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A NATO Candidate...Blessed George Matulaitis...Help for Lithuania's People

P E R S P E C T I V E S

One of the privileges of living by the ocean is being able to hop into the car, ride by bike, or (if one's endurance needs to be tested) walk the mile and a half to its shores. We always know that home is just a minute away.

I suppose that's why we choose odd hours or uncommon moments in our day to nestle ourselves on the sand or on a warm bench by the inlet. The best times seem to be after the crowds have rumbled and tumbled home after 3:00 in the afternoon, or on a Sunday after Mass. Either with our children or alone, we seem to gather up the peace and contentment of the ocean in a little bundle and bring it home with us.

Those times help to work out the extra energy my sons might have. The kids battle the waves with boogie boards or with their own fierceness. They dig trenches to hide in or tunnels to castles and forts that disappear with a far-reaching wave.

Sometimes, my children just sit quietly watching every wave unfurl on the shore. They slowly empty fistfuls of sand onto their legs and breathe deeply the sea air. They feel peace within themselves and I am thankful.

On the other hand, my husband and I will time our walks on the sand after 7:00 in the evening, to be able to watch the sun set and the boats return home to dock. We talk, reflect, solve, and plan. We return home bringing with us the ocean's mist on our clothes.

When the boys join us, the ocean has a way of engulfing us into its seagull-filled sounds, its salty heaviness, its fresh aromas, and its calming lulls. The day's battles, arguments, and non-stop going here or there is whisked away. All that is left are four people holding hands, walking ever so slowly along a line that separates the tranquility that the ocean brings and the routine that the land delivers to its dwellers.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

B R I D G E S

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Raimondas Pučkorius, from Kretinga, completed this way-side cross (rūpintojėlis) during the ten-day Smithsonian Folk Life Festival in Washington, D.C., in July.*

Photo by Audronė Pakštas

With . . .

- ✓ a growing economy,
- ✓ a stable government,
- ✓ and a cooperative, peacekeeping military. . .

Lithuania is ready for NATO.

But, is the U.S. ready to support Lithuania with an invitation into NATO now?

(See page 4 for the story)

Regina Narušis

LITHUANIA: A Serious Candidate For NATO

In May of this year, the United States Senate approved adding Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Nine more countries are pushing to be invited. Slovenia, Romania, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia are considered by many as serious contenders.

Slovenia has Italy's support and argues that Slovenia will provide a land bridge from Italy to Hungary, which would otherwise have no border with any other NATO country. Romania has France's support. Romania argues that it can be the bulwark against instability from the former Yugoslavia and provide access to the Black Sea. What about Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia?

Integration into NATO is essential to the national interests of the Baltic countries as seen by their people. The Baltic Nations are strategically important to the Alliance because of their growing economic potential and favorable geographic location for trade. They are also able to provide early warning of any trouble for the Alliance. To leave them out would hamper their economic development, and their and Europe's security.

Some U.S. Senators feel they wish to delay

further expansion to see how well the three already invited countries perform, how much the current expansion will cost, and how Russia might behave before addressing further expansion. Such a position is short-sighted. Stopping the expansion now or even delaying it will, no doubt, leave the Baltic countries and much of Eastern Europe under the cloud of Russia's sphere of influence. NATO's goal should be a truly secure and reconciled Europe, permanently linked to America. As Dr. Brzezinski appropriately said, "Baltic membership in NATO will assist Russia to define itself as a nation instead of an empire" that we all need to fear.

The U.S. Administration claims the process of enlargement is ongoing and the "door is open" to all countries that meet NATO standards. The U.S. and Baltic Charter, signed last January in Washington, supports the efforts of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia to join the Alliance. Marc Grossman, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, reiterated U.S. support for Baltic NATO hopes at the Senate European Affairs Subcommittee hearing held on July 15th. He stated, "We want the U.S. to be a

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champion of the integration of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into European and Trans-Atlantic institutions." Senator Biden, at the same hearing in his opening remarks, asserted that "among the new independent states, the three Baltic countries have emerged as the most successful economically."

On Jan. 4th, 1994, Lithuania was one of the first countries in Central and Eastern Europe to apply for full NATO membership. Most people in the know are ready to admit that Lithuania is ready to be invited to join. Lithuanians support NATO membership, as shown by the recent polls. Lithuania has a pro-reform parliament and government. It recently elected as president a man who spent most of his life in the U.S. working as an American civil servant, and is now engaged in completing economic reforms in Lithuania. Lithuania has stable democratic, civilian control that meets all membership criteria of Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty; to wit a non-military minister of defense, two free presidential elections, and a multi-party system. Inflation is under control with a GDP growth rate which rose to 6.4% in 1997.

Like Poland, its bordering neighbor, Lithuania adjoins Russia only on the Kaliningrad enclave. There is virtually no discrimination against the smaller Russian minorities in Lithuania.

In fact, it has a good human rights record. It has no border disputes and has relatively good relations with Russia. When Poland becomes a member, it will support Lithuania's membership.

Lithuania is fundamentally restructuring its armed forces and has doubled its defense expenditures to 1.5% of its GDP. Within a few years, it expects to have a 24,000 man army organized into four divisions with a 250,000 man reserve. One of the combat divisions will be a rapid deployment force available to NATO on 24 hours notice.

Lithuania has continued to participate in international peacekeeping operations which serve the European community and the United Nations: UNPROFOR – Croatia from August 1994 through February 1996; IFOR – Bosnia-Herzegovina from February 1996 through December 1996; and SFOR – Bosnia-Herzegovina since December 1996.

On May 5th, 1998, Lithuania's Parliament passed a new national defense law intended to bring the country's military up to NATO standards. Lithuania believes in total and unconditional defense of its freedom. If international politics was entirely fair, Lithuania should be in a separate category eligible for consideration as a serious candidate in the second round of NATO enlargement. ◆

Good Impressions. . .

From ELTA News Agency at www.elta.lt

Strobe Talbott, U.S. Under-Secretary, praised Lithuania's progress while visiting Lithuania in early July, 1998. He told journalists, after meeting with President Valdas Adamkus, Seimas Chairman Vytautas Landsbergis, Prime Minister Gediminas Vagnorius, Foreign Minister Algirdas Saudargas and Defense Minister Česlovas Stankevičius, that United States was happy to have such a friend

as Lithuania in this important part of the world.

Talbott relayed his message of support for Lithuania as the four-track US-Baltic Partnership Charter read. He noted that NATO was changing; therefore, the doors of NATO would be open to all countries worthy of becoming its members, including Lithuania. Talbott emphasized that the U.S. also supported Lithuania's

(can't on next page)

efforts towards membership in the European Union and the World Trade Organization.

He stressed the significance of the Baltic Challenge 98 military exercises held in Klaipeda in July; the role of Lithuanian peacekeepers in former Yugoslavia; and the formation of the Baltic peacekeeping battalion BALTBAT. Talbott added that successful reforms in Lithuania is "a merit to Lithuanian people and its state leaders."

On the other hand, Talbott did not give a straightforward answer to the question whether good relations with Russia would help Lithuania to join the North Atlantic alliance before two other Baltic States. He noted however that he would not like to distinguish any of the three Baltic states, and added that he knew about the continually improving Lithuanian-Russian relations. This was confirmed by a recent visit of by Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov in Vilnius.

Talbott also mentioned the important economic event -- the Williams International Co.

investments in Lithuania -- precedes a "strategic and very important goal". This company proposed to buy a 33 percent stake in three basic energy-related oil supply, trade, processing and transit enterprises. The Lithuanian government expects to earn at least \$250 million.

