



*Holy Mother Mary
of Magadan
Pray for us.*



*Archdiocese of
Anchorage, Alaska*

MISSION TO MAGADAN

“Preaching the Gospel in Far East Russia”

Vol. 16 No. 1

January/February 2011

WELCOMING GOD’S CHILDREN AT CHRISTMAS

Each year, we wonder if the children will come for the “Catholic Christmas.” (In Russia, the Orthodox Christmas is celebrated on January 7th.) The children came in great numbers - over 250 in our little church to hear the Christmas story. Each child received candy, treats and a lovely soft toy. The kids were delighted. For many, there would be no gifts except what they receive at the Church of the Nativity of Jesus.

One child remains in our thoughts. We had given most of all our gifts away and had only a few bags of candy left. On December 26th in the late afternoon, Fr. Mike heard a small knock on the door. He opened the door and saw a little girl, with a torn and dirty green coat and beautiful dark eyes. She told Father Mike that her mom said he had gifts here for children. She seemed to expect a negative answer and to be pushed away.

Father Mike had one special gift just for her. He had saved a doll with knitted clothes that had been sent by one of the friends of Magadan. He had saved it after Christmas and wondered who it should belong to. He gave the young girl a bag of candy and she was astonished! When he showed her the doll, a flash of light came into her eyes and she repeatedly asked “Is this for me??” Christmas came alive in her face. This little girl looked around the Church and repeatedly



Father Mike distributes stuffed animals to the children. Each year, the parish gives the children the bears and animals sent from friends of Magadan. For many of the children, it will be the only toy they receive as a Christmas gift.

commented on the beauty of our church. One child’s surprise for Christmas showed Father Mike what it means to receive grace. Grace is undeserved and always a gift. Oh, Christmas joy is to know and receive gifts and the greatest of all: He who is our joy and life and savior.

Father Mike is on a sabbatical year of prayer for 2011. The Daughters of Charity continue their vital ministry work along with the Magadan staff and parishioners. The Bishop in Irkutsk will provide priests for the Mass while Father Mike is away. As he journeys around the world, will you continue to pray for Father Mike, for your Church’s ministry in Magadan and the people here in our little parish?

My dear friends,

I am letting my potato field rest - it has been seven years of great and abundant harvests. It is time for a Sabbath year. The ground has been blessed by the love and the work of our little Catholic community that plants and harvests for the parish and for the poor, but now it is time for a rest.

My bishop has given me permission to take a sabbatical year out of Magadan. It has been seventeen years of grace upon grace for me. Yes, there are storms and struggles but **not once did I doubt that I am here to pray and stay till my death.** So, why a sabbatical? I want more of the Lord. I want to prepare my heart and soul to be more for the Lord. To do that, I believe the Lord is giving me a year of prayer. Here in Magadan, I spend one day a week in prayer. I pray before the Blessed Sacrament daily. But there is difference when you immerse yourself in deep and extended times of prayer. This is my desire for this year.

Praise God there are priests willing to serve in Magadan in my absence. Our dear Daughters of Charity will carry on our mission of mercy. When I return in January, 2012, I will be ready for the next desire of my dear brother Jesus. Oh, my friends, He is such a Lord of kindness and mercy. I am so deeply thankful for this year of prayer. I know others more worthy and would probably benefit more than I. But He is kind to the poor and the lowly - to such sinners such as myself. I have nothing to do by praise Him and thank him.

I thank you as well. I promise with all my heart to pray for you and your needs in this year of prayer. On bended knees, I beg for your prayers so I don't waste a moment of this precious year of prayer. When you receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, please offer up one communion for me every so often. That way, we will then be in one communion in the Lord in this year of Prayer.

Praise to Jesus Christ, now and forever!!!!

In the hearts of Mary & Jesus,
Father Michael Shields



Father Michael Shields delivers the homily at the Church of the Nativity of Jesus. It was bittersweet for Father Mike as he prepares for a sabbatical year of prayer out of Magadan for 2011. He will return to Magadan and the Church of the Nativity in January 2012.

A SAD AND JOYOUS CHRISTMAS



Father Mike presides over the gravesite at Allosha's funeral. A brain tumor made Allosha think like a child. His child-like faith was inspirational to parishioners in Magadan.

I celebrated the life of one of God's little ones shortly after Christmas. Allosha died after a second struggle with a brain tumor. After his first surgery, he was like a child even though he was an adult. He came to us asking for a deep Catholic faith. He said, "I don't know all what you believe but I do know I want to receive the Eucharist because here I find Jesus."

Allosha's mother was hostile to our visits. Sometimes she literally slammed the door in our faces. We would pray at the door and eventually able to bring the Eucharist to Allosha. One day, she changed her attitude. We found Allosha on the floor because she couldn't pick him up. We brought a mattress for him to lie on the floor if he could not get up. She was moved by our compassion and help. Later, the mother began praying. It was amazing. She asked for God's help for her and her son.

