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CATHOLIC CHURCH IN EASTERN EUROPE FACES MANY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Five years after the fall of communism, Catholics in Eastern Europe are rebuilding their countries both spiritually and physically, with help from the church in the United States. The faithful now gather publicly for Mass in churches once forcibly closed, and children attend schools where prayer is encouraged, not forbidden.

"The Church is credible because it has suffered with the people," explains Msgr. R. George Sarauskas, executive director Office to Aid the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe. "Together we've survived the harshest regimes whose avowed purpose was to extinguish the light of faith in the hearts of the people. In this, communism failed."

While the church and its people triumphed, the human infrastructure of the Catholic Church was deeply wounded. For years, religious leaders were imprisoned or killed. Catechists were hunted down, and seminaries were destroyed or suppressed.

Of the 150 existing Catholic churches in Russia before 1917, 148 were closed, destroyed, or converted into factories, clubs, or offices. In 1991, Russia has only two priests to serve 300,000 Catholics.

In Albania, homeland of Mother Theresa, bishops and vicars were forced to clean the streets and public bathrooms wearing clown suits decorated with slogans mocking the Church.

A Greek-rite parish church in Romania was closed and forced to give up its Catholic status when communism declared it illegal, yet the entire parish remained faithful to the Church and worshiped secretly for more than 40 years.

Since 1990, the Office to Aid the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe has healed wounds in this

region of the world through nearly 1,000 projects in 22 countries, funded by an annual collection in U.S. parishes. To date, the collection has raised \$25 million to support the formation and training of priests, religious, and lay leaders; the religious formation of the laity, especially young people; religious communication and evangelization; and the capacity for social ministry in Eastern Europe. Most dioceses will hold the collection on Ash Wednesday, February 21, or the First Sunday of Lent, February 25, 1996.

The environment of renewal, however, continues to be challenging and often hostile. In many countries, former communist party members still hold positions of power and continue to create obstacles for the Church. Secularism and materialism have filled the void left by communist atheism. But progress is being made:

SISTER SHARES SKILLS WITH LITHUANIANS

"If I have any hope, it is for my children. As for myself, I feel destroyed." This is a common response among Lithuanian parents interviewed by Sister Barbara Valuckas, SSND, Ph.D., who volunteers her skills through the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office to Aid the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe.

After 50 years of brutal communist oppression, many Lithuanians are looking to the Catholic Church to help them find meaning in their lives. The Church is responding in many ways, including the development of religious programming for national television—a daunting challenge, considering the Church itself was silenced for five decades.

(continued next page)

(Sister shares skills)

"The whole communications process was corrupted," said Sr. Barbara, referring to the use of propaganda by the communist government. Under communism, independent thinking was discouraged. The concepts of teamwork and long-range planning, so vital to the preparation of TV programs, were unfamiliar to Lithuanians. "The media said what they were told to do and did what they were told to do," she added.

Sister Barbara worked with the staff of the Lithuanian Catholic Television Center based in Kaunas. She helped them develop a statement of purpose to guide their work and to appreciate the religious as well as the technical aspects of what they produce. "The staff have the talent and skill, I help them put those gifts at the service of their faith," she noted. Sr. Barbara has also helped the center begin advance program planning with the assistance of an advisory board, another new concept in a now-free Lithuania.

The women religious of Lithuania, who lived lives of enforced silence as part of the underground Church, also need help and hope. Sr. Barbara has coordinated programs to update Lithuania's twenty-four religious

congregations of women religious on current church teaching and theology. "Many of the older sisters spent their youth in prison. These are women of incredible courage. And they are so eager to learn," she said.

Learning English is another source of hope for the Lithuanian people because it helps them feel connected with the West. Sr. Barbara taped a series of English lessons for Tele-3, the only independent TV station in Lithuania. Each three-minute lesson invites viewers to listen, speak, read, and write a sentence in English. The lessons air seven times each week-day, and several lessons are combined to compose a half-hour review program on week-ends. So far, Sr. Barbara has taped almost 1,000 programs and plans to make more on her next visit.

Hardly a day goes by when she is in Lithuania that someone does not stop her on the street to say a simple "thank you for the lessons" or to press a small homemade gift such as a hand-carved wooden angel into her hand.

"Jesus preached a message of hope to His world," noted Sr. Barbara, who says that she and the other sisters who minister with her in Lithuania are simply carrying out His mission of hope.

DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE CREATES OFFICE OF ETHNIC OUTREACH

Chairman Don Fowler has announced the creation of the Office of Ethnic Outreach at the Democratic National Committee under the direction of Thomas A. Albert. The Office will focus its efforts on the European and Mediterranean ethnic communities, strengthening and expanding their participation in the Democratic political process.

"The ethnic vote has historically been a bedrock of support for the Democratic party. The values shared by ethnic Americans — of family, work and freedom — reflect the message of the Democratic party today," said Fowler.

Albert, named as Director of Ethnic Outreach,

served for six years as Chief of Staff to former Congresswoman Mary Rose Oakar of Cleveland, Ohio. Of Irish and German decent, Albert has worked with ethnic communities and their issues throughout his professional career.

Regarding the Office of Ethnic Outreach, Albert said, "Ethnic Outreach will address issues of common concern to America's many ethnic communities. On the domestic side, the office will emphasize the ways in which our diverse heritages strengthen America. On the foreign policy side, we will work for an America engaged in the world in pursuit of our shared values of democracy, human rights and freedom."

ANOTHER BOEING 737 FOR LITHUANIAN AIRLINES

Lithuanian Airlines (airline code TE) is pleased to announce it has taken delivery of its second Boeing 737-200 aircraft, which arrived at Vilnius Airport on June 23, 1995. A third is expected in August of this year, and anticipates that this replacement of Russian-made aircraft by state-of-the-art American-made aircraft will help to increase traffic from the United States. For further information regarding schedules and fares, contact your travel agent.

HEALTH TIPS

The current gourmet coffee craze may be hazardous to your waistline. Compared with black coffee, which has no calories or fat, a 16-ounce cafe mocha has 390 calories and 25 grams of fat. A large counter lunch-counter-size coffee with cream and sugar has 135 calories and 10 grams of fat.

Eat romaine lettuce instead of the more common iceberg variety and you'll get eight times more vitamin A and twice as much iron.

HEALTH BENEFITS FOR WOMEN

Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Blue Shield encourage all female subscribers to utilize their available health benefits as a way of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

All health insurers are required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Women's Preventative Health Services Act 20 of June 21, 1994) to cover one routine gynecological examination and one routine Pap smear per calendar year for all female subscribers and dependents.

The benefit, which includes a pelvic examination and a clinical breast examination, is exempt from all program deductibles and maximums. This mandate applies to Basic blue Cross, Basic Blue Shield, Major Medical, Comprehensive Major Medical, Wrap around Major

Medical, Point of Service, and Preferred Provider Programs.

In addition, one mammography screening per calendar year is covered for all members age 40 and over, whether or not directed toward a definite condition of disease or injury. Mammograms recommended by a physician are covered for all subscribers.

Benefits for mammography screening are payable only if performed by a mammography service provider who is properly certified by the Department of Health in accordance with the Mammography Quality Assurance Act of 1992.

Women living outside Pennsylvania should consult their provider.

LITHUANIAN PILGRIMAGES GAIN IN POPULARITY

Through the ages, Lithuania has had a very deep and special love for the Mother of God. Many shrines and churches have been built in Her honor and many locations where the Mother of God is said to have appeared, have become sites of holy pilgrimages and miracles. Because of this special devotion to Mary, Lithuania has long been known as "Terra litany - Terra Mariana" or "Land of Lithuania - Land of Mary".

Rev. Valdas Valdemaras, Pastor of Divine Providence Church, Southfield, MI and Travel Consultant Birute Bublys are the organizers of a May pilgrimage tour to Lithuania. May is the month we honor the Blessed Virgin and the organizers have included visits to all four of the most beloved and best known shrines in Lithuania - Our lady of Siluva, Our Lady of Vilnius, Our Lady of Pazaislis and Our Lady of Kalvarija, locations which denote Mary's miraculous apparitions.

The month of May is Lithuania's most beautiful: the climate is warm and everything is in bloom and green. Every evening churches hold May devotions in which the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary is sung. You will have the chance to experience the deep religious traditions of rural Lithuania.

Pilgrims will leave the U.S., May 6, and return May 28. The 21 day tour includes 7 nights in Vilnius, 3 nights Druskininkai, 4 nights Kaunas, 1 night Siauliai, 5 nights Palanga and 1 night Copenhagen.

Details for anyone interested in joining in this pilgrimage can be obtained by writing: Birute V. Bublys 5190 Longmeadow, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304. Telephone: (810) 646 8588.

NEW MEMBERS WELCOMED

We continue to welcome new members to the Lithuanian Catholic Alliance with the latest additions listed below:

Nicholas Logan Kozerski of Lowell, MA. and Matthew R. Bode, Derby, CT.

