



**CHRONICLE OF THE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH  
IN LITHUANIA**

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**CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN  
LITHUANIA No. 79**

A Translation of the Complete Lithuanian Original  
LIETUVOS KATALIKŲ BAŽNYČIOS KRONIKA Nr. 79  
Documenting the Struggle for Human Rights  
In Soviet-Occupied Lithuania Today

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## CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LITHUANIA No. 79

### Introduction

In 1940, when, as part of its spoils from the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania by force, 85.5% of the country's 2.5 million inhabitants were Roman Catholic, 4.5% Protestant, 7.3% Jewish, 2.5% Orthodox and 0.2% of other persuasions.

In the two archdioceses and four dioceses were: 708 churches, 314 chapels, 37 monasteries, 85 convents, three archbishops, nine bishops, 1271 diocesan priests, 580 monks, of whom 168 were priests. Four seminaries had 470 students. There were 950 nuns. Nuns cared for 35 kindergartens, 10 orphanages, 25 homes for the aged, two hospitals, a youth center, and an institute for the deaf-mute.

On June 15, 1940, the Red Army marched into Lithuania. The independent government was replaced by a puppet regime. On July 14-15, rigged elections were staged. On July 21, with the Red Army surrounding the assembly house, the new People's Diet "unanimously voted" to join the Soviet Socialist Republic.

On June 25, 1940, the Church was declared separate from the state, and the representative of the Holy See was expelled. Parish property was confiscated, clergy salaries and pensions were cut off, and their savings confiscated. Churches were deprived of support. Catholic printing plants were confiscated, and religious books destroyed.

On June 28, 1940, the teaching of religion and recitation of prayers in schools was forbidden. The University's Department of Theology and Philosophy was abolished, and all private schools were nationalized. The seminaries at Vilkaviškis and Telšiai were closed, and the seminary at Kaunas was permitted to continue under severe restrictions. The clergy were spied upon constantly.

On June 15, 1941, 34,260 Lithuanians were packed off in cattle-cars to undisclosed points in the Soviet Union. After World War II, the mass deportations resumed and continued until 1953. One fifth of the population was in prison, in Siberia, or dead.

Vincentas Borisevičius, Bishop of Telšiai, was arrested on February 3, 1946, and condemned to death after a secret trial. Before year's end, his auxiliary, Bishop Pranas Ramanauskas, was also arrested and deported to Siberia. Bishop Teofilus Matulionis of Kaišiadorys and Archbishop Mečislovas Reinys of Vilnius were deported to a Siberian labor camp. Archbishop Reinys perished in prison at Vladimir, November 8, 1953.

By 1947, Lithuania was left with a single bishop, Kazimieras Paltarokas, of Panevėžys. He died in 1958.

In 1947, the last convents and monasteries were closed, their communities dispersed, and all monastic institutions were outlawed.

After Stalin's death in 1953, there was a slight improvement in the religious situation. Relaxation of pressure on religious believers soon revealed that the Lithuanian people were still deeply religious. It was decided in the mid-fifties to resume the attack. The principal means of attack would be unlimited moral pressure, since physical terror seemed only to strengthen and unify the faithful.

In 1965, Monsignor Juozas Labukas-Matulaitis was consecrated in Rome to head the Archdiocese of Kaunas and the Diocese of Vilkažiškis. Two new bishops were consecrated in 1969: Bishop Romualdas Krikščiūnas was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Panevėžys, and Bishop Liudas Povilonis was appointed auxiliary to Bishop Labukas, succeeding him after his death in 1979.

In 1982, Bishop Sladkevičius was permitted resume duties as Apostolic Administrator of Kaišiadorys. Father Antanas Vaičius was named bishop and Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Telšiai and the Prelature of Klaipėda.

Juozas Preikšas was consecrated bishop in 1984 and named Auxiliary to Archbishop Povilonis, whom he succeeded as Apostolic Administrator of Kaunas upon the latter's retirement in 1988. Bishop Vladas Michelevičius, consecrated in 1986, became as Auxiliary Apostolic Administrator. In 1983, Bishop Krikščiūnas resigned as Apostolic Administrator of Panevėžys, replaced by Msgr. Kazimieras Dulksnys as Vicar Capitular. In 1988, Bishop Sladkevičius was named a Cardinal and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Lithuania.

In 1972, the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, clandestinely published in that country, began to reach the free world at irregular intervals. Primarily intended to keep Catholics in Lithuania informed of the situation of the Church there, these Lithuanian *samizdat* also serve as a constant appeal to the free world not to forget the plight of a people struggling against overwhelming odds to defend their religious beliefs and to regain their basic human rights.

Between the appearance of Chronicle No. 79 in Lithuania, Sept. 8, 1988, and the publication of this translation, *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* have dated some of the references in this issue. In a *rapprochement* between the Vatican and the Kremlin, five of the six dioceses have resident Bishop Ordinaries, headed by Cardinal Sladkevičius as Bishop Ordinary of Kaunas, and Julijonas Steponavičius the Bishop Ordinary of Vilnius. The Cathedral of Vilnius, the church in Klaipėda, and St. Casimir Church in Vilnius, confiscated for decades, have been returned to the faithful, to mention but a few examples. All Lithuanian prisoners of conscience have been released.

Rev. Casimir Pugevičius

Appearing since 1972  
Read this and pass it on!

*This issue is dedicated to Father Alfonsas Svarinskas, a member of the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights, who spent 21.5 years in Soviet camps for God and Country, and last September 22, had to leave his homeland against his wishes.*

CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LITHUANIA, NO. 79

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Lithuania. . . . . September 8, 1988

## CARDINAL VINCENTAS SLADKEVIČIUS' REMARKS AT THE PRIESTS' SYMPOSIUM

From 1952 until 1957, I had more than one occasion to speak in this modest seminary church. I had occasion to give meditations and conferences. In the long time which is past, much has changed. We know that changes are not all uniform: some are happy and some are sad. In the course of this long period of time, not all the changes were joyous. It would be difficult to recount all of the developments.

Today assembled in this solemn symposium celebrating the close of the Marian Year, and recalling the abundance of God's graces granted to us with the beatification of the Blessed Archbishop Jurgis Matulaitis, and the solemn anniversary of the beatification which took place not long ago in Marijampole, we feel in a very special way that the happiest changes began during the Marian Year. We can say as was said at one time at the wedding feast of Cana in Galilee, that the best has been kept until now.

It is precisely during the Marian Year that the most remarkable changes are taking place in our nation under the title of restructuring. Their special significance our nation experienced not so long ago in *Vingis* Park when, for the first time after so many years, tricolors waved so proudly . . . When questions of concern to the whole nation were considered. It is too bad that we do not see our national flag here today. Surely, it is no stranger to us? Surely, it is not something unworthy of our gaze, or are we unable to rejoice in that which our whole nation rejoices today? Surely all this is not unacceptable to the clergy? It is not without reason that those who experienced that joy of restructuring in *Vingis* Park threw it up to us clergy that we have become so alienated, without feeling, as if we did not desire restructuring or change, as if we had become entirely too accustomed to the sad situation. The restructuring movement gives me no peace. Delegations keep coming, one after another, asking why we remain silent. Let these remarks of ours only be like a reply, that we are not silent, that we are concerned.

Today I wish, not only in my own name, but in the name of all the Catholic clergy, to express and to clarify our spirit, what it is that we really desire and yearn for, what we complain about, what we are concerned about, and what we demand.

For several decades, Catholics and the adherents of other faiths in our country, were excluded from public life, bounded by church walls, by the limits of the churchyard and the cemetery. The changes now taking place in our society invite and urge us, the hierarchy, the priesthood and the faithful, to take a new look at our place in the nation's history today. During the past several months, many restrictions of speech have dropped off; during the past couple of years, some well-known proponents of culture in the Soviet republics, and through them, those in our own republic have spoken out about the significance

of religious life for the national spirit, for its morale.

It has already been acknowledged publicly that the soul of our nation was hurt, not only by enforced collectivization, unplanned organization, but also by heedless imposition of atheism. People's consciences were damaged when they had to say something different from what they were thinking, and to do something different from what they said; when they had to ridicule something which was and is sacred to their parents and also to themselves.

The Church does not preach vengeance, even though it recognizes that one must not lightly forget crimes against humanity, and against the freedom and life of innocent people. Believers, it is true, did not organize and carry out the deportations. They were organized and carried out by others. They did not sign death warrants or long-term sentences. However, there were and perhaps still are, believers deceived in the shameful army of secret informers who cooperated with those horrors and still assist the machinery of oppression. Such lay believers, and especially Church ministers, we warn most solemnly: let us not deceive ourselves; let us not try to justify our meanness of spirit; let us remember our painful responsibility before God, before the nation.

No price can be too great for us in order that we might finally feel ourselves free people of righteous conscience. At the present time, two destructive eras in the history of the country are constantly brought up: the cult of the dictator and the period of stagnation. How and how much have these periods effected the life of the Church? In the days of the personality cult of the dictator, the Church suffered. In those days, this was not acknowledged, but now, there are those who dare to say so publicly, only reticently.

Surely, we priests are not about to expose these things reticently. Every third priest in Lithuania, and four of the five bishops, were in prison; the leaders of many Catholic organizations were imprisoned and exiled, proponents of Christian culture, zealous faithful, the whole Catholic press, schools, organizations, and fraternal organizations were suppressed, religious orders were dispersed, many churches and three seminaries were closed, and monastery and seminary libraries were confiscated. The Church suffered painfully, but it remained the only institution in the country which would not worship the dictator. During the thaw after the dictator's death, neither the religious press nor schools were restored; on the contrary, churches were again closed, wayside crosses and shrines were systematically destroyed, the war against God in the press and in schools and anti-religious pressure against intellectuals and officials was escalated. Children and youth were driven off the altar by threats, and Bishop Steponavičius of Vilnius, who objected to this, was exiled to Žagarė, and has not been restored to office to this day. (On December 30, 1988, Bishop Steponavičius was reinstated. - Trans. Note)

During the era of stagnation, efforts were made to create inertia even within the Church. Stagnation sank deep roots and at the present time the all-Soviet Council for Religious Affairs and its representatives in our govern-

ment find it very difficult to reorient themselves to dialogue with the Church: they wish to go on dictating and administering in the same old way. In some cases, there is only talk about restructuring, but nothing concrete is done in this regard. Quite the contrary.

It has been announced that 150 young men will be allowed to study at the Theological Seminary in Kaunas. Today, someone through some vague channels not revealed in the press, is already proclaiming that only 145 young men will be able to study. Who had to, or was able to, change the quota already given us? I did not receive information, nor did the other bishops of Lithuania receive any. By what channels do such directives come? Let them announce publicly in writing or in the press that fewer young men will be accepted to study at the seminary in Kaunas than was originally allowed, and let them explain the reasons.

This has not been done. Such news reaches us only by vague, clandestine, secret channels. Surely, we bishops and priests cannot remain silent and go along with this. History shows that freedom is never presented as a gift, but when the right conditions have come about, the people themselves, the public, must begin to act like free people and to demand freedom themselves.

Today, we can wait no longer. For three years now, they have been promising and repeatedly postponing the promulgation of new religious regulations, and it is still unclear when they will publish them. We have been lulled to sleep and comforted by promises... Since the Soviet government has abrogated the Concordat of the Lithuanian Republic with the Apostolic See, and declared non-interference in the canonical activities of the Church, the measures taken by the Office of the Commissioner for Religious Affairs, the *Rayon* government and other organs in these matters, had no juridical basis for us and should cease.

If we are to have true restructuring and normal conditions, let them allow the Church to be guided without interference by *Canon Law* and the hierarchical and pastoral activities it sets forth. This is the only way in which steps will be taken in the religious sphere toward the creation of a legal state which was the concern of the significant forum which recently took place in *Vingis Park*.

Priests: Both pastors and assistants, in my opinion, should immediately begin the open catechizing of children and the religious education of youth without waiting for the Office of Religious Affairs to announce that it is allowed. Do not wait, either, for any special communication from the bishops. This right is conferred on you by *Canon Law*, so why do you need a letter from the bishops. It is not the bishops who forbade the priests to teach children and youth catechism. Let us begin ourselves, right now, to regain those positions which we lost.

The hierarchy, the clergy and the faithful must not stop demanding that the cradle of Christianity in Lithuania, the Cathedral of Vilnius, be returned to the faithful, and that the profanation of the Church of Saint Casimir in Vilnius,





*Cardinal Sladkevičius celebrating Mass in Vilnius.*

so dear to all of us, be discontinued; that the return of the Church of the Queen of Peace in Klaipeda be accomplished more expeditiously and that permits be given to erect new churches where, in the judgement of the hierarchy, they are needed by the faithful. (The Cathedral of Vilnius, the Church of Saint Casimir and the Church of Our Lady, Queen of Peace have all been returned and building permits have been issued for a few new churches since the cardinal spoke. -- Trans. Note)

Let us not stop pressuring all responsible agencies to restore freedom of religious press. Hierarchy, clergy and the faithful themselves, and not government agencies, should decide which publications and in what quantities are needed by them. Having seized hundreds of church buildings, and over a dozen presses forty years ago, the state should not feel as though it were doing us a favor when it tosses us some crumb, and then shouts it to the whole world.

Let the faithful be prepared to make use of all possible pastoral resources, individually or collectively exercising their apostolate in the care of the elderly, the invalid, the orphan and the sick. We hear that welfare work will be allowed, and that perhaps some religious orders might be allowed to work in this area. But so far, these are only scattered reports. We urge lay believers and especially the clergy, to support by all available means the public's efforts at renewal and democratization. It is not necessary that we join various movements as clergy, but let us be favorable toward these things and support them by all possible means. If it appears that the laity participating in the renewal

movements need consultants, theologians or canonists, the Bishops' Conference will choose and supply them.

The Church has suffered much during this time; much as been taken from it. Nevertheless, we intend to be patient, to avoid negative attitudes or heedless actions. However, let us not forget that the believing public can be patient only when it sees concrete steps being taken one after the other, and not vague promises being made.

