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Lithuania's Cause for NATO...Traveling to Lithuania...Hope for Children

P e r s p e c t i v e s

Recently, my class and I took a field trip to Ellis Island. It was one of those educational type trips where students were to try to conceptualize what trials and tribulations the newly-arrived to the United States experienced.

Several children asked me what I thought these immigrants did after Ellis Island. "They probably felt alone and scared not knowing if they could survive here." they said. My first reaction was to agree with these thoughts, but I explained that many had relatives and friends who lived in different cities. Many immigrants, then later refugees or displaced persons, knew of communities, such as China Town, Little Italy, or the Lithuanian section of Marquette Park, in which their country's culture and language was duplicated so soothingly. These newly arrived people found solace and guidance there.

Times have changed. Ellis Island does not greet hopeful people anymore. Immigrants and refugees arrive by airplane with a green card in hand. They wander to a city or town they may have read about or a friend had written of. They involve themselves in becoming American.

Those who had been teachers, business managers, nurses, doctors, architects in Lithuania become construction workers, home health care aids, or house cleaners. They put aside what was...and settle for what is available because they lack guidance and friendly advice from someone who has been able to successfully combine both cultures.

Those of the Lithuanian communities still continue to carry on with schools, festivals, and social events. They may not be thousands strong in one sole area, but their contacts extend to all the nearby hamlets. The newly-arrived, may search them out when the need for their culture, language and guidance overwhelm them.

Lithuanian-American Communities have established Chicago's Seklyčia (Human Services Office), and a New York-based office to aid Lithuanians with information and establishing themselves here. Other cities see the merit of these practices, as Lithuanians arrive and disappear because they do not know where to turn. Yet, as a supportive community it is vital to expand to catch those who slip through the cracks.

One newly-arrived Lithuanian told me, "We are only one family of four hundred green card winners of 1998." After nine months in cultural isolation, they hungrily travel an hour to two hours to the nearest communities to visit, share, and learn from other Lithuanians. Where are the other 399 green card winners? How can we as a community or as individuals help them with choices and opportunities?

As a supportive community, we must continue to be the first to greet and guide our fellow Lithuanians — lest they seek solace from those who care not for who they are.

Rasa Ardyš-Juška

Editor

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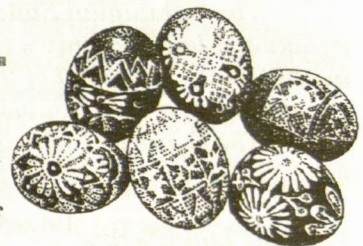
On the cover:

Lithuanian Easter eggs are nestled among birch trees in early spring.

Leading Into Easter

The week preceding Easter (Grand or Souls' Week) was a time for abstinence and cleansing. Preparation of ceremonial Easter foods began with margučiai (dyed eggs), which were believed to possess magical powers. These eggs were either decorated with intricate, wax-based designs or the designs were scratched into the already dyed eggs. Dyes were made from natural substances, such as onion skins, corn-flower petals, and beets. Cold foods were prepared for Easter Sunday — baked ham, goose, sweet cheese, breads, and cakes.

Source: *Lithuanian Customs and Traditions* by Danutė Brazytė-Bindokienė



Rasa Ardys-Juška

We Commemorate. . .

March 11, 1990

On March 11th, 1990, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania proclaimed the restoration of Lithuania's independence. During the next nine years, she emerged as a stable, growing, and motivated democracy. Meanwhile, Vytautas Landsbergis, the present President of Parliament and Lithuania's first President, emerged as the symbol of perseverance and conscience. The following is the official statement of "The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania Act on the Restoration of the Lithuanian State", written on March 11, 1990.

"The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, expressing the will of the Nation, resolves and solemnly proclaims that the execution of the sovereign power of the Lithuanian State, heretofore constrained by alien forces in 1940, is restored, and henceforth Lithuania is once again an independent state.

The February 16, 1918 Act of Independence of the Supreme Council of Lithuania and the May 15, 1920 Constituent Assembly Resolution on the restoration of a democratic Lithuanian State have never lost their legal force and are the constitutional foundation of the Lithuanian State.

The territory of Lithuania is integral and indivisible, and the Constitution of any other State has no jurisdiction within it.

The Lithuanian State emphasizes its adherence to universally recognized principles of international law, recognizes the principle of the inviolability of borders as formulated in Helsinki in 1975 in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and guarantees the rights of individuals, citizens and ethnic communities.

The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, expressing sovereign power, by this act begins to achieve the state's full sovereignty."

Vytautas Landsbergis
President
Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania

Liudvikas Sabutis
Secretary
Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania

Vilnius, March 11, 1990

(Source: *Lithuanian Independence: The Re-establishment of the Rule of Law* edited by S. Paul Žumbakis. Chicago: Ethnic Community Services, 1990.)

Regina Narušis

NATO's 50th Anniversary: What will be Lithuania's Role?



The United States will host the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) 50th anniversary in Washington, D.C. on April 23rd to the 25th. This Summit will commemorate NATO's success and plans for a larger and more effective alliance. On April 23rd, it expects to celebrate democracy with the first participation of leaders from the three newest members – Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. Yet, we Lithuanian-Americans wonder what future-affecting decisions will be made concerning Lithuania's status regarding NATO?

The expected Summit agenda will include: laying out a vision for NATO in the 21st century, updating its strategic concepts, addressing further expansion, developing capabilities to deal with threats from weapons of mass destruction, and deepening cooperation with Russia and the Ukraine. The matter of utmost importance to the Lithuanian-American community is NATO expansion. Will new countries, including Lithuania, be invited to join at the Summit, and what requirements may be imposed upon these countries awaiting invitation to join.

We hear that the door to NATO expansion is open and there will be a step-by-step process that will allow candidates to better prepare themselves. Those well-sounding words may be in fact the justification to postpone further enlargement. Delaying expansion would be a great mistake, as such action will only cause uncertainty and instability in Central Europe. The guidelines for NATO admission exist and should not be changed. The same guidelines that were used to admit the last three members

should be used to admit future members.

Lithuania applied for NATO membership and met the existing NATO criteria to be invited to join NATO. The majority of the Lithuanian people, all the political parties and government have chosen to join NATO. They see such membership as the means to guarantee their independence. Some feel that Lithuania is no longer in danger. Yet, during the first week of February of 1999, at talks about the 50th anniversary celebration among the allied officials, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gusarov made some startling remarks. He proclaimed that the expansion of NATO is the destruction of the existing world order, and further enlightened the participants that Moscow has drawn a "red line" on further eastward NATO expansion into lands of the former Soviet Union, such as the Baltic States. It is obvious that the Russian leadership is not about to accept the clear emergence of Lithuania as a free and independent nation.

The invitation of Lithuania to join NATO has now become a political decision. Lithuania has met NATO criteria to be invited. It is a parliamentary democracy, which has held free and fair elections since achieving independence in 1990. It respects human rights of its citizens, including the rights of national minorities. It has an independent judiciary. It has established a free market economy with good steady growth – 5.5% GDP in 1998 – and checked inflation – 2.4% in 1998.

Lithuania enjoys good relations with neighboring countries and has no major territorial or ethnic disputes with them. Lithuania has a good relationship

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with Russia, with the signing of a border treaty in October of 1997. It forged highly successful ties with Poland and has created joint cooperation institutions, including a Lithuanian-Polish peacekeeping battalion. Lithuania's army is not as large as Poland's, however it will be able to make a contribution to future NATO peacekeeping efforts similar to that of a smaller current NATO member as Luxembourg. They have already participated in NATO peacekeeping missions in Bosnia.

In April of 1998, the three Baltic States signed an agreement setting up **Baltnet**, a joint air surveillance network with NATO systems. Lithuania has about 8,200 men in its active duty armed forces and about 10,000 in the National Defense Volunteer Forces, a volunteer paramilitary force. Since 1998, the defense budget was \$156.1 million – about 1.5% of the GDP. By the year 2001, Lithuania is committed to spend 2.0% of its GDP for defense. Lithuania has also restructured its army, which is under civilian control.

What are the political considerations? Some say that because of Lithuania's geographic position, conventional forces cannot defend it. NATO, however, serves as a deterrent against aggressors. Let us not forget that Berlin was indefensible. Others do not wish to anger Russia. They feel Russia is

weak economically, militarily, and governmentally, especially due to President Yeltsin's frail health. Russian polls show that the Russian people are not upset over NATO's expansion to the east. Only the rulers are upset. Russia has to reconcile herself to the loss of her empire and needs to abandon her traditional drive to expand her subjugation of other countries. Appeasement and concessions only encourage the imperialistic Russian mindset. Expansion will block any realistic prospect of Russian imperialism – a concept too outdated to continue into the 21st century.

Many in Washington say that Slovenia, Lithuania, and Slovakia should be invited to join NATO in April at the Summit. Those same people assert that Estonia and Latvia, however, are not ready to be invited and that simultaneous admissions of all three Baltic countries might be too provocative for Russia. Estonia has been invited to the European Union. Lithuania borders Poland, soon to be a member. Admission of Lithuania first and at this time would be a logical step in the expansion process.

The key to NATO's future is the need for continued strong American engagement in Europe. The Washington Summit should reaffirm that central principle as a fundamental element of our vision of a stable, democratic, and peaceful Europe. ♦

From Washington, D.C.

Resolutions to Aid Lithuania's Cause for NATO

Word from Washington, D.C. arrived with resolutions of support for the Baltic States' inclusion into NATO. Congressman John Shimkus and his colleagues Congressmen Kucinich, Pallone, Pascrell, Knollenberg, Cox, and Jones introduced the House Concurrent Resolution 21 recommending that Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia be admitted to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on February 2nd. Sen. Durbin introduced a similar resolution to the Senate, Senate Concurrent Resolution 2, on January 20th.

