

# THE NATIONAL MONUMENTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP GARDENS IN THUNDER BAY THAT DISPLAY SYMBOLS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

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## A Brief History

Situated in Northeastern Europe, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, form a group of nations known as the Baltic States. Of these three, Lithuania, which has a total population of three million, has the highest density of Catholics, (about 79%) and continues today to be a vibrant Christian nation.

### Many Persecutions

