



Vladivostok Sunrise Russia Mission



Mary Mother of God Mission Society: Reviving the Roman Catholic Church in Eastern Russia
Issue Number One Hundred Thirteen September 1, 2013

Lesozavodsk Kids’ Retreat

By Chris Reuther, FOCUS

This year thirteen Americans—myself included—joined Sister Stella, Sister Catherine and two translators to host a weeklong, faith based summer program for the children around Visitation Parish in Lesozavodsk. This area is made up of primarily small apartments and many of the children come from broken families. Every year these kids look forward to the FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) team’s arrival. This year 26 boys and 10 girls took part in the camp.

From day one the boys were excited to go outside (even in the rain) and play sports while the girls enjoyed numerous crafts inside. Organized activities are uncommon during the rest of the year, so this week of organized sports and crafts were a real treat for the local children. In addition, we started and ended each day with singing and some talks about our faith. Each of the FOCUS members from America gave a talk. We were also blessed to have Father Steve Bauer from Chicago on the trip with us. He offered a great deal of guidance for the campers and taught them important things about being Catholic. Some of the children are Orthodox, but most have no religion outside of the camp, so they absorbed our information like sponges. Father Steve was also able to serve the team by saying Mass each day after camp and hearing Confessions.

One of the greatest things the kids need is simply love. Sometimes this love came in the form of hugs at the beginning and end of the day; other times we showed love by just sitting with or playing sports with them. Often, especially at the beginning of the camp, we had to show some tough love through discipline.

Putting the kids on our shoulders became a major way the men of the group spread love to the kids. This started with an arbitrary shoulder ride given by TJ to one small boy. The next thing we knew all of the boys were asking for us to give them shoulder rides every time we walked more than 10 meters from the parish. Father Steve taught



Chris Reuther and friend in Lesozavodsk

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"Pick up your cross and follow me"

By Chris Reuther, FOCUS

One of the things the little kids (and some of the not so little kids) really liked was having the male team members put them up on our shoulders. This turned into quite the experience throughout the week with a lot of highs and lows to it.

We obviously enjoyed serving the kids. Putting them up on our shoulders was a fun way to interact with them and let them have some fun. All the kids were asking us to do it. We were often happy to comply because it brought so much joy to the kids.

As the week went on they learned the English way to ask us was to say, "Sit down please." I later learned that they didn't even know that "please" was just the proper manners, but thought it was part of the request. Anyway all through the week the guys couldn't go more than a few minutes outside without a small Russian hand tapping us and hearing "sit down please."

This soon became more than a fun activity for the kids. While the kids were enjoying rides, the team gained new crosses to bear. First, after a day or two of carrying kids around on our shoulders, we were all a little sore. It was really hard to say no to the kids, and they were really persistent, but our shoulders got tired. Secondly, as the boys realized the shoulder rides were going to come to an end as soon as camp was over, they began to fight over our shoulders. Usually this was no big deal, but occasionally they boys would start pushing and shoving over a simple shoulder ride. Boys will be boys, right?

These challenges actually gave us a new perspective on things. The fact that the boys were so persistent in their asking and were fighting over us shows how much of an influence we could have on them. It also shows, unfortunately, how few of them have a strong male presence in their lives. Sister Stella pointed out that where we were was a poorer neighborhood with a lot of one bedroom apartments and very broken family situations. We understood that the kids really craved our attention not only because we were Americans, but because we were going to give them lots of attention.

As for the shoulder pain, both Brian and I mentioned the same thing one night at our debriefing: it was the cross that we had been asked to take up. Jesus had to carry His literal cross on His shoulders for quite a ways with no energy, food, or sleep. The pain in his shoulders must have been excruciating. Not to say that the children themselves were burdens to us, but we certainly felt the weight in our shoulders. Though not as heavy as Jesus's cross, the kids on our shoulders brought us a little bit closer to Christ's Passion as we felt the strain on our muscles. This mirroring of the Passion gave the men of the team strength to carry one more kid. Though thinking of our Lord carrying His cross did not relieve the pain in our backs and shoulders, it did give us the mental drive to say, "Yea, I'll do it for the kids."