Allosha died on December 26th. When we arrived, his mother collapsed in my arms and wept. We made the arrangements for our Allosha and had a simple funeral around the Christmas theme of the Word of God taking flesh and sharing in our death and promising His life.

This may seem like an odd Christmas greeting to our dear friends. The truth is in the manger, you can already see the Cross. In the birth of the Child, you can see our Savior who freed us from sin and death. He is born and because of this, the faith and baptism of Allosha, Allosha is born anew in Christ. A sad event can also be joyous.

We will visit Allosha's mom and little by little invite her to come to church. It may take some time, but caring for widows, orphans and mothers who have lost their sons is our Christian duty and privilege.

Mission to Magadan e-Newsletter

GO GREEN! The Mission to Magadan monthly e-mail newsletter allows you to receive updates delivered straight to your computer. You can subscribe by visiting www.archdioceseofanchorage.org/stewardship/magadan.htm or e-mail nfredrick@caa-ak.org. Let us know if you want to receive only the e-mail newsletter.

The Archdiocese of Anchorage provides communication and stewardship support for the Mission to Magadan. All financial gifts are processed through the Archdiocese of Anchorage to provide a safe and secure way to help support the Church's work in Far East Russia. Thank you for your support.

Your Legacy For Magadan

We celebrate your faithful prayers and support of the Church in Russia, but Magadan's many challenges will require on-going ministries. Will you consider helping the work of the Church of the Nativity of Jesus long into the future?

Remembering the Mission to Magadan in your will is one of many ways you can provide long-term ministries for the people of Siberia. If you have already planned a gift for Magadan, or are considering making a gift, please let us know. For additional information, contact your estate planning professional.

CHRISTMAS 2010 IN MAGADAN



Children from the parish act out the Christmas story for a large group of families who came to hear the story of Jesus. Each year, the play grows more popular with children around Magadan and more than 250 attended this year.



The survivors of repression have been given generous gifts this year from friends of the Mission to Magadan. Each was presented with a beautiful cross during the parish anniversary observances in November. For Christmas, each received a stuffed animal. Many of the repressed never had toys when they were young, so even in their old age, they were excited like children to receive this simple gift.



After the successful children's play, Sister Malgorzata and Sister Jean Marie Williams prepare the altar for Christmas Eve Mass.



The church was packed for the children's Christmas play. Children watch the young actors recreate the Christmas story, then enjoyed refreshments and gifts from the parish.



A survivor of repression inspects her new bear. Thanks to the generosity of our friends, there were enough stuffed animals for the elderly survivors. They were all delighted with the gifts!



The parish gathers for Christmas Eve Mass at the Church of the Nativity of Jesus. The official Christmas in Russia is Orthodox Christmas, celebrated January 7th. December 24th & 25th are regular work days in Russia but faithful Catholics filled the church for the Mass.

THANK YOU

Contribute online to the "Magadan Russian Mission" at www.archdioceseofanchorage.org/donate with a Visa or Mastercard or call the Anchorage Archdiocese (907) 297-7700. Send letters and packages directly to Magadan allowing at least eight weeks delivery for packages and two weeks for letters.

Please address mail to Sister Jean Marie Williams.

Declare each box's value as less than \$90 on U.S. Customs forms. Please send monetary contributions to the Mission to Magadan in Anchorage.

RUSSIA
685000 Magadan
Glavpochtant, Box 171
Sister Jean Marie Williams

Mission to Magadan
Archdiocese of Anchorage
225 Cordova Street
Anchorage, AK 99501

Mission to Magadan is a bimonthly newsletter from the Archdiocese of Anchorage. The Archbishop of Anchorage, in service to the Russian Bishop in Irkutsk, oversees and financially supports the Catholic missionary work of the Church of the Nativity in Magadan, Russia.

Newsletter Publisher:

Archdiocese of Anchorage Office of Stewardship and Development
Phone (907) 297-7700, Fax (907) 297-3885, Email magadan@caa-ak.org
Web site www.magadancatholic.org

Photos courtesy of Father Michael Shields or Sr. Jean Marie Williams unless otherwise noted.



Sisters Malgorzata, Marta, Jean Marie and Father Mike stand in the snow in front of the church before Christmas. Your generosity provides support for the many ministries of the parish – including heating the church through the cold Siberian winters! Thank you for your continuing support of the Church's ministry in Magadan.

facebook

Follow us on

Archdiocese of Anchorage
Mission to Magadan
225 Cordova Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Nonprofit Org.
U. S. Postage
P A I D
Permit No. 287
Anchorage, AK