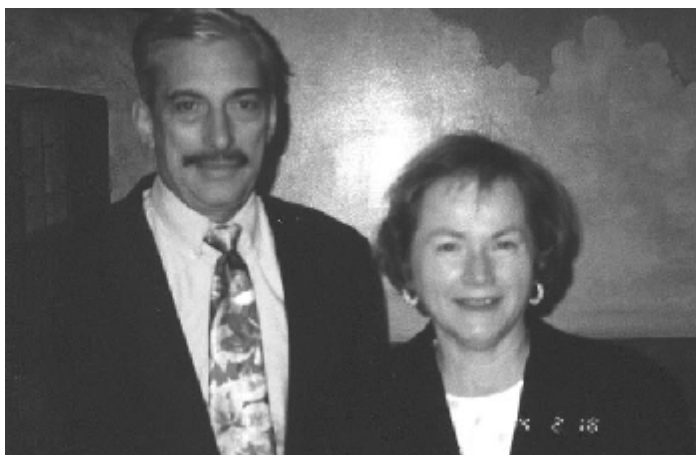
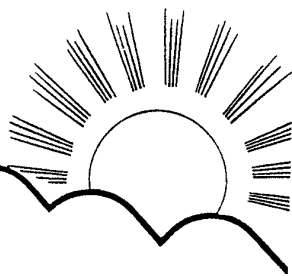


Vladivostok Sunrise

Most Holy Mother of God Roman Catholic Church + Vladivostok, Russia

Issue Number Thirty Two March 1, 2000



Meet Our New American Representatives: David and Sandra Sonnen

[Thanks to the efforts of Lee Larkey from our sister parish in St Anna, Minnesota, we were introduced to Mr and Mrs Sonnen who were members of Nativity of Our Lord Parish in St Paul. They were immediately interested to see what they could do to help our mission, and from this interest Nativity itself became one of our most active and helpful sister parishes. When Fr Richard Wey from the St Cloud Mission Office offered to help us by incorporating our stateside fundraising efforts, most of the burden fell on Nativity parishioner Virginia Murphy who became secretary of the corporation, Mary Mother of God Mission Society. Mr Sonnen was elected Chairman of the National Board, and Mrs Sonnen was appointed to coordinate our stateside activities. Here is their letter of introduction.]

Dear Vladivostok Sunrise readers,

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves. We are Dave and Sandra Sonnen. We have known Father Effing since 1994. We are close to retirement with 6 children and 5 grandchildren. We have some extra time and sort of an empty house. We have watched this priest work so hard for so long. We heard of a number of programs they would like to start, but no one to coordinate it stateside. When Father was here several months ago, he was

ill. We lay awake at night sometimes talking about what Father needed for his mission. On the 13th of October (the anniversary of the last Fatima apparition) we accepted the invitation to help on a regular basis. Sandra thought she could give 4 hours a week or so; Dave thought he could do the financial books in about the same time frame. We are very excited and happy. We have had so much help from our friends in our parish. We are counting on help from all of you. We need your ideas. We need your help with resources.

We hope to inform you regularly with ideas and ways to help this mission. Father asked us, as our goal for this year, to find the money for the church: tuck-pointing, steeples to be finished, and ground windows to be replaced.

Now we may need a crypt for our deceased and beloved Bishop Karol Slivovsky. The parish is in the process of examining records and witnesses for candidates for sainthood. The Holy Father has asked for this from the Russian church, and with haste while there are eyewitnesses able to tell their stories these many years later.

We decided on October 13, 2000 as the deadline for the monies to be raised. We need your prayers and your help. Foundations are out there. They have money set aside to give. They want applicants. We have to find them. We have three volunteer grant writers. We have a book with Foundations in your area. Please consider assisting us. Usually it may be a phone call to the contact person or an introductory letter, which we will generate for you, maybe a proposal, which we already have done with architectural work completed. Then we wait and see and pray. We have someone available to attend a meeting in your area if requested.

Father Effing told me they had several months where the donations were so low the priests had to cut back on their own nutrition needs to meet their payroll because the families were counting on the income. If any one could send regular monthly donations it would help over the rough times

**Thank you,
God love you and your families,
Sandra and Dave Sonnen**

News Notes

by Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.