Carrying the kids was a defining point of everyday for the male team members. We now all have stronger muscles, yet we have also grown spiritually from the experience. And at the end of the day, seeing the joy on the kids' faces as we agreed to pick them up onto our shoulders was worth every second of struggling we may have had.

Troy Wallace and Andrew on the Cross



the kids the English phrase “sit down.” They soon started to use this as a request for shoulder rides running up to an unsuspecting counselor begging, “Sit down, please! Sitdown, please!” It became pretty strenuous, but seeing how happy the young boys and girls were made it all worthwhile.

Almost immediately the kids of the camp began to return the love to us. Many of the girls were excited to share their crafts (bracelets and crosses) with the American women. Some even worked on art at home and brought it in to give as gifts. All of the kids were very patient and loving with us as we tried to learn a little bit of Russian. They were pretty good teachers too!

It was amazing to see how far along a little love and discipline carried these kids. While some seemed unchanged by the camp, many admitted to learning something from the FOCUS team; additionally, there was a visible difference in most of the campers by the end of the week. Unlike the first day, the children were quiet, attentive, and excited to sing on the very last day. Taking it to an even larger scale, the sisters and parishioners noted that every year the camp the kids seem to grow into better young people and have better manners and behavior around the neighborhood.

The final day was the epitome of bittersweet. We all took a walk to the river for swimming, sports, and the old American pastime of making S’mores over a campfire. Even though it was the last day, many of us made new connections with the kids or strengthened the connections we had made all week. When the day finally drew to a close many of the kids were reluctant to leave. Some tears were shed as we hugged the kids goodbye and prayed that we had made some impact on their lives. I am confident that I speak for the whole FOCUS team when I say that the camp changed not only the lives of those children, but changed our lives as well.



FOCUS and kids at the retreat in Lesozavodsk

Remember
“Mary Mother of God Mission Society”
in your will.



The 17th Annual Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference

*By Bro Bede Paquingan, C.J.D. and Emily Stowers,
 FOCUS*

The FOCUS team was immensely blessed to have been able to witness and participate in this year’s Far East Catholic Youth Conference. Around forty people were present, ourselves included, representing six different countries! Some people had traveled for as many as five days by train to attend the conference, and nevertheless arrived with boundless energy and happiness to share.

The 17th Annual Far Eastern Catholic Youth Conference was held in Nakhodka, Russia, from July 28 to August 4, 2013. The theme was: “The Task of the Church among the Nations.” Participants were from United States, Indonesia, Philippines, India, Spain, and Russia, of course! The whole week was packed with learning and activities, sharing our countries’ church histories and practices. It was a time of fellowship among young Catholics from different countries. Father John Gibbons, a Franciscan Friar who is pastor in Arsenyev, Russia, told me, “It is nice to share with the Russians our Church histories and practices, because here we are kind of a small group, so they will feel that they have brothers and sisters in the other side of the world. Somewhere out there they’re not alone.”

Despite the language barriers, every participant felt the universality of our Catholic faith during Mass and prayers together. Even if only half of a Mass was said in a language I understood, I still knew what parts of the Mass we were at. The great thing is that it was the exact same Mass and the exact same Christ in the Eucharist no matter where on Earth we are or what language we are speaking. This brought us all together in a special way. Sr. Stella, Sr. Catherine, Father John and Victor worked overtime to translate presentations and discussions, dissolving the language barrier enough for all of us to share our hearts with one another.



There was time for the beach between rains.

Throughout the week, we had speakers come and share with us about their lives, and their efforts to forge forward in the faith despite difficulties. A few of the brothers shared about the religious history of their respective countries, and we were all able to better understand the beauty of our universal faith's intertwined past. Father Myron came to the conference one day to share his story.

For me, the highlight of the week was the loving joy of each participant. Despite our *extremely* limited knowledge of the Russian language, we were showered in love and dissolved countless times into laughter over wordless jokes. As a new Catholic myself, I enjoyed seeing for the first time Catholics from all corners of the world. Many of the young adults present live in places where Mass is not readily available as it is in the United States, but rather than being discouraged, many of them displayed a burning desire for knowledge of God and His love.

