

REPORT OF THE 6TH ANNUAL MEETING

25 - 28 FEBRUARY 2005

DRUSKININKAI, LITHUANIA

Like other years this conference was again an inviting, peaceful space for mutual spiritual direction as well as encouragement on our way as spiritual directors. It was challenging to encounter different European traditions of spirituality and spiritual direction.



The concrete context of this meeting appeared to be particularly important, effecting in many ways. Thanks to the introduction to the life and work of the famous Lithuanian composer, painter and writer [M.K. Ciurlionis](#) (1875-1911), we could experience something of the dynamics of the metaphors like wood(s), road and sea.

The Lithuanians like to be in the woods (for instance to find mushrooms). This is the place where they could stay pagans. Lithuania is the last country of Europe that became Christianized at the end of 14th century. But also from wood they carve impressive 'rupintojelis' (big or small wooden images of the listening suffering Christ: who cares about you and concerns Himself about you).



We have to go our way on a road we don't know where it will bring us to. What we know, is that we are probably able to find companions (or maybe a companion will find us), and, that this road will bring us to our Rupintojelis. In the very room we worked in, the Lithuanian hostesses and hosts had made for us from a long, long curtain an image of the road, with small lights, leading to a wonderful wooden statue of a Rupintojelis. This suffering and still contemplative Christ was present to us all through our meeting. All the days the chairs were in a wide circle around that image of the road.

And the metaphor 'sea' remembers us that we are living in the space of the Unnameable. We can not lay our hands on what is happening in the light of the love of God.

We were 37 all together from 12 different countries, different denominations (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed), bringing and sharing different experiences in spiritual direction. We stayed in the 'Regina' hotel. It was small enough and almost too luxurious. We could enjoy a warm bath, and it made us long for the sobriety of a monastery.

To taste something from what happened, and to offer as working models for other settings, we will shortly describe the program of this conference as follows. More details you can read in the [Appendices](#).

FRIDAY THE 25TH



After dinner we had our first short session. We were welcomed by Ligita and Johan and after that we were invited to write our names and the country we came from on a piece of bark (a metaphor of the wood and an ancient way of writing things down), say it out loud and lay it on the road to the suffering Christ (the Rupintojelis) in the middle of the room. After each five names, we sang the Taizé-hymn 'Bless the Lord my soul.' The rest of the evening was space for social encounter, meeting friends, seeking contact to those coming their first time, sharing stories. And then, finally going to bed.

SATURDAY THE 26TH

We started with a worship. Pia led us in a soft and attentive sort of chanting. We could feel the resonating areas in our bodies when singing.

After this, we were invited to visit the museum of Ciurlionis. Rokas Zobovas with his wife were our involved guides in the music (piano), paintings and stories of Ciurlionis. They brought us to the heart of the Lithuanian spirituality, deepening our views on the metaphors of wood, road and sea.

In the afternoon we did not miss the opportunity to share what crucial changes had taken place in our lives during the last year - for quite a number of us this being since the previous meeting in Denmark - looking at all this through the image of Christ we had taken with us. In a second session we were invited to share in small groups of five or six persons what this personal image of Christ meant to us, in particular in view of our ministry as spiritual directors.

We started the evening with worship. We listened to music of Ciurlionis, looked at paintings of him and listened to meditative texts. We received afterwards beautiful papers with the texts and the pictures of these paintings. If you wish, you can watch the presentation given (pictures and texts) by clicking [here](#).

SUNDAY THE 27TH

On Sunday morning our Lithuanian friends had placed for each of us a small wooden statue of the suffering Christ (Rupintojelis) on the road in the centre of our meeting room. We all received one copy and could hold it. Ligita then guided us in making contact with this image of Christ using only our hands and our heart, listening to what He says to me, and then, talking to Him. We received these precious images of Christ as a gift for our journey.

After making a [group photograph](#) we had a long session (the rest of the morning) in triads to be alternately spiritual director, directee and observer (or co-director). This was a special (and according to the evaluation: highly appreciated) possibility to receive and give spiritual guidance.



In the afternoon we shared our (practical) wisdom as spiritual directors by explaining the models of mutual support for spiritual directors in the different countries.

Eucharistic service Then Maureen showed us the process of making the logo for SD-Europe. We are very grateful for her creative work. See our website.

The rest of the afternoon we shared in the same small groups as the Saturday-afternoon our wisdom and experiences (who comes, why, what maybe are special, recurring themes ?) and closed the afternoon-sessions with a Eucharistic communion service with Lauri as our celebrant. (picture)

And in the evening of course there was social time.

MONDAY THE 28TH

On Monday-morning we had a business meeting.

Johan gave us information about several items, including the process of becoming a juridically recognized Association, possibilities for membership and creative use of our website.

Gisela gave us a taste (also with our ears and our mouths) of the place of our next Meeting: Vranov in the Czech Republic. The meeting will take place again in the last weekend of February, namely 24-27 February 2006.

Henry led the discussion about the Draft of a Mission Statement for SD-Europe. (See the [appendices](#)). The discussion will be continued in the forum at our website.

At the end there was an open evaluation. Everybody was very charmed by the special hospitality of our [Lithuanian friends](#). Johan thanked everybody who made this conference possible.

We ended with a closing worship. Aukje led us in this beautiful ceremony around the theme of living water. We did lectio divina on the story of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), and offered each other water from the well and a blessing for our journey.

Wishing everyone a safe journey with refreshing moments at the Well of Living Water, we rounded off this blessed event.

Gideon van Dam and Mikko Peura

APPENDICES

1. Singing with our body
2. Learning from each other
3. Sharing our stories with the image of Christ
4. Models of mutual support in different countries
5. Discussion about the draft of a Mission Statement
6. An exercise in Lectio Divina