Premier Gediminas Vagnorius thanked the U.S. administration "for its consecutive efforts in strengthening security in Europe and the Baltic region." He emphasized that it was very important for Lithuania to receive positive recommendations from the European Commission this year. The decision to avoid inviting Lithuania to start negotiations would be a political one, not an economic reason. He said many experts gave favorable evaluations of the Lithuanian economy and that it met the requirements for the first-wave candidate standards. If Lithuania were not invited either to NATO or to the EU, this would be considered a "doubly hard blow for regenerating democratic Lithuania," Vagnorius concluded. ◆

BALTIC CHALLENGE '98

From ELTA News Agency at www.elta.lt

The flags of Lithuania and 10 foreign countries represented in the Baltic Challenge International exercises were hoisted in the Klaipeda 7th dragoon battalion at the official opening of the military exercises on July 20th, the largest in Europe this year.

Lithuanian Prime Minister Gediminas Vagnorius, Defense Minister Česlovas Stankevičius and U.S. Ambassador Keith Smith took part in the ceremony. There were also Lithuanian Army Deputy Commander-in-Chief Colonel Valdas Tutkus and U.S. Marine Reserve Colonel James Haynie. Participants taking part in the exercises were lined up in the square of the battalion.

The Baltic Challenge navy exercises began July 10th. The U.S. Navy brought five trained dolphins to the Baltic Sea to demonstrate how dolphins help search for mines and other explosives. Other exercises included individual training of soldiers and final stage exercises according to a scenario imitating the situation after an earthquake.

At the same time military medical services had their own exercises with U.S.S. **Comfort** -- the largest sailing hospital in the world -- taking part. About 5,000 troops, 24 airplanes and helicopters, and 16 vessels from Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Sweden, Norway, Hungary, Finland, and U.S.A. took part in the maneuvers.

This year Baltic Challenge '98, held under the initiative of the U.S., is the third and last exercises under this name. In 1997 and 1996 they were held in Estonia and Latvia, correspondingly. ◆

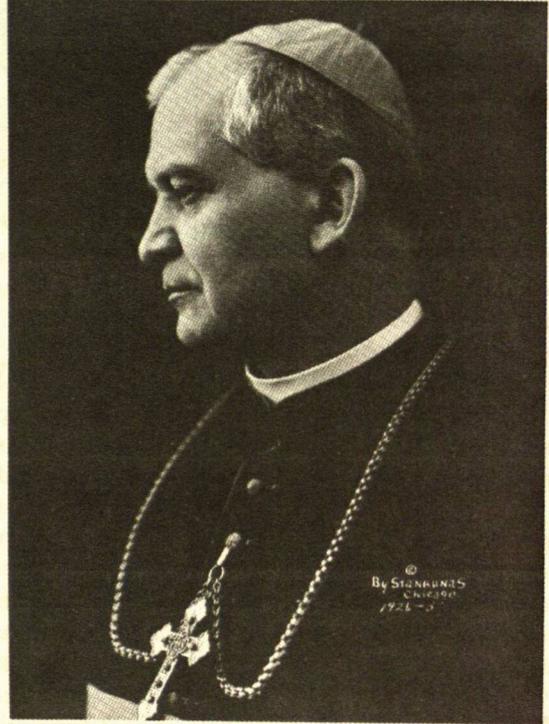
Sister Ann Mikaila

THE LIFE AND WORK OF BLESSED GEORGE (JURGIS) MATULAITIS

As the twentieth century draws to a close, we cannot help but to reflect on the people and events that it has brought us. Ours has been a violent, turbulent century with more than its share of sorrow and suffering. It has also had its share of goodness – especially the radiant goodness in lives like that of Maximilian Kolbe, Edith Stein, Brother Andre, Solanus Casey, Mother Teresa, Padre Pio, and many others. Some of these extraordinary people have already been recognized by the Church for their heroic Christian love, and others will probably be recognized in time.

On June 28, 1987, Archbishop Jurgis (George) Matulaitis was beatified by Pope John Paul II. The Pope spoke of him as a special gift for the Church and the Lithuanian nation. His life was full of suffering, hardship and trials of all kinds; yet, it was abundantly blessed by God and bore fruit during his own lifetime and after his death. His vision of God working in and through the human person revives our hope in our power for good.

Blessed George Matulaitis' personal motto, taken from the words of St. Paul, his favorite saint, was: "Overcome evil with good." He remained faithful to this ideal despite great personal cost. In the end, both friend and foe had to admit that he *had* overcome. In his obituary, a priest friend expressed what many had experienced; Matulaitis "had a smile for everyone –



***“Overcome evil
with good.”***
*Blessed George Matulaitis’
personal motto, taken from the
words of St. Paul,
his favorite saint.*

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for his friends and supporters and for his enemies as well."

Shortly after his beatification, great things began to happen in Lithuania, his native land. In October of 1988, the Soviet government allowed the Lithuanians to display their own flag and use their own language. Lithuanian Catholics were allowed to celebrate Christmas publicly for the first time. The Cathedral in Vilnius was returned to the faithful. It was here that Blessed George was installed as Bishop of Vilnius on December 8, 1918.

Many healings and other graces have been obtained through the intercession of Blessed George, both in Lithuania and elsewhere in the free world. During his lifetime, he had special compassion for the sick; since, he suffered from an incurable illness most of his life. The sorrows and sufferings he endured deepened his faith in the loving Providence of God, which never abandons us in our need. His favorite prayer was, "*I kiss the hand of Providence; I entrust myself completely to your guidance – lead me, O Lord.*"

EARLY LIFE

George Matulaitis' life spanned two centuries – the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th – a period which molded our own era. He was born in 1871 in Lithuania. At that time, Lithuania was part of the Russian Empire: a dark age without religious, cultural or political freedom. Young Jurgis (George) learned his native language at his mother's knee, but at school he was taught in Russian.

He was a country boy, and life on his parents' farm was good. Sorrow dimmed his childhood

when he lost both parents by the age of ten. His older sister, Emilija, looked after him. In later life, his heart always went out to children and orphans.

At an early age, he fell ill with tuberculosis of the bone; although, it was diagnosed only much later. His illness interfered with his schooling, and he had to drop out of high school. Walking on crutches, he helped with the farm work. It was only through the kindness of an older cousin, a teacher in Poland, that he was able to fulfill his secret dream of entering the seminary.

Blessed George completed his seminary studies in Poland, and it was here that his last name was changed to Matulewicz. As an exemplary student, he was sent to continue his studies at the Theological Academy in St. Petersburg. Here he was ordained a priest in 1898 and received his Master's degree in theology. Among the students he was known as a quiet, friendly, and pious young man with a formidable intelligence.

He went on to Switzerland where he completed his doctorate in theology at the University of Fribourg in 1902. He was especially interested in apologetics; the branch of theology concerned with the defense of Catholic doctrine. His dissertation on Russian Orthodox theology showed a bent for ecumenical dialogue. He had also become proficient in languages; Polish Russian, French, and German. He was an expert Latinist, as well.

With such great intellectual gifts and a heart burning with enthusiasm to work in the Lord's vineyard, it seemed that his young priest would do great things. Already he was filled with compassion for the persecuted Church in his own country

and throughout the lands ruled by Russia. He could see how the Catholic Church was oppressed and hampered in every way: religious orders were expelled, closed down, and persecuted; the hierarchy was pressured to conform with government demands and its control; and the faithful were not allowed to worship in their own language and were penalized for engaging in the most harmless religious activities.