Below is the wording of H. Con. Resolution 21; Recommending the integration of Lithuania, Latvia,

and Estonia into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Whereas the Baltic countries of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are undergoing a historic process of democratic and free market transformation after emerging from decades of brutal Soviet occupation;

Whereas each of these Baltic countries has conducted peaceful transfers of political power – in Lithuania since 1990 and in Latvia and Estonia since 1991;

Whereas each of these Baltic countries has been exemplary and consistent in its respect for human

rights and civil liberties;

Whereas the governments of these Baltic countries have made consistent progress toward establishing civilian control of their militaries through active participation in the Partnership for Peace program and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) peace support operations;

Whereas Lithuania is participating in the NATO-led multi-national military force in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (commonly referred to as "IFOR") and is consistently increasing its defense budget allocations with the goal of allocating at least 2 percent of its GDP for defense by 2001;

Whereas each of these Baltic countries has clearly demonstrated its ability to operate with the military forces of NATO nations and under NATO standards;

Whereas former Secretary of Defense Perry stipulated five generalized standards for entrance into NATO: support for democracy, including toleration of ethnic diversity and respect for human rights; building a free market economy; civilian control of the military; promotion of good neighborly relations; and development of military interoperability with NATO; and

Whereas each of these Baltic countries has satisfied these standards for entrance into NATO: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of Congress that –

- (1) Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are to be commended for their progress toward political and

economic liberty and meeting the guidelines for prospective members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) set out in chapter 5 of the September 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement;

- (2) Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia would make an outstanding contribution toward furthering the goals of NATO should they become members;
- (3) Extension of full NATO membership to these Baltic countries would contribute to stability, freedom, and peace in the Baltic region; and
- (4) Upon complete satisfaction of NATO guidelines and criteria for membership, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia should be invited to become full members of NATO."



It is vital that the Senate and Congress become aware of American citizen support for these resolutions. It is also important to note that only Lithuania is up for admission into NATO at this time. Thus, it is vital that it be known that support for admitting Lithuania as a solitary country, rather than together with Latvia and Estonia, is commendable and essential. To wait until Latvia and Estonia are invited will only assuage Russia's argu-

ments – a non-NATO country which has been displeased with Lithuania's intentions and desire for NATO membership.

Please record your support for H. R. 21 and S. R. 2 by writing to your Senator and Congressman. You may also phone 202-224-3121 to ask your representatives to co-sponsor John Shimkus's resolution.

Edward W. Baranauskas

Lithuania: *A Witness to Change*

I visited Lithuania many times during the Soviet era, and also in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Empire. The conversion from a state controlled economy to a free enterprise system seemed almost impossible after fifty years of occupation by a ruthless power. The rigidly controlled police state did not encourage much hope for a free and democratic society, either. But, like the old saying goes, nothing is forever.

I was a witness to the past, and would like to mention some of the changes that have taken place since independence was restored, and that are still going on today.

Going to Soviet Lithuania

How difficult those days were for the tourist. A travel agency made the itinerary and all arrangements, including obtaining a Soviet visa. Tourist groups were limited in number, and if there were not enough reservations in any group, that particular tour was cancelled. With the exception of the Christmas and New Year's Day holidays period, no tourist groups went to Lithuania from October to March.

I recently discovered a memorandum sent to me, about twenty years ago, by a travel agency arranging one of my



Mr. Edward Baranauskas stands with Aušra, a salesperson, at a General Electric appliance store.

Photo from E. Baranauskas

tours. Among the reminders stressed, was the importance of filling out the Currency Declaration Form correctly when arriving in the USSR. There was no limit to the amount of foreign currency, in cash or traveler's checks, being brought in, but the exact amount had to be entered on the form. Each time money was exchanged at an approved state agency, the entry had to be noted on the form, too. The exact amount of money had to be declared when leaving the USSR. If the figured didn't add up when, and if, the Customs officer decided to examine the form, then the tourist was faced with a problem.

All of these rules were obviously meant to discourage any-

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one from giving dollars to relatives and friends. Soviet law strictly forbade citizens to have any foreign currency in their possession. If caught, a train ride to Siberia and the gulag was most likely.

We take religious freedom so much for granted. It may be difficult to believe, but the Soviet Constitution actually guaranteed it. In reality, however, government policy of atheism prevailed and all aspects of religious life was discouraged and not tolerated.

Tourists were affected as well; for they were permitted to bring in only one prayer book and one rosary for personal use. I will always remember the year I tried to go through Customs in Moscow with three prayer books and three rosaries. They went through my luggage thoroughly and took away two prayer books and two rosaries. They didn't notice the extra rosary around my neck. I was surprised to see some in my group who didn't want to bring anything religious in nature for fear of getting into a hassle with Customs.

The Soviets had a phobia not only about religion, but also about anyone attempting to bring in printed matter; such as books, magazines, and newspapers. I visited Lithuania seven times during the Soviet years and know what some of my fellow tourists had to go through during a Customs search. Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction and what I am about to tell you is not fiction – for it could only happen in a Communist controlled society.

A friend of mine bought a copy of Time magazine in Helsinki while waiting for the connecting flight to Moscow. After landing, he tucked it into his jacket pocket, and a Customs officer found it during a search. He was asked why it was not written on his Customs Declaration Form, as the instructions stated. The magazine was taken away from him, and he was asked to step aside and wait. An hour later he was permitted to rejoin the group, and the magazine was given back to him. Apparently nothing slanderous about the Soviet Union was found mentioned in the magazine.

On another trip, a gentleman was going to take two Lithuanian-language newspapers published in the United States to give to his relatives. I told him that it would be foolish to even try it, but he insisted “they had a right to know what is going on in the world”. Sure enough, Customs found them, and he was asked to go into a separate room for question-

ing. The rest of the group and I, who had already cleared Customs, waited for about an hour in the bus that was going to take us to the hotel. Finally, he joined us. He confided to me that he warned not to try it again; for if he did, he would be put on the next flight back to Helsinki.

Visitors to Lithuania were more closely scrutinized by Soviet Customs than those going elsewhere, from what I observed. On the flights from Helsinki and Stockholm to Moscow that I was on, for example, I noticed that most passengers seemed to breeze through Passport Control with very little, if any, baggage inspections. On the other hand, the story was different for those going to Vilnius.

In December of 1981, I was going to visit my relatives during the New Year's holiday. I was sitting in the lounge near the Finnair boarding gate at JFK waiting for the flight to Helsinki. Relaxing with me were about twenty students from two universities, Texas and Oklahoma, going to the Soviet Union for a two-week tour during their winter school break. Accompanying them were two professors and one of them stood up to advise them not to bring any books or magazines. The previous year, he went on to say, there were about the same number of students. All of them passed through Customs without any luggage inspection, except for the last one. He, unfortunately, had a book on Soviet Jewry. Customs then called back all those who previously went through to have their luggage opened and examined thoroughly. I guess those college students received an education on how the Soviet system operated.

The quality of Soviet-made goods, from what my relatives told me, was not that good. Imported products from Western countries were not available locally, and the only place to get them was at the state owned and operated store known as the “Dollar Store”. Purchases could not be paid for with Soviet rubles, but only with money from western countries, which became known as “hard currency”. The other option was “plastic money”, the credit card issued by Visa or American Express, as examples, with a limit of no more than 300 dollars, as I recall. I had to keep every receipt just in case Customs wanted to know where and how much money was spent.

Private ownership of any business was illegal. There were no state-operated automobile dealer-

ships. Without going into detail as to how and where a Soviet citizen could get a car, the most convenient place was, once again, the "Dollar Store" -- provided if some fortunate Lithuanians had relatives from the West. I remember a gentleman from Canada presenting the saleslady with a stack of traveler's checks in front of two, smiling, young ladies. I later learned that their uncle was buying each one a car.

Foreigners were not permitted to travel outside the city limits of Vilnius unless with a tourist group and if apprehended by the police, would be escorted back and fined. This had happened to two tourists during one of my trips, and for that reason I was a little concerned when my relatives insisted on taking me for a ride around the countryside one afternoon. I noticed that practically every freshly painted farmhouse was the same color, brown. I thought this was rather unusual, and I asked why this color was so popular. It was the only one available at the local store, they told me. I did breathe a sigh of relief when I was returned back to the hotel without incident.

Leaving the Soviet Union was sometimes more nerve-racking than entering, as I found out more than once, and so did others. One year, my relatives asked me to take a glass jar of honey to my mother as a surprise gift, and I agreed. In addition, I was given two Lithuanian silver coins from the prewar years as souvenirs. I would always treasure them, I told my relatives who were fierce Lithuanian patriots.

Leaving the workers' paradise by way of Lenin-grad was memorable. Customs demanded to know what was in the glass jar, and I replied, honey. Because it was not clear and transparent, but a cloudy white in appearance, it was taken away from me to be x-rayed. In the meantime, my luggage was thoroughly searched, and my silver coins were found hidden inside. I was then invited to go into a room where I faced an Army officer and was told to sit down. He demanded to know where I got the coins and who gave them to me. I thought fast and told him that I received them from a young man outside the Hotel Lietuva in Vilnius in exchange for a pair of blue jeans.

"You're lying," he snapped. "Tell me the truth." I told him I was telling the truth. After an hour of questioning, I stood by my story. I asked him if he

was going to send me to a prison camp in Siberia for telling the truth. He gave up and let me rejoin my group. My silver coins were confiscated, but the glass jar of honey was returned.

Going to a Free Lithuania

All of these stories are now a part of history. Going to Lithuania today is relaxing and only an American passport is required. I can fly directly to Vilnius without first landing in Moscow or Lenin-grad (now St. Petersburg), and without being subjected to stressful searches by Customs. What a difference -- like night and day.