Last year, in the sermon scheduled for the day of the baptism jubilee (The 600th anniversary of the conversion of Lithuania celebrated in 1987 ~ Trans. Note), the bishops have stated: "We are fraternally grateful to those who sympathize with the Church; to all who, on account of internal or external obstacles, cannot receive all the sacraments, but who hold the values of the Gospel in high esteem, support the Christian spirit by their behavior, speech and art; to all who support and protect the efforts of individual believers and the whole Church."

One is prompted to add to these words gratitude to all proponents of our national culture who, prompted by feelings of justice and love of country, raise their voices ever higher on behalf of Christian values, against their devaluation, and in opposition to discrimination against the faithful. These are my introductory, unpolished remarks. ...

We believe that through the intercession of our Heavenly Mother Mary, through our deep devotion and the implementation of her words, "Do everything that He tells you," this situation will change for the better. "Do everything that He tells you."

With these words, Our Heavenly Mother addressed mankind and each one of us for the first and only time in the manner of a commandment, directing us to do what He is waiting for, what He wishes and demands. The misfortunes in our nation began precisely when, enjoying freedom, we did not do what the Lord told us, did not carry out the commandments He gave us — this was the beginning of all our misfortunes. The best changes will come and manifest themselves in the most beautiful way and we will be able to say as was once said at the wedding feast of Cana - that the best has been kept until now, if every one of us, and especially the clergy, resolves in our hearts to do everything which Jesus Christ commands us.

#### WE THANK HIM FOR HIS SACRIFICE!

On July 12, 1988, Father Alfonsas Svarinskas, who had been arrested January 26, 1983, accused of anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation and sentenced under L.S.S.R. Criminal Code Par. 68 Id. to seven years strict regime labor camp and three years exile, was released from the Perm strict regime labor camp. After spending five-and-a-half years in various strict regime labor camps,

Father Svarinskas was released on condition that he leave the homeland and go to West Germany at the invitation of Bishop J. Stimpfle of Augsburg.

On the evening of July 15, 1988, Father Svarinskas arrived in Vilnius. Father Svarinskas, sentenced three times, and having spent 21.5 years in various camps in the gulag, having suffered much physically and mentally, returned to the homeland unbroken, full of resolve and energy, to continue working for the glory of God and the good of the nation.

Lithuania, trying to be re-born in its religious and national self-image, greeted this spiritual giant with respect and awe, receiving his words of instruction like a spiritual legacy to the nation. Father Svarinskas spent just over a month in Lithuania, visiting a whole list of parishes: Vidiškė, Viduklė, Telšiai, Tauragė, Šiluva, Igliauka, Kybartai, Marijampolė, Vilnius, Paberžė, etc., and everywhere he was welcomed by hundreds and thousands of loving hearts, the faithful of Lithuania, longing for his word.

But perhaps the clearest sign of solidarity with him was demonstrated by believing, and even unbelieving, Lithuania, during the last moments of Father Svarinskas' leave-taking from Lithuania, when on August 22, 1988, Father Svarinskas offered a Mass of farewell at the Gates of Dawn in Vilnius.

From early morning, people flocked to this shrine in Vilnius, packing the Church of Saint Theresa. Over the sea of heads, tricolor flags waved proudly and bouquets of flowers could be seen. The number of young people, including a group of girls decked out in national costume, was a beautiful sight to see.

Concelebrating Mass with Father Svarinskas, yesterday's prisoner of conscience, were five other priests, among them: Father Vincentas Velavičius, a member of the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights, and the former prisoners Father Jonas-Kaštytis Matulionis and Father Juozas Razmantas. The intention of the Mass was for the rebirth of Church and country.

During the sermon, Father Svarinskas thanked his fellow countrymen for their prayers, and for continuing his struggle. He thanked the re-awakening intelligentsia of Lithuania, reminding and inviting them to seek true freedom the only possible way, by fostering decency and by overcoming alcoholism, immorality and drug addiction. The priest's fervent remarks full of love were met with the spontaneous applause of those assembled.

After Mass, farewell remarks were given by Father Algimantas Keina. He emphasized how our religious conviction and human solidarity had been fostered by the imprisonment which Father Alfonsas had heroically accepted, and he expressed the conviction that our ties of love and cooperation would continue uninterrupted.

Speaking on behalf of the young Catholics of Lithuania was Robertas Grigas. He emphasized that the names of Father Alfonsas Svarinskas

and other prisoners of conscience had become for the nation symbols of freedom and justice like the *Vytis*, like the tricolor, like the Pensive Christ. Young believers will not stop striving for the ideals presented by Christ; they are inspired and fortified by the innocent suffering of the just.

In his response, Father Svarinskas expressed his embarrassment over the exceptional respect shown him, saying that he considered himself an ordinary man who only tried to do his duty well. He indicated that there are many more who have suffered: Balys Gajauskas, bearing the chains of the gulag for thirty-seven years and Viktoras Petkus, for the twenty-seventh year. Father Svarinskas said that he firmly believed that he would return to Lithuania from his compulsory exile. ("Rehabilitated", Father Svarinskas, was scheduled to return to Lithuania in the spring of 1990. - Trans. Note)

The whole church, to organ accompaniment, resoundingly sang the national anthem. Endless lines of people — children, youth and adults — approached the altar, congratulating, thanking and presenting flowers to him. As he emerged on Didžioje Gatvė, Father Svarinskas was greeted by the applause of the people crowding the street. The words which Father Svarinskas had uttered in his sermon were confirmed: "The producers of the film about me asked, Who are you, Father Svarinskas? Behold, you are the answer."

After Mass, Father Alfonsas went to the hospital to visit Father Babonas, pastor of Kavarskas, who had been seriously injured in an automobile accident.

About noon, a cavalcade of cars left for the Vilnius airport. Their arrival at the airport was met by an astounding sight: a huge crowd of people surrounding the terminal, the yellow and white Papal flag and the national tricolor proudly waving over their heads, and countless little flags. Standing off to one side could be seen a little group of militiamen and civilians, but they did not interfere with those assembled.

As Father Svarinskas alighted from his automobile, there arose a storm of applause such as Vilnius had not heard for a long time. At the feet of the priest were strewn cut flowers over which he walked as on a carpet to the terminal. People kept bringing their beloved shepherd flowers, kissing his hands, thanking him, greeting him and weeping. Surrounding Father Svarinskas on the terminal steps, the crowd chanted in unison, *uLie-tu-va bus lais-va!*" ("Lithuania will be free!")

As the priest disappeared into the building, he was followed with a thundrous »*Lau-kiam!Lau-kiam!Lau-kiam!*" ("We will be waiting!")

Inside, a pleasantly smiling airport employee politely explained the procedure for checking in and departure, and helped with all the formalities. When he re-emerged on the steps, the priest was again smothered with flowers and a constant stream of prayerbooks, holy cards and postcards passed hand to hand until his hand became too cramped to continue signing autographs. Once again, the national anthem rang out. The young people sang songs of exile and

folk songs, and patriotic poems which had become folk songs. Everything was filmed without interruption by official and private cameras.

It was announced that the flight was delayed for an hour. The airport official invited Father Svarinskas, the other priests and his friends, into a separate lounge. The airport personnel acted most respectfully. Respects were paid to Father Svarinskas and mementoes were presented even by people not especially close to the Church.

After the flight had been postponed several more times, Father Svarinskas, bidding a final farewell, passed the checkpoint. The people stood outside the wire fence separating the runways from the terminal grounds, singing patriotic songs and waving bouquets and flags. Thus they waited for about an hour, until the jet took off into the clear Lithuanian sky, physically tearing from us him with whom we have grown one in heart by common endeavors. Nothing, however, can tear him from loving hearts or the life of our re-awakening country.

To send Father Svarinskas off in Moscow, a small group left from Lithuania, joined by Russian ex-prisoners and supporters.

In the leave-taking from Father Svarinskas, the official lying propaganda experienced a crushing blow. The nation clearly demonstrated what the vilified, tormented Father Svarinskas who, with the power of the Lord, had conquered coercion and evil, means to Lithuania. Once again, it demonstrated its solidarity, its gratefulness for the sacrifice which had been made, and the determination to follow the way of sacrifice for God and country.

#### FATHER ALFONSAS SVARINSKAS' FAREWELL

*May that which you, departing from your forebears' native land,  
Left to blind fate of death and oppression:  
Ancient tells, homesteads and the paths of dawn  
Be light to the lost, when heaven is obscured,  
When hopes and paths become confused.*

*What you, leaving homestead fences behind,  
Took with you, when the painful switch touched the land —  
Your ancients' blood - their name - in the flame of freedom in your hearts-  
Bear as eternal memorial throughout this journey,  
As a great treasure in your heart.*

*Both their sacred foot-prints, impressed in slavery,  
And your days, dedicated to struggle and trouble—  
The fate of your homestead, when a new mom dawns, -  
Will remain a granite testament unfading  
For days unending — to their children's children.*

(Bernardas Brazdžionis)

My brothers and sisters in Christ! Everything good soon passes. Not long ago, we enjoyed a welcome celebration, and today, it is already time for a departure ceremony. I sincerely thank my brother priests, my dear parishioners and all those who assembled today in Viduklė to pray together, to strengthen one another, and then go our separate ways through life. Such is God's will!

We have on earth no lasting city, but we seek the one to come. And that city to come, each one of us seeks his own way, we simply need to carry out our duties conscientiously, and have a healthy self-respect as Christians, Catholics and Lithuanians.

Today it is not easy for me to speak. As we part, so that you might not be sad, I promise that at the first opportunity, I will return to our homeland. When - whether in a week, a month or a year - makes no difference. But I will return; I will return, having done my duty. I still do not understand very well what God has in store for me, or what mission awaits me. I go as a priest, and I think that I shall be helpful to Catholics, first of all to my fellow countrymen, and later, if necessary, to others.

Let these, my poor words, be like a spiritual testament, a legacy of love. First of all, I thank everyone for your prayers and letters, even though most of them never did reach me. Once, speaking with the Procurator of Chusavov, I asked why they did not give me the letters, since people really were writing. The procurator replied, "Yes, a mass of letters comes for you, but what do they write? They write wishing you the strength to outlast everything and return to your homeland."

That, to their way of thinking is, in itself, a crime. I thank you for your moral support, your flowers. In camp, it was good to hear that for so many years, on the 26th of every month, you gathered in Viduklė to pray for me and for others who were suffering. I would never have thought of it; your lively faith and love came up with it. Prisoners of other nationalities were in awe and admiration: "The Lithuanians have a great source of strength in the Catholic Church."

So, my brothers and sisters, let us continue to be loyal to the faith. It is a precious gift. The guiding force of life, if we have a lively faith, we shall weather every storm in life without becoming lost or grounded; we shall not perish.

In ancient literature, the writer, Homer, describes how the Greeks attacked Troy, but were unable to take it. Then they came up with a ruse. They made a large wooden horse in which some soldiers hid. They left the horse, and pretended to withdraw. The Trojans hauled the horse into their city. During the night, the soldiers emerged, unlocked the city gates, and so the Greeks conquered Troy.

They have tried, they are trying and they will try to get a Trojan

Horse into the Catholic Church of Lithuania. When they try to do so in the form of brute force, it is easy to recognize and resist. I have heard that in Lithuania, sects, various religious movements, have begun to manifest themselves. Some of these movements may not be a bad thing, but in our circumstances, there is a great danger of losing one's way, and of confusing others. Saint Paul says, "For even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a Gospel not in accord with the one we delivered to you, let a curse be upon him!" (Gal 1,8)

We have the gospel which was proclaimed to us six hundred years ago. We have the hierarchy of the Church, we have the Holy Mass and the sacraments; in a word, we have everything necessary for the redemption of souls, so let us listen sincerely to our shepherds, in the first place to the Cardinal, who lead the Catholic Church of Lithuania. Let us support one another, listen to one another; then we shall truly avoid all sorts of provocations and we shall not suffer harm. Let us not succumb to temptations, let us consult and ask, but the final word will be uttered by the leadership of the Church. Let us obey it. It sees better than we what the Church needs.

Christ has said, "This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another." (Jn 13, 35) So my brothers, let us love one another, let us not become petty, let us not blame each other for trifles, let us be magnanimous with one another.

The Russians have a good saying: "Measure seven times, and cut only the eighth." Let do likewise. A thoughtless word slips out and it can do much harm to another. Let us be careful in our choice of words. Better to suffer oneself a hundred times, rather than hurt another once. Let us love God with our whole heart; then all will go well. It seems to me that life is not so complicated, it's just that we ourselves sometimes become lost giving in to the current fad. If anyone would say there is no God, do not believe it.

In the scripture it says, "The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." (Psl. 14, 1) There is a God, and He leads each one of us by wondrous paths; only one thing is needed, that we ourselves not oppose God's will, that we be good conduits.

Let us not give into the spirit of the times: let our churches be full. Let us go often to Holy Communion, so that strengthened by the Body and Blood of Christ, we might be able to fight the good fight and win it. Let us try as much as possible to deepen our faith. I have heard that the government will not stop priests from teaching catechism. We all need to prepare well and promote the teaching of catechism.

Nor is it just the children who need to be taught, but all of you brethren need to be taught and to learn, so during the winter, when there is more free time, let us come to church more often, even on weekdays, to hear the word of God. Most of us have completed education of one kind or another, so let us try to pick up a religious book more often. Look for them among the priests, and the more active laity. I think that in time, there will be increasingly more

books. We must all become involved in teaching religion; only then shall we obtain good results. Let us resolve, every Sunday, and in leisure time, to devote at least an hour's time to our neighbor.

Let us visit friends, relatives and neighbors, and speak with them about God. We have done enough talking about the fading things of this earth. Besides, they will not disappear; the time has come to make an about-face and to speak about God. So let us resolve and act. When we accept Divine Truth more deeply, no Trojan Horse will be a threat to us. We ourselves will be able to separate the wheat from the chaff.

