

Let's Chat

Labdara residents' news is published quarterly.

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Toronto, ON M9A 5G1



May this season of renewal bring you joy, peace, and hope. We wish you and your loved ones a wonderful and blessed Easter.

Labdara Foundation Board of Directors





Dear Residents, Families, Staff, Volunteers, and Friends of Labdara



The board of directors continues to be concerned about the decreasing numbers of Lithuanian residents at our Lithuanian nursing home. We have sought opportunities to bring our concerns to the attention of the Honourable Minister of Long-Term Care, Natalija Kusendova-Bashta. Last November, we launched a letter writing campaign in which some of you may have signed a letter to the Minister. At the beginning of December, I delivered over 400 letters to the

Minister's office along with a letter from the Board and a letter from a resident's family describing the challenges they faced while trying to get their family member placed in Labdara Lithuanian Nursing Home. We received a response from the Minister from which it is clear that she understands our concerns. The Ministry will expand and implement the Cultural Homes Pilot model across all 59 homes recognized by Ontario Health as serving a specific religious, ethnic, or linguistic community. Additionally, more beds will be made available for family reunification. While these changes are positive, they may not have a significant impact for smaller cultural communities like ours.

In several recent conversations with Minister Kusendova-Bashta I have reiterated our concerns. The Minister has assured me that she is looking at policy options which would address the unique circumstances of our home and other similar homes. I am encouraged by the Minister's positive response and eagerly await forthcoming changes resulting in an increase in Lithuanian residents at Labdara. Our board of directors and administration strongly believe that all residents should be placed directly into the home that is best for them in an environment that reflects their culture.

As we approach National Volunteer Week, I would like to thank our volunteers who enrich the lives of our residents throughout the year. Your ongoing dedication makes a significant positive impact.

**Zita Bersenas-Cers
Labdara Foundation Board Chair**

IN THE WORLD AROUND US

WINTER OLYMPICS MILANO/CORTINA 2026
LITHUANIA'S ATHLETES ARRIVE



TRICOLOUR LIGHTS AT NIAGARA FALLS

IN CELEBRATION OF FEBRUARY 16 - LITHUANIA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY



FEATURE ARTICLE

LITHUANIAN CHAPEL at the NATIONAL CATHOLIC BASILICA



The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC was constructed in the style of Byzantine and Romanesque revival architecture. Construction began on Sept. 23, 1920 and was completed on Dec. 8, 2017. On December 8, 2017 the Trinity Dome was completed with the installation of 24 tons of Venetian glass, one of the largest mosaics of its kind in the world, and was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. Pope John Paul II raised the National Shrine to the status of Minor Basilica on October 12, 1990.

It was built in the style of medieval churches with thick masonry walls and columns in place of structural steel and reinforced concrete. It can hold 10,000 worshippers. The Basilica houses 82 Chapels to the Virgin Mary.



FEATURE ARTICLE (continued)



THE LITHUANIAN VIRGIN OF ŠILUVA CHAPEL in the Basilica was dedicated in 1966 as a symbol of Lithuanian faith, endurance and resistance against Soviet occupation. Organized by Lithuanian emigres and refugees under Bishop Vincent Brizgys, the chapel honors the 1608 appearance of the Virgin Mary in Šiluva, Lithuania. During the Cold War when Lithuania was under Soviet rule, the chapel served as silent protest and beacon of hope, with artwork depicting the religious and cultural history of the occupied nation.

The chapel houses mosaics created by Vytautas Jonynas and Albinas Elskus – artists who fled Lithuania during the Second World War. The statue of Our Lady of Šiluva and the altar are the work of

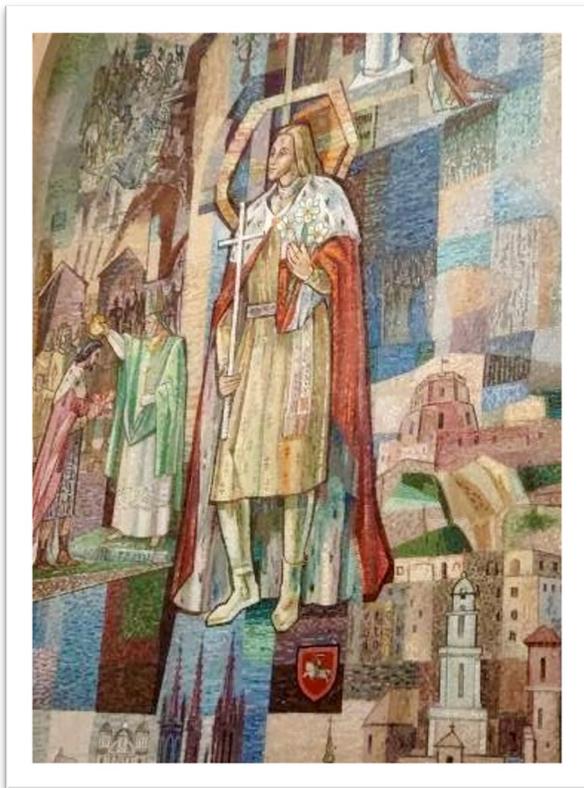
sculptor Vytautas Kašuba, a graduate of the Kaunas School of Art who worked in a furniture workshop in New York.