Times have changed dramatically since I was there two years, and will probably keep changing. New car dealers now sell and service such imports as Ford, Toyota, Chrysler-Jeep, and a new showroom was being built for the popular Audi. I didn't see many Soviet-built automobiles, at least not as much as I used to. They appeared to be like an endangered species. My relatives told me that the Russians come over, buy them, and drive them home. They buy them mostly for spare parts. Automobiles now clog the streets of Vilnius and its adjacent highways. Rush hour traffic is a headache. Parking space is another problem for the apartment dwellers.

Visitors have no concern now in obtaining either Kodak or Fuji film, including processing, at the many photo stores scattered throughout Lithuania. I remember Soviet days when tourists were advised to bring enough film to last the entire tour. Unfortunately, some underestimated their needs, took a chance, and bought some Soviet film. After returning home, they were disappointed to see that nothing came out. Apparently, only Soviet chemicals are compatible with Soviet film.

I was walking along Žemaitės gatve in Vilnius with one of my relatives when I was amazed to see a sign in one of the store windows advertising General Electric products. I retired from GE fourteen years ago, and just had to see what my former employer was selling. I introduced myself to a charming young saleslady named Aušra. She was surprised to know that I was a GE pensioner from the United States.

I was invited to browse around the showroom and noticed two appliances made in the USA (at Appliance Park, Louisville, Kentucky). Both were

“Side-by-Side, No Frost” refrigerators and one was priced at 5,200 litai (1,325 US dollars). I couldn’t help but wonder how the average Lithuanian could even afford it. I noticed that the other appliances, complete with the General Electric monogram, were made in Great Britain, Denmark and Sweden. Apparently the company must have some sort of a working agreement with those European manufacturers, whereby they share in the profits if they use the GE label.

From what I learned, a popular item is the combination washer-dryer, about three feet in height. It can fit nicely in a small apartment and was priced at 3,199 litai (800 US dollars). Before leaving, Aušra was very kind to give me a catalog showing GE products described in English and printed by GE Appliances Europe, Brussels, Belgium.

I never thought that I, during my lifetime, my children and grandchildren would ever see the collapse of the mighty, powerful Soviet Union and witness the emergence of a free and independent Lithuania. But, it did happen. As the people of Lithuania are about to face the challenges of the new millennium, I am confident that even more changes for the better will be in store.



Mr. Baranauskas stands by a store sign reading — “A summer gift for you! Special prices on washing machines!”

Photo from E. Baranauskas



Life in Lithuania under the Soviet regime in 1983 was frozen at a stand still. Horse drawn carts and Soviet-made Zhigulis mingled in the streets of Vilnius.

Photo from R. Ardys-Juška

Laima Sinkūnaitė

The Pažaislis Monastery —

A Baroque Pearl

When one thinks of baroque style architecture, Italy and her magnificent churches pop into mind. Yet the most unlikely place in Europe is the sight of a wonderful baroque pearl of the 17th century – Pažaislis Monastery in Lithuania.

The main inspirer and the founder of this monastery was Christopher Zigmantas Pacas (1612 – 1684), great Chancellor of the principality of Lithuania, one of its wealthiest feudal lords. Pacas was a learned man. Besides studying in Ljezo and Cracow, he studied at the University of Perugia in Florence, Italy for eight years. He returned home to Lithuania with an idea. He requested and received permission from Rome to build a monastery and church for the Order of the Camaldose Hermits at Pažaislis near Kaunas.

The foundation and the corner stone for the church were consecrated in 1664. Two years later the church was consecrated. The document of foundation stipulated the 12 Camaldose fathers



must live in Pažaislis on the Hill of Peace (Mons Pacis, Latin). Lithuanian Father Jeronimas was the first prior.

Talented Italian artists commissioned by Pacas accomplished the execution of this magnificent monastery. Architect Joanes Baptista Frediani and, later, the architect's brothers Carlo and Pietro Putini designed the stately building. Florence artist Michael Archangelus Palonis painted the sanctuary, the paintings on the walls, and individual portraits. Sculptor Joannes Merli executed the stucco moldings, and Michael Volcet formed the sculptures of the sacred gate and the façade of the church. Painter Guiseppe Roses created the fresco of the cupola.

The source of inspiration undoubtedly was the complicated ichnographical program of the monastery and the church. Those programs or sets of themes surpassed other holy places, not only in Lithuania. The planning and the strict both side symmetry emphasize clear and exact hierarchical function of its sepa-

LAIMA SINKŪNAITĖ is the author of literature concerning The Pažaislis Monastery.

rate parts. This is the only example of baroque axial composition in Lithuania.

The center of the ensemble is the church, an original work of art. The facade is dominated by the hexagonal cupola, and towers in the angles and the middle concave part. Slabs of gray sandstone were used for decoration. The essential facade characteristic is its perpendicular inclination. Angular towers of the hexagonal drum harmoniously connects the silhouette of the cupola with the roof of the chapels. The highest point of the ensemble is the graceful cross, which crowns the hexagonal lantern. Rarely in baroque churches does the hexagonal space open so widely. However, four chapels placed around the entrance hall and presbyter optically enlarge the space in Pažaislis.

The light pouring from the cupola creates a beautiful view. Black and red marble were used to decorate the interior. The space was coordinated with colorful frescoes and white stucco moldings. The wall frescoes were painted in warm and soft tones. The arches were done in fresh and rich colors. Some 140 frescoes of different sizes survived in the premises. Each one is an independent work of art, which is included into separate cycles developed in more than one room. Everything is connected by the main theme – the Coronation of Mary. Mary's monogram is ciphered along the churchyard paths from the sacred gate to the portal of the church, and from the

doors of the north and south wings of the guest house to the gallery gate to the north and south buildings of the monastery.

The progression of the theme of Mary begins with the sculptural group called "The Visitation" in the facade of the church. The further development of the theme is concentrated on the inside of the church at the highest point of the longitudinal axis. The fresco called "The Visitation" is in the entrance hall, and "The Assumption" is in the choir area. "The Coronation of the Virgin Mary in Heaven" is the last fresco to complete the cycle and is found in the church cupola.

A secondary theme of saints begins at the Holy Gate with frescoes depicting Sts. Romuald, Benedict, Christopher, Francis de Sales, and Mary Magdalene de Pazzi. The theme culminates with a fresco in the cupola showing a circle of praying saints.

For a long time Pažaislis Monastery was famous for having the painting "Mary with Child", also called "Mother of Fair Love". Catholics especially venerate this painting. In 1661, Pope Alexander VII gave this painting to Pacas, who placed it in the church. The painting was placed in the Kaunas Cathedral Basilica in 1948 and never returned. In addition to this change in the church other events throughout its existence took their toll on this church and monastery. In 1812 retreating soldiers of

Napoleon's army robbed the monastery. In 1832, after suppression of the rebellion of 1831, the monastery was closed by order of Czar Nicolas the First. The Camaldolese were sent into exile and their property confiscated. The monastery was given to the Orthodox monks. In 1842, "The Assumption" Monastery was established. At that time, the décor of the ensemble was destroyed and changed. The Orthodox monks confiscated the biggest part of the valuable art and archives and sent them to Russia in 1914. After they left, German soldiers occupied Lithuania and established a military hospital in Pažaislis Monastery. By 1920, Mother Maria Kauptaitė, the foundress of the Sisters of St. Casimir, arrived from the United States with four sisters to settle and care for the ensemble until 1948. During the years of the Soviet occupation, the Monastery and Church was the central republican archive, a home for the elderly, a psychiatric hospital, and a tourist center.

From 1967 to 1992, the Kaunas State M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum owned the monastery; the research and restoration of the Pažaislis ensemble started at that time. From 1992 the Sisters of St. Casimir have settled back in the Monastery and Church to continue to restore one of the most valuable creations of 17th century mature baroque in Northeast Europe.

Jeanne Dorr

CHILDREN'S



Easter and spring are a time for rebirth and renewal. There may still be a chill in the air but there is hope that soon the trees will bud and the flowers will begin to bloom again. But how many children and how many families never have a spring because they have no hope.

For these families, their children will always live with excruciating pain. Their children will never run or catch a ball. They will never be able to be left alone, even for short periods of time, regardless of their age. These are the children who were born with horrendous orthopedic problems; these are the children who suffered terrible burns over much of their bodies. Thousands cannot be helped; they are trapped in their bodies.

For a very small fraction of these children, there has been a miracle. That miracle came to them through the Shriners' Hospitals in Chicago, Los Angeles and St. Petersburg. The miracle has also come through Lithuanian Children's Hope and the volunteers who keep the program going. Several years ago I wrote about my trip to Chicago and the children I visited there. I introduced you to the children and their parents. We talked about their hopes and their dreams. I also shared with you their fears.

I took my second trip to Chicago not too long ago. This time I wasn't hysterical about being forgotten in the airport. It's the strangest thing, I have no fear of flying to Lithuania alone, but the thought of traveling to Chicago is enough to cause me to lose sleep for a week. My mission was three-fold: to attend a meeting of the entire board of Lithuanian Orphan Care; to visit the children and their mothers

who were currently at Shriners'; and to visit with my dear friend Regina Svoba, whose daughter was one of those children.

My trip was uneventful -- although going home would be another story. When I arrived at "Seklyčia", the building that houses the Lithuanian restaurant as well as the rooms where the children and their parents stay, I found five children and their mothers. One child would be coming back from the hospital the next day, another would be going back to Lithuania in two days, and three new ones would be arriving from Lithuania the following week. Take my word, this is not a program where things are at a stand still.

The Volunteers...