For one who wishes to be a Catholic, it is not enough to have a prayerbook and rosary, and to go to church on rare occasions. It is necessary that the Commandments of God be the cornerstone of our lives. Everything contrary to the Commandments of God should be foreign to our lives. The Catholic cannot be a passive observer. Life is not theater; for every minute, we will have to account, so I say that each one of us must be a soldier and struggle against current evils. One evil which we, in our time did not wish to admit and which has now become a serious illness in our society, is alcoholism. In Holy Scripture, it is stated that everything which God has created is good. Hence, a cup of wine is good, also. But when our society is sick, when it has lost its sense of proportion and does not have the will to control itself, we must set a good example of self-control. I think that at least until the age of twenty, young people should be abstainers. Let older people, if they cannot abstain from alcoholic beverages completely, practice temperance.

What does that mean? It means that from time to time, on the occasion of a celebration - never at funerals or memorial services - but at weddings or baptisms, when they meet some good friend they haven't seen for a long time, they will have no more than one hundred grams of alcoholic beverages. This limit was set earlier by the intelligentsia of Lithuania, which continues to work nicely for the good of the nation and it is known to us all by the name of the Restructuring Movement (*Persitvarkymo Sąjūdis*.) If you do drink, let it be not be in communal farm buildings, warehouses, the city park or the bushes, but only at a table covered in white. And that table must be covered in white only by your mother, wife, or sister. Let anyone who drinks alone not urge anyone else to drink. Keep this rule strictly.

God loves and guides the Lithuanian nation. He has given us many good priests, courageous laity and in recent years, the Blessed George Matulaitis, a Cardinal, and many other graces. And he gave them not in vain. It is a reward for those sacrifices which our fellow countrymen made during the post world war years, and which they are determined, if necessary, to make in the future. And I am convinced that in the future, much will still be required, life will demand more sacrifices.

When I was in labor camp, I used to say to my fellow prisoners, "Don't be dismayed, I shall return to Lithuania, but other priests will come to



if  
you.

To my way of thinking, God grant that a few priests be arrested every year for remaining faithful to Christ. There is no need to panic because of that, or to grieve hopelessly. Priests are very, very necessary in camp. Russia is looking for God, and we must show Him to her. It is the duty of the faithful — which you carried out — to pray for prisoners, including priests, to persevere and witness Christ as much as they are able. Let us not be afraid to suffer for God. Let us look at life, not through the ruble, and not exclusively in terms of the market, but with the eyes of the Christian. Let us seek first of all the Kingdom of God and His justice, and everything else will be added.

Let us struggle sincerely against alcoholism and drug addiction. Let us fight moral depravity, of which there is so much in our surroundings, and which they are beginning, publicly, to recognize as evil.

Upon my return, I travelled throughout Lithuania, and became convinced, once again, that the apple does not roll far from the tree: where parents are serious Catholics, there, the children also are loyal to the faith, and decent. There are exceptions: when the parents are good, the children get off the track. In that case, let us pray. Let our example be Saint Monica, who, for long years prayed to the Lord for her son, Augustine. Let us trust God, and pray.

As Catholics, let us avoid giving anyone bad example. The people of our age, as never before, are effected by good or bad example. Let us give only examples of good behavior, and so witness Christ.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the youth of Viduklė. By their behavior, they served the Church and gave me much joy. During the trial, the Secretary of the Communist Youth organization at the Raseiniai Professional School complained that it is difficult to work with pupils from Viduklė. "No matter how I talk to them, they used to say, 'The pastor told us that we must not party during Lent.' Constantly... The pastor told us!" said the Secretary.

The young people did well. The atheists listened and marvelled at the fact that young people of today listen to their pastor. I think, my brothers and sisters, that you will continue listening to me.

In my lifetime, I have seen and experienced much. I have known trouble and suffering, but I am glad that my heart is free of hatred. I forgive all those who gave me pain, and I, myself, ask God and you for forgiveness, if I have hurt anyone, or not done everything I could have and should have done.

Once again, thank you for praying for me and for keeping your faith alive. It is good for a priest to feel that people love him. This love gives him strength and reinforcement to proceed along the road of life, to carry conscientiously his burden of duty and sacrifice.

I visited several parishes. I really did not deserve the love which you showed me. I am a rank-and-file soldier of Christ. I think that by your behavior, the love you show, your giving example to others and especially, to the young priests of Lithuania, once again, you witness convincingly that no one,



*Father Svarinskas preaching in Kybartai.*

neither the atheistic government, nor prison, nor labor camp, can compromise a priest. Only he can compromise himself.

While I was in camp, I longed with all my heart to see Lithuania, to travel its roads once more. I thought about the land of my forefathers, and sang. I sang as well as I knew how, so that later, no one would say that the Lithuanians in the Urals did not sing songs or hymns. Some old prisoners, seeing it, said, "His long sentence has made him take leave of his senses." They often do not understand us believers, they do not understand where we get the strength, often at the most critical times. We draw our strength from the Cross of Christ, from prayer.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us continue to pray for one another. I don't know where I shall end up. I would like, on my knees and in my heart, to visit all the holy sites as we did in Šiluva. In gratitude for so much kindness, I really will remember all of you and our common needs and goals in my prayers. I very much want this to oblige you to do nothing but good, to be good members of the Church.

I could go on for a long time, but this is enough. We have seen one another, renewed our strength, refreshed ourselves, and now we can go on to seek the city to be, which we do not have here on earth. I believe that we shall really meet once more in the homeland. Three times I returned from forced exile in the East; I will return also from the West.

May the anticipation and pleasure of our meeting stir our energies, so that we might live on and work actively. If I do not come back on my own, they will bring me back, so that I might be buried in Viduklė, at the statue of

Mary, and that the people of Viduklė would sing the Hills (A popular local devotion - Trans. Note) one last time for me. This I pray God, and I long for, but may His holy will be done. Most important is that we will meet in heaven.

I will end with the words of the great President, Ronald Reagan, "May God bless you all!". Amen.

*I call the nation, smothered by the GPU  
And scattered, like the leaves of fall:  
To a new high-road, a new life,  
Where the northern winds will never overcome.*

*I call Lithuanian to stand by Lithuanian,  
And Living heart by living heart,  
That unperishing in the midnight dark,  
They might arise to live and flourish in the mom!*

*Take leave of darkness and of twilight,  
Ignite a new flame in your hearts,  
To the slave leave the slave's fearsome night! -  
I call, your forebears' spirit...*

*I call upon millions of working hands  
To bind the sheaves of a new work-day...  
To the bams of new joy, new harvest store-rooms,  
Not a prisoner's house, nor bogs, nor graves.*

*I call in the name of your suffering country,  
In the voice of tell and meadow and of forest:  
Do not take vengeance, lest the stains of vengeance blood  
Fall as a curse on the children of your children!...*

*I call from the ages: He is not worthy of the future,  
Who did not dare to bear the present for the nation,  
Who seared the step-son's wounds, opened in the heart,  
With the flame of a hypocritical fire.*

*I call with the voice of the gods of your fathers of old  
And with your baptismal metanoia bright:  
"Stand firm for ages here, as the sun stands!-  
I call, the spirit of your forebears.*

(Bernardas Brazdžionis)

**THERE IS NO FREEDOM WITHOUT FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE**  
**(An Appeal to the Restructuring Movement *Sajūdis*)**

We, Catholics concerned for the renewal of society, wish to direct the attention of *Sajūdis* to the fact that the democratization of society is not possible without bringing the rights of believing citizens up to par with the rights of all others, and without doing everything necessary to guarantee this equality and complete freedom of conscience.

1. *Equality of rights.* The Brezhnev Constitution now in effect (Art. 52), as well as the earlier Constitution of the U.S.S.R. under Stalin (Art. 124), clearly enshrines the inequality between believers and non-believers in principle. They guarantee unbelievers the right to propagate their beliefs, to carry on atheistic propaganda, while believers are guaranteed only the right to carry out religious worship, but not to spread their beliefs. So religious publishing is extremely limited, while all the mass media are obliged to propagate Soviet atheism. The very right of participating in religious worship is often denied to many citizens in various categories, especially the intelligentsia and young students.

Advocates of democratization in society should try to have the Constitution guarantee all citizens the right to profess and freely disseminate and defend their worldview (religious or atheistic convictions), and thus, equal rights to make use of the mass media. Atheistic propaganda should be financed by the atheists themselves, and not by the state, since money is earned for the state also by believers, and by citizens sympathetic to religion; in our republic, they constitute the majority.

2. *State-Church-school.* The aforesaid Art. 52 of the Soviet Constitution states: "In the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Church is separate from the state, and the school from the Church." Logic and justice require that the separation in both cases mean the same. Just as the Church is not allowed to interfere in the internal affairs of the school: the appointment of teachers, in school organizations, etc., so, the state should renounce interfering in clergy appointments (even under the pretext of registration), in the planning of Church celebrations, the choice of candidates for the seminary, etc.

Likewise, the state should not impose upon associations of all faiths a structure taken from secular organizations (committees of twenty, with their executive organs, given precedence over hierarchical structure). Finally, just as the highest degree of loyalty to the actions of the government is required of the faithful and Church leaders, regardless of the separation of Church and state, so too the separation of the school from the Church should not be interpreted as a mandate to the school to attack religion or the Church.

Alas, up till now, this is just how Art. 52 of the Constitution has been explained. With restructuring well under way, in May of this year, the

Principle of the Salininkai Middle School in the *Rayon* of Vilnius, sent away from the cemetery a priest who had come at the invitation of the parents to conduct funeral services for a religious student who had been killed in a traffic accident. Even that flag waver of restructuring, *Gimtasis Kraštas (Native Land)*, (June 2, 1988, June 8, 1988), has denied the right of believing students to share the Christmas Eve wafer in the school dormitory.

For some decades, the consciences of believing educators have been assaulted when they have been forced to take part in anti-religious activities, and publicly to ridicule and tear down that which is sacred to them.

3. *The General Anti-Religious Attitude.* New laws covering the activities of religious associations have been promised, and a draft should be published for public consideration. The attitude, in principle, in effect till now, of interpreting all laws and directives to the detriment of religion and the Church, with a view to their ultimate task, first to limit the influence of religion in society, and then, to destroy it completely, should be renounced.

Chairman Konstantin Kharchev of the Council for Religious Affairs has already stated to a correspondent for the magazine *Ogoniok*, that restructuring has totally rejected the view of believers as second-class citizens (thus, admitting that such an attitude existed), but the representatives of that council in our republic continue, till now, to condone unjust restrictions: the law allows religious funeral services in crematoria, but in Lithuania, they are forbidden in facilities sharing the same category with crematoria - funeral homes. Many offices and organizations refuse to provide any assistance at all at the funeral of one of the members of their collective, if it is performed with religious ceremonies, and the representatives of the Council for Religious Affairs fail to protest.

4. *Freedom of Conscience and Unwilling Supporters of Atheism.* The program and the Constitution of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and rules of the Lithuanian Communist Youth, obliging all their members to attack religion, restrict the civil rights of believing citizens guaranteed by Art. 48 and Art. 51 of the Soviet Constitution, and violate conscience. Upon deciding to become a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or the Lithuanian Communist Youth, a believer must either take on obligations contrary to one's conscience and carry them out, or dissimulate, or to remain outside these organizations which have a decisive voice in affairs of government and society.

The new regulation that only the First Secretary of the Party Committee will be able to become Chairman of the corresponding Council of Deputies cuts off any possibility for a believer unprepared to dissimulate, to assume such a position. Thus again, you have either violation of conscience, or discrimination. The one legal party in the country, and the sole legal mass youth organization should be neutral with regard to religion, so that citizens of various beliefs could belong to them. Otherwise, in the restructuring movement, there

should be a motion that the believers who have joined under pressure or through some misunderstanding, should resign from these organizations with the legal and actual guarantee that this will have no negative social consequences for them.

We urgently ask the restructuring movement to explain to official agencies and to the public that believing citizens will be able, sincerely, to participate in restructuring and renewal only when they are convinced that their "apartness" really has been unconditionally eliminated. We will know that from appropriate legal actions, and most importantly, from everyday practice. For example:

If the principle church of Lithuania, the Cathedral of Vilnius, is returned to religious worship, and new churches are permitted to be built where they are needed by the faithful;

If the Museum of Atheism is removed from the Church of Saint Casimir, Patron of Lithuania, and the profanation of that sacred shrine ends;

If religious associations obtain the rights of a juridical person and church centers the full right to publish;

If the ban on teaching children and youth religion is abrogated;

If church temperance, welfare and other fraternities and organizations are allowed to be established and operate;

If the agenda of the Council for Religious Affairs is restructured so that it is no longer an instrument of repression of the Church;

If an end is made to systematically demeaning religion and the Church in school and the mass media;

If no one, under any semblance, is forced to speak and act against his conscience, and the practice of religion is no longer an obstacle to promotion at work, in school or in cultural activities.

We would like the entire Lithuanian public to be informed about this appeal.

Julija Šalkauskienė  
Artist (widow of Prof. Šalkauskas)  
Vilnius, K. Požėlos g. 20-7

Vincas Rastenis  
Physician  
Vilnius, Architektų 36-24

Alfonsas Misevičius  
Lawyer  
Vilnius, Baltupio 55-40

Povilas Varnelė  
Engineer  
Vilnius, Vykinto 7-1

Antanė Kučinskaitė  
Linguist  
Vilnius, Lenino pr. 2-20

## PETITIONS AND PROTESTS

To: The XIX All-Union Party Conference of the Soviet Communist Party  
From: Priests of the Catholic Church in Lithuania

### A Petition

We are pleased and greatly encouraged by the words of General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union Communist Party Central Committee, uttered in one of his speeches, "Believers are Soviet people, working people, patriots, and they have the complete right suitably to express their beliefs. Restructuring, democratization and openness effects them also. And that completely, without any restrictions." (*Tiesa, April 30, 1988*)

We feel a moral obligation to appeal to those who make future plans for the life of society and to express the opinion of the faithful about the wrongs which they have experienced. During the Stalin era and the period of stagnation in our nation, the people of all walks of life, among them priests and laity, suffered infinitely much. It hurts that although now, there is much talk about righting those wrongs, the process of restructuring with regard to religion on the part of government organs is almost unnoticeable.

