



Vladivostok Sunrise Russia Mission



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

Issue Number One Hundred Eighty Nine May, 2026

All About Seminarians

The “Weekly” Pastoral Experience of a Seminarian

By Br. Jackson Malik CJD

Introduction:

I am Br. Jackson Malik CJD, currently in my fourth year of theology at the National Catholic Institute of Theology in Pakistan, supported by Most Holy Mother of God Mission Society. As part of my ongoing pastoral formation, I continue to serve at St. James’ Parish in Bhattai Colony, Karachi.

On 7th and 8th February 2026, I actively participated in the parish ministry during the weekend celebrations. These days were especially meaningful because I was entrusted with preaching the homily during the Sunday Mass, reflecting on the words of Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew 5:13-16: “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world.” This pastoral opportunity helped me grow in confidence as a preacher and deepened my

understanding of my responsibility as a future priest called to be salt and light among God’s people.

Experience:

On Saturday evening, 7th February, I arrived at the parish to begin my weekly pastoral ministry. I visited some sick parishioners, as I always appreciate spending time with those who are suffering and in need of comfort. Later, the parish priest, Fr. Afzal Gulfam, informed me that the next day I would lead the Liturgy of the Word at two main substations of the parish. This responsibility required careful preparation and prayer.

On the morning of 8th February, after breakfast, I went to the Nasir Jumb substation of the parish. The atmosphere there was lively and prayerful. Families arrived early, children gathered near the entrance, and the choir was rehearsing hymns that helped prepare the hearts of the faithful for worship. Before the celebration, I spent time in silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, asking the Holy Spirit to guide my words and help me preach with clarity and conviction. Approximately 300 people were present for the liturgy.

I observed the diversity of the congregation; elderly men and women who have remained faithful for many years, young couples with children, and youth who actively participated in the choir and readings. This diversity reminded me that the message of Christ must reach every age group and every state of life. As the church continued to fill, the joy of the Lord’s Day was visible on their faces.

After the proclamation of the Gospel, I stood at the pulpit with a deep sense of responsibility and gratitude. Preaching was not simply a task of delivering a speech; it was a sacred duty to break open the Word of God for the community. In my homily, I reflected on the meaning of salt and light in daily life. I explained that salt, though small and often unnoticed, changes the taste of food and preserves it from corruption. In the same way, Christians are called to influence society positively through faith, honesty, and love. Although Christians are a minority in Pakistan, we are still called to give witness and add flavor to society, just as salt gives taste to food. If salt loses its taste, it becomes useless. Similarly, if Christians fail to



Brother Jackson preaching at St James Parish on Sunday

Most Holy Mother of God Pray for Us

live according to the Gospel, they lose their identity and mission.

I also reflected on the symbol of light. Light does not make noise, yet it removes darkness simply by shining. A lamp is not meant to be hidden but placed where it can illuminate the entire house. I encouraged the faithful to let their faith be visible - not through pride or superiority, but through good works, kindness, forgiveness, and service. In a world often marked by division, injustice, and moral confusion, Christians are called to reflect the light of Christ through their daily lives.

While preaching, I noticed attentive faces in the congregation. Some gently nodded in agreement, while others listened thoughtfully. After the Liturgy of the Word, a few parishioners approached me and shared that the message encouraged them to reflect more seriously on their Christian witness at home and in their workplaces. Their feedback strengthened my confidence and reassured me that God works through simple and sincere efforts.

Throughout the day, I continued interacting with parishioners. These small encounters reminded me that pastoral ministry is not limited to the altar. It also includes personal presence, listening, and accompaniment.

Theological Learning:

This pastoral experience deepened my understanding of the Sermon on the Mount as a foundation of Christian identity. The words of Jesus, “You are the salt of the



Distributing Holy Communion

earth” and “You are the light of the world,” are not merely suggestions; they are declarations of what His disciples are called to be. The emphasis is not only on personal holiness but also on mission and witness.

Salt represents transformation and preservation. In biblical times, salt was precious and essential. It prevented decay and enhanced flavor. Spiritually, this image highlights the Christian vocation to preserve moral values and to bring the flavor of the Gospel into society. Faith cannot remain confined within church walls; it must

influence daily life, including family relationships, professional responsibilities, and social interactions.

Light symbolizes revelation, truth, and guidance. Throughout Scripture, light is closely associated with God’s presence. By calling His disciples the light of the world, Jesus shares His mission with them. Although He is the true Light, He invites believers to participate in that light. Such participation requires authenticity and integrity. A hidden or compromised faith cannot illuminate others.