THE WAYS OF PROVIDENCE

Matulaitis' first assignment was that of seminary professor in Poland. However, he was unable to continue this work for long because of illness. In a small hospital on the outskirts of Warsaw, he lay in a general ward because he had no money. The situation seemed hopeless, but it turned out to be a time of grace and spiritual growth. He did not complain about being bedridden, but wrote to his spiritual director, Fr. Honoratus Kozminski, a Polish Capuchin, "*I am very content in the hospital. The nurses take good care of me and other people are also kind. Perhaps the Lord God visits me with illness because I am happy in this world – otherwise I would not know what affliction is.*"

He would have probably died if not for the kind offices of a high-born lady and member of a secret religious community. She heard of his plight and took him back to her school where he was given expert medical attention and good food until his health improved. In this kindness, Matulaitis recognized the finger of God.

His own compassion for the sick was based on real insight into

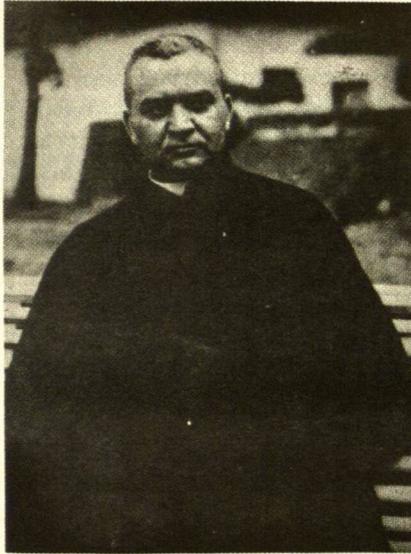
their sense of frustration. He would console them by saying, "If you are seriously ill and bedridden, do not worry that you cannot work. You already have something to do – to bear the pain and discomfort of your illness patiently and peacefully...Suffering in the spirit of Christ is very worthwhile. Our Savior never accomplished so much as when he appeared to be doing nothing – on the cross."

When he recovered somewhat, he agreed to be chaplain at the girls' school run by his benefactress, Cecilia Zyberg-Plater. He taught religion and was often brought to class supported by two people. Sometimes he would limp in on crutches. Even after many years, the students remembered this young priest; his radiant personality, what he said to them, and his encouragement to use their talents and education for the good of others.

COMPASSION FOR THE POOR

Since his student days, Matulaitis had been interested in social reform and in practical methods of improving the life of the working people according to the principles set down by Pope Leo XIII. At the University of Fribourg, he had studied the leading Christian authors on social reform. In Russia and elsewhere, he had seen the appalling conditions in which urban workers had to live and work. Something had to be done to help these people under Catholic auspices; otherwise, they would be drawn toward atheistic socialism and revolution. From 1904 to 1907, Matulaitis focused on social action.

Father George Matulaitis,



Blessed George at Bielany during World War I. The Polish Marians had a monastery and an orphanage (later turned into a school) here.

Photo courtesy I.C.C., Putnam, CT.

along with a like-minded colleague and Polish priest, Fr. Marcel Godlewski, organized a Catholic Workers' Association in Warsaw. Several thousand workers joined and it proved to be very successful. Matulaitis cooperated with the Christian Democrats who were also concerned with the welfare of the urban workers. For a time, Matulaitis edited their paper, *The Polish Worker*.

In Poland, this movement was considered to be very modern, and many noblemen and landowners disapproved. Enough of the clergy and laity were enthusiastic to keep Matulaitis busy giving talks and conducting seminars on social questions. Both in Poland and in Lithuania, he was instrumental in organizing a series of lectures on social thought and reform. Matulaitis was one of the key speakers presenting

the teaching of the Church on property ownership and the rights of the workers.

In the fall of 1907, Matulaitis was invited to teach sociology at the Theological Academy of St. Petersburg. Not only the students, but also members of the faculty attended his lectures. A number of listeners became social reformers in their own countries.

Matulaitis' interests in social questions and social reform were never merely theoretical. He was moved by deep compassion and real understanding of the plight of the worker. He knew firsthand what it meant to be poor, dependent on others, humiliated by a lack of the bare necessities. He knew too that no pastoral ministry would be effective unless it was also concerned with improving the living conditions of those who were being evangelized. Matulaitis appealed to his fellow priests, "As living conditions change and the spiritual and cultural level of the people also changes, new problems and difficulties arise in the field of pastoral ministry; new tasks confront us. As life moves forward, it presents new problems. We must look for new methods and solutions to deal with them...As the life of the people flows on, so must the pastor be the living water of the Gospel, always flowing outward to refresh his flock."

During this period, Matulaitis was also acting as spiritual director and advisor for various underground religious communities for women founded by Father Honoratus, his own mentor. Father George revised their Constitutions, consulted with their superiors, gave conferences, and helped indi-

viduals through the confessional. He began to realize how much the Church needed new religious communities in order to survive oppression by hostile governments and the crisis of faith brought on by new philosophies and movements.

WORKING FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

In 1909, while he was still professor at the Theological Academy, 38 years old, with a promising career ahead of him, Matulaitis made a momentous decision. He decided to become a religious – to follow more closely in the footsteps of Christ. Having received permission from Rome, he made the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in a private chapel in Warsaw.

At the same time, his close friend and fellow professor, Pranciškus Bučys, was received into the novitiate. This was the beginning of the revival of the Marian Congregation. Closed down by the Russian government, it had only one surviving member. Matulaitis was convinced that God was leading him to resurrect this dying community and infuse it with new life.

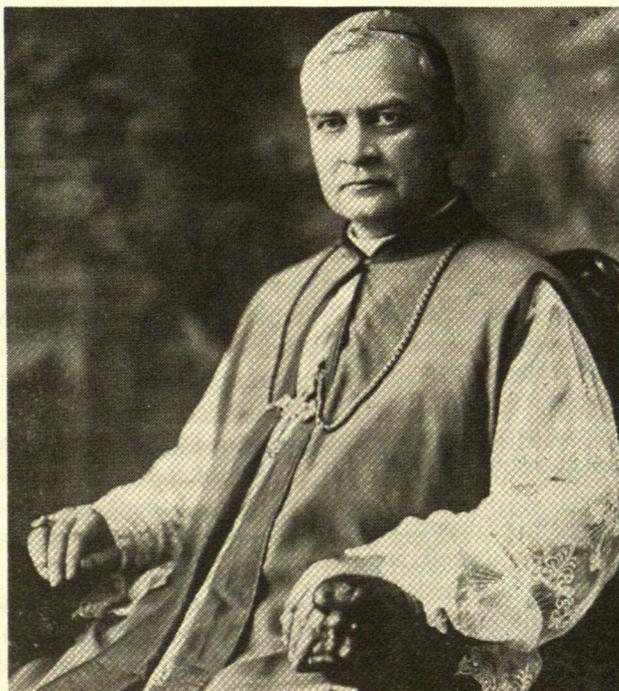
The Marian Fathers were well known to him; they worked in his parish church at Marijampolé in Lithuania. He had been baptized by one of their generals. Now he resolved to revive and prepare them for an apostolate in the modern world. Matulaitis gave up lecturing on sociology and taught dogmatic theology instead. He began to rewrite the Constitutions and at the same time, directed his two novices. In the fall of 1910, he began to keep a journal in

which he recorded his thoughts, inspirations, and resolutions. (These journals were later used during his beatification process.)

