



## INSTITUTE SERVANTS OF THE LORD AND THE VIRGIN OF MATARÁ

Community "Our Lady Gate of Dawn"

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Panevėžys, Lietuva

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*"The inclination to give is rooted in the depths of the human heart: every person is conscious of a desire to interact with others and everyone finds fulfillment in a free gift of self to others." St John Paul II*

Dear Friends and Family,

Praised be Jesus Christ both now and forever! Before adventuring into the summer season in depth and losing all tract of time and organization, I wanted to share with you a few of the activities and apostolates that the sisters were able to realize with the closing of the school year.

For some of the youth in our parish, we were able to take a small group to Luxembourg where we held our 12<sup>th</sup> annual international youth gathering. During the five day retreat, youth were able to choose different talks from priests, sisters and the Catholic laity to discover more about the Faith, different vocation calls, mission work, human virtues, ethics and character building. Between talks, the youth were able to meet other young Catholics from all-over Europe, compete in energetic games, socialize and sing during bonfires and roasting marshmallows, all the while coming together to share their faith through the Holy Mass and a rosary-guided Marian procession, in their different languages.



With the end of the school approaching, we decided to invite one of our groups of children, who were receiving preparation for First Holy Communion, to our house in an afternoon of games, a small talk, snack and a short tour of our house and new chapel that we have recently finished. Living in such a small city, the children were able to walk from their school with their homeroom teacher to our house, which is just a short distance away. It was quite interesting and very entertaining to watch the children walking/running to our house filled with excitement and arms waving frantically in the air to play with the sisters, all the while their school teacher was trying with more or less difficulty to catch up to them.



In Launching off the summer season, our annual children’s summer camp was greatly anticipated from the kids from previous years, but also from many new comers. Filled with games, crafts, banner presentations, an accordion concert, the Holy Mass, rosaries and many more games, the children not only were able to have fun during the summer season but also grew in many virtues like perseverance, good spirit, team work and great patience.



From my previous letters, I explained how most of our apostolic work is in the small town of Pumpėnai; however, we also teach various classes of catechism for First Holy Communion in the neighboring city of Panevėžys. This year we added a new apostolate in working in the school for children with special needs. Once a week, our sisters give Holy Communion classes for children from 8-16years. These children have physical problems such as Autism, Down’s syndrome, hearing loss, impaired speech or learning disabilities. Being our first year instructing there, we were incredibly blessed to accompany the children in receiving the sacraments who, in their great simplicity, received the sacraments with such piety, fervor and devotion.



As for the other Confirmation and First Holy Communions classes, I’m only able to show a few photos of them on their day of reception. In all, there totaled around 50 children who received First Holy Communion and 45 youth who received the sacrament of Confirmation.



In coming to a close of my first year in Lithuania, I first wanted to thank God for the great blessing that he has gifted me with in sending me here on mission. I cannot express how much that I have learned not only in experiencing a new and very different culture than that of my own, but also of the spiritual and human growth that Christ has lead and continues to lead me through. Everyday God shows us in different and often in very small ways of our instrumentality in his plan for the salvation of all men. It didn't matter if I was studying or more correctly, staring blankly at a long list of words that I couldn't pronounce or playing with children whom I couldn't understand or struggling to pray and "stay awake" in Adoration after a long afternoon of hauling fresh, wet logs of firewood into the house. In all and in everything, God only desires and asks us to try our very best in what we are doing at *this* moment. When we offer to God these moments of difficulty, endurance or even tasking duties that are required of us, He is able to transform these struggles into victories for others or for ourselves. Our failings or even our successes in our works mean absolutely nothing to him, but it is our attitude and how much love in which we do things for his sake that He takes into account and rewards us for our battles.

Taking a look back on a year that truly flew before my eyes, there are innumerable blessings and graces that I so unworthily received directly from the hands of God or through his humble servants in my apostolates. How can I expound on the greatness and mercy of God that He has worked and continues to work in my life. When we look at everything through the eyes of faith, we can truly say with the Blessed Virgin Mary; *"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him."*

Thank you again for all who continue to pray for the mission in Lithuania and in a special way for the sisters, who every day lay down all they possess in order to follow Christ their spouse in a more intimate way by offering their love and service to others. Know your intentions are in our prayers. May God bless you and your families!



In His Sacred Heart,

Sister Mary Rock of Constancy

Mother Maria Reina de los Cielos

Sister Maria Dovire