1. We request that wrongs still going on at the present time be righted without delay; namely:

To allow Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius, exiled to Žagarė in 1961 without any trial, to return to Vilnius and carry out his episcopal duties without interference;

To issue immediate orders for the release of people imprisoned for carrying out the principles of democratization and equality before the law: Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius, laymen Viktoras Petkus, Balys Gajauskas, Petras Gražulis and others;

To return to the faithful the important shrines of Lithuania taken away from them by force: the Cathedral and the Church of Saint Casimir in Vilnius, and also to accelerate the redecoration of the Church of the Queen of Peace in Klaipėda;

To allow the reconstruction of the wrecked and burned-down churches in Ryliškės, Batakiai, Gaurė, Kiaunoriai, and Kaltinėnai;

To allow Catholics to erect churches in the new cities and in the new suburbs of the larger cities.

2. In seeking to put into effect the equality before the law of believers and non-believers, emphasized in the Constitutions of the U.S.S.R. and the L.S.S.R., it is essential to arrange it so that Catholics could juridically and actually be able to take care of their own affairs freely, in accord with the *Canon Law* established by their religion, and good order in their own interior life: in fulfilling international obligations, it is essential to guarantee to believing

parents the same possibility of passing on to their children their religious beliefs, as non-believing parents have with regard to their own. It is essential to guarantee that never will any citizen, neither highschooler nor university student, neither teacher nor worker, nor anyone in high authority, be insulted or demeaned for the profession or the public practice of his faith.

It is essential strictly to forbid any officials of the civil government to terrorize youth and men wishing to become priests, and it is essential to allow the latter to enroll in the theological seminary freely, without any quotas.

It is important to strive that every believer could, on important religious holidays, be excused from obligatory work.

3. In the organizational and social sphere, believers must also be given the same rights as atheists, namely: believers' movements and societies serving the promotion of religious life and public decency must be allowed to function (e.g., the Catholic Temperance Movement and welfare organizations).

Representatives of the Catholic Church must be allowed free use of the mass media for disseminating the faith and developing morality. There must be no interference with believers' printing the number and kinds of religious books and newspapers as they desire.

We trust that in these times of restructuring and democratization, pursuing universal justice and truth (we believers support these efforts), the Constitutional principle of the equality before the law of all citizens, believers and non-believers, which the Soviet government has obliged itself to abide by, in signing the UN *Declaration of Human Rights*, and the Helsinki Final Act, finally be realized.

Signed by the following priests, Fathers:

Leonas Kalinauskas, Josvainiai, Kėdainių raj. Jonas Boruta, Vilnius. Jonas Kastytis Matulionis, Vilnius. Juozapas Pačinskas, Telšiai. Ferdinandas Žilys, Stulgiai, Kelmės r. Algirdas Pakamanis, Žarėnai-Latveliai, Šiaulių r. Donatas Valiukonis, Vilnius. Dr. Petras Puzaras, Tauragė. Liudas Šarkauskas, Kretinga. Vincentas Vėlavičius, Telšiai. Juozapas Razmantas, Žalpiei, Kelmės r. Petras Meilius, Eržvilkas, Jurbarko r. Vincentas Gauronskis, Vieksniai, Akmenės r. Jonas Kauneckas, Skaudvilė, Tauragės r. Alfonsas Bulotas, Vadžgirys, Jurbarko r. Juozapas Slurys, Seda, Mažeikių r. Jonas Bučelis, Mažeikių r. Boleslovas Jonauskas, Šaukėnai, Kelmės r.

Algimantas Keina, Valkininkai, Varėnos r. Mykolas Petravičius, Dubičiai, Varėnos r. Antanas Simonaitis, Navikai, Ignalinos r. Vytautas Rudis, Kalesninkai, Šalčininkų r. Jonas Kukta, Palūšė, Ignalinos r. Antanas Andriuškevičius, Druskininkai. Česlovas Taraškevičius, Rudnia, Varėnos r. Steponas Tunaitis, Tverečius, Ignalinos r. Ignas Jakutis, Ignalina. Jonas Vaitonis, Vilnius. Petras Purlys, Kabeliai, Varėnos r. Josifas Aškelovičius, Eišiškės, Šalčininkų r. Alfonsas Petronis, Ceikoniai, Ignalinos r. Aldas Antanas Čeponis, Dūkštas, Ignalinos r. Petras Tarvydas, Šalčininkų r. Albertas Ulickas, Švenčionys Edmundas Paulionis, Daugėliškis, Ignalinos r.



Leonas Savickas, Adutiškis, Švenčionių r. Marijonas Savickas, Mielagėnai, Ignalinos r. Kazimieras Pukėnas, Nemenčinė, Vilniaus r. Vaclovas Aliulis, Vilnius. Kazimieras Vasiliauskas, Vilnius. Juozas Tunaitis, Vilnius. Stasys Markevičius, Paluknys, Trakų r. Vladas Černiauskas, Marcinkonys, Varėnos r. Vytautas Pūkas, Butrimonys, Šalčininkų r. Medardas Čėponis, Vilnius. Jordanas Slėnys, Varėna. Aušvydas Belickas, Daugėliškis, Ignalinos r.

One signature illegible.

To: General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,  
Mikhail Gorbachev  
Copies to: Bishops and Apostolic Administrators of Lithuania  
From: Priests of the Diocese of Panevėžys

#### **A Petition**

In 1976, when the *Regulations for Religious Associations* were being drafted, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church in Lithuania appealed to the Soviet government in writing requesting that the *Regulations* be in conformity with *Canon Law* of the Catholic Church. However, at that time, no regard was paid to their wishes. The *Regulations* were drafted without regard for the rights of believers.

Clergy and laity are supposed to abide by *Canon Law*; as citizens, they must also abide by the laws of the state, but this is impossible because the very constitution of the U.S.S.R. proclaims the equality of all citizens while right here, it divides citizens into two classes: non-believers and believers. Non-believers are given the right to conduct atheistic propaganda, while believers are given the right only to carry out religious ceremonies.

In order to bring about the equality of non-believers and believers, atheism must be separated from the state, just like the state is separated from religion. Atheism, like religion, must be a private matter. The Church maintains itself without state aid from donations from the faithful; let atheism support itself by donations from its followers. The Church is separated - let it then be allowed to conduct its own affairs. Why do atheistic officials of the state interfere in the internal life of the Church, even canonical activity!

They determine at what age an individual will practice religion; they demand that the association of the faithful be led, not by priests, but by individuals confirmed or even determined in advance by the government; they set the quota of seminarians at the only theological seminary, that of Kaunas; without clearance by security organs and their concurrence, candidates cannot enroll in the seminary, the administration or faculty of the seminary cannot be appointed. Similarly, without them, a priest cannot be assigned to a parish nor a bishop to a diocese. We have come to a state in which a quarter of the parishes in Lithuania are without priests, and the Diocese of Panevėžys does not have a bishop of its own.

The quantity of prayerbooks and catechisms published in former

years is so small that it is impossible to provide them for many of the faithful. It is already the latter part of May, and we still have not received from the printers the *Catholic Calendar-Directory* which is needed by the priests since January, 1988. To say nothing of religious books or literature.

The war ended in 1945. The Diocese of Panevėžys did not receive permission to rebuild churches which had burned down or to build needed new ones.

Even the highest government officials do not recognize equality between believers and atheists. In official speeches, demands are made for official warfare against religion and strengthening of atheistic propaganda - as if against criminals. In the present circumstances, it is not possible even to dream that anyone in the government would say anything in favor of believers. Believing students and white collar workers experience discrimination in practice, even though this is denied.

We therefore request:

1. That in drafting the new religious regulations, true freedom of conscience be guaranteed, respecting believers. In discussions of the regulations, representatives of the dioceses of the Church in Lithuania should participate.

2. For a more successful struggle against various evils in society, the Church should be granted the right to use appropriate measures: press, radio, television; to allow temperance and welfare organizations to operate; not to interfere with priests visiting parishioners or renting automobiles for the religious and spiritual needs of believers.

3. Not to restrict the preparation of children for the sacraments, to allow children and youth to study catechism (as is done in other socialist countries: Hungary, Poland, etc.).

4. Not to interfere with Catholics celebrating holy days of obligation.

5. To recognize the rights of a juridical person for the parish religious association.

6. To name as leaders of the parish religious association (committee chairpersons) priests and not laymen; this is required by the spiritual mission of the Church and *Canon Law* (just as neither orderlies nor ambulance drivers can be hospital directors).

7. Not to interfere in the Church leadership choosing suitable candidates for the priesthood, appointing seminary administration and faculty, priests for the parishes and for the dioceses, candidates to the episcopacy.

8. Not to interfere with the procession to the cemetery in honor of the deceased on All Souls'. There can be no freedom of conscience if atheism is supported on a government level by all means, while the faithful experience discrimination.

May 23, 1988

Signed by Fathers:

1. Petras Adomonis
2. Bronius Antanaitis
3. Juozapas Antanavičius
4. Boleslovas Babrauskas
5. Jonas Bagdonas
6. Juozas Bagdonas
7. Bronius Balaiša
8. Antanas Balaišis
9. Vytautas Balašauskas
10. Jonas Balčiūnas
11. Juozas Balčiūnas
12. Jurgis Balickaitis
13. Kostas Balsys
14. Petras Baltuška
15. Petras Baniulis
16. Kazimieras Baronas
17. Henrikas Bernatovičius
18. Valdas Braukyła
19. Adolfas Breive
20. Petras Budriūnas
21. Feliksas Čišauskas
22. Povilas Čiučkis
23. Algirdas Dauknys
24. Saulius Filipavičius
25. Steponas Galvydis
26. Juozas Garška
27. Juozas Giedraitis
28. Antanas Gobis
29. Kazimieras Girnius
30. Alfonsas Gražys
31. Antanas Gružauskas
32. Klemensas Gutauskas
33. Gaudentas Ikamas
34. Vincentas Inkratas
35. Tadas Ivanovskis
36. Alfonsas Jančys
37. Povilas Jankevičius
38. Juozas Janulis
39. Vytautas Jasiūnas
40. Jonas Jatulis
41. Povilas Jozėnas
42. Jonas Jurgaitis
57. Juozas Jukšas
58. Leonas Jukšas
59. Aleksandras Masys
60. Vytautas Masys
61. Algirdas Miškinis
62. Povilas Miškinis
63. Antanas Mitrikas
64. Kazimieras Mozūras
65. Jonas Nagulevičius
66. Lionginas Neniškis
67. Petras Nykštas
68. Albinas Paltanavičius
69. Algimantas Petkūnas
70. Albinas Pipiras
71. Jonas Pranevičius
72. Robertas Pukėnis
73. Vladas Rabašauskas
74. Antanas Rameikis
75. Jonas Rimša
76. Edmundas Rinkevičius
77. Pranas Sabaliauskas
78. Raimundas Saprigonas
79. Aurelijus Simonaitis
80. Bronius Simsonas
81. Leonardas Skardinskas
82. Eugenijus Stalėronka
83. Vincentas Stankevičius
84. Sigitas Stepšys
85. Mykolas Stonys
86. Bronius Strazdas
87. Alfonsas Strielčiūnas
88. Povilas Svirskis
89. Ignas Šalčiūnas
90. Bronius Šlapelis
91. Povilas Šliauteris
92. Gediminas Šukys
93. Juozas Šumskis
94. Albertas Talačka
95. Leonardas Tamošauskas
96. Pranas Tamulionis
97. Stasys Tamulionis
98. Petras Tarulis

- |                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 43. Antanas Juška             | 99. Petras Tijušas        |
| 44. Alfonsas Kadžius          | 100. Vytautas Tvarijonas  |
| 45. Antanas Kairys            | 101. Benediktas Urbonas   |
| 46. Vytautas Kapočius         | 102. Sigitas Uždavins     |
| 47. Stasys Kazėnas            | 103. Antanas Valančiūnas  |
| 48. Petras Kiela              | 104. Antanas Valantinas   |
| 49. Antanas Kietis            | 105. Juozas Varnas        |
| 50. Anicetas Kisielius        | 106. Povilas Varžinskas   |
| 51. Povilas Klezys            | 107. Antanas Vaškevičius  |
| 52. Vladas Kremenskas         | 108. Virginijus Veilentas |
| 53. Stanislovas Krumpliauskas | 109. Stasys Zubavičius    |
| 54. Petras Kuzmickas          | 110. Antanas Zulonas      |
| 55. Jonas Labakojis           | 111. Bronius Žilinskas    |
| 56. Petras Liubonas           | 112. Stasys Stanikūnas    |
|                               | 113. Leonas Linda         |

To: Secretary of the Communist Party of the Lithuanian S.S.R., L. Šepetys  
 From: Priests of the Diocese of Telšiai and the Klaipėda Prelature

#### **A Petition**

The heart of Vilnius is its area of castles, the entire complex of hills and valleys and fortifications, whose multifaceted meaning is only now beginning to be understood.

A very important element in that historic district is Bald Hill (the hill of the three crosses). The tradition of the carving of the crosses at its summit goes back four centuries. Erected in 1613, re-erected in 1740, the crosses stood until 1869, until they disintegrated. But the Czar's government would not allow them to be re-erected. That was done only in 1918, during the austerity of wartime. The monument was planned by the Samogitian petty noble, the architect Vivolskis. People of all nationalities in the area of Vilnius were involved in realizing the plan and re-erecting the crosses. The three crosses used to remind the residents of Vilnius of the beginnings of the Catholic religion in the city, and provided a feeling of peace and calm. However, one night in 1960, the concrete monument of the three crosses was blown up. At that time, Vilnius lost such sacred sculptures as T. Rigys's sacred figures over the cathedral facade, Professor K. Jelskis's sculptures on top of the Evangelical Reformed Church, etc.

We demand that the sculpture of the three crosses, as planned by Vivolskis, be re-erected on the still extant foundations, at the summit of Bald Hill, that the long-standing position be supported, and that the hill not become bald in the full sense of the term.