His heart burned with a desire to expend himself for the kingdom of God – the Church. He felt that it was vital for him and his fellow religious to take the risk of evangelizing and prepare the people to evangelize in turn. With the rise of modern philosophies and movements, he could see that people were being influenced to abandon their faith. He wrote in his Journal, *"Our concern is with all humanity with the needs of the universal Church. We should be willing to hasten to any place where there is an opportunity to do something for the greater glory of God...In a special way we must direct our attention toward the vast territories of Russia and*

Siberia, where so many souls have strayed from the fold because there is no one to guide them; toward America with its noisy lifestyle where it is so easy for people to forget their spiritual needs." (Journal: Jan. 25, 1911)

His idea was to build up a modern, mobile religious community dedicated to the apostolate. He was convinced that the religious and laity must work together to bring the Gospel to every home. In 1911, Matulaitis was elected superior general of the Marians and remained in this position until his death. He was also novice master; since, they were so few. That summer, the novitiate was transferred to Fribourg, Switzerland. St. Petersburg proved too dangerous because the Russian secret police had been conducting



Blessed George Matulaitis as Bishop of Vilnius — 1918 to 1925.

Photo courtesy I.C.C., Putnam, CT.

raids and searches for secret religious organizations. Under cover of the University of Fribourg, Matulaitis hoped that the novitiate would be safer and grow more rapidly.

Blessed George's work continued during good times and bad. In 1913, he and two young Lithuanian Marians traveled to the United States to start a mission in Chicago. In 1915, unable to leave Poland because of the war, Matulaitis gathered the Polish Marians together at a monastery outside Warsaw. This was the beginning of the Polish province. During the first year of Lithuania's independence, Matulaitis went to Lithuania to restore the Marian monastery in Marijampolė and start a novitiate. In the fall of the same year, he founded a Lithuanian community for women, the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, popularly known as the Sisters of the Poor. Several years later, he founded another religious community for women in Belorussia, the Servants of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. All these communities are still active.

A GOOD SHEPHERD

Despite his own wishes to remain a simple religious, in the fall of 1918, George Matulaitis was appointed Bishop of Vilnius by Pope Benedict XV. He was consecrated in Lithuania at the Cathedral in Kaunas on December 1st, and the installation ceremonies took place in the Vilnius Cathedral on De-

cember 8th.

He was not well known to the people of Vilnius and was very much aware of his mission's difficulty. In his inaugural sermon, he presented himself sincerely to his flock, *"I stand before you a stranger and therefore, first of all, I ask one thing of you – to regard me as the servant of Christ who has been given to you to show you the way to heaven and to guide you to eternal happiness. From now on we shall live together as one big spiritual family of which I am to be the father and head as we move for-*



Archbishop Matulaitis (center) being met at Grand Central Stations in Chicago by a group of priests and two Lithuanian American girls — Bernice Žiedas and Bernice Peporiunas on June 11th, 1926.

Photo courtesy I.C.C., Putnam, CT.

ward along our wearisome spiritual journey."

His vision of unity and harmony proved extremely difficult to realize in these turbulent times. During his time as Bishop of Vilnius – 1918 to 1925 – Matulaitis had to contend

with six different civil governments; some of these were openly hostile to the Church and its hierarchy. His large, ethnically mixed diocese was seething with unrest: the people were fearful, food was scarce, and political passions ran high. Lithuanians, Belorussians, and Poles were all striving for independence. He wanted all of his flock to live in peace and harmony, and did his best to reconcile persons and nations.

Because of his refusal to take sides or to promote the interests of one political party or nation against another, Bishop Matulaitis was criticized, attacked, and denigrated. Yet, he remained gracious and cordial even to those who publicly vented their antagonisms or snubbed him personally.

In the summer of 1925, Matulaitis' resignation from the diocese of Vilnius was accepted by Pope Pius XI, his friend and colleague. Poland had signed its Concordat with the Vatican and Vilnius was going to be made an archdiocese. Matulaitis was well aware that he had to withdraw. He quietly left Vilnius and went to Rome where he hoped to establish the Marian generalate and a house of studies. However, the Pope made him titular Archbishop of Adulia and appointed him Apostolic Visitor to Lithuania.

Archbishop Matulaitis returned to his native land and settled in the Marian monastery in Kaunas. His first task was to prepare a project

for the formation of an independent ecclesiastical province for Lithuania. When the project was approved by Rome, Lithuania was divided into five dioceses. Matulaitis officiated at the consecration of the five new bishops in 1926.

In June he sailed to the United States to attend the International Eucharistic Congress in Chicago. He also visited 92 Lithuanian parishes and gave over 200 homilies and speeches. Everywhere he was welcomed with great enthusiasm. The railway car in which he was traveling was even painted violet in his honor.

Back home, he began work on the Concordat between Lithuania and the Vatican. He did not live to see its completion. He died after an appendix operation in Kaunas on January 27th, 1927 at the age of 56.

Thousands of people came to mourn him; all the church bells pealed a final farewell. Every national group recognized the enormity of their loss – he had been a father to all. Thousands attended the funeral. He was buried in the crypt of the Kaunas Cathedral and, in 1934, his remains were transferred to his own parish church in Marijampolė. On the occasion of his beatification, a special repository was made for the remains and an altar constructed. This has now become a national shrine where Lithuanians and people from other countries come to pray.

After the Archbishop's burial, groups of prayerful people constantly visited Marijampolė's Church to not pray for him but, to pray for Blessed George's intercession with God. The testimonies of many people were collected for the

"If I may ask, Lord, let me be but a kitchen rag in your Church, a rag used to wipe up messes and then thrown away into some dark and dirty corner. I want to be used up and worn out in the same way, so that your house would be a little cleaner and brighter."

Journal: January 13, 1911

cause of his beatification. Nearly 900 letters attesting to unusual spiritual and temporal graces received through prayer to Blessed George were used during the process of beatification. Blessed George's compassion for the sick and suffering continued.

A MAN OF PEACE

Blessed George Matulaitis was a man of peace and also blessed with a special love for the Church. He was able to be a peacemaker between persons and nations because he had attained inner peace which radiated to all who came in contact with him. This was both a gift and an achievement that took many years to fully develop.

At the end of his life it was evident that Blessed George lived in undisturbed peace. The last resolution recorded in his Journal was, *"To pray more for those from whom I have experienced any kind of evil."* (Journal: August, 1925). His favorite Scripture quotation had always been, *"Non in commotione Spiritus Dei."* (The Spirit of God cannot be felt in turmoil.)

Blessed George's love for the Church was the great passion of

his life, but it was a peaceful passion that stretched his heart and broadened his vision. Even as a young priest, Blessed George was already filled with great compassion for the persecuted Church. In an article he wrote addressing his fellow priests, published in the U.S. in 1903, he said,

"The Church has never had to suffer more, it seems, than in our times. If we turn our eyes to our country, we can see that things are much more difficult for us than before – our beloved Church is weighed down by no small burdens."

All of his natural and spiritual gifts were used by God for the growth of the Church in his own country and in other lands. He wanted to be as a candle that burns out on the altar – consumed by the fire of love and the heat of hard work for the glory of God. ♦

Jeanne Dorr

The Story of. . .

Lili

...Alcoholics Anonymous in Lithuania

As you read this article, you will notice there are none of the usual photographs that accompany my columns. I have often written about the destruction alcohol has brought to so many Lithuanian families, but this article will show you how the people in Lithuania are trying to help each other as well as themselves. It is the final interview I had from my 1996 trip to Lithuania.

It was by chance, while standing under an awning during a torrential downpour, that I met an American Lithuanian woman in Vilnius who told me she was in Lithuania for a seminar hosted by Alcoholics Anonymous. It really surprised me because I never quite realized that international organizations were active in Lithuania. Yet I should have known better; Lithuania is rapidly moving into the next century. I asked her if she could give me a contact name and number – that she did. I was due to this chance meeting with a stranger that I met Lili.