Children's Hope was started in 1991 and is part of the Division of Human Services of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. In reality, Children's Hope and Lithuanian Orphan Care are "sister" organizations. The president of Children's Hope is Gražina Liautaud, and the day to day organization is in the capable hands of Birutė Jasaitis, as is every facet of Human Services.

Let there be no doubts, the heart and soul of Children's Hope are the volunteers who staff the program. All the money and all the organizational skills in the world cannot replace these faithful people who drive into the city day after day and make these children and their parents part of a family. It is the volunteers, who at their own expense, drive the children to Shriners' Hospital, which is a difficult drive and almost an hour each way.

It is the volunteers who sit with the parents during the surgery, sometimes as long as fourteen or

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

fifteen hours, not saying anything, but just holding the parents and drying their tears. Imagine these parents being so far from home and family, many unable to speak English, and knowing the seriousness of the surgery their children are undergoing.

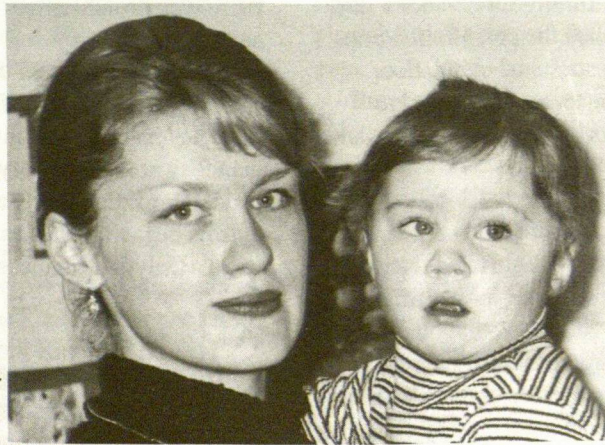
These are the same volunteers who spend hours translating back and forth from Lithuanian to English and the reverse in the hospital. It is the volunteers who help not only with the physical therapy but also with the mental therapy. These children suffer a tremendous amount of psychological damage and many hours of therapy are necessary, as well as physical therapy.

The philosophy at Shriners' is that it is as important to heal the mind as well as the body. All of this falls on the shoulders of the volunteers. Yet when I spoke to some of them, they all told me the same thing -- they receive tremendous pleasure and gratification from helping the children and their parents.

Since 1991, more than 100 children have abandoned their wheelchairs and walked to the plane on their return trip to Lithuania. For others, they were no longer ashamed or embarrassed to look in the mirror because of disfiguring burns. Is there any greater satisfaction than to see the smiles of these children? Is there any greater satisfaction than to hear them laugh? But the volunteers also hear their cries of pain. How much agony can a small body tolerate? How much agony can a mother endure as she sees her child's body wracked in pain?

The Children...

I would like to introduce you to some of the children I met in Chicago. Since it was my second trip in several years I knew what to expect. Above the Lithuanian restaurant are the offices of Human Services. I use the term "offices" rather loosely, as the room contains several desks, a computer, a few phones, a fax machine and more volunteers. It also contains reams and reams of



Kotrina and her mother.

All photos from Jeanne Dorr

papers. Around the bend from the "office" are the bedrooms of the mothers and children, all containing donated furniture and donated linens. There is a kitchen where the parents take turns helping, as well as a combination playroom/television room.

For some of the children this can be home for as long as two years. For most, many months will pass before they see their families in Lithuania. Holidays will come and go for the mothers without seeing the children they left behind.

Yet always, making life more bearable, are the volunteers. Children and their mothers will be driven to stores and parks. They will be invited to the homes of the volunteers and treated to the many Lithuanian functions that take place in Chicago. Birthdays will be celebrated, as well as departures back to Lithuania.

A Trip Home...

I was fortunate to be there for a departure celebration. There was an air of excitement as the volunteers began to arrive carrying platters of food and for the children, boxes of pizza (their favorite). People spilled over from the kitchen into the playroom. Fourteen-year-old Megle and her mother were returning to Vilnius. They had been in Chicago for three months and now Megle couldn't wait to see her eleven-year-old sister.

The trip to Chicago took much preparation. Grueling medical tests had to be performed in Lithuania. The many documents and medical forms had to be completed. Children's Hope had to arrange for plane tickets, as well as transportation from O'Hare Airport. Regardless of how you look at it, the trip from Lithuania is an exhausting experience when one is healthy. I cannot imagine the hardships the children endure on such a long and arduous journey.

Megle suffered from a spinal problem. She was also born with a deformed chest. Her

surgery lasted for twelve hours, and for the entire time her volunteer remained with her mother. Her hospital stay was ten days, and again, the volunteers were there to visit every day. The remainder of her time in Chicago was spent going back and forth to the hospital for physical therapy. Megle knows her ordeal is not over. When Dr. Lubicki and his staff from Shriners' examines her in Vilnius, he will tell her when it is time for her to return to Chicago for more surgery. But for now, Megle was happy to be walking on her own and to be returning to her homeland. When I asked Megle what impressed her the most about her trip, she didn't hesitate to say it was the people she met and the museum where the volunteers took her for a day trip.

Our second Megle is the seventeen-year-old daughter of Regina and Jonas Svoba, who work so hard to help Lithuania's forgotten children. Regina is the president of Countryside Children. Regina came to Chicago with no illusions; she knew there would be no guarantees. Her only hope was that Megle would be able to stand and perhaps walk a few steps; she knew her daughter would never be cured.

Megle suffered a trauma at birth. In fact, from what her parents could piece together, she was dropped in the hospital. This was during the "old" days in Lithuania. One did not complain when things went wrong within the system.

Megle is confined to a wheelchair. She attends school in Lithuania but, the system there still has a long way to go. Her parents fear for her future. In Chicago her feet were straightened as much as possible. Megle exercises faithfully for an hour a day. My heart broke as I watched the perspiration dripping from her face as she stretched on the floor. And once again, the volunteers were praised to heaven for the many hours they gave to mother and daughter.

Nine-year-old Zivile had been in Chicago for three weeks. Her mother expected their stay might be as long as three years. Zivile suffered from tremendous spinal pain. At this point it was affecting her lungs and her bones. Readers, can you imagine a nine-year-old child having to endure such pain? There would be several operations and many, many hours of therapy. But Živilė was a happy child, and she had no problem telling me her story. She told it without feeling sorry for herself. It was

Živilė's mother who broke down in tears in the next room. She could not bear to see her child suffer.

Fourteen-year-old Dovilė and her mother had been in Chicago for two months. Dovilė was in constant pain from a spinal problem but there were no complaints from her. She did admit she missed her father and her sixteen-year-old brother. To me, it seemed she suffered as much from homesickness as she did physical pain.

As was the case with all the children, they had hope in the Shriners' doctors, and they were willing to endure anything. Some were on crutches, others had walkers and wheelchairs.

The youngest one always steals the show. Perhaps this is because they have no inhibitions, and they are free to be themselves. Two-year-old Kotrina was one of the most beautiful children I had ever seen. I just didn't want to put her down. I wanted to keep holding her, and I guess in some way, protect her.

Kotrina lives not far from Vilnius and has a year-old sister. Kotrina's grandmother and her father, a policeman, are caring for the sister. This beautiful child had her first operation in Lithuania when she was six months old. Now she would have several operations in Chicago. Her two knees would be operated on, then her two feet, and finally both her hands. Kotrina cannot stand up. Her hands and her feet are turned inward, and she scoots all over the floor on her little bottom. Actually, she is quite fast. She is a friendly and outgoing child, and she loved the playroom. The other children, those with crutches, would get down on the floor and play with her.

Readers, I wish you could see these children. Every child takes care of every other child. Somehow they manage to find one that is a little worse than they are. And every mother takes care of every child. Our little party was almost over, and the volunteers began to leave as the children started to yawn. Only Kotrina was still going strong.

An Outing...

The next day some of the volunteers returned to take some of the mothers and the children to a grand opening of a nearby store. You can't imagine what this encounters. There are many steps and the

wheelchairs have to be taken down-stairs. At the last minute, it was remembered there was no car seat for Kotrina. Before anyone could blink an eye, one of the volunteers ran out and returned with one. When she was offered money for the purchase, she simply shook her head "no." This was her gift to Kotrina.

There was such an air of anticipation. Everyone who was going was excited. Kotrina's seat had to be assembled, mittens and scarves had to be found. This simple outing charged the air with electricity. For some of the participants, it was their first "grand opening."

At last the group was out the door and the rest of us relaxed around the kitchen table. Some of the children and their mothers talked about home. Others told me about all the wonderful people they met and the places the volunteers took them.

It seemed we had just sat down, when our little group returned; all of them talking at the same time. They told of the things they saw and what they did. Of course, everyone held their precious little grand opening gifts. But what affected them the most was the fact that Chicago was starting to light up for Christmas. They couldn't say enough about the decorations, but without the volunteers there would have been no outing to the store, and deep down inside the mothers and children knew that. Yet the volunteers put it in such a way that the children and their parents were doing them a favor by going to the store with them. How fortunate that we have such people who know how to help others forget their problems, if only for a few hours. As for Kotrina, she was just happy to see her crib.

The Program's Outlook...

The program has been an overwhelming success. All the children are doing well, except for one child. She was a "poster child" from Kaunas. Several years after she returned to Lithuania, she contracted pneumonia and died. Needless to say, this saddened everyone who is involved with the program. They felt they lost a family member. The children and



A volunteer with a mother and her daughter enjoy lunch together.

their families keep in touch with Children's Hope and the volunteers.

As for the volunteers, they are about to become "grandparents." Several years ago, a young girl was turned down for surgery. The chances of her becoming totally paralyzed were 95% if the surgery was unsuccessful. The girl threatened to kill herself. She could no longer live with the pain and ridicule from others. After much deliberation and more consultations, again explaining to the girl and her family that chances of success were very slim, the doctors agreed to operate.