Reflecting on this Gospel passage also led me to examine my own vocation. As a seminarian preparing for priesthood, I am called in a particular way to be salt and light. My life, words, and actions must give witness to Christ. Preaching on this text challenged me personally: Am I preserving Gospel values in my own life? Am I allowing the light of Christ to shine through my attitudes, decisions, and relationships?

Conclusion:

This weekend pastoral experience strengthened both my pastoral sensitivity and my preaching skills. I realized that effective preaching requires prayerful preparation, a clear understanding of Scripture, and a meaningful connection with the lived experiences of the people. It is important to speak in language that is simple, relatable, and encouraging.

I also learned the importance of confidence rooted in humility. While standing at the pulpit, I was aware of my limitations, yet I trusted that the Holy Spirit would guide me. This trust reduced my anxiety and helped me deliver the message sincerely.

Another important lesson was observing how the faithful respond to the Word of God. Their attentiveness reminded me that people hunger for spiritual guidance. They seek meaning, direction, and encouragement. As a future priest, I must always approach preaching as a service that nourishes this spiritual hunger.

This experience contributed significantly to my formation. It increased my confidence, strengthened my sense of responsibility, and deepened my love for pastoral ministry. I sincerely thank Fr. Myron and my community in Russia, the Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord, for their continuous support and encouragement in my journey toward priesthood. I am also grateful to all our beloved friends who assist us through financial help and personal prayers. May God bless them all. May God grant me the grace to truly become salt that preserves and light that shines for His glory and for the good of His people.

Did you remember to pray for vocations?

The Solemn Vows of Br. Lazer Iqbal, CJD: Feeling the Boundless Love of God

By Fr. Vicky Samuel, CJD

“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

March 18, 2026, at 4 p.m. was one of the greatest moments of Br. Lazer’s life. After spending three years in simple vows, he decided to give himself totally to God and live his life as Canon Regular of Jesus the Lord. Being finally professed, he is now a full member of CJD community. I feel this is the path God has chosen for him to follow in Jesus’ footsteps.

Br. Lazer is from Sialkot; Pakistan, from a small village Boobkawala. We had the ceremony in the main parish of St. Mary’s in Jamke Cheema. I also belong to the same parish. Almost all his relatives were present there, to be the part of a blessed moment of his life.

As the celebration began, I was overjoyed and nervous because it was my first experience to listen someone’s solemn vows. That time I also remember my solemn vows and felt like I was also renewing my vows. I was hoping I would remember all the steps I had memorized for the profession ritual. When I saw the presence of four diocesan priests, his family and friends, I felt their love and support for Br. Lazer, which helped give him a sense of calm, happiness and peace. The ceremony was beautiful, simple and powerful.

Being the main celebrant of the ceremony, I encouraged Br. Lazer to be faithful in his vocation because he would give himself totally to God and the commitment, he would make it would not for one week or month, or one year. It would be life time commitment to God.

I was moved by the beautiful music by the cantors, musicians and everyone in the church. During each song, I silently reflected on God’s love and the founder of our order (Fr. Myron Effing CJD). I felt God’s blessings and love as I listened to the songs, and I continue to have a sense of comfort and feel uplifted when I listen to them over and over.

When I asked Br. Lazer about the ceremony and his feelings of being a solemn professed brother; he told me; “The experience of prostrating was very profound. It was an intense sense of surrendering myself to God, offering God my life and asking for continued guidance. This time was special to me. I felt all the saints in heaven and the community praying with me. It was a humbling experience to ask God to receive me forever”.

When I was performing the ritual of solemn vows, I could feel the spirit of St. Augustine and whole community of CJD who are already professed. I was overwhelmed to receive Lazer to be the permanent member of our order or community. As I used the famous quote of St. Augustine in the beginning (“You have made

us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”) I prayed for Br. Lazer that almighty God will bless him and give him strong faith to be the image of Christ for others. May he live the spirituality of St. Augustine and may his heart rest in God.

After the ritual and mass, we all had group pictures. I was very moved to see Br. Lazer’s family. They were all very happy to see him and wishing him to be faithful in his life and vocation. Specially, his father had tears in his eyes because he was missing Br. Lazer’s mother who recently gone to the Lord. I hope she would be seeing her son’s success in heaven. May her soul rest in peace.

To end, I would like to share some reflection on the evangelical counsels also known as vows.



Brother Lazer preparing himself by prayer.

