

Bridges

LITHUANIAN - AMERICAN
NEWS JOURNAL

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600th Anniversary of Lithuania's Christianization



Holy Eve

Graphic and Story by
Juozas Bagdonas

It will soon be midnight in Lithuania. Neighbors crowd into several cars and speed towards town to attend Shepherds' Mass. Suddenly the cars turn off into an obscure road and enter the dark depths of a forest. They come to a halt near a tall pine tree on which somebody

sculpted three crosses. In the biting air, under luminous stars, they bend their heads in fervent prayer. They are offering their gratitude to the brave Freedom Fighters who, during the USSR invasion of Lithuania, hid in the forest, fought the enemy, and

gave their lives for their homeland and people. Today, Lithuanian children are taught in school that the Freedom Fighters were not heroes but "bandits—a disgrace to their country." The group of neighbors finishes praying and proceeds to the Mass in town.

Kotryna Grigaityte

Kaledos CHRISTMAS

Swaddling cloth spreads
across the heavens
From the sun's linens,
The clouds' yarn,
The rainbows' threads.
Earth's cradle swings like a bell
And the ocean depths rock
With the heart of the earth.
Palms, pines and spruces bend
and lower their crowns.
Why do You cry?
With the wailing of a wretched child?
Why do you cry?

Leadens tears fall from Your eyes.
Into Your cradle fall
the nails, the nails, the nails.

(DMJ trans)



Seeing the nails fall in the crib and on Lithuanian children.

Angry Lithuanian American Youth

LETTERS

A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

I write this open letter because I am an outraged young Lithuanian who has participated in many attempts to keep alive the memory of Lithuania where our brothers and sisters were deprived of basic rights and freedom by the Soviets.

It would be hypocritical for me to say that we have not done anything to publicize our cause. However, the greatest opportunity to be heard has just passed.

Mikhail S. Gorbachev visited the United States of America, and we as Lithuanians did not make any concerted stand against the fact that our relatives, friends and countrymen in Occupied Lithuania are suffering from the lack of human rights and freedom.

This event called for an organizational effort. My trust was in those whom we voted into leadership, to lead us to the furthering of our cause on a national level.

We must work and collect money, of course, but not for glorified banquets or fancier commemoration days. But must we let events such as Gorbachev's visit pass us by?

Our leaders should be there to organize our people to be heard on a national level. In this instance, we did not fulfill our moral obligation to ourselves and, most of all, to those who are enslaved by the Soviet. Needless to say, we in the U.S.A. are still a part of Occupied Lithuania.

It seems to me that our national leader-

ship was sleeping while the sun was at high noon.

The Jewish community seized the opportunity to be heard, and they were heard. Their cause is in no way of any greater importance than ours, and their differences among themselves are many. Nevertheless, they have recognized the fact that unity has nothing to do with unanimity, as long as we recognize the ties that bind us and the objectives to which we are committed.

I give the Jewish community credit for their stand and wish that we, too, would recognize the fact that there is strength to be found in diversity.

President Reagan is fighting for human rights, but he cannot do it alone. Public support and open outrage must be heard by all,

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especially the Soviets. Only pressure on the Soviet leaders will give us a fighting chance. The Jews here and those in the Soviet Union have proven that. We, too, have proven this with Simas Kudirka.

There is no limit to what we can aspire as long as we and our leaders remember that sleep comes after work has been done.

Regina Zabulis
Mt. St. Mary's College
Emmitsburg, MD

BRIDES FROM LITHUANIA AND SUSPICION

I met my wife in Vilnius and we were married in 1981. She was a teacher in Lithuania. When we arrived in the USA, she was asked by the Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, New York, to conduct classes in the Lithuanian language. She agreed, and I have been helping her with the presentation of Lithuanian history and culture.

It may be surprising to you to learn that the people who have been attending these classes found much enjoyment. The new generation of Lithuanian Americans are yearning to learn about their history and culture.

Now, I must strongly criticize the editors of a Lithuanian newspaper published in the USA which printed an editorial which stated that people who have been coming from Lithuania recently to live in the USA were "made in the Soviet Union." Would it not be more accurate to say they were "made in Soviet-occupied Lithuania?"

Does the editorial writer think that the people in Lithuania have any choice in making their life style? Or that they can change the education they receive under Soviet rule? Does he believe, moreover, that the people in Lithuania submit to those in power completely, without reservations, and do not use their own intelligence?

Such people do not come to the USA to destroy American ideals and democracy. Read the letter in the last issue of *Bridges* written by Paul Tacewicz from Nashua, N.H. My wife knows his wife very well. Mrs. Tacewicz is certainly not a Marxist.

There are quite a few brides leaving Lithuania today to join their husbands in the USA. I know of one bride who lives in Rochester, N.Y. and another who lives in Salem, N.H. I know a gentleman from Pennsylvania who was married in Vilnius in July and his wife arrived at JFK before Christmas. And I know a young man who lives in Albany, N.Y. who is making plans to get married in Vilnius some time in 1988.

The biased editors of that newspaper should change their tune and welcome these ladies as an addition that will benefit our Lithuanian American communities. And they should stop calling them Marxists, as the editorial implies.

Edward W. Baranauskas
Schenectady, N.Y.

MINDS IN A DEEP FREEZE

Our sturdy oldtimers—who so recently were young, patriotic, money-collecting builders of "freedom" for Lithuania—now disappear, one by one, in funeral homes.

They are disappointed in their children who choose to pattern their lives in their own fashion and refuse to become clones of their parents. Worst of all, many of these young people, although given so many advantages, can barely speak even an ordinary kitchen form of Lithuanian.

An old lady sits in her Woodhaven house, waiting for the phone to ring. It stopped ringing decades ago when her children were young. She used to pick up the phone, listen wisely, and advise angrily: "In *this* residence, we speak only *Lithuanian!*" Today, her children rarely call her, knowing she will accuse them of having failed to "save" Lithuania.

An angry dentist in Chicago, wielding his drill gracefully as though it were a sword, works on the teeth of a Hispanic and argues with himself aloud, "Why won't my children fight—as *I* fight!"

An officer of an old million-dollar Lithuanian-American organization can no longer hear or walk very adequately. He is insensed because Lithuanian youth refuses to join his organization and help him run it the way *he* thinks it should be run.

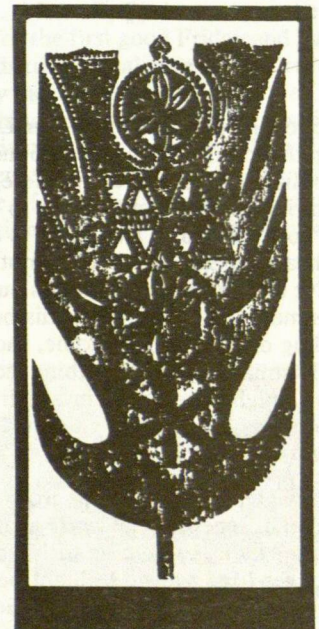
An aging poet priest goes off into a righteous tantrum because Lithuanian youth in the parish hall is cavorting and playing wild rock music: "*That* is not *our* music! *Those* are not *our* dances!"