August 5, 1988

Signed by Fathers:

|                          |                                    |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| V. Vėlavicius, Telšiai   | D. Skirmantas, Laukžemė            |
| J. Šiurys, Telšiai       | M. Šulcas, Klaipėda                |
| A. Arnašius, Kuršėnai    | V. Jušys, Alsėdžiai                |
| B. Jonauskas, Šaukėnai   | J. Šukys, Telšiai                  |
| A. Svarinskas, Viduklė   | A. Putramentas, Skuodas            |
| J. Gedvila, Mažeikiai    | A. Genutis, Seda                   |
| B. Talaišis, Kretinga    | V. Gauronskis, Vieksniai           |
| J. Tamašauskas, Darbėnai | T. Poška, Telšiai                  |
| J. Pačinskas, Plungė     | A. Gylis, Židikai                  |
| J. Paulauskas, Gargždai  | J. Petrauskis, Varniai             |
| B. Burneikis, Klaipėda   | V. Matekaitis, Vėžaičiai           |
| J. Miklovas, Palanga     | K. Rimkus, Nemakščiai              |
| V. Šlevas, Žygaičiai     | K. Velioniškis, Tverai             |
| A. Pudžemys, Mosėdis     | L. Dambrauskas, Žemaičiu Kalvarija |
| A. Striukis, Akmenė      | K. Jadviršis, Akmenė               |
| B. Latakas, Rietavas     | L. Veselis, Gargždai               |
| B. Bagužas, Salantai     | A. Ričkus, Plateliai               |
| J. Pakalniškis, Laukuva  | P. Palšis, Skuodas                 |
| J. Razmantas, Žalpiei    | P. Puzaras, Tauragė                |
| K. Žukas, Vieksnaliai    | A. Pranckaitis, Eigirdžiai         |
| A. Šeškevičius, Gargždai | A. Budvius, Telšiai                |
| J. Boruta, Vilnius       | J. Bučelis, Mažeikiai              |
| V. Mikutavičius, Telšiai | N. Sobkovskis, Telšiai             |

An Open Letter to L.S.S.R. Prosecutor Liudvikas Sabučius,  
the Restructuring Movement and the  
Editors of the Newspaper *Truth*, Communist Youth Edition.

### **Vilnius**

Even though it is only 8 o'clock in the morning, officials of state security and the public order are all ready to go to work full-tilt. On the morning of May 3, the neighborhood of the L.S.S.R. Supreme Court, all the way to the Lenin Prospect, was being closely guarded by the defenders of the interests of the state and agents of law and order. All side streets leading to the courthouse were cordoned off. Officials were ready for a serious fight with anyone who even tried to take an interest in the criminal trial of Father Alfonsas Svarinskas, during which they arrested a second priest, Father Sigitas Tamkevičius.

At about 9 o'clock, it became clear that all the security measures had not been taken in vain: several hundred of the faithful really did try "threateningly" to approach the courthouse. The officials went to work seriously. Right there in the street, they entered the crowd of people. Taking them under

the arms, they hauled one after another of the "criminals" who had not had time to open their mouths, to the militia station, accused them and gave them jail sentences or fines for the strangest things. Two polite-looking girls are arraigned; they are accused of using physical force against militia officers. One young believer, who had not uttered a single bad word, got ten days for "cursing", and two other girls were hauled to jail because, in front of the courthouse, they had dared right under the noses of the officials to speculate in shoes, of which they had no more than one on each foot.

Even the very zealous guardians of law and order were not able to arrest all those assembled. Some they apprehended, stuffed into automobiles prepared beforehand, and drove them to the woods. No, they did not shoot them. That time, they did not shoot people in the woods. They just drove them 30 to 50 km. from Vilnius and left them scattered by one or two in the gloom of the Forest of Nemenčinė and Dubingiai.

This incident was not during the Stalin era, it was the Brezhnev era, someone has perceptively called the era of stagnation. However slowly, this rigidity is receding from almost all areas of life, somehow, however, skirting the faithful. How else explain the fact that even in these times of openness, nobody to date has deigned to reply to written protests signed by tens of thousands of believers. Radio, television and the press claim as before that religion is free. The rights of believers are not restricted. No attempt is even made to solve specific problems which have developed between believers and the state. As if nothing had happened, they go on teaching everyone the same tired formulae: "things are improving", "things are becoming friendlier", "things are normalizing".

How much can things be "-izing" when the facts show something quite different. True, they are promising to return the Church of the Queen of Peace in Klaipėda. But have they revealed who took it unjustly? Have they made public how they used to round up the "witches" -- those collecting signatures. How the pages with the signatures of the faithful used to be seized and destroyed on the spot? And how about the efforts of all the appropriate agencies to check who had signed, why, validly or not, etc., etc. But all that was done not so long ago, just yesterday, actually, today.

It is impossible to mention all of the injustices at one time. There are too many of them. We shall touch upon one which, like a post-war theme in the words of the writer, R. Gudaitis, goes through the very heart of the Lithuanian, in this case, the believer. This was the arrest and imprisonment of the priests who defended the faithful, Father Alfonsas Svarinskas and Father Sigitas Tamkevičius. And they defended not some kind of fabricated rights, but the right guaranteed by Art. 50 of the Constitution, freely to confess the faith of one's choice.

To speak more fully about Father Svarinskas is still difficult today, especially for us people of Kybartai. He was simply born too soon. In the

post-war years, the Stalinist mechanism for "purging" the nations pinned on him the sobriquet of bandit, and sent him off to Siberian imprisonment, where at that time, a great part of the intellectuals of the day, were.

The trial just embellished the sobriquet: "bandit" became "anti-Soviet". Incidentally, neither we nor a great number of others who have the least acquaintance with Father Svarinskas, believes that. Even the documentary film, *Who Are You, Father Svarinskas?* failed to convince.

It is still too early to try to exonerate a "bandit", even one who never had a weapon in his hand. So we shall be patient, and wait until history dots every "i", or, as it is fashionable to say today, fills in the blanks of history.

Let us speak about Father Sigitas Tamkevičius. He is personally known to us. During the post-war years, "he was still attending the Middle School of Seireijai". That is how he is written up in the article shockingly called, "In One Hand A Stick, In the Other, a Rosary" (*Tiesa*, 12-3-83), by the journalist Stasė Mockuvienė (you cannot call a teenager a bandit). And what is that "stick" which Father Tamkevičius so zealously applied?

In the first place, it was the word of Truth from the pulpit, which was recognized by officials and responsible agents as "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" and "vilification of Soviet life". And how are we believers to view all that calmly, when today's newspapers and magazines sparkle with even sharper criticism, when entire decades are called a political mistake which brought the country to stagnation, when one after another, evils are brought up, and their authors, instead of being described as "anti" are presented to the public as proponents of restructuring and its active supporters. Where is the logic in this?

Today, we are all glad that the government is making efforts toward sobriety. The war against alcoholics and distillers has become so serious that it has led even to ration cards for sugar. Who were the first to start the struggle for sobriety? The first heralds in the struggle for a sober way of life were priests, among them, Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas, Sigitas Tamkevičius, the late Father Juozas Zdebskis, et. al. They were among the first to understand the damage done by alcohol to the person, the family and the nation. Boldly from the pulpits, they urged everyone to change their way of life. They created the sobriety movement, criticized the state apparatus which, with an overly free hand, produced and sold alcoholic beverages.

Yes, they cut down the production of alcoholic beverages, restricted their sale, and "forgot" to remove the "anti" lable from him who, without waiting for the opportune moment, first set forth to do battle with evil.

Father Sigitas Tamkevičius urged people from the pulpit to turn their attention to the families, to seek their permanency; he spoke out especially strongly against abortion as a phenomenon demoralizing man. "If there are no strong families, if a family raises fewer than three children, we shall destroy ourselves," said Father Tamkevičius. And strange as it may seem today, this idea

is being published in the press, almost word for word.

Nor was Father Tamkevičius hesitant about the nationality question, he spoke publicly from the pulpit against the introduction of the Russian language into kindergarten. He said that the Lithuanian in Lithuania can and should speak the native Lithuanian language, and that if people from other republics living among us for many years do not know the Lithuanian language, it is the fault of us Lithuanians.

Here is a quotation from the resolution of the XIX All-Union Conference of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union regarding the question of nationalities and their relationships: "A very important principle of our multinational state is that all citizens of the U.S.S.R. should be able freely to nurture native languages and make use of them equally before the law... to urge that citizens of other nationalities living in its territory should study the language."

Is it not strange that the thinking of the resolution and of Father Tamkevičius are so similar, but the fate of the authors of the ideas, alas, is not.

How could Father Sigitas Tamkevičius not have misgivings about still another negative phenomenon in our society: the persecution and terrorizing of children, youth and adults on account of their religious convictions. Publicly, from the pulpit, he criticized the distorted atheistic education being carried out in the schools. He publicized examples of teachers forcing believing children to join atheistic organizations, forcing them to speak and write against their own convictions, and ridiculing them. That Father Tamkevičius spoke the truth is clear to us. We and our children have experienced it firsthand. Finally, even the atheists today say that the situation in this regard has changed little, albeit they speak under their breath: "Still alive are the traditions of the past when it was considered almost good form to ridicule a believer. Even that Constitutional freedom of conscience, alas, remain only on paper," writes Audrius Užkenis (*Mokslievis*, No. 1, Jan. 1988).

APN commentator, A. Ignatov, writes, "I have just returned from the Rostov Region, in the land of the Cossacks, where the Kamenolomni live, I heard two sides of a routine conflict. Tatiana Duriagina complained to the editor of the APN publication, *Religion in the USSR*, that she had been summoned to the headquarters of the Executive Committee and threatened with public denunciation because her children go to church not with her, as would be fitting, but with their grandmother, or alone. The teachers at the local school began discussing why children believe in God, whether there is a God, and who has seen Him." (*Evening News*, March 30, 1988)

And here, Father Sigitas Tamkevičius, for publicizing similar examples, was convicted by the court of "vilifying the policy of our government with regard to the Church and believers," and they even claimed that this had been established "based on the testimony of witnesses".

And who were those witnesses? Believers? Students who had



experienced religious discrimination? No! Strange as it might seem — educators, yes, the very ones who used to transgress against Par. 50 of the Lithuanian SSR Constitution. They ridiculed, they demeaned our children, they even "testified" that they were "vilified". And the court was satisfied with such "witnesses".

Of more or less two hundred believers questioned, security investigators saw no need to enter into the records of interrogation and to use during the trial a single instance of terrorizing our children on account of religion! Not a single demonstrated testimony defending our pastor, Father Sigitas Tamkevičius.

One more - perhaps the most serious - accusation: Father Sigitas Tamkevičius belonged to the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights, and took an active part in its work. The Committee often used to have their documents publicized abroad. One of their complaints defending the faithful they even addressed to UNESCO.

However, in these times of openness, when multilateral ties with foreign countries are being developed, this makes no impression on anyone. The only thing which does not fit in the concept of openness is the revelation of military or state secrets. But here there really is no military and no state secret. Finally, where could one turn when soviet agencies used to respond to declarations and protests with nothing but new repressions.

During the trial, it was established that "Father Tamkevičius knew that he would have to answer before the law." Yes, he knew, and still he stood up, not for his own personal interests, but for the Truth. And for that:

"The Supreme Court of the Lithuanian SSR, having considered the material in the case, having heard the witnesses, has found Sigitas Tamkevičius guilty according to the first part of Par. 68 of the Lithuanian S.S.R. Criminal Code (anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda), and sentenced him to six years deprivation of freedom, and gave him a supplemental sentence of four years exile.

No, this is not the era of Stalin, and no one shot us in the forests of Dubingiai or Nemenčinė.

Nor were Father Tamkevičius or Father Svarinskas tried in absentia, as was done during the Stalin era. In a closed courtroom, filled only by witnesses (except for family members of those on trial), and those acceptable to the KGB, an "open" trial took place.

Regardless of the fact that questioning nearly two hundred of the faithful, the KGB used illegitimate methods of investigation (leading questions, threats, interrogation of minors without their parents being present), and in spite of the fact that they did not find among them anyone to witness against these priests, nevertheless, they sentenced them. And not to one or two years, but to ten.

This is no wonder. We believers are accustomed to it. *But we have not accepted, and have not become reconciled* to such a situation. We therefore

ask how to reconcile all this with openness and democracy?

When will socialist justice finally smile upon the believer and the priest?

Postscript to the editors of *Truth*, Communist Youth Edition: we turn to your newspaper which has advanced the furthest on the road to democracy and openness. We trust that room will found in it to discuss the problems of the believer also. In case of publication, we ask you not to condense the text. We are tired of fragments taken out of context.

July 12, 1988

Signed by the following residents of Kybartai:

- |                           |                              |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Kostas Abraitis        | 19. Ona Langaitienė          |
| 2. Rimantas Baltrušaitis  | 20. Matilda Mališkienė       |
| 3. Marija Baltrušaitienė  | 21. Bernadeta Mališkaitė     |
| 4. Benius Baltrušaitis    | 22. Kęstutis Mačiulaitis     |
| 5. Alfonsas Bilickas      | 23. Anastazija Mačiulaitienė |
| 6. Juozas Bindokas        | 24. Lina Mačiulaitytė        |
| 7. Teresė Bruožienė       | 25. Eugenija Menčinskienė    |
| 8. Birutė Briliūtė        | 26. Vytas Norkus             |
| 9. Ona Dailidavičienė     | 27. Stanislava Norkienė      |
| 10. Gintas Dobiliauskiene | 28. Jeronimas Samuolis       |
| 11. Elena Dobiliauskiene  | 29. Salomėja Samuolienė      |
| 12. Ona Grigalevičienė    | 30. Ona Šarakauskaitė        |
| 13. Romas Griškaitis      | 31. Teresė Šioraitienė       |
| 14. Ona Griškaitienė      | 32. Dalia Verbylaitė         |
| 15. Evaldas Jaras         | 33. Romas Žemaitis           |
| 16. Ona Jasaitienė        | 34. Arvydas Žemaitis         |
| 17. Ona Kavaliauskaitė    | 35. Petras Žemaitis          |
| 18. Aušra Karaliūtė       | 36. Edmundas Žemaitis        |

## OUR PRISONERS

From the letters of Father Sigitas Tamkevičius:

"From Staro-Sainakov, they transferred me to Krivosayn. I am living on the bank of the River Obe. I delivered mail only two days and after that they took the job away. The postmaster explained that "policy" does not allow me to work in the communications network. That same day, I found work in a factory making athletic equipment. Here, they make ice-hockey sticks and I plane the handles. There could be less noise and dust: my eyes, ears and lungs are full. Of course you must not imagine that this is some unbearable burden.