For many of them, this is their fourth or fifth year attending the conference; for others, it was their first year, and one of the first times they've had the opportunity to engage with other young Catholics. But for *all* of us, the conference in Nakhodka was a blessing and we hope that in the years to come, more and more people are able to come together to learn, make friends, and grow closer to Christ.

All in all, I can say that the whole conference was a success--we deepened our relationship with the Lord, increased our learning, made new friends, and felt deep connections with other Catholics of other countries, which makes for great memories.



Presenting results

Language Problems in Russia?

By Missy Brassie

I was asked multiple times before I left for Russia how I would communicate with those that I met, or if I had learned any Russian. Nyet! (Nope!) I picked up a few essential words, like hello, goodbye, yes, no, please and thank you, and maybe a smattering of other small things. But for anything more, hand gestures or a translator would have to do. And just as I suspected, I discovered that friendship transcends language.

We became acquainted with each other often without words, using a different language: the language of the heart. Over time, we learned each other's names and some small details about each other's lives, mostly, I'll admit, through the broken English conversations the Russians were brave enough to have with us. But without common speech, we had to look at each other with a deeper gaze, and come to know each other through actions and through our character. You see, practicing what you preach becomes a whole lot more important when you can't preach at all! We couldn't tell our new Russian companions about our faith in Jesus Christ; we had to demonstrate it. We couldn't tell them about who we were as people; we had to show them with our lives!

I didn't always need to understand what one of the girls was saying because she often came up to just give me a hug or a smile. When one of the Russian guys picked a flower for one of the American girls that had been sick, no words were needed. Pats on the back, smiles, handshakes, hugs, thumbs up...these visible signs of care, affirmation, and love spoke louder than any bilingual conversation could have. I learned a valuable lesson in living a life worthy of observation, one that demonstrates who I am as a person, and as a disciple of Jesus Christ. This experience has prompted deeper reflection on how I can put these lessons into practice.

By the end of the week, the thirty of us exchanged heartfelt goodbyes and tight hugs as we parted ways, international friendships sealed by shared experience of faith and fellowship. I left the Far East amazed at how closely connected I felt with these Russian brothers and sisters in Christ and how much I enjoyed their company, despite language barriers. Whether I'll ever see them again, I don't know, but I am grateful in a new way for Facebook, which will keep us connected...and for the "translate" button!

News Notes

by V Rev Myron Effing, C.J.D

- The charitable corporation we founded in Russia to do the same work as the St Vincent de Paul Society is called “**Charitable Fund FOMIP**” in Russian. “FOMIP” means “Fund for the Poorest”. FOMIP has been very busy lately helping the Sisters of Charity of St Anne with their apostolate with children in Romanova. FOMIP has been providing visa support for the sisters, and licensing support for their work. Why wasn’t FOMIP just called “The St Vincent de Paul Society”?— because at the time of its founding, naming it after a saint would have forced it into another category of Russian corporations which are very much more regulated—a religious corporation. The bureaucratic overload would have made it impossible to be effective in working for the poor.



- Catherine and Bennett Egan from Lexington, SC were the heroes for taking care of our stand at the **Atlanta Eucharistic Congress** in June after a family emergency kept the adults family members from attending. The display is well done, and there were lots of visitors. Way to be young missionaries, Catherine and Bennett!

- The new **Women’s Support Center done on Russian Island**, is finally nearing completion at the new Far Eastern Federal University, which is expecting up to 100,000 students from many countries of the world. Since maybe half of the students will be women, so can see how important the Center will be. And at the same time the Sisters in Jesus the Lord will be operating the Newman Center there and a chapel for Catholic students. We are excited about the possibilities. Meanwhile we have to

install a new electric cable to the building soon, and get the heating and water and sewage systems up and running normally before winter sets in. The Center will be more accessible now, not only because of the new beautiful bridge across the Strait of Peter the Great, but also because there is now a city bus which crosses the bridge to the university, and passes about 5 blocks from us. The ticket on bus “15k” will be 17 rubles (\$0.51).