Fat, past-bloom, but blonded Lithuanian ladies, who love to sport their national costume during patriotic events, are distressed because slim young Lithuanian ladies, everywhere, from Chicago to Australia and back, write in their press that such ladies should retire and stop showing off and embarrassing us all. The native costumes should be worn by the young and the limber and graceful who are comfortable speaking

English. Elderly ladies who feel young and coy in their native costumes and romanticize themselves as saviors of their country look sad and silly in the role, especially to American viewers.

These are only minor local tragedies. But they spell out the reaction of young people to the behavior of the well-meaning oldsters who stopped living and thinking when the Soviets took over Lithuania. They remain frozen in antiquated attitudes which blind them to the needs of their own children, as well as to the needs of the people living today in Lithuania.

Jonukas Šelmukas
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New York, N.Y.



WANTED

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for *Bridges*.

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Stasys Yla

Translated by
Rev. Anthony Jurgelaitis, O.P.

The Crucifix in the Crib

*Our Christmas and Easter
Mysteries are, in essence,
one and the same.*

Lithuanians, risen belatedly from paganism in 1387, developed a uniquely profound understanding of Christianity. On Christmas Eve, they do not prepare a crib for the Christ Child. Instead, they make a bed of hay on which they lay a crucifix not an infant. They conjoin

the crib of Bethlehem with the table of the Last Supper. In this long-suffering "land of Crosses", the family gathers at the table, makes room for those who are unable to be present and those who have died, and celebrates both the birth of the Christ Child and the Resurrection of Christ.

Following the customs of our Lithuanian ancestors, we gather on Christmas Eve around a common table which symbolizes the family altar. Here, we renew those deep-down, inner ties which bind us to each other and to God. This holy Christmas Eve, there is a deep silence of peace; our hearts speak out to one another in that silence. We forgive one another and express our fondest wishes for the Christmas season. Whether this be done in a poor, small dwelling or a well-to-do home, those who gather together on Christmas Eve feel something sacred and holy. Christmas Eve is a night of mystery in which the light of two worlds intermingles, the light of this world and that of the world beyond.

It is winter and the sun has crossed over its threshold and seems to be renewing the world again, shedding down more and more light, awakening within our hearts a greater joy, a stronger life, a more brilliant beauty.

The light greater than the sun, God Himself who stepped over the threshold of time that first Christmas sends forth a new ray of light: His Son, born as man Who brings into the world a spiritual renewal and, with it, peace and love.

Our family gathers around a common table, but this is not an ordinary, everyday table; because the family table on Christmas Eve has little to do with the everyday, commonplace chore of taking a meal. We do not get together this evening merely to feed bodies nor to enjoy a feast. The bread-wafers of unleavened dough, the boiled wheat grains, the fish—these are elements of a sacred meal, as are, too, the hymns sung around the family table and the prayers with which the meal is begun and ended. There is an air of seriousness and devotion. All this envelops the Christmas family gathering with a special aura of mystery and holiness.

The Christmas Eve supper table reminds us of that other supper, the Last Supper of the Master, on the evening before He died, a supper which is unique in all human history. At that Last Supper ordinary wheat bread became the mysterious Bread which nourishes the soul more than the

body. And for three hundred years after the Last Supper small groups of Christian people have gathered in their own homes, or in the Catacombs, where they sat around a common table and broke bread in a spirit of unity and communion with each other and with their Divine Master.

From the depths of the centuries, from the cradle of Christianity, this sacred family meal was transferred to Lithuania and has persisted up to the present. Many observers in the Christian Western world regret that their own Christmas celebrations, in comparison with the celebrations in Lithuania, do not have such definite ties with primitive Christian observances.

Our Kūčios, our Christmas Eve supper, is the only celebration that joins the table of the Last Supper with the Crib of Bethlehem.

The bread-wafer and the hay are the two symbols which recall the one and the other. The bread-wafer bespeaks the bread become Body, the hay speaks of the Word becoming flesh. These two mememtos of God's transubstantiation lie on the Lithuanian Christmas Eve table, just as in ancient Christianity, side by side on the same altar there rested the Sacred Host and the Book of the Gospel, the living Bread and the living Word.

These two mysteries—the Christmas and Easter mysteries—are in essence one and the same. What happened at the Christmas crib and what took place in the upper chamber of the Last Supper may be likened to the same ray of light which appears as two different colors of the spectrum when shining through a prism. Looking at the one ray of white light we cannot distinguish the two colors, but through the prism many colors become visible.

The coming of the God-Man into the world would have been like the flash of a meteor, if He had not become incarnate under different species. That which began with His Birth had to be perfected in the Eucharistic substantial change.

Kūčios is a night of mystery, and communion, Kūčios

joins the two greatest mysteries of our religion: the Birth of Christ and the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The Lithuanian Christmas Eve supper unites the hearts of men and thus forms the oneness of mankind, which is in itself a great mystery. Our inexplicable sacred force binds the hearts of men together.

The table is a visible sign of family unity. It brings together all the family members and points out to them the meaning of family hierarchy: father, mother, children. The table serves not only to set out the food to feed the body, but also serves to nourish, uplift and renew the very soul of the family.

This second aspect becomes more prominent in the family circle and thus the family table becomes a sacred altar. It is somewhat similar to the "family altar" mentioned in the marriage prayer. All the more so, the family table becomes the family altar at the Christmas Eve supper, when upon it are placed religious symbols, when around it special family prayers are recited, when the father of the family sits at the head of the table to lead in the family customs, thus becoming the family priest.

The Christmas Eve table is first spread with hay to recall the crib in which Christ was born. The hay is covered with a clean white tablecloth on which a crucifix is placed, not

upright, but flat upon the table. Why the crucifix and not a crib with Christ-Child?

The Christmas crib is not a symbol, but a real representation of the Christmas event. The realistic-minded Westerners used a crib in their homes and churches; they would place a crib with the Christ-Child on the altars, and even on the tabernacles in place of the crucifix on Christmas Eve.

Was there some historical reason that kept the Lithuanians from making Christmas cribs and using them, or was there some inner sensitivity in the hearts of Lithuanians themselves that refused to make the cribs and to use the crucifix instead?

A crucifix on the hay is clearly a contradiction, a paradox, because it represents Christ's death at Christmas. However, this shows a unique understanding of the Christmas mystery among the Lithuanians. After all, Christmas was the first step in the preparation for the first good Friday and Easter. The Birth of Christ leads to spiritual renewal and redemption which was gained by the death of Christ upon the Cross. Liturgically, these two things are inseparable, because in the Midnight Mass on Christmas Night the same Sacrifice of Good Friday is represented and renewed. So why should these two events in the life of Christ be separated in the Christmas Eve celebration? (Continued on page 12)



In Siberia and in Lithuania, as in the rest of the USSR, Christmas Day is an ordinary working day. Absentees are severely punished. Children must attend school; they are afraid to be absent, even if they are ill. At the end of the day, Christian families gather in their homes and quietly celebrate the birth of Christ. This Christmas Day scene was photographed at the camp of Valentinofka in Siberia. The site was cleared and buildings erected by forced laborers from Pilviškiai, Lithuania.