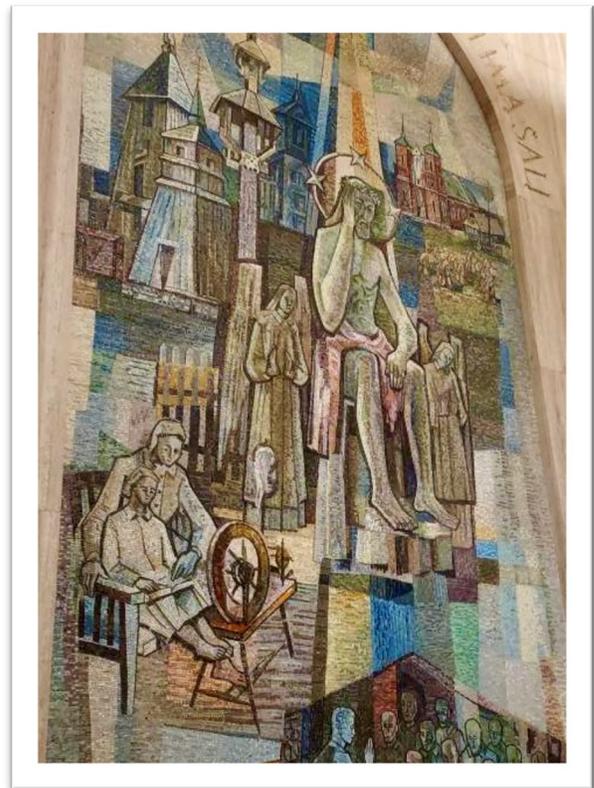
FEATURE ARTICLE (continued)

The chapel houses intricate glass mosaics by Vytautas Jonynas as well as murals on the walls depicting Saint Casimir and "Rupintojėlis" or "Christ the Worrier" and stained glass mosaics on the ceiling by Albinas Elskus of the various Madonas of Lithuania from Trakai, Pažaislis (in Kaunas), the Gate of Dawn Madona in Vilnius. The walls feature mosaics of St. Casimir, the coat of arms of Lithuania's capital city Vilnius, the Hill of Crosses, etc. One of the walls features a large mosaic by Vytautas Jonynas depicting Lithuanian exiles in Siberia.

Bishop Vincent Brizgys launched the idea of a Lithuanian chapel in the National Shrine. The requisite 325,000USD (2-3 million in today's dollars) were raised over 3 years and construction of the chapel was completed in 1966. The mosaics are reminders to future generations that a new life has been created without forgetting the old.



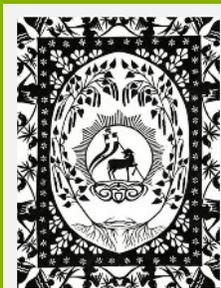
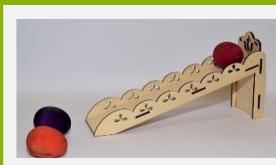
St. Casimir



Christ the Worrier

(research from the Internet)

EASTER IN LITHUANIA



The date on which Easter is celebrated changes. The earliest is March 22nd; the latest is April 25th. Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday following a full moon. Easter has been linked to a celebration of nature's rebirth following a long hard winter – the beginning of new life. With the coming of Christianity, Easter became a celebration of Christ's resurrection and triumph of life over death.

EASTER EGGS: the egg is a symbol of life. Eggshells are decorated with patterns etched into the shell or drawn on the egg with beeswax. The eggs were coloured using natural dyes made from plants: petals of violets for a blue colour, the bark of oak trees for black, onion skins for a deep brown, etc.

EASTER GAMES: in order to determine who's easter egg is the strongest, one would hit others' eggs on the end to crack the shell. Last "man standing" was the winner. Another popular game was rolling of the eggs to knock out everyone else's; or, to see whose egg could roll the farthest; or, roll the farthest without cracking the shell. These games were thought to aid in nature's reawakening.

