

News Notes

by Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

- On Sunday, 30 May 1999, we received the sad news of the death of Angela Wozniak of St Paul, Minnesota. She together with her husband Donald Wozniak were the donors of the icon of the Most Holy Mother of God of Vladivostok which hangs in our church. Benefactors often receive copies of this icon together with our letters of thanks. She had fought a long, courageous, and dignified battle with cancer. On June 3, the day of her funeral mass in Minnesota, we also celebrated mass for her. Judge Donald Wozniak serves very actively on the Board of Mary Mother of God Mission Society. Our condolences to her family. We will miss our friend until we meet again where there is no more sorrow.
- Thanks be to God, to our benefactors' many prayers, to Dr McEllistrem, and to our sister parish of the Nativity of the Lord of St Paul, Minnesota, I got a clean bill of health on my checkup of June 25. So the cancer scare has abated for now.
- Congratulations to the Immaculate Heart of Mary Presidium of the Legion of Mary of Vladivostok Russia for reactivating after several years of inactivity. The leader is Evgeni Balanyov, and the young people have begun some projects of working with children and some parish service projects.
- At last our parish has an AA group meeting within our walls weekly. Alcoholism is a big problem in Russia, and AA is doing what it can. But AA is an organization founded in America, so its methods have still to be "inculturated" for the Russian environment. Your prayers would be helpful here.
- Congratulations to the newly formed Russia Prayer Group meeting at St John Cantius Church in St Cloud, Minnesota. We and all of Russia are grateful to your prayerful support of the needs of this great country. Mr Lee Larkey and Deacon Reker are among the founders of the Prayer Group.
- Our Bishop Jersey Mazur has invited the Society of Our Lady of the Holy Trinity to come and work in Ulan Ude, a city just south of Lake Baikal. It is the area of Russia which is most heavily Buddhist. It is the capital city of Buryatia, one of the few remaining Russian states which didn't have a Catholic parish. There still remains Chita of the Chitinsky State without a Catholic parish.

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How to Communicate with Us

FAX: 011-7-4232-26-96-16

E-mail: myron@catholic.marine.su
daniel@eastnet.febras.ru
CARITAS@catholic.marine.su

Phone: 011-7-4232-26-96-14

World Wide Web:

<http://www.pond.net/~jeffclang/mostholy/index.htm>

Money cannot legally be sent by mail to Russia. Donations of money should be sent to:

Vladivostok Mission
225 Cordova Street
Anchorage AK 99501 USA

Your donations are tax-deductible. You will receive the required receipt for IRS tax purposes by return mail.

Letters without donations can be sent to:

Most Holy Mother of God Catholic Parish
Volodarskovo 22
690001 Vladivostok RUSSIA

Please do not mail packages directly to Russia, since every package mailed to Russia costs us \$50. If you have items that you think we can use, please contact us by electronic mail or fax giving a complete list of items. If we accept your offer you will need official inventory information from:

Mrs Joan O'Rourke
P.O. Box 266
Hanford CA 93232
FAX (650)871-2856
Phone (559)582-4112

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Vladivostok Mission
225 Cordova Street
Anchorage AK 99501

Sister Susan Wal
Missionary Sisters of St Peter Claver
265 Century Ave
St Paul MN 55125-1155

651 738-9704

Vladivostok Mission
Nativity of our Lord Parish
324 Prior Ave South
St Paul MN 55105-1617

Address Service Requested

Vladivostok Mission
Nativity of our Lord Parish
324 Prior Ave South
St Paul MN 55105-1617

Address Service Requested

Virginia E. Murphy
1906 Princeton
St Paul MN 55105-1523

Remember
"Vladivostok Mission"
in your will.