Photo from Lithuanians in Siberia by Rev. J. Prunskis

WINTER VACATION AND CHRISTMAS ON A FARM IN LITHUANIA IN 1937

Albinas Azukas was one of the American students in 1938 in Lithuania studying Lituanistica under a government scholarship. A native of Scranton, Pennsylvania, Azukas is a Lithuanian American of third generation. His mother was American

*born. The following article which we discovered in **Jaunimas**, a 1938 Lithuanian-American Youth newspaper printed in Chicago, is an account of former Lithuanian farm life, seen through the eyes of a young American.*

If ever I should forget the many hard facts I try to learn here, I shall never forget the natural beauty of Lithuania and the sincerely friendly character of the Lithuanian people. Here at Naujikai, but a few kilometers from the Latvian border where I came to spend a part of the holiday vacation, I am enjoying the beauty of the countryside and the open-hearted hospitality of all these people so much that I dislike having to hurry back to school in Kaunas.

Before coming to Naujikai, I spent a week in Panevežys. It was the first city outside of Kaunas that I have yet seen. From its railroad station, Panevežys looked like a long street, a river of slush and mud, and on both sides of it, were clusters of ramshackle log huts that one sees everywhere in Lithuania. It looked very mean and very dirty; but before leaving the city, I learned that first impressions can count for little, because the railroad stations here are usually in the meanest outskirts of the towns. These *bakužes* which are so offensive to Americans require some explanation. I think it is not fair to judge them because they are the remains of the old Lithuania, the Lithuania of economic nonentity and horrible oppression that can not be immediately wiped out. They house the kind of warm-hearted and industrious people who make one feel as proud to be Lithuanian as I was once ashamed. I know that the *bakužes* will not remain here long. The houses of the new Lithuania are modern in construction. Very seldom are they built of wood. In a section where all the houses

are modern, one finds it hard to believe one is in Lithuania.

MAJORITY OF STUDENTS WRITE POETRY

Panevežys is a pleasant town built around a market place as are all towns. It has two high schools, one for men and the other for girls. I made a point to become acquainted with some of the students who impress me as being intellectually superior to American high school students. Here they study with more serious intent, and give less time to sports. And it seems that every student is a poet in the bud, for poetry, next to languages, interests the Lithuanian student more than anything else. I think it's natural because the Lithuanian language is singularly adapted to beautiful expressions.

From Panevežys to Rokiškis, it was pleasant riding the train but, from Rokiškis to Naujikai, it was much more interesting. We traveled by sleigh—three hours against a strong wind. Very often we were compelled to get out and stand behind the sleigh to keep from freezing. Twice we were thrown head-long into snowbanks when the sleigh overturned...a pleasant memory now, but a cold experience then.

EVERYTHING HAND-MADE

The house in which I'm sitting is built of hand-hewn logs. The house and everything in it are hand-made. If the Lithuanian farmer were required to buy everything he needs, he would walk about like a naked beggar, but he knows

how to use his hands to make whatever he needs. Lithuanian women are less ingenious. Almost every piece of cloth, every piece of linen and all the woollens are home-made. The girl of the house has created some beautiful things in weavings. Knowing my passion for Lithuanian *audiniai*, she pleased me by changing the weaved spread on my bed every few days. The most precious thing I own now is that spread which pleased me most. She was kind enough to part with it. My feet are kept warm by a pair of woolen socks she knitted for me from yarn she herself spun; and my neck by a beautiful scarf she wove. I'll be completely remade outside as well as inside, when she finishes the gloves and tie she is working on now. There is no need to write about the food. It is Lithuanian. That means it is very good.

A STOVE ONE LIES ON

When I'm not outdoors and someone asks her where I might be, she answers rightly: "In Lithuania—on the stove." It is so comfortable to lie there and drink deep of the Rygiškiu Jonas' Grammar! It is difficult for most Americans to visualize the kind of stove that one can lie on. I'll not describe it, but I will advise everyone to save his money that he might come to Lithuania to see for himself and get a new lease on his physical and spiritual life.

PUBLIC BATH

Here on the *kaimas* I had my first experience in a Lithuanian public bath. I must say that I like it very much. It was

the day before Christmas. A friend and I hitched an old mare to the sleigh and went into Pandelys to shop. After the ride in the bitter cold, there was nothing more pleasant than spending an hour in the steaming hot bath and then going out into the snow to dry and dress. It makes one feel like a new person—it's very hygienic. They have a passion for hygiene here. There are "Higiena" restaurants, drug stores and barber shops where the barber stuffs your ears with cotton before cutting your hair—for "hygiene's" sake.

CHRISTMAS ON THE FARM

After the bath, we listened to the radio—yes, there are radios in Lithuania, even on the *Kaimas*. We ate a supper of herring and potatoes, pickled beets, and

foods familiar to all Lithuanians. There was something new to me: a large dish of poppy seeds made savory with honey and chopped almonds. Standing upright in all this was a forest of long flat lady fingers. I was told that this dish symbolizes Bethlehem where the Lord Jesus was born. Then there was apple wine and beer made from beets, and finally sweet sleep.

In the morning we went to Pandelys to church. The old church interested me so much that I paid little attention to the services. The decorations were very interesting, especially the statues that were everywhere. I think they must have been made by a local artist, not very good in his art and with no great knowledge of anatomy. The body proportions were very bad, but the expression on the faces was very compelling. Christmas day we

spent very quietly, but on the following night there was a get-together of the village youth.

