

June 24, 2009

It is finished. Our time with the youth is over. It was sad to go, but I know they really enjoyed having us here. The Word was spoken, and we pray that God would sustain them in the faith. We also pray that they would continue to go to church for the Divine Service to receive both Word and Sacrament. They were very sad to see us go, but the friendships we have made here will last until we meet them again next year. Liz taught the lesson today on the good and bad harvest. On that last day, God will separate the good crops from the bad ones. It will be a day we Christians will joyfully celebrate. After saying our good byes, we headed to Mickey-D's. Not too shabby. After that, we went to Akropolis (big mall) to finish our shopping. It is the first time all week that we have been back to our hotel when the sun is out. Usually, we are out very late with the youth or Romas and his wife. Now, we can relax and prepare ourselves to leave tomorrow. Tomorrow, we head for the land of my forefathers = Deutschland! Zer gut! It shall be a good trip before we head home. God's blessings and continue to pray for the youth at St. John Lutheran Church in Klaipeda, Lithuania!

June 23, 2009

I will make this short and sweet because it is 9:22 AM on June 24, and I need my cup of coffee... Yesterday was a lot of fun. Instead of working at the church in Klaipeda, we went to a Latvian Lutheran church (about one or two hours away). Yet, we still had the same youth. Again, we are getting more and more close to them, and it is a lot of fun to be around them. David did the homily and lesson. He did a very good job explaining the Good Samaritan is Jesus who has picked us up off the side of the ride and has rescued us from death. We didn't have time for games, but we did go to the beach. That was a lot of fun as well. After that, Romas, his wife, our translator, and all of us went to a "jazz club" in Klaipeda. I got a juicy steak. It was good, and the music there was good as well. After that, we went home for an early bed (12:30 AM). Today is the last day with the youth, and I'm sure it will be a lot of fun! Blessings to all!

June 22, 2009

Today was my turn to teach. I led the homily on prayer, shared the lesson with Joe on the story of Bartimaeus, and taught them how to play American futbol. Joe and I did pretty well. I think they understood the fact that we are all like Bartimaeus because we are all spiritually blind with sin. Just like Bartimaeus, we are healed from this blindness not by what we do but by what Jesus Christ does for us (His life, death, and resurrection). It was an absolute blast to teach them football. It took them a while to get the whole "pass" part down, but once they got that, they enjoyed it. We started off by just playing "pass" (football version of ultimate Frisbee), and then later, we moved up to play flag football. They wanted to play tackle football (even the ladies), but we decided that would not be the best thing to do. Our time with the youth is becoming very enjoyable for both sides. It helps a lot that most of them can speak some sort of English. It is a lot of fun to joke around with them, and I think they really like having us there.

After the time with the youth, we went to the city of Polanga. This is a real tourist spot in Lithuania. We walked down the streets filled with shops, restaurants, and attractions. The

street led all the way to the beach, where we sat down for some drinks. We then had dinner at a very good restaurant. I had beef stroganoff, which was different from what we have in America. It was just beef, really good sauce, and onions. No noodles. Very, very good. After dinner, Romas and his wife took us through a beautiful park and a path that led to a gorgeous site of the sunset against the sea. Great day! I hope all is well in America. Let your prayers continue to rise to our Father that He may bless our work here in Lithuania.

June 21, 2009

“This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” –Psalm 118:24. Today, we gathered together at St. John Lutheran church not as Lithuanians and Americans, but we gathered as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. It does not matter what country you live in or what language you speak, the Word of God was received by all people in that place. His forgiveness of sins was given. His blessing of peace was given. Our translator asked us if we were bored during the service, and we said no. We explained to her that if a Lutheran Church uses the liturgy, we will know exactly what is going on if it is spoken in English, Lithuanian, or whatever. Lutheran liturgy is Lutheran liturgy. Pastor Thoma preached, and I know that the people of the church enjoyed having him and us there. We all were introduced before the congregation, and they gave us a gift, which were pictures of Klaipeda put into a picture frame. We returned their gift with our gift of money given by our whole congregation. They were well pleased.

