

the respect of their surroundings. The time has come for you to say to your educators and professors: Teach us the truth and do not destroy us. Do not rob us of our faith. Do not destroy our Christian and moral way of life by a foolish laicism understood by nobody and for which so much money is spent. Do not deprive us of our faith in the living God. For you will make us into slaves of idols – like once in ancient Israel and like Judas, who went out into the night when he left the Last Supper to betray the Lord.

The time has come for you, young people in the universities and students' hostels, to dare to demand: Respect us! Respect each other! We are people. Do not snatch away our faith for you cannot give us anything more valuable.

The time has come for you to say even to your parents: If you cannot raise us as Christians either because you do not understand it or because you have no time, do not at least out of mere opportunism undermine our courage to confess the faith. Do not make us sell our inheritance, the dignity that God has given us, for a mess of pottage.

The greatest sin is not unbelief, which may be a personal accident, a malformation or even human ignorance, but organized anti-faith, the setting up of atheistic programmes, the support of the atheistic system with administrative and public means. These means have not been entrusted to the State to destroy the faith in God but to maintain law and order: not for destruction but for construction.

The time has come to say courageously to us, priests and bishops: We do not like your indulgence in regard to laxity of morals. We do not accept the fact that you have not the courage to require anything of us. If you discover faults in us, point them out to us – because that is what you are for.

We do not want pastors who do not dare to appeal to our generosity.

## The Life of Roman Catholics in Lithuania

*The Roman Catholic Church in Lithuania continues to live despite the many difficulties placed in its way. RCL has already published extracts from various issues of the Lithuanian Catholic Chronicle – hereafter LCC – (see RCL Vol 1, Nos. 4-5, pp. 47-54 and Vol. 2, Nos. 4-5, pp. 39-42) and now gives extracts from LCC Nos. 12, 14, 15 and 16. (The page numbers given below refer to the Russian version in typescript available from the CSRC.)*

*Children who are brought up as believers face problems at school, priests who give children religious instruction are fined and yet the number of children who receive First Communion remains extremely high.*

### I

On the 27 May, 1974 Leonas Sileikis, a seventh grade pupil at Siauliai Secondary School No. 5, was summoned for an interview with the head teacher, at which his religious beliefs were to be discussed. The boy's father came to the interview, although he was not invited. The following teachers were present: Mrs. Misiuniene, the deputy headmistress Mrs. Jakimciene and five others.

L. Sileikis was first asked whether he had read the atheist books which the school had asked him to read. The schoolboy answered that he had read all six.

"What do you think of the books you read?"

"They are untrue and slanderous," the schoolboy replied.

After a series of attacks on religion, the teacher Misiuniene twice asked Leonas: "Do you now renounce your beliefs?"

"I have been a believer up till now and I shall always remain a believer."

After the schoolboy left the study, the teacher Misiuniene began to tell Leonas's father the harm religion could do to children.

"It's not true, that religion is harmful", Sileikis replied. "Nowadays religion is trampled underfoot; that's why children don't respect their teachers, smoke, swear, drink, even sleep around – there you see the results of atheism."

"Nowadays only a minority go to church, so you should follow the majority," Mrs. Jakimciene explained.

"Only a corpse is carried away by the tide, a living man swims against the current."

"You will bar your children from further education because of your religion," said Mrs. Misiuniene, trying to persuade him.

"It is not I who bar them from further education, but you, the atheists. What's the use of science, after all, if you have to renounce the most precious thing in life – faith. But you, respected teachers, should be punished according to Soviet laws for persecuting children because of their religious beliefs."

"We will make your son an atheist in spite of you," said Mrs. Misiuniene.

"I have now been to a number of these meetings with you, and I am now certain of one thing – that you want to make him a hypocrite. You say 'believe as much as you like, but renounce God in our presence'."

So it remains uncertain whether the atheists intend to leave the Sileikis family in peace from now on. (*LCC*, No. 12, p. 13)

## II

On the 29/30 June 1974, Bishop P. Kriksiunas was scheduled to preside at the Sacrament of Confirmation in Obeliai church. For miles around, therefore, children were preparing for this festival.

On 5 June 1974, mothers and children gathered in Kriaunos church for examination in preparation for this Sacrament. 15 minutes later, a Commission broke into the church, consisting of Kastanauskas, Party Secretary of the State Farm, Mrs. Kralikiene, Chairwoman of the Village Soviet, Tautkevicus, headmaster of Kriaunos Secondary School, and Vabelis, agronomist at the State Farm. At that moment, the parish priest, Petras Adomonis, was explaining to the children and their mothers what they should know before being confirmed. The Commission informed the priest that he had broken the law and made out a legal case against him.

On 12 July 1974, P. Adomonis, parish priest of Kriaunos, was summoned to the Executive Committee of the Rokiskis District Soviet. The Administrative Commission unanimously declared the priest guilty and fined him 50 roubles. Before letting him leave, they remarked that if the offence was repeated, he would be sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

Fr. P. Adomonis reminded them that private religious instruction was not contrary to Lenin's Decree of 23 January 1918, the ninth paragraph of which

stated: "the school is separated from the Church. Religious education of children in State, social and private schools, which teach general subjects, is forbidden. Citizens may learn and teach religion privately." No general subjects have ever been taught in the Church, only religion. Religious knowledge is checked there, and where such knowledge is lacking, it is further explained.

Jegelis, the Chairman of the Commission, stated that the situation had been such formerly, but that now it was only permitted to examine each child separately, completely isolated from other children. Even the parents could not be present at the examination. Even if the pupil answered wrongly, it was not permitted to correct him. That would be regarded as religious education.

Atheist fanaticism is capable of calling one child a "school", never mind the 25 children assembled in Kriaunos church. The Administrative Commission wrote that "the priest was explaining the catechism to 25 children and thus he was teaching children in preparation for First Communion."

The priest's punishment disturbed not only the believers, but even people not involved with the Church. In spite of atheist attempts to prevent young parishioners taking First Communion, 163 Kriaunos parish children did so.

On 29/30 June, 2,860 children and young people took First Communion. (LCC No. 12, p. 15)

### III

#### *"The Land of Mary Lives"*

(The "land of Mary" was the name given to Lithuania by Pope Pius XII.)

In 1974, thousands of Lithuanian children took First Communion. Some facts are given below which show that religion in Lithuania is alive in spite of atheist efforts.

In Dotnuva, 1,526 children took First Communion; in Tituvenai - 2,456; in Prienai - 2,702; in Silale - 5,100; in Alante - 2,000; in Griskabudis - 1,200; in Obiliai - 2,860. (LCC No. 12, p. 21)

### IV

In that part of Lithuania, which was included in North West Belorussia, in the regions of Apsas, Vidziai and Breslau - there are functioning churches only in Deleka and Breslau. The local authorities constantly forbid children to be taken to church. Children who go to church are terrorized at school, and their parents at work.

In 1974, the authorities allowed the parish priest of Deleka, who had come back from Poland, to organize a First Communion. On a Sunday in June, thousands of parents and children gathered at the church in Deleka. The local authorities, seeing the crowds, sent their chairman to get the priest and bring him to the local Soviet building. Three hours went by but the priest did not return. Then the crowd moved to the local Soviet building. After a stormy discussion with the authorities, the priest was released. (LCC No. 14, p. 12)

*Teachers and youth leaders are expected to uphold official atheist teaching and not attend church or allow the young to be influenced by religious beliefs. Even the sound of church bells, in one instance, was considered dangerous.*

**Kaunas:**

On 1 September 1974, Andrius Druckus, a teacher at Jablonskio Secondary School in Kaunas, was dismissed from his job. What was this teacher guilty of – a teacher who had received commendations from the Ministry of Education, and had published educational works at Lithuanian and All-Union Symposiums? Teacher Druckus's chief crime was that he accepted a "Rupintojelis" statue (a statue of the suffering Christ, with His head supported on His arms) into the school ethnographic museum, after it had been found, on the verge of rotting away, by a pupil . . . (LCC No. 14, p. 18)

**Kapsukas:**

In 1973, the teacher Juze Jakelaitiene received a severe warning from the Party Board in Kaunas (Mariampole) because her son had received First Communion while staying with his grandmother in the country. (p. 21)

**Kapiniskiai:**

Miss Radzeviciute, a teacher in Kapiniskiai village school (Varene district), went to the church in Druskininkai at Christmas. Because of this, she had to give an explanation in writing to the authorities. (p. 21)

**Kartena:**

In September (1974/5 school year) the youth-leader in charge of the Pioneers at Kartena Secondary School told the Pioneers of the 7th class: "Stand up, anyone who believes in God and goes to church!"

The whole class stood up, apart from three pupils. In 1974, about 3,000 children took First Communion in Kartena. (p. 22)

**Plateliai:**

In the autumn of 1974, Ruzgus, a 2nd-grade pupil at Plateliai Secondary School, was invited to a relative's wedding; the marriage ceremony was to take place in Plateliai church. Stripinys, the headmaster of Plateliai Secondary School, warned Ruzgus before the wedding not to go into the church.

After the wedding, headmaster Stripinys scolded Ruzgus for going to church. According to the headmaster, Ruzgus was of age and could have refused to obey his mother. The headmaster threatened that Ruzgus could be expelled from school for going to church. His mother was summoned to the school to explain her son's action. For going to church, Ruzgus had his mark for behaviour lowered, but the wall-newspaper in the collective farm office stated that Ruzgus had a bad behaviour mark for breaking the school rules. (LCC No. 15, p. 9)

**Darbenai:**

In 1972 headmaster Mazonis of Darbenai Secondary School, expelled a 10th-grade pupil, Komsomol member Adele Silaite, merely because she had gone to confession in the local church. In Mazonis's opinion, expulsion was too mild a punishment for such a "crime". The school girl completed her secondary education elsewhere. (LCC No. 12, p. 18)

### *Jurbarkas:*

A children's play-school has been established in the former rectory (where the priest used to live). When the neighbouring church bells ring, the children asked their teachers to take them to church. Ten years ago, the Council of Ministers forbade the bells to be rung, so that they would not "disturb the children's sleep".

In 1974, the parish priest Fr. Buozyis and Zinkevicius, head of the church council applied to the Soviet Representative for Religious Affairs, Tumenas, for permission to ring the bells. After ten years, it is now permitted to ring the bells on Sundays before both Masses. (*LCC* No. 15, p. 28)

## VI

*Students, like the school children in section V, are reprimanded for having any contact with the Church. Even to celebrate Christmas by dressing up can create difficulties.*

### *Kaunas:*

On 11 February 1975, a group of veterinary students, on their way to Kurtuvenai, turned off the road to visit Siluva and Tituvenai (Catholic shrines). On 13 February 1975, Bagackas, the Dean of the Faculty of Marxism, began to interrogate the students who took part in the excursion one by one, accusing them and asking them why they went to Siluva. The Dean threatened those who participated in the Shrovetide feast-day in Kurtuvenai with expulsion from the Academy. The head of the executive section at the Academy, who allotted the students a bus, was dismissed from his job. (*LCC* No. 16, p. 53)

### *Siauliai:*

On 25 December 1974, on Christmas Day, many of the second-year students at Siauliai Pedagogical Institute turned up dressed in festive clothes, although by so doing they exhibited their views publicly. A few days later, the students on this course were told to go to church, listen to the sermon, make notes and hand in a report to the Komsomol organization. The students refused, saying this was not part of any student's obligations. (*LCC* No. 16, p. 54)

## Order No. 20

Issued by the Rector of Vilnius State Pedagogical Institute.

Vilnius 14 February, 1975.

... Recently, there have been incidents which infringed the basic rules for organizing student excursions. These incidents had a harmful influence on the ideological education of students as well as on their formation of a Marxist world-view.

On 29 June-12 July 1974 a group of 14 students from the History Faculty, under the leadership of Lecturer R. Saluga, were carrying out a practical study of archeology, ethnography and education in the Joniskis, Akmene, and Maziekiiai regions. This group, while in the Akmene region, lowered themselves before

churchmen, asked for permission to go inside the Klikuoliai wooden church, an architectural monument, listened to the anti-scientific commentary of the local priest (the priest of Klikuoliai church is Jonas Paliukas, who graduated from the Kaunas Seminary in 1969), and looked at privately produced films and pictures, mostly on religious subjects. It is clear that this was not part of the practical study plan. R. Saluga was relieved of his post as he showed himself unworthy of trust, and no longer works at the Institute. The senior student of the group was also relieved of his position. It was necessary to interview the students concerning these events.

On 27 October 1974, a group of second-year students from the same faculty, under the leadership of tutor A. Gaigalaite, organized a one-day study excursion along the route Pilaite, Kernava, Elektrienui, Vevis, Lentravis. In Kernava, unnoticed by the tutor, the students went on their own to visit a church, in which it seems an unscientific, unhistorical museum had been set up. The tutor, when he discovered this, immediately led the students out and gave an explanatory talk. However, on her return, she failed to report the episode to the Dean of the Faculty. (Extract. *LCC*, No. 16, p. 51)

Signed: V. Uogintas

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## NEW APPOINTMENTS

*Episcopal Appointment in Poland.* The Primate of Poland, Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński, announced at the 14th plenary conference of Polish Bishops held in Warsaw on 26 and 27 June, that Pope Paul VI had appointed Bishop Bolesław Pylak as residential Bishop of Lublin. The appointment has been pending for nearly a year since the death of Bishop Piotr Kalwa in July 1974. Mgr. Pylak was reportedly the episcopate's choice for the seat but for some unknown reason his candidacy was opposed by the regime; thus his final appointment appears to mark a considerable victory for the Polish Bishops' policy, and to be a further sign of normalization in Church-State relations.

*The Vatican and Bulgaria.* In the aftermath of the Helsinki summit, the Vatican successfully settled some of its outstanding problems with Bulgaria by agreeing to fill both the Latin-rite administrations in that country. Vasko Seirekov was nominated to the bishopric of Nikopol and Bogdan Dobranov to the apostolic vicariate of Sofia and Plovdiv. There are about 50,000 Latin-rite Catholics in Bulgaria, including 15,000 who follow the Slavo-Byzantine rite recognized by the Pope.