



*Holy Mother Mary
of Magadan
Pray for us.*



*Archdiocese of
Anchorage, Alaska*

MISSION TO MAGADAN

“Preaching the Gospel in Far East Russia”

HOLY WEEK AT THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY OF JESUS



Father Rafal leads on Pussy Willow Sunday, which you may know as Palm Sunday. The pussy willows represent new life and are blessed and distributed to the people. It is traditional in northern parishes to use pussy willows on Palm Sunday because palm branches are unavailable or very expensive.



Father Rafal Brzuchanski washes the feet of one of the parishioners on Holy Thursday. Father Rafal is a Polish priest serving in Magadan for three months.



Usually, we set up the altar in the Martyrs Chapel, but the chapel is undergoing major renovation, so we set up in the Padre Pio room near the sanctuary. It turned out to be a good move, for there was lots of room for people to gather and pray.



Father Rafal lights the Paschal candle in front of the Church of the Nativity. Your continuing prayers are appreciated throughout the Easter season.

IS YOUR SUFFERING A MYSTERY?

In Part 1 of a 3-part series, longtime Magadan volunteer and supporter Peter Schafer shares his reflections on Suffering, Christ, and the Repressed.



Father Rafal had the opportunity to hear about the depth of the suffering in the work camps around Magadan. The survivors of repression meet regularly at the parish and receive a warm meal, good companionship and spiritual comfort.

As I sat in Magadan contemplating the large crucifix in the sanctuary, I thought that suffering is a wonderful mystery given to God's people. Unbelievers avoid it as much as possible and even believers sometimes have difficulty with it. In truth, I was having some difficulty with it myself. I was feeling a bit sorry for myself and asked the Lord how much more I would have to suffer. He did not answer with words but I felt a great grace come over me. I understood in a moment that suffering was as mysterious and as wonderful as God Himself. If God became man and suffered through His son Jesus, then if we willingly accept the suffering God gives us then we become closer to God. There is perhaps nothing more glorious that we can do on earth than to imitate Christ in His suffering.

My focus on suffering came about because this was my second trip to Magadan and I had suffered (or at least I felt I had) both times. In 2006, I developed abdominal edema and had to go to a Russian doctor for

relief. Now, I had vertigo caused by inner ear problems. During my first trip, I felt the presence of Jesus here in Magadan not only because of the great suffering that had occurred in the labor camps, but also the current suffering of the Repressed, the sick, the lonely, and the poor. I could see Jesus everywhere in Magadan and I felt close to Him here among His suffering people.

The survivors of repression deeply touched my heart, and inspired me to undertake a project to send crucifixes for the Repressed. The idea was to recognize the personal cross that each survivor endured during their time in the slave labor camps by giving each one a crucifix for their home. It was my hope and prayer that the Repressed could look at Jesus on the cross and identify their own suffering with His and that this bond of suffering with Jesus would give them some peace and tranquility in their lives.

In the July/August Mission to Magadan newsletter, read more about Mr. Schafer's reflection on suffering.

GOD PROVIDES PRIESTS FOR MAGADAN

Have you wondered how the Church of the Nativity of Jesus is celebrating the sacraments, rejoicing at Easter and continuing their vital ministries without their long-time pastor, Fr. Michael Shields? Father Mike is on sabbatical for 2011, taking time for prayer and spiritual renewal.

Father Jan Radon ministered to our parish from January to mid-March. You may be familiar with Fr Jan, who has spent time in Magadan. Fr. Jan is the associate pastor at St. Theresa of Liseux parish on the Kamchatka Peninsula about 600 miles east of Magadan. He arrived there three years ago after many years of ministry in the western Ukraine.

Father Rafal Brzuchanski followed Fr. Jan in March and will minister to the Church of the Nativity until



Father Jan gives ashes to a parishioner at the beginning of Lent. Our parish families are familiar with Father Jan, who has come to serve in Magadan in previous years.

mid-June when his visa ends. He is from Poland and served in L'viv, Ukraine for ten years at the diocesan seminary. Fr. Rafal served our parish for two months last summer where Fr. Michael was away, so he was familiar with our parish when he came in March. But the Magadan winter, with its snow, cold and high winds were a new experience for him.

We are grateful for God's grace in providing wonderful priests to serve our needs during this year. Thank you for your prayers for our mission here, and we appreciate

your continuing prayers that God will continue to provide all that we need so our parish and your church continues to serve the many needs of babies, children, youth and adults in Magadan.

YOU REMAIN IN FATHER MIKE'S PRAYERS

I am so thankful for this time of sabbatical. I spend my lunch hour each day praying in front of an abortion clinic to participate in the 40 Days For Life campaign. One day, a special moment came about. I was praying the rosary and a young woman came up to me and asked if she could tell me her story. Her name was Claudia and she had worked at this abortion clinic some years back. She started as a receptionist and then became a medical assistant. She helped with the abortions. She saw horrible things.

Eventually, Claudia began to drink. She was transferred to another clinic because of her drinking, but said to herself the money was worth it. But the burden was too great, her drinking increased and she was fired.

In telling her story, Claudia paused and gave a big smile. "You know," she said, "I became a Christian and have two beautiful children. I am so sorry and so thankful." She was so happy to tell me her story.

I went back to praying the rosary as I walked in front of the clinic. The sign I was holding says Pray to End Abortion. I think about the clinic workers that see our signs and prayers. I believe one day, like Claudia, they will see the terrible evil being done. Praise God for witnesses of faith like Claudia.

Father Michael Shields is the Pastor of the Church of the Nativity of Jesus in Magadan, Russia – and is a diocesan priest of the Archdiocese of Anchorage. He is spending 2011 on a sabbatical of prayer and will return to Magadan in January.

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 magadan@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.



The parish is awash in candlelight during Easter Vigil. Thanks to your faithful prayers and support, the Magadan parish has had continued presence of a priest during Father Mike's sabbatical. Thank you for your continuing support for the Mission to Magadan.

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 Father Michael Shields.

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.

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