It was one of those weeks in Lithuania where it seems that heaven forgets to turn off the water faucet. The sky was black, the rain was coming down in sheets, and the umbrella wouldn't open. While I was waiting to cross the street, I was in water up to my ankles. I guess the sewer couldn't handle the overflow. Every car that passed by, splashed me. By the time I entered the large, gray building, my looks and mood were water-logged. After entering three or four offices (naturally, they were the wrong ones) I finally found the office of Alcoholics Anonymous. I was warmly greeted by

Lili, a beautiful young lady, and my mood quickly changed. Not knowing anything about this organization, I assumed she was simply employed by them. It was not until we started our interview that she told me she was a recovering alcoholic.

Lili gave me a brief history of how Alcoholics Anonymous came to be in Lithuania. A man named Romas was desperate for help with his drinking problem. He tried many doctors, both those of the body and of the mind, but he just couldn't stop drinking.

He heard about an organization in America which helped people like him, and he sent a letter asking for advice. They sent him their literature in English, and he learned it from cover to cover. Not long after that, an international delegation from Alcoholics Anonymous traveled to Russia. They stopped at the Vilnius Airport, and telephoned Romas asking if he needed assistance setting up a program. He was delighted with their offer of help. They asked him to find two or three people who shared his problem. At the first meeting, on June 30th, 1988, with only three or four people present, Alcoholics Anonymous was born in Vilnius. This first meeting was to be the first day of their lives.

At the time I conducted the interview, there were 29 groups in Lithuania with about a thousand recovering alcoholics participating. They meet in building, halls, and private homes. They meet in all districts of the city, and the meeting hours are staggered to accommodate as many people as possible.

JEANNE DORR is a member of the Board of Directors of Lithuanian Orphan Care, a branch of the Human Services of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. She is also a Social Studies teacher in New Jersey.

Vilnius has the largest number of groups – six. On Wednesdays, they conduct their meeting in English. All major cities have at least one chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous. They accept no funding from outside sources, and are totally self-reliant. They follow the steps of the organization.

The opening of a new chapter is considered a birthday – the first day of the participant's life without alcohol. Visitors from all the chapters, as well as guests from as far away as Latvia are invited. The members were especially proud of the working seminar which was held in Lithuania in 1996. Lithuania hosted delegates from many countries, including America. For one week, they stayed by the sea with each of the 320 delegates paying their expenses. Although the weather was uncooperative, the delegates returned to their homes with wonderful memories. Lili explained how there is a place for everyone at the meetings and that all are welcome.

Then there was Lili's story. This beautiful, young woman was a serious music student who never had any desire to drink. Her friends would urge her to take a drink at social events so that she would 'lighten up' and 'have a good time'. But Lili had no interest in alcohol; it didn't even taste good to her. Yet there were times when she felt morose, almost as if there was a dark cloud hanging over her head. She felt there was something missing from her life; she lacked a feeling of peace.

Lili was an excellent musician, and when she finished her professional training, she obtained a place with a prestigious orchestra. She enjoyed her work, but the pressures to maintain her position were ever present. The stress began to mount. Many of the orchestra members enjoyed drinking as a way to relieve their tensions. Lili would join them, too. At that point, she realized she enjoyed alcohol. She wanted to have friends and to be accepted by the group. After a few drinks, she felt happy; she started to forget her problems, and the stress in her life lessened.

The more she drank, the happier she felt. Of course, this was only while she was drinking. The same problems and the same stress were there once her head cleared. At first she took a drink after rehearsals. Then she needed a drink when she came home at night to help her fall asleep. She would wake up physically sick and depressed. Soon she needed a drink after breakfast to help her face the

day.

Lili had a real desire to stop drinking because she knew it was destroying not only her career, but her life. She asked God to help her stop, to show her the way to quit. Every time she thought about making a genuine effort to quit drinking, she would start rationalizing to herself why she should wait just a little while longer. She would stop tomorrow, she would wait until after her birthday, after Christmas, after the next wedding or christening she would be attending. There was always a reason to put off the decision that would change her life.

Eventually Lili left the orchestra and was working in a school. This was when she hit rock bottom. The summer vacations were just too much for her. They allowed her too much time for herself. For two weeks she drank morning, noon, and night. These were two lost weeks in her life. She couldn't remember anything; she lost control of her life. When her sister found her, Lili was shaking so badly, she couldn't hold a cup in her hand or dress herself. Her sister insisted on taking her to a doctor. Lili would not hear of it. The doctor might think she was a drunk, and Lili couldn't bear the thought that someone would think of her in that way.

Her sister struggled with her and finally got her into the car. The doctor took one look at Lili and put her into the hospital. It was exactly what Lili feared most – she was stuck in a ward with a group of drunks. These were the kinds of people Lili scorned when she herself did not drink. She would look at them and wonder why they couldn't control themselves. How could they let themselves go like this? Certainly, Lili was not a person like this.

Lili thought that all she needed was for the doctors to examine her and give her some pills to help her stop drinking. She soon found out there was no magic pill. She had to do it all on her own.

Lili told me that being in the hospital was a truly rewarding experience for her. It was during those days she spent talking to the other patients that her eyes were opened, and they were opened wide. These weren't drunks; these were people the same as Lili. They faced problems they thought were insurmountable without the help of a drink, just like Lili.

Alcohol was not selective in who it destroyed – no one was spared. These were mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters. They were young and old, educated and uneducated, from the cities and from the

villages. They all had their own story to tell. Some had been in the hospital five and six times, and they told Lili there was no magic pill.

When Lili left the hospital, she felt fortunate to have met the other patients. She still had her drinking problem but, now she knew she wasn't alone. She wasn't the only person in Lithuania who couldn't face her problems.

After she was discharged, someone told her about Alcoholics Anonymous, and Lili went to a meeting. She told me that this was truly the first day of her life. It was here that Lili learned she had an incurable illness that attacked her body, her mind, and her soul. It is not a disease that destroys only the person who has it, it destroys the lives of all who love that person. Lili made a commitment at that first meeting, and she has kept it. She now feels the inner peace she could not find for much of her adult life.

Lili spends much of her work day on the tele-



This statue stands at the birthplace of Bishop Motiejus Valančius (1895 — 1935) in Nastrėnai, Žemaitija. Valančius was a proponent of the abstinence movement. School groups follow his anti-alcohol message to this day and flock to his birthplace for poetry readings of his works.

Photo: Ramunė Kubilius

phone. She offers encouragement to those people who are about ready to "slip". She's very good at this because she understands their problems; she's been there herself. She didn't learn the answers from a textbook, she learned them from her own bitter experiences. Lili has a glow about her which is contagious to all she touches.

Lithuania is fortunate to have such dedicated people who are trying to make a difference with this devastating problem. At the time of my interview, Alcoholics Anonymous still hadn't reached in to the countryside where the problem is so desperate. They are encouraging young people to visit Alcoholics Anonymous, to sit in on their meetings, and to ask questions.

Lili explained to me that when a person is desperate for help to stop drinking, they will find their way to Alcoholics Anonymous. She told me of a man who walks many miles from a village to the city to attend meetings. He was ready to face his problem. With the help of those who had been there, he was successful.

I would like to thank the American Alcoholics Anonymous for helping the Lithuanian people triumph over this destructive demon that is destroying their lives and their families.

Our word of thanks to Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. for providing the publications and materials for Lithuania. Sincere gratitude to Romas who had the determination and foresight to seek help not only for himself but for others who shared his addiction.