Nicholas was enrolled in Lodge 212 by his great-grandfather, John W. Kozerski, Sr. who is secretary of Lodge 212.

Matthew was enrolled by his grandmother Jean DuPaul and he is now a member of Lodge 32.

AN INVITATION

The Lithuanian American and Canadian Communities
together with the
Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute
cordially invite you to attend the

X LITHUANIAN FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL

Saturday, July 6, 1996, 1:00 P.M.
Rosemont Horizon, Rosemont, IL

and the other Festival events

FRIENDSHIP DANCE

Friday, July 5, 1996, 8:00 P.M.
Navy Pier, Grand Ballroom, Chicago, IL

FESTIVAL BANQUET

Saturday, July 6, 1996, 7:00 P.M.
Hyatt Regency O'Hare, Grand Ballroom, Rosemont, IL

Information:

X LITHUANIAN FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL
2715 West 71st Street
Chicago, IL 60629

tel.: (312) 737-9504
fax.: (312) 436-6909

LITHUANIAN HISTORY/HERITAGE BOOKS

(Available to Members Only)

<u>Lithuanian Self-Taught</u> by M. Variakojyle - Inkeniene (Essentials of Lithuanian for travel and enjoyment).....	\$6.00
<u>Popular Lithuanian Recipes</u> by Josephine Dauzvardas	\$8.50
<u>Lithuanian/English Dictionary</u> by B. Piesarskas and B. Svecevicious (about 27,000 words).....	\$15.00
<u>English/Lithuanian Dictionary</u> (30,000 words by V. Baravykas).....	\$15.00
<u>Introduction to Modern Lithuanian</u> (Forty lessons for the teacher or the self-teacher) by Dambriunas, Klimas and Schmalsteig.....	\$25.00
<u>Simas (The Story of Simas Kudirka)</u> by Jurgis Gilda (Translated by Kestutis Ciziunas and J. Zemkalnis).....	\$3.50
<u>Lithuanians in America</u> by Dr. Antanas Kucas, (translated by Joseph Boley)	\$12.50
<u>The Brothers Domeika</u> by Liudas Dovydenas, (translated by Milton Stark.).....	\$3.50
<u>Vytautas the Great - Grand Duke of Lithuania</u> by Dr. Joseph B. Koncius. (The life and times of Lithuania's most famous ruler).....	\$5.00
<u>Praise the Lord, All You nations</u> (A religious, social and cultural history of Lithuania) by Sister Virginia Marie Vytell.....	\$9.00
<u>Lithuanian Cookery</u> by Izabele Sinkeviciute (328 pages).....	\$15.00
<u>Lithuanian Customs and Traditions</u> by Danute Brazyte Bindokiene.....	\$16.50

Make all checks payable to:

Lithuanian Catholic Alliance and mail to:

L.C.A., 71-73 S. Washington St., Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701

VISA LOTTERY A CHANCE TO WIN THE AMERICAN DREAM

If you have relatives or friends in Lithuania who may be dreaming of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness in America, now is the time to send them the necessary information needed to possibly make that dream come true.

There will be 23,910 visas issued for Europe in the 1977 Diversity immigrant Visa program and Lithuania is included in this number.

The application period for registration for the DV-97 visas to be issued during Fiscal Year 1997 (i.e., from October 1996 through September 1997) will begin at 12:01 a.m. (Eastern Time) on Monday, February 12, 1996, and will end at midnight on Tuesday, March 12, 1996.

Applicants must follow detailed instructions outlined in the Visa Bulletin in order to be eligible for the lottery. Don't delay! Act today! Call your United States Congressman and ask for the VISA BULLETIN or call the New Visa Lottery telephone number — (202)-663-1600

OBITUARIES

LONCOSKI, MichaelLodge 17
215 Chamberlain St. Hilldale
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18705
Died: February 9, 1996
Buried: February 13, 1996
Holy Trinity Cemetery
Bear Creek, PA

NORTHEAST FRATERNALS MEET

The Northeast Fraternal held their regular monthly meeting January 16, at the Polish Union in Wilkes-Barre, PA.

Topics taken under discussion were: Ball Park, Proclamation signing in Wilkes-Barre and Scranton for Lithuanian Independence Day and topics to be discussed for the annual CPS Actuaries seminar.

A discussion was held regarding the possibility of holding a fair to educate the general public in the ways of fraternalism.

President George Klapischak presided.

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