The first day of actual work with the youth went very well. We started it all with Evening Prayer and a homily led by Pastor and Joe. Pastor explained the true purpose of worship, which is God giving us His gifts, and we return with thanks. Joe explained why we begin worship with the invocation and making the sign of the cross. Dave and I taught them the game of Ultimate Frisbee. They loved it! Liz and Christa taught them about Independence Day by making tie-dye shirts. Again, they loved it, and the shirts turned out very nice. Christa led the Bible study speaking of the people of Israel in need for their God. We too have that need for our God and His gifts of Word and Sacrament. We ended the day with the Lithuanian’s game of “potato”. The goal of the game: hit the people in the middle of the circle with a volleyball. If you can do that, you will be very successful. Sounds fun, right? It was. We had pizza for dinner. During dinner, our interpreter, Yovedas (most likely spelled that wrong), was very surprised that we believe women should not be ordained ministers. Her idea of America is very liberal (which is true), but she was very strong in the idea of “women shutting up in church”. Now, we are back in our hotel rooms. Blessings to all in America!

June 20, 2009

Romas (the pastor of St John Lutheran Church in Klaipeda (the church we are working with)) took the youth group and us to Riga, Latvia. It was about a 5-hour road trip starting at around 9 in the morning. It was long, but it was also a great time to socialize with the youth. They are very kind and very welcoming. David and I sort of learned their card games, and we taught them some of ours. America plays “B.S.”, and Lithuania calls it “Liar”. We thought that was neat. Riga, Latvia is a very beautiful city. We visited a

Lutheran cathedral and went up the steeple. We also received a tour of the city by some English-speaking Lutheran Latvians. On the way back home, we stopped by “The Hill of Crosses” (see pictures). It is amazing to see the faith of our brothers and sisters in Christ by how many crosses were on this hill. Quite a site to see. By the time we got the church in Klaipeda, it was midnight. We rushed back to the hotel, fell on our beds, and went to sleep. We start work tomorrow with the youth. Bible studies, games, and crafts. Continue to pray for our work that the Lord’s Gospel may be taught in all of its truth and purity!

June 19, 2009

We praise God for the PAST travels, and pray for the FUTURE adventures. The plane rides over here were very good. The airbus from Chicago to Denmark was quite comfortable with movies, dinner and lunch, and I actually was able to sleep some. The only problem with the plane rides was the security issues I was having. Pastor Thoma calls me the “weak link” because I am so slow in the security lines. It is tough for me to take my shoes off, take all of the things out of my pockets, put my shoes on the table, get my computer out, get my liquids out, etc. Oh well!

Today was a nice day in the great country of Lithuania. Began the morning with no wake up call (I think the front desk forgot about us), which led to a late start to our day. We took a ferry over to the other side of the Baltic Sea and took a bus ride to Nida, Lithuania. Quite a bus ride! Apparently, sitting in chairs isn’t a priority on a 40-minute bus ride in Lithuania because many people were standing due to not enough seating. In Nida, we saw the great dunes of Lithuania. Reminded me a lot of up north in Traverse City. We had lunch in Nida, also. Soup, chicken, mashed potatoes, peas, carrots, sauerkraut, and cucumbers. Delicious! We just got our luggage that was lost in Copenhagen a couple of minutes ago. Alleluia! Clean clothes feel very nice. For dinner, we had some pizza. The pizza here is very large, very thin, and also pretty good. After dinner, we went to the Lutheran church in Klaipeda. There we met the entire group (about 30-40 youth). We pray that the Word of God by the work of the Holy Spirit has brought this big group here that their faith may be strengthened or for some maybe that their faith may begin in Christ. At the church, we played games to get to each other, worshiped in Evening prayer, and sang songs. It is very exciting to start working with the youth! That is all. Continue to pray for us that we may faithfully serve our Lord Jesus here in Lithuania.