A most sincere thanks to Lili for sharing her personal story with me. Her enthusiasm turned a dark, cloudy day onto one filled with sunshine and the knowledge that here is help and hope for those who want to help themselves.



Rūta Aidis

Domestic Violence Victims

Find **Hope** at . . .

THE VILNIUS WOMEN'S HOUSE
AND CRISIS CENTER



The Vilnius Women's House and Crisis Center (Vilniaus Moterų Namai – Krizių Centras) began its work on August 15th, 1996, following more than three years of activities and programs raising the issue of domestic violence against women in Lithuanian society. The Center resulted from co-operation between the Women's House organisation in Lithuania, Oslo University in Norway, and women's crisis centers in Denmark. The Crisis Center project has been financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The main activities of the Center have been:

- A help line since November 1996 that provides information and support to victims of domestic violence. The help line is run by the Crisis Center's staff and volunteers who have received training in counselling.
- Personal consultations with lawyers, psychologists, and medical doctors, if necessary.
- The creation of a temporary shelter for women and their children in cases where the home environment becomes too dangerous or intolerable.

In order to find out more about the Center, I spoke with Asta Paulikaitė, a dedicated volunteer at the Crisis Center. She was able to tell me more about the Center's activities as well as about her own background and motivation to volunteer at the Center.

Asta Paulikaitė was born in 1970 in Šilutės rajonas of Lithuania. She came to Vilnius in order to study at the Economics Department of Vilnius University, where she obtained a degree in Economics

in 1993. She is currently working as director of advertising for the local Vilnius television station. Asta began volunteering at the Crisis Center at the end of 1994.

Asta said that most of the funding for the Crisis Center has come from Norway and Denmark. With their financial assistance, an apartment in Vilnius's old town was purchased and renovated. In addition, both donors have played an instrumental role in transferring knowledge and know-how regarding women's crisis centers to their Lithuanian counterparts. In October 1996, some of the Crisis Center's staff were able to visit crisis centers in Norway. In June 1997, Asta, together with other volunteers and Crisis Center staff, spent a week visiting crisis centers in Denmark. Unfortunately the Center has not been able to generate support from the local municipality.

Currently, the Center's apartment has been renovated, and theoretically the space is available as a shelter for battered women. Some practical problems remain; such as, lack of central heating and a lack of funds for food and other necessities. At the moment, most women counseled choose to live with friends or relatives instead of coming to the Center.

The Crisis Center staff consists of a full-time paid director and 2 part-time staff -- a secretary and an accountant. The rest of the input comes from volunteers. Currently there are 10 volunteers who regularly volunteer at the Center, and 20 others who

RUTA AIDIS is a Fulbright Fellow doing research on female entrepreneurs in Lithuania. She may be contacted at Vienuolio 12-4, 2001 Vilnius, Lithuania, or by email -- raidis@hotmail.com.

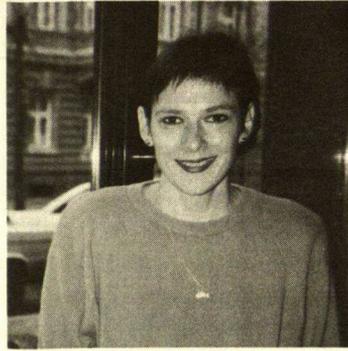
will become active in the future.

The Help Line is staffed from 9am to 9pm. The calls are varied. Many callers are seeking legal consultations, especially regarding divorce. There is a lot of ambiguity regarding the legal code since some laws have changed, while others remain the same as they did under the Soviet system. Currently parliament is drafting a new family code but, until the legislation is completed and approved, the ambiguity regarding old/new laws will continue.

All prospective volunteers take part in a 42-hour course. Asta found this training to be very useful because it taught her valuable skills; such as, listening fully to a woman's problems before considering what actions to take or before giving any advice. The course also provided the opportunity to meet with police and other organizations that come in contact with battered women. Though little assistance currently exists for women who are victims of domestic violence, Asta learned about other organizations, such as those that defend children's rights, can also provide assistance in situations of domestic violence. If the battered woman has children, then much can be accomplished working through organizations that focus on children's well-being. A violent domestic environment is detrimental for a mother and for her children.

Asta also commented that the reason little attention is paid to the issue of violence against women is because it is rarely reported to the police or other law enforcement agents. Often the police are not interested in getting involved, and in the case of rape, the registration process is time-consuming and difficult. As a result, most cases go unreported. Many of the current practices continue to be influenced by Soviet-mentality. During the Soviet period, statistics on domestic violence did not exist -- society as a whole viewed domestic violence as a 'private issue' to be solved or dealt with 'privately', and often the woman was held to blame for its existence. She was seen as not fulfilling her domestic duties. Asta noted sadly that if someone is being beaten on the street or in the stairwell, then the police will intervene. If a family member is being beaten at home, then the police would rather not even hear about it.

Though Asta was lucky enough not to encounter any violence within her own family, she was aware of many instances in which women's rights were



Asta Paulikaitė, a volunteer at the Vilnius Women's House Crisis Center.

Photo: Rūta Aidis

being compromised and she saw the need for a crisis center. When Lithuania gained independence, the possibility to become involved in a social cause suddenly became a reality. Asta was very excited about the possibility to have the choice to become involved in a cause she felt was worthwhile. This was her main motivation to become involved in the Crisis Center as a volunteer. Personally, she feels that by providing legal information as well as psychological support, a woman will be better equipped to not only defend herself but also fight for her rights.

In the future, the Crisis Center hopes to continue building its international contacts and networks. Asta herself was able to participate in the week-long visit to Denmark's crisis centers. She found it to be very useful; since, it helps the Vilnius Women's Crisis Center build on existing experience and keeps the Center from 'reinventing the wheel'. In addition, it is hoped that more crisis centers will open their doors to women in other Lithuanian cities. A future challenge for the Center remains the question of funding. At the moment, even funding for fixed costs, such as electricity, telephones, and heat, remains limited.

In order to protect their women they are trying to help, the Vilnius Women's House and Crisis Center uses a secret address. Those interested in contacting the Center can write to or call:

Vilnius Crisis Center
 PO Box 1748
 2000 Vilnius
 tel. +370 2 61 63 80
 email Asta Paulikaitė: 74247@nelte.lt

CURRENT EVENTS

SHOP "LITHUANIAN-MADE" HERE IN THE U.S.

By Regina Narušis

At last Lithuanian products have reached the United States. Look around many of the major stores, and Lithuania's exports can be bought readily.

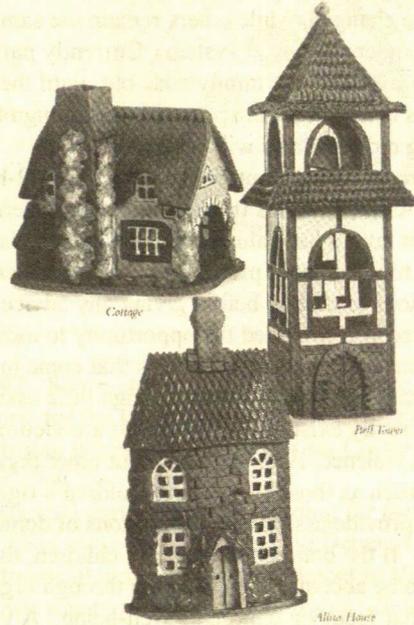
Last Christmas, I received a gift from a non-Lithuanian friend of a "Lithuanian Candle House". The candle house was purchased in Barrington, Illinois at a gift shop. These candle houses were imported from Lithuania by Baltic Designs, LLC of Orinda, California. The tag attached to them explains the uniqueness of each house; entirely made by hand, using a straight-edged knife and wooden stylus, local craftspeople create the houses without using machinery of any kind. "Each house is hand-painted and is as unique as a snowflake." The artist's name is stamped on the bottom of each house. This is truly a lovely gift.