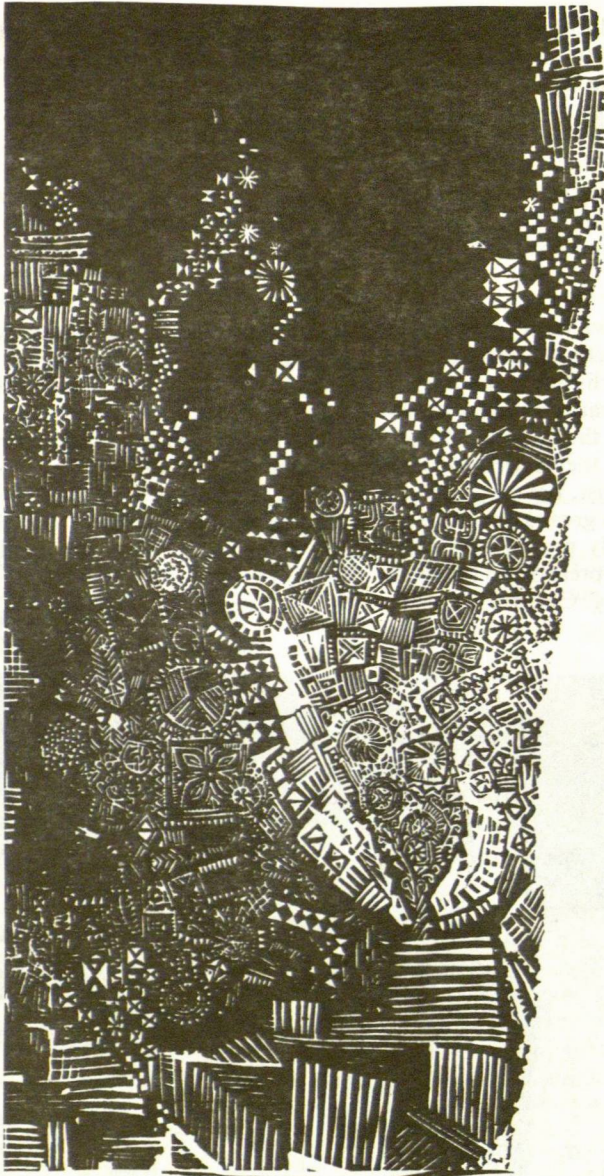
YOUTH WORKS AND PLAYS HARD

Young people on the Lithuanian farm work very hard. When they play, they play just as hard. They dance with vigor that would exhaust an American in an hour. They sing—oh, how they sing! It's beautiful to hear these young people! Most of them have surprisingly good voices. It is best to hear a group singing outdoors. There can be nothing more beautiful than hearing a group of young Lithuanians singing the simple and lovely Lithuanian songs as they walk down a country road. Their ringing voices are carried over the fields and through the forests with such an affect that one wants to listen forever.



Azukas wrote in 1937, "There can be nothing more beautiful than hearing a group of young Lithuanians singing the simple and lovely Lithuanian songs as they walk down a country road." Time has passed, our people were forced to flee from the Communists and now the songs are sung in countries all over the world. There is still no sweeter sound than young people singing in Lithuania where the purity of the language and the painful history give the songs a loveliness known nowhere else in the world.

Photo of Rumšiškės Singers by Kapočius

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Graphic by Ramonas Kestutis

ALBERT CIZAUSKAS

We left Germany in the fall of 1966 to live once again in the States. My family especially looked forward to spending its first Christmas in six years in our own country. We had been spoiled, however, because nowhere was Christmas observed in the same way it was in Germany, where the holy day and the holiday did not compete but rather complemented each other. For one thing, the Christmas season didn't start until December 6, the feast day of St. Nicholas, the real-life forerunner of our commercialized Santa Claus. German toys (at least then) were not the gimmicked, space-oriented, or ghoulish objects they have evolved into here, but rather imaginative playthings, often carved out of wood by artisans. The home of the original

Christmas tree ("Tannenbaum"), after all, is Germany, and Germans in our time still lit white candles on fir trees inside their homes (a dangerous yet very picturesque tradition). Most of the loveliest Christmas carols are of German origin, and the most celebrated of all – *Silent Night* – came out of the Austrian Tyrol.

And so we were shocked in the States when we saw Christmas decorations put up in stores the day after Halloween, pre-empting even Thanksgiving, a beautiful American tradition steeped in the religious background of our country, simply because of its minor importance in stimulating sales. Carols were endlessly repeated on the airwaves, and constant reminders of so many shopping days until Christmas dulled our anticipation of the great day. After two months of mercenary displays, and the mindless proliferation of synthetic Santa Clauses in every department store, we became Christmas-weary, and even the children turned cynical and bored after their initial confusion.

My wife in particular was dismayed by the protracted and hectic shopping season before Christmas. She, as well as I, had forgotten, during our stay abroad, the frantic assault on the senses to buy, buy, buy, on television, the airwaves, the newspapers, and in all the stores, crowding out of our minds the joyous advent of the Incarnation.

Returning home one evening, I found my wife listening to recordings of German Christmas carols that we had brought home. In an agitated voice, she poured out her disappointment with the American Christmas in comparison with what we had found in Germany. Tonight, she said, marked the beginning of a personal boycott against the salesman's pitch. At least at home, she would silence the endless repetition of "Merry Christmas," followed by the false gaiety of commercial jingles to *buy* in the remaining days before the holiday. No longer would she fight her way in the densely-packed department stores to purchase unneeded gifts, marked up in price, and packaged so artfully they were more beguiling than what was inside.

Her rebellion came to a head that very day when she had taken the two youngest children Christmas shopping, stopping off first at Bloomingdale's where she put them on line to meet the store's Santa. After a long wait, punctuated by trips to the restrooms, they reached the head of the line, half-puzzled, half-frightened by the white-bearded, red-coated monstrosity who emitted periodic bursts of an unsettling cry that sounded like "Ho, Ho, Ho!" All the kids on line were uncertain whether this strange creature was friend or foe. Some of them thought prudence better than courage, and bolted the line. Our kids, encouraged by their mother, stuck unwillingly to the line. By the time they reached the front, the figure stood up, stretched, yawned, and left. He was then replaced by another similarly-bedecked figure, slimmer than his predecessor, who said in a voice loud enough to be overheard, "Don't forget to punch the card. You forgot yesterday and there was hell to pay." My wife had a hard time explaining away this language as well as the large number of fake Santas everywhere they went. Even at their tender age, the children sensed a Santa-gate, just one of the many disappointments for my wife that were

building up to a big disillusionment with Stateside Christmas.

This unhappy state of affairs persisted up to Christmas Eve, all of us continuing to pine for the peaceful German-style Christmas. My wife was determined, however, to have a Lithuanian Kūčios meal. One of the children cried out that it was snowing! Yes, indeed, snow was falling, slowly at first, large errant flakes tossed about by the wind, but still real snow. Soon, the first flakes were followed by others, and these by others, so that, in a short time, the whole sky was mottled by millions of thick, white granules of snow, blanketing everything around.

With one mind, we all decided that Kūčios could wait for an hour, while we went out into our first Stateside snowfall since our return, so providentially arriving at the best time of the year—Christmas Eve—to enable the real Santa Claus to drive his reindeer through the white sky and into our chimney after midnight.

We drove around the neighborhood which seemed so different now, so clean and white and sparkling in the street lights. We could even make out the individual flakes in our car's headlights, falling like a countless host of angels to blot out the noise and grime of everyday life.

And then we came upon something that seemed utterly unreal, as if the first Christmas Eve in far-off Bethlehem had suddenly appeared to us. It was so beautiful and unusual, that we got out of the car and walked over to it, a Nativity scene on a normally-busy corner that was the frontyard of a local church. At first we thought the figures were life-like statues. But, as we approached, we saw Mary move her head and smile at us. The children whispered to my wife, "Mother, see, it's Mary. She's come down to earth to show us how it was that first Christmas Eve. And Joseph is smiling, too. The angels and the shepherds are looking at Jesus, but, mother, He isn't moving. Why?" My wife answered, "Mary and Joseph aren't here. These are people like us taking the place of Mary and Joseph. But it's too cold for an infant, so they're using a baby doll instead."