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- 11 - - 12 - - 13 - - 14 - - 15 - - 16 -

Dear Sister Susan,

Please send the photos, when you are done to:

Thanks. God bless you. --Fr Myron

Mr Jeff Lang
2095 Morning View Dr
Eugene OR 97405-1633

The 70-Year Road to the Church

The memoirs of Antonina Sulimova

tr by Olga Berdnikova

I was born in 1913 in Seleznyevka village, Kiev region, the Ukraine. We were the only Polish family in the nearest villages. My father's name was Philip Sakevitch. Father's parents were living in this village since olden times. The Sakevitch family wasn't so large. They had two children--a son (my father) and a daughter. Their mother died when they were children.

After the sister married my father, he and our grandfather had to go away in search of a living to the nearest sugar factory. Besides producing sugar the head of the factory also bred bullocks. Therefore my father and grandfather applied for jobs as farmworkers. They worked with diligence. The yokes that were used to carry buckets with fodder left deep scars on their shoulders.

On their earnings they managed to buy a plot at the edge of village where earlier people had mined clay and baked bricks. My father and grandfather were occupied with the cultivation of this plot. They filled up holes with earth and covered the plot with black earth. Little by little the plot was improved.

In 1907 father got married to Rozalia Grankovskaya, a pretty Polish girl who was born in 1889 and lived in Kamenets-Podolsk. He had been raised in a small family always dreamed of having a big and friendly family. My mother loved children too. And God gave them eight children, all of them daughters.

At childhood we were trained to work because there were only two men in our family. Growing up we didn't have a time to play with another children but nonetheless we always felt our parents' love and care. Our family was a true Christian family. We kept all Christian traditions and feasts. Our mother told us about God and taught us to pray. The only Catholic Church was situated in Skvira (a regional center at that time). We went there for mass on Easter and Christmas. When our relatives visited us we felt that a festive spirit reigned in our house. The citizens of our village didn't share our faith. Their negative treatment of our religion increased when Catholic Church was closed in 1928. Because we were Catholics some of our neighbors denounced us tacitly and others despised us openly.

Our parents respected national traditions. Therefore we went to a school for Polish children that was the only one school in our region. I had to study at this school during the time of social breakdown and at the time of my family's financial difficulties. Four years I lived far from my family and I had only a plate of soup for a dinner. On weekends I had to go home on foot and then come back to school (about 5 miles). Then the school for Polish children was closed, and so I had to go to a school for Ukrainian children. To follow the school program in the Ukrainian language I had to study very hard. But I liked to study and I did it very well.

The New Economical Policy of the Soviet government favored the development of the economy. A lot of families rose from ashes. People bred bloodstock and to increase the crop capacity they used high-yielding seeds. Though we hadn't the means our father bought a cock of rare breed. Our yard and new garden looked much better.

But there was no time for our family to rise from ashes because the horror of repression and the dispossession of kulaks (landowners) was coming to our country. Our family was ranked with the middle peasants, but later, by reason of our nationality and religion, we were

In 1941 the black death of Fascism came to our long-suffering land--The Great Patriotic War destroyed our lives and our families. Because my husband was called up for military service I had to raise my daughter and sister without him. I worked 20 hours a day. I had to dig trenches, unload trains and ships. On summer weekends I worked at other jobs. During four years my life was like that. I prayed for my mother and sisters who lived in the Ukraine that was occupied by

subjected to repression as kulaks.

To this day I am shocked by a scandal that happened at school on my graduation day. Only because I was a girl whose father was an middle peasant I got an unfavourable certificate though I studied very well. That evening I walked out into the hall of the school with tears on my cheeks. My teacher entreated me to be silent because one girl whose father was a "kulak" was arrested and no one ever saw her again.

Soon our family was exiled to a lumber camp in the Ural Mountains. Our father who was such an honest and perfect man that he couldn't kill a cock with an axe because he would never destroy the beauty of nature. Then we were exiled to the taiga (forest). Tchusovoye, the nearest village, was 35 miles from the lumber camp where we were kept. There we lived in a dugout that we had to dig by ourselves. At that time I was an elder child in the family. One sister was married and later she was exiled too. Other sisters died when we were on our way to the place of our exile.