*Father Sigitas Tamkevičius*

People work for years on end and nothing happens.

"Moreover, for five years I was at the loom and in dust and... and everything else. And thank God that I did not forget to pray. I did not forget how to laugh, I did not forget that I am supported by very many good people to whom I am so indebted for their prayers and moral support. The work itself is not heavy. I only have to stand from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM at the loom. In camp, the work at the loom was easier, and it was even easier to pray. Here, it is only during breaks that one can say the rosary and pray. However, because of this, I shall have Saturdays and Sundays free, while in camp, I was free only on Sundays. For everything I am grateful to God. He grants enough of everything, as much as necessary: whether health or strength or time or anything else, only we must not bury our God-given talents ...

"When, year after year, you see around you strange faces, looking askance at your plight, and often even antagonistic, you become spiritually hungry. It is our good fortune as believers to have learned spiritual communion with the invisible world, and we are fortunate if we know that there are those who are praying for us and giving us moral support. I knew this even when they were confiscating my letters in stacks and they used to disappear without a trace.

"It used to happen like this: the camp censor comes and begins reading the names of individuals writing to you (greetings, good wishes, encouragement), but you will never see those letters, nor read them. He reads the names one after the other: ten, fifteen, twenty... and looks to see how you will react. I used to tell him thanks, and leave. And how many letters there were, which were not even mentioned, as though they had not even been written. Such is the prisoners' lot. At that time, apparently, they wanted to convince me that I was not missed by anyone. However, I was never tempted to think so, for the people of God were praying. Now many write. Thanks to all. I receive letters from Germany and England. I would like to write all of them at least one or two words.

"Jesus Christ, during His temptation, expressed a very important idea: in order for man to live, he needs bread and the word of God. If these things are lacking, man does not live, but vegetates. The word of God often reaches me through people, when they pray for me, that I might persevere. When they write, when they wish me success, at least in their hearts. Because of that, I am blessed, and I thank every single one for their prayers and letters of support. True, many of them when I was in camp, ended up in the censor's wastebasket. For those, a special thanks.

July - August, 1988

Father Sigitas Tamkevičius' address in exile:

Ind. 636000 Tomskaja obi. KrivoSeino Pionierskaja - 3

Petras Gražulis writes to the L.S.S.R. Procurator:

I wish, Mr. Procurator, to describe to you briefly in what conditions prisoners are living in the Pravieniškiai 06-12 8 Zone. When they first brought me to our zone's dining hall, I was shocked to see the greatest disorder and misery prevailing. The dining hall windows, doors and walls had not been painted for a long time, and they were peeling and dirty; the condition of the tables and benches was the same. It was full of dead rats and an unbearably bad odor. The soup was black and smelled like dishwater.

Tea meant for the prisoners here ends up in the black market, bringing six times the price in the commissary. Hence, the convicts never receive any. In place of tea, they give boiled water, and in order that it might have a brown color, a little burned sugar is put in. There is a dearth of dippers, spoons and other utensils. Hence, sharing them among the prisoners often gives rise to conflicts. The dishes are poorly washed, greasy, and have bits of old food sticking to them. Whether meat is allotted to prisoners or not, I do not know. I can only say that I've never eaten any here yet.

Sometimes in the evening, a little piece of very bad fish is given out, but even that is half the size it is supposed to be. In the morning, they pour a scant spoonful of sugar out on the table, which you do not know what to do with - lick it up with your tongue, or dip it up with bread, since, as I mentioned,

they issue no cups for tea. We drink it from the same vessels from which we eat soup or porridge.

Bread is baked for us from hulls, and is often only partially baked. Sometimes, the serious suspicion arises that it is baked from flour swept up from the ground. You find everything in it: dirt, ashes, coal, bits of cement and even rat droppings. Sometimes it has been gnawed by mice or rats. Convicts who work under noxious conditions (although everybody here works under such conditions) receive half a liter of milk daily, but it is always diluted with water.

During the season when the heat is on, in order not to have to bring drinking water from a distance, they dilute it with hot water from the heating system. In this way, people working in noxious conditions are being poisoned. In the Lukiškai Prison in Vilnius, 9 rubles are allotted to feed one convict. But here, 18. Many here do not eat breakfast or supper because having slept an hour longer, you will save more calories than you obtain by eating. Like many, I too eat neither breakfast nor supper; only, like many, I take the bread.

Convicts who have earned money have the right to buy 15 rubles worth of food a month at the zone commissary. However, not everyone earns money, regardless of the fact that they have no judgement against them, and they have worked more than a year. Meanwhile, the factory fulfills plans, someone receives thousands in prizes, while the convict gets less than 10 rubles a year. In my personal account there is also no money, and I do not know when I shall earn any. Perhaps, I shall finish my sentence before I receive any compensation. With money sent from outside, we are not allowed to buy anything. Hence, tormented by hunger, I pay no heed to the rules and often "beg".

There are good people here. They feel sorry for you, and smear some margarine on your slice of bread, or treat you to some preserves. Those whom no one treats and have no money to buy with gather scraps of food from the ground, or earn a piece of bread by scrubbing the corridor, the hall, or the like. Smokers pick up all the butts from the floor. There are shrewder individuals who know how to obtain food from the outside through one means or another.

Necessity is the mother of invention. If someone had told me earlier, I would never have believed that they could feed a convict in such conditions and with such food in a labor colony. This is possible only in the Soviet system. Convicts demanding that the food and conditions in the mess hall be improved would cooperate in proclaiming hunger strikes, and whole groups of them would not eat. This year, on the eve of February 16, prisoners armed with crowbars, pikes, sticks, pipes, clubs and other weapons tore down fences and attacked dining hall workers. There were casualties. To put down the riot, they brought in the army. However, regardless of the prisoners' demands, the situation in the mess hall never changed.

The zone is often visited by commissions. But what they ascertain, what they do, is not clear. Probably as is customary, they have coffee and cognac

with the administration, and leave. When I complained about the rats and dirt in the mess hall to Chief Nesterov of the Operations Section, he merely smiled and replied, "Gražulis, you haven't come to a resort. I haven't seen rats in the mess hall for ten years." The chief's eyesight is bad, but why should it be good? He doesn't eat here.

During the interview, Nesterov tried to convince me that I am an American CIA agent, only now, isolated. It is too bad that I cannot write abroad from here. Perhaps the Americans and Lithuanians abroad would hear me. Perhaps, as Nesterov said, the CIA would help me as one of their own, send me food through the Red Cross, and I would not have to starve. They would provide me with vitamins and medication, since everything here is very very low quality - rejects. They would send poison for the rats which are taking over the camp.

In our zone, there is an infirmary, but real patients cannot get in, because four or five healthy people are always being "treated" there. Some of them are "treated" a half-year or longer, sometimes right up to the end of their term. And those who should be excused from work are not; e.g., A worker in our brigade named Gintas. He injured his hand with an electric saw. The wound was sutured, but he was never excused from work, even though he was unable to work for a whole month. When I came down with the grippe, and my temperature rose, I was excused for just two days. I had to go to work while still feverish.

In cell-like quarters, and punishment cells, Chief Nesterov and Colonel Gruodis of the Operations Section, dispense medication. The physician here has no rights. This an abuse of medicine. It is common talk among the convicts that for 25 rubles, one can be confined to the infirmary to rest. For the same price, it is possible to purchase a "diet" - better food. This is done by paying money to one of the healthy patients who is confined for the duration of his sentence. It is his task to collect the tribute and share it with the chief physician. For this reason, the doctors keep their own friends who are well in the infirmary. There is no other way to explain such lengthy "treatment".

Those who were constantly on the first shift are utterly unable to get to see the dentist, who works three days a week from 8:00 AM until 1:00 PM, since they are not excused from work. There is no use forcing one's way in. She herself says that in the zone, treatment is bad, the "drill" is old, the bits are worn, fillings and other material are sub-standard.

At work we assemble boxes, the shop is cramped and badly lit. Since there is little room, it is difficult to pass by workers to get to materials: you tear your clothing and cut your hands. The work benches are broken down, not at all designed for assembling boxes. They don't even have hammers. Instead, we use a piece of metal fastened to the end of a pipe, so we often smash our fingers. We have no work clothes, several times we requested them from the foreman. He told us there were none. So we work and live in the same soiled clothing.

The convicts photographed by Algirdas Pilvelis for *The Ranks of Youth*, are show pieces, with clean new padded jackets and shined shoes. Pilvelis should have photographed the prisoners of brigades 21, 23 and 24 in our zone. Their clothing is ragged, and one of them keeps his shoe tied on with a rope. All of them are exhausted, unshaven, their bodies and faces covered with sores. Since they are unwashed and their clothing unlaundered, their bodies give off a stench. In their pocket is a piece of bread, so that they might not faint before the end of the workday. Without exaggeration, they can be compared to the concentration-camp prisoners in Balys Sruoga's *Forest of the Gods*, whom he called "staggerers".

Convicts employed at the radio factory work without a day off, even though by law there is supposed to be a day of rest, and only an eight-hour workday. As it is, they work from 8:00 A.M. until 9:00 P.M., and sometimes even until 1:00 A.M.. That is slave labor. But slaves used to be bought, purchased. One had to pay money for them, so the owner took care of them as his own property, took care of them like things which were expected to serve him for a long time. We are government property, convicted, demeaned and voiceless. Our health and our complaints are of no concern to anyone. They do not care whether we have anything to eat, or in what conditions we live and work.

When they bring a new prisoner to the zone, they confiscate his civilian clothing, sell that which is better, and send the rest off somewhere. Those leaving for home never get them back. It is fortunate if friends or family come to meet you and bring clothing. But what if no one comes?

In the living area, there is practically no room. The whole area is full of rats' tunnels. The toilets in the living area, as well as the work zone, are dirty, never cleaned. The sewer pipes are clogged, and an unbearable stench hangs in the area. The sections (that's the name of the quarters where the convicts live and sleep), are orderly, the walls freshly painted, but they are so small that there is no room even to set up a stool. There is no radio. One is unable to complain about the smallness of the area, since, as Major Barškietis says, "The law does not provide any square footage, or any area for convicts". They have no right to it.

A prisoner brought to the camp has a number of problems. There is nothing to shave with. Use whatever you want to shave, but you must be clean-shaven. Where to obtain needle and thread, soap, buttons, shoe polish, a shoe brush, a clothing brush, writing paper, envelopes, or something to write with, etc., etc.? Where to wash one's clothing and what to change into while this is being done, if only one set of clothing is issued? There has been no tooth powder in the zone for over half a year. Toothpaste is forbidden because the prisoners consume it. Nor may sugar be sent from home. The convicts use it to make moonshine.

Around April 20, two stills were discovered in the work zone. This is nothing new in the zone. Addiction to narcotics, alcoholism and

homosexuality are widespread in the camp. When someone brings in drugs through illegal channels, half the zone gets high.

In this statement, I wish to mention also prison conditions in the Lukiškiai Prison in Vilnius. In the cells, whose length is about 4 meters and width about 2 meters, in Czarist days, two prisoners were kept, and sometimes one. Today, the same space holds six, eight or even nine prisoners. In the cell, there are three double-decker bunks, a mat, a sheet of metal welded to a frame in place of springs. So six prisoners sleep in bed, the rest on the floor. The ninth gets to sleep under a bunk since only two mats fit on the floor. In the same cell is a toilet (you can imagine the stench), a washbasin, and a little cabinet for food. There is so little space that all the prisoners cannot get out of their bunks at once. There is no room for them to stand. Convicts living in such conditions, getting out for only one hour to exercise, live like this for up to a year. So, lice and illness are frequent guests.

When they were hauling us from Vilnius to the camp in Pravieniškiai, in a space about the size of a train compartment intended for four persons, they crammed seventeen prisoners. In order to get us in, the soldiers had to kick shove us in with their canvas boots.

This is a brief overview of our life in zone Oc 12-8 and the conditions of confinement at the Lukiškiai Prison. The purpose of this petition — that a system of order applicable to all prisoners be established at the prison camp, that better conditions be provided not for me alone. If the camp administration supplies only me with dental care, a cup (as it has done), a chair, work clothes, and so forth, I reject them.

Certain portions of this petition do not state names. Names are irrelevant to impose order. For instance, during an inspection of the health facilities, it is possible to establish without knowing names whether a healthy person is lying in the bed and how long he has been there. Inmates formerly held in punishment isolation or similar cells can be asked who furnishes their medical care and dispenses medicine, the medical staff or the prison administration. Without knowing names, it can be determined whether the inmates work long hours or have days of rest. Even without names, it is possible to see how the prisoners assigned to brigades 21,23 and 24 are dressed.

From our conversation on May 4th of this year, it is apparent that you, Mr. Procurator, are totally indifferent to the imprisonment conditions we endure in our work and living facilities. Your purpose was simply to frighten me so I will not write or complain because, as you claim, I may be punished, etc. for writing.

What you might say and how you might punish is of no importance. Seeing these things, I cannot remain silent and write only about myself. As a believer, I am obliged to feel for my neighbor and help him. Exhausted by the hard labor and seeking some rest, the inmates hurt themselves by swallowing pieces of wire or welding rods, slashing their wrists and driving nails into them



so they cannot even be seen, sometimes piercing their lungs. To remove these foreign objects, these self-inflicted victims are taken to the hospital. There they are able to rest.

Medical care at the labor camp is controlled by the administration, and the administration as well as the KGB are against me, so even if I get sick, medicine may be used not to cure me, but to cripple me. May 15, 1988

Gintautas Iešmantas writes:

(Excerpts from a letter of November 8, 1987 to the editors of *Literatūra ir menas - Literature and Art.* )

"On August 11 of this year, I sent a letter to Secretary L. Šepetys of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party, requesting that measures be taken to return the poetry manuscripts confiscated from me by personnel of the Lithuanian S.S.R. Internal Security Committee, beginning in 1974 and ending in 1986. Secretary Šepetys did not take any action and without informing me, forwarded the letter to the Office of the Procurator.

This office informed me in a letter, dated October 10 and signed by J. Bakučionis, that the works I demanded "have been designated as material evidence, and the court's verdict in this case has not been overturned." Consequently it is not possible to return the manuscripts\_\_\_\_\_

I would like to ask openly whether such behavior is not in direct violation of the rules attributed to the restructuring movement? Did not this same Šepetys assert in the press that "it can be stated most reliably that no works of art are, nor ever were, banned here for ideological and political reasons..."

But it was precisely for such reasons that the satires of Vincas Kudirka were not published, nor were Dobilas' *Blūdas*, V. Pietaras' *Algimantas* and some of Maironis' works... Was it not for this same ideological, political rationale that J. Mikelinškas' novel *Juodųjų eglių šalis (Land of the Black Firs)* lay in a drawer for a good decade, that the publication of Kojelavičius' history of Lithuania was held up?

There were, and still are, even worse instances than with my manuscripts. Strangely, even works written on such innocent themes as nature, love, human existence and so forth are considered evidence. And these are in the majority! Just consider where, in what country, can works of poetry, regardless of their quality, become proofs of guilt, material evidence? But that is not even worth discussing! I read in one inmate's verdict that a transistor radio (allegedly to listen to foreign broadcasts) was determined to be material evidence. Consequently, by decision of the court, the poor transistor was condemned to destruction. These are the heights of stupidity attained when both conscience and justice are ignored! . . . Torpid reasoning is like a road-blocking boulder which cannot be removed without effort\_\_\_\_\_An end must be put to criminal and barbaric actions.

P.S. The editors of *Literatūra ir menas* refused to publish the letter from which we quoted above.

April 22, 1988:

It is wonderful to hear kind words from the homeland. They provide strength at times of sadness and anxiety.

While at labor camp, I received a letter which, like yours, spoke of gratitude and love. I was surprised, for what? Why?

"Why the thanks, my quaking heart?

Why me, a poor man who simply yearned to dare?

Could it be for the pain, marked by dedication?

Why the thanks, my quaking heart?

Could it be for the greed intervowen with despair?

Could it be for the sacrifice? The resolve blown by the wind?

Why the thanks, my quaking heart?

Why me, a poor man who simply yearned to dare?"

And it is truly so. We walked in the dark, without seeing the light, but believing in it. Today the situation is changing, we are seeing a small ray. We want to believe that it is not a mirage and our hopes will be fulfilled. It is easier now to see than ever before:

"And our weakness becomes our strength And despair turns into hope . . . Oh misfortune! Against darkness and villainy You go from agony to agony. Like hope . . . And tears, glimmering Like stars, rain on souls as fire."

#### NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

##### K a u n a s

On August 2, 1988, at the Interdiocesan Theological Seminary in Kaunas, a symposium was held for the hierarchy and clergy of the Catholic Church in Lithuania. The symposium opened with a hymn to the Holy Spirit. Two papers were read: "Mary in a Priest's Life" and "The Pastoral Letters and Lessons of Blessed Jurgis Matulaitis, Archbishop of Vilnius." Holy Mass was concelebrated by Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius, Bishops A. Vaičius, J. Preikšas, J. Steponavičius and R. Krikščiūnas and about 30 priests.

During the Mass, Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius spoke on behalf of the bishops (see p. 2). The priests, attentively listening to the cardinal's remarks, voiced their support and confidence in the present hierarchy, and outrage at the government's interference in purely internal Church matters: crude handling of the Kaunas Theological Seminary and meddling with the assignment of priests. Everyone seconded the remarks of Father V. Jalinskas, the Dean of Lazdijai. It is disturbing that the final selection of applicants to the seminary is made by a government representative.

This year again, the list of candidates to the seminary was taken

to Vilnius . . . We must endeavor to free the Church from subservience to the interests of the state, to cut as much as possible the tentacles of this subjugation. The admission of young men to the Seminary is strictly the concern of the clergy and the current situation is unjust. A final stop must be put to the practice of terrorizing seminary applicants, by demanding pledges of cooperation with the security police, slandering priests and the priesthood itself.

This is a violation of the Constitution, a criminal act, and the perpetrators must be made known and held accountable before the law; shame on the state for using such methods to subordinate the Church, stated Father V. Jalinskas. It is wrong to consult Vilnius when assigning priests. This, also, is an internal Church matter and no one has the right to meddle in her internal structure. Under current circumstances, a priest is often uncertain whom to obey: the bishop who consecrated him or that unseen hand demolishing the Church's structure? Father Jalinskas voiced the painful experience of many a priest.

Father Zenonas Navickas, of the Diocese of Kaišiadorys, raised the matter of prisoner priests. The priests supported the demand that Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius be rehabilitated and not held in exile as in the case of Father Tamkevičius or exiled to the West like Father Svarinskas.

Father Algimantas Keina, pastor of the Valkininkai parish, posed a series of pastoral questions. Father Svarinskas, who attended the symposium, shared his experiences as a priest, thanked everyone on behalf of the prisoner priests for their prayers, moral support and, stating his gratitude, pledged always to be united in prayer and deed, wherever he might be, with the Catholic Church in Lithuania.

At the conclusion of the symposium, concrete demands were drawn up and offered for submission to the government:

- That Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius of the Archdiocese of Vilnius be permitted to return to Vilnius and resume his office of shepherd;
- That the Cathedral of Vilnius, the churches of St. Casimir and Mary, Queen of Peace in Klaipėda be returned to the faithful;
- That permission be given to rebuild demolished churches and build new ones where the Church's hierarchy deems the faithful need them;
- That parents be guaranteed the right to teach the faith to their children without interference;
- That people be guaranteed they will not be discriminated against for their religious beliefs;
- That applicants to the theological seminary cease being intimidated;
- That the faithful be afforded the opportunity to be excused from obligatory work on major religious holidays;
- That religious movements and societies (charity and aid

societies, temperance movements, etc.) be permitted to operate; that the faithful be granted the possibility to use mass information media to disseminate the faith and promote morality, publish books and newspapers.

The *Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary* was sung at the end of the symposium.

### **Žemaičių Kalvarija** (Plungė Rayon)

On July 2-10, 1988, as every year, Žemaičių Kalvarija (Samogitian Calvary) was the site of the great religious festival of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin. This year, it took place in an atmosphere of spiritual uplift which everyone felt. The religious fervor of the faithful, and especially of the people of Samogitia, was bolstered by the news that the Holy Father had accorded the title of minor basilica to this Žemaičių Kalvarija shrine. Prayers of thanks for this grace were included in the festival solemnities. Worshippers attended in large numbers on Sunday and in particular on July 6th, known as Priests' Wednesday.

On that day, His Excellency Bishop Juozas Priekšas preached at the High Mass. Urging the people to cherish the faith inherited from their forefathers, he called everyone to a steadfast union with the Catholic Church.

In his morning sermon, Father Jonas Kauneckas pointed out to the faithful that the mass information media is used to propagate sex — the nation's moral perdition which can have much more serious repercussions than the nation's physical destruction in the postwar years. The preacher invited everyone, in this Marian Year, to resolve and fight for purity and chastity, virtues treasured in our nation for centuries.

At the conclusion of the High Mass, prior to the renewal of the temperance pledge, the priests were briefly addressed by the exiled bishop of the Archdiocese of Vilnius, Julijonas Steponavičius, saying that we will not resurrect the nation to a new life without the help of God and religion. We must be beacons in the struggle for national sobriety. Offering help to our countrymen who have succumbed to the cross of drunkenness is the sacred duty of all Lithuanian priests, spoke the bishop. He recalled the example of the Irishman Matt Talbot, who with the help of prayer and the sacraments, showed that even a man sunk in the mire of alcoholism can become a saint.

On July 6th, the Marian Year was also commemorated at the Žemaičių Kalvarija shrine. Present at the ceremonies were Their Excellencies Bishops Julijonas Steponavičius, Juozas Preikšas, Antanas Vaičius - Bishop of Telšiai with jurisdiction over the shrine - some 110 priests and an vast throng of believers, among them many youths.

For six whole days from July 2nd to 7th, the Bishop of Telšiai, Antanas Vaičius, presided at the High Masses and, after them, accompanied the people on the Stations of the Cross.

The sermons at the stations recalled the recent past, when the



*Pilgrims at the shrine of Žemaičių Kalvarija.*

godless government employed various bans and threats to abolish the tradition of visiting the chapels: it barred priests from leading and accompanying the people to the stations (only Father Klemensas Arlauskas, the retired pastor of Ylakai, had the courage to defy this ban); some years the multitude assembling for the stations at the churchyard gate was barred by armed militiamen who threatened to fire if the crowd crossed the churchyard line, though even then the armed officials yielded when they saw the people's determination and the Stations of the Cross tradition remained intact.

The preachers recalled the time when "unknown evildoers" stole from the chapels valuable pictures which later found their way into the Museum of Atheism, and only through the intercession of the Cultural Fund did the Church manage to recover them. The people of Samogitia also remember the days when, arriving at the stations, they found the chapels locked by government officials and had to break down the doors; when it was forbidden to invite guest priests to the religious festival and only two priests, the local pastor and retired pastor, were permitted to minister to the throngs of worshippers. Recalling the difficult days of the past, the faithful drew upon resolve and courage to fight, despite any hardship, for Christ's Gospel in the nation and each in his own heart.

During the Žemaičių Kalvarija festival, 26,000 Holy Communion were distributed.

On June 14, 1988, the faithful in most Lithuanian churches prayed, remembering the first mass deportations of innocent people, June 14, 1941, and

their cruel sentence: condemnation to terrible agony, finally to freezing and death by starvation. Beginning on June 14th, the faithful in the parishes formed groups to pray for the dead deportees, and on Sunday, June 19th, in their memory, sung the *Angelus*, "God is Our Refuge and Our Strength", the national anthem *Lietuva, Tėvyne mūsų* and other religious and national hymns; the more zealous priests preached sermons appropriate for the occasion.

#### K l a i p ė d a

Since January 1988, the government has been promising to return, and keeps setting new dates for the return of, the Church of the Queen of Peace in Klaipėda. Father Bronislovas Burneikis, the newly appointed pastor of this church, planned to at least begin saying Mass in the rectory which the government has returned and thus minister to the local Catholics. The Executive Committee barred holding services in the rectory.

#### J o s v a i n i a i (Kėdainiai *Rayon*)

On February 8, 1988, Father Leonas Kalinauskas, pastor of the Joscvainiai parish, was summoned to the Kėdainiai procurator's office. The procurator, in the presence of the *Rayon* Security Police Chief Julius Kudreshev, threatened to prosecute Father Kalinauskas, under article 68 of the Criminal Code, for signing a call to pray for Lithuania on the occasion of February 16th; and on February 18th, the *rayon* newspaper published an article allegedly written by residents of Joscvainiai, titled "Remove Your Dark Glasses, Pastor."

In an April 13th letter to the editor, Father Kalinauskas exposed such action of government officials, when collective farm Party Secretary Ksavelis, accompanied by a reporter, visited homes and ordered people to sign the article contrived against the priest. Steponas Lukošius and Juozas Juodeika, both Joscvainiai parishioners, refused to sign. Even some atheists came later to apologize to the pastor. They had signed because they feared losing their jobs or incurring trouble.

#### K a p s u k a s

On July 16, 1988, the Saturday of the octave for Archbishop Jurgis Matulaitis, His Eminence Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius came, at the invitation of the youth, to the Marijampolė church to participate in the Lithuanian Catholic Youth Mass. It has become a tradition among the youth to gather at the tomb of Blessed Jurgis Matulaitis, formerly during the month of January, and during the past two years, in July.

Cardinal Sladkevičius celebrated the High Mass. In his sermon, addressed to the young people, Cardinal Sladkevičius explained what a person needs to experience an abundance of youthful happiness and the spirit to stay youthful through old age: he or she must keep the commandments given by God.

During the services, the Marijampolė youth choir, renowned for its artistry, sang classical religious works in Latin. However, this one day of the year when the young believers of Lithuania from diverse parishes gather in vast numbers at this shrine in Suvalkija, many would have liked to hear and, together in prayer with others, sing youthful hymns in a language familiar to everyone.

After the services, the young Catholics met with Cardinal Sladkevičius in the churchyard. The youth warmly thanked the Cardinal for coming as a gesture of solidarity and support, and pledged to practice in their lives the ideas they heard in the sermon.

Once again, the joy of this Marijampolė event was troubled by certain incidents. Intimidated by godless government officials, the pastor, Father Leonas Leščinskas, wrestled too vigorously with the Lithuanian tricolor flags, would not permit the youth to sing the anthem of the *Ateitis* organization in the church, nor provide the Cardinal with an honor guard from the church's main gate; the area in the churchyard set aside for meeting with the Cardinal was not wired for sound, hence most of those who stood farther away were unable to hear either the greetings or the Cardinal's words.

## **Vilnius**

On December 31, 1987, the pastor Father Juozapas Tunaitis, assistant pastor Father Medardas Čeponis and church committee chairman Alfonsas Makačkinas of St. Nicholas' Church in Vilnius sent a letter to the editors of *Vakarinės naujienos (Evening News)*, with reference to an article, published on December 12th in that very newspaper, written by Docent Zenonas Pilkauskas and titled "Unusual Lecture to a Stranger", in which the author attempts through bias, insolence and open lies to show that no such church as St. Nicholas' exists in Vilnius, just as, according to him, there is no St. Nicholas ~ the church has revoked his title of saint. The letter to the editor includes a biography of St. Nicholas and refutes the lie that St. Nicholas is not a saint, which Docent Pilkauskas can verify in the *Catholic Calendar - Directory*.

Further, the letter states, "It is unfortunate that the author and the editors have no respect for their readers and, aware that the readers have no means to verify the facts as presented, mislead them. Even more disturbing, it is still commonly believed that believers are second-class citizens who can be publicly insulted. We hope that, under conditions of openness, the editors will retract the lie ..."

Unfortunately, the editors did not publish this letter and did not retract the lie. Furthermore, on March 5, 1988, the *Evening News* published a second article under the same heading. This time, the editors ask P. Pečiūra to comment on Docent Pilkauskas' article. Pečiūra, with a tone of irony, repeats the same slanders and is amazed that the priests rushed to defend St. Nicholas.

On April 14, 1988, the priests of St. Nicholas Church, Fathers Tunaitis and Čeponis, and chairman Makačkinas wrote a second letter to the

editors of the *Evening News*, demanding that they stop deceiving people and that, when writing similar articles with so little information on hand, they consult experts -- the letter lists sources where they can themselves easily verify the facts.

The *Evening News* has yet to retract the lie.

#### V i l n i u s

On July 25, 1988, 23 individuals, representing the inhabitants of the Pašilaičiai, Viršuliškiai, Šeškiniai and Justiniškiai districts of Vilnius, sent a petition to the Vilnius Archdiocesan Curia, with a copy to His Excellency Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius. The petition states:

"Our capital of Lithuania, Vilnius, has grown in the last decades and has spread, particularly to the northwest. These districts are inhabited by many believers, who have great difficulty reaching the closest churches still operating in the city.

"Therefore, we, representing the said districts, request that you establish a new Roman Catholic parish and grant permission to construct a parish church named for Vilnius Archbishop Blessed Jurgis Matulaitis.

"We also sincerely request the support and cooperation of the spiritual authorities in obtaining legal status for establishing the new parish and building the church."

#### Š i a u l i a i

On March 23, 1988, St. George's Church, in the city of Šiauliai, was issued the following warning from the Council for Religious Affairs of the Lithuanian S.S.R.: "It has been determined that on February 14-16, 1988, the house of worship was used not in accordance with its designation. Sermons of a political nature were preached, the anthem of bourgeois Lithuania was sung, the nationalist emotions of the faithful were incited. This was in violation of the statutes governing the use of houses of worship, Article 2, subparagraph C, and the *Regulations for Religious Associations*, articles 10 and 25, which indicate that houses of worship are to be used exclusively to serve religious needs."

February 20, 1988

#### Š i a u l i a i

On June 15, 1988, residents of Šiauliai ~ Vanda Ragauskaitė, Mečislovas Jurevičius, Kęstutis Stulgys, brothers Arūnas and Gintaras Zembleckas and Vincas Danielius - went to the editorial offices of the *Rayon* newspaper *Red Flag*. The believers demanded that Bulzgis, the head of the propaganda and agitation department, and Sabaliauskas, a department employee, refrain from using the newspaper to slander Father Kazimieras Gražulis, assistant pastor of St. George's Church in Šiauliai. Some time before, several issues of *Red Flag* had published false articles about the priest.

Agitation Department Chief Bulzgis let it slip that they get direc-



tives from above. Vanda Ragauskaitė thanked him for his honesty. The believers asked the editorial staff certain questions, expressed their dissatisfaction with the disinformation rather frequently published in the newspaper, and stated that the *rayon* newspaper has yet to be touched by restructuring and still employs Stalinists.

#### **Tabariškės (Kaunas *Rayon*)**

On January 9, 1988, the Kaunas *Rayon* newspaper published an article entitled "Views Differ, But Life Remains Unchanged" by N. Grinevičiūtė. The article assails Father Petras Dumbliauskas, pastor of Tabariškės, for demanding that persons who attend funerals behave respectfully in church. The atheists, who were present in the church, took offense, and complained to the newspaper editor.

When the newspaper reporter arrived to investigate, Father Dumbliauskas offered to answer his questions in writing. In an open letter, Father Dumbliauskas writes: "Every place has its strict etiquette of conduct. For instance, people at a theater do not behave as they do at a sauna, nor at the sauna the way they do at a dancehall, just so, in a church, it is inappropriate to act the same as in a park, stadium or marketplace ...

"People personally select the way they wish to bury their dead relatives, whether with civil or church rites. Individuals who escort the casket to the church are not forced inside with a gun: those who wish, may enter, those who don't, remain outside. Of those who do enter, we require proper and respectful conduct, in accordance with the dignity of the place. Whenever the national anthem of any country is sung, all present rise, though they may be citizens of another state. And if someone were to remain seated? ...

"The church is a place of prayer and a house of worship, and, as such, not the place to demonstrate one's atheist beliefs. For that, we have atheistic centers. It is therefore obvious that such 'know-it-alls', who debase the dignity of churches and scandalize the faithful are not welcome there."

"Further, the priest cites a series of incidents of discrimination against the Church and problems of daily life: 'Every priest is obligated by the Church: to offer the sacrifice of the Mass, administer the sacraments and proclaim the Gospel of Christ, i.e., to teach people, including children, the truths of the faith. The state forbids us to catechize children and punishes those who obey the Church, Christ, rather than the state and its laws which are contrary to the laws of the Church.'

"True, the state does suggest that children are to learn the truths of the faith from their parents. We respond: 1. Parents do not have the time to teach their children the truths of the faith. 2. The parents themselves, for obvious reasons, do not know well the truths of the faith. 3. All parents who want their children to learn to read and write take them to school. Even teachers do not teach their children at home but send them to school. Parents who wish their children to learn the truths of the faith take them to church, to the priest, but

that is already forbidden by law. Where is then the freedom of conscience?

"Christ said: 'Suffer the little children to come to me and do not hinder them, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Meantime, civil law decrees that a young man or woman, having reached the age of 18, has the right to participate in public church rites - processions, the church choir, boys may serve at Holy Mass. In other words, a youth cannot be compelled, at maturity he must personally decide whether to believe or be an atheist. A parallel can be drawn: Suppose children, minors, could not be required to go to school, but decided for themselves upon reaching the age of 18, to attend school or remain illiterate?

"Fifteen years ago, when I worked in Liubavas, I was fined 25 rubles by the Kapsukas *Rayon* government because minors participated in the Easter procession, though they walked with their fathers and mothers. Whether I was fined justly or not, I leave to the editors and readers to judge...

"Statistics from early 1987 show that: Lithuania has 665 priests, of them 86 retired or in residence ~ these are priests who work little or not at all ~ and 12 infirm priests. There are 630 churches, 474 of which have their own priests, while 156 are served from other parishes. Sometimes, one priest ministers to two or three parishes. Clearly the situation is critical. Priests over 80 years old work as pastors. Where, before, parishes had two or three priests, now there is one or none at all. There would be sufficient priests for all the churches of Lithuania if government representatives did not meddle in internal Church affairs and did not limit the number of applicants to the seminary."

Father Dumbliauskas raises the problem of alcoholism and drug abuse, urging everyone to ponder seriously the future of the nation. During this year of restructuring and peace, it is imperative that Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius of Vilnius be reinstated, that the unjustly imprisoned priests, Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius, be released, that the Queen of Peace Church in Klaipėda, the Cathedral of Vilnius and St. Casimir's Church be returned. These would be but the first steps to redress the injustices committed against the faithful.

Let us return to the article written by reporter Grinevičiūtė. Upon reading it, it is easy to understand that the author stands, with her entire article, behind the complaining atheists, she vehemently attacks the priest's claim that the state bars priests from catechizing children and punishes those who disobey with administrative fines and even prison. Ignoring the facts, Grinevičiūtė writes: "This is tantamount to political incitement. Not a single priest has been penalized merely for catechizing children, even though the latter is contrary to our laws."

For what then were Fathers A. Šeškevičius, P. Bubnys and the late J. Zdebskis punished?

It is fair to ask: When will Soviet reporters, especially from *rayon* newspapers, finally stop spreading disinformation against the Church and have

the courage to retract the lies already disseminated?!

### **Rokiškis**

On the evening of All Saints' Day 1987, in keeping with ancient tradition, the people assembled at the Rokiškis cemetery to pay their respects to the dead. At the old city cemetery, services followed the High Mass and were conducted by Father Eugenijus Staleronka, assistant pastor of the Rokiškis church; at the new cemetery, in order to keep distinct the times of the civil and religious ceremonies for the dead, parish pastor Father Juozas Janulis presided over the rites at 5:00 P.M.

With the faithful already assembled, the pastor Father Janulis, assistant pastor Father Staleronka, sacristan Vytautas Sablinskas and two altar boys drew near. At the cemetery gate, they were met by City Executive Committee Chairman Danielius Jurevičius, Deputy Bronius Puluikis and another individual dressed in civilian clothes. The government officials pushed against the car doors in an attempt to keep Father Janulis from getting out.

Puluikis shouted: "Let's see your written permit!" The pastor explained that he had no written permit but had cleared the matter with the *rayon* government verbally. Several days before, Father Janulis had been summoned by the *rayon* government for a talk, during which he had convinced the officials that, by law, no one is permitted to ban religious rites in cemeteries and was given oral consent.

After a time, the pastor left the car and made preparations for the services. The young altar boys held a cross. Executive Committee Chairman Danielius Jurevičius protested: "Minors are carrying the cross!"

The cross was handed to church committee member Sablinskas. Chairman Jurevičius forcibly wrested the cross from Sablinskas and attempted to place it in the trunk of a passenger car. Assistant pastor Father Staleronka warned him: "The cross is blessed."

The faithful recaptured the cross from the executive committee chairman. Deputy Puluikis attempted to disrupt the services, shouting "Move on!" even after they had started. When the procession began to move to another spot, a shoving match resulted between the faithful and deputy Puluikis. The people demanded that Puluikis remove his hat and stop hindering the praying. After this, they no longer directly obstructed the services and limited themselves to observing.

Some time later, a commission was dispatched from Vilnius to investigate the incident. The local government was forced to make a public apology in the press. The December 3-9 issue of *Gimtas Kraštas* published an unprecedented item: The Rokiškis city government authorities have apologized to Father Juozas Janulis, the pastor of the Rokiškis church, for the incident which occurred on the evening of All Saints' Day 1987, at the new cemetery of the city of Rokiškis.

### **G a r g ž d a i** (Klaipėda *Rayon*)

On August 23, 1987, the faithful of the Mikoliškės parish (Kretinga *Rayon*) solemnly commemorated in their church the 600-year Jubilee of Lithuania's Christianity. The ceremonies were attended by Bishop Antanas Vaičius. It is impossible to reach Mikoliškės by scheduled bus on time. For many years now the faithful of the Mikoliškės parish have demanded that the bus administration change the bus schedule and, if the authorities deemed this to be impossible, to allow them to exercise their rights under Article 3 of the *Regulations for Religious Associations* which provides that "Religious communities have the right to acquire means of transportation." Hundreds of signatures were collected. The Office of Commissioner for Religious Affairs Petras Anilionis is preventing the faithful from procuring a bus.

The parishioners of Gargždai were travelling to the ceremonies on a bus they personally rented. Around Lapiai, some 4 kilometers before Mikoliškės, they were stopped by the traffic police. The passengers were ordered off, and the bus driver's license was confiscated, despite the fact that he had a travel order and the passengers had paid in advance.

### **G e n i a i** (Alytus *Rayon*)

On April 20, 1988, during the night, in the village of Geniai, someone replaced the old collapsed cross with a new one. It stood less than one day - it was demolished at the order of government officials.

## IN THE SOVIET REPUBLICS

### **G e r v ė č i a i** (Byelorussia)

Last year, in the parish of Gervėčiai, the majority of whose parishioners are ethnic Lithuanians, the 600-year Jubilee of Lithuania's Baptism had gone unobserved. The faithful made an attempt to commemorate it at least this year. They called on Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius, requesting his help (Bishop Steponavičius was born in the parish of Gervėčiai, the Village of Žiciūnai). The Bishop joined in the efforts of the faithful, personally sending a letter to Father Gvozdovich, the pastor of Gervėčiai, asking that in keeping with their request, he be permitted to officiate at the jubilee services. In their letter to the pastor, the faithful requested:

- That the ceremonies take place on May 29, 1988 (during the religious festival of the Holy Trinity), that the parishioners be notified of this in advance, that the Jubilee services start not at 11:00 as customary, but at 12:00, so that guests from Lithuania could arrive on time;

- That the picture of Blessed Archbishop Jurgis Matulaitis be hung in the Gervėčiai church.

The parishioners obtained a picture of Blessed Jurgis Matulaitis

and invited a guest priest from Lithuania so that the services for the occasion and the sermon might be in the tongue of their fathers and forefathers.

Father Gvozдовich, the pastor of Gervėčiai, asked the local *rayon* government's assent for these ceremonies. As may have been expected, the authorities refused permission. Having failed to secure approval, Father Gvozдовich did not prepare for the jubilee celebration; he also refused to hang the picture of Blessed Archbishop Jurgis Matulaitis in the Gervėčiai church.

On May 29th, Father Gvozдовich told the visiting priest from Lithuania to announce that, after the services in Polish, the Lithuanians would be permitted to commemorate the Jubilee of Lithuania's Baptism at about 3:30 P.M. in the churchyard. In 1387, all ethnic Lithuania of that time was christened, meaning eastward as well, up to Lake Narutis and beyond, including Gervėčiai. Therefore, the parishioners of Gervėčiai rightly question why they have so few rights and are permitted to commemorate the jubilee of their parents' Baptism only in the churchyard; indeed, even this was announced only a few hours in advance.

V y d ž i a i (Byelorussia, Breslau *Rayon*)

In 1988, the Catholics of the Vydžiai parish petitioned the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow several times, demanding that the church confiscated from them after the war be returned.

Correction *Chronicle* No. 77 contains an error on page 2, the article titled "Hail the Heroes of Church and Nation." On February 5, 1988, in the Church of Rudamina, His Excellency Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius did not attend the commemoration of the second anniversary of the death of Father Juozas Zdebskis.

Lithuanian, remember that:

Father Sigitas Tamkevičius

Viktoras Petkus

Balys Gajauskas

Petras Gražulis

Gintautas Iešmantas and others wear the chains of imprisonment so that you might be able to live and believe in freedom!

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