

# Petras of Lithuania

By Monica Clark  
NC News Service

I met Petras quite by accident during a visit to the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius. It was a warm August Saturday which I had free from duties as a member of the Northern California Catholic peace mission to the Soviet Union.

I'd walked to the church to take part in the 500th-anniversary observances of the death of the country's patron, St. Casimir.

This large church has served as the central place of worship for the archdiocese since the 1953 confiscation of the Cathedral of St. Stanislaus. I found it filled with young parents presenting children for baptism, nervous brides and grooms awaiting their turn at the altar and scores of relatives and friends.

Petras, a 24-year-old student at Lithuania's only seminary, was assisting the priests. An altar boy with whom my companion had spoken briefly when we arrived introduced me to Petras, who spoke English.

Few American Catholics visit Vilnius. Petras was eager to learn all he could about Christian life outside his Soviet republic. In turn, wanted to learn firsthand about Catholics in a land where religious belief and practice are stifled.

When Petras was replaced at the altar we walked to a nearby park. Dressed in a well-worn suit, he looked like a poor businessman. He turned over his lapel to display

a small silver cross and told me religious symbols cannot be worn in public.

He talked of harassment by Soviet officials when he applied to the seminary. "Sometimes I feel afraid," he said. "Then I remember Jesus triumphed over adversity and I find courage to carry on."

My companion withdrew a small Bible from his backpack and Petras reached for it. "The whole Bible, you have the whole Bible?" he said in astonishment.

Arriving at Sts. Peter and Paul the following morning for Mass, I found a large crowd outside. "It's too early to go in," I thought. Soon I realized there wasn't standing-room inside.

Petras escorted me to a reserved seat in the sanctuary and I stared at the crowd so tightly packed that even one person's slight shift created a wave of motion.

Men and women of all ages were singing, reciting the rosary. Every few minutes a small child would land in the sanctuary, pushed there by a relative to see Lithuania's bishops concelebrate the Eucharist. During the Blessed Sacrament procession around the courtyard after Mass trumpets blared.

"This is a persecuted church, yet people are openly joyful," I kept thinking. "They believe in the life that emerges through suffering."

Later Petras led me silently up three flights of stairs to an apartment of friends. Seated at a table enjoying biscuits and instant coffee were university students and young professionals — Catholics, secretly living their faith.

They closed the windows so we could talk freely about their efforts to study Scripture, to introduce Vatican-II renewal, to organize young-adult groups.

They were surprised to learn of the laity's role in the U.S. church and shook their heads in frustration when I told of programs of sacramental preparation.

"The government would never permit that here," they said sadly. "Some parents send children to 'secret' nuns for religious education but it is dangerous."

I realized I was amidst a 20th-century catacomb church quietly keeping the gospel story alive and courageously passing on faith.

Their seclusion was not that of the frightened disciples after Calvary, but of the early Christians struggling to proclaim the resurrection in a foreign land.

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In the ordinary idiom, "living water" meant the fresh running water of a stream. The thought of having such a copious supply of this marvelous liquid running through her yard fired her imagination.

But Jesus used the expression "life-giving water" to refer to his teaching and his gift of the Spirit, the vivifying, energizing spirit of God himself.

The Easter liturgy celebrates the glorification of Jesus. Through his death and glorification Jesus was empowered to pour forth for us the life-giving treasures of water and blood.

Life has conquered death. Light has overcome darkness.

(Father Castelot teaches at St. John's Seminary, Plymouth, Mich.)

# FOOD...

## ...for thought

An Easter Pursuit  
By Theodore Hengesbach  
NC News Service

Easter brings memories of colored Easter eggs, the return of spring, family celebrations. But it also is a time when people remember the empty tomb, the women hurrying at dawn to anoint Jesus' body, the bewildered guards, the appearances of the risen Lord to his disciples.

Here is a little quiz just for fun that asks: How well do you remember all the details in the biblical accounts of the resurrection? This quiz is based on Matthew 28; Mark 16,1-8; Luke 24,1-49; John 20 and 21.

Take a minute to try your hand at this Easter pursuit. And then take another minute to re-read the four biblical passages just cited.

1. Who was the first to see the risen Jesus, according to Matthew and John?

a. Mary, Jesus' mother; b. Peter; c. John; d. Mary Magdalene.

2. How was the stone blocking the entrance to the tomb moved away, according to Matthew?

a. by an earthquake; b. by Jesus when he rose from the dead; c. by an angel; d. by Joseph of Arimathea.

3. Who made up the story that Jesus' disciples had come and stole his body from the tomb?

a. the guards; b. the chief priests and elders; c. Pontius Pilate; d. Herod.

4. According to Mark, who did the women tell that Jesus had risen from the dead?

a. John; b. Peter; c. Mary; d. They said nothing to anyone.

5. John tells of a race by two of Jesus' disciples to see the

tomb. Name the two disciples.

6. Who won the race to the tomb?

7. The risen Jesus was mistaken by some as:

a. a visitor to Jerusalem; b. a spirit; c. a gardener; d. all of the above; e. none of the above.

8. Which one of the disciples refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead until the nail prints in his body were seen?

a. Thomas; b. Nathaniel; c. Peter; d. Matthew.

9. How did Jesus demonstrate to the disciples that he was really alive?

a. he told them to touch him; b. he prepared breakfast for them; c. he ate some broiled fish; d. none of the above; e. all of the above.

10. Name two of the women who visited Jesus' tomb on that first Easter morning.

Answers:  
1. D. Matthew 28,1 and 9; John 20,14ff.  
2. C. Matthew 28,2.  
3. B. Mark 16,11-13.  
4. D. Mark 16,8.  
5. Peter and the disciple (John) whom Jesus loved. John 20,3-4.  
6. John. John 20,3-4.  
7. D. Luke 24,18 and 37; John 20,15.  
8. A. John 20,25.  
9. E. John 20,21 and Luke 24,39; John 20,9-12; Luke 24,42-43.  
10. Mary Magdalene. Matthew 28,1; Mark 16,1; Luke 24,10; John 20,1.  
Mary the mother of James. Mark 16,1; Luke 24,10.  
Salome. Mark 16,1.  
Joanna. Luke 24,10.  
"Other women." Luke 24,10.

## SECOND HELPINGS

"Listening to People of Hope," by Brother Leonard of the ecumenical monastery in Taize, France. This book tells the stories of 30 individuals throughout the United States struggling to help others living under difficult conditions of poverty and despair. They include: a young woman who found the simplicity in a California Catholic Worker house "exactly what I'm looking for"; a Baptist minister in San Antonio, Texas, whose services electrify people and lead them to make prayer a more regular part of their lives; a priest in Belmont, Calif., who runs a home for homeless teens. Brother Leonard says he wrote the book out of the conviction that people often "don't know what's going on next door." He believes the stories can demonstrate what the churches are called to become: "A people one yet diverse; suffering yet hoping; uniting struggle for justice and contemplation." (Pilgrim Press, 132 W. 31st St., New York, N.Y. 10001. \$6.95.)