- The large new window frames were placed in our church during January while I was in America. How wonderful it was to come home to a warmer, brighter, more promising home. The first stained glass window has also arrived in a crate from Brest, Byelorussia—The Annunciation Window. We expect it will be in place for the 2000th anniversary of the Annunciation, March 25, 2000. Four more frames are in place, and they will be the next to receive their glass: St Joseph, St David (Tree of Jesse), Sorrowful Mother, and Pieta. Meanwhile Andre Udovichenko, who is in charge of our building renovation, is planning to replace all the old window frames during the month of May. It will again be a month of dust, mess, and extra work, but well worth it. We love the frames that we purchased from Sussman's in New York.



The gaping hole where the new window of the Annunciation will be placed.

- According to the new law about religion, our parish had to be re-registered as a religious corporation before January 1, but the Religion Department of the territory had a big problem about the re-registration of one of the Orthodox

parishes—a fight between two groups of parishioners both of whom claimed to be the true parishioners with a right to register. Sorting it out took much time for the Religion Department, so re-registrations are behind schedule. They said that we should not worry, because we cooperated in the process very well, and all our documents are in order. It should be just a matter of time. Meanwhile, both Fr Dan and I had to leave the country and get new visas because the parish was not re-registered yet.

- In January I visited several of our sister parishes while I was in the States for my medical check-up. The first weekend I was at Transfiguration Parish in Pittsford NY, a sister parish to Transfiguration Parish in Blagoveschensk. It is a very dynamic new parish which has really gone all out to get a physical plant set up. They now have a beautiful church and other buildings, and they still took time and energy to help their also-fledgling parish in Russia. They purchased seating for the Russian parish, helped pay for the altar, installed a new furnace and a new heating system. All this while they were doing their own! The parish, besides being new is also very young. We'd like to help them, too, and the best I could do was to tell them of my five seminarians, and say that I hoped when I see them again in a couple of years that they would have five seminarians, too!

Then I was at Coronation of Mary Parish in Grandview MO, which is a sister parish to our Most Holy Mother of God Parish in Vladivostok. They've had more of a financial struggle these past years with the changing demographics of their parish, but they have also had an energetic program to help us. They've had bake sales and toy sales and special collections. Here again I challenged them to have five seminarians by the next time I come. I still think that there is nothing to it but to do it.

Finally I visited St Philip Benizi Parish in Oregon City, Oregon. They are the sister parish of our Romanovka parish of the Holy Trinity. This is a smaller parish, but very vigorous. Their collection for Romanovka while I was there was much larger than their usual Sunday collection. The parish is considering how they can help us with our shipping needs, since they are on the Pacific coast.

My thanks to all three parishes for their hospitality and for their donations to our work.

When I flew from Seoul to Chicago, I had a free ticket which was sent to me by one of our benefactors who works for United Airlines. It was a standby ticket, but at the ticket counter in Seoul, they upgraded me to business class! Thanks to the ticketing supervisor I had a very comfortable flight.

- Thanks to Fr McGuire's Mission Share of Kentucky we have funding to buy a parish apartment in Ussurisk. The city is near the Chinese border and so it is a major transportation center between Russia and China. It is the second largest city in our state, but we are just starting the parish there because we had to start the parishes further away from us first—in emergency Ussurisk people could come to Vladivostok. We've had the first two meetings and the first mass there. There are ten

Catholic families that we have found so far with which to begin the parish.



Some of the attendees at the first mass in Ussurisk, February 6, 2000.

But an interesting thing happened in late February. One of the Lutherans from Ussurisk called me to ask for an appointment. When he came on Thursday, he came with his pastor. They said that they and 18 other Lutherans want to become Catholics! The pastor had studied in Rome at the Lateran University and is a Russian citizen. His parents have themselves become Catholics, and now he has decided. Most of his parishioners were baptised earlier as Orthodox, so technically, if they become Catholics they will belong to the Eastern Rite.

This should speed the development of the parish in Ussurisk for which I have proposed the name "Nativity" in honor of the 2000th birthday of Jesus when the parish is being founded, and in honor of Nativity of Our Lord Parish in St Paul, MN, which has been our most active sister parish for many years already. Among the former Lutherans there is already a choir director and an organist. The Office to Aid the Church in Eastern Europe in Washington has offered to buy a keyboard/organ for the parish. With your prayers and God willing, the parish will develop quickly.



Is this the historic church in Ussurisk? The address is correct, based on archival documents. It is certainly not a normal house. The building does not match the foundation on which it sits.

