

THE 2020 ANNUAL LCAS MEETING

The annual Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Sciences (LCAS) meeting took place on September 12 in virtual mode using ZOOM due to the coronavirus. In attendance were 22 people – both members and supporters of LCAS.

A new Board was elected, consisting of: Dr. Aleksas Gedmintas, Dr. Žara Girniūtė, Dr. Mirga Girniuvienė, Dr. Ramūnas Kondratas, Paulius Rizauckas, and Onutė Traitor. Voting took place electronically and was coordinated by LCAS member Dr. Tomas Girnius.

Dr. Mirga Girniuvienė gave the President's report on the work and status of the organization. Members confirmed the acceptance of one new member - Monika Girniūtė, who received two Master's degrees in Psychology from Maastricht University and the University of Amsterdam. The academic portion of the program consisted of two lectures – a Philosophy lecture by

Dr. John Knašas and a Social Studies lecture by Dr. Barbora Tedrow.

Dr. John Knašas is a member of LCAS and a volunteer at the ALKA (American Lithuanian Cultural Archive) library. He is Philosophy professor emeritus at St. Thomas Aquinas University Center for Thomistic Studies in Houston, Texas. He has taught philosophy in the Philippines, in Italy and in Eastern Europe. In 2004 he was a Fulbright professor in Vilnius. From 2006 to 2009 he held the Bishop Hold Chair in Graduate Philosophy.

Dr. John Knašas.

Dr. Knašas is interested in Aquinas' philosophy, Metaphysics, Cosmological thinking, Cultural philosophy, neo-Thomism, philosophical



psychology and ethics. He has published several books and articles on these topics.

When he taught in Lithuania, he had the impression that most of the students were skeptical about Aquinas' philosophy, believing it to be merely statements about Church doctrine, not true philosophy. In his lecture Dr. Knašas attempted to explain why Lithuanian philosophers would find Aquinas enlightening.

He used Aquinas' explanation of human understanding to illustrate his point. Aquinas' *analogon* (reminiscent of Plato's *idea*) is at the basis of his theory of understanding. The over-arching *analogon* is being (*esse*). The analogon of being motivates man to understand everything and also motivates him to seek the good. In this way, it becomes clear that Aquinas bases volition in reason, not in emotions. In this sense we can say that man has free will. In his brief exposition Dr. Knašas successfully presented Aquinas as a systematic philosopher akin to Plato, Aristotle and Kant.

During the question and answer session Dr. Knašas explained how he moved from History to Philosophy during his undergraduate years. One day he realized that the word „am“ is more than a connecting word. It has a meaning which the young History student unsuccessfully attempted to explain. This was very frustrating. Even his Philosophy professor did not quite understand why he was so hooked on this word...

Later Dr. Knašas studied the works of Gilson and Maritain. These twentieth century philosophers acquainted him with Aquinas' concept of *actus essendi*. The development of this concept was exactly that which the young undergraduate had been restlessly searching for.

The second lecturer, Barbara Tedrow, earned her Social Studies doctorate in 1998 at Michigan State University's Department of Education. From 2002 to 2008 she was a Visiting Fulbright professor in South Africa and from 2016 to 2020 she was a Visiting Fulbright specialist in Lithuania. After retiring she continued teaching as a part-time instructor at the Georgia State University Department of Education.



Dr. Barbara Tedrow.

Dr. Tedrow is both Lithuanian and Ukrainian. Her mother's parents both came from Alytus. She is interested in the development of education in Lithuania from the nineteenth century on, especially keeping in mind that during this period Lithuania moved from a subjugated to a free state two times.

From 2014 she has focused her attention on superstitious and magical thinking in Eastern Europe. During the LCAS meeting she summarized the research she has been doing with Jurgita Babarskienė, Assistant

Professor of Social Sciences at LCC International University in Klaipėda. Her topic was "Superstitious and Magical Thinking and Adult Identity in Eastern European History." The Question and Answer session included a lively discussion on the question "Can faith be called a superstition?"

The purpose of LCAS is to provide a Lithuanian Catholic forum for sharing academic work. The purpose and the activities of LCAS is described in its website at www.lkma.org

If you are interested in becoming a member, please write Mirga Girniuvienė at mgirnius@hotmail.com.

Mirga Girniuvienė