

Let Us Chat



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5 Resurrection Rd., Toronto, ON M9A 5G1



Lithuanian Folk Art Institute photo from the internet



MERRY CHRISTMAS

*Dear Residents, Families, Staff, and Friends of Labdara,
We extend our sincere wishes for a Christmas filled with warmth,
love, and the comfort of cherished memories. May 2025 be filled
with good health and happiness for you and your families!*

THE LABDARA FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS



From left to right: Dalia Rocca - Secretary, Ramunė Čygas and Algimantas Nakrošius - members, Zita Bersėnas-Cers - Chair, Daina Kalendra - Vice-Chair, Audronė Butrimas - Treasurer.

Absent - Gabrielė Zitikytė.

Long-term Care Home Within Familiar Cultural Community.



In September the Honourable Minister of Long-term Care for Ontario, Natalia Kusendova-Bashta, and Christine Hogarth, the Member of Provincial Parliament for Etobicoke-Lakeshore visited our home. They met with a few residents who emphasized the advantages of living in a long-term care home within their own cultural community. Minister Kusendova-Bashta told the residents that she understands their concerns and that she and her staff are working on a plan which will be announced early in the new year. She stated that she has heard similar concerns from many cultural groups, including her own Polish community. We were very encouraged by the positive response from the Minister.

On November 6th, Minister Kusendova-Bashta announced a proposed change to a regulation which would modify the criteria for placement of individuals on the crisis waiting list to long-term care to reflect an applicant's culture, ethnicity, religion, and language needs. The proposed change had to be approved by the Ontario Cabinet. Then, the Ministry would implement a pilot project to evaluate whether the changes had an impact on admissions. The Ministry allowed only 20 days for feedback about the proposed changes.

Our Lithuanian community quickly moved into action to show our support for the Minister's proposal. We organized opportunities for people to sign letters of support after church in both Lithuanian parishes, at Vilnius Manor, at the Song Festival choir practice, and other places where people gather. Laura Puteris, the Administrator, collected letters of support from residents, family members, and staff of Labdara Lithuanian Nursing Home. Community leaders and other concerned individuals submitted letters directly to the Ministry. On November 25th, I delivered 285 signed letters to Minister Kusendova-Bashta's office. I am truly impressed by and grateful for our community's support for this issue. Together, we demonstrated how much we care about our elders.

On November 27th, the Minister announced the proposed pilot project in the Ontario parliament. We are still waiting to hear details of the pilot project. We hope that Labdara Lithuanian Nursing Home will be included in the pilot and that Lithuanians, along with members of other cultural/religious groups, will be placed directly into the long-term care homes that best meet their personal needs.

Zita Bersenas-Cers

Chair of the Labdara Foundation Board of Directors



Audrone Butrimas and Zita Bersenas-Cers collected letters of support at the Labdara Bake and Craft Sale.

Zita Bersenas-Cers
Chair of the Labdara Foundation Board of Directors

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to everyone.



I wanted to say that the merriment and goodwill of the Lithuanian community came early for Labdara this year. I wanted to thank all the community members, the residents, the family members, the staff, and the board of directors for all their hard work and support in writing letters to the Ministry in support of the pilot project. It really reminded me how the community bands together in tough times and good, and warmed my heart. I am also thankful to the residents who share their stories and passion for supporting the community that I will cherish for a life time. Without you none of this would exist. If you want to hear more details on

this please read Zita Bersenas-Cers, Chair of the Labdara Foundation Board of Directors' letter.

The snow has fallen and the winter season has started, this also includes Christmas Parties and festivities. I wanted to thank UniversalCare Inc. for organizing the staff Christmas party. We were finally able to resume holiday parties in person and we had so much fun getting dressed up, taking photos, seeing each other outside of work, laughing, dancing and of course, enjoying good food. Thank you to all the staff who attended. Thank you to the Board of Directors for treating the staff who were working that evening and throughout the night to a festive meal at work. I also wanted to remind everyone that Labdara Staff cannot accept personal gifts of any kind. If families or residents would like to treat staff please consider general group gifts for the floor, eg. coffee, treats, flowers. There is also the staff appreciation fund that people can give money to (as little or as much as they would like). With that we purchase food, gift cards, coffee or other items and celebrate with all the staff.