If you visit your local liquor store, don't be surprised to find Lithuanian Vodka (which is said to be the finest) and Utena beer. The unique taste is reminiscent of the microbrewery beers popular in the United States.

While shopping at your fine department or clothing stores, look for the label, "Made in Lithuania". My husband was shopping at our local West Dundee, Illinois shopping center at Carson's, when he found wonderfully-made men's suits and sports jackets made in Lithuania.

Similarly, beautiful Lithuanian-made linen dresses, skirts, and blouses can be found in the women's departments. The clothes are stylish and well-made. The owner of this particular boutique told me that she could not keep the store stocked with the Lithuanian products. They were too quickly sold!

Other Lithuanian-based businesses are expanding to the West. Lithuanian Airlines is interested in making regular flights available between Lithuania and the U.S. They are in the process of preparing



These candle houses are not only sold in gift shops but also through catalogs, such as SIGNALS — a catalog supporting the WGBH Educational Foundation and public television program development. Their toll-free telephone number is 1-800-669-9696.

an Air Transportation Agreement between the two countries. Lithuania is seeking the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration's technical assistance to prepare Lithuanian civil aviation specialists for work in the U.S. air service market.

In the food industry, Lithuania is looking to export its cheese, such as gouda, parmesan, tilsit, and Lithuanian varieties. As soon as the producer is able to work out favorable tariffs, expect to see these Lithuanian-made cheeses in your supermarket.

There are, I am sure, many other products available from Lithuania in your local stores. Look around for that "Made in Lithuania" sticker — we're going to see more of them with time. ♦

CONFERENCE ON BALTIC ISSUES

translated by Ramunė Kubilius from DRAUGAS, 6/24/98

The 16th Conference on Baltic Studies, "Baltic Issues in International Perspectives", was held in Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana on June 19th to the 21st. The conference, sponsored by the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS), was attended by approximately 270 participants and featured about 120 papers and presentations.

Attendees came from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Iceland, Australia, Germany, Britain, Sweden, France, and the Baltic countries. Presentations were divided into subject sections: History; Linguistics; Business/Economics; Literature; Aesthetics, Culture and Communication; Geography; Political Science; Democratic Reform; and a student session. The papers were presented by a diverse group of academics and students, Balts and non-Balts.

Topics ranged from overviews on the future of business, civil service, ethnographic studies, tourism, theater, to currently published literature in the Baltic countries. Insights and research were shared about the difference between nationality and citizenship; the political power of wayside crosses and the Catholic Church during Soviet occupation; and the continuing residual influence of the KGB after the re-establishment of independence in the Baltic region and other former Communist countries.

After the opening reception, there was a literary evening entitled, "Baltic Voices in North America", featuring published Baltic-American writers who write in English, such as Agate Nesaule, Linda Kivi, Irena Rusėnas, Antanas Šileika, and Karlis Jirgens. The banquet also featured a performance by the newly-formed ethnographic group "Delčia", from Chicago.

The new AABS president is Thomas Palm of Portland State University. Their address is: AABS Business Office, 3465 East Burnside Street, Portland, Oregon 97214-2050. AABS also has a Baltic office in Riga, Latvia, publishes the Baltic Studies Newsletter (edited by Sandra Milevska), and the Journal of Baltic Studies (edited by Saulius Sužiedėlis).



THE LITHUANIAN WORLD CENTER CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY

from the Lithuanian World Center Administration

During the last ten years the Lithuanian World Center, located in Lemont, Illinois, has developed into a beacon of Lithuanian culture.

The Center houses a Lithuanian school – whose growth still continues. The Center is also open to Lithuanian organizations, concerts, meetings, balls, and socials. Lithuanian choirs and folk dance groups rehearse nearly every weekday. Other activities on the premises include; the Blessed George Matulaitis Mission, offices of the Lithuanian Foun-

dation, the World Lithuanian magazine, the Lithuanian World Community headquarters, and the Human Services Office of Lemont's Lithuanian-American Community.

From its beginning, the Center became the largest facility outside Lithuania dedicated to Lithuanian culture. Volunteer work and generous donations help sustain the Center. They will be celebrating their anniversary on September 26th this year.

For more information about the Lithuanian World Center, write to the Center at 14911 – 127th Street, Lemont, IL 60439, or call 630-257-8787.

CONSECRATION OF CATHEDRAL HIGHLIGHT FOR PITTSBURGH GROUP

From the Lithuanian Citizens'
Society Newsletter, July 1998

The July 11th consecration ceremonies of the Cathedral of The Visitation of Mary in Vilkaiviškis, Lithuania was the highlight for 23 Pittsburgh Lithuanians. They were members of the Lithuanian Citizens' Society who had generously donated their closing parish's pipe organ and the Stations of the Cross.

The Society's parish, St. Casimir's Church, was one of seven Catholic Churches on the South Side of Pittsburgh which were merged into four. The 90 year-old church was officially closed in 1991. Members of the Society were determined to save something from St. Casimir's for posterity and as a reminder of this very active Church.

After months of hard work: paper work for approvals, disassembling, and packing, the set of Stations and pipe organ were delivered to the Cathedral. The Cathedral was built as a replica of the former one destroyed during the war and is on the same grounds. The pipe organ was installed in the Cathedral replacing the one destroyed. The Stations, one of three in the world, were too large for the spaces open in the Cathedral. They were installed in the Cathedral of the Blessed Trinity in Pilviškiai.



STASYS LOZORAITIS REMEMBERED

By Viktoras Nakas



June 13, 1998 marked the fourth anniversary of the death of Stasys Lozoraitis, Jr., one of Lithuania's central figures in the struggle for independence, and a veteran diplomat who served as its first Ambassador to the United States, following the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1991.

A monument to the popular leader, who was dubbed "The President of Hope" (Vilties Prezidentas) during his unsuccessful candidacy for Lithuania's highest office in 1993, stands in Kaunas near Independence Square.

Designed by sculptor Juozas Slivinskas, the monument was dedicated on September 8th, 1996. In the background is the house in which Stasys Lozoraitis and his family lived before the Soviet occupation of Lithuania.



STAY IN A QUIANT LITHUANIAN COUNTRY HOUSE

By Rūta Aidis

Lietuvos Sodžius, the Lithuanian country house, has been the subject of numerous poems and song. Many noble Lithuanians have come from the Lithuanian countryside. It was the countryside that preserved Lithuania's national heritage and cultural traditions. Also, it is only in the rural areas that the distinct charm of Lithuania's regions -- Dzūkija, Žemaitija and Aukštaitija -- becomes visible.

A group of Lithuanians living in the countryside formed a rural tourism association (Lietuvos Kaimo Turizmo Asociacija) which has been recognised by the European rural tourism association. The association's main function is to provide its members with up-to-date information, as well as set standards for agrotourist or rural tourist accommodations. The association sets a quality rating system and certification. It also insures and provides roadside markers for more easy access to accommodations in remote areas. In addition, attention is paid to providing good sanitary conditions: modern and clean toilet and shower facilities, saunas, etc.

The Association encourages each rural tourist location to specialize and provide specific services and recreation possibilities, such as: fishing, boating, horseback riding, indoor sports facilities, organic farming, teaching crafts skills, the times of local festivals, and more. Each country house owner is expected to know about its locale's history.

The Association has high requirements for its members. It expects them to be polite and courteous to guests, uphold certification standards, and be communicative and friendly in foreign languages.

