

**Dated December 1, 2009**

**Sun, Oct 4**

We visited the orphanages in Vladivostok today. We just got back from visiting the Hospice. We were able to talk to some of the residents at the hospice. They all are very poor, which is why they stay there and not with family. Next trip we plan to buy them different things like bottled water, slippers and other small personal items. It is really a hard place to visit, as it is so poor there. Many of them have no children, their children have died, or their children just do not visit. We spoke with an elderly gentleman named Pavel. He has two daughters that visit him, for which he is extremely thankful. Pavel is agnostic, so we asked him to consider Christ. When we go back, we'll try to bring him a Bible or another religious book for him to read.

Tomorrow we go to Artyom and will visit the Orphanages there. We may come back and try to go to the Hospice again too. We hope to be able to visit the Children's hospital #3 in Vlad and # 1 as well. I asked if we might be able to visit a home where children with handicaps and down syndrome go as they get

**Mon, Oct 5**

Traveled to Artyom and visited an orphanage, a children's hospital and a home for the blind. The children's hospital was one we had never been to before and we met with refusal to allow us to enter. Sometimes this is how relationships start with orphanages. You have to meet with them so they know your name and face and go back another time. We were able to leave them with fruit we brought and we left with a list of items they would like us to bring. They do place for adoption there, so we will probably go back at some point.

From there we went to Orphanage #4 where they remembered us from previous visits. Time was short, but they are compiling a list of repairs and work for our future visits. We took as much contact information as we could, so we can continue to dialog with them from back home. We walked through the orphanage and spent some time with the children. We left wishing we had more people and time so that we could accomplish more for these children.

We then went to a school for the blind, where the students also reside. There were 150 children there and only 20 are abandoned children. The Director there said they do place for adoption, but not often. They want us to come back to work at their facility. They really wanted us to come back and they gave us a picture that a blind child had drawn of the Madonna and Child. It is quite elegant. They also said to let them know of what we would like a picture ahead of time and they would have a student do one for us. We are going to ask for one of St Nicholas. We hope to go back there on our next visit. I think we could conduct a ConQuest activity there, but would have to make it work for children who are blind.

After our long day of travel and visit, we returned to Mary Mother of God parish where Father Keenan held Mass. He really gives awesome sermons. Today he spoke of Jonah in the belly of the whale for three days and Father compared it to our trip for the next three days. We will be staying overnight in other parts of the Primorye province for the next 3 nights and we have plans for charitable work.

**Tue, Oct 6, 2009 4:12 pm**

Subject: Off to Lesozavodsk

Today brought us a beautiful 6-hour drive through the Russian country side. We were driven to Lesozavodsk. After about two hours on the road, we visited the Franciscan facility for the homeless in Ussyrisk. When we were there two years ago, the facility was still being built. Seeing for the first time complete was impressive.

We were also able to visit the orphanage we visited two years earlier. There have been improvements in the facility, although as seems to be the case at many orphanages this year, new windows are needed to replace the old worn out windows.

After our short visit, we hit the road for the remainder of our drive to Lesozavodsk. It was fall when we were there so we were blessed with many beautiful views of colorful trees, mountains, and streams. By the time we got to town, the sun was just barely over the western horizon.

We met with a member of the parish who will be helping us with paperwork needed to achieve non-government organization status in Russia. This is an important step in becoming an adoption agency. He took us to the building in which the church parish is located. Afterward, we were invited to his apartment for dinner. We were pleasantly surprised when he offered to let us stay at his summer. It was right next to the Siberian Railway, and although the chill in the air was very crisp that night, it was not enough to prevent us from using the outdoor amenities when nature called.

The next morning came early but we met for breakfast back at the apartment. We had an appointment with the Women's support group and discussed the Guardian Angel program with them that is available through the Mary Mother of God parish in Vladivostok. There was a high level of interest in the program and we're praying the program will be able to help some of the families in Lesozavodsk.

We spent some time visiting the Russian Orthodox Church in town and were able to procure several items such as icons, tapestry, and candle holders for future donations.

Our final stop in Lesozavodsk was a very happy surprise. We were fortunate enough to visit an orphanage that was celebrating its fourth anniversary. The facilities at this orphanage were very well maintained. What was most impressive was the fact that these children have not only be provided food, clothing, and shelter, but that they have also been nurtured and genuinely loved by the orphanage staff. The children and staff had worked hard to create a talent show featuring the children singing, dancing, and performing skits. The show lasted about an hour and we were even called on stage and recognized as part of their "family" for the donations we had brought to help support them. There truly is a family atmosphere at this orphanage and feel that all are blessed to be a part of it.

The orphanage just placed two children, for adoption. It was their first time. They would like to work with us in the future to help facilitate more adoptions.

After saying our goodbyes, we hit the long 6-hour road trip back to Vladivostok for we knew the next day would also be a long travel day.

#### **Wed, Oct 7, 2009 5:57 pm**

Today we went for Nahodka and will visit the families we are trying to find sponsors for the Guardian Angel Program. We took a 4 hour bus ride through scenic foothills and eventually along the Sea of Japan. A priest from India, Father Sebastian, came with us on the trip from Vladivostok, where he was having meetings with Father Myron.

#### **Thu, Oct 8, 2009 5:50 pm**

Things are going well here. We are in Nahodka, staying at Father Sebastians apartment, with him. We visited all of the Guardian Angel families last night. They do have problem houses and could use help. I met the boy we sponsor too and took a picture with him. Today we will visit an Orphanage and a Rehabilitation Center for Children from problem families. We then take a 4 hour bus trip back to Vlad and will visit the Orphanage that Dave and Lisa were trying to adopt the little girl from. Father Myron is going to go with us to that Orphanage. That will be a big help to us. So it is going well.