- As our representatives have started to work in cooperation with the police and prison administrations for the benefit of women prisoners and ex-prisoners, we also receive letters from Catholics in men's prisons begging us for help. The overcrowding rate is high, and the level of disease is also high, but prisons are woefully underfunded, so that it is difficult to maintain good, professional staffs. We are looking to see what we can do for the men.

- One of our grandest parishioners has died. I heard her confession before I left Russia, and Fr Dan gave her viaticum, the Apostolic Pardon for the Dying, and the Sacrament of the Sick. I used the word "grandest", because that is the only way to describe Yadviga Frantsevna Zelinsky. She was born in Vladivostok 80 years ago, and baptized and received her first Holy Communion in our cathedral from the hand of the future Bishop Slivovsky. Her brother who was one of the bishop's last altar servers and who is sitting with the bishop in the famous photograph, was killed by Stalin, but she kept her Catholic faith in spite of the threat. When it was possible again to open the parish, she was one of the first members. Since she spoke Polish and was a native parishioner, she was the "coordinator" of all our most elderly parishioners, keeping them all informed by phone and letter of parish happenings. It was she that we always asked to greet the newly baptised and welcome them to the parish in the name of all the parishioners. She was always a source of counsel to us in matters relating to the elderly, in matters relating to the early history of the parish, and in matters concerning the memory and prayers for those who died during the Repression. We will miss her wisdom, counsel, and energy very much. She died of cancer, after being hospitalized several months. She was so beloved that other parishioners kept a round the clock vigil with her. The mere mention of her deceased brother always brought tears to her eyes. I can't help but think that he came to greet her with the Lord at her death. See an article about her on page 5.

- Flowers are expensive in Russia, so Fr Dan wanted to try to grow his own for Easter. His cousin John and Bernadette Maurer of Arlington VA bought 120 tulip bulbs, and Fr Dan and friends potted them and place them in the attic of the church where it is cold because the ceiling and roof are not insulated as yet. We are waiting for an Easter harvest.



Fr Dan and Tatyana Vladimirovna working with the tulips.

- February 16 was the first mass in the new parish of the Visitation in Lesozovodsk. It was held in the gym of the local school, but the weather was poor so attendance was small. Members of the Blind Persons Association attended the mass, too, even though they are Orthodox. They live close by, and our mass and preaching are in Russian. They cannot understand the service at the Orthodox church because it is in Old Slavonic, and the Orthodox church is high on a slippery hill, so they are afraid to walk to church. While I was in Lesozovodsk I accompanied the parish Trustee Vladimir Pisorenko to make a gift of a new TV set from CARITAS to the children at the local orphanage.



Some of those who attended the first mass in Lesozovodsk.

Mr and Mrs Pisarenko with children at the Lesozovodsk Children's Home.



**Remember
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How to Communicate with Us

In Russia:

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

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

E-mail: myron@eastnet.febras.ru

daniel@eastnet.febras.ru

CARITAS@mail.primorye.ru

Russian language:

World Wide Web: <http://www.catholic.ru>

Please do **not** send any **donations** of any kind directly to Russia. For donation information, see below.

Letters without donations can be sent to:

Most Holy Mother of God Catholic Parish

Volodarskovo 22

690001 Vladivostok RUSSIA

In America:

Phone: (651)690-5139

FAX: (651)690-5139

E-mail: RussianMission@juno.com

English language:

World Wide Web: <http://www.vladmission.org>

Donations of money should be sent to:

Mary Mother of God Mission Society

1854 Jefferson St

St Paul MN 55105-1662

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

Donations in kind. If you have items that you think we can use, please contact Mrs Sandra Sonnen at the Mission Office in St Paul giving a complete list of items. If we accept your offer, you will need official inventory information from her, too, for Russian Customs.

Our parishioner Marina Ivannikova from the Parish of Our Lady of the Pacific in Nakhodka works with children from several different children's homes and orphanages.



Yadviga Frantsevna Zelinsky 1917-2000

By Miroslava Efimova and Fr Myron Effing, C.J.D.

