

Update on Blessed Mother Theresa Parish in Jalal–Abad, 2012

We would like to share with you our 2012 update on Blessed Mother Theresa parish activities, which are primarily focused on three aspects: **parish life, charity work and education**. Of course, these are related to each other:

Our **parish life** centers on the liturgy, teaching CCD and pastoral activity for the small number of Catholics (about 30) living in southern Kyrgyzstan. This region encompasses the districts of Osh, Batken and Jalal-Abad; an area of 200,000 km with a population of 2,000,000 inhabitants, most of whom are Muslim. Although there is not the threat of the death penalty for converting from the Muslim faith to Christianity here in southern Kyrgyzstan, there is the threat of severe beatings, disinheritance from family and exclusion from the community. Most of our parishioners are of German descent who re-settled here under Stalin's repression.

This year we had two baptisms, four First Communions and, unfortunately, four funerals. People from other nationalities sometimes come to the Mass, and this year we had our first Catholic baptism of an Uzbek lady. While the number of Catholics here is minimal, we hope & pray that our parish is a powerful witness of the Incarnation in this predominantly Muslim region. In this Year of Faith we received a baptismal font from a parish in Warsaw, and we hope it is a sign for the future.

INFANT BAPTISM OF MATTHEW



FIRST COMMUNION 2012



Usually two Jesuits work in our parish. In January Br. Damien Wojciechowski, SJ moved to Kazakhstan while Fr. Duszan, SJ from Slovakia came to serve for three months as part of his tertianship experiment. He was a great help during this time of transition. Then in August Br. Vladimir Pachkov, SJ began his new duties in Moscow, and so in September Fr. Adam Malinowski, SJ arrived to join us for pastoral work and to learn the Russian language. He also founded an Astronomy Club at the local university.

OSH – SAINT NICHOLAS VISITS CHILDREN OF ORPHANAGE



After the summer holidays, three long-term volunteers and one candidate for the Jesuits of the Russian Region came to our parish. (The three volunteers are from Poland and the Jesuit candidate is from the United States.) The volunteers help support our activities in parish life, local charity work and teaching. Once a week they visit the local children's handicapped center, where there are more than one hundred children. They organize activities there, help feed the children, and they also visit a local orphanage every week. We regularly pay visits to three orphanages in Osh. Once a

month we visit the Centre for Handicapped Adults located in Kizylkija village (about 200 km. from Jalal - Abad), as well as, the retirement home in Oktiabrskoje near Jalalabad (with more than 100 elderly).

Our parish also supports local families by the so-called "spiritual adoption" of 12 children. Most of them are children of Muslim families whose income does not cover basic needs. Parents receive monthly support (the equivalent of 10 Euros) as a kind of scholarship for their children. The necessary condition for all families to participate in this program is that the child must not only attend school but also must receive good marks there.

JALAL-ABAD - NEW BUILDING FOR VOLUNTEERS



In September we began reconstruction on a building next to our parish. It will be used as a place of residence for future volunteers and as a facility for Fr. Adam's Astronomy Club. In the city of Osh, we completed repairs on a dilapidated roof for our chapel building, as well as, a new fence in the backyard. Presently, the floor is in disrepair with gaping holes and there is no central heating, so it is not possible at this point to live there in the winter. We will continue renovation of this

OSH CHAPEL – NEW ROOF



OSH CHAPEL – NEW BACKYARD FENCE



building in the spring and would like to finish reconstruction before September in order to invite volunteers to live there. Since Osh is the second largest city in Kyrgyzstan we must begin to focus our missionary endeavors there.

ISSYK-KUL CAMPERS - EVENING SONG



Our **charity work** is, above all, involved in our Rehabilitation Centre at Issyk-Kul Lake. In December 2011, Fr. Remigiusz Kalski, SJ became the Director for the Centre. In May we bought an adjacent piece of land to the Centre, thanks to the support of our benefactors. We needed this land in order to accommodate the volunteers who stay in tents, as well as, a playground for the campers. Additionally, in October we finished construction of a storage shed that will house all of the rehabilitation equipment for the children. These additions are important as last summer

ISSYK-KUL – NEW SOLAR HEATING SYSTEM & POOL

There were times when we were beyond capacity. Finally, “Misereor,” a Catholic organization from Germany, helped fund the construction of a small swimming pool and solar heating for the Center. So now the facility is warm and functional during the winter months.



ISSYK-KUL SUMMER CAMP



This year we had camps for various groups, totaling 22 camps and one eight-day retreat using the Spiritual Exercises. As usual, there were three camps for Catholic children and young adults, totaling 120 youth. Fr. Jerzy Jedrzejewski, the Franciscan sisters of Kyrgyzstan and one Franciscan

brother from Uzbekistan led these camps. They used the “Magis” formation program (which is a popular Ignatian program in Poland) to develop our themes for the Catholic camps. We also had more than 40 volunteers and several priests from different parts of the world help organize the camps. The other camps were mostly for disabled children and children from orphanages. Their stay at the Rehabilitation Centre in Issyk Kul would not be possible without our benefactors’ great support.

ISSYK-KUL - UNVEILING OF HOLY FAMILY RELIEF



St. Joseph the Bridegroom is the patron for the Centre, and in June we unveiled the Holy Family relief there.

Thanks to the cooperation of the Protestant Churches in Osh we received 800 gifts prepared by children of some Protestant churches in England. We distributed these gifts to children in neglected areas of Osh, Jalal – Abad and villages around Bishkek. Father Remigiusz regularly participated in meetings with the

Protestant pastors in Osh. Recently, we came up with the idea of organizing an ecumenical Christian preschool for children in Osh, but the final decisions have not been made. In April Dr. Thomas Weggeman, an europathologist from Austria came to develop a rehabilitation program for disabled children. Then in September Ms. Hannelor Paither from Bavaria came to help serve the needs of the poor.

MEMORIAL CEREMONY WITH POLISH DIGNITARIES



Educational activity: As usual we held language courses at the parish for grade school children and university students. The volunteers' daily responsibilities include teaching English and German to local students and our parish kids. This year we were also invited to teach English and German language discussion groups at the local state university (Jalal - Abad State University) and college (Jalal – Abad College). Occasionally , Fr. Adam Malinowski , SJ conducts astronomy classes(including telescope observations of the sky) for students of JAS University's Geography Department. Our volunteers also held English classes in Osh on Sundays for Uzbek children. Finally, this year we were also invited to teach in Osh on Sundays and Mondays for school children at "Swietocz," a local Russian Orthodox school there. In July, a group of Polish students ran a language camp for children in Jalalabad, and two volunteers from the British Jesuit Mission led a similar camp in August. Finally, we also held language camps in Issyk – Kul for university students from Jalal - Abad. Jesuit scholastics from Belgium, England, the USA and the Independent Region of Russia, along with several short-term volunteers, helped us in these camps. There were eighty students who participated.

PARISH TEAM 2012



We believe that all this activity is a result of God's grace for us. On behalf of the Jalal – Abad community I would like to extend great thanks to all of those who helped us in the year 2012 for the glory of God.

Fr. Remigiusz Kalski, SJ

Christmas, 2012