100th baby mark. Beginning in 2009, the program has provided regular help to needy moms and children in Russia from sponsors from France to Canada to the USA. The donors are given information about prospective babies or children. If they make their choice, then they provide a regular monthly donation for the child, and the funds are passed on through Mary Mother of God Mission Society through the local Russian pastor or the local Women's Support Center in Russia. Sometimes letters or holiday greetings or news goes back and forth between the family and the donor, but we never release the contact information of the donor so that they needn't fear a future knock on their front door—Unless, of course, we are requested to do so (but it has never happened.) The first Guardian Angel kids are now 17 years old!

- Happy 70th Birthday, Fr Sebastian! Our Bishop Kirill Klimovich, D.D., made a special trip to Nakhoda's Our Lady of the Pacific Parish for pastor Fr. Sebastian's 70th birthday. After mass there was a birthday party which was attended by many parishioners and Fr Sebastian's friends.



Fr Sebastian D'Silva, the builder of the beautiful church of Our Lady of the Pacific in Nakhodka

- Our only bishop of the Diocese of Vladivostok, **Bishop Karol Slivovsky**, who died in 1938 in exile because of the Communist repression in Russia, now has the title of "Servant of God" as a first step to possible canonization as a saint of the Catholic Church. Here is a prayer for his

intercession. Please let us know if something miraculous happens after you use this prayer!

PRAYER FOR INTERCESSION OF Servant of God Bishop Karol Slivovsky

Lord God, Your servant, our father and shepherd Bishop Karol SLIVOVSKI, was faithful to You and to his flock, despite dangers, confusion, and destruction, until exile and death took him from us.

Reward your servant with recognized holiness for the joy of all God's people, and remember my request every time I ask Bishop Karol for intercession, through Christ our Lord. Amen



The bishop's grave marker. January 5, 1938. The location of the grave is unknown today.

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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

Russian language: www.catholicvl.ru

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



● April 8 was the date of the Chrism Mass for the Eastern end of our diocese, held this year in Vladivostok. Bishop Kirill blessed the holy oils which will be used by priests of our Far Eastern deaneries. The Oil of Catechumens is for anointing those preparing for baptism, the Oil of the Sick for those ill and maybe in danger of death, and Chrism, used for the Sacraments of Baptism and Ordination. Most of our Far Eastern priests attended, as did most of the sisters working in this part of Russia.

● Many thanks from a **mom and her son Gregory** who was born with an allergy to milk! The Women's Support Center in Vladivostok helped them out by finding appropriate replacements for milk in his diet. Help was provided for replacement foods by the Center. Thank you, donors to our **Adopt-a-Birth program!**



A sample of provided foods

Baby Talk

From the Women's Support Centers



“Moses waiting for pharaoh's daughter”

Timothy April 2, 2024

Opportunities

♥ Giving Day! Giving Day! Giving Day!



Thank you to everyone who participated in our 3rd Annual Giving Day, which was held this past March, on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. With your help, we were able to raise 63% of our goal to date! We are so grateful for your generosity.

♥ It's July, and summer is officially here and with it comes our beloved **Catholic Conferences!** Conferences are a great and easy way for us to spread the word of our mission in Russia throughout the United States. In addition to sharing of the charitable works and programs provided in Vladivostok and nearby cities, attending conferences allows the mission a way to fundraise for these works, by selling a variety of religious gifts. See the Development Desk for more information on Conferences. Below are conferences we can attend with your help! Contact Vicky for additional information at vicky@vladmission.org or 209-408-0728.

- **July 19** Diocese of Stockton Eucharistic Conference – Modesto CA
- **August 16-17** SCRC Conv. - Anaheim CA
- **September 5-6** Diocese of Charlotte Eucharistic Congress - Charlotte NC
- **September 25-28** Catholic Answers Conference - San Diego CA
- **October 11** Michigan Catholic Women's Conference – Lansing MI
- **November 7-9** Marian Conference – Gaylord MI

♥ Come see Fr. Daniel Maurer, CJD, and our mission representatives speak at Catholic parishes for the **2025 Missionary Cooperative Plan (MCP)**. Every year the mission office applies to the dioceses in the US for participation in parish mission appeals. There are many great Catholic charitable causes so you can imagine the number of applications and request letters received by each diocese. When accepted, the mission is assigned parishes to visit for mission appeals. Fr. Dan and our representatives will be

visiting parishes in Oklahoma, Indiana, Massachusetts, Missouri and Pennsylvania.

- July 5/6 Saint Francis, Idabel OK
- July 12/13 Blessed Sacrament & Sts Peter and Paul, Oakland City/ Petersburg IN
- July 12/13 Saint Patrick, Lowell MA
- July 19/20 St. Joseph and Holy Cross, Princeton/Fort Branch IN
- July 19/20 Coronation of Our Lady, Grandview MO
- August 2/3 Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus, Hellerton PA
- August 16/17 St. Boniface, Evansville IN
- August 30/31 St. Louis Besancon, New Haven IN
- Sept. 27/28 All Saints, Evansville IN
- Sept. 27/28 Blessed Andrew Phu Yen, Medford MA

♥ Visit our online store, ***Gifts of Faith***, for your perfect summer read. We carry books on our Faith and the saints, as well as religious gifts for all sacramental and special occasions. Use code **SUMMER** for 15% your cart! store.vladmission.org

♥ Although Fr. Myron and Fr. Dan are as busy and active as ever, we are planning ahead for when the time comes for them to slow down and retire. Help us build their **Health and Retirement fund**, and for all the CJD Russian priests, by noting your donations for their futures.

♥ Offering a mass is a great way to support our priest. You may **request Masses** for your loved ones or special intentions to be celebrated by a Canon Regular of Jesus the Lord priest. You or your designated recipient will receive a Mass card if you like. The suggested Mass stipend is \$15.

My Name _____

Please offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the following people or intentions, (include the address if you would like a card to be sent.)

1 _____

2 _____

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From the development desk...

Dear Friends:

Are you looking for a bit of summer fun but also want to help the mission in Russia? We've got you covered! Help spread the word of our Catholic Faith growing in Eastern Russia by manning a table at a Conference! There are Catholic Conferences all over the US throughout the year, especially during Summer and Fall. Conferences can range in size from those held at convention centers to those held in parish halls or recreation rooms.

Both small and large conferences help the mission immensely. Here in Modesto, where our mission office is located, we started attending conference hosted by *World Ablaze*. Their conference started off as just Men's conferences. Over the years, it has grown to include Women's & Family Conferences too! Each year we return, we see familiar faces that often become mission supporters once hearing about the struggles our Faith has overcome in Russia.

If you see a conference flyer at your parish and are interested in passing out literature or selling religious items, please email vicky@vladmission.org or call

209-408-0728, with the conference information. Vicky can contact the event coordinators, make arrangements and send you all that you will need!

Your conference box will definitely include our one-of-a-kind, hand made, heirloom quality tote bags which have become one of our conference best sellers! These tote bags, as well as Bible/book covers, book marks, and rosary cases are made from retired priest vestments. Our talented seamstress upcycles a vestment that can no longer be worn by a priest during the celebration of Mass due to wear and tear from years of use. These special items are such a great way to bring some of the physical beauty of Mass to daily life.



Many Blessings to all of you!
Jessica Trevillyan USA Mission office
usoffice@vladmission.org, 209-408-0728