The unexpected scene laid a strange enchantment over us, as if we had wandered through the canvas of a Nativity painting by one of the great masters. By now, the snow lay thick upon the ground, muffling all the sounds around us, enhancing the sensation of a rare and holy moment in our lives. With no one else out in the snowfall, we felt as though we had joined the shepherds and the angels in the stable at Bethlehem that first Christmas Eve.

And, then, breaking the pregnant silence, the church's carillon pealed the most beautiful carol of all—*Silent Night*. It was indeed a Silent Night, the living crèche, lovely and moving in its religious symbolism, its dramatic setting framed by the heavy, falling snow. The peace that passes all understanding, the peace on earth proclaimed by the angels, filled us with its joy.

My wife, tears mingling with the snow flakes on her face, said quietly to me, "This is Christmas Eve. Not even in Germany did we have a Silent Night like this."

ON ANGELS



All was taken away from you: white dresses,
wings, even existence.
Yet I believe you,
messengers.

There, where the world is turned inside out,
a heavy fabric embroidered with stars and beasts,
you stroll, inspecting the trustworthy seams.

Short is your stay here:
now and then at a matinal hour, if the sky is clear,
in a melody repeated by a bird,
or in the smell of apples at the close of day
when the light makes the orchards magic.

They say somebody has invented you
but to me this does not sound convincing
for humans invented themselves as well.

The voice—no doubt it is a valid proof,
as it can belong only to radiant creatures,
weightless and winged (after all, why not?),
girdled with the lightning.

I have heard that voice many a time when asleep
and, what is strange, I understood more or less
an order or an appeal in an unearthly tongue:

day draws near
another one
do what you can.

messages to us from small angels

Like starbursts, hordes of small angels—happy and sorrowful, troubled and care free—liven the walls of the famous 17th century church of SS Peter and Paul in Antakalnis. It was here that the remains of Saint Casimir were transferred in 1953 when the Cathedral of Vilnius was converted by the Kremlin directors into a picture gallery.

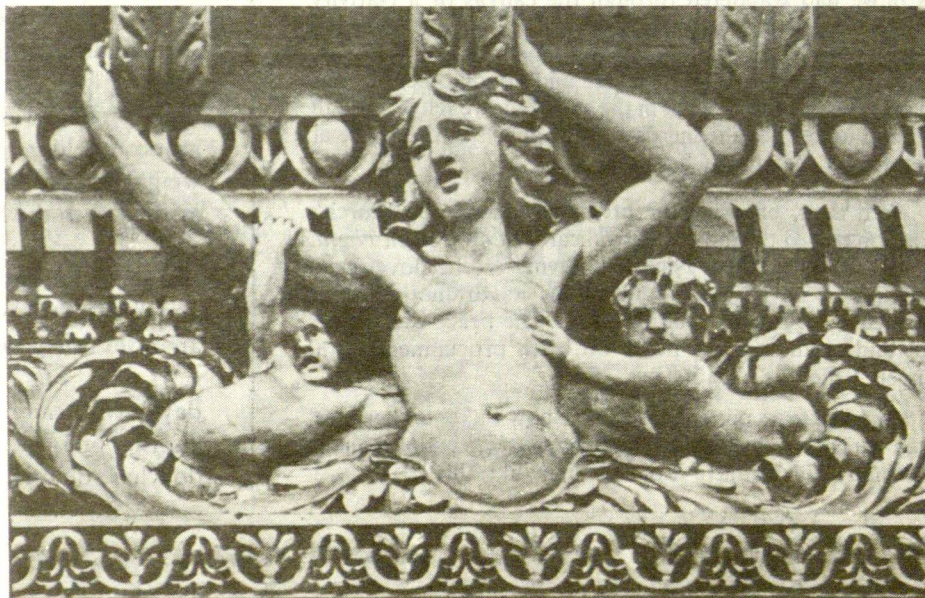
A visitor, studying the angels in these baroque surroundings, becomes aware of history grown vibrant beneath the vaults of the church. The angels are not just cute embellishments on the edifice. They are live personalities. Some you'd like to take back home with you; others you'd prefer to leave alone. Some delight you with their refreshing warmth; others are less appealing, looking ready to howl and roll off

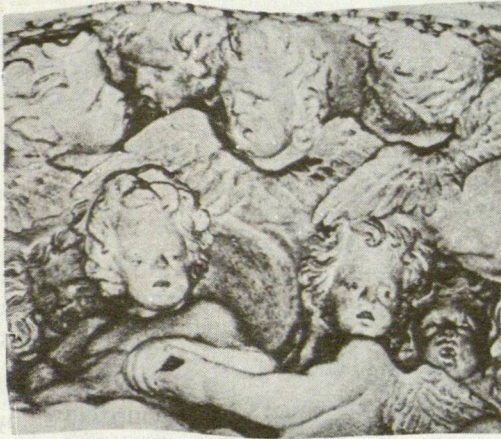


A skeptical cherub argues with a reasoning cherub

Angels hover over heroes, martyrs and saints,

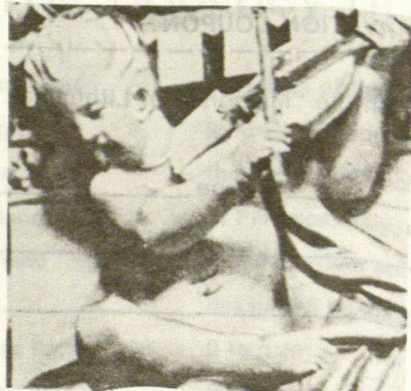
but they work hard to help human beings in troubled waters, bearing the personal Cross each person must carry.





Angel folk, like teenagers, can become belligerent and hostile when they're upset and frightened by man's lust for power, his greed, bigotry, injustice, wars, and the sword that destroys the soul.

in a tantrum. They are all helter-skelter-busy helping one another work with human beings. Over two thousand human faces are represented sculpturally on the walls of the church. These are people from all walks of life and history. A beggar has been immortalized near a king the devil near a saint, a shepherd near a warrior, a mother near an executioner. The angels play their instruments, creating celestial music as they hover over all forms of everyday life, as well as mythological, philosophical, and biblical scenes. Their feverish activities link the past, present and, conceivably, the future. They seem to become human in their involvements, while some humans seem to turn angelic. As the cherubs play and work, race, romp, and tumble about—their faces full of love and often sorrow—they seem like starry reflections of the Christ Child himself.



Angels Love music. Adding their own music to the music of the spheres,

they proclaim the divine destiny of mankind...

Demie Jonaitis

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As Director of "Memories of Lithuania" Radio and organizer of many tours to exotic places around the world, I am pleased to announce the sponsorship of an excursion to "nature's paradise" —the beautiful and fabulous 50th American State of ALASKA!