The Vow of Poverty The vow of poverty consists of detaching oneself from what one has. Obviously, we use material things, but one cannot say that these things belong to him. For example, cell phones, automobiles, among other things, but nothing is under one’s name. We have access to its use but not as a possession. This permits us to practice the virtue of simplicity, with nothing for one’s self, including the roof over one’s head. Living this vow, we follow Jesus Christ Who was poor, as Saint Paul says: “Jesus Christ, rich as He was, made Himself poor for your sake, in order to make you rich by means of His poverty” (2 Corinthians 8,9). The practice of the vow of poverty brings us total detachment of earthly things so that we can fill our heart with spiritual things that bring us to life eternal.

The Vow of Chastity The vow of Chastity does not consist simply in not getting married or having children. It

consists of something more. The practice of this vow leads us in carrying out all our actions with purity of heart; and what does this signify? It is to perform all we do with love for Christ; therefore, one does not love only one person but his love becomes universal, for all. It is then we practice chastity. So, our works are focused for persons whom we do not know, who are, actually, strangers in our lives. From this love our service for others springs forth. To be chaste implies living free, as the Apostle Saint Paul on his first letter to the Corinthians, 7: 34 says, “An unmarried woman, or virgin, concerns herself with the Lord’s work, because she wants to be dedicated both in body and spirit.” To live the vow of chastity is to live only for Christ and anxious in serving the people of God.

The Vow of Obedience In the vow of obedience, we practice the virtue of humility, abandoning our lives in the arms of God our Father, in His divine will, through obedience to our superiors. Obedience helps us deny ourselves. We give up the right to make our own plans and comply with them as we wish. It is well to clarify: it does not mean that we do not speak or decide anything. No! Actually, in communicating with the superior and guided by faithful adherence to our constitutions, there exists a



Brother Lazar signs his life away to God, with Fr Vicky as witness.

dialog which allows us to be heard and guided so as to walk according to our charism, responding with humility to Christ, as Saint Paul the Apostle in his letter to the Philippians tells us: He assumed human nature and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death – His death on the cross” (Philippians 2:8-9). Our superiors always guide us in living out the commandments, our constitutions and, above all, they help us in every situation of our life.

Historic Moments...

Christmas in Vladivostok’s Temporary Church in 1918*

(Translated from the French by Google.)

The Catholic church is open, bathed in light, and singing emanates from within. Are we in Vladivostok in 1918 or in Bethlehem at the beginning of our era? For, in truth, we are in a kind of barn, under the roof of a wooden structure, crude and unadorned, devoid of decoration and almost no furniture. And all these people with thick, frost-silvered beards, wearing sheepskin hats and coats—are they not shepherds?



The old temporary church at Christmas time

Ah! No. Someone began to hum a popular chant through their nose, and the tired, trembling, asthmatic harmonium (a kind of organ—ed.) began to sigh discordantly. We are in Vladivostok. One of those endless Polish masses is beginning, during which everyone present sings with all their might until they lose their memory and voice. The priest delivering the sermon has a pink ribbon tied in a huge knot on his chest. Incidentally, this man is cordial, he loves to talk, and speaks excellent French. There's something majestic about him that lends such an imposing air to the Polish clergy. (Undoubtedly that was Fr Karl Slivovsky, the future bishop—ed.) The priest leading the service is a tall, skinny Belarusian with long arms and sunken cheeks. (It must have been Fr Vladislav Murzhvinsky—ed.) He lives next to the church in a peasant hut, poor and cold, but filled with mercy toward all those "deprived of a home and shelter." An old woman, an old man, and a sacristan live there, and by some miracle, a corner and a bed were found for me. The owner of this refuge is often away. He is responsible for the spiritual care of the entire eastern coast of Siberia: thousands of Catholics scattered across more than two hundred villages. He travels on foot, on horseback, by car,

by sleigh; he rents horse and dog sleds. In the summer, he fords rivers, holding a box with vestments and the Eucharistic chalice over his head



Fr Vladislav Murzhvinsky and Fr Karl Slivovsky

He has only one church, and it is located on Sakhalin Island. So when he arrives at a village, very often, he finds no more than a single Catholic family there. But what joy, what festivity reigns around him! He celebrates Mass, delivers a sermon, asks children to recount the fundamental truths of the faith, distributes Communion, blesses marriages, and administers baptism. Orthodox believers come to watch, and sometimes even a “batushka” (Orthodox priest) who can be either supportive or hostile, and a police agent. Among these lost and isolated Catholics in this vast territory, there's hardly a single one whose faith has wavered. Some of those touched by Bolshevik propaganda even combine their old faith with the new dogmas of communism.