"VERBA" AND HOLY WEEK: A "Verba" is a wand made of dried flowers and used in Palm Sunday ceremonies in lieu of palm leaves, particularly throughout the region of Vilnius. Palm Sunday (the week before Easter Sunday) saw the tradition of the blessing in church of the "verbos" and pussywillow branches. Good Friday – was a solemn day of reflection, penance and fasting. Holy Saturday was spent preparing for Easter and dyeing and decorating of easter eggs. On Holy Saturday, folks brought home from church holy water and the easter flame upon which they then cooked the Easter meal.

EASTER SUNDAY: was considered a family celebration. Everyone would sit around the table decorated with easter eggs and the Easter lamb symbolizing the rizen Christ – typically sculpted from butter or clay, was the centrepiece. The table was laden with various meat dishes: headcheese, ham, lamb, sausages, special potato sausages "vėdarai". Sweet cheeses, cakes, cookies and the Easter babka were treats everyone looked forward to.

EASTER GRANNY: Children were told tales of Easter Granny who lived in the forest. She came around in a carriage pulled by Easter rabbits and left delicious sweet easter eggs - two for each child on the windowsills of their home.

EASTER AROUND THE WORLD

(from BERNARDINAI.It March 27, 2016)



GERMANY: Easter is vacation time and for children, they are on school holidays for up to three weeks. It is a tradition to decoatre trees and bushes with easter eggs.

FINLAND, SWEDEN, DENMARK: Children dress up in various costumes and go visiting to collect Easter sweets in their Easter baskets.

GREECE: the most important symbol of Easter – eggs – are painted red to symbolize the death and resurrection of Jesus.

FRANCE southwestern region: It is traditional on Easter Monday to make huge skilletts of scrambled eggs – enough to feed a thousand people.

SWITZERLAND: water is a symbol of life and renewal, so for Easter, folks decorate their village water wells with plants and easter eggs.

SCOTLAND: in a tradition similar to that in Lithuania, scots roll easter eggs down hills to see whose can roll the farthest without cracking the shell.

GUATEMALA: Communities together create colourful, kilometer-long "carpets" on street pavements made from grasses, plants, mosses, wood chips, etc.. Folks start working on these "carpets" a week before Easter and on Easter Sunday people walk over them in huge processions, on their way to church.

MEXICO: Semana Santa and Pascha are the two weeks of Easter. Semana Santa – begins with Palm Sunday and ends on Holy Saturday. Pascha – begins on Easter Sunday and ends on the following Saturday. Throughout this time period, the major events of Christ's final days: the Last Supper, the Passion, the Betrayal by Judas, Pontius Pilate's condemnation to death, the Stations of the Cross, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection are all marked through a series of vivid plays and processions.

Life at Labdara

100th Birthday Greetings

Our CENTENNARIAN MARIJA DAMBRAUSKAS turned 100 in February and celebrated the momentous event with her dear family. Congratulations Marija! We wish you much happiness and good health!



A 94th Celebration

ALVINA celebrated her 94th birthday on February 14th with her daughter to the sounds of HAPPY BIRTHDAY and a delicious torte shared with everyone. HAPPY 94th ALVINA!!!

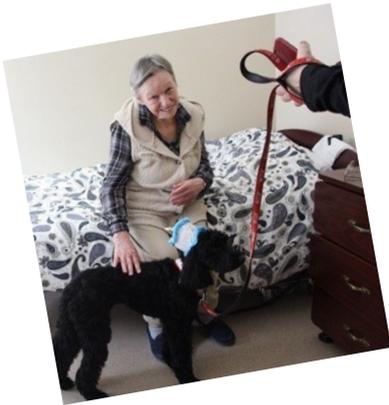




JACK our THERAPY DOG



JACK our THERAPY DOG celebrated his 7th birthday at Labdara. He visits us regularly and brings much warmth and joy to everyone: residents, staff and visitors.



Happy Birthday Jack and may you celebrate many more with us over the years.





SINCERE THANKS TO RCU:

SINCERE THANKS TO RCU: We are grateful for the Resurrection Credit Union's (RCU's) generous support in helping Labdara Lithuanian Nursing Home purchase a new floor scrubber for the kitchen.

In the foto from left to right: Vladas Sinila, Environmental Services Manager; Gwen Hillier, Territory Manager (Sani-Marc Inc.) Tamara Szczepanska, Culinary Services Manager.