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The total cost for this wonderful trip is \$1,945. per person, based on double occupancy. The supplement for a single cabin is \$650. All accommodations will be in outside cabins with 2 lower beds. The price also includes all port taxes as well as roundtrip airfare from Newark and all meals while on board the Ship.

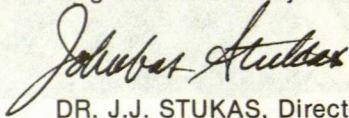
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Su geriausiai linkejimais,



DR. J.J. STUKAS, Director

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A Famous Lithuanian Journey Misnamed “The Journey of the Magi”

In 1415 a large number of princes from Samogitia (Žemaitija) journeyed to Constance, Switzerland, to attend the 16th General Council of the Holy Roman Empire where they protested against the

injustices of the Teutonic Knights. Impressed, the wealthy Medici family of Florence, Italy, entertained them and commissioned Benozzo Gozzoli to paint a mural on the walls of their palace, re-

cording the famous journey. Years passed and the significance of the painting was lost in antiquity. Art connoisseurs erroneously labeled it a Christmas scene “Journey of the Magi.”

from “Samogitia” by C.L.T. Pichel



"The Crucifix in the Crib"

(Continued from page 6)

Hay on the Table

Hay has been drenched with the sweat of man at harvest time. It is food for animals who are man's helpers. It reminds us of the flowers of the fields. It is not brought into the house at other times and placed on the table except on Christmas Eve.

Once on the table, the hay reminds us of the Birth of Christ in the Christmas crib. It is covered by the white table cloth, the color of mystery. After the Christmas meal, strands of hay are pulled out and examined. Its dried blades suggest what the future will hold for the members of the family. Different forecasts are made, depending upon whether the blades of grass are short or long, whether they are straight or broken, whether they are branched or single. Once the hay on the Christmas Eve table is blessed by the prayers, it is not discarded.

After the meal, it is carefully gathered and returned to the stable and given to the animals to eat. The animals were witnesses to the birth of the Christ Child. Their breath kept the Christ Child warm. Maybe, in their way, they understood what was taking place that night and what a great change was taking place in the world. It is said that on Christmas Eve animals talk to each other about mankind.

The hay on the Christmas Eve table reminds us of simple humility when the sincerity of the heart opens up. No one places crystalware, silver or porcelain on the Christmas Eve table. No one comes to the table dressed up in silks and finery. All the glitter and glamour with which other countries surround Christmas Eve are absent on Lithuanian Christmas Eve. Our people do not make much of decorating the Christmas tree...At least, the Christmas tree is not lit up during the Kūčios supper. The festivities around tree itself are left for the following morning.

Host from Wafers

Some place in Lithuania the bread-

wafer used to be called the "Christ-Child cake". The wafer, thus, is a symbol of the living Bread which became flesh. The Christmas Eve wafer used to be a single wafer which was divided among the whole family. It was always set at the place of the father, who, after he had said the prayer, took it into his hands and turned to the mother and asked her to break the bread-wafer. Then he would say: "May you live till the next Christmas. God grant you happiness and health all through the coming year, until the next Christmas holidays." In a similar way, the father would give the wafer to the children, to each according to age, asking each to break off a portion while he expressed the same prayerful wishes. Lately, however, wafers are obtained in sufficient numbers for all the members of the family. The father breaks his wafer first, then each member of the family breaks off a portion from his own *plotkelė* and they all share their wafer with each other.

Wheat and šližikai and Priekučiai

Two other foods have a symbolism close to the symbolism of the bread-wafer: the boiled grains of wheat, sweetened with honey, and the little pieces of unleavened bread called "šližikai" and "priekučiai", which are prepared from unleavened dough. There is no doubt that the šližikai and the priekučiai remind us of Eucharistic bread, which in former times was used for Holy Communion, in France. Even today, there are places where, at the end of the Mass, similar pieces of unleavened bread are cut up and distributed to the people as a reminder of the ancient agape banquets practiced long ago.

It is possible that the šližikai were the original symbol of our Eucharistic bread and the bread-wafer was a later version, which came into the Church with the custom of parish priests visiting the families before the Christmas holidays.

When the wafers became the primary

form of bread used, the šližikai became one of the other twelve foods prepared, and lost some of its original significance. However, the šližikai are used again on New Year's Eve, when the Octave of Christmas, the Christmas meal is repeated. It is more difficult to explain the boiled wheat grains in connection with the Eucharistic symbolism. This is an exception. It is used only in Lithuania.

One thing is clear: the wheat grains are the element from which Eucharistic bread is made. It is very unusual among the Lithuanians to eat this at any other time of the year. That is why some members of the family will not want to eat this, but it is the custom that everyone at least taste the boiled wheat grains. It seems that whoever refuses even to taste these grains will not be considered as one fully sharing in the joys of the newborn Christ.

"The Eden Fruit"

Among the twelve Christmas Eve dishes which remind us of the twelve Apostles of the Last Supper is the "Eden fruit", the apple. This Eden element in the Lithuanian customs is also found in some marriage customs where in the "tree of Eden" reminds us of the beginning of life, while here "Eden fruit" recalls the first sin and the promise that a Redeemer will come to redeem mankind and that he would be born of a Virgin, the second Eve. Christmas Eve is the liturgical feast day of Adam, so the symbolic apple relates him with the new Adam-Christ, and with the symbol which refers to Christ as the New Adam. It is that the father of the first family has a relationship to the Child of the new family of God in this Lithuanian family feast.

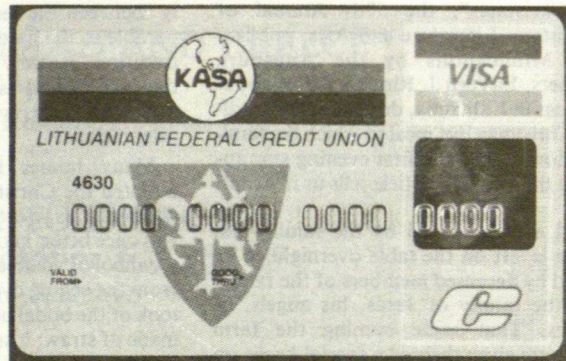
The element of Eden in our Christmas Eve supper, as we see, has not become too common among other Western nations which do not have a Christmas Eve supper. The Christmas tree which symbolizes the Eden tree became the sign of the entire Christmas season and hence the focal point of family reunion.

Our neighboring Slavs have, as we do, the family table as the center of Christmas Eve celebrations and it, too, is considered an altar. The meal is considered a sacred meal. But we differ from the Slavs in our Kūčios supper. We have twelve different foods, but the Slavs have one special food called "Kūcia," which is prepared from twelve different grains. This symbolic Slavic food was adopted by some Lithuanians in certain parts of the country. However, in recent years, this "Kūcia" was little used. All the food of the Christmas Eve meal is meatless, or abstinence food.