Miracles do happen and this young lady is walking proof. The surgery was successful, and today the miracle child is married and awaiting her first child. Another child who was unable to walk off the plane when she arrived in Chicago is a diving champion.

But success is expensive. Children's Hope calculates that it costs \$1,000 a month to keep a mother and child here in the United States. This includes airfare, lodging, and food. If you knew your donation could help a child walk or remove scars from burns, would you even think twice about making a donation? I know so many of you through the mail, and I know you would not hesitate for a minute to help these children. No one person can do it alone, but together, we can and we will make it happen. We will bring as many of Lithuania's children here that Shriners' can handle.

There are no adequate words to thank Dr. Lu-

bicki and the staff of Shriners in Chicago, as well as the staff of Shriners in Los Angeles and St. Petersburg. What can you say to such dedicated people who give so much of themselves? To the volunteers in all three cities, you have our heartfelt prayers as well as our thanks. A special thank you to the people who administer the programs in Los Angeles and St. Petersburg.

To Gražina Liautaud and Birutė Jasaitis, thank you not only for your organizational skills, but also for caring and worrying about each and every child who is involved in Children's Hope.

According to Confucius, "It does not matter how

slowly you go as long as you do not stop." We are helping one child at a time, and we will not stop until we have helped every child that can be helped. I know that the you, the BRIDGES readers, will take these children into your hearts.

Please become a part of Children's Hope by helping with your donations. If you prefer to have your donation directed to Los Angeles or St. Petersburg, please send a note with your check and it will be forwarded. Write your tax deductible checks to:

Lithuanian Children's Hope
2711 W. 71st St.
Chicago, IL 60629

An Update...

American Doctors Aid Children With Their Donations



American orthopedic doctors, who arrived in Vilnius for consulting and operating on Lithuanian children during the last week of February, donated surgery instruments, bone bolts, plates, and costly distracters needed for spine correction. This \$200,000 dollar worth donation was given to Vilnius University Children's Hospital.

Chicago's Shriners' Hospital chief surgeon, Dr. John Lubicki headed the surgery team. While, in Lithuania, the team performed 30 operations; mainly those on curvature of the spine, inborn dislocation of hip joints, hand anomalies, and others. Vilnius doctors, led by Dr. Kestutis Saniukas, assisted in operations.

The U.S. doctors stayed in Lithuania until February 27th at their own expense. They had the

opportunity to dine with Lithuania's President Valdas Adamkus, who thanked them for their time and expertise. The Chicago-based "Lithuanian Children's Hope" financed the surgeons' trip with accommodation costs covered by the Vilnius hospital.

"Lithuanian Children's Hope" also organizes consultation tours for American doctors to Lithuania, and training visits for Lithuanian doctors to the U.S. It also facilitated the installation of two modern operating rooms in Vilnius University children's hospital.

Pictured at left is one of the children living at Seklyčia in Chicago after a successful operation at Shriners' Hospital funded by Lithuanian Children's Hope.

Source for information from Lithuania: ELTA News Service.

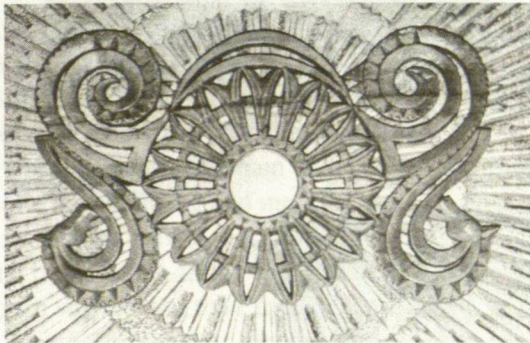
Rasa Ardys-Juška

Speaking the Language of Wood

As with any hobby or interest, a time comes when it becomes more than a hobby but a way to express one's total self – your roots, your culture, and your beliefs.

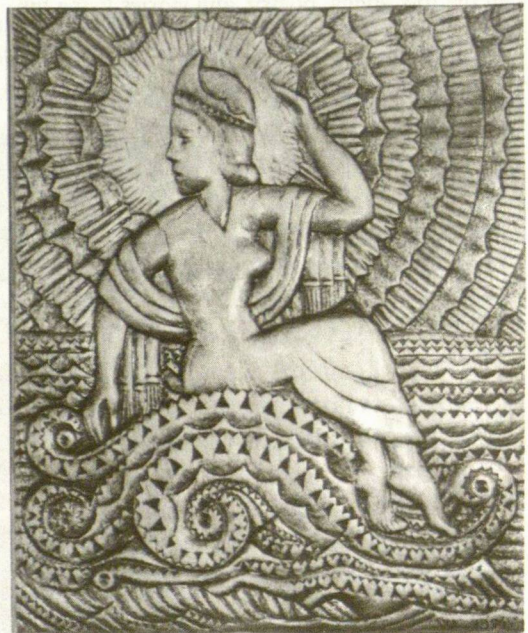
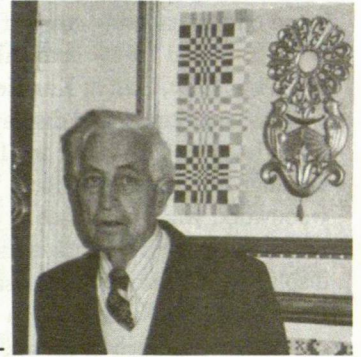
Viktoras Liaukus recalled that "For a means of support, I finished my studies and worked 52 years, 22 of which I worked at Lithuania's Ministry of Finance. Studying art and working on each art piece presented me an enjoyable hobby, and thereby, during my long lifetime, I've produced over 300 works of art based on Lithuanian themes."

The 94 year-old has gleaned the visual aspects of Lithuanian folklore, historical legends and events, and folk songs into his woodworking. His central theme, which repeats itself in most of his work, is the Sun. Liaukus includes this theme to stress the importance of the Sun during the Lithuanian pagan time period. The Sun was seen as the source of light and heat, which affected the earth's air and waters. The Sun also became the nurturer of all living beings, from birds to animals to fish to humans. As Lithuania's national hymn states, "Let the sun of Lithuania banish all darkness. Let light and truth guide our steps."



Liaukus's works have represented the Sun's wonderful characteristics, as seen in the wood carving of "The Wedding of the Sun and the Moon" above. The carving is based on a Lithuanian myth, which spins the story of the romance between the Sun and the Moon, and the angry response from Thunder.

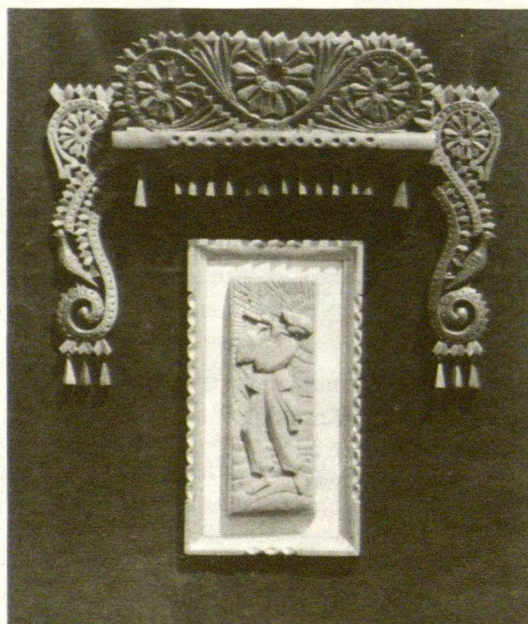
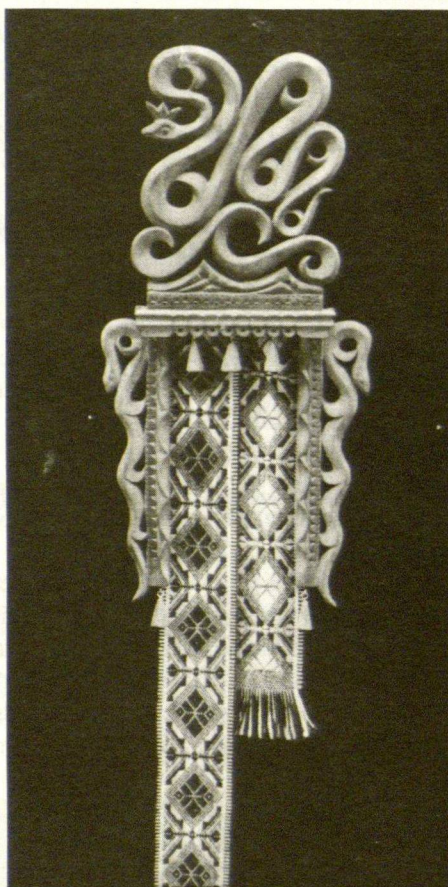
The poet and writer Rev. Jonas Maironis immortalized the unforgettable folk tale of Juratė and Kastytis. Later, the Lithuanian composer Banaitis wrote an opera based on Maironis's dramatic narrative poem. Liaukus further translated the beautiful, eerie words into a wood sculpture of the "Goddess Juratė", as shown to the right.



Salomėja Neris wrote the poem of "Eglė, Žalčių Karalienė" (Egle, the Serpent's Queen) in 1939. The composer Mikas Petrauskas created an opera based on this haunting story of loyalty, unconditional love, and family betrayal. Liaukus's works based on "Eglė, Žalčių Karalienė" includes plaques, sculptures, and display holders for traditional hand woven sashes and linen towels. These carvings follow the traditional Lithuanian style of woodworking, which was used in daily life. Many Lithuanian homes, in Lithuania and the U.S., still display their heirloom woven sashes (juostas) and linen towels (rankšluosčiai) in beautiful, intricately carved holders, such as the ones Liaukus has produced many times over. (An example is shown at right using the serpent theme.)