- We are expecting a group of experts from “**Friends of the Missions, Inc.**” in September to complete the repair of one of the areas of the Sisters in Jesus the Lord’s convent on Russian Island. Frankly, not only the sisters, but also the parish and the deanery really need this new facility. There will be room for retreats and meeting facilities, as well as work with the new university’s students and the new Women’s Support Center.

- The biggest event coming up is the **ordination to the priesthood of our Deacon Inosensius Hetu, CJD**. The ceremony is scheduled for August 15 in Surabaya, Indonesia, and then his First Mass in his home parish on Flores Island (which Pope Benedict called “a second Ireland” because of the number of vocations it has produced and is still producing!) Fr Daniel Maurer will represent us there. Meanwhile here are some words that Deacon Inosensius sent me recently: “Over the last few months, I have been trying to be a witness of Christ not only reading and preaching the Gospel, distributing communion, doing my daily Christian prayer but also walking around the orphanage and the poor. I don’t have material things to give them, but I have something which belongs to Christ: He gives me ‘spirit’ when I was with them all. My presence is enough for them, and I try to hear what they want to say. Yes, many people want to speak and only a few people want to listen.” (Sounds like something Pope Francis would say, doesn’t it!)



- “Our Lady of Vladivostok” was selected for the patroness of our **seminary chapel in Surabaya**, Indonesia. A copy of the icon will hang below the Cross in the sanctuary of our rented facility. Brother Inosensius wants to promote devotion to her in Indonesia, and has already secured the imprimatur on the prayer in the Indonesian language from the Bishop of Surabaya.

- In June the Diocese of St Joseph in Irkutsk had a **conference for all the priests and religious** of the diocese. After the end of the conference, several priests and sisters decided to make a trip to see Lake Baikal, the largest freshwater lake in the world, as they hadn't seen it before. Unfortunately the driver lost control of the car on a bridge, and to avoid oncoming traffic they went off the road and hit an embankment. Thanks be to God no one was killed! Two people had no injuries, but several have broken bones, including our Sister Gloris of the Sisters of Mercy of St Anne. She had seven broken ribs. The airbags did not open. She is now back with us in Vladivostok, but some of the injured are just now leaving the hospital, six weeks later.



Sister Gloris Francis, SCSA

- While Brother Patrick Napal, C.J.D. was here for the summer, he took a special interest in working at the Hospice for the dying, going nearly every day to help at meal times, and to comfort those in pain and in need. He was instrumental in the baptism of two people who expressed their desire, including one he baptized himself,



Children and grandchildren of repressed victims attended the ceremony, many with tears as they remember the terror of their childhood.

as death was pretty immanent. Everyone there and here in the parish was sad to see Brother Patrick return home to prepare for this next year in the seminary. The staff at the Hospice expressed their gratitude for his help with this certificate.



Cossacks stand guard at the new memorial.

- August 14 was a special day for the people of Vladivostok when a memorial was finally dedicated to the thousands of people who were murdered as “Enemies of the People” during the Stalin Repressions. This memorial was built at the 14th Kilometer Cemetery over the mass burial site of many tons of bones that were dug up from the military reservation where these victims were shot as they stood over their open mass gravesite. The bones were removed from their original site due to the construction of the new Russian Island-DeFrieze Expressway. A total of nine memorials are planned, as the Terror was especially here in Vladivostok, which was the transition point for prisoners from the Transsiberian Railroad to ships going to the gulags in the North. We do not know if our martyrs are among those who bones are here, but surely there are many of our parishioners here.



How to Communicate with Us

Internet

Russian language: www.catholic.vladivostok.ru

English language: www.vladmission.org

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Vladivostok Sunrise gives you up to date information about the Church in Eastern Russia. Contact our office for your free bi-monthly copy.

Opportunities

♥ You can become a **Seminarian's Guardian Angel**.

Our seminarian numbers are growing! More are answering the call to become priests in the Order of Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord (CJD). Blessings from God! We need help to support them as we now must turn away new candidates due to lack of funds to provide for them all. Contact the mission office to get our new information booklet and meet our many seminarians.