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LaVern J. Rippley

Our Pagan and Christian Traditions

In "Christmas", the 57th Annual of Christmas Literature and Arts, published in Minneapolis by the Augsburg Publishers, LaVern J. Rippley writes about Christmas in Lithuania, describing the traditional Christmas Eve meal to which the family sits down when the first evening star appears in the sky. The article tells us in detail:

Food not consumed by the family that evening is left on the table overnight to be enjoyed by deceased members of the family or by the family of Jesus, his angels, or disciples. That same evening the farm animals are given their own special *kucia*, an ample measuring of hay, oats, and other grains. At midnight in Lithuania, animals are thought to kneel and pray, or even speak. But if anyone intentionally listens to what they say, it is feared he or she will surely die within the year. At midnight, it is assumed that water in wells turns to wine, bees in their hives predict the future, and sheep by their behavior signal bad or good omens for the coming year. Hens, likewise, lay extra eggs. Sometimes family members take a bit of straw left from the table decoration and bundle up fruit trees to protect them from the cold during the winter and to assure a good harvest the next fall.

These activities indicate a desire to predict the future. On Christmas Eve some families call forth ancient rites to determine such things as how long each one will live, what kind of death awaits them, what good fortune might be in the offing, who will be the future husbands of young girls, and what the weather will be like during the coming season. Illustrating a curious mix of paganism and Christianity, witches are thought to roam through the region on Christmas Eve, and people take many precautions not to fall under their spell.

New Year's Eve is in some respect a repeat of Christmas Eve, especially with reference to divinations concerning the coming year. Yet New Year's is never the boisterous event in Lithuania that it is in western European countries, partly because Lithuanians celebrate continuously from the third day of Christmas right up to Epiphany on January 6. This period is called *tarpusventis*, literal-

ly "between the festivals," something comparable to the Twelve Nights in the English tradition. In many Lithuanian communities this time period is used for games, masquerades, merrymaking, and general celebrations.

Many homes in modern times have adopted the Christmas tree, *kaledu eglute*, although this twentieth century development was once better known as the "wedding tree," a symbol of youth and fertility that was hung from the ceiling over the couple as they partook of the bridal banquet. Later the tree was made of straw; it survives today in the form of straw decorations on the Christmas tree and around the home. Santa Claus, too, has made his appearance in the Lithuanian setting, particularly among immigrants in the United States. He delivers gifts in the usual manner, but is not to be confused with *Kaleda*, the personification of Christmas and its festivities. *Kaleda* is conceived as an old man arriving from far away who knocks on a cottage door and speaks the introductory lines: "I am *Kaleda* and I bring happiness, a good harvest, and well-being."

The Annual also tells us about Christmas in Latvia and Estonia. The impressive publication is lavishly illustrated in color, very pretty to see, but not realistic. For example, the native costumes are not accurately portrayed. Lithuanian women and young girls do not wear jewelry, but their own lovely amber. All the females in the illustrations look as if they just came from a local America-town hairdresser who set their hair in the fashions of the 50's. And they all smile like trained models, displaying not the Baltic joy of Christmas but the blank flash of teeth perfected and whitened by American orthodontists.

We appreciate, however, the author's final statement:

During the current era of suppression by Soviet rulers Christmas traditions, like Christianity itself, have gone somewhat dormant. But this period of winter is not likely to last forever. Even as domination by Teutonic Knights, Swedish Overlords, and Roman Bishops has in each instance proved futile, so it is improbable that the oppression of the moment will succeed in snuffing out the ancient Baltic folklore. In fact, the message of hope that the Christmas story brings annually might be applied to the fate of these proud peoples. History is bound to repeat itself. Freedom and the open celebration of Christmas, like the springtime sun, will someday return in all their glory.

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Glasnost and Young Fr. Puzonas

Freedom demonstrations in the Baltics in August proved to be an acid test of glasnost. The apparitions of our Freedom Fighters returned. The Soviets interfered with telephone conversations between Vilnius and western European cities, as well as overseas. The official media attempted to smear the organizers and divide them. Among the activists was Fr. Rokas Puzonas.

The Communist Party daily *Tiesa* published an article entitled "The Roots of the Nationalism and Hate of the Priest-Extremist Rokas Puzonas."

Fr. Puzonas, 30, rector of the Kiaukliai parish, was accused of using the pulpit for the dissemination of "anti-Soviet slander and nationalist ideology." *Tiesa* said that he used almost each of his sermons to maintain that Lithuanians were "enslaved."

R. Puzonas' views were conditioned, it was said, by the experiences of his father, Juozas Puzonas, who was one of the leaders of an anti-Soviet guerilla group in the immediate postwar period. The elder Puzonas "kept the bourgeois nationalist archives and published their newspaper, urging the people to resist the Red Army and to sabotage the

Soviet government's instruction." *Tiesa* declared: "We cannot allow the inculcation of our people with anti-Soviet nationalist views."

"Spontaneous" meetings by "indignant" people were whipped up into activity by the press. Such meetings are, in essence, "lynching parties", organized and orchestrated by Communist Party officials. Speakers denounced Fr. Puzonas for claiming that there is "no religious freedom" in Lithuania and for extolling the postwar anti-Soviet guerillas as "Freedom Fighters" to whom the Party refers as "bandits". The press demanded an end to such "insults" to the Soviet system by Fr. Puzonas. Equally as furious were the attacks against Robertas Grigas, Fr. Puzonas' assistant who was brutally kidnapped and terrorized. The militia precinct regarded the ugly episode as nonsense: "It must have been somebody's joke."

Fr. Rokas Puzonas told the Lithuanian State Security Committee his own story on Christmas Day, 1984. After high school and army service, he applied in May 1977 for admission into Lithuania's last surviving seminary at Kaunas.

A month later, he was contacted at work by Vincas Platinskas, a State Security official who told Platinskas that there were very many candidates, but cooperation with the KGB would smooth his way. Under pressure, Puzonas agreed to report any anti-Soviet activities in the seminary.

During later meetings, he received a code name, and Platinskas paid him expense money—asking for receipts, and threatening him with imprisonment if he told anybody about it.

Admitted to the seminary, Puzonas avoided meeting Platinskas. Finally, he let him know he would have nothing to do with the KGB.

He was summoned by the local KGB on May 28, 1980 and interrogated for five hours. During the questioning, it became clear that there were other informers in the seminary; for he was accused of 1) giving a 14-minute talk about two underground papers, 2) writing letters to Lithuanian political prisoners; and 3) visiting two priests, Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius—who were later sentenced to 10 years imprisonment.