I worked together with my father, grandfather and other countrymen. United in one team we felled big trees to build barracks. We had been promised that the first team that built a barracks would live in it. We did our best. But suddenly our family together with other "foremost people" were sent to another place of exile. Soon winter came... Our food and our strength were coming to an end. We had to dig dugouts and feel trees to build barracks. Our mother, worn out by disease, looked like a ghost. That winter we survived only through faith and hope.

One year later we came home. Because my documents were stolen I had to hide myself from the police and the inspectors. But at the most desperate moments of my life Our Saviour was with us. On a way home my grandfather and father died. I don't even know where they are buried.

Our exhausted family that lost four of its members came back to our native village. At once I was ill. I had a typhoid fever. It was a wonder that I was escaped. Because we came back to our native village at the end of summer we didn't have any food preserved. Besides we found that strangers were living in our house. We had to look for shelter and to work for hire. Later the collective farm's administration let us live in a small house.

But soon starvation came to the land of the Ukraine... Thousands of eye-witnesses described in their memoirs this horrible time. People ate mill-cake. Numerous cases of cannibalism took place in Ukrainian villages... Famished hungry people fell down and couldn't get up. It was just a miracle when I once found two loaves of bread on a way home! My mother said to me that through this miracle God told us that we would survive. But some members of collective farm's administration suggest that they not pay for our work because we were "kulaks". Fortunately other members of this administration didn't agree with them and gave us a salary.

In 1935 our towns and villages were involved in the Progressive People's Movement. Advanced methods of work were started in collective farms. I took part in this Movement in agriculture. Because I worked very hard I got a heifer as a prize.

In 1936 I married and went to Vladivostok together with my husband and young sister who was 9 years old. We had no flat and for a long time we looked for shelter. Our life became much better when we got a small room in a communal apartment. I found work at the bread-baking plant. Soon my daughter was born.

German Troops. One sister went through the horror of fascist captivity.

Our house and garden, that had been taken before, were returned to my mother only in 1950. One day I met here in Vladivostok a poor man who was begging. Of course I gave alms to him, but I was very surprised to recognize this man. His name was Afanasy. Many years ago he lived in my native village. He was the very man who ruined

my family. It's true that a man who won't confess his sins deserves God's punishment.

I'm a very old woman. My sisters have already died. All my life I prayed to God but I couldn't hope to find a way to Church. When the Most Holy Mother of God Catholic Church was renewed in Vladivostok I couldn't come to the Church by the reason of my health's state. But I always knew that God wouldn't let me die until I could confess my sins and take the Holy Sacrament. On the 27 of January, 1998, I again saw a catholic priest. It's very hard for me to describe all my feelings that filled my heart. I was very glad to find God again. I very much appreciate Father Myron for his care. His visits make me stronger. I appreciate Lilia Silina, the CARITAS Parish Director, for the charitable work she is doing on my behalf. I pray for you as far as possible.

God bless you. Antonina Sulimova

Your Donation

If you like, you can specify how your donation to Vladivostok Mission will be used, or you can use the following information to promote a grant from your parish or society:

Religious Needs:

1. Evangelization Programs
2. Children's Catechism Programs and Camps
3. Seminarians' Support
4. Priests' Support
5. Prayer Books, Bibles, Hymnals and Literature
6. Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference

Physical Plant Needs:

1. Church Steeple Project
2. Repair of Church Facade, Brickwork
3. Home for Priests Project
4. Apartment for Parish in Arcenyev
5. Apartment for Parish in Romanovka
6. Apartment for Parish in Ussurisk

Humanitarian Needs:

1. Family Emergency Loan Fund
2. Meals on Wheels Fund
3. Adopt-a-Birth Fund
4. Women's Support Center Fund
5. Street Children's Fund
6. Prisoners Fund
7. CARITAS Center
8. Air Conditioner for Intensive Care Unit at Thousand-Bed General Hospital in Vladivostok

Here is an explanation of the various projects:

Religious Needs:

1. Evangelization Programs. Donations support our "Catholic Faith by Mail" program, as well as financial support for our lay helpers who work with us in our parishes and evangelization programs. Hall rental for parishes which don't have their own premises.
2. Children's Catechism Programs and Camps. Supplies for the catechetical programs in each parish as well as training and travel expenses for teachers. Financial support for poor children so that they can attend our catechetical camps. Support for our catechetical holy day parties for children.
3. Seminarians' Support. Educational expenses for young men in our pre-seminary program, and travel expenses and spending money for seminarians.
4. Priests' Support. Personal expenses, food, clothing, shelter, and government expenses for our priests.
5. Prayer Books, Bibles, Hymnals and Literature. Purchase and distribution expenses. Translations and publication costs. Currently we are hoping to print books about Post-Abortion Syndrome and about the Jehovah's Witnesses, both of which we have already translated.
6. Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference. Our annual evangelization and formation program for all the youth of our region, including chastity education, NFP, and vocations programs. Youth ministry.

Physical Plant Needs:

1. Church Steeple Project. We must build steeples on the cathedral in Vladivostok. The bells were already donated by

the Siberian Society of Poland.

2. Repair of Church Facade. After 70 years of neglect, the brickwork of our cathedral must be repaired and pointed. This is a very urgent project.
3. Home for Priests Project. Fr Dan and Fr Myron live in their offices--the only priests in our state. It takes a toll on their health, too. We want to build a proper rectory for them and the seminarians. Two foundations have already donated the land, so now we need building expenses.
4. Apartments for Parishes in Arcenyev, in Romanovka, and in Ussurisk. Parishes can't really effectively do their evangelical, catechetical, and humanitarian work without a place to do it. We usually try to buy at least an apartment for a parish as soon as its activities warrant a special place.

Humanitarian Needs:

1. Family Emergency Loan Fund. Sometimes Russian families have an emergency situation, like death in the family or sudden illness. The family is capable of paying the expense over time, but there aren't banks which can loan them short term emergency funds. This would be the purpose of this Loan Fund.
2. Meals on Wheels Fund. For elderly, abandoned elderly, street children, and the homeless whom CARITAS helps regularly.
3. Adopt-a-Birth Fund. \$20 per birth to women who do not have the money to pay for the birth expenses of their child. We will report to you the name of the child and the birthdate so that your donation can be concrete.
4. Women's Support Center Fund. This is the crisis pregnancy center, which is expanding from one center to six centers in various cities.
5. Street Children's Fund. Food, clothing, and educational projects for children who have been arrested by the police and are being held in the Children's Temporary Shelter until their fate is decided by the courts.
6. Prisoners Fund. This fund is meant to provide a ticket home, especially for women prisoners having children who are released from prison. The government does not provide such tickets, nor any kind of rehabilitation services for ex-prisoners. The fund also provides evangelical materials and clothing for prisoners, and food and medicine for prisoners' infant children who live in the prison children's shelter. Some day, if there will be a larger donor, CARITAS hopes to open a prisoners' rehabilitation center, especially at the women's prisons.
7. CARITAS Center. In spite of all the activities of CARITAS, the organization does not have its own office or premises. We need a donor to donate a building for CARITAS, where it could store humanitarian aid, have a used clothing shop and a dispensary for medicines.
8. Air Conditioner for Intensive Care Unit at Thousand-Bed General Hospital in Vladivostok. Even in the summer's heat with flies and mosquitoes the ICU at this largest hospital is not airconditioned. The result is increased infections, and extra load on the health of the patients who are fighting for their lives. In order to be sure that the airconditioning system would not be stolen--a constant problem in Russia is theft!--CARITAS would retain ownership of the system and inspect it regularly for proper operation.

Photo Captions:

Fr Michael Shields from Nativity Parish in Magadan, Russia, came to Vladivostok earlier to give talks and prepare us for the pilgrimage of the relics.