Liaukus's work has been displayed in 23 galleries or shows. In 1987 the Lithuanian-American Community of Hartford, Connecticut sponsored an exhibit on Lithuania's 600th anniversary of Christianity at the Hartford Old State House. Liaukus's various works were included and caught the attention of the American public. Liaukus stated that his home is also a perpetual gallery of his work.

Although Liaukus stated that he and his wife are at the twilight of their lives, he still continues to recall the folk songs, poetry, and stories using his carving tools and wood.



C u r r e n t E v e n t s

V a l o r a n d I n d e p e n d e n c e I n t e r t w i n e d

When three U.S. Army sergeants risked their lives to retrieve the body of a fallen Lithuanian platoon commander in Bosnia, little did they know how appreciative a Lithuanian-American Community would be.

The Philadelphia Chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community marked the 81st anniversary of Lithuania's independence on Feb. 21st. This was also a special opportunity to thank these three brave men for their unheralded actions.

The commemoration began with a Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated at St. Andrew's Church in Philadelphia by Rev. Peter Burkauskas. Msgr. Leon Peck delivered the homily. Among the gifts presented at the Offertory was a Lithuanian hand-carved cross, amber, Lithuanian bread, and soil from Vilnius' Antakalnis Cemetery, where most of the civilians who died guarding the television tower in 1991 are buried. Women and children wearing colorful costumes, and men carrying the flags of many Lithuanian organizations highlighted the procession. In the afternoon, a formal program was held at the Lithuanian Music Hall.

Earlier in the day, three American sergeants were honored for bravery at the U. S. Naval Air Station at Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. The army awarded medals for bravery to Staff Sgt. Charles Crego of Levittown, Pa.; Sgt. Robert Bastian of West Berlin, NJ; and Sgt. Horace Johnson of Springtown, Pa. The three are members of the 369th Engineers Platoon, the fire fighting and accident-rescue team of the 99th support Command.

The three firefighters, risked their lives to retrieve the body of First Lieutenant Normundas Valteris, a Lithuanian soldier who was part of a multinational patrol team.

The Lithuanian Army also acknowledged the courage and bravery of the three men. Major Valdemaras Sarapinas, Lithuania's Attaché to the United States and Canada, presented certificates to them.

When Lieutenant Colonel Isabelle Slifer-Naujokaitis of the 99th Support Command learned the Willow Grove ceremony would coincide with the celebration of Lithuanian Independence Day, she set the wheels in motion to have the sergeants attend in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community is deeply grateful to her.

After the ceremony in Willow Grove, approximately 100 military and civilian personnel made the trip to Philadelphia. Among the attendees were Major General Rodney Ruddock, Colonel Charles Betony, Lieutenant Colonel David P. Tebo, and Lieutenant Colonel Isabelle Slifer-Naujokaitis. There was hardly a dry eye in the hall as the 307th Army Band opened the formal program with the Star Spangled Banner and the Lithuanian National anthem.

The hall vibrated with open emotion as the military speakers spoke of the courage shown by the sergeants. First Lieutenant Valteris had served as a platoon commander for NATO peace implementations in Bosnia. He lost his life in April 1996 when his patrol team was caught in a mine strike explosion near Doboï, Bosnia. The young Lithuanian was several months shy of his twenty-fourth birthday. Two Polish soldiers escaped and freed the body of their Danish driver, but Valteris was trapped beneath the vehicle.

The next day, Crego, Bastian, and Johnson volunteered to retrieve the body; although they knew they would be surrounded by land mines.

As one mine hurled a five ton minesweeping device 60 yards through the air, the three continued to clear a path one foot wide so they could get to the vehicle. Bastian knelt on his hands and knees probing for mines under the vehicle. "We're not leaving until he goes with us," said Bastian.

The commanding officer suggested to the three that they stop. Aside from the fact that it was getting dark, it appeared this mission was not going to be successful. The three asked for and were granted permission to keep working. They couldn't leave their fallen comrade behind. After ascertaining there were no land mines, they pried open the trunk using the "Jaws of Life" to free the body from the wreckage. According to Staff Sgt. Crego, "We just wanted him to go home the way we would have wanted to go home if it had been one of us."

The Philadelphia Chapter of the Lithuanian American Community honored the sergeants with Lithuanian sashes and their heartfelt gratitude for sending First Lieutenant Valteris home to his family and to rest in Lithuanian soil. They taught us the true meaning of the word "brotherhood."

Karen Peck, administrative assistant, offered official greetings from Congressman Robert Borski of Philadelphia. The Congressman was unable to attend due to a family matter. Philadelphia's Mayor Edward Rendell, wearing a Lithuanian sash which was presented to him last year by the Lithuanian ambassador, also spoke. The Mayor is completing his eighth year in office and has never missed an Independence Day Commemoration. He presented a proclamation to the Community urging the admission of Lithuania to NATO.

To show its gratitude to the Mayor, the Community presented him with a "Lithuanian Care" package. The beautifully decorated tri-colored basket contained Lithuanian products including Lithuanian bread, chocolate, beer and champagne. The Mayor was delighted with his gift and thanked the Community for all they have done for the city.

The keynote speaker was Major Valdemaras Serapinas. Major Serapinas, speaking in both Lithuanian and English, discussed the military and its role in Lithuania. He also spoke of the defense budget and how it was being used. The Major's wife, daughter, and son accompanied him to Philadelphia.

The cultural portion of the program consisted of the Lithuanian Folk Dance Group, "Žilvinas". The Lithuanian Country Band presented folk-dance music. The Philadelphia Kanklės Ensemble provided the audience with a special treat. These young ladies proved their skill at playing the ancient Lithuanian musical instrument. The Vinco Krėvės Lithuanian School Children's Choir completed the program. Dalia Jakas, a representative of the Lithuanian Fund, presented the Lithuanian School with a check.

As a Philadelphia tradition, the children waved Lithuanian flags as the audience linked arms and sang "Lietuva Brangi". Once again, an emotional moment clouded the eyes of many as the flags were retired. Among the many guests in the audience was Rita Kazragienė, First Secretary of the Lithuanian Embassy and her family, as well as representatives of other ethnic organizations. A reception followed the formal program.

Vytautas Bagdonavičius, President of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community, would like to thank the many volunteers who made the day a success, as well as the people who donated food for the reception. It was day that made each person proud to be both an American and a Lithuanian. ♦

— Jeanne Dorr

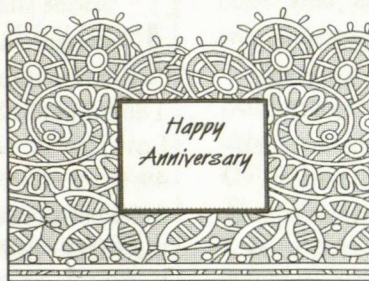
Lithuanian Parish in Philadelphia to Observe Two Anniversaries

St. Andrew Lithuanian Parish marks two significant anniversaries in 1999: the 75th anniversary of the founding of the parish and the 20th anniversary of the ordination of its energetic administrator, Father Peter Burkauskas. St. Andrew's Parish is located on 1913 Wallace Street in Philadelphia.

Since early summer of 1998, the Jubilee Committee has been working closely with Fr. Burkauskas and the Parish Committee in developing meaningful plans for the two anniversaries. The Jubilee Committee, headed by S. Algimantas Gečys, was formed along with five sub-committees: banquet – Chairperson Linas Kučas; publications – Angele Puodžiūnas; media information – Teresė Gečys; parish membership and revival – Rimas Gedeika; and social events – Roma Krušinskas. Their primary goal is to strengthen the parish by increasing its membership and church attendance, as well as to broaden the parish's outreach to the Lithuanian-American community. Although the number of Lithuanian parishes have diminished throughout the United States by being merged or closed, St. Andrew Parish in the last five years has undergone a rebirth, remains a strong Lithuanian parish community, and is recognized as such by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

The jubilee year opened with the traditional Christmas concert at St. Andrew Church on December 27, 1998. The official main observance of the two anniversaries will take place during the weekend of April 24th and 25th, 1999. A concert by the noted "KANKLES" instrumental and vocal ensemble from Vilnius, Lithuania will take place at the historic Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Avenue, on Saturday, April 24th at 3:00 p.m.

On Sunday, April 25th, at 1:00 p.m., a Mass of Thanksgiving will be celebrated at St. Andrew's Church. The Most Reverend Robert P. Maginis, Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia, has accepted the invitation to be the main celebrant. Most Reverend Paulius Baltakis, O.F.M., Bishop for Lithuanians outside Lithuania, and Bishop Jonas Boruta, S.J.



from Vilnius, Lithuania, will the celebrants together with "Sons of the Parish" priests and numerous priest friends of Fr. Burkauskas and the parish.

Bishop Boruta, by representing the faithful of Lithuania, will link the parish celebrations with thanksgiving for the rebirth of Lithuania's national independence.

Following the Mass, a festive banquet catered by Culinary Design Associates will take place at the Lithuanian Music Hall at 4:00 p.m.

The Hon. Stasys Sakalauskas, Lithuanian's ambassador to the United States; the Hon. Petras Anusas, Ph.D., Consul General of Lithuania; Msgr. Joseph J. Anderlonis, Msgr. Leon J. Peck, Msgr. Francis J. Statkus, and Msgr. Thomas J. Hilferty have joined the Honorary Committee of the Jubilee and have been invited to attend Sunday's festivities.

Not only parish members, but descendants of the founding parishioners, as well as many friends of Fr. Burkauskas scattered throughout the United States are invited to mark the dates of April 24 and 25 on their calendar and to plan to attend all the festive events of the two Parish Jubilees. All those who appreciate and enjoy Lithuanian classical and folk music performed by world class artists certainly should not miss the "KANKLES" concert.