Yadviga Frantsevna Zelinsky's fate was like that of many who were born in 1917. Her father Francis Xavier Zelinsky was the stationmaster of the Ugolnaya Railway Station not far from Vladivostok, Catholic and Polish. Her mother Casimira Vladislavna Maychrovskaya was raised in the Catholic faith, too, so Yadviga was baptised in the Catholic Parish of the Most Holy Mother of God in Vladivostok, as were her older brother and sister. As a child she was a member of the parish Scouting troop and her family was very involved in parish activities. But then Communism came to Vladivostok. She often cried for her brother, Stanislaus, who was one of Stalin's victims. "Why did they want to kill a handsome, bright, active young man?" she often remarked. Even in the darkest moments of totalitarian atheism she kept the love of God in her heart

In 1991 Yadviga was already 74 years old, but she always took her daily walk and swim in Amursky Bay. In 1991 great changes happened in our country, she felt the desire to spend the rest of her years on the rebirth of the Catholic parish, on the return of the parish church, and on the cleansing of the reputations of those who were killed during the years of repression, even though they were not guilty. Her energy became an example for others.

The most difficult task, it seems, was the creation of a monument to the victims of the Stalin repression. Finally the directors and organizer of Memorial—the all-Russian organization which worked toward rehabilitation of victims—were given a place in the woods in the Second River area where the mass gravesite of those liquidated is located, where possibly her brother was buried. They placed there a large stone with a marble tablet, and often visited the site realizing that those unceremoniously buried there deserved a better gravestone. Yadviga and others began collecting funds for a new monument. There was disagreement on just what form the monument should have, but Yadviga proposed that it should be a cross. Funds were not sufficient, but eventually the memorial cross was dedicated. Two priests blessed the monument, Fr Myron, our Catholic pastor, and Fr Valentine, the Orthodox pastor of Our Lady's Protection Parish. Yadviga's dreams had been greater—she wanted to build a memorial walkway, but all the elderly could achieve was a flower bed around the cross. She was ecstatic when she learned that another elderly parishioner whom she remembered from their youth still had a picture of her brother serving as an altar boy near Bishop Slivovsky.

We want to remember another of Yadviga's good deeds. She wanted to found a Polish cultural society. When she was a child several thousand Poles lived in Vladivostok. After Poland received independence and especially after the Soviet power was established here in Primorye almost all the



Yadviga Frantsevna (right) near the monument in the woods.

Poles left the Soviet Union. Among those who remained, many were repressed or destroyed as Polish spies. When the parish was reborn, Yadviga invited those parishioners of Polish heritage to gather in a society which became "Gmina", the officially incorporated new Polish cultural society. The little organization grew and Yadviga was always from the beginning headed the list of founders.

Yadviga was among the first parishioners of the reborn parish. Here is how Andre Popok, the second founder of the parish remembers it: "Before Fr Myron came in 1991 our parish was a kind of club. Our meetings were held in the Territorial Center of People's Culture. We read the sacred scriptures, planned our work, and dreamed of the future. The soul of our group was, of course, Yadviga Frantsevna."

Naturally everyone who knew her carries fond memories. Malvina Stanislavna remembers, "I heard an ad on the radio that a Catholic parish was forming, and so I came. I immediately got acquainted with Yadviga. There were only several persons at the first meeting, but the number grew, but many had never been baptised, so Yadviga became godmother for them all. She always treated me like her daughter. When my son was sick she paid me a lot of attention which especially meant a lot to me when my son died. She often telephoned, and I visited her every week, but even in her sickness she never uttered a word that things were difficult for her."

Nellie Artyomovna expresses it thus: "I got acquainted with Yadviga at the first mass which was held on the street in front of the church on November 13, 1991. It was obvious that this

was a wonderful woman. She was a strength and support for me. She dreamed that they would return the church to us, and she did a lot to make it happen. She used to tell us how the church looked before it was closed, and we all listened attentively."

"The church brought us together," says Alla Daniilovna. "As a child I often encountered a lovely, stately lady who lived in the house parallel with ours on our street, but I didn't know her name. I didn't even imagine that fate would bring us together—She became my godmother! For eight years I felt her concern and attention."

Anastacia Lionidovna calls Yadviga "a multifaceted and interesting person, and all our parish relationships are somehow connected with her. She was one of the first who responded to the ads about those interested in the Catholic faith, and from the summer of 1990 all the affairs of the parish were her concern. It seems to me that she was a real Christian her whole life, so she preserved the memory of the parish history all through the repression. She said she couldn't die until she had taken care of the re-establishment of the parish and the proper placement of a monument to those who were killed unjustly."