In Vladivostok, by contrast, barely four hundred out of a thousand Catholics practice their faith. The remaining six hundred, most of whom are workers, are very cold, subjected to very strong indoctrination, and, what's more, this indoctrination is carried out by the Bolsheviks, so the six hundred claim nothing more than the sacraments of baptism, marriage, and burial. Three people have recently become Baptists. There are few converts from Orthodoxy: ten to fifteen people a year; in 1918, thirty-six.

* Excerpt from the article "On the Expanse of Morality and Religion in Siberia" from **Review of the French Clergy**, pp. 276-277. VOL. CI. January. 1920 Letouzey & Ané Publishers. 87 Boulevard Raspai, 82 Rue de Vaugirard. 1920

News Notes



- Fr Vicky Samuel C.J.D., the pastor of our northern parishes of Nativity in Ussurysk, Annunciation in Arsenyev, and Visitation in Lesozavodsk just gave us a photo of the “new” car which American benefactors bought for us. Actually, it is a slightly used car imported from Japan, which is “just across the water” from here. It should give him years of service. He has to do a lot of travelling between these parishes which are rather far apart and rather small. He is doing a great job and the parishes are growing. The parish in Ussurysk is preparing to host vacationers from South Korea in their big building as soon as flights are established. And the parish in Arsenyev expects many winter tourists from the whole Far East and Japan and Korea, as the new ski resort is opening there. Fr Vicky comes to us from Pakistan.

- February 2 is the church’s “Day for Religious Life”. So all of us religious who live in Vladivostok itself had dinner together. Here is a photo!



3 CJD brothers, 4 CJD priests, 1 CJD seminarian, 3 CJD Sisters, 3 St Anne Sisters. Beyond Vladivostok there are still more priests and seminarians supported by Mary Mother of God Mission Society. There are also lay employees in most parishes. Thank you, Benefactors! God bless you always! We can't do it without you!



Deacon Lloyvd Cabatana, C.J.D.

● On March 21 our Bishop Kirill Klimovich, D.D., arrived and promptly celebrated mass at our parishes of Romanovka and Nakhodka. On March 22, he **ordained our brother Lloyd Cabatana, CJD**, to the diaconate, but then he had more busy

days with us. On Sunday, March 23 he confirmed five of our adult parishioners and then on March 24 he held the regional **Chrism Mass** for our Far Eastern deaneries at our church in Vladivostok. The bishop blessed the holy oils used in the sacraments in all the parishes of the Far East, and again asked us priests to continue our ministry and be faithful to our vows and promises.



Bishop Kirill Klimovich, D.D. and all the ministers at Deacon Lloyd's ordination.

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How to Communicate with us:

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Internet: English language: www.vladmission.org
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Office in Russia: Phone +7-423-226-9614
Fr Myron: myron.effing@gmail.com
Fr Daniel: vladcanonsregular@gmail.com
Office in California: Phone: +1-209-408-0728
Mary Mother of God Mission Society
PO Box 576216
Modesto CA 95357-0835
usoffice@vladmission.org

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

Baby Talk

From the Women's Support Centers



“Don't you think I look like the deacon?”

Irina April 8, 2024



Happy Birthday from parishioners to Fr Myron for his 85th birthday, February 7.

Opportunities

♥ May, The Month of Mary, our Blessed Mother

This month we celebrate Mary, the Mother of God and reflect on the Mothers in our lives as well. We are so grateful for all the mothers who choose life! Since the start of our Women's Support Centers in Russia, we have been able to help in saving thousands of babies. We can honor Mary through our **Adopt-A-Mom Program**. A \$125 covers the costs of care during pregnancy and after the baby is born.

♥ Come hear our speakers, including **Fr. Daniel Maurer, C.J.D., Fr. Doug Grandon** and **Mr. Terry Kopp** speak about the Roman Catholic Church in Eastern Russia at one of our **2026 Mission Appeals**, More dates to come, stay tuned:

May 30/31 St. Vincent de Paul / St. Mary of the Assumption, Bedford/Mitchell, IN

June 20/21 St. Patrick, Angels Camp CA

June 27/28 St. Gregory / Sacred Heart, North Branch / Rush, MN

June 27/28 St. Michael / St. John, Boulder Creek / Felton, CA

July 11/12 Holy Spirit, Maryland Hts MO

July 11/12 St. Joseph, Rio Vista CA

July 11/12 St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington IN

♥ **Giving Day!** Thank you to all who participated in our 2026 Giving Day on March 25! With your help we raised **\$15,793** for our **Seminarian Program!** That's support for 1 seminarian for an entire year and support for a second seminarian for 6 months! It's not too late to help! Note **Giving Day** in your donations if you would like your contribution to go towards our future priests.

