



*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. 3

July/August 2011

## WHAT THE CHILDREN IN MAGADAN NEED

### Father Mike Joins Magadan’s Vacation Bible School

In the middle of my sabbatical year of prayer, I had to come back to Magadan to register my new passport. By the goodness and grace of God, it happened on one of the weeks that the parish was holding Vacation Bible School for children.

We try and limit our many Bible school sessions to a small group of children so we can concentrate on each child and their needs. What is most important to each child that comes to our vacation bible school?

To know they are loved. Our Vacation Bible School has the theme of God’s love and God’s care. I find the children so much in need of this message. Many come from broken homes. Many parents struggle with alcohol or substance abuse problems and the children suffer from this. It is so important for each child to know they are loved just as they are - without criticism or critique from anyone.

We start with this message of love and acceptance and show how God loves us as we are. But as a good father, God loves us so much that he doesn’t want us to stay that way but wants us to grow in his grace and mercy. Vacation Bible School ends with acts of mercy and the children do some corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Another important thing we do in our Vacation Bible School is feed these children. Often they come hungry and it is best for them to hear the message of the gospel with a full stomach. We have great

teachers, music ministers and cooks - all volunteers from the parish. We will continue to do these week-long schools in different areas throughout the Magadan region. That way, more children are feed with bread and the Word. The face of a child who knows he or she is loved is so beautiful and it is such faces we are working to create.

*In the hearts of Jesus & Mary,*

Father Michael Shields

Pastor – Church of the Nativity of Jesus



Father Michael Shields enjoys time with the children participating in Vacation Bible School. Your faithful support assures important faith formation opportunities for the children, like VBS.

# REFLECTIONS ON SUFFERING

*This reflection is part 2 of a 3-part series on suffering in Magadan by long-time supporter Peter Shafer. Part 1 appeared in the May/June 2011 Mission to Magadan Newsletter.*



The survivors of repression each received a stuffed animal earlier this year from the generous supporters of the Mission to Magadan. The survivors gather at the parish regularly to talk through their experiences of suffering in the Soviet work camps.

In 2006, I interviewed some of the Repressed (camp survivors) and their stories deeply touched my heart. I was again touched by the stories of the survivors back at home in California when I read the English version of “Martyrs of Magadan.” These stories inspired me to undertake a project which I called Crosses of the Camps to send 100 crucifixes to Magadan to be given out to the Repressed. The idea was to recognize the personal cross that each survivor had to endure 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. It was also my prayer that a special grace would come from these crucifixes so that the Repressed could also imitate Jesus in forgiving those who had caused them so much pain and suffering.

I spent 12 months going to various Catholic churches, prayer groups, and individuals to raise money and to obtain sponsors for 107 crucifixes. It was a very difficult and rewarding project with many high and low points. I and my wife and family had to make sacrifices over many months and it was a lot of work. I finished the project in mid-September with just enough time to get the crucifixes to the Church of the Nativity in Magadan in time for the 20th Anniversary Celebration in November 2010.

Three weeks before I was to come to Magadan for the celebration, I had a terrible bronchial virus, followed by two other infections. The Saturday before my flight out, I developed an inner ear condition which caused a great deal of nausea and dizziness. I was off work sick the two days before my flight out and I almost cancelled my flight. For some reason, I believed that God still wanted me to go so I did not cancel and I was quite a bit better by the time I left San Francisco for Munich, the first leg of my trip.

*Read Part 3 of Peter Shafer's reflection in the next Mission to Magadan Newsletter.*

# VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



Father Mike blesses the children during the liturgy for Vacation Bible School. Father Mike's travel schedule allowed him to be in Magadan during this brief time. He is currently on a sabbatical year of prayer.



The VBS participants enjoy a nice meal together. All the sessions are kept small in order to give the children personal attention.



A young girl gives careful attention to her painting project. Arts and crafts are always an important part of VBS.



Children gather regularly for meals, celebrations and to learn about their faith. Your continuing support provides these important opportunities for the children. Thank you for your continuing support of the Mission to Magadan.

# THANK YOU

Contribute online to the "Magadan Russian Mission" at [www.archdioceseofanchorage.org/donate](http://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.

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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.

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