"My first meeting the Yadviga was one of the important moments of my life," recalls Yelena Andreevna. "In spite of her age she became an example of a noble life, of faith in God, of love of the Church, and charity to people. I will always remember the moment in 1993 when Yadviga and Malvina, with tears in their eyes, together carried the statue



Yadviga Frantsevna and Malvina Stanislavna had the honor to carry the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary into the old church building on October 3, 1993. The event felt like the Old Testament crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land with the Ark of the Covenant. The church was returned to the parish on January 1, 1994.

of Mary in procession into the church. During this year and a half when Yadviga was confined to bed her thought and prayers were always with us, and after every Sunday Mass she awaited my phone call so that I could tell her all about it in great detail. She always answered, 'Thank you—today I was in church.' She never spoke about her burdensome illness. I respect her wisdom, her love of life, and her hope to find health, her unusual curiosity about everything around

her, and her humility before God. Once I was telling her about the recent funeral of a parishioner, but I thought she fell asleep, so I quit talking. She right away opened her eyes and asked me to continue. I knew she was relishing her last moments with us parishioners."

Yadviga was very grateful to Fr Myron that he had travelled many days to bring the last sacraments to her sister, Sophia, in faraway Amursky Oblast. Thus Yadviga was the last remaining member of her family, but she had the joy to see her grandchildren baptised into the Catholic faith. She died after receiving the Holy Anointing and Viaticum from Fr Daniel. Her funeral was held on January 28, 2000. She left us and all her earthly concerns because God called her, but not before the dreams of her years were fulfilled—the Parish of the Most Holy Mother of God has been reborn, the parish again lives in its own church, and every year there is a special mass in the church for all those who were killed without the sacraments, a fitting memorial which the Lord himself gave us. Perhaps some of our parishioners will soon be canonized saints, which will give them a memorial in the universal calendar of the church. The greatest joy for Yadviga was to see that the parish has a future, that there are new members every year, especially children and young people. A great joy was still waiting for her—her reunion with her brother in the heavenly kingdom.



The rock pit where "enemies of the people" were collected for shooting during the Stalinist reign of terror. It is near the mass gravesite just outside of Vladivostok. How many Catholics lost their lives here is not known.

The Catholic Martyrs of Vladivostok

*by Miroslava Igorevna Efimov
Archivist of the Catholic Parish
of the Most Holy Mother of God
tr V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D.*

Father George Yerkevich was born on April 5, 1884, in the settlement "Timkovich" in the Minsk governorship. In 1910 when he finished the major seminary in St Petersburg he was sent as vicar pastor to Krasnoyarsk. In 1912 he was transferred to Khabarovsk to serve as the chaplain for the Khabarovsk cadet corps and as priest for the Khabarovsk Roman Catholic parish, and also became the catechists for the women's high school and college. He also took care of the Roman Catholic parish in Nikolaevsk-na-Amure. In 1923 he was transferred to Vladivostok as vicar for the Parish of the Most Holy Mother of God. When the Vladivostok Bishop Karol Slivovsky became ill and was no longer able to take care of the cathedral, Father Yerkevich became the pastor. On December 1, 1931, Father Yerkevich was arrested, and convicted of a violation of Criminal Codex #58-6 on February 6, 1932, and was imprisoned in the Siberian concentration camp for a term of 10 years beginning from December 1, 1931. He had been betrayed by a neighbor who claimed he had foreign currency, which would not be surprising since the currency in Manchuria, where the Vladivostok Seminary of St Vincent de Paul was located, was Mexican silver dollars. We have only passing witness of his further fate from unofficial sources, that in March of 1935 he was still in the camp at Railway Station Yaya in Kemerovky state.

After the arrest of Father Yerkevich and the death of Bishop Karol Slivovsky in 1933 the Vladivostok Catholic parish was tried by every type of forceful government pressure to 1935. The existence of the "headless" parish became impossible, and it was officially liquidated. Then the government tried to get rid of "unreliable" Catholics who continued to believe in God, prayed in their homes, and sometimes gathered together. This served as an excuse for their arrest in 1937. Those arrested were Martin Petrovich Malinevsky, Sigyzmund Vladislavovich Bezhinsky, Jan Jeronimovich Strudzinsky, Anton Ivanovich Gerasimuk, and Valerian Antonovich Gerasimuk.

Martin Petrovich Malinevsky was the acting head of the Catholic community at the time when the parish was left without ordained ministers. They continued to pray in the cathedral, but soon this became impossible because of the huge taxes which the community could not pay, and the church was taken from the community, although the official documents say that the building was "abandoned". It was supposedly given over for free use to the state archive bureau, but the archival documents were transferred to the church only in the 1940's.