♥ **Meet Br. Lazar Iqbal** I am from Sialkot, a city in Pakistan. (See the article of page 3 also.) Currently, I am studying philosophy at Saint Francis Xavier Seminary in Lahore, and I am in my final year of philosophy. After completing this stage, I will begin my studies in theology.



I joined the CJD community on 24 December 2021. Father Vicky Samuel, C.J.D. and I belong to the same parish, and through him I came to know about the CJD community. In 2019, I contacted Father Myron, and after a period of discernment, I officially entered the community

in 2021. On 18 March of this year, I made my solemn vows.

I decided to serve in Russia because I have always felt a deep calling to become a priest. Since my birth, my parents dedicated me to the Lord, and I have never seriously considered any other vocation. After leaving Franciscan formation in 2018, I had to wait almost three years before finding a new path. In Pakistan, it is often difficult for former seminarians to be accepted again, but I believe that God opened a new door for me through the CJD community.

Joining CJD has given me the opportunity to serve the Lord in a new cultural context, especially in Russia. I am often amazed at how God works in ways I could never have imagined. I feel very grateful and happy for this opportunity. During my philosophy studies, I have learned a great deal, especially from the life and teachings of Saint Augustine, which have deeply inspired me.

Looking back at my journey, I see how God has guided me through challenges, waiting periods, and new beginnings. Each step has strengthened my faith and deepened my desire to serve Him. As I prepare to begin my theological studies and continue my vocation, I place my trust in God's plan, knowing that He will lead me wherever I am needed. With gratitude in my heart, I remain committed to serving Him and His people with dedication, humility, and love.

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If you would like to help **sponsor a seminarian**, please contact our mission office.

♥ **Catholic Conferences** Here are some upcoming conferences you may be interested in helping with. Read on in our Development Desk Section to hear of the latest conference we attended!

- **July 24-25** Women's Conf. – San Antonio TX
- **July 31- Aug 2** Midwest Cath. Family Conf -Wichita, KS
- **August 26–29** National Council of Catholic Women National Convention - Grand Rapids MI
- **Sept 5-6** Eucharistic Congress Charlotte NC
- **Sept 11-12** Archdiocese of Las Vegas Conf., NV
- **Sept 11-12** Eucharistic Congress Charlotte, NC
- **October 10** Women's Conference, Lansing, MI

♥ We need mass stipends, asking \$15 per mass for the upkeep of one priest for one day.

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

List your intentions: \_\_\_\_\_

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## From the development desk...

### Fruitful Contacts at the Religious Education Congress!

Tony Hagelsieb from the California mission office and I, were blessed to recently represent and promote Mary Mother of God Mission Society from our exhibitor booth at the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Religious Educators' Congress. Thousands of Catholic educators from all over the Archdiocese and beyond attended.

Events like the Congress are an essential means for the mission to get the word out and talk about our missionary work in Russia and boy, did we talk! Countless patrons from the Congress stopped by our booth and were very interested in hearing and asking questions about the developments of the Church in Vladivostok. It's a surprise to hear how many people still don't know the Roman Catholic Church has a presence in Eastern Russia. Tony has served in Vladivostok on two separate mission trips to Russia and me, several more. Interest was high as we joyfully shared some of our first-hand experiences.

Tony and I set up a small version of our mission store, distributed several hundred pieces of literature. We ran out over this 3 day event! Sixteen Sunrise newsletter signups were registered and over \$6300 in sales and donations were generated from our booth to offset costs to

attending and to raise funds for the mission. What an exciting weekend!

If you would like to attend a conference, our missionary priests need your help! Only as we work together here in the USA are we able to bring them assistance to continue with the developments that are happening in Russia. If you know of a local Catholic Conference in your area and would like to attend to represent the mission, please contact me at our office. My job is to take care of all the details to register your attendance as well as your accommodation and travel, if needed. Your job will be to share the mission with as many people as you can and hand out our mission literature. We will send plenty of literature and a small box of Russian icons and religious goods to sell to help pay for the conference expense and raise a bit for the mission. Offering goods to sell is always your option. The important goal and focus are to spread the good news of the work of our great priests serving in Russia!

God bless you. Vicky Trevillyan 209-408-0728

Dear Friends, all of you! Happy Month of May, and may the Virgin Mary take all your needs to her Son!

Jessica Trevillyan USA Mission office  
[usoffice@vladmission.org](mailto:usoffice@vladmission.org), 209-408-0728