♥ **Seminarians' bus** and van fundraising update. \$22,239 has been raised! \$6500 has enabled the seminarians to acquire the small van needed earlier this year, thanks to you. A 28 passenger used bus

is needed in order to transport the seminarians' growing numbers to and from school and to community charitable works they provide in the area. They need \$12,261 to reach their goal for the bus for the new school year. Can you help our seminarians get their bus? Please see our

website for more details and to track their progress!

www.vladmission.org



♥ The preparation and celebration of the birth of Jesus are manifested through our special thoughtfulness and service on behalf of others throughout this holy season. If you wish to help the children and families of our mission through a specific

program such as the Adopt-a-Birth or Guardian Angel programs or any of our building projects, we have several

fundraising projects you may wish to consider

participating in individually, as a family, apostolate, ministry or parish. Now is the time to begin planning.

Some ideas include

- ◆ Advent coin collection boxes to take home and fill as an individual or class project.
- ◆ Hanging ornaments we can create for you on a parish Christmas Giving tree that describes the needs of the orphans, the babies and women from the Women's Centers and the needs of our seminarians and sisters.
- ◆ Selling Russian icons and religious gifts at your parish or ministry dinner for Christmas giving.
- ◆ Christmas craft boutique or bake sale.

Small or large, your efforts will be a great blessing in bringing the light of Christ to the people of Russia. Please contact us for ideas and instructions.

♥ **Fr. Myron's 2013 USA mission preaching schedule.**

Fr. Myron is available for TV and radio interviews, and meeting with apostolate groups during the weekdays in the local areas. Please contact the mission office to schedule a visit with Fr. Myron. 209-408-0728,

usoffice@vladmission.org

Aug 31/Sept 1 Our Lady of Hope, Washington, IN

Sept 7/8 St. John, Loogootee, St. Joseph, Bramble IN

Sept 14/15 St. Ann and Holy Cross, Porterville, CA

Sept 21/22 Holdingford Area Catholic Community Parishes, Holdingford, MN

Sept 24 (Tues) St. John the Baptist, Hot Springs, AR

Sept 28/29 To be announced. Contact the mission office for location

♥ Thank you, **S.H.A.R.E.S.** card users! The mission received a quarterly earnings check for \$2,994.90 from your participation. You can pass FREE SHARES cards to your friends, family, co-workers and ministry members. Encourage them to present the card at Save Mart, Lucky's, FoodMaxx or SmartFoods grocery stores. The mission will receive 3% of their grocery bill. It costs you nothing! It's a great way to help. Call or email the mission office and let us know the number of cards needed. (Available in CA and NV only.)

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From the development desk...

Dear Friends,

Please meet the Mandrekin family. They are a family of 6 children, 2 sons and 4 daughters living in Nakhodka. In a country where families are traditionally made up of one child and a single parent, the Mandrekin family is nothing short of a miracle and great blessing for us all. Fr Sebastian, pastor of Our Lady of the Pacific Parish in Nakhodka, has made an urgent appeal on behalf of the Mandrekin children. The family is poor and being such a large one, the basic needs of the children cannot be met. The children need food, clothes and school supplies. You may directly sponsor one of the children through our **Guardian Angel Project**.

The needs of the Mandrekin children and others in the program can range from daily meals, medicines and surgery, clothes, and/or school supplies. Each Guardian Angel sponsor will receive a picture, personal and family profile, and needs of their child. Sponsors can receive updates on how their child is doing. Sponsor's donations go directly to caring for the needs of their child.

Currently, we have 62 children participating in the Guardian Angel Project. 38 children have sponsors providing from \$25 - \$100 each month for each child. 24

children are still waiting for help. Several sponsors are sponsoring multiple children.

Margarita Mandrekin has been blessed with a Guardian Angel Sponsor already. If you can be a Guardian Angel for Zachary, Bazhena, Louisa, Valentina, Elisha, or any of the 18 other children hopefully awaiting sponsors, please



contact the mission office. A portfolio of our children will be mailed to you so you may choose the child you wish to help. You will make a difference in a child's life. Thank you!

God bless you and your families. Sincerely,
Vicky Trevillyan Mission Desk 209-408-0728,
usoffice@vladmission.org