A DOG IS MAN'S BEST FRIEND



Written by our resident Kostas

For those who live in Canada, it is not surprising that we appreciate the natural beauty of this country. Canada is the "Great North". It is known not only for its nature, its large and small lakes, but also for its history and its friendly and multi-ethnic inhabitants. Our indigenous peoples remind us to love and preserve everything that is natural and as yet unspoiled by man.

There is a great advantage to living in this wonderful, vast country full of different landscapes – home to a variety of plants and animals. And dogs are an important part of life here. Humans fell in love with them and befriended them early on in history. They have become our best friends and companions.

In the past, dogs were owned by the wealthy and were used primarily during the hunting season. The nobles hunted in the wild with the help of large aggressive dogs. Dogs were used mainly for work. But their qualities, such as loyalty to the owner, their friendliness and their help in everyday life, ensured that they eventually became a pet and a loyal friend of the household. Many ladies in the nobility bought small puppies of various breeds. They not only became their four-legged friends, but also a 'decoration' for their salons. The dogs were exploited less and less. They were more often trained for various rescue operations in the aftermath of major fires, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and were put to work on farms or looking after grazing sheep in the mountains.

Now dogs participate not only in sports competitions, but also in beauty contests. Some of them become therapy dogs, helping in rehabilitation and with functionality in everyday life. They also play an important role in reducing human loneliness. From a humorous point of view, if a dog tries to bite you and thus 'express his opinion', then don't believe that it is 'therapy dog'.

The service of four-legged friends has also expanded to the sphere of Police work and Forensics. Dogs, using their incredibly good sense of smell, help in the search for missing persons, search for drugs, participate in the arrest of criminals, and in the rescue of people. The Soviet dog "Laika" has even flown out to space!

The owner of the dog usually spares no expense when veterinary treatment is required. If necessary, the dog will receive all the necessary vaccinations, be fed with

prescription foods and vitamins.

They say that the dog often resembles its owner. This observation results in some comical truths!!!

Usually, people who raise dogs show the following characteristics: tenderness, correctness, attention to details and a lot of knowledge about nature. This particularly harsh winter has forced us to take extra care of our four-legged friends by dressing them in coats or sweaters and warm shoes for their walks outside. Of course, how much extra care a dog needs, depends on its breed. For example, the Siberian Husky loves the cold.

So, before acquiring a four-legged friend, we should find out in advance what food he will eat, what vaccinations he will need and what vitamins he will take, whether there will be enough space for him at home, whether the owner is willing to go for a walk with him several times a day.

However - all worries aside, it's all worth it – as a dog is man's best friend!
I send greetings for Spring and the upcoming Easter, dear friends!

Your friend - Konstanty (Kostas)



A Poem for this Easter Season

Selected by our resident Irena Žemaitienė

**Today I pray for those who've passed away.
For those who will no longer be at home,
With no more time to add: "I've something more to
say.."**

**For those who left their family and loving friends
behind.**

**And I pray for those whom I'll no longer meet,
Whose path will never cross with mine.**

**We'll fill the void with prayer -
Words meaningless and shattering the silence.**

**O God, be merciful to them,
Welcome them through gates of peace, of mystery.**

**I pray for those who have remained,
For those whose lives are fragile,
That joy, not sadness comes into their home**

(The author is unknown)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

(Deacon Kazys Ambrozaitis' thoughts for reflection)

ARE WE WORTHY?

Are we worthy of God-given holiness and fullness?

Many of us feel that we are not worthy of God's gift of holiness because of our sinful human nature. Let us reflect on how we can become worthy to accept God's call to us. Jesus often said to his disciples: "Here I am, do not be afraid; I am always with you."

In order to receive God's grace, we must not be afraid and open our hearts to God. Whether in old age or youth, in life, there are all kinds of obstacles that prevent our journey towards holiness. Life is full of all kinds of activities and distractions that prevent us from getting closer to God. Sometimes it is difficult to say even a short prayer.

Often, the worries of our old age distract us from such reflections. It is important to think in silence about how to turn away from evil and return to the love of God and neighbor. This is the essence of penance - the inner change of ourselves. Only then can we feel in union with God and in Charity with our neighbour.

What distances us most from God and from one another? What distances us are the mistakes we make about one another, our sins, our weaknesses. When we are freed from them, we will then begin to feel the nearness of our Creator and we will find it easier to really communicate with one another. Do not question your worthiness - everyone is worthy in the eyes of God, just open your heart to Him.