Other Jubilee events include a Pilgrimage to the religious and national shrines of Lithuanian led by Father Burkauskas from June 20th to July 1st, 1999, and a bus trip to the Chapel of Šiluva at the National Shrine of Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. on September 8th, 1999, the Feast of Our Lady of Šiluva.

For information about all Jubilee events, please call St. Andrew Lithuanian Parish at (215) 765-2322 or the Jubilee Committee at (215) 938-0783. Arrangements for the Pilgrimage to Lithuania are through Cover All Travel, Logan Square East, 2 Franklin Town Blvd., Philadelphia, PA 19103, (215) 854-1350. ♦

– Teresė Gečys



“Books to Note”

In the United States, approximately 4,000 books are published annually for young readers.

Yet, since Baltic independence, only a meager few have appeared that either deal with the subject of Lithuania or that might be of interest to Lithuanians.

One of the first to fill a need was Lerner Publications with a series on newly independent Eastern European countries. **LITHUANIA** was one such title. (**Then and Now Series**, prepared by the Geography Department, Lerner Publications Co., Minneapolis 1992 ISBN 0-8225-2804-5) It is a factual, though brief (52 pages) account of the country and its past, somewhat dry in style, but straightforward and well illustrated. However, as seems to be the norm, the authors downplay the tyranny of the Soviet Union; for example: "for decades Lithuanians lived under the strict laws of the central Soviet government in Moscow".



LITHUANIA, THE NATION THAT WOULD BE FREE by Stephen Chicoine and Brent Ashabrunner, on the other hand, is eminently readable. (Dutton, New York, 1995, ISBN 0-525-65151-9, \$16.99) Lithuania's history and its present is seen through the eyes of observers keenly aware of the Soviet legacy yet impressed by the hopefulness and industriousness of the population. The authors describe the problems of creating a new system, share the lives of ordinary people and the efforts of those not so ordinary, as that of Sarunas Marcilionis. Even Lithuanian-Americans are recognized in the chapter "Lithuania's Special Link with America." The book is a welcome introduction to Lithuania, with colored photographs adding a touch of warmth.



Lithuania has also been used as the setting in a few books. **PASSAGE TO FREEDOM**, *The Sugihara Story* by Ken Mochizuki. (Lee and Low Books, New York, 1997 ISBN 1-880000-49-0, 15.95) Most of us know the story of this Japanese consul in Kaunas who in 1940, against the wishes of his government saved thousands of lives by issuing Japanese visas to Jews. The style of writing is very engaging, describing those events of long ago as if remembered by a child. However, particularly, with the prevalence of negative publicity about Jewish persecution in Lithuania in those years, a young reader may not have the knowledge to distinguish between German Nazis in Lithuania and Lithuanians. And with no counterbalancing stories available, slowly there emerges the stereotype of an anti-Semitic Lithuanian.

A book that further illustrates this point is **IN AMERICA** by Marissa Moss. (Dutton, New York, 1994, ISBN 0-525-45152-8) A Jewish grandfather tells his small grandson why, at the age of 10 and alone, he left Pikeli, a small town in Lithuania, to come to America.

"I wanted to have the same freedom as everyone else...."

"But why couldn't you...?"

"We were not allowed. Because we were Jewish...." was grandpa's reply. (I abbreviated the dialogue.) Again we have a story most unfavorable to Lithuania's character for a child's impressionable mind to absorb. Are there no stories of Lithuanian grandfathers fleeing the Czarist Cossacks? The Soviet gulags? For that matter, are there no published stories about the Lithuanians who shielded Jewish families?



Lithuania seems to have a ubiquitous appellation of "tiny" or "small" as in "Lithuania is slightly smaller than Denmark." (**LITHUANIA, THEN AND NOW** – see above). Perhaps because of that designation, publishers take liberties in ignoring it or altering its history.

A case in point is **THE HISTORY OF EMIGRATION FROM EASTERN EUROPE**, by Sarah Horrell (Origins series, Franklin Watts, New York, 1998. ISBN 0-531-14449-6 <<http://publishing.grolier.com>> \$19.95. This book was already reviewed in the January/February issue of Bridges.) Though brief, 32 pages and with extensive illustrations, it attempts to cover large-scale population movements, particularly of the Jews, throughout the history of Eastern Europe. The Baltics, however, for all practical purposes are ignored. Again, as in other books on Eastern Europe, the cause of this major population shift, the horrors perpetrated by the Soviet Union, are barely mentioned.

If the Baltics are short shrifted in the above-mentioned book, Lithuania does not even warrant an entry in the index of the book **POLAND** by Martin Hintz. (*Enchantment of the World* Series, Children's Press, New York, 1998. ISBN 0-516-20605-2, \$20.00, <<http://publishing.grolier.com>>). The author completely glosses over the fact that for centuries, Lithuania was a vital component of Poland's history; Grand Duke Vytautas's conquests making Lithuania, not Poland, the largest country in medieval Europe, etc. Again the overwhelmingly destructive force is Germany rather than the Soviet Union. ("Poland was liberated in 1944"). And, to add insult to injury, on all five current geopolitical maps, the borders of Belarus now reach the Baltic Sea, Lithuania has moved into Latvia, and Latvia into Estonia. Estonia has vanished completely! Two additional historical maps either eliminate Lithuania or relegate it to a minor position. This popular series, *Enchantment of the World*, is considered to be a reliable resource and can be found in most school and public libraries. That fact makes this disappearance of Lithuania all the more deplorable.

Our Lithuanian organizations and, for that matter, the government of Lithuania, are not structured to react to such distortions, biases, or rewriting of our history. Yet, unless we respond, the created myths will solidify into es-

tablished fact. Therefore, we must accept it as our individual obligation to pressure publishers, bookseller, editors, and writers to listen to our side and to tell or include our Baltic story.

Ah -- yes, and we do have stories to tell! But we must tell them in a way that is acceptable to the American audience. In 1992, **TUG OF WAR**, by Joan Lingard, was published. The fictional story portrays two Latvian children torn apart by the events of World War II. Poignant as the story is, the style of writing does not touch American youngsters, and it has become a shelf-sitter. Our talented younger writers, now seasoned in the West, must be encouraged to commit our legacy to paper and publish, publish, publish! ♦

— Ina Bertulyté-Bray



New Book on Religious Life

The trilogy, **LITHUANIAN RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AMERICA**, is now complete. The work of historian, Fr. William Wolkovich-Valkavičius, took twelve years to research and write. Volume 1 encompasses the East; Volume 2 is devoted exclusively to Pennsylvania; and Volume 3 embraces Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, and the rest of the Midwest.

There are over 150 entries on parishes, including Lithuanian Protestants, religious communities, and miscellaneous listings. Hundreds of clergy biographies, as well as those of outstanding nuns are found in this hard cover, acid-free paper series. Indexes include parishes, persons, places and institutions, and subject matter. For a free detailed description and copies of book reviews of the first two volumes, write to:

Lithuanian Parish History Project
36 St. George Ave.
Norwood, MA 02062-4420 ♦

Lithuanian Language Course

The 14th annual Lithuanian Language Course at Camp Dainava, Manchester, Michigan will take place August 1st to the 8th, 1999. This course, operating under the auspices of the Educational Council of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc., is designed for beginners, intermediate, and advanced students – or those just wishing to refresh their Lithuanian.

Experienced instructors in vacation-like surroundings and atmosphere teach the course. There are no limitations regarding age or formal education. For more information and application, please call 616-458-6378, or write to Vytautas Jonaitis, 1546 Quarry NW, Grand Rapids, or e-mail at vjonaitis@juno.com. ♦

– Vytautas Jonaitis

Drug Trafficking Stymied in Lithuania

The International Drug Control Board praised Lithuania for acceding last year to the United Nations Convention on prevention of illegal drugs and psychotropic substances circulation. Seimas (Parliament) passed a law banning the growth of poppies, hemp, and coca plants on the territory of Lithuania.

Lithuania is witnessing a growing demand for stronger drugs: the so-called "elite drug" heroin, as well as cocaine and hashish, and psychotropic substances. Still, the most popular are drugs produced from poppies which are consumed by 90 percent of drug addicts in Lithuania. ♦

Commemorative Postage Stamps in Lithuania

Lietuvos Paštas Co. (Lithuanian Post Office) will be issuing postage stamps featuring a series of "Signatories of the February 16th Independence Act"; the first will be portraying two signatories, Petras Klimas and Donatas Malinauskas.

Painter Jokubas Zove designed the new postage stamps. The printing work was undertaken by a state-run Budapest printing-house. Previous stamps have already portrayed fourteen famous pre-war Lithuanian State figures. ♦

Landsbergis Tours the U.S.

Lithuanian Seimas Chairman Vytautas Landsbergis and his wife Gražina flew to Washington during the first week of March. Landsbergis said he had great expectations for this trip, as it was organized specifically to occur before the NATO summit due in Washington next month.

At a news conference, held before the flight to Washington, Landsbergis said he believed that the tour would help Lithuania's circumstances regarding NATO enlargement. He also intended the trip to call attention to Lithuania's present social, political, and cultural conditions.

In Washington he met with well-known U.S. political analyst Zbigniew Brzezinski; the House of Representatives Speaker Dennis Hastert and Congressman John Shimkus; the majority leader of the Senate Trent Lott, Senator Richard Durbin, and other members of the Senate.

Landsbergis delivered a lecture on "Priorities of Stability: Lithuania and the Open Door" at the International Wilson Research Center, and spoke on "The Democracy Wing of Northern Europe" at the National Press Club. He also traveled to Chicago for meetings with local authorities and the business community.