Elta

Cooking

with Aldona Marcavage

The Federation of Lithuanian Women's Clubs writes to us about the traditional Lithuanian Christmas Eve supper:

No less than twelve dishes must be served, all meatless. The supper begins with the breaking of a special Christmas wafer and wishing happiness to each other. Various appetizers are served: herring—au naturel, marinated, in vinegar and oil; mushrooms—pickled and sauteed; fish—marinated, in tomato sauce; etc. After this follows a special red beet soup, usually served with small pastries stuffed with mushrooms, called *auselés* (little ears). Then comes the main course, fish: boiled, broiled, fried, the place of honor going to the carp and pike. Various desserts follow, among them a specialty served only once a year on Christmas Eve—*aguony pienas* (poppy seed milk), served with small round dough balls. This "milk" is prepared by grinding the scalded poppy seeds and mixing them with water, honey and nuts. The same "milk" is sometimes poured over boiled whole wheat grains.

Just as the Christmas Eve supper is meatless in Lithuania, so the table on the first day of Christmas virtually groans under various meats. The traditional menu includes: ham—boiled, baked in sour rye dough, smoked; goose, roasted with apples or duck with sauerkraut or red cabbage; turkey with prunes; a suckling pig roasted to a golden perfection or in aspic; leg of veal or mutton; various sausages, among them the hearty Lithuanian *skilandis*. All this is accompanied by an assortment of relishes: the freshly ground horseradish—(very hot with vinegar, milder with sour cream, or mixed with red beets), pickles, sauerkraut.

STUFFED PIKE WITH WHITE SAUCE

Serves Six to Eight.

In Lithuania this is called *kimšta lydeka su baltuoju padažu*.

- A 2- to 3-pound whole pike (or whitefish)
- 3 tablespoons bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 3 medium onions
- 6 each, white and black peppercorns
- 2 hard boiled eggs, finely chopped
- fish broth or water
- 2 cups vegetable broth

Clean the pike; cut under the head so that the backbone will be cut through, but the



Long ago it was believed that animals on Christmas Eve conversed like humans.

head still connected. Using a sharp knife, slit the skin and remove in one piece, with some flesh and the head still attached. Remove gills. Remove the remaining fish from the bones.

Chop onions finely and saute in butter. Mix bread crumbs, onions and fish and grind together in a meat grinder or blender. Add chopped eggs, pepper, salt and mix well. While mixing, add some fish broth or water, so that the stuffing is not thick; it should be the consistency of good sour cream.

Stuff the skin with the fish mixture, loosely, so that the fish will not burst. Sew the fish up.

Bring vegetable broth to a boil in a fish cooker or wide-bottomed pot. Prick the fish in many places, and place into the boiling broth. (If a fish cooker is not available, the fish should be wrapped in cheesecloth and sewn up, to keep it from falling apart during cooking.) To make the broth stronger and more nutritious cook the fishbones in the broth. Add salt while cooking. Simmer over low heat about 1 hour. Cool in pot.

To serve, remove to a platter and slice carefully, not spoiling the shape of the fish. Pour sauce over the fish, or serve in a separate dish.

SAUCE:

- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 tablespoon butter
- ½ cup sour cream
- 2 cups broth
- dill to taste

Saute flour in butter. Add broth. Simmer until it thickens, stirring constantly. Add sour cream and finely chopped dill.

BEET SOUP WITH "LITTLE EARS"

Serves 10.

This is called *burokeliu sriuba su ausukemis*.

- 3 beets
- 1 carrot
- 1 stalk celery
- 1 medium onion
- 1 bay leaf
- 6 black peppercorns
- 1 level tablespoon sugar
- 1 level tablespoon salt
- 4 ounces dried mushrooms
- 12 cups water

Boil all ingredients except beets for about 45 minutes to make a broth. Strain it and let it settle. Take out the mushrooms, cut them into small pieces and reserve. Cook beets until soft, peel them and grate coarsely or cut into julienne strips. Put the beets into a soup dish and pour on the strained broth. One or 2 tablespoons of beet or lemon juice may be added, according to taste.

LITTLE EARS:

- 1½ cups flour
- 2 eggs
- salt
- water
- mushrooms (from broth)
- 1 medium onion
- 2 teaspoons bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- dash pepper

Make a dough of the water, 1 egg, flour and salt. Roll thin on floured board. Cut into 1½ inch squares. recipe should make about 4 dozen.

Grind the mushrooms, onion, bread crumbs, pepper and salt twice in a meat

grinder or blender. Add a well-beaten egg and mix well. On each square put a spoonful of mushroom mixture. Moisten edges with egg white, fold over opposite sides to form a triangle, press edges together tightly. Twist two ends of triangle up and over to form "ears".

Place into boiling water and gently boil for 5 minutes. Add to beet soup.

LITHUANIAN CHRISTMAS MUSHROOM COOKIES

Grybai is the Lithuanian name for these treats.

1 cup honey
 ½ cup sugar
 ¼ cup butter
 4 tablespoons burnt sugar
 2 eggs
 ¼ cup sour cream
 4 cups flour
 1½ teaspoons baking soda
 1 teaspoon each: ground cinnamon, cloves, ginger, nutmeg, cardamon, grated lemon rind, orange rind.
 8 ozs. ground candied lemon
 8 ozs. ground candied orange

Heat honey to boiling. Place 4 tablespoons sugar in a small skillet and heat until liquified and amber-colored. Immediately add to heated honey and stir. Add sugar, butter, sour cream, spices, rinds and candied fruits. Let cool to lukewarm. With a wooden spoon beat in eggs. Sift flour with baking soda and add to mixture. Refrigerate for 2 hours.

Divide dough in half. Form half of the dough into mushroom caps of various sizes, rounded on top and flat on the bottom. Make an indentation with finger tip in flat side for insertion of stem. Place flat side down on cookie sheet.

From the rest of the dough, form 1-inch long stems of various thicknesses to correspond to mushroom caps. Wrap each stem in brown paper, leaving ends open. Place on cookie sheet, lapped side of paper down. Bake caps and stems at 350 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes. Cool. Enlarge mushroom cap indentation with the tip of a knife. Dip thin end of stem into icing and fit into indentation. Allow to dry, preferably overnight. Ice flat side of caps and stems with white icing. Sprinkle several poppy seeds around bottom of stem.

Ice mushroom tops with chocolate icing.

ICING:

3 egg whites
 ½ teaspoon cream of tartar
 1 pound powdered sugar

Beat all ingredients at high speed until thick. Add 2 tablespoon cocoa to half of the icing and beat well.

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self-braced egg
- put a spoon-
holders close
with egg white, fold over opposite sides to
form a triangle, press edges together, tight-
ly. Twist two ends of triangle up and over
to form "cap."



"Lietuva brangi—"

Kapočius photo

with this wish for the New Year

May we Lithuanians,
scattered over the globe,
bridge all that separates
us and strive to establish
both unity and power
among ourselves to help
our people who live
in Lithuania today
achieve the independence
vital for the survival
of Lithuania

BRIDGES' Editor

Demie Jonaitis

and Administrator

Fr. Peter Baniunas,
O.F.M.

**Holiday
Greetings
to you**

from
Bishop P. Baltakis, O.F.M.
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