In order to promote rural tourism, the Association has created information centers in all the major Lithuanian cities. These centers provide more information, as well as photos and some video materials on different accommodation possibilities.

Although Lithuania is located in Europe's center, it boasts 150 times cleaner, less polluted air than can be found in the average European city. The Association helps tourists see the vast forest areas where wild boars and foxes still live. In addition, the unique landscapes, clear rivers and lakes, and the ever-present countryside charm entice visitors. For further information about the Lithuanian Rural Tourism Association, please contact:

Regina Sirusienė, president
K. Donelaičio 2
3000 Kaunas Lithuania
Tel./fax +370 7 22 64 72

AUTO INSURANCE LAW STILL NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED

From ELTA News Agency at www.elta.lt

The proposed Compulsory Traffic Insurance Law (similar to our automobile insurance) was approved in principal on July 16th, as long as some improvements and edits are made. The hottest issues discussed during the Seimas meeting were: the Lithuanian motor bureau fund - to be established under the law, transition period, size of insurance contributions, and insurance terms.

Presently auto insurance in Lithuania is volunteer; although, the growing number of drivers and car owners prefer to take this kind of insurance. The main purposes of the compulsory insurance for car owners and drivers are to regulate insurance order, promote safe driving, state order of compensations of damage caused during car accidents, and secure owner's and victim's rights and interests.

With this law, victims of car accidents would have more guarantees that damage caused during an accident will be compensated. Insurance companies and the to-be-established Lithuanian Motor Bureau fund would assure compensation payments.

According to Lithuanian insurers' association data, the average compensation paid out by Lithuanian insurance companies for one driver or car owner stood at 4,000 litas (\$1,000) in 1997. While, the Lithuanian business paper, *Verslo Žinios*, revealed that damages due to car accidents in Lithuania amounted to 600 million litas (\$150 million) or 1.5 percent of the country's GDP. ♦



LITHUANIA'S STATEHOOD DAY SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS



One of Lithuania's Statehood Day events was the presentation of the Second Degree in the Order of Gediminas, Grand Duke of Lithuania (*Didžiojo Lietuvos Kunigaikščio Gedimino Antrojo Laipsnio Ordinas*) to Regina Narušis, Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. president.

President Valdas Adamkus is pictured presenting this honor to Mrs. Narušis for her work on Lithuania's behalf as a Lithuanian-American Community member on the July 6th occasion.

ART TREASURE DISCOVERERS RECEIVE HONORS

From the ELTA News Agency at www.elta.lt

Four museum specialists will be decorated with the honor of the Second Degree in the Order of Gediminas, Grand Duke of Lithuania (*Didžiojo Lietuvos Kunigaikščio Gedimino Antrojo Laipsnio Ordinas*) for discovering and protecting art treasure found 13 years ago.

The Cabinet decided to present the awards to the Director of Lithuanian Museum, Romualdas Budrys; monument specialist, Juozas Stasiulaitis; museum specialist Stasys Čipkus; and Kazys Napalys Kitkauskas, architecture department head at the Lietuvos Pily's (Lithuanian Castles) research center.

During Statehood Day (The Crowning of King Mindaugas), July 6th, the four men announced the existence of the cache. These men had shared the secret of the location in the Cathedral of Vilnius since March 27th, 1985. Until 1990, the Cathedral had been used as a Soviet art gallery. The sacred objects were recovered and then hidden in the Cathedral fearing Soviet confiscation. The men waited for a more stable government before publicizing their find.

The goldsmith treasure of the Vilnius Cathedral - estimated to be the richest art collection in Lithuania - consists of approximately 270 religious articles made of gold and silver with jewels: monstrances, chalices, reliquaries, archbishop's pastoral staff, and other riches accumulated during the centuries.

A LETTER FROM THE SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER

As of April 1, 1998, the BRIDGES subscription office has moved to 1927 West Blvd., Racine, Wisconsin, 53403.

Because we experienced difficulties in getting the journal edited and published in 1997, we added six free issues to everyone's 1998 subscription. Renewal, "we miss you", and final renewal notices are being sent to our current and past subscribers encouraging them to renew or to re-subscribe. If we don't hear from you, we'll understand that you do not choose to receive BRIDGES any-

more. Renewal notices had not been sent out for eight to ten months before the change in subscription managers.

If anyone has encountered a problem with their subscription, please let me know, and we will work it out.

I would like to thank Rasa Ardys-Juška, our new editor, for all her hard work and tremendous efforts in putting BRIDGES back on its feet. She has done and keeps doing an excellent job for us. With her help, we now have 200 more subscribers than we did in April.

I do have one favor to ask of our readers; if anyone is moving, please let me know, so that we may correct the addresses. I also ask that our readers let their friends and relatives know that

BRIDGES is back on track and consider subscribing. BRIDGES makes a wonderful gift!

Rasa and I have one goal in mind: we will provide a journal published to the best of our capabilities that will reach out to as many people of Lithuanian descent as possible. Thank you for your support!

*Ramas Pliūra, Treasurer, LAC, Inc.
BRIDGES Treasurer and Subscription Manager*

P.S. Thanks to all the subscribers who have added generous contributions with their renewal. This will help BRIDGES survive and to keep the subscription price low.

Save up to 46% on your long distance while you support your Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

Here's a way to support your Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. and save money. Introducing the new Lithuanian-American long distance partnership that gives you—

- 10.9¢ per minute day and night on long distance calls in the Continental US
- 6-second billings, no minimums
- Incredible savings over AT&T, MCI and Sprint
- Guaranteed Rate (\$3.95 monthly recurring fee)
- Competitive International Rates — only 79¢ per minute to Lithuania
- Advanced fiber optics
- Calling cards with enhanced services, 25 cents a minute and 6 second billing. No surcharge.

Per minute rate for calls to Lithuania	
Qwest	79¢
AT&T One Rate	\$1.23
MCI One	\$1.23
Sprint Sense II WKND	\$1.45

Qwest — a long distance provider known for its advanced fiber optics — has partnered with Innova Communications and The Lithuanian-American Community.

Together we are offering a long distance calling plan especially for you — our Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. members.



Your support means a lot. For every new account, Innova will contribute \$1.00 plus a residual to the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. every month. Every dollar counts.

Just sign the service request below and switch to Qwest today.

ICI/ Qwest 1+Long Distance Service Request

For Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

Customer Information

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: Day _____ Evening _____

Location Information

Main Telephone #: _____

Estimated Monthly Usage: \$ _____ (average monthly usage)

Secondary Numbers: _____ County: _____

Additional Services

Total Travel Cards Requested _____ Product #: 796

Check here for 800/888 service

Please send completed order form to:

ICI
505 N. Sam Houston Pkwy East, Suite 500
Houston, Texas 77060
Phone: 800.714.8783 • Fax: 281.260.0477

Service Authorization Customer is selecting Qwest™ as its sole long distance carrier, except where customer may select an additional long distance carrier, and hereby authorizes Qwest to act on its behalf to coordinate conversion of Customer's service to Qwest with the local exchange carrier (LEC). Qwest Communications is the long distance carrier setting Customer's rates. However, Qwest may elect to provide service via resale, in which event another carrier's name may appear on Customer's bill. There may be a one-time charge from the LEC for conversion to Qwest. Customer represents that the person signing below is qualified to authorize this long distance carrier change and that the information provided by Customer is accurate. Qwest service is provided subject to and in accordance with applicable federal and state tariffs and/or price lists. Not all services are available in all states.

Customer's Signature: _____ Date: _____

AGT# 589 Product # 846
Charge Code: 002 Network Field #550

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