The Library of the U.S. Congress hosted a charity concert featuring Prof. Patricia Miller and a local choir accompanied by Landsbergis' wife, pianist Gražina Landsbergis. ♦

OOOOPS!

We're Sorry, We Made a Mistake!

In the November 1998, Issue 9, of BRIDGES, we made an address mistake regarding Albert Gustaff's article entitled, "English Books for Lithuania, a Real Treasure". The address to which donations should have been sent to was 2711 W. 71st Street, not 2711 West St.. Luckily, after speaking with the Chicago post office people, they told me that the incorrect address does not exist, and they would have sent the envelopes back to the sender. In some cases, the name was recognized, and envelopes were routed to the correct address. We're very sorry for the misunderstanding. ♦

– Rasa Ardys-Juška, editor

Source for news from Lithuania: ELTA News Service

Antanas J. Van Reenan

A SPIRITUAL GIFT: The Lithuanian Perspective

America is the richest country in the world, yet it appears to be in the midst of a spiritual crisis as it looks for a “wake-up call” to regenerate its sense of people’s community. America’s political culture, rooted in rationalism, appears powerless in the area of psychic regeneration in spite of its great material wealth.

It is in the realm of “spirit” that the political culture of the East-Central European peoples may offer a potential antidote to an America that does not see itself as a living organism but rather as a sum of isolated individuals. Within this context, if one looks closely at the peoples stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea and eastward into Russia, this area’s cultural history has demonstrated historical power to function as a source of light. It is in this very region of Europe that the many activities of the human spirit are interrelated and not isolated. For illustrative and comparative purposes, one need take only two examples that serve as entry points into the “corpus mysticum” of the peoples of this region: first, the solitary act of a gifted Polish pianist and, second, the group activity of a Lithuanian folk dance group.

In the first instance, if one were to look at it from an American standpoint, the pianist would be simply viewed as an individual playing the piano. However, from an East European viewpoint, the playing of the piano is not a solitary act. Rather, it is an act – through the vehicle of music – that solidifies the integral wholeness of the individual who is a manifestation of the Polish soul. In the psychic realm that permeates all of East and Central Europe, the pianist is a manifestation of something greater than himself with umbilical ties to his national community (national individuality). Thus, this Polish pianist is more than just “a pianist” – he is Poland personified.

The same dynamic holds true in the second example. Here the Lithuanian folk dance group is more than just a collection of isolated individuals who have come together, in the American sense, for an ephemeral dance experience. Within the paradigm of the Lithuanian soul, the folk dance is a visible manifestation of the group’s moral and spiritual solidarity with the dead and with the living -- an unspoken message that the Lithuanian community is an extension of its past, present, and the future to come.

*ANTANAS VAN REENAN, PH.D., teaches history at Columbia College, Chicago. His book, **Lithuanian Diaspora: Konigsberg to Chicago** was published in 1990. Mr. Van Reenan is presently working on Lithuania's Armed Forces English Language Project to further prepare Lithuania's military for NATO membership.*

It is no accident that there are no "solos" in the Lithuanian national folk dances. Rather, as the group dances, it personifies Lithuania -- its past, present, and future. So it is with other East European folk dance groups -- Poland personified, Bulgaria personified, Latvia personified -- as the dancers step out of chronological time and into a timeless collective "corpus mysticum" that has been fired by an unspoken spirit of solidarity able to reach across time and space.

Consequently, it is on the level of soul that the peoples of East-Central Europe can offer historical examples of "national spirit",

"regeneration", and a "moral awakening" to America. Historically speaking, the spiritually rich East and Central European peoples have demonstrated, time and again, a powerful "will to awake" and harness themselves to reverse seemingly hopeless situations -- partitions, occupations, and systematic short-term and long-term undertakings to destroy their language and religions. Once again, these peoples have prevailed.

The latter part of the twentieth century has found American materialism and rationalism running "on empty" in the rarified air of First Principles as it tries to grapple with the spiritual needs to regenerate a people, whether its own or, for that matter, the people of Russia. All of America's billions are powerless to "awaken Russia" and harness its people to reverse their present state of moral and civic degeneration -- a degeneration that has its roots in the imported and alien idea system imposed on the, during three-quarters of the twentieth century. This system proved to be hostile to the very soul of its peo-

ple -- a soul that Vladimir Soloviev and other Slavophiles expressed. What is missing in the American paradigm of our era is what German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies says is the real concept of community -- a concept encapsulated in the German word *Eintracht* (harmony-concord) -- in which a real community is based on mutual understanding, concord, and unanimity. Conversely, a society, as in the case of American society, which is characterized by inner conflict, mutual tension, and the rule of a mechanical quantitative majority, presupposes no organic societal ties.

Having reached a point in time when it is possible to argue that the American condition is "a society without a soul," or "a society without *Eintracht*," America may consider taking a closer look at the intellectual pedigree of the organic concept of community as exemplified by East-Central European peoples. In the process, America may learn that this area of Europe has much to offer. Specifically, Eastern Europe is not solely a thought-receiver but can also become a thought-sending center because it is fired by a dynamic that organically intertwines national ideals, spiritual rebirth, and a sense of commu-



nity that does not translate into a sum of isolated individuals.

This gift of spiritual wholeness -- which America now needs in order to understand its spiritual greatness of the past and to awaken its potential greatness in the future -- can be a gift of East-Central Europeans to America.

CR

Sr. Margarita Bareikaitė

Thoughts for Lent

The last century was an age of great explorations. We went into every corner of the world. We began to explore the deep regions of the oceans. We even went to the moon and whirled around the galaxy. It is now time to turn inward to journey inside of who we are. During the season of Lent we have the opportunity to travel within. This is a chance to recall our baptism and do penance in preparation for Easter.

The church can help us to begin this travel. The best way to explore is to have open eyes, not clouded with preconceptions and prejudices. The best way to travel is to travel lightly. The church can help us discard what isn't needed.

We should pray that our young people will take the time and effort necessary to search within themselves. We should pray that we will be able to both see and endure the pain which is all around us. That's asking a lot. Violence seems to be growing by leaps and bounds. Yet we also observe the positive influence and help from people, sometimes strangers, who give unconditionally to those who do not ask, yet are needy. These are the heroes and role models of today who will be able to guide our youth and help them reevaluate their lives and goals.

Once Kierkegaard said when speaking about religion's purpose: "To strip men of their disguises, to compel them to see evasions for what they are, to label blind alleys, to cut off retreats... to enforce self-examination and to bring them solitary and alone before the eternal." In other words, religion's purpose is to make us vulnerable to ourselves, to our world, and to God. We have an opportunity to open ourselves, to renew our purpose in life, and to cast off those "old clothes" that hamper the spiritual side of our souls. Becoming vulnerable is risky, but the rewards are worth the risks. ☩

The Pope's Issues for Jubilee Year 2000:

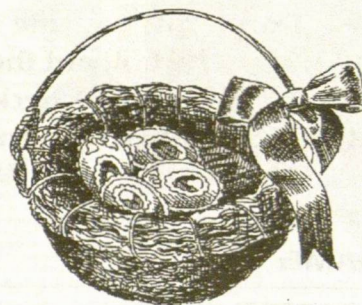
Jubilee Year:

December 24, 1999 to January 6, 2000

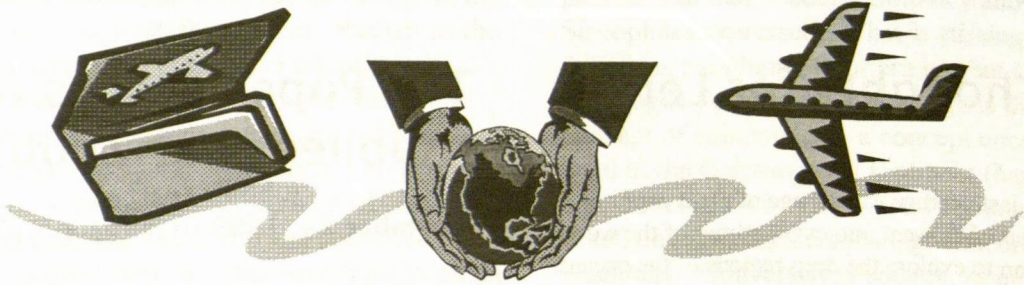
You may remember recently reading about a special document prepared by Pope John Paul II to mark the special concerns of this year long celebration of the birth of Christ in the year 2000. You may obtain this papal bill of indication of the Great Jubilee Year 2000, entitled **The Mystery of the Incarnation**.

Topics addressed in the document by the Holy Father include:

- a. a suggestion that poor nations be relieved of their debts within a "new culture of international solidarity" in which "wealthy nations and the private sector accept... an economic model that serves everyone."
- b. an acknowledgement that the "profound bond" unifying the Catholics of our age to Catholics of ages past obliges us to repent for wrongs committed in the name of the faith.
- c. a particular emphasis placed on the indulgence, a total gift from God which "discloses the gift of Father's mercy, who offers everyone his love, expressed primarily in the forgiveness of sins". ☩



SR. MARGARITA BAREIKA belongs to the order of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a Lithuanian order in Putnam, Connecticut. She is also the Chairperson of the Religious Affairs Council for the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.



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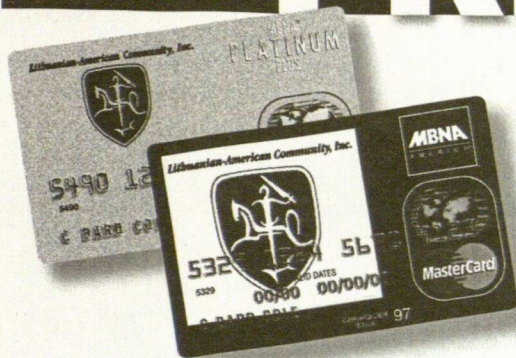
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