Jan Jeronimovich Strudzinsky was already an older man, already 59 years old. He worked as a guard at the dormitory of the Japanese consulate in Vladivostok. Naturally he was

accused of being part of the special forces of Japan, and that he, fulfilling the assignment given him by the Japanese, had formed a spy ring in the Japanese residence from those Poles of a nationalistic bent.

Sigyzmund Vladislavovich Bezhinsky who was born in 1906 had a large family—eight children of which six survived. His wife, Sophia Michailovna Bezhinsky, is still alive today and is a member of the newly refounded Parish of the Most Holy Mother of God. Sigyzmund was arrested the first time already in 1932 because they found that he had some foreign currency, but in ten days he was allowed to return to his large family. Before his second arrest he worked as vice principal of the musical college.

Anton Ivanovich Gerasimuk was about 47 years old and a musician, having worked many years as the choirmaster of the orchestra of the factory Dalzavod. He and his wife Valeria Gerasimuk were committed Catholics. After the church was closed their acquaintances from the parish gathered in their apartment to pray. That was sufficient to accuse Anton of forming a "counterrevolutionary nationalistic organization."

The terrible fate of his father was shared by Anton's son, Valerian Antonovich Gerasimuk who was only 23 years old and had a wife and a year-old daughter. Valerian worked as a chauffeur for the military commerce organization, and was an accomplished musician playing for the orchestra of Club "Ilich".

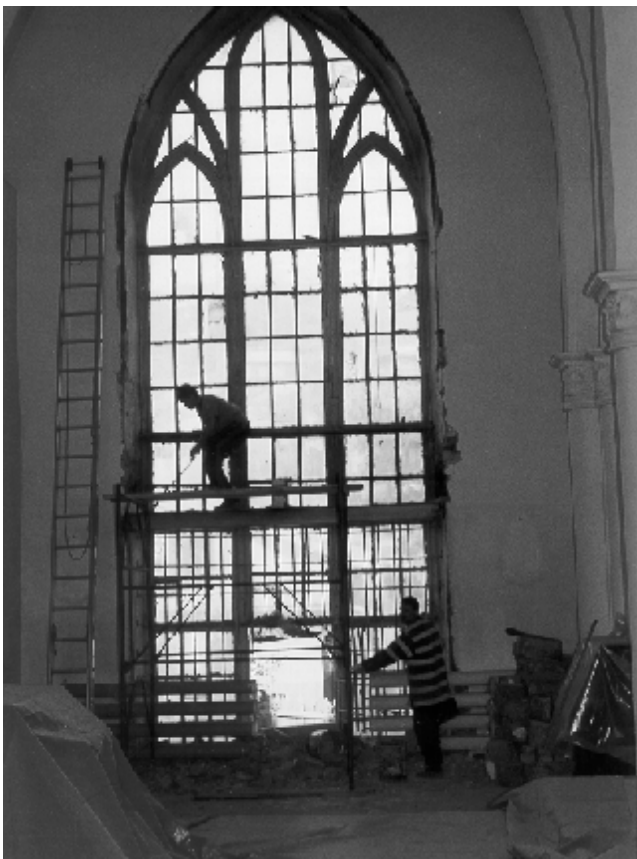
By a decision of the judge of the NKVD of the USSR of December 30, 1937, Martin Petrovich Malinevsky, Sigyzmund Vladislavovich Bezhinsky, Jan Jeronimovich Strudzinsky, Anton Ivanovich Gerasimuk, and Valerian Antonovich Gerasimuk were sentenced to capital punishment. The sentence was carried out in Vladivostok on February 3, 1938. In 1958-9, by a request of the relatives that the case be reviewed, it was determined that, "The Primorsky State Administration of the NKVD had no material evidence of criminal activities of the above named, and that there was no evidence of their participation in foreign spying. There is no evidence that Father Yerkevich organized a counterrevolutionary nationalistic organization." By a decision of the Military Court TOF of July 30, 1959, the case was closed for lack of evidence of criminality.

[The above materials are from M. I. Efimov and E.N. Chornolutsky "The Vladivostok Catholic Parish Under Pressure from the Soviet Antireligious Politics", from the book *Questions about the Social Democratic History of the Far East*, Russian Academy of Science, 1999.]

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Last look at the 70 year old, uncared-for window and frame as it was being removed by our workmen.

Baptism in the school room in Arsenyev for the Parish of the Annunciation. Roman Kriborug and Ludmila Babak were baptised, and Natalya Friedberg entered the Catholic Church. January 2, 2000—the parish Christmas Mass.

