

April 17, 2016

Dear Family and friends,

Praise be Jesus Christ both now and forever! Greetings from Lithuania! I hope your Easter has been and continues to be a time of great joy in celebration of the Risen Christ. This year, I had the great opportunity to celebrate Easter in another part of the world outside of the United States. To my surprise and wonderful delight, I discovered and found attraction of some very interesting and beautiful traditions of the Lithuanian culture.

I would like to share some things that the Lithuanians do during the Easter Liturgy that was quite beautiful and inspired great devotion from the people, but also from me. On Good Friday after the celebration of the Mass, Father took the monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament that was covered with a sheer veil, and placed it on top of the "tomb". The Tomb is a large monument with lots of candles and flowers that Father built inside the Church from brown packaging paper and other materials that took the form of the tomb of Christ. Inside the tomb, there is a beautiful and very detailed painting of Jesus who has already died lying down. This life-size painting of Jesus is placed inside the tomb on Good Friday. From then on, there are always people coming to the Church to "keep watch" with Christ by lighting candles and praying throughout the whole weekend. It was something that I had never seen before and was very different, nonetheless it was incredibly beautiful and touching to see families with great devotion stay after the Mass for such a long time to pray and just to be with Christ in the church remembering his passion and death. One can see that this was their way of remembering the Passion of Christ by spending a few minutes or longer in silent adoration and meditation on Christ's biggest proof of love for humanity. I saw that this was just one of the many ways that the people showed their fidelity, their compassion and their sorrow with Jesus by accompanying him throughout night/weekend in memorial of His Passion for our redemption and salvation. It truly was something very inspiring and made a great impression on me.



In our continuation of celebrating the Easter season, we decided to make a small retreat day with 32 kids from the St. John Bosco Oratory and the First Holy Communion class. We headed out for a beautiful basilica dedicated to Marija Krekenavos, where we also stayed at the basilica's recreational hall. Between games, talks, confessions and the Holy Mass, we were also able to walk to a nature museum close by to learn about the



wildlife in Lithuania. Taking into consideration that only two of us sister spoke Lithuanian, the day flew by smoothly and was loaded with great fun and laughter from the kids, but also from the sisters.



In the evening we held a scavenger hunt for the children which they enjoyed greatly and we ended our retreat day with traditional Kaabai for dinner. The two volunteers who made the dinner hit a big success among the hungry kids with roars of cheers chanting "Ačiū, Ačiū, Ačiū!" (Thank you). We again thank God for blessing us with the opportunity to have a retreat day with our children of the Oratory in celebration of the resurrection of Christ.

I also want to thank all those who have been praying for me especially with the intention of learning Lithuanian quickly, prays are being answered! Over this past weekend, I was able to give my first talk in Lithuanian to my group of girls called "Daughters of Mary". The talk only lasted about 10min, however it was a start that I was excited to begin with confidence and excitement! The other sister in my community, who has been missioned here for about 8 years, told me that I pronounced and spoke excellent, especially for it being my first time. Encouraged by her words and with God's continued grace, the road only looks up from here in my journey of learning the language. I truly thank God for blessing me with this great consolation during these times of patience, humility and perseverance in learning a new language.



As I continue to learn and am exposed to God's hand working in my life, one can never become accustomed or become dull to the gifts and graces God bestows. What a shame and heavy crime it is, when one begins to lose appreciation for the blessing and graces our Lord gives and one becomes used to receiving on sheer demand or without real effort. For that's when the ingratitude comes in and we lose the true realization that everything we receive, whether materially or spiritual, has been given freely and without necessity from God our Father. I think that could be one of the greatest pains that Christ suffered in the Garden of Olives, that is, the pain of ingratitude from men. Christ knew everything what he was about to suffer, physically and spiritually, yet how many men whom he called by name, would cast aside his gift of suffering by their lukewarm and tepid life, trample his love underfoot by their indifference to His commandments and spit upon his grace by their continual repetition of sin and yet, still they have the audacity to put out their hand for what they want and expect in life. It is the ungrateful heart, which shows no devotion, no thanksgiving or love and lacks the yearning of desire to give back when it has received something that it is deprived of or desperately needs. Obviously, we are sinners and we will always fall short of offering God our praise and thanksgiving for His blessings. However, this should in no way hinder our earthly battle of conquering ourselves, our defects and failings and shortcomings. If we get into the habit of upon waking, falling to our knees and asking for the grace of becoming just a little more holy today and the grace to persevere in our resolutions, how can God who is all-good deny our request?



During this Year of Mercy, let us ask God for a radical conversion of heart, for the grace to recognize all he has given and the courage to respond to his gifts by a complete offering of our self to Him and His will for our life. I continue to pray for the perfection and sanctity of you and your family and I commend myself to your prayers as well. May God Bless you!

In His Sacred Heart,

Sister Mary Rock of Constancy Powell