The Solemn Entrance of the Relics at Sunday Mass, the reliquary being born on the shoulders of our parishioners. St Theresa, in addition to being one of the patrons of the missions of the Church, is also patroness of the Roman Catholic Church in Russia.

Fr Michael giving the sermon before the relics. That statue of St Theresa The Little Flower which stands in front of the reliquary will be given as a gift to the new Parish of St Theresa of the Child Jesus in Petropavlovsk, Kamchatka. "Thank You!" to the unknown benefactor who gave it to us.

Prayers of intercession after communion. Fr Dariush of the Third Order of St Francis from Moscow who accompanied the relics on their pilgrimage through Russia.

The author's children and wife near the relics.

After the intercessions the children came to the reliquary to be near their new heavenly friend.

People wanted to be photographed with the relics--here parishioners from Romanovka with Sisters Rosario, Alicia, and Eugenia.

After the Sunday Mass many parishioners kept a night vigil with prayers and songs until the Monday departure of the relics. After us, the relics went to Kazakhstan.

Sunday Mass in Vladivostok in the Presence of the Relics of St Theresa of the Child Jesus--the Little Flower, May 2, 1999.

Antonina Sulimova's family all of whom have now entered the Catholic Church. Daughter Lilia Shevchenko (middle left) with her husband Anatoly Shevchenko (middle right), granddaughter Svetlana Kostyousko with greatgranddaughter Katya (center), grandson Maxim Shevchenko who is on the Parish Economic Council (mid-right) and his wife Olga (front left).

The Relics of St Theresa in Vladivostok

*by Yuri Byelozorov
tr Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.*

At last it happened! On April 30 under a cold rain the airplane carrying the chest containing the relics of St Theresa The Little Flower arrived in Vladivostok from France. Evgenie Balanyov, who was charged with the process of reception of the relics on our Primorsky Territory, reported that the baggage handlers were extremely careful with this unusual freight, although they always referred to "Little Theresa" as "Mother Theresa". It seems they presumed that the world famous Catholic nun was already declared a saint. Evgenie tried to explain that the relics were those of the Theresa who was the namesake of the recently deceased nun.

So the truck with the chest of relics and the escort entered the courtyard of the Church of the Most Holy Mother of God. Out to meet it came that always energetic priest from Magadan, Fr Michael Shields, and also Fr Dariush from Moscow as well as two Franciscan sisters who accompany the relics in their travels, Sisters Crystal and Tamara. They carefully brought the chest into the small chapel where there began an awesome silent prayer on the part of the parishioners and the guests. Some later reported that they felt as if some very close friend had arrived. That sense of personal closeness would also be felt by those who participated in the ensuing services and on Sunday, May 2. Parishioners said, "Saint Theresa came to us." It didn't bother anyone that she had completed her earthly life nearly 100 years ago.

Television companies began to call to ask if they could televise events, and they wanted us to give some facts so that they could quickly get the news on the air. We tried to discourage them somewhat until the main mass on Sunday. We explained that we didn't want a lot of noise or agitation around this event. Even so, one company sent its cameraman. We agreed to let him record the first mass in the presence of the relics in the chapel from a distance. We gave information in the hope that the Evening News would get the facts straight, but the reporter gave more "information" than we had supplied, making some kind of a connection between the pilgrimage of the relics with a later scheduled visit of the Primate of Poland, and even some future visit of the Pope to the Russian Far East instead of Moscow! But all this gossip didn't really have any basis in fact.

On Sunday was the Solemn Mass with a full house of parishioners. We listened to the fiery sermon of Fr Michael which didn't allow anyone to be disinterested, neither young nor old. After the communion rite was completed, the children and their parents surrounded the reliquary of St Theresa and, under the leadership of Fr Myron our Pastor, prayed for her intercession on behalf of all the faithful and all the parishes in the Far East.

We believe that God will answer our needs through the intercession of our saints. Our Catholic faith in Christ will grow even stronger here on the shores of the Pacific Ocean.