I wanted to thank all of our dedicated staff for making our home so special and ensuring that our residents feel cared for. We have done so much this year to improve the home and the care for the residents. Let's not forget all the positive things we have accomplished this year! Thank you to the **managers** who work tirelessly with their teams to ensure everything is prepared and planned ahead of time. They cover weekends and evenings when needed and go above and beyond the minimum that's required. Thank you to the **nurses** for their hard work on BPSO/implementing new clinical pathways, getting new equipment like the bladder scanner, glucose machines and AED cabinet. All these changes can be difficult, but we thank you for your patience to help improve resident safety with these new practices. Thank you to the **PSWs** who continue to help residents and continue to work and improve documentation to ensure resident care and funding is maintained. You care for the residents as if they are your family, it shows and does not go unnoticed. Thank you to the **kitchen staff** who always impress me with their creativity in their home cooked food, and thank you for adapting to the upgraded dishwashing machines. Ensuring food is ready even when the lights go out just shows your passion and dedication. Thank you to the **programs team** that makes sure the residents mind, body and soul are taken care of. Our new documentation

system, Welbi may have been a difficult transition but we can see how well it works in tracking and documenting activities of the residents. Thank you to the **housekeeping and maintenance team** who make sure this home stays functioning and clean. Thank you for learning the new maintenance care system that can make it easier to track what needs to be fixed or enhanced in the home. Our home would not look the same without you, and our outbreaks would be much longer without your caring work. Thank you to the **reception and office team** for helping everyone stay connected and informed. Thank you for greeting everyone with a smile and joining in dance parties with the residents in the lobby. Wishing everyone gets to spend time with family, friends and loved ones. Let's remember those we lost with happy memories and stay warm, healthy and happy.

All the best for the new year

Laura Puteris



From Left to Right: Executive Director Laura Puteris, Labdara Foundation Board Chair Zita Bersėnas-Cers, Board member Ramunė Čygas.

The Pensive Christ (Rūpintojėlis) of Lithuania



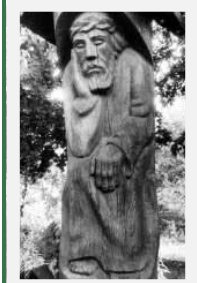
Before Rodin's *The Thinker*, there was the Pensive Christ.

Dating back to the late 14th century, this iconographic type shows Jesus sitting on a stone, bent over, supporting his head with one hand while resting the other on his knee. Sometimes he is crowned with thorns, sometimes not, but either way he bears an expression of exhaustion and worry and thoughtfulness.

Although the image first appeared in northern Germany, it is now most commonly associated with Lithuania, where the figure is called Rūpintojėlis: "the One Who Worries" or "The Brooding One" or "The Pensive Christ". As Christianity spread throughout Lithuania in the 16th and 17th centuries, so did images of Rūpintojėlis, as the wandering woodcarvers (*dievdirbiai*) of native folk culture carved him into hollowed-out tree trunks wherever they went. Today he is found not only at crossroads and in forests but in churches homes, cemeteries and shops.

Lithuanians relate the figure to their own suffering as a people, especially since having endured persecution under the Soviet regime, including mass deportations to Siberian labor camps and other remote parts of the Soviet Union in the 1940's and '50s. About 60% of the roughly 130,000 Lithuanian deportees either died in the camps or were never able to return to their homeland.

For these victims of repression, the Pensive Christ represents a God who identifies with the suffering of humanity.



Perhaps he contemplates not only his own unjust treatment and death but also the countless injustices waged against others throughout time. And he weeps.

(from a posting on the internet "The Jesus Question.org" on Jan. 20, 2016 by Victoria Emily Jones)

The Pensive Christ carries a deep cultural and historical significance for Lithuania. Rooted in the nation's tragic history marked by suffering and oppression, the figure of Rūpintojėlis embodies a serene acceptance of suffering and an expression of peace and concentration.

Traditionally kept in homes as a guardian against disasters and symbolizing humility and reconciliation, Rūpintojėlis also finds a place as a reminder of acceptance of God's will...and encouraging optimism for the future.

(from the internet Rasa Matevičiūtė's interpretation)

This image of Christ shows the humanity of Jesus, the man of sorrow and compassion...It represents Christ with us in our human fate who is on the side of the oppressed, the least, the voiceless and insignificant...

(from Theological Studies internet posting of a study by Ligita Riliškytė)

AND IN CANADA: THE PENSIVE CHRIST AT ST. JOHN'S LITHUANIAN CEMETERY IN MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO.



Cemeteries are enduring places of memory, history and biography. St. John's Lithuanian Cemetery located in Mississauga Ontario is unique in Canada. It is dedicated to people of Lithuanian origin or heritage as their final resting place. The threads of Lithuanian culture can be found in the symbols and motifs on the gravestones, way crosses, memorials and metal ornamentation throughout the cemetery.

This image of the PENSIVE CHRIST (Rūpintojėlis) surrounded by the Hill of Crosses is the centrepiece of the cemetery.

(From the Canadian Lithuanian Museum/Archives website: lithuanianheritage.ca)

Christmas memories by our resident Kostas

I grew up in a practising Catholic family. My parents were both Lithuanians who brought me up following our national customs. I am lucky that they instilled in me a strong Lithuanian identity. I thank them for that. When I grew up, my mother taught me to pray in Lithuanian. In the church of the Seine (Poland), Mass was held in Polish, but my parents and I prayed in Lithuanian. It wasn't long before I received my first Communion. Instruction in preparation for this event was given by a Polish priest. And yes, to this day, I can pray in two languages, Lithuanian and Polish.



I lovingly remember the Dzūkias region Christmas Eve and Christmas Day festivities spent with my dear parents. My childhood and youthful years were carefree. To this day I have especially warm memories from the Christmas holidays and particularly from the Christmas Eve family dinner. On Christmas Eve we waited for the first star to appear in the sky. This was a sign that we could take our seats at the table. That evening, the table was decorated with a white linen tablecloth and a little hay was sprinkled on it. Mom beautifully laid out the twelve dishes she had prepared. Their smell and variety augmented the spirit of anticipation of the holiday in us children. We changed from our everyday clothes into our Sunday best thus paying tribute to the celebration of Christmas Eve. We then offered a joint family prayer of thanks to God for what we have. Requests were not allowed – only prayers of thanks. We then shared "platkutes" (Christmas wafers) and wished each other every happiness. If only half of those wishes that we made over the years came true, we would be better people and the world would be at peace. Maybe it would be better for us to wish less and to love each other and help each other more.

An empty plate at the Christmas Eve table with a Christmas wafer on it along with a candleflame quietly fluttering on the candle nearby, reminded us of those dearest to us who had already departed this life. That's how we showed them our deep respect. I keep remembering my dear parents who taught me to love God and books to foster learning and to never forget my Lithuanian roots.

I remember those wonderful dishes on the Christmas Eve table.



They were:

- Salted and pickled herring with onions
- Fried fish
- Dumplings fried on oil, stuffed with minced mushrooms and cabbage
- Pickled forest mushrooms
- Boiled peas with poppy seeds
- "Lazankos" (broad noodles) with poppy seeds
- Homemade cranberry kissel (thick pudding)
- Boiled potatoes (eaten with the herring)
- Red, boiled beets with dried forest mushrooms
- Poppy seed milk
- Smoked salmon or eel
- A compote drink made from dried apples and pears

It was and is a wonderful time spent with family and people dear to you.

After Christmas Eve dinner, having cleared the dishes, we began to decorate the Christmas tree, which just yesterday grew in our "mossy grove" – this is what our pine tree grove used to be called. It gave me a duplicitous feeling because I'm fully in favor of preserving everything that grows. On the other hand, I love natural Christmas toys made of straw and wood, wax candles and "candy" tree decoration which, in the run-up to the celebration of the "Three Kings" in January, "mysteriously" disappeared from the Christmas tree. When burning the wax candles on the tree we had to be especially careful not to cause a fire.

I also want to share with you my thoughts about today's world. Nowadays there is too much push for commercial sales, like on Boxing Day and Black Friday. Purchases are "wrapped" in shiny "Christmas" paper. The seller thus tries to lure as many buyers as possible at this time of year, offering the lowest prices in an attempt to secure the highest number of sales possible, without having the customer consider whether he needs the items or not.

My wish to everyone is to make your good wishes a reality not only through your words, but through your deeds – as much as your spiritual and physical strength allows.

I send special greetings to my table mates who sit with me at table No.8 in our dining room, namely Mr. Stanislovas, Mr. Artūras, and Mrs. Aldona.

Let's not forget that Christmas is first and foremost the birthday of our redeemer, Jesus Christ. So let's celebrate Him!

God bless you all through this Christmas season and throughout the coming New Year 2025! Until next time!

Kostas

Craft and Bake Sale

The Annual Bake and Craft Sale held on Sunday November 17th in the Resurrection Parish Café was a success. So nice to see so many beautiful crafts and creations of Lithuanian foods available for purchase. Thanks to the generous donations of delicious cakes, folks could sit for a chat over coffee/tea and baked goodies. All proceeds go to support Activation Department's costs associated with resident outings and activation equipment purchases as required. Sincere thanks to everyone for your support.



BAKE & CRAFT SALE VENDORS



THE BAKE SALE



RAPTOR'S TICKETS DRAW





Word Puzzles

1. They invite me and look forward to my arrival; but once I arrive, everyone hides from me. What am I?
2. Without washing it, it's clean. But when washing, it gets dirty. What is it?
3. When we toss it from a rooftop, it's white; but when it falls – it turns yellow. What is it?
4. The more of it you eat, the more is left over. What is it?
5. What can speak any language in the world?
6. What is the fastest in the world?
7. What beats without hands?
8. What is a giant in the morning and the evening, but becomes a midget at noon
9. What cannot be hacked by an axe or cut by a knife?
10. What hears everything, but says nothing?

An Ear	10
Water	9
A shadow	8
The heart	7
A thought	6
An echo	5
Nuts and their shells	4
An egg	3
Water	2
Rain	1



FIAT - SO BE IT

The Gospel of Luke 2: 16-21 says: Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. Our dear sisters and dear brothers in Christ: Can we feel the "Newborn Baby" in our hearts?

Without a doubt, I am sure that there were fears, worries and concerns for Mary for herself when told by the Angel of God that she would give birth to the "Son of God." But, as we know, Mary accepted everything with firm trust and unshakable confidence.

We too receive answers from the Lord. He gives us his words of encouragement, rebuke, challenge, forgiveness, healing and love. We only need to hear his voice in the silence of our hearts, for God's language is divine silence.

Among the eight billion inhabitants of this planet, Jesus individually has a purpose and meaning of life for each of us individually.

*Finally, Mary responds to God's call.
"Here I am the servant of the Lord;
let it be to with me according to your word."
Then the angel departed from her.
(Luke 1:38)*

That was Mary's pure and sacred "Fiat!"

Dear ones, we too need to respond to the Lord's call to us; not only at Christmas time, but always at all times.



Deacon Dr. Kazimieras Ambrozaitis