



**CHRONICLE OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN LITHUANIA**

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IN LITHUANIA No. 64**

**A Translation of the Complete Lithuanian Original
LIETUVOS KATALIKŲ BAŽNYČIOS KRONIKA Nr. 64
Documenting the Struggle for Human Rights
In Soviet-Occupied Lithuania Today**

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COVER:

Vilnius Cathedral as it appears today. Three religious statues on the roof of the church were torn down by Soviets in 1952. The relics of St. Casimir were transferred to SS Peter and Paul in Vilnius in 1953. The cathedral was converted into an art gallery in 1956.

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Introduction

In 1940, when the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania by force, 85.5% of the country's more than 3 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, 73 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" declared Lithuania a 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 lands were 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 operate on a very limited scale. 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.

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. Bishops Matulionis and Ramanauskas were allowed to return to Lithuania, but not to minister to their dioceses or to communicate with the clergy or laity.

Bishop Ramanauskas died in 1959, and Archbishop Matulionis in 1963.

In 1955, two new bishops were appointed by Rome and consecrated: Julijonas Steponavičius and Petras Maželis. Steponavičius has never been permitted to administer his diocese.

Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius, consecrated in 1957, was kept under severe government restrictions until 1982. In 1965, Monsignor Juozas Labukas-Matulaitis was consecrated in Rome to head the Archdiocese of Kaunas and the Diocese of Vilkaviškis. Two new bishops were consecrated in 1969: Bishop Romualdas Krikščiūnas was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Panevėžys, and Bishop Liudvikas Povilonis was appointed auxiliary to Bishop Labukas, and succeeded him after his death in 1979.

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

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 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.

Rev. Casimir Pugevičius
Translator

Appearing since 1972
If possible, make copies!
Read this and pass it on!

This issue is dedicated as an expression of solidarity with His Excellency, the exiled bishop, JULIJONAS STEPONAVIČIUS, Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Vilnius.

**CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN LITHUANIA, No. 64**

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Lithuania

October 7, 1984

**CATHOLIC LITHUANIA THANKS THE HOLY FATHER,
JOHN PAUL II**

Holy Father, Catholic Lithuania sincerely thanks Your Holiness for your paternal concern for the Church in the land of Lithuania, which you once more expressed so stirringly by joining through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in the commemoration of the Jubilee of our nation's patron, Saint Casimir.

We painfully regret, Holy Father, that you were not allowed to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in our capital, Vilnius, at the Tomb of Saint Casimir. The priests and the faithful of Lithuania are not giving up hope of seeing you in their country. Your attention to the Church in our country and your graciousness to our nation encourages us, in spite of all trials, difficulties and threats, to a greater loyalty to the Church of Christ.

In the name of Catholic Lithuania, we express to you, Holy Father, our sincerest thanks, our filial love, and complete obedience.

**THE STRUGGLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LITHUANIA
BECOMES INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT, AND THE ENEMY
MORE DEVIIOUS**

This Jubilee Year of Saint Casimir has been for the Catholic Church of Lithuania a year of difficult struggle with atheistic oppression and deceit.

After the arrest of Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius, the atheists began to put into effect the program for persecution of the Church set forth in a speech last year by Communist Party First Secretary, Petras Griškevičius.

Having paralyzed the public activities of the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights, the atheists set about extinguishing the other potential sources of organized opposition to atheistic oppression, namely, the Priests' Councils. In his speech, Griškevičius demanded that they be declared anti-Soviet organizations, but now, convinced that according to the new Code of Canon Law they must be formed, he has decided to do everything possible so that Priests' Councils, and especially Colleges of Consultors in the Dioceses, be so constituted as to help the atheists to destroy the Catholic Church in Lithuania and to enervate the spiritual revival of the nation. With

the assistance of the office of the Council for Religious Affairs, the atheists' interference has been most obvious in the organization of the Diocese of Panevėžys, which consultants have the right to elect their new administrator, if necessary.

The Apostolic See has condemned the efforts of atheists to divide the Church in Nicaragua. The atheists have been trying to do the same thing in Lithuania for a long time: They keep trying in every way to place in key positions of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, priests who have betrayed the Church. It is almost exclusively such clergy that officials allow to inform the Vatican.

Today, priests who have sold out to the government are still in the minority, so the KGB is making great efforts to see that in the future such priests would constitute the majority. So this year the recruiting of collaborators with the KGB among the young men entering the Kaunas seminary has intensified. The KGB, as usual, has been threatening almost every applicant that unless he promises in writing to be an agent of the KGB, he will never set foot in the seminary. They have pressured the young men, saying that many of the other candidates have already signed. We feel sorry for those young men who without consulting good priests, "help" their vocation by turning off on the slippery and difficult road of treachery.

It is very sad that this year, even some of the seminary administration were included in this work of crippling candidates to the priesthood. Someone from the seminary administration tried to accuse one young man, whom KGB pressure could not break, of trumped-up offenses against the Church leadership, and later the KGB agents themselves admitted to the young man that it was not the seminary but they who have prevented him from entering.

The work of recruiting agents among applicants to the seminary is made more difficult for the KGB by the existence of the clandestine extension seminary: so this year, attempts are being made to force priests who finished the latter to apply "voluntarily" for admission to the first year of the Kaunas seminary. In this way, an attempt is being made to kill two birds with one stone: To paralyze the activities of clandestinely trained priests, whom the government is unable to regulate (by isolating them from the believing public for at least five years); and to intimidate those candidates for the seminary who refuse to succumb to KGB pressure and choose the extension course route. Some of the clergy are trying to see as bona fide the efforts of the atheists to "legalize" the correspondence-course priests. However, the suggested method of legalization is

devious. The mere "voluntary" submission of applications does not guarantee that the atheists will allow all to be accepted by the seminary. The KGB will again interfere, trying to recruit, pressure and threaten. Once again, they will surely not tolerate the "stubborn ones". As long as the approval of candidates into the seminary is in the hands of government atheists, the Church in Lithuania, in order to assist vocations, must make use of the option provided in Canon 235 II d for preparing young men for the priesthood outside the seminary.

Moreover, since all efforts to improve the faculty of the seminary are thwarted by government atheists, and efforts are even being made to appoint as seminary professors priests who are shocking in their "ultra-strange" views. The extension-course seminary may in the future become the only way of preparing for the Catholic Church of Lithuania good priests who have not sold out to the atheists.

The struggle against atheistic deceit is very difficult. The most enlightened leaders of our clergy, Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius, are in prison; many decent priests, terrorized by the atheistic government, do not dare to protest the machinations of the atheists.

We pray the Most High not to abandon the Church in our homeland and to call new heroes to defend the rights of Christ and the Church. We firmly believe that even the heavy cross of our times, oppressing the Catholic Church of Lithuania, is a promise of the Resurrection.

PRIESTS OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF VILNIUS GREET THEIR BISHOP-IN-EXILE, JULIJONAS STEPONAVIČIUS

The priests of the Archdiocese of Vilnius sent His Excellency, Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius, in honor of the twenty-ninth anniversary of his episcopacy, the following greetings:

"We congratulate Your Excellency on the twenty-ninth anniversary of your consecration, and we thank the Almighty and the Apostolic See for this precious gift to you and to our archdiocese. We are grateful to you, Your Excellency, for your self-sacrificing concern for the welfare of the Church in our country: and we wish you, with God's blessing, many years to work on its behalf."

August - September, 1984



Children greet Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius at St. Michael's Church during the celebration of his twenty-fifth anniversary as bishop. Although he is bishop of the Archdiocese of Vilnius, he has been in exile since his consecration, preventing him from exercising his episcopal duties.

Signed by the following priests of the Archdiocese of Vilnius:

1. Josifas Aškelevičius, 2. Vaclovas Aliulis, 3. Antanas Andriuškevičius, 4. Juozas Baltušis, 5. Danielius Baužys, 6. Henrikas Blaževičius, 7. Romualdas Blažys, 8. Vytautas Bronickis, 9. Janas Charukevič, 10. Aldas Čeponis, 11. Ričardas Černiauskas, 12. Petras Daunoras, 13. Antanas Dilys, 14. Antonis Dziekan, 15. Antonas Filipčik.

16. Kazimieras Gailius, 17. Konstantinas Gajauskas, 18. Ignas Jakutis, 19. Pijus Jankus, 20. Vytautas Jaskelevičius, 21. Bronislovas Jaura, 22. Juozas Juodagalvis, 23. Pavelas Jurkovilianec, 24. Stanislovas Karkarieka, 25. Jonas Kardelis, 26. Algis Kazlauskas, 27. Algimantas

Keina, 28. Kazimieras Kindurys, 29. Aleksas Končius, 30. Tadeušas Kondrusevič.

31. Povilas Kučinskas, 32. Jonas Kukta, 33. Kazimiežas Kulak, 34. Edmundas Kulvietis, 35. Juzefas Kvietkovski, 36. Jonas Lauriūnas, 37. Stasys Lidys, 38. Silvestras Malachovski, 39. Stasys Markevičius, 40. Kazys Meilus, 41. Alfonsas Merkys, 42. Konstantinas Molis, 43. Vladislavas Novicki, 44. Juzefas Obremski, 45. Ignas Paberžis.

46. Nikodemas Pakalka, 47. Edmundas Paulionis, 48. Zenonas Patiejūnas, 49. Mykolas Petravičius, 50. Alfonsas Petronis, 51. Juozas Poškus, 52. Juozas Pranka, 53. Juozas Puidokas, 54. Stasys Puidokas, 55. Vytautas Pūkas, 56. Kazimieras Pukėnas, 57. Petras Purlys, 58. Lukijanas Radomskis, 59. Vytautas Rūkas, 60. Bronius Sakavičius. 61. Justinas Saulius, 62. Leonas Savickas, 63. Marijonas Savickas, 64. Antanas Simonaitis, 65. Martynas Stonys, 66. Jordanas Šlenys, 67. Česlovas Taraškevičius, 68. Petras Tarvydas, 69. Adolfas Trusevič, 70. Juozas Tunaitis, 71. Steponas Tunaitis, 72. Albertas Ulickas, 73. Juozas Urbonas, 74. Kazimieras Vaičionis, 75. Jonas Vaitonis.

76. Domas Valančiauskas, 77. Antanas Valatka, 78. Kazimieras Valeikis, 79. Donatas Valiukonis, 80. Kazimieras Vasiliauskas, 81. Vladislavas Velymanski, 82. Vaclovas Verikas, 83. Juozas Vertas, 84. Antonis Zaman, 85. Kazimieras Žemėnas, 86. Medardas Čeponis, 87. Mykolas Žemaitis, 88. Juozas Budrevičius, 89. Jonas Matulionis, (living in Vilnius) 90. Jonas Boruta, (living in Vilnius)

Signed by a guest from Byelorussia, Father S. Kuczynski, Prael. Mon. S.S.

Could not be contacted: J.A. Kaškevič, 2. Juozas Norkūnas, 3. Alfonsas Tamulaitis

Refused to sign: 1. Jonas Morkūnas, 2. Pranciškus Vaičekonis, 3. Jonas Deksnys, 4. Alfredas Kanišauskas, 5. Jonas Grigaitis, 6. Nikodemas Jaura, 7. Stanislovas Valiukėnas.

Postscript(:) The priests of the Deanery of Kalvarija congratulate Bishop Steponavičius:

"The priests of the Deanery of Kalvarija, assembled September 3 for retreat in Sudervėjas under the direction of Father Adolfas

Trusevicius congratulate you, pay their respects and express their filial obedience."

All priests of the Deanery of Kalvarija signed.

THANKS!

To the Bishops of France and the Christian Solidarity International organization for defending the imprisoned priests Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius:

The priests and faithful of Lithuania, after learning from Vatican Radio about the support of their brethren in the Faith, in defense of our country's most zealous priest-prisoners, express their most sincere gratitude for your solidarity and your understanding of our troubles. This is not only of concrete assistance to the priests who have been sentenced, but also of great moral support for the entire Church struggling in Lithuania.

The bishops of Lithuania also wished to sign a protest over the trial of the priests, but the Commissioner for Religious Affairs began making telephone threats to the bishops, and the document was never drafted.

REPERCUSSIONS OF THE JUBILEE OF SAINT CASIMIR

The Commissioner for Religious Affairs, Petras Anilionis, would not allow the following verse to be included in the 1984 *Catholic Calendar-Directory* since the poem was written, it seems, by the correspondence-course priest, Jonas Matulionis:

Satnf Casimir,

*I extend my hands to your holy tomb,
Brooding there in the silence of Antakalnis,
Where the fullness of beauty never wanes
And the universe is immersed in heaven's prayer.
In the warmth of life, with a rich word.
I step along the paths of noble thought. . .
Along the path of your redemptive youth—
I find the sacred truth of goodness.
From our Vilnius, City of the Gates of Dawn.
You soared in silent prayer to heaven's canopy.*

*You bore to the Highest the bloom of youth
And found there the crown of glory.
We scatter petals of prayer beneath your feet
And honor you in the throng of saints . . .
I extend my hands before your holy tomb.
With petitions — in the silence of prayer.*

After the March 3, 1984 Saint Casimir solemnities, which the KGB tried in various ways to play down or at least to disrupt, the faithful did not gather in great numbers at the Tomb of Saint Casimir until the end of the jubilee. No one officially organized pilgrimages from the larger cities to visit the relics of Saint Casimir in the Church of SS. Peter and Paul. Believers came to Vilnius only in small groups, or urged by zealous pastors. Throughout, an air of hesitancy prevailed, a fear of organizing anything more, so that no one would have to suffer.

Somewhat more worshippers gathered for the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul, but to the great surprise of all, during the sermon the pastor of Turgeliai and dean, Kazimieras Vaičionis, spoke angrily about those who demanded religious freedom: "They need rights! They write protests!!! Let them pray more! They need to pray, and not to collect signatures and all kinds of protests . . ." the Reverend Dean Kazimieras Vaičionis said to those assembled.

Similar currents were felt during the closing celebration of the Jubilee of Saint Casimir. The preachers were hand-picked to avoid any strong statements regarding the present troubles of the Church in Lithuania. During the whole octave, Mass was celebrated by the local priests, except for the main Mass of the day. Getting to confession on the occasion of religious celebrations is a problem: There are few priests sitting in the confessionals, sometimes only one or two. Faithful in poor health do not even try to get in line.

Everyone knows that the pastor is the authority in his own church, and that no one can act without his permission. However, under special conditions, zealous priests in Lithuania without wishing to hurt the pastors or cause them unpleasantness, speak from the pulpit without permission from the pastor. If you ask the pastor for permission, it will be embarrassing for him not to allow it; if the pastor allows it, then a great share of the responsibility for the sermon delivered will fall on his shoulders. A good priest would rather assume the risk himself, unwilling to have another blamed for his actions.

And it is necessary to speak! Many of the faithful, for lack of information, are confused on the simplest questions. Besides, intellectuals, students and those pursuing a career, by going to church publicly and especially by participating in processions or the choir, jeopardize their positions and risk unpleasantness from the government. Almost all students serving in church are constantly persecuted, derided, and threatened in school. They especially need an encouraging word and a good example, and they expect it in the first place from the clergy.

During the closing ceremonies of the Saint Casimir Jubilee, August 30, after the evening Mass, the pastor of Pociūnėliai, Father Antanas Jokubauskas, ascended the pulpit. The preacher had hardly begun to speak when from the sacristy emerged the pastor, Docent Pranciškus Vaičekonis, an instructor at the Kaunas seminary, shouting and gesticulating for the organ to play, and for the people to disperse. The congregation, however, would not budge, and the organ remained silent. The preacher continued to speak calmly. Losing control, the pastor rushed to the microphone in the sanctuary, control, the pastor rushed to the microphone in the sanctuary, him not to interfere with the sermon.

Seeing that the people were not dispersing and that the priest continued preaching, Dr. Vaičekonis began excoriating Father Jokubauskas, "People, do not recognize him! The church is no place for rallies! . . ."

Suddenly, the lights began to go out one after another and the church grew dark. When Father Jokubauskas began speaking about the imprisoned priests, the pastor sent two men in surplices to escort the preacher from the pulpit. The men in surplices had hardly begun ascending the pulpit when someone from the crowd suddenly jumped up, restraining one of the functionaries. However, the first had already reached the preacher, and touched him. Father Jokubauskas, making the Sign of the Cross, turned to descend. At that moment, the pastor charged into the crowd, trying to push his way to the pulpit. The faithful at first made way, but suddenly the crowd pushed forward and forced the excited pastor into the sanctuary.

As Jather Jokubauskas left the pulpit, the congregation began to applaud. In Lithuania, it is not the custom to applaud in church, however, because there was no other way of showing agreement with the preacher, the faithful, regardless of tradition, applauded so thunderously that one could not hear the pastor loudly scolding the

crowd and the preacher. As soon as the applause died down, the pastor reprimanded the faithful and the preacher even louder. To drown out the pastor, the people resumed their applause. And so it went, back and forth. Seeing that the pastor would not stop scolding, the crowd began singing the hymn, *Marija, Marija*. It was a sad and frightening experience. It would have been better to see a militiaman or some government official pushing a priest around, or striking him.

The next evening before Mass, during the announcements, the pastor recalled the events of the evening before and repeated that politicking and rallies had no place in church, even though Father Jokubauskas had not mentioned politics in his sermon. He had spoken about the contemporary experience of the Church in our country. During Mass, the sermon was preached by the pastor of Turgeliai, the Reverend Dean Kazimieras Vaičionis. After speaking eloquently at first about Saint Casimir, he touched on contemporary events. To the great surprise of the faithful, the preacher spoke with satisfaction about the fact that "We are a part of the great Soviet Union." that "we have to get along with our brothers, the Russians," that "there is hope that in one of the churches of Vilnius, services in the Russian language will be introduced," and "the essential characteristic of Saint Casimir's regime in Lithuania was his great concern for the catechization of the Russians." One got the impression that the main reason for the sermon was to show that the Lithuanian nation had been the best of friends with, "their brothers, the Russians". The attitude of the faithful was as though they were at a rally: Some smiled sardonically, others shrugged, while still others did not know what to think.

The last day of the festival there was one more surprise. Before the principal Mass, the pastor, Father Vaičekonis, asked the faithful to go out into the churchyard to meet the bishops who were coming. The people lined up at the main gate of the churchyard and beyond the street and waited for the guests. After a long wait, the worshippers heard services starting in church. It seems that the bishops had come in by a side gate, and entered through the sacristy. Those waiting at the main gate felt tricked.

It seems that instructions for the bishops to enter the church by way of the side door before the Lithuanian services had been given, as much as can be ascertained, by KGB agents watching the ceremonies. They were afraid that the people who had gathered would greet the Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Vilnius, Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius. (Still banned by the government from

administering his diocese after more than twenty years. — Trans. Note)

For the Polish services, the bishops were allowed to enter the church by the main doors. The pastor, Father Vaičekonis, acceding to the wishes of the KGB, introduced the arriving bishops, administrators of dioceses and members of the Saint Casimir Jubilee Committee at the beginning of the services, and last of all, he mentioned Bishop Steponavičius, without even saying that he is the Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Vilnius, although the offices of the other bishops were solemnly announced.

While the faithful waited outside for the bishops to show up, other people filled the church, and those standing at the gates could not get in. When the sermon, which was preached by His Excellency, Bishop Antanas Vaičius started, the loudspeaker at the main door where many of the faithful were, kept going out of order. The faithful ask one another. "Are we supposed to keep considering the regular breakdown of the loudspeakers during services an accident?"

On Saturday, August 25, youth from Marijampolė (Marijampolė, originally named after the Blessed Virgin Mary, was renamed Kapuskas in honor of one of the early Lithuanian Communists. — Trans. Note) tried to pray together at the Tomb of Saint Casimir. The KGB was on their heels, unabashedly following the youth right into the sacristy. Thus, not even a few minutes of free time could be found in church for prayer in common by the young people — up until the evening services, couples were married, one after another. After the evening Mass, when the young people had barely begun to sing, the choir in the loft began rehearsing the *Tu Es Sacerdos* (sic), even though people were still praying in church. There seems to have been no need the next day for that hymn which had been prepared for the bishops' arrival, since the bishops entered the church informally, by the side door.



Father Algis-Kazimieras Gutauskas, pastor of Our Lady of the Dawn Gate in Vilnius, serves as Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Vilnius, Bishop Steponavičius, the Ordinary, is in exile in Žagarė, a small town on the Lithuanian-Latvian border.

To: His Excellency Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius,
Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Vilnius

His Excellency Bishop Liudvikas Povilonis,
Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Kaunas
and the Diocese of Vilkaviškis

His Excellency Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius,
Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Kaišiadorys

His Excellency Bishop Antanas Vaičius,
Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Telšiai

Monsignor Kazimieras Dulksnys,
Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Panevėžys

The Reverend Dr. Pranciškus Vaičekonis,
Pastor of the Church of SS. Peter and Paul, Vilnius

A Report of the Scandalous Incident During the
Saint Casimir Jubilee Celebration

"The holiness of Saint Casimir is not to be silenced . . ." This thought was often repeated in sermons during the jubilee celebration of our nation's patron, Saint Casimir. One after another, these sermons urged love of God, zeal in witnessing the Truth of Christ, respect and gratitude to God for the sainted prince, the source of our spiritual energy, from which Lithuania will not stop drawing life-giving sap, as long as there is one Lithuanian alive desiring to remain faithful to the Creator's will.

The enthusiasm arose from the spirit of the residents of Vilnius and their guests, as witnessed by the participation of the faithful in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, both at the principal Mass and at evening services all week long, and their union in great numbers with the Eucharistic Jesus.

This was a beautiful example of living faith. Even one atheist was forced to admit that religion is still very much alive in our country.

Yes, no matter how systematic attempts are made to extinguish it, the fire of godly ideals burns in the believing people's hearts, into which no little spiritual pain and bitter doubt was injected by events Thursday, August 23, at evening services which began at 8:00 PM. If a war is being mounted against God and religion, the principal factor in maintaining fidelity is unity among us. In union there is strength.

This is an old principle confirmed by history. The idea of unity was often brought up during this celebration, and implored during the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass.

But lo and behold, on the day mentioned, something took place which demonstrates the absence of that unity so vitally essential for us. At the end of the Holy Mass, the faithful saw a priest in the pulpit: Surely not another sermon? It was. The priest made the Sign of the Cross and began to speak. No sooner had he begun than the loudspeakers were turned off. A voice was heard from the altar, saying, "Hooligan! Troublemaker! Be quiet! Who invited you?"

Reverend Dr. Pranciškus Vaičekonis hurled himself into the crowd: "Get out of here! What are you listening for? Go home! I do not recognize him!" The priest pushed people out of the church. The Reverend Doctor's behavior seemed to many to transgress the rules of etiquette. He said he did not recognize him. Strange! In the crowd, a whisper could be heard, "That's Father Jokubauskas!"

The crowd recognized him, but the priest, a professor at the seminary, did not. However, he should have recognized him, since Father Jokubauskas (according to the *Catholic Calendar-Directory* for 1982), was ordained to the priesthood in 1954, and Father Vaičekonis, in 1952. So, they are related by at least a couple of years spent together in the seminary.

The preacher continued, while the pastor returned to the sacristy and the crowd fell into a rapt silence, broken by two signal bells in succession to the organist. Apparently someone wanted him to start playing the organ. They began ringing the altar bells. In the sanctuary, men in white surplices stormed about. There was a kind of panic, but the sermon went on. Slowly one by one, the lights were extinguished until finally, it became completely dark in the church, while the crowd expressed its annoyance audibly.

The darkness did not prevent the sermon from continuing. The crowd listened with even greater interest: No one even tried to leave the church, except for those mentioned earlier who, pushed by the pastor, left at the beginning of the sermon. There were just a few of those, while a throng almost filling the church listened.

The darkness enabled one of the functionaries to ascend the pulpit. In the half-light, the man was seen to put his hand on Father Jokubauskas' shoulder. Saying "Amen", the priest made the Sign of the Cross and was conducted from the pulpit. The throng began to applaud warmly. Suddenly, the lights went back on. Father Vaičekonis once more rushed from the sacristy into the crowd, trying

to quiet those applauding. But those in the front row of the crowd pushed the pastor so hard that he almost ended up in middle of the sanctuary. It was fortunate that one of the functionaries was able to shut the sanctuary gates in time. Perhaps the angry crowd would have advanced farther. The pastor immediately rushed to the microphone (now working!) shouting. "Don't hold any rally! To organize rallies, go out into the street and squares! This is a church! The Blessed Sacrament! Don't disturb the people praying!"

When the pastor fell silent, the crowd seemed to calm down. However, Father Vaicekonis, taking advantage of the silence, tried again in more or less the same words, to shame the crowd for the applause which had spontaneously broken out, and for the shouting: "Hurrah!", "God!", and the like. The throng would not allow itself to be shamed. On the contrary, with renewed applause, they shouted down the pastor who, in the name of "unity", had tried to silence the preacher.

After this failure, the pastor returned to the sacristy. The crowd gradually calmed down. Only a murmur of discontent was audible. A high note was heard, intoning *Marija, Marija . . . palengvink vergijq! . . .* ("Mary, Mary . . . save us from oppression . . .") The melody rang out mournfully indeed, echoing from the baroque ceiling, and many of the crowd greeted Father Jokubauskas, shaking his hand in the name of sincere solidarity. "Courage, Father!" The eyes of the faithful glistened with tears . . . only individuals here and there remained hesitant, or failed to understand.

Why did the need arise to silence Father Jokubauskas? What did he say? Did he proclaim falsehood? Far from it! The congregation could have greeted so warmly and cordially only a courageous statement of the truth! It went like this (in summary):

The holiness of Saint Casimir's personality has not faded one bit for five centuries. This is witnessed by the enthusiasm of your large gathering even though atheism is wrecking the Catholic Church in Lithuania by the most organized means. We pray for vocations to the priesthood, since there are already about 130 parishes without priests! Could it be that there are no vocations? Not so — there are vocations! However, the atheists do not allow all those young men who wish, to enter the seminary.

(At these words, the main lights were turned off.)

The priest went on to urge people to abhor sin and evil in their lives. He encouraged them, saying that no matter how much the darkness of sin tries to prevail, God will win out, we shall

conquer. He affirmed that the faithful are not allowed to fear sacrifice, even death, if fidelity to the Church and God requires it. Indeed, what is an idea worth if one is unwilling to sacrifice and die for it? He mentioned those who are already walking the way of sacrifice: the priest-prisoners Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius.

(Here the rest of the lights were extinguished, and the preacher was escorted out.)

Is it possible to attach a political meaning to these words? Yes, it is politics, but it is the politics of Christ, the Church, God and only God! The preparation of priests is the exclusive responsibility of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and not of the civil government! The atheists, by the most refined trickery and deceit, are overtly wrecking the Church in our hearts. Only the cowardly and the naive can fail to see this! To detest the work of the devil — sin — is the Catholic's calling — the theme of Saint Casimir's life! Unity with those suffering is a duty of neighborly love. (Our Holy Father acted no differently by remembering Lithuania so sensitively these days.) To visit the prisoner is a good work. We visit prisoners by constant prayer and frequent remembrance of their honorable sacrifice. We have no other means . . .

And here Father Kazimieras Vaičionis, speaking during evening services, August 24, declared that the fact that Lithuania was incorporated in the Soviet Union is a blessing from God! Is this not politics?

So we are in a tragic situation. We are urged to pray for unity, but under what flag: that of Christ's Truth or atheistic politics? We want our lives to be lived only under the banner of Christ, to that end we are doing everything, often at great risk.

Postscript: On June 29, in the Church of SS. Peter and Paul, during a religious festival, Father Vaičionis tried to say in a sermon that there is no need for petitions or collecting of signatures — that this only hurts the Catholic Church. So this time, we merely state the above-mentioned painful fact (We cannot remain silent, we hear the voice of conscience, we believe that by keeping silent we would do wrong,) without collecting signatures, even though we could.

Let us offer a few suggestions. During such religious festivals, we would like to see more priests in the confessional, especially during evening services or prior to them. Otherwise, long lines form, and this

inconveniences the faithful, most of whom put off the sacraments. Why are religious festivals needed if people cannot take full advantage of God's grace? Priests would come to the confessional just ten or fifteen minutes before Mass, but most often, after Mass had begun. Forgive us, but this is strange, and incited wonder. The loudspeakers cut out precisely during services (e.g., March 3), or remain turned off near the doors (August 26). In such a case, those in the churchyard could not hear the sermon. It must be remembered also that most participants in the festival stood in the churchyard and on the street.

(Signed)

Faithful of Vilnius who participated in the evening services August 23, for the Festival of the Jubilee of Saint Casimir.

August 27, 1984

In commemoration of the 500 Year Jubilee of the death of Saint Casimir, Bishop Kazimieras Paltarokas' monograph, *Karalaitis Šv. Kazimieras (The Prince, Saint Casimir)*, was translated in Lithuania into Esperanto and into Estonian, and Simas Sužiedėlis' work, *Karalaitis Kazimieras (Prince Casimir)*, into Estonian. Both translations are in typescript.

**SERMONS OF FATHERS ALFONSAS SVARINSKAS AND
SIGITAS TAMKEVIČIUS INCLUDED WITH
INCRIMINATING EVIDENCE**

Sermon of Father Alfonsas Svarinskas delivered at Šiluva:
(Probably in 1980 — Trans. Note)

"Glory to You, Lord, for the eternal path from earth's dust to the stars in the firmament, glory to you for the sun which rises each morning, and for the greatness of our little hearts . . ."

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I think that these words of the poet, Bernardas Brazdžionis, best expressed our feelings upon arriving at Šiluva. During these eight days, all Lithuania is streaming to Šiluva. The fame of Šiluva has reached beyond the borders of Lithuania. Faithful from Kazakh, Latvia, Estonia and Byelorussia are coming to Our Lady of Šiluva, and not in vain. No one is driving them

to Šiluva by force, and if people come, it means that they feel a spiritual benefit, and receive many graces. Visiting Šiluva today are many priests and a bishop, whom we will soon meet, and a throng of the faithful.

To the feet of Mary we have brought the troubles, complaints and malaise of the Catholic Church in Lithuania. We have come here not to surrender, not to weep, but on the contrary, to ask that Our Lady of Šiluva bless our work and having strengthened our spirits, to return to the great struggle for the Church of God and religious rights in our country. I trust that all — priests and faithful— will pray with Saint Bernard, "O most holy Virgin Mary, never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection would be left unaided."

So let us hope that Mary will hear us, too, will understand, will present our every concern to her Son and will help us. Looking at the 600-year history of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, we see that the road of the Church in our fatherland was not smooth: it was strewn with great, painful difficulties. One of them was the oppression of the Reformation, when priests who had earlier become infected with the Reformation tried to force it on our people, and only the miracle of Šiluva, Our Lady of Šiluva, saved Lithuania.

The Church is experiencing similarly great difficulties at the present time, since the beginning of the post-war era, when government atheism, as it is called, is trying by force to destroy the Church and the Faith in our land. Much has already been accomplished along this line: Many of the churches have been converted into warehouses. Crosses have been cut down and the Faith has been uprooted from many people, especially the youth. But thank God, the atheists have not yet been able to do everything — the nation is still alive, and it will revive to a new and better life.

To encourage this rebirth, let us resolve on a further spiritual war. Last year, on August 15, the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights wrote a petition to all the bishops and priests of Lithuania, Lithuanians of good-will, our brethren overseas and Vatican Radio, asking that this year be proclaimed as the Year of Temperence. The Ordinaries of Lithuania, and the administrator of the Diocese of Telšiai much earlier, proclaimed this year in their letters as the Year of Temperence. And now, various exercises and recollections are going on to enable us to think over this mission better, and to carry it out successfully.

And I think that in the future, once a year, just as last year at Aušros Vartai (The Gates of Dawn), Kalvarija and now, at Šiluva, we



Vilnius Cathedral. The statues on the roof were torn down in 1952. It is now an art gallery.

priests will gather to pray together and consider practical problems'.

It is necessary to gather, since we have no press, we have no freedom of speech, we have only the Church left, and this audience we will use properly. It is always customary on the Wednesday of every festival at Žemaičiu Kalvarija and at Šiluva, for all the priests of Lithuania to gather at these Marian shrines . . . It is our wish and intention that this Year of Temperance not be the end for us, and would not be just one more short-range program, but that it be a preparation for two great jubilees which we will soon be celebrating: In 1984, we will celebrate the 500 year jubilee of the death of our nation's patron, Saint Casimir, and in 1987, 600 years since the introduction of Christianity into Lithuania. The jubilee of Saint Casimir will be celebrated by the Poles and by the pope. I'm sure that we Lithuanians also, will not lag behind. Our Ordinaries are already consulting on the jubilee program . . . We asked the Ordinaries of Lithuania that they go to the Soviet government, demanding the return of the Church of Saint Casimir, desecrated and turned into a museum of atheism.

In 1604 when they proclaimed Casimir a saint, the construction of

this church began, and in four years, we would like to celebrate the jubilee of Saint Casimir in the Church of Saint Casimir. I trust that the Ordinaries will convey our wishes to the Soviet government.

So we have come to Šiluva to pray and to consider how to lift the spiritual face of the nation: our lives, works, thoughts and words — the entire image of Lithuania — before the aforesaid jubilees. By that time, we want to close all saloons. We want no more staggering drunks in the streets. We want the tears of women and children to diminish, harmony to reign again, and our brothers to find their way to the Church, especially those who on account of fear, on account of ambition, "For a speck of gold, a spoonful of tasty food . . .", have turned away from God — the Fount of Eternal happiness.

In the words of Saint Paul, we need "to renew all things in Christ". Let us try to think deeply over these words, and each try to put them into practice in our lives. If, by the 600th anniversary of the introduction of Christianity into Lithuania, we are able to renew ourselves suitably, who knows but that the Pope might not express a wish to come to Lithuania. Perhaps he will be able to kiss the soil of our fatherland. We need only to be worthy of this before God at the Apostolic See.

In order to rise, we must know the dangers which lurk about us, burden and torture us. First and foremost among these is drunkenness which has been sown in our land by atheism. Drunkenness is the result of atheism, and it is foolish to affirm that people drink only because of a high standard of living. The Americans live well, but among them, alcoholism is the fifth greatest problem, while among us, it is the first. The men drink, the women drink, the children drink, and we are about to drink ourselves into oblivion.

During this Year of Temperance, many parishes have made pledges of temperance or complete abstinence — to abstain from drinking altogether for a year, or to be very abstemious: e.g.. 100 grams of alcohol on the occasion of a feast day, a christening or a wedding and no more, and what is most important, not to urge or force anyone to drink. This practice has produced good results.

At the main Mass today also, cards will be distributed. When you get home, sign them, and indicate for how long you wish to take the pledge. When you have the opportunity, come back to your pastor with the card, so that he might know how many of his parishioners have joined the sobriety movement. . . Today we have no Bishop Valančius among us, no authority whom the entire nation would obey,

but we have thousands of little Valančiuses, and all of you here are those little Valančiuses, so you must take the sobriety and abstinence movement to our nation. (Bishop Motiejus Valančius was a leading proponent of temperance in 19th Century Lithuania. — Trans. Note) I suggest that everyone participating in this religious festival of Our Lady of Šiluva abstain from all alcoholic beverages for at least a month. That will be the beginning of our resolve, a beautiful gift to Mary. Today, a half-hearted sacrifice is not enough. We need a sacrifice which is great, total, gigantic, and one would like to think that we would be able to make such a sacrifice. We priests look with hope and trust to all of you gathered here. I think that you will understand that this is needed by the Church, this is needed by Lithuania, this is needed for a better tomorrow.

The second illness from which we often suffer is fear. If people before the War feared a black cat in their yard, they are now afraid of their neighbor's eye and their neighbor's ear. People are afraid of a great variety of things, they are afraid, afraid . . . and finally, they do not even know what they are afraid of — they just feel they have to be afraid. Fear is a demeaning emotion. Those especially who lead the people of God, who stand at the head of the people of God, should not have to be afraid. That honorable national martyr, Archbishop Teofilus Matulionis said, "I can see a priest trembling in the face of danger, but I cannot see him being afraid."

Thus each of us as a human being can tremble in the face of hardship and danger, but we do not have to be afraid. And still, the mania of fearing the polar bears, disseminated at sometime or other, lives on among us. Let us take, for example, our youth. On August 24, our young people arranged a religious procession from Tytuvėnai to Šiluva. Participating in this procession were two priests and about 1500 worshippers, most of them young people.

We have heard of high Soviet officials saying. "We have become a laughing-stock . . . if people are praying, then why the fire engines? Why film them? Why not film the hooligans of whom the streets are full . . ." In reality, the atheists, afraid of prayer, often make themselves a laughing-stock. It appears that they really are very timid: They fear the Sign of the Cross and the rosary.

Seeing young people such as this, let us adults take care that we don't have to blush before them in the future. It seems that the youth, educated in Soviet schools, can separate the wheat from the chaff, the truth from a lie. They courageously walk the roads of Lithuania carrying the cross, the truth and love. We elders must not hang back,

we have to go forward: to Sunday Mass, to making the Sign of the Cross at the table and to greeting our neighbor upon meeting him with, "Praise be to Jesus Christ!"

So let us conquer fear. If we are afraid, if we hide like mice under a broom, we as Catholics will be doomed to extinction. The incident from the Old Testament comes to mind, of Moses leading the Jewish people from Egypt. Travelling in the desert, they began to miss onions and garlic, and murmured against Moses. Then God said. "This nation shall not enter into the promised land . . ." For forty years they died in the desert; I fear lest the same thing happen to our older generation. Often they betray their religion out of fear, and do not provide good example to the younger generation . . .

The youth will really enter the promised land and see the complete triumph of the Church. Therefore, my brothers, away with fear! The only fear should be the fear of sin. The Christian fears sin alone and nothing else. Away with mediocrity! Long oppression under the Czar spawned an unworthy kind of Lithuanian. Such a person often wants to serve God and the world. He is often afraid, and kowtows to one group or to another. That is bad. The atheists see it and try to use it. Not long ago, the Minister of Cult, Petras Anilionis, went about the rectories summoning priests before executive committees, and telling them that they are not allowed to teach catechism to children, and children are forbidden to be at the the altar.... It's always "You're not allowed! You're not allowed!" You're not allowed even to preach on a catechetical theme!

The same commissioner summoned the pastor of Grinkiškis to the district center, and in the presence of the district chairwoman, he reprimanded him. According to the commissioner, a priest may open his mouth only to put a spoon into it! After scolding the priest, the commissioner pulled out a Catholic catechism on the spot and, giving it to the district chairwoman, said. "Take this and read what it says here!"

When the catechisms were printed, 3500 of them were stolen and sold by employees, while 1500 were sequestered for the Commissioner for Cult. People often wonder why there is so much theft of catechisms and prayerbooks from the print shop itself, and why they do not steal other books. It's simple. If an idea is alive, if it is effective, then everyone seizes on it. No one has any use for outmoded things . . .

This means that priests are not allowed to explain truths of the catechism, to preach catechetical sermons while district chairpersons are being trained for catechetical work, so that they might more ef-

fectively destroy the Church. We must obey the basic laws of the state and the Constitution, but not the webs woven by the atheists. We priests are obliged to catechize children well, according to a two or three-year program determined by the Ordinaries. Under the present circumstances, we must catechize the adults, too, every Sunday, for we did not receive many catechisms, ten per parish more or less. So it is imperative to give catechetical sermons, while the faithful, in order to see the truth and distinguish falsehood, must absorb well the truths they hear.

So priests must catechize the people of God, both the adults and children. It is especially necessary to make two-day, or in some parishes, three-day Advent and Lenten retreats, to make them devoutly. All these things will truly bring us God's grace and courage, and then we will see who we are.

In conclusion, since the time is short, I wish to touch, if only briefly, on one more serious problem: namely, the problem of training priests. There were years when atheists allowed only four, six, eight or ten candidates to be accepted into the seminary. Now that priests and Ordinaries have begun to demand it repeatedly, for the past four years twenty candidates have been admitted to the seminary. During that time, some priests have died, and vacancies have appeared — a shortage of priests.

The atheists have become so emboldened that in fact they run the seminary. For instance this year, the seminary administration submitted to the Office of the Commissioner of Cult the applications of thirty-six candidates. Seventeen of them were weeded out by the atheists, and stricken from the list. They eliminated the very best. I think that the Ordinaries will see to it that those rejected prepare privately for the priesthood.

The time has come when the fitness of candidates for the seminary should be decided not by the commissioner, but by the leadership of the Church — bishops and administrators, priests and faithful. We can remain silent no longer! If we want to immolate ourselves spiritually, all we need do is keep quiet and we shall immolate ourselves. But history will record that by our silence and neglect we betrayed the Catholic Church of Lithuania.

Another example: Last Tuesday, a good seminarian was expelled from the fourth year of seminary. (Seminarian Aloyzas Volskis. See *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, Nos. 53, 55. — Trans. Note) When I inquired what he was expelled for, some said that it was because during the summer, he had met with reaction-

ary priests, while others said that he had spent his summer vacation in Viduklė. Viduklė is the source of contagion where it is possible to contract the plague . . . (Father Svarinskas was the pastor of Viduklė at that time. — Trans. Note) These and similar events force us to think and to say. "Enough! We will not stand for this any longer. If the government wants to, let it shut down the seminary completely, but it must be administered only by Church leadership, and we will support such a seminary in every way."

Today our bishop is here, and he will have something appropriate to say. Let us spread what we hear throughout Lithuania, and put it into practice in our lives.

We priests of Lithuania are not striving for political goals. No! We merely accept that mission which God places upon our poor, weak shoulders. We will kneel often before Mary at Šiluva, Aušros Vartai and Žemaičių Kalvarija and pray for the strength to carry out this mission properly. We promise Mary that we will defend the Church to the last priest. We will defend it with our whole life: by our word, courage, the dissemination of truth, and then let us trust that with the help of God, by the time those two great jubilees come, we will have been successful in renewing the spiritual face of the nation. So, brothers, let our motto be, "To renew all things in Christ". Amen. (The language has been edited — Ed. Note)

Sermon of Father Sigitas Tamkevičius, on the Anniversary of the Death of Father Karolis Garuckas. Commemorated in Ceikiniai, April, 1980.

We stand at the grave of Father Karolis. Why have we come here? We have become accustomed to looking for great people in books, faraway in France or Italy, and often we do not notice them when those great people live right here in our midst, speak and work with us, create with us the future of the Church and the nation. One of those great people whom the Church and the nation will not forget was and still is Father Karolis. Who was he? If one of the faithful were to describe Father Karolis, he would say that Father Karolis was a 100% idealist. He was concerned about God and the Church. He was concerned for the fatherland. He was affected by the immortal souls of people, and their material well-being. If the question, "Who was Father Karolis?" were to be answered by a contemporary government atheist, he would say that Father Karolis was a damned Jesuit, and religious extremist.



Father Karolis Garuckas, SJ, on his deathbed, being visited by Father Alfonsas Svarinskas (center).

Why do government atheists call bishops, priests (including Father Karolis) and believers "extremists"—in other words, label them with whatever perjorative titles they can imagine? In order to answer this question, let us glance at least briefly at the present-day plight of our Church.

Today the Church in our country is walking the road to Golgatha. Today in our country it is being crucified. There is a desire to see the Church and the Faith buried, so that in our fatherland not a trace would be left of a single cross or a single church, in order that future generations would see only atheistic monuments, and no one would testify that here, beside the Baltic Sea, was a deeply believing nation which had loved God and Mary. For this crucifixion of the Church of Christ, everything is used. We can summarize those basic ways in which the Church is being crucified as follows:

First, for the crucifixion of the Church and for the war against religion, alcohol is being used. Consciously and subconsciously, by mass production of alcohol, the atheists are attacking religion and crucifying the Church by the very worst means. Remove alcohol from our nation today and our churches will see three times, and perhaps five times as many of the faithful. The person for whom alcohol

becomes life's be-all and end-all forgets the way to church, and religion becomes for him a collection of superstitions. The Land of Mary today has been built full of saloons. Each year, Lithuanians sacrifice millions of rubles to this terrible idol, and everyone who thinks and is not blind sees that the greatest tragedy, THE GREATEST ENEMY OF THE NATION AND THE CHURCH IS NOTHING OTHER THAN ALCOHOLISM!

The second weapon, the second means used in the war against Christ's Church is intimidation. We feel the terrible claws of intimidation throughout the life of the Church. Every spring from the pulpit, we priests read to your faithful a document from the diocesan chancery in which the seminary invites young men to decide to work in the vineyard of Christ. We keep quiet about the fact that young men are often accompanied to the seminary, not by their pastors, but by government officials, whom we call security police and other names. A young man dedicating himself to the service of Christ cannot have free hands. He is intimidated into building, not the Church of Christ, but the house of Satan, intimidated to dissemble and to be a traitor.

We believers have no religious literature. We do not have our own newspaper. We do not have books. Those of you who, not long ago in March, watched a couple of television programs, heard how official persons stated that the believers of Lithuania have everything: They have the Scriptures and religious literature: liturgical books and calendars are published for them. In a word, they publish everything that we believers need!

Not so! We have nothing. Printing presses were taken away from us by force; by force they keep us off radio or television, and when the dregs of untruth and calumny are poured on the heads of priests and faithful, the priest is not allowed to stand up alongside the speaker to rebut. The hand of intimidation prevents priests from teaching children the truths of the Faith, and if today, priests continue to catechize children, daring not to succumb to this terrible intimidation, we honor them. We could mention many instances of this intimidation, but you all know them well. Today it takes an idiot or blind man not to see these instances of intimidation.

The third weapon which the government atheists use in their desire to crucify the Church of Christ is falsehood. Intimidation is in itself terrible and inhuman therefore, in order to hide it, lies are used. We hear these lies on radio and television, and we read them in

newspapers and magazines. An attempt is being made to convince us priests and laity of Lithuania that the the rope which the atheists are placing about our necks is not a rope, but a beautiful necktie. So when the atheists try in various ways to strangle us, to bury us, those same atheists exert efforts to convince us that we have complete facilities to breathe, to live and to flourish.

This lie serves to camouflage the intimidation, and the same lie serves atheistic ideology. Today, when even atheists who are objective admit that Christ is a historical figure, that He lived on earth. He functioned and was crucified, the government atheists in their newspapers and textbooks still write that Christ was a myth, a story—a legend created by people. Such a despicable lie is still used today so that children, youth and all who are not so knowledgeable about the Faith would forget it, and turn away from the Catholic Church.

Such in short seems to be the plight of the Church today. Father Karolis saw all that. Wishing to serve God and people, to help immortal souls, he became a Jesuit, renounced everything, placed everything on the altar of sacrifice. Seeing the present difficult plight of the Church, seeing the intimidation, the children and youth being led astray, hearing the lie, he could not just pray, he could not just think about his own life and death. He was impatient, his heart was aflame, he looked for ways of doing something, of changing things.

When he found out that a Lithuanian Helsinki group was organizing in Lithuania (A small independent group to monitor implementation of the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Accords, signed by the Soviet Union in 1974. — Trans. Note), he became a charter member. This group was the first to go on record demanding that the Church in Lithuania have the same full freedom which the government atheists have today. If they are allotted tons of paper to publish atheistic pamphlets, then the same number of tons should be allotted to the Catholics. If the state supports the atheists, the state, considering believers as citizens, with equal rights, should support believers also, helping and allowing them to disseminate their ideas.

Today, we pay homage to Father Karolis. At a time when many fearfully kept silent and bowed to intimidation, to falsehood, Father Karolis stood immovable as an oak, and told the truth. Most likely, deep in his heart, he too experienced fear and uncertainty, but he used to find in himself the power to resist that internal fear and uncertainty, to resist it and to stand tall, holding aloft the banner of

Christ. We stand at Father Karolis' grave . . . we have gathered not just to pray for him — not to weep but to think, so that in days to come, we might take the right position which every priest and layman in Lithuania should take.

First of all, today each of us must understand, become deeply aware, that our silence and passivity are a great offense against the nation and the Church at a time when all hell is set against the Catholic Church to demolish it, so that not one believer would be left in the land of Lithuania. If we remain silent and do nothing, we are cowards, deserters and criminals. The posture of the priest and of the believer today must be one of intense action. Today, it is too little just to pray, too little to think only of one's own life, death and eternal happiness. Today we must have a broader vision, encompassing in our hearts all our brothers and sisters in the nation and in the Church.

When a terrible alcoholism is destroying the nation and the Church, every priest, every lay person picking up a drink is a deserter and a criminal! It cannot be justified even if he does so without bad will, merely giving in to his weakness. Today, each one of us must struggle for a sober future for the nation, for only a sober nation can produce good citizens and good children of the Church.

Not everything today is in our power, but we can, by our protests in meetings, demand that the production of alcohol be cut back, that saloons would disappear from our environment. They are our misfortune, the graveyard of the Church and of the nation. It is the duty of all of us, bishops, priests and faithful, to demand that these poisons be removed from our nation, that the production of alcoholic beverages be cut back. When we see the intimidation and the falsehood, remaining passive, applauding the lies, opting for falsehood and disseminating it — being blind, unthinking instruments of intimidation — would be a crime.

The plight of the Church and the nation today demands that we struggle against this intimidation and falsehood. The present condition of the Church and the nation requires that we be strong and brave. Fear, retreat before adversity, bodes well neither for the Church nor for the nation. And regardless of what is said and thought by priests and faithful who try to be tactful and justify themselves, saying that sometimes it is wise to keep quiet—that by working quietly one can accomplish more— today we say unequivocally to everyone that is a terrible mistake!

From history we have many examples: The painful lesson of

the Russian Orthodox Church is well known, where an attempt was also made to take the tactful way. We priests and faithful of Lithuania cannot allow this terrible and unforgiveable mistake to be repeated in our fatherland: otherwise, we shall be responsible before the divine tribunal, before the nation and before history.

We stand at the grave of Father Karolis . . . at the grave of a soldier of Christ. All of us, whoever we are, clergy or laity, must resolve to carry Christ's banner bravely. Today, we must not be afraid of sacrifice. No threats, no labor camps, prisons or death can stop us. The Church has never suffered because its children languished in prison. The Church was never hurt when her children were scourged and crucified, but the Church suffered great losses when her children become cowards, traitors and betrayed the most sacred cause of Christ, for which He, Himself, died on the cross.

My brothers and sisters, let us leave the grave of Father Karolis with a prayer on our lips and great love in our hearts: let us carry forth that flame with which Father Karolis burned, and let us spread it throughout the nation. May the flame of truth, love and courage burn in the hearts of us all. Amen.

(The language has been edited. — Ed. Note)

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

Žagarė (Joniškis Rayon)

On August 24, 1984 Commissioner Petras Anilionis of the Council for Religious Affairs came to Žagarė to visit His Excellency. Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius. He introduced himself, saying. "I have come as a representative of the government to warn you."

The commissioner presented Bishop Steponavičius with the following accusations:

1. The bishop signed, with 500 priests, a petition regarding the Regulations for Religious Associations.

2. He signed a petition from priests of the Archdiocese of Kaunas regarding the arrested priests, Father Alfonsas Svarinskas and Father Sigitas Tamkevičius.

3. The bishop travels around to religious festivals, jubilees and funerals.

4. He prayed for state criminals, e.g., recently in Utena, he prayed for the criminal, Canon Petras Rauda, on the tenth anniversary

of his death. Canon Rauda was never rehabilitated! In his sermon, the bishop said, "The years he spent in labor camp were marked by sacrifice and love for the Church." In his sermon, he also mentioned that in our country today, one-third of the marriages end in divorce. This is considered an anti-Soviet statement.

5. A few years ago, in Telšiai, he prayed for Bishop Pranciškus Ramanauskas and other deceased bishops of that diocese.

6. In his talks with priests, he has urged them, "It is necessary to catechize the children." In other words, he has urged them not to abide by Soviet law.

7. He has interfered in the affairs of the Archdiocese of Vilnius. He sent a letter to the chanceries regarding the organization of the Priests' Council and the College of Consultors of the Archdiocese of Vilnius. He has no right to interfere in the affairs of the archdiocese. The state does not recognize his actions.

He incited the Administrator of the Diocese of Panevėžys, Monsignor Kazimieras Dulksnys, to form independently a Priests' Council and College of Consultors.

At this point, Bishop Steponavičius reminded Anilionis, "You are interfering in the affairs of the Church. For example, you require that only those you choose be appointed to Priests' Councils or the College of Consultors, even though in the press and on radio and television, you proclaim that you do not interfere in the canonical or liturgical activities of the Church." After these words, the commissioner, looking at the bishop angrily, fell silent.

The commissioner dared to advise the bishop against going to Vilnius, for the closing services of the Year of Saint Casimir, August 26. To all this, His Excellency responded. "I do not feel that I have committed any crime against the civil government. I am going to the Saint Casimir celebration. I think that will be better for you also. What will the people abroad say if they find out that you forbid it?"

Anilionis was worried that the bishop might report the conversation to the *Chronicle*. To this, Bishop Steponavičius replied, "I'm going to tell everyone that you visited me, and what you warned me about."

Panevėžys

On June 1, 1984, Commissioner Petras Anilionis of the Office of Religious Affairs summoned to the Panevėžys Diocesan Chancery all the deans of the aforesaid diocese. Arriving, the deans found posted in the chancery an announcement by the administrator of the diocese,

Monsignor Kazimieras Dulksnys, regarding the Diocesan Priests' Council and the College of Consultors which had been organized.

When Religious Affairs Commissioner Petras Anilionis arrived, he was very annoyed at such an announcement. He stated, "I am not interfering in the priests' choice (of the six priests), but I will never agree that the six priests be appointed as members of the Priests' Council without my consent." Anilionis categorically stated that without his approval the College of Consultors was invalid. In the list of members of the College of Consultors which had been posted, the names of Canon Bronius Antanaitis, Father Petras Baltuška and Father Jonas Balčiūnas aroused the special ire of Anilionis.

The commissioner, disregarding that the composition of the College of Consultors had already been announced by Monsignor Dulksnys, ordered that the aforesaid three members unacceptable to him be replaced by others.

Intimidated by Anilionis, Monsignor Dulksnys gave in. However, on August 6, 1984, Monsignor Dulksnys wrote to Commissioner Anilionis, indicating that he had made the changes in the Priests' Council and College of Consultors before checking Canon Law, and in response to repeated demands from the commissioner. In his communication, he listed the Priests' Council and the College of Consultors unchanged, as duly elected.

On August 14, Monsignor Dulksnys was summoned to Vilnius to see Petras Anilionis, who demanded that Monsignor Dulksnys rescind his letter of August 6. Apparently, the commissioner does not wish to acknowledge the original appointments to the Priests' Council and College of Consultors.

On August 11, 1984, the Priests' Council of the Diocese of Panevėžys assembled at the diocesan chancery. Monsignor Dulksnys informed those assembled of his letter of August 6, which indicates that the Priests' Council consists of Fathers: Peter Adomonis, Canon Bronius Antonaitis, Petras Baltuška, Petras Kuzmickas, Juozas Janulis, Antanas Balaišis, Canon Petras Žukelis, Canon Jonas Juodelis, Dean Jonas Pranevičius, Dean Klemensas Gutauskas, Jonas Balčiūnas and Petras Budriūnas. The College of Consultors consists of: Canon Bronius Antanaitis, Chancellor Petras Juodelis and Petras Kuzmickas.

On June 1, Anilionis spoke angrily to the deans. He was especially annoyed that the deans and even the administrator of the diocese, Monsignor Kazimieras Dulksnys, signed a letter from the priests of

the Diocese of Panevėžys to the Soviet government, protesting against the arrest of Father Alfonsas Svarinskas and Father Sigitas Tamkevičius. He threatened that in the future, every priest who signs a similar document will have to certify his signature at KGB headquarters.

Anilionis tried to convince the deans who had been summoned that Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius had been justly sentenced. The commissioner was convinced that the priests sentenced had no reason to be angry and to bring up various contemporary problems, since in his words, it was no better in former days. Anilionis based his talk on old, pre-war magazines, reading from them various news items about thefts and murders.

As an example of anti-Soviet agitation by Father Svarinskas, the commissioner indicated a sermon which Father Svarinskas terminated with the exhortation. "Brothers and sisters, let us go to establish a new Lithuania. . ." "New, it is true, but not a Soviet Lithuania." Anilionis added sarcastically.

Šakiai

On June 26, 1984, the priests of the *rayon* were summoned to the offices of the Šakiai Executive Committee. After some propaganda announcements by government representatives, Vice Chairman (Mrs.) Kasperavičienė, read an excerpt of a letter from Religious Affairs Commissioner Anilionis, which condemned the gathering of signatures on protests against the imprisonment of Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius. During the meeting, Father Romualdas Vaičiulaitis denied the accusation that the arrested priests are criminals. Father Vaičiulaitis affirmed that Father Sigitas Tamkevičius was his classmate, so he knew him well as a very exemplary and serious priest, working according to the spirit of Christ. The government representatives would not allow themselves to get engaged in further discussion; saying that it was lunchtime, they dismissed the priests.

Vice Chairman Kasperavičienė, detaining the Reverend Dean Juozas Žemaitis, reprimanded him because his youth choir sings at wakes (The youth choir sang at the funeral of a good Catholic), because he catechizes children, visits parishioners and has many children and young people at the altar.

Šiauliai

On July 30, 1984, at 11:00 AM, Vice Chairman A. Caparas sum-

moned to the Office of the Šiauliai *Rayon* Executive Committee the priests of the City and *Rayon* of Šiauliai. Upon his arrival, Vice Commissioner Juozėnas of the Office of Religious Affairs, tried to convince the priests not to sign petitions and protests demanding the release of Father Alfonsas Svarinskas and Father Sigitas Tamkevičius. He tried to show that the priests who had been sentenced were criminals, justly sentenced, and therefore would not be released.

Širvintai

On September 7, 1984, priests working in the *rayon* were summoned to the Offices of the Executive Committee. The *Rayon* government strictly forbade them to pray for the state criminals, Father Alfonsas Svarinskas and Father Sigitas Tamkevičius.

The catechizing of children is forbidden.

Canon Jonas Pilka, Father Petras Krikščiukaitis and Father Rokas Puzonas argued back strongly, recalling that the catechizing of Children is strictly enjoined by Church law, and the priests would abide by it. To this, the *Rayon* Executive Committee Vice Chairman retorted, "You're not going to change us, and we're not going to change you! There's no need to argue!"

Moreover, he warned that there are other transgressions of the laws but there would be no warnings — sterner measures would be applied.

Jurbarkas

At the beginning of September, 1984, the priests of the *rayon* were summoned to the Offices of the Jurbarkas *Rayon*, and warned not to pray for the imprisoned priests. Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius. Especially under attack was the pastor of Vadžgiris, Father Alfonsas Bulota, for a sermon delivered in Viduklė, August 2, when the people assembled on the occasion of his feast day, prayed for Father Alfonsas Svarinskas, and for a youth Mass celebrated at the beginning of the school year.

Kaunas

At 5:00 PM on April 3, 1984, Chief Judge Misiūnas, of the Supreme Court of Lithuania, came to the seminary in Kaunas for a lecture. Along with him came a representative from the office of Petras Anilionis, who always accompanies lecturers to the seminary.

Chairman Misiūnas, in his lecture to the seminarians, explained the structure of the Supreme Court, its work, the equality of all

citizens before the law, etc. Misiūnas acknowledged that in the past the court had made mistakes, but he was convinced that the mistakes had been corrected, and they were currently operating according to the principles of the Supreme Court. The lecture lasted about forty minutes. Afterwards, as usual, there was an outburst of questions:

"You speak of justice, equality and freedom, but in the Constitution there is no paragraph defending religious organizations, meetings, freedom of religious speech or religious press, so what kind of equality can there be, and how are we to understand such justice?"

Responding to this question, Misiūnas explained that even though there is no clause in the Constitution about the rights raised in the question, nevertheless, they are protected by other paragraphs of the Constitution, indirectly.

According to Misiūnas, there are such laws in other documents, but exactly which documents were the paragraphs he mentioned, defending the freedom of religious organizations assembly and religious press the chairman of the Supreme Court did not indicate. To the question why clergy and church employees are taxed double, triple or more the rate of all other agencies, Misiūnas did not reply, saying that he knew nothing about such things. Asked why no religious literature is allowed to be published, Misiūnas explained that the question was groundless. There is plenty of religious literature being published, according to Misiūnas. As an example, he mentioned the *Catholic Calendar-Directory*.

After such a reply by Misiūnas, when everyone knows that the edition of the *Calendar* is minimal, and that the *Calendar* itself is meant only for priests, and there are no religious books published for the faithful, hearty laughter broke out. During the lecture, the question was asked why permission is not given for erection of new churches and crosses: why long-standing crosses and newly-erected crosses are being demolished: why a large percentage of churches are closed, converted into warehouses and completely neglected, with dilapidated roofs, which no one is allowed to repair. Misiūnas said that the representative of the Office for Religious Affairs who had come with him could answer this question, but the latter also gave no specifics.

They were asked to give more details of the trial of Father Alfonsas Svarinskas. Avoiding a direct answer, Misiūnas merely expressed his own opinion, saying that if he had his way, Father Svarinskas would have been arrested long ago. In his words, the priest

would have committed fewer offenses and would have received a briefer sentence in labor camp.

When Misiūnas stated that anyone who wished had been allowed into the trial, a storm of derisive laughter rang through the Audience. Supreme Court Chairman Misiūnas and the representative from the Office for Religious Affairs could not restrain their own laughter.

During the entire question and answer session, Misiūnas was nervous and restless: quite often, he referred questions to his companion, but the latter also had nothing specific to say.

Varduva (Plungė Rayon)

July 2 - 9, 1984, at Žemaičių Kalvarija, the great Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary took place. During the festival, sites commemorating the Passion of Christ, which the people call the Hills, are visited. Visiting these stations requires a journey of approximately 7 km: during the entire journey, hymns are sung. There are the only Hills of Calvary which the faithful were successful in defending against destruction by the atheists. Every



Pilgrims at the shrine of Žemaičių Kalvarija.

year, crowds of believers come to the religious festival at Žemaičių Kalvarija, not just from Lithuania, but from other republics.

Prior to the festival at Žemaičių Kalvarija, the government atheists usually attack especially the Bishop of Telšiai, the Dean of Plungė and the pastor of Žemaičių Kalvarija. They demand that farm laborers who are religious believers be told from the pulpit not to miss work during the religious festival. They are especially angry on account of the Priests' Day, proclaimed during the festival. This year, Bishop Antanas Vaičius was ordered not to visit the Hills of Calvary with the faithful, and to forbid priests to go, since according to Commissioner Petras Anilionis, such visiting of the Hills of Calvary is a transgression of religious regulations.

Commissioner Anilionis demanded through the *rayon* government that sermons be preached only by priests of the Diocese of Telšiai, and that their names be reported in advance to the *rayon* offices. Loudspeakers may not be installed in the churchyard, so that faithful unable to get into the packed church might not hear the preaching.

At the *rayon* center, a special staff has been established under the leadership of a high KGB official from Moscow.

Žemaičių Kalvarija itself buzzed with a large number of KGB agents and traffic police, noting the license numbers of automobiles on their way to the festival. Staff members from the Religious Affairs Office participated, along with a whole brigade of agents under orders to record every sermon preached. A number of agents were ordered to record the sermons, so that there would not be the least possibility of concealing anything. Nevertheless, the number of faithful at the religious festival annually increases. This year Bishop Antanas Vaičius of Telšiai, a great number of priests and a countless throng of the faithful participated in the services at Žemaičių Kalvarija on Priests' Day.

During the concelebrated Mass, Bishop Vaičius, the priests and the faithful prayed for the sobriety of Lithuania, and her young people. After Mass, Bishop Vaičius, priests and faithful walked the Hills of Calvary. During the religious festival, over 20,000 people received Holy Communion.

Šiluva

On September 26, 1984, the last Sunday of the month, government officials feared a possible procession of youth from Tytuvėnai to Šiluva. The pastor of Tytuvėnai, Father Liudvikas Semaška, was sum-



Procession to Šiluva.

moned to the *rayon* offices, and warned about the procession. On the day mentioned, a multitude of militia guarded Tytuvėnai, and patrolled Kelmė. Šiluva and the Hill of Crosses. Along the road to the Hill of Crosses, signs were erected barring traffic. Along the roads, traffic police checked passing automobiles, and fined them for the least thing, threatening to lift the drivers' licenses.

At the beginning of September, during the great religious festival of Our Lady of Šiluva, in order to make it more difficult for the faithful to reach Šiluva, certain commuter buses were cancelled, and most of the remainder coming from Kaunas and Raseiniai took on only as many passengers as there were seats available. Taxis categorically refused to take passengers in the direction of Šiluva. Traffic police zealously checked private cars and if anyone tried to drive to services repeatedly, they were accused of engaging in profiteering.

On September 9, after the principal Mass, the traditional procession of penance took place along the roads around the Basilica of Šiluva, led by a priest.

On Wednesday, September 12, the so-called Priests' Day, about forty priests concelebrated Holy Mass. On September 13, Mass was

concelebrated by His Excellency. Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius and forty-six priests. In his sermon, Bishop Steponavičius brought up the difficulties experienced by believing children and youth in school and at work. As an example, he mentioned the behavior of a young man in a certain factory: When they tried to ridicule him, saying that he didn't know himself what he believed in, the young man devoutly recited the Apostles' Creed, and everyone was shamed into silence.

The bishop went on to say that priests are forbidden to teach children religion, and addressed himself to the family, emphasizing its great responsibility in the education of children, especially in teaching them religious truth.

The seminary administration, letting seminarians out for the solemnities at Šiluva, warned them not to associate with the more zealous priests, lest they possibly be infected by extremism. It is too bad that the seminary authorities do not warn seminarians not to associate with atheists, who are wrecking the Church, and with KGB, who are constantly trying to recruit Lithuanian youth and seminarians as informers.

On September 12, 1984, tourists from Latvia visiting cities of Lithuania in a hired bus, stopped off at Šiluva. Here government agents detained their bus, and took the driver away. When the driver failed to return, the people went to the militia, demanding his release. "No one informed us that stopping at Šiluva is not allowed September 8 - 16." the people told the militia. After two hours of questioning, the driver was released.

Krekenava (Panevėžys Rayon)

August 31, 1984, at the offices of the Prosecutor in Panevėžys, Father Petras Budriūnas, the pastor of Krekenava, was warned about teaching children catechism.

Skudvilė (Tauragė Rayon)

June 8, 1984, in the church in Skudvilė, after services, the pastor, Father Jonas Kauneckas, delivered a catechetical sermon about confession. During the sermon, approaching a confessional, he showed the children how to make their confession, and this was considered a crime.

After the sermon, Executive Committee Secretary (Mrs.) Karosienė, and Vice Principal, Mrs. Jancevičienė of the Middle School, came to the sacristy, ostensibly regarding the heating of the church, and

summoned Father Kauneckas to the offices of the Executive Committee. Here a warrant was drawn up, indicating that Father Kauneckas taught children religion and organized devotions just for children, because in church, about sixty children and seven women were counted, although there really were more adults in church during services. The women making the check failed to notice more than twenty men and women up in the choir loft. Vice Chairwoman, Mrs. Ulbienė, stated that the report would be presented to the Prosecutor's Office and added to Father Kauneckas' file since, in the words of the vice chairwoman, it was "by just such crimes that the priests A. Svarinskas and S. Tamkevičius began their activities".

Vilkaviškis

On June 6, 1984, Vice Chairman Juozas Urbonas of the Vilkaviškis *Rayon* Executive Committee entered a building in the Vilkaviškis churchyard. Seeing children gathered for a catechism lesson, Urbonas called Miss Genovaitė Paliaukaitė out into the churchyard, and ordered her to go home immediately (Miss Paliaukaitė lives in Kapsukas), and not to show up any more. The Vice Chairman warned the girl that for teaching children catechism, she would be tried in criminal court.

Going to the rectory, Urbonas demanded that group instruction of children for First Communion be discontinued. The pastor, Father Juozas Preikšas, and Associate Pastor Father Vytautas Gustaitis, explained that it was not possible (for lack of time) to question the children one by one, and they did not consider it any crime if the children gathered in small groups of forty or more, so their grasp of the material could be tested. To Urbonas' statement that Miss Paliaukaitė had no right to teach children religion, and could be brought to trial, Associate Pastor Gustaitis responded that in such a case, he would catechize the children himself: the teaching would not be discontinued. (On November 16, 1984, Father Juozas Preikšas was designated by Pope John Paul II as Assistant Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Kaunas and the Diocese of Vilkaviškis, assisting Bishop Liudvikas Povilonis, who was named archbishop at that time. — Trans. Note)

After the visit of Vice Chairman Urbonas, committees of teachers tried to get into the churchyard. When this failed, the teachers met children who were coming to church at the churchyard gates, where they counted them, took down their names and threatened them.

After the visit of Vice Chairman Urbonas, committees of teachers

tried to get into the churchyard. When this failed, the teachers met children who were coming to church at the churchyard gates, where they counted them, took down their names and threatened them.

To: The Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian SSR
The Executive Committee of the Klaipėda *Rayon*

From: Parents and Faithful of the Parish of Gargždai,
Klaipėda *Rayon*

A Protest

On June 5 of this year, we brought our children to church before evening services, so that the priest might hear their prayers individually, for admission to their first Confession and Holy Communion. Into the church came three women, who told the priest that the Executive Committee had sent them, and that they were going to file a complaint because he had opened a school in the church. They immediately began to take charge in church: All three of them rushed up to the children, looking inquisitively to identify them, questioning and counting them. The children were frightened: some of them tried to hide when they spotted their teacher.

The mothers and grandmothers became frightened, along with the children. The investigators made rude remarks and began on the spot to write up the complaint. Some of the mothers were heard to say, "We brought them and will continue to do so. Don't interfere with the quiz!" But the "new church administration" attacked them even more vehemently and raised such a furor that it recalled to mind the massacre in the church of Kražiai where the Czar's powerful Cossacks fell upon unarmed women.

The voices of the women were heard in self-defense: "Get out of here!" The frightened children, meanwhile, watched intently to see how everything would turn out. Finally, the three intruders approached the priest and introduced themselves: Mrs. Jadvyga Siurplienė, Secretary of the Executive Committee: Mrs. Rūta Raudienė and Mrs. Jūratė Dapkevičienė, a teacher. Then, taking their complaint with them, they left.

We protest most strenuously such actions in church by these women. They took over in church, terrorized our children and us, caused a terrible row and interfered with the questioning of the children.

They could have done without the senseless attacks by remaining calm and writing their report.

They transgressed Article 50 of the LSSR Constitution. "The Church is separated from the state," since they assumed authority in church and caused a disturbance.

They made up the idea of "school" without any basis: The children's knowledge must be checked by questioning them. This is the priest's duty. Otherwise, he has no right to admit them to the sacraments. He had the full right to deliver a catechetical sermon in which the truths of religion are explained, and parents have the full right to take their children to church: this is what the mothers do.

The mere fact that quite a few children assemble simultaneously does not constitute a school. The priests do not have the time to be occupied with the children all day long, since they have other work as well, so they set a time for testing the children. When many children come to church at the same time, surely he does not have to chase them from church and let them in one by one for questioning? That would be absurd! It is quicker and easier to question all of them together. It is impossible to teach them just in church, so even if one wanted, one could not create a school in church. Hence in Poland, in Hungary and in the German Democratic Republic, they teach children religion in the parish hall throughout the year. Even though it is the same Communism, there the Directive of Lenin is applied correctly: Religion is not taught in school (that is, the Church is separated from the school).

That is how the whole world understands it. Hence, according to Lenin's principle, we too should have the right to teach children religion in church throughout the year: but the Executive Committee of Gargždai persecutes people just for questioning the children. Is this not blind atheistic fanaticism, which would like to crush religion by force? Where is the law saying that the children's knowledge can only be tested, and one must scrupulously avoid uttering a single word of instruction, because this would be "school"? Is this not absurd?

For nine years in our church the children were questioned in this way, and no one said a word. Now the Executive Committee of the City of Gargždai seems to have promulgated a new law and is blindly carrying it out. This only riles the believing public and sets it against the government. Is this sensible?

The Executive Committee of the City of Gargždai does not see what it really should see: For several years now, we have been trying

to raise the roof of our church — a barracks — so that we might have enough air and light. But it pays no attention to the fact that residents of the city suffer for want of air, especially during the summer.

We ask you most urgently to defend us, our children and the Church from similar terrorist attacks in the future, so that we might avail ourselves of the religious freedom which the Soviet Constitution guarantees.

On June 8, the terrorizing was repeated: When the mothers brought their children before services for the priest to question them and to obtain a card for First Communion, the same three women hurried to church, this time accompanied by three men. Without saying anything, they immediately began photographing the priest, the children and the mothers. The flashbulb kept going off like lightening. Everyone became confused and frightened, especially the children. Among the men was the district chairman, the director of education cadres and a photographer. The mothers began defending their children. While "those in charge" had their way, a disturbance and argument arose and frightened children began to shout, "Get out of here!" Finally they left.

Save us and our children from terrorization, defend our freedom of conscience and that of our children. The Church is separated from the state, and government officials in Gargždai interfere in church and terrorize the faithful. Hurry to help us!

Signed by: 413 Faithful of the Parish of Gargždai

Gargždai. June 8, 1984

Gargždai (Klaipėda Rayon)

On July 30, 1984, while the parish priest of Gargždai was questioning the children about the catechism before church, the investigators came into church for the third time. This time, it was the secretary of the Communist Youth League and two of her assistants. At that time, the priest was questioning a thirty-year-old unmarried woman whether she knew everything necessary for first Confession. The Communist Youth League Secretary insisted that such questioning constituted instruction. The mothers in church retorted, "We teach the children ourselves, and we brought them to be tested." They asked the uninvited guests to leave the church. The latter, having written up a report that the priest was teaching seventy-five children religion, left.

Two months later, on August 14, A. Leita, Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Klaipėda *Rayon*, in response to the June 8, 1984 written protest of the parishioners of Gargždai, summoned the parish organist (whose address had been given as return address), and in the presence of a uniformed militiaman, stated, "If you write libelous statements to the government and collect signatures under them, we will take measures." The organist tried to explain, "If government officials don't act like hooligans in church, no one will write such letters or collect signatures."

Vice Chairman Leita interrupted the organist, saying: "We brought you here, not to have a discussion, but to respond to your petition. You will get no other answer."

To: The LSSR Ministry for Internal Affairs

From: Father Antanas Šeškevičius, son of Kazys
Pastor of Mikoliškiai
Residing at Gargždai, Tiltol — 2

A Petition

It was necessary to replace the decaying cross in the churchyard at Mikoliškiai, so as pastor I requested communal farm worker Griušis to make a new one. He agreed, and made one from material allotted to him for fuel. Although I offered him money, he would not take it, and made it an offering to the church.

When on November 25, 1983, we were taking it to Mikoliškiai, the Klaipėda *Rayon* Traffic Police demanded to see the authorization for the wood. Since I did not have it, they confiscated the cross and took it away to the Klaipėda *Rayon* Militia Headquarters in Gargždai. At Griušis' place, the militia, together with the representative of the financial section, searched for a workshop, but did not find any. Griušis showed them an axe and a plane with which he worked on the cross. Nevertheless, a few days later, they fined him 10 rubles for making the cross. The old man paid the fine.

Since the cross was confiscated by Inspector Grimalis, I explained the origin of the cross to him in writing and asked him to return it. He kept demanding the authorization for the wood. I asked the elderly pensioner, Griušis to provide a written explanation about the lumber. I had nowhere else to turn. He explained in writing that in October, Forest Warden Martinaitis assigned him wood from the Department

of Health Forest Preserve, for fuel. From a piece of seasoned oak, he made the cross.

When I presented this paper to the Chief of the Militia, he demanded a written statement also from Forest Warden Martinaitis. The latter also explained that in October, he had given Griušas, just like other collective farm workers, fuel from the Department of Health Preserve. When I presented that paper to the Chief of the Militia, he was still not satisfied with the school-boy note-passing, and promised to make inquiries of the communal farm administration. And so he did. As far as I know, the forest warden told him the same. Inspector Grimalis told me that he would not return the cross, which was already inventoried.

In connection with this matter, I went to the Klaipėda *Rayon* Executive Committee. They explained to me that the militia had acted illegally, confiscating the cross and fining communal worker Griušas: From his own material, he was allowed to make a cross and give it away. When Inspector Grimalis demanded to see the permit for erecting the cross, an inquiry was made of Religious Affairs Commissioner Petras Anilionis, and he explained that no permit was necessary to replace the rotting cross.

Crosses should be made by the carpenter, the deputy explained to the faithful during his visit to Gargždai. Since carpenters on collective farms do not make crosses, I had to make my own arrangements. After all, that is the only way to obtain a cross, even when it is allowed to be erected.

Hence I urgently request that you use your good offices with the Internal Affairs Division (Militia) of the Klaipėda *Rayon* to return the cross which has been confiscated from the church of Mikoliškiai illegally, and with the financial department to recompense communal farm worker Griušis the unjustly levied fine.

Father Antanas Šeškevičius

Gargždai, February 1, 1984 (In 1970 - 1971. Father Antanas Šeškevičius served one year in prison for teaching children catechism. See *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, No. 1 — Trans. Note)

To: The LSSR Ministry of Internal Affairs

From: Father Antanas Šeškevičius, Pastor of Mikoliškiai
Residing at Gargždai, Tilto 1 - 2

A Petition

I am very grateful for your action regarding the return of the cross seized by the militia. Upon receipt of your letter, Vice Chairman A. Leita of the Klaipėda *Rayon* Executive Committee, together with Chief Ananyev of the Internal Affairs Division informed me that they will not return the cross, but merely reimburse me for the lumber, which has been given to the Communal Division.

"I need the cross, not the money," I answered them.

The Chief of the Communal Division explained that the cross has already been cut up, and that he would reimburse me 40 rubles and 70 kopeks. I asked him at least to return the pieces, saying that we would try to re-assemble them. He told me that to do so, he needed the permission of the militia, but that he could pay me the money immediately. I refused.

The court says that full restitution should be made for damages done, but they just mocked me: Even though they have admitted doing wrong, they do not wish to pay damages. After all, it costs at least 150 rubles to make such a cross.

Moreover, the administrative commission and the financial division fined the retired communal farm worker 10 rubles because from his own material, he made a single cross as a gift to the church. They themselves did wrong: as the militia officials became excited, they accused the little old man of full-time trade. So for every favor done, one must now be fined. Is that not absurd? If a carpenter will not make crosses, then someone has to. Where is the law saying that a special permit is needed to make a cross?

The cross is the Christian banner. Cutting up a cross means insulting Christians, of whom there are more than a billion in the world. What if someone cut up the Soviet flag? All Communists would be very angry, and the word would get around the world. Perhaps this harsh attack will also resound throughout the world, since it was perpetrated during the Year of Redemption, when Christians honor the cross especially. Do such attacks serve Communism well? Lithuania is famous as the Land of Crosses. Will Catholics not be angered by the destruction of crosses? It is, after all, an attack and an insult upon the whole nation, breaking centuries-old traditions.

You would go a long way toward making reparation for this attack by using your influence with militia and the executive committee to make complete amends for the damage done: so that in place of the cross cut up into six pieces, it would be possible to make a new one just like it. Besides, let the administrative committee and the financial section revoke the unjust fine levied on pensioner Griušis, and let them return his 10 rubles. They acted unjustly and unwisely, rushing to cut up that cross, since the whole time I was raising the issue of its return.

If you do not straighten out the matter, I will be forced to appeal to higher tribunals, even to Moscow. I trust that this will not be necessary.

Father A. Šeškevičius

Gargzdai, February 22, 1984

Note: On April 26, 1984, J. Griušis, a resident of Klaipeda *Rayon*, Village of Siupariai, addressed a petition to the Klaipeda *Rayon* Executive Committee, demanding the return of a fine unjustly levied on him and already paid. In his petition, Griušis remarks, "That an injustice has been committed, even the Ministry of Internal Affairs has confirmed, ordering that restitution be made for damage committed . . ."

No one replied to Griušis' petition, nor was the fine refunded.

Klaipeda

In 1984, as signatures were being collected on the petition demanding the return of the Church of the Queen of Peace in Klaipeda (See *Chronicle* No. 63), militia and security agents began in various ways to terrorize those collecting signatures, taking away from them their texts, preventing them by force from gathering signatures and frightening them. The faithful are angered by such acts on the part of officials: ". . . We appeal to our own government, and not anywhere else. Could it be that they have forbidden us to ask the redress of wrongs?"

A reply has recently been received from Moscow, saying that in place of the church which has been confiscated, believers are allowed to enlarge the existing church. The faithful do not agree to such an offer: Expansion of the church is impossible, since it does not have the necessary foundation. During the renovation, believers would have to vacate. Talk is going around that they should be offered the use of

the parish church of Plikiai, 13 km from Klaipėda. Such an offer is arousing unrest among the faithful of Klaipėda: they took away the church erected with the money and labor of the faithful. What can one expect of the new offer? Will we not all be left without a church?

Every evening, the faithful of the church in Klaipėda ask Mary's intercession in the rosary to help them regain their confiscated church.

Žarėnai - Latveliai (Šiaulių Rayon)

During the night of June 22 - 23, 1984, the historical cemetery of the serf-martyrs in the parish of Žarėnai-Latveliai was completely destroyed. People call them Agailiai, Kerbedžiai or Meilaičiai. The first time this cemetery in the middle of the Forest of Agailiai was vandalized and leveled to the ground was on September 8, 1975. Votive crosses used to be erected here, requesting or thanking God for favors. Amid the crosses stood a chapel with a capacity of about one hundred, an altar, confessionals, stations of the cross and pictures on the walls. The chapel was never locked.

Once a year, on Pentecost, services were held there. On the aforesaid date, militia officials guarded the roads, while others destroyed everything: Using bulldozers, they wrecked the chapel and pushed sections of the cement walls into trenches and covered them over, leaving a bare clearing. After this vandalism, people began again to erect crosses. A beautiful statue of Mary was put up, with the inscription, "Loving Mother, we pray to you for mothers, that you would help them bring their children to God, and to keep their families in unity. Good Mother, obtain a happy death for us, pray for dying sinners."

The people also erected a wayside shrine, in the niche of which were fastened pictures of Jesus and Mary. In all, about one hundred crosses were erected, and around the crosses, on iron posts, were placed the stations of the Way of the Cross. This year, on the Feast of the Ascension, there was an especially large number of people gathered here: two priests participated. The Pastor of Kruopiai, Father Romualdas Žulpa and Father Algirdas Pakamanis, Pastor of Žarėnai-Latveliai.

During the second vandalization of the cemetery, the atheists used cranes, demolishing all the crosses, the shrine and the statues. They wrecked everything, piled the debris into a truck, and at dawn, took it 33 km away, not far from Tryškiai (Telšiai *Rayoni*). The iron crosses and everything incombustible, they threw into the swamp in the

Forest of Lilėnai. The wooden crosses, confessional, wooden statues, stations and pieces of the shrine, they piled up, covered with tree branches, and burned.

In an effort to hide their barbaric work, they brought a few truck-loads of sand, and covered over the crosses thrown into the swamp. This year the atheists not only destroyed everything, but also chopped down the trees around the site of the former cemetery, filled in the well (during the second vandalization, the atheists did not spare even the well, which they had left the first time, leveling everything so that no trace would remain of the former cemetery. Along the roads to the cemetery, they erected signs banning traffic, which government officials guarded for a long time, terrorizing everyone who wished to visit the desecrated cemetery. The people, with aching hearts, say, "Our grandparents revered the Cemetery of Meilačiai, and erected crosses here. This did not bother even the cruel czar — the Soviet terrorists have outdone them all!"

After the desecration of the cemetery, mourning services were arranged in the parish church of Žarėnai-Latveliai. The pastor, Father Pakamanis, and the faithful, holding small crosses tied with black ribbons, and singing hymns processed around the church on their knees asking God's forgiveness for all in our nation who cannot tolerate crosses, wrecking and destroying them.

Religious Affairs Commissioner Petras Anilionis warned Father Pakamanis in writing through the Vice Chairman of the Šiauliai *Rayon* Executive Committee, accusing him of inciting the faithful against the atheists. Father Pakamanis would not acknowledge the warning in writing.

Utena

On August 20, 1984, in Utena, they commemorated the tenth anniversary of the death of Father Petras Rauda, who had once been Vice Rector of the Kaunas Seminary, principal of Utena High School and pastor of the parish. Father Rauda died at the age of eighty, having spent eighteen of those years imprisoned in harsh conditions. In his old age, he lost his sight. (Father Rauda was cared for in his last days by Nijolė Sadūnaitė, later imprisoned for involvement with the *Chronicle*, and currently in hiding. — Trans. Note)

At 1:00 PM, in a church packed with people, and with forty priests in attendance, Holy Mass was concelebrated by the Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Vilnius, Bishop Julijonas Stepo-

navičius: the Administrator of the Diocese of Panevėžys, Monsignor Kazimieras Dulksnys and a group of priest-friends of the deceased.

The sermon in church, recalling the glowing memory of Father Rauda, and his optimism in the difficult conditions of occupation, was delivered by his comrade in suffering, Father J. Balčiūnas. At the grave of Father Rauda, Bishop Steponavičius, recalling the difficult but meaningful life of Father Rauda, said, ". . .some in difficult conditions tremble like the leaves of an aspen, others, like reeds in the wind, and still others stand strong and immovable as oaks . . ." Among the latter, the Bishop placed Father Rauda. In his talk, Bishop Steponavičius recalled Father Rauda's zeal, steadfastness and courage.

Ukmergė

On July 2, 1984, Father Pranciškus Bastys, emeritus priest at the parish of Ukmergė, died. Father Bastys came from the Jurbarkas *Rayon*, the parish of Skirsnemunė, where the relatives of the deceased wanted to bury him, alongside his parents. The late Father Bastys was beloved by his parishioners, and most of them wanted to participate in the funeral of their priest. The Funeral Bureau promised to reserve two automobiles from the motor pool. The next day, the money was returned because allegedly the KGB had forbidden the accomodation of believers. The bureau directress was warned not to get involved with the KGB. The believers then hurried to the Ukmergė Office of General Services. Those in charge promised to provide transportation, and wrote out a receipt: but for some reason or other, they requested that the visitors make direct arrangements with the driver.

The next day, the dispatcher tore up the order and retorted. "We don't serve church people!" Why? It seems that on July 4, a group of the faithful had ordered an automobile through the Office of General Services, to take them to Žemaičių Kalvarija. (A popular religious shrine — Trans. Note) The militia guarding the roads had stopped the people from Ukmergė, and had ordered the driver and the passengers to go back. When the automobile doors were opened, the pilgrims scattered; and the driver, after being required to fill out a form of several pages, had disobeyed the orders of the militia officers, deciding to wait for the people and so further angering the militia and KGB.

Of course, word of this incident reached the Ukmergė Militia

Department, and the Director of General Services, so the automobiles for the funeral of Father Bastys were cancelled. The faithful then applied to the Ukmergė Reinforced Concrete Factory. They were told. "There are automobiles, but we are afraid of the security organs!" The people then tried their luck with the Paliepė Reconditioning Factory. They replied. "Gladly if it weren't a priest's funeral!"

The parishioners accompanied the remains of Father Bastys in their own automobiles. During the funeral services in church, one woman fainted. The people summoned an ambulance, but the nurse on duty sarcastically said, "The ambulance does make church calls!"

Kybartai (Vilkaviškis Rayon)

On April 29, 1984, in the church of Kybartai, the third anniversary of the death of Father Virgilijus Jaugelis was being commemorated. This date has already become traditional. At Mass, not only is Father Jaugelis, of venerable memory, prayed for and commemorated, but also all priest-martyrs who have sacrificed their lives for God and country. Even though April 29 was proclaimed a work day, nevertheless, the believing youth and adults who gathered from the four corners of Lithuania actively participated in the solemn services. Meaningful sermons were preached by Father Ričardas Rebšys and Father Jonas Boruta, urging the faithful in this difficult period for the



Visitors to the tomb of Father Virgilijus Jaugelis in Kybartai, Lithuania.

church in the history of our country not to get confused and especially to develop in virtue. After Mass, the priests and all the faithful gathered to pray at the grave of Father Virgilijus Jaugelis. After they had prayed for the deceased and sung the *Angelus*, the hymn, *Marija, Marija*, so well-beloved by the faithful, rose to the skies.

Kybartai

On May 7, 1984, in the church of Kybartai, prayers were recited for Father Sigitas Tamkevičius, the Pastor of Kybartai, arrested a year earlier. Holy Mass was concelebrated by eleven priests. Sermons were preached by the pastor of the parish of Linkmenai. Father Jonas Lauriūnas, and the pastor of Pociūnėlė, Father Antanas Jokubauskas. In the sermons, the meaning of the sacrifice and sufferings of Father Tamkevičius was recalled. Mass was followed by the Way of the Cross led by Father Jonas Kauneckas.

Ryliškės (Alytus Rayon)

In 1953, the church in Ryliškės burned down. The government would not allow it to be rebuilt.

On June 17, 1984, as Father Petras Krikščiukaitis was on his way to the Cemetery of Reliškės to offer Mass, he was hailed in the Village of Makniūnai by a militiaman who had been drinking. Next to him were two Volgas, in which KGB agents sat. Father Krikščiukaitis did not stop. When he arrived at the cemetery, the same militiaman caught up to him, and KGB agents demanded his papers, but the priest refused. The officials wanted to remove the priest's license plates, but people surrounded the car and would not allow them to do so. On succeeding Sundays, militiamen again waited for the priest to arrive: but when he did not come, they left.

On July 1, Vice Chairman Makštutis of the Alytus *Rayon* Executive Committee himself rode about not far from the Ryliškės village cemetery, where Holy Mass used to be offered, and waited for the priest. That day, the priest reached the cemetery somewhat later.

Kaišiadorys

On June 28, 1984, during services in the church at Kaišiadorys, in which plants and families with young children were blessed, unknown malefactors desecrated the crucifix hanging over a religious display, by taking it down from the wall and throwing it into a scrub bucket.

Čiobiškis (Širvintai Rayon)

During the night of July 14 - 15, 1984, the church in Čiobiškis was robbed. The thieves broke open the church and sacristy doors with a drill. They took the tabernacle crucifix from the high altar, and all the vessels and a paten from the sacristy safe. They did not touch the Blessed Sacrament, even though before the devotions, the Blessed Sacrament was in a monstrance unsecured. In the opinion of many, this was not a random burglary; the thieves were determined that after their "foray", there should be no services of reparation which only serve to strengthen the people's bonds with the Church. By such burglaries, the priests whom the government terms "extremists" are being urged to allow an inventory to be taken of church property ("leased by the government to believers").

Šakiai

On February 13, 1984, the pastor of Šakiai, the Rev. Dean Juozas Žemaitis, transported from Šiluva to Šakiai a small statue of Mary presented to the persecuted faithful of Lithuania by the Catholics of Ireland, which he himself had brought back from Ireland. (See *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, No. 57 — Trans. Note) Temporarily, he placed it in his parish church, where everyone prayed fervently, especially the youth. The pastor explained the history of the statuette of Mary to the people.

On February 23, Father Žemaitis took the statuette of Mary to Vilnius, to Father Lidys, so that the latter might see to its repair. (Father Stasys Lidys, administrator of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Vilnius, is the only one licensed to make religious goods in Lithuania. — Trans. Note) Commissioner for Religious Affairs Petras Anilionis became interested in the chain of events. That very day, he scolded the pastor of Šiluva, Father Vaclovas Grauslys, by phone, for letting the statue be brought from the church at Šiluva. In a very angry voice, Anilionis spoke also to Bishop Liudvikas Povilonis, and warned Father Lidys not to try to reproduce the statuette of Mary. On March 10, the restored statuette of Mary was brought to Šakiai, and on the 13, to Šiluva.

On February 1, 1984, the pastor of the parish of Šakiai, Dean Juozas Žemaitis, and the Associate Pastor, Father Vytautas Insoda, were summoned to the Šakiai Rayon Executive Committee. Only the pastor, Father Žemaitis, went. Executive Committee Vice Chairwoman Kasperavičienė, arguing that the church had been used for other than worship, reprimanded the pastor, Father Žemaitis, for



Father Stasys Lidys celebrating Mass at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Vilnius.

showing a videotape of the life of Christ after services in church. The pastor explained that in place of Vespers in church that day, the religious film had been shown to the faithful; therefore, neither he nor his associate had committed any offense. Vice Chairwoman Kasperavičienė wanted to know the source of the film, and warned against similar incidents in the future. Mrs. Kasperavičienė scolded the pastor for the parish children's and youth choir, altar servers and adorers of the Blessed Sacrament. She claimed that all this was forbidden. Father Žemaitis explained that there is no longer any such word as "forbidden", because when they were briefing him to go to Germany and England, they told him that if anyone abroad asked about religion, the situation of believers in the Soviet and the scope of their activities (for example, the teaching of religion to children, young people serving at the altar, or in adoration groups, or singing in the church choir), he was not to use the word "cannot". When these very questions were raised abroad, and he replied that in the Soviet

Union children serve Mass and sing in the choir, the heads of delegations hearing it said, "Well spoken!". To Father Žemaitis' statement, Vice Chairwoman Kasparavičienė had no reply, but only repeated that the Associate Pastor, Vytautas Insoda, should come to the Executive Committee offices.

Telšiai

May 5 -15, 1984, the KGB interrogated the following women who worked around the church or went there often: Mrs. Mockuvienė, Miss Marija Melynauskaitė, Miss Stasė Činskytė and others. The purpose of the interrogation was to prevent the celebration of the Saint John's Eve, or *Joninės* with the traditional bonfires, songs and refreshments. The women, surprised, asked, "Why are they forbidding it, if the *rayon* newspaper encourages this tradition? Last year, they carried a long article, urging everyone to light Saint John's fires and to revive other traditions in connection with Saint John's Eve.

On June 18, 1984, the Commissioner for Religious Affairs, Petras Anilionis, telephoned Bishop Antanas Vaičius and Liudvikas Povilonis, warning them: "Young people are preparing to celebrate *Jonines* near Telšiai and Kaunas. Warn the priests not to participate. The KGB will take care of the youth."

On June 20, 1984, the pastor of Eigirdžiai, Father Ferdinandas Žilys, was summoned to the Telšiai KGB Subdivision, and accused of planning a celebration of Saint John's Eve in his parish. The priest was told that on Saint John's Eve, there must not be any services in the church he ministers to.

On June 22, Bronius Savickis, the sexton of the church in Viešvėnai, was interrogated by the Telšiai KGB. "What kind of services are going to take place in the church in Viešvėnai June 23?" the chekists inquired. "At eleven o'clock, we'll have an anniversary Mass, and during the evenings in June, the faithful always gather and pray privately. Is this forbidden?" the sexton replied. The KGB wanted to know whether Father Jonas Kauneckas was coming to the services, whether he visited Viešvėnai frequently and why the church was hung with wreaths. The sexton explained that the prior Sunday, there was a priest's first Mass in church, and that was why it was decorated.

On June 23, 1984, local residents and all those travelling to Telšiai were surprised to see the roads full of traffic police. Every five minutes, a police car went by. In the bus station at Telšiai, militia-

men were on duty, the hills of the surrounding area were surrounded by militia officers, and at every country road were patrols of militia and traffic police.

Two young men, Faustas Meiženis and Gintautas Petryla, were detained at the hill in the Village of Šakaliai. The militia ordered them to depart immediately; otherwise, things could end badly. In the woods near Viešvėnai, militiamen dispersed children weaving wreaths, even from the bushes. That day, the guard at Panų Kalnas was reinforced, and in the Reiniai Woods, a polygon of soldiers was deployed.

In the evening, there were more KGB agents in church than faithful. The chekists asked women going to church whether Father Kauneckas visited the parish often. The KGB also had the evening services in the Cathedral of Telšiai under surveillance, and the introductory remarks by Canon Jonas Beinorius. As the procession was passing, one usher approached them and said, "Please kneel. We stand during the National Anthem."

"Leave us alone!" the KGB agent angrily retorted.

Viešvėnai resident Kalakauskas was celebrating a baptism. When the guests had grown mellow, they lit the Saint John's Eve bonfire; and immediately, the militia showed up. The militia stood watch at the stations all night. Women on their way to milk cows at 5:00 AM, taking pity, spoke to them. The Telšiai Traffic Police and militia were assisted by officers from Kelmė, Šiauliai and Vilnius. And still the hills around Telšiai and Viešvėnai glowed with bonfires.

Kaunas

Kaunas ethnographers were preparing to celebrate Saint John's Eve very elaborately. Over four hundred people actively involved in the program were supposed to participate. The national circulation magazine, *Jaunimo gretos (The Ranks of Youth)* devoted two whole pages to a report on the lyric quality of this holiday. On the evening of June 22, national television reminded viewers of the beautiful traditions connected with Saint John's Eve, saying that Lithuanians could be proud of them. However, the propaganda was a far cry from the reality: The celebration of Saint John's Eve near Kaunas was suppressed. On Rambynas Hill, the traditional celebration of Saint John's Eve did not take place either: During the day, a Soviet youth day was arranged, and in the evening, the participants had to disperse without the traditional Saint John's Eve bonfires.

Leipalingis (Lazdijai Rayon)

To: The Editors of the Central Asia Military District Daily,
Kovos Vėliava (Battle Flag)

From: Robertas Grigas, son of Antanas
Lithuania, Lazdijai Rayon,
Liepalingis, Naujosios 13

A Statement

From 1982 - 1984, I paid my "dues": Two years of my life in a labor battalion at the Badam Base, Kazakh. Being a Catholic, and unable to reconcile fidelity to my conscience and fidelity to the atheistic state, I refused to take the military oath. I thank God that in spite of physical and moral terrorization, I stuck to this principle until the end, and this has been recorded on my military identification. However, my "educators" would not give up, and determined at least to calumniate me.

In the fifty-third issue of your daily this year, an article appeared entitled, "In a Unified Family", in which a cynical lie is propagated. It says there that being a believer up to the time I was called up, I supported jingoism and ideas dreamt up by the clergy regarding the restriction of Constitutional rights, but that in the army, I "regained my sight".

This is a downright lie. I was a Catholic and a Lithuanian until I was called up. I remained so during the two years of my compulsory service, and I still am now that I have returned to my homeland, Lithuania. The facts which I used to come up against constantly in the army strengthened my views greatly. Here are just a few such examples from personal experience:

The USSR has signed the Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19 of which states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression . . ." As a matter of fact, I exercised this right sleeping on a bare frame in the military stockade at Chimkent, and on an asphalt floor at Kzyl-Orda, just because, on the grounds of my religious and national beliefs, I refused to swear allegiance to the Communist Party. Disregarding Article 52 of the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of conscience, staff members of the political section threatened me at the end of my tour of duty with five years in prison if I did not change my attitude towards the oath. Both the Constitution and the Helsinki Final Act demand respect for the

dignity of every person, and forbid ridiculing beliefs. With Communist officers using unprintable words, ridiculing religion and Lithuanian ethnicity. I decided that the demands of humanitarianism here are still *terra incognita* (unknown territory). And when they used to order those unable to fulfill their work quota to be exercised wearing gasmasks — I quote! — "Until they lose consciousness"— then I understood how true were the words: "When God is rejected, there is nothing left of the human being."

With deep gratitude I recall all the decent people who helped me to know the Truth of Christ. I am proud of my nation's heroes, Fathers Sigitas Tamkevičius and Alfonsas Svarinskas, presently suffering in the camps of Perm, just because they taught the faithful of Lithuania to live conscientiously. I thank Divine Providence for letting me be a contemporary of these great people.

In your article, published in the newspaper, there is a blatant lie claiming that I praised to the soldiers the advances in Lithuania under the Soviet government, that in the presence of "warmongers", I explained the meaning of friendship with the Russian nation. I never did pay homage to these so-called advantages. What do they mean in comparison with the damages in the area of morality, culture and human rights? I did not speak of any kind of friendship with our neighbor to the East, since I have never noticed it, neither in history, nor now. On the contrary, in my statements about the role of the "great Russian nation" in the history of Lithuania, I used to emphasize the demoralizing side of russification. I used to accent the meaning of spiritual resistance such as that of the book smugglers in the struggle for freedom for the Lithuanians. In two years spent in Kazakh, I never used the expressions which the aforesaid article attributes to me. If you have any respect for your own world view, you are bound to retract the libel.

RAIDS AND INVESTIGATIONS

Šlavantai (Lazdijai Rayon)

On July 5, 1984, the home of Father Juozas Zdebskis, pastor of Šlavantai, was raided. In the record, the reason for the raid was given: "To find and seize stolen articles purchased from Citizen Kolka." The search was carried out while Father Zdebskis was out. Without waiting for the priest to return, the raiders broke down the garage door and began their search. The raid was carried out by Vil-



Father Juozas Zdebskis

nius KGB, under cover of local militia and security police. The official search which was carried out by six persons was directed by the District Inspector Chief of Militia Jarmala. Official witnesses of the search were Martynas Petrauskas, son of Juozas, a resident of the Village of Krosna, and Mrs. Janina Blaževičienė, daughter of Jurgis, residing at Lenino 3-3, in Lazdijai.

They seized: Documents of the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights (Nos. 5, 12, 13, 14, etc.); written communications: to Patriarch Dimitri (ten pages); to the World Council of the Orthodox Church, October 14, 1976 (four pages); to the Congress of the USA, October 14, 1976 (six pages); a petition by priests of the Archdiocese of Kaunas (three pages); a petition to Petras Griškevičius (ten pages); information concerning the Catholic Committee for the

Defense of Believers' Rights (four pages); "Is Catholicism the Religion of Tomorrow?" (thirty pages from *Tiesos kelias*); the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; a letter from Father Alfonsas Svarinskas; the article "Lietuvių tautos dorovinės kultūros problemos" (Problems of Lithuanian National Moral Culture", four pages); Vatican Radio broadcast of March 14 and 15, 1979 (five pages); a bulletin of the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference to the clergy (1984); a typewriter with a Russian keyboard; an Erika typewriter with a Lithuanian keyboard; two metal safes marked with the number 100; a hunting rifle; electrical apparatus with a power cord, etc. During the raid, most attention was paid to the electronics equipment. Included in the list of articles seized was a miniature electrical saw used for woodwork. The search lasted about three hours.

Skaudivilė (Tauragė Rayon)

On December 29, 1983, Father Jonas Kauneckas, the pastor of Skaudivilė, was summoned to Vilnius to see Assistant Prosecutor Bakučionis of the LSSR. Prosecutor Bakučionis warned Father Kauneckas that if he participated in activities of the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights, he would be arrested just like Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius. Moreover, Prosecutor Bakučionis reminded him that the *Chronicle* often writes about Father Kauneckas, and if this happened in the future, he would be brought to trial as a collaborator in the *Chronicle*.

The other members of the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights were similarly warned. Father Kazimieras Žilyš was summoned for the warning all the way from Byelorussia where he had been working recently. Also warned was Father Algimantas Keina, even though he has officially resigned from the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights.

Viduklė (Raseiniai Rayon)

On August 30, 1984, Father Jonas Tamonis, Pastor of Viduklė, was visited at his rectory by Raseiniai KGB Chief Gardauskas and a captain from the Vilnius KGB. The chekists demanded that Father Tamonis discharge Father Svarinskas' former housekeeper, Miss Monika Gavėnaitė, from her duties as church laundress for the parish of Viduklė, and that Father Kęstutis Brilius cease visiting Viduklė. It was suggested that Father Brilius enroll in the seminary at Kaunas, even though he finished the extension seminary.



Mrs. Elena Terleckienė, on a visit to her husband, Antanas Terleckas, in Magadan.

Vilnius

On June 19, 1984, at Vilnius KGB headquarters, the following residents of Vilnius were interrogated: Elena Terleckienė, Zita Vanagaitė, Vytautas Bogušis, Jonas Volungevičius and Albertas Žilinskas. Chekist Česnavičius and others accused those under interrogation of signing libelous statements, protests against the arrest and conviction of Fathers Svarinskas and Tamkevičius, passing anti-Soviet material to the underground press and abroad; of meeting foreigners and downgrading the authority of the Soviet Union in their conversation with them. All of those under interrogation were told to sign the warnings, but not one of them did.

The chekists kept those under interrogation for a whole day; Mrs. Terleckienė for more than six hours, and Miss Zita Vanagaitė for over eight hours. The chekists suggested to Žilinskas that he emigrate. When Žilinskas was asked whether he had signed the protest regarding the arrested priests, he asked to be shown the text of the statement, and after he had read it, he said that there was nothing anti-Soviet in the statement and he would not discuss it with the KGB.

OUR PRISONERS

Father Alfonsas Svarinskas writes:

I greet you warmly. I thank you cordially, and through you, all my dear parishioners, friends and acquaintances. I wish you God's blessing, peace of heart, and spiritual joy on the occasion of our nation's great jubilee. May the Lord keep you all! You are my pride and joy in Christ!

I wrote you a letter last Sunday. I will write again today, kiss the letter, make the Sign of the Cross over it and send it. May it fly to our beloved, unforgettable homeland, the Land of Amber... I thank everyone sincerely for their letters. It is difficult for you to imagine how much joy and hope these snippets of information bring. . . . My letters addressed to you in April have come back bearing a notation from the post office dated May 25; "Returned Upon Expiration of Holding Time". Inquire at the post office why that happened. . . since otherwise, we all suffer: You don't receive the letter, and I waste my quota. After all, they only allow me two letters a month! Of course, I was unable to write anything much: I wanted to wish you a good retreat, to thank-you-for your beautiful hymn-singing and to wish you the blessings of the Risen Christ. . .

How quickly time flies! June 11 will mark two years since I am here. In 1979 . . . I celebrated my Silver Jubilee, and this year, October 3, will mark 30 years! Only it is too bad that I have been uprooted from my homeland, the Church and my parish, without Confession, Communion, or Holy Mass! With the faith of the righteous Job, I repeat daily, "May Your holy will be done! Amen!" . . . I have little free time, I work nine hours. After that come all sorts of personal chores. The rest of the time I read and study languages. I have obtained a French-Russian dictionary, and some magazines. I am brushing-up on Italian, and learning Spanish. I may need it! . . . I am

well, and alert. I am doing His will, so there is no pessimism or sadness of heart. If God bestows the martyr's crown, I will accept it eagerly . . .

June 20, 1984

Vilnius

July 9 - 22, 1984, Gintautas Iešmantas found himself in the hands of the Vilnius KGB. Also interrogated were his wife and son. One gets the impression that they want to label him a psychiatric case, and thus break his spirit. This is a whole chain of psychological terror, the culmination of which took place December 14 - 31, 1982. (sic) At that time, the prisoners, as usual, marked Political Prisoners' Day, by calling a hunger strike the whole day. Iešmantas proclaimed his own personal hunger strike, protesting the fact that he is not allowed to write, and that they retained his petition addressed to the Prosecutor General of the USSR, in which he demanded a review of his case, reasoning that he has been unjustly sentenced. The administration let him go hungry for ten days, then force-fed him and, weakened as he was, ordered him to remove snow from the roof, in a temperature of 50 degrees below zero Centegrade.

For participation in the hunger strike on Political Prisoners' Day, and for demanding overtime pay, Povilas Pečeliūnas, was placed in solitary confinement, where he spent ten days and nights. The weather was especially cold, the drafts were fierce, and they gave him nothing to eat. . . He spent Christmas and New Year's Day in solitary confinement, and from there they took him directly off into exile. He remained in transit for a month and a half.

Prior to his solitary confinement, Pečeliūnas was in the infirmary, suffering from a serious inflammation of the spinal nerves. On orders from Junior Lieutenant Volkov, Doctor Pomariov discharged Pečeliūnas as recovered and capable of the journey into exile. Now, in exile, Povilas Pečeliūnas' health is in great jeopardy: His oxygen utilization has been decreased by 35%.

Magadan

Petitions are coming in from abroad to various agencies in Magadan, signed by members of Congress and other prominent persons, demanding that the conditions of Antanas Terleckas' exile be eased. (See *Chronicle* No. 41 — Trans. Note) Recently, Terleckas obtained a separate little dormitory room, and is working as a metal-

smith. His morale, in spite of poor health, is good; his attitude is positive. KGB agents from Magadan, seeing religious pictures hanging on his wall, asked him whether he is a believer. "I believe," replied Terleckas, "if I did not believe, life would be meaningless." The chekists acted politely, and did not insult or ridicule him.

Terleckas' address in exile is:
686420 Magadanskaja obi.
Omsukcanskij r-on
p. Industrialnij do vostriebovnija
Terleckas, Antanas, Prano

Mordovia

According to information available, Docent Vytautas Skuodis, (United States citizen convicted in 1980 of "anti-Soviet activities". See *Chronicle* No. 46 — Trans. Note) interned in the prison camp of Mordovia, appealed to the Soviet government, informing them that in protest against the unequal status of the Church and against the imprisonment of priests, he is going to fast one day a week.

Šiauliai

At the end of August, 1984, Mečislovas Jurevičius, living at Šiauliai, Spindulio 6-10, was visited by an agent of the *rayon* militia. In response to the false accusation that Jurevičius is not working, the former prisoner explained that there must be a misunderstanding, since he works with the administration of the LSSR Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Administration. The inspector produced forms showing that Citizen Jurevičius is not working anywhere, and ordered him to write an explanation. Jurevičius refused to write one, and suggested that the inspector first telephone his place of employment, to find out exactly whether he is working or not. To the inspector's question what he was sentenced for, Jurevičius replied that it was because he loved God and country.

IN THE SOVIET SCHOOL

Kiaukliai (Širvintai Rayon)

On January 17 and April 19, 1984, the Principal of Kiaukliai Primary School, Mrs. J. Grigaitienė, Žibaliai District Chairman Karaliūnas, and several KGB agents who had come in, interrogated

pupils: Elvira Polkaitė, her brother Juozas Polka, Rūta and Julita Gudonis and Rūta Markauskaitė. The pupils were pressured to write statements explaining why they visited the rectory, what kind of films the pastor, Father Rokas Puzonas, showed them, who visits the pastor, from where, what the pastor gives them for coming to church and serving Mass, whether they go to church spontaneously or under duress from their parents, etc. When they refused to write the statements, the students were threatened that they would be taken to the Čiobiškis Juvenile Colony. The frightened children returned to their homes, teary-eyed and badly shaken. The mother of the terrorized children, Mrs. Ona Polkienė, went to Vice Chairman Tvirbotas of the Širvintai *Rayon* Executive Committee, to find out on what grounds her children and other religiously believing children are being threatened in the Kiaukliai Primary School. Tvirbotas said that no one has the right to terrorize children just because they go to church.

Kaišiadorys

In May, 1984, as the faithful were congregating for evening devotions, school-age adolescents kept running in and out, checking to see who of the school-children went to May devotions. At one point, one of them photographed girls who were gathering in church for adoration. Sometimes later, Teacher Miss Šimkūnytė, summoning some of the girls, showed them the pictures which had been taken and asked. "Is this you?"

Raguva (Panevėžys Rayon)

At the beginning of September, 1984, Principal Vytautas Narečionis of the Raguva Middle School ordered teachers to draw lists of pupils who had made their First Communion during the summer of 1984, and submit them to him.

THE CHURCH IN THE SOVIET REPUBLICS

In Ukraine, persecutions of Catholic-Uniates are growing in number and intensity. The apartments of believers are being raided, children and adults are being terrorized, and churches are being closed.

Region of Lvov

On September 29, 1982, KGB agents took care of a twenty-eight year old girl, Marija Schwed. At about 9:00 P.M. after Mass, she was

preparing to leave Lvov to visit her mother. On the way to the railroad station on Turgenev Street, Miss Schwed was set upon by KGB wearing the insignia of auxiliary police, pulled into the gateway of Cumber 10, and beaten. People who gathered to the spot summoned an ambulance which took the injured woman to City Hospital 8 on Zhelonaya Street, and there people ridiculed Marija: "The priest offered you to God." Marija Schwed died without regaining consciousness. Witnesses were warned not to tell the truth.

Skole

Before November 7, in the Skole *Rayon* of the Lvov region Ukrainian churches were closed in the Villages of Bubneshch and Grebenka.

From the village church of Medzhibozh, the government confiscated antique artistic church articles which were made back in the Fourteenth Century during the reign of King Danil.

In the *Rayon* of Nesterov, the government ordered the church in the Village of Zhabe closed. The people there went on strike in protest. The police were summoned, and the Nesterov *Rayon* KGB came. Leading the clash was the Commissioner for Religious Affairs who had come from Lvov. Six persons were arrested.

Lithuanian, Do not forget!

Father Alfonsas Svarinskas
Father Sigitas Tamkevičius
Docent Vytautas Skuodis
Jadvyga Bieliauskienė
Sergei Kovalev
Gintautas Iešmantas
Povilas Pečeliūnas
Viktoras Petkus
Antanas Terleckas
Julius Sasnauskas
Balys Gajauskas

and others are wearing the chains of imprisonment so that you might live and believe in freedom!

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 SEND YOUR TAX-EXEMPT DONATION, OR WRITE TO:

Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, Inc.
 351 Highland Boulevard
 Brooklyn, NY 11207

**A PRAYER BY
FR. SIGITAS TAMKEVICIUS
Prisoner of Conscience for Christ**

Pastor of Kybartai, Lithuania; Charter member of the Catholic Committee for Defense of Believers' Rights, sentenced 12/2/83 to 10 yrs. by the USSR for religious activities.

Lord, let me offer You my heart and my whole life

for those, for whom your beloved Son offered himself...

How will it turn out, or whether we shall hold out should be the least of our concerns.

We shall truly hold out if we lean on Christ.

Capitulation will be possible only

If we become confused and depend on ourselves.

"Whoever loses their life for my sake

Will find it." How special are these words!

By renunciation we do not lose anything.

A hostile world awaits us. Let us not fear it.

God is with us. God is not asleep in the

vessel of our life, as it seemed to the apostles.

It was not necessary to arouse Christ.

Let us be very brave and God will bring us through all storms.

**LITHUANIAN CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS AID
351 Highland Blvd., Brooklyn NY 11207-9195**