

FANTASTIC, FUN SUMMER CAMPS and...

For many years LCRA has financially supported organizations that sponsor summer camps as well as other worthwhile free time activities such as pilgrimages, retreats, prayer groups, and seminars. All these events help children and teenagers as well as young adults enjoy their vacation time in a quality and fun manner. Forty-five organizations received financial aid for the above named activities in 2009, totalling over \$200,000.

The Mercy Home of Petrašiūnai Association has a superb Sunday program for children and teens aptly named "Kelias" (the Road) which provides various activities for its members. Recently, families with children had a wonderful experience participating in a pilgrimage from the Hill of Crosses in Šiauliai to Our Lady of Šiluva shrine in Šiluva. LCRA provided financial help not only to "Kelias" participants but also to the whole pilgrimage project. The summer culminated with three camps organized by "Kelias" in Naujamiestis, Vertimas, and Šventoji (by the Baltic Sea). Camping provided a golden opportunity for everyone to learn social skills and community interaction.

The Parish of Mary, Queen of Peace in Klaipėda organized two summer camps in 2009—one for the parish children and the other for parish scouts. In the parish camp the campers, in addition to their fun time, were involved in catechetics, learning the dogmas of the church and their roles as members of a parish in the Church and its liturgy. The scout camp was a teaching camp where the campers were led by missionary priest, Henrikas Šulcas. He met with youngsters from far away Ruanda in Africa and together they shared different life experiences.

Sisters of the Holy Family work in Vilkaviškis and organized a camp for families in Višakis Rūda. Here 60 people of various ages had the opportunity to interact with each other, share life experiences, and expand their vistas about communal life thus growing closer together spiritually. In addition to formal camp events many volunteered for special programs during their free time. The following is a beautiful reflection about the camp by a male camper (Vytautas aged 38 yrs.: "A huge impression was made on me meeting with a very active men's volunteer group. Their prayers on behalf of others really do work. After meeting with them I felt a great sense of peace and after hearing a lecture about the Sacrament of Reconciliation, I was moved to go to Confession. I have not had such a rewarding Confession for the past 15 years... You ask me if the camp has value? I say an empathic yes! Yes if it was able to bring at least one soul closer to Christ, then it exceeded all expectations..." Without LCRA's aid this camp would not have seen the light of day. Many thanks go to all who sent in donations to LCRA.



Pilgrimage to Šiluva.



Rev. H. Šulcas with friends from Rwanda.



Army Day at camp.



Church of Višakis Rūda.



Snapshot of marching campers.

SCHOLARSHIPS

In 2008, due to the weak dollar, a decision was made to increase the scholarships from \$400 to \$500/ month and of course the students were very pleased with this decision. As their letters show they truly appreciate LCRA's help, without which, especially in these difficult times, the students would have a difficult time financially. Since October 2008, 70 scholarships were granted with a value of \$33,500 and another 11 valued at \$37,200 given to those studying outside Lithuania.



Sr. Monika Petravičiūtė
Paulius Minkevičius
Rima Stepanavičienė



MAY the JOY of CHRIST'S BIRTH fill our hearts and manifest itself in the expression of love for all during this HOLY CHRISTMAS TIME
A Blessed CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR!
Msgr. Algimantas Bartkus, LCRA President
The Board of Directors and Staff

Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid
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Maspeth, NY 11378-2441

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

The newly elected president of LCRA will continue the tradition started by Bishop Paul A. Baltakis, OFM and will celebrate mass every Tuesday for all living and deceased benefactors of LCRA.

From Nov. 1, 2008 through Oct. 31, 2009 a total of \$1,468,993 was sent to Lithuania.

The financial report for the 2008 fiscal year is available at LCRA office.

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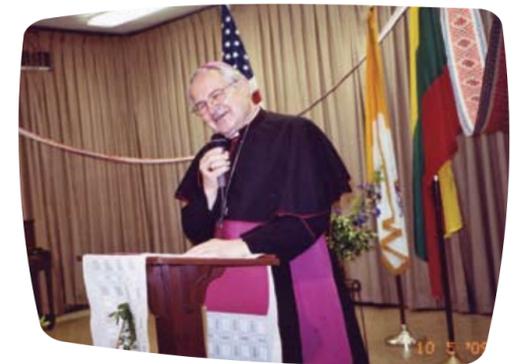
LCRA NEWS

Newsletter of Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid
Winter 2009



GOOD-BYE and...

After many years of successful leadership at the helm of the Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, Board President, Bishop Paul A. Baltakis, O.F.M. tendered his resignation during the semi annual meeting of LCRA's Board of Directors on Dec. 6, 2008, and in the spring of 2009 moved to the Franciscan Monastery in Kennebunkport, ME. However, Bishop Paul, did not abandon LCRA completely, consenting to stay on as one of the vice presidents of the Board of Directors. The Bishop celebrated his farewell Mass at Transfiguration Church in Maspeth, NY on May 10, 2009, followed by a luncheon in the parish hall. Good-bye dear Bishop, you will be missed!



Bishop Paul A. Baltakis, OFM saying his good-byes.

HELLO

And so we say a warm hello to Msgr. Algimantas Bartkus, the newly elected president of LCRA who formally took over the duties of president during LCRA's annual meeting in Putnam, CT on May 16, 2009. Monsignor recently finished his tenure as rector of the Lithuanian Pontifical College in Rome and graciously consented to assume the duties of president of LCRA. Everyone is very happy with the choice of president and wish Msgr. A. Bartkus a long term at the helm of LCRA. May God bless him abundantly as he begins this new phase of his life.



Pope John Paul II and Msgr. Algimantas Bartkus in Rome.

WITH LCRA'S HELP

“**Naujoji Sandora**” is an organization of the **Catholic Evangelization Community**. Its members, with financial aid from LCRA, participated in the Pentecostal vigil and feast in Šiluva on May 9–11. A “Pentecost of Nations in Lithuania” was celebrated for the first time during a nine day period prior to this event. The event was marked by concerts, seminars, and prayers by Lithuanians and guests from abroad.



Celebration of the Pentecost of Nations.

Family Center of Telšiai Diocese has relocated to new quarters in Žemaičių Kalvarija. This move will reap great benefits not only for local families but all the families with whom the Center shares its invaluable experience. LCRA provided much needed financial aid for its renovation.



Conference hall pre- and post-renovation.

The Catechetical Center of Vilkaviškis Diocese sponsored a contest in local schools to honor the 1000 year jubilee of the mention of Lithuania's name in historical writings. The contest, aptly named “Lithuania's 1000 years,” was won by the local government of Kazlų Rūda project titled “Jesus—The Way, Truth and Life”. The project was realized by organizing a special conference in honor of the jubilee and the planting of an oak tree.



Planting of the oak tree.

St. Anthony's Day Care Center works with children 8-17 years of age (from Kretinga and the surrounding rural area) from asocial and problem families. LCRA has been instrumental in helping the center start up by providing funds for needed inventory, technical support, expanding the scope of activities and most recently purchasing a mini van. This item was a dire necessity because many children come from poor families in the rural areas and transportation is a big issue. At the center the children are fully cared for, taught the rudiments of participation in activities and work, learn the catechism and participate in other religious activities. Margarita Lizdenytė is currently the director of the center.



Ice cream party.

A snapshot of daily activities.



The Guardian Angels parish of Alytus, under the direction of sr. Ramutė Račkauskaitė, has a very special program called “Hope”, which calls for interaction with socially needy families. Through interaction the families are helped spiritually, socially, and materially. With LCRA's financial help, the sisters and volunteer helpers were able to meet with the needy families, help them overcome despair by making their lives a little happier and more interesting through travels and seminars, thus being better able to see the Lord's hand in their everyday lives.

An enjoyable trip to Vilnius.



The Youth Center of Kaišiadorys Diocese has organized and implement a project for teaching young volunteers. Through various seminars, meetings with older parish volunteers, and Advent retreats, the youths were able to gather valuable information, hone their social work skills, and receive valuable experience and spiritual satisfaction. This Center would like to continue the successful program and needs your generous support.



Young volunteers at a Lenten seminar.

The Divorced Students Apostolate “Bendrakelaviai” was started 7 years ago by Rev. Antanas Saulaitis, SJ. The current president is Elvyra Kučinskaitė and the psychologist is Rasa Bieliauskaitė. The center, located under the roof of the Vilnius Jesuits, provides students who are in the process of a divorce or are already divorced much needed psychological help in order to start anew, and gives spiritual therapy so wounded hearts can begin to heal. The center provides a large number of activities including a summer camp. LCRA has helped this organization by providing financial aid for its various programs .



Canoeing at camp.

Campers on the way to fly their handmade kites.



Family center of Kaunas Archdiocese has sponsored a sexual education program “Know Thyself” since 1997. This program created by various family centers has proven to be a very effective tool in youth sex education and has received positive reviews by schools, parishes, youth organizations, and university communities. The program is based on Christian/Catholic morality principles and seeks to foster respect for human life, sexuality, and family. It also strives to prepare young people for responsible love and overall responsibility later on in parenthood.



A presentation about family life at camp.

Massive Book Project. It has come to the attention of LCRA directors and other visitors to Lithuania that there is a dire need for religious literature, not only in Catholic school libraries, but in state run school libraries as well, especially those that are located in small towns and villages. Thus a project was born, the by-product of two people—Msgr. Rimantas Gudlinkis, director of the Lithuanian Catechetical Center (LCC) and Birutė Bartasūnaitė of the publishing house “Katalikų Pasaulio Leidiniai”. LCC seeks funds to provide religious theme books for the Catholic school libraries and the publishing house would seek for state run school libraries. Even though the project has not been as yet completed, LCRA has given out over \$155,000 in financial aid. This is a highly worthwhile gift for future generations from LCRA and all those who have given so generously through LCRA.

The Cardinal Sladkevičius Fund, started in 2000 has an essential mission—to provide financial help for priests, brothers, nuns, and catechists embarking on studies to prepare them for their chosen lives. It is vital for this fund to continue to provide the necessary financial gains, and aiding in critical situations when other assistance may no longer be available. Please make donations to this fund through LCRA, noting that the donation is earmarked for the Cardinal Sladkevičius Fund. In early 2009 the fund balance was \$2,149,037, reflecting losses due to the financial crisis.

Rumbony's parish is a small parish near the city of Alytus, in the southern part of Lithuania. Here the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception help in the parish and work with orphans, needy families, and recently the parish elderly. The sisters do a marvelous job and are well liked by the people. They organize summer camps,



During a tour in the woods of Punia, the forest ranger explains about the bunkers where freedom fighters hid during the Soviet occupation.



Orphans visit the elderly in the parish nursing home.

schedule tours of historical and holy places in Lithuania, celebrate religious and ethnic holy days, and essentially keep the children well occupied and out of trouble especially during the summertime.

HELP for VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

St. Clare's Hospice in Utena in the spring of 2009 requested financial aid to help them install a centralized electrical system whereby the patients would be able to call for help. LCRA provided the \$10,000 needed and the project is already operational. Previously, a grant of \$15,000 enabled the hospice to purchase a mini van for the safe transport of patients, since the old one was no longer trustworthy.



A patient holds a patient call button.

The new mini van.



Two day student seminar during the spring semester.

The Academic Apostolate Center of Vilnius was started with the realization that there was a very real need for a spiritually oriented organization in the academic milieu of Vilnius. And so, in response to these needs, the pastoral staff of the center began organizing winter and summer retreats, various seminars, and meditation and prayer weekends during Advent and Lent.

Press and Radio. There is no doubt that the internet daily Bernardinai. It has a profound influence on Lithuanian life. Founded by the Lithuanian Franciscans of St. Bernard's monastery in Vilnius, during 2009 the daily received a \$100,000 grant from LCRA allowing the daily to flourish and grow. There is still a great need of donations if the daily is to survive, so please send your gift today. Catholic radio was provided with a \$10,000 financial grant for the support of radio Mažoji Studija. The Catholic/Christian press has a difficult time competing with the sensational secular press and definitely needs our support. The following were recipients of LCRA's aid during this year: The bi-weekly newspaper XXI Amžius – \$25,000; Children's weekly newspaper Kregždutė – \$4,000; The cultural newspaper of Žemaitija Žemaičių Saulutė – \$5,000; Children's monthly magazine Bitutė – \$4,000; Ateitinikiai youth group's magazine Ateitis – \$10,000; and finally the monthly newspaper of the Belarus Lithuanians Lietuvių Godos – \$10,000. Financial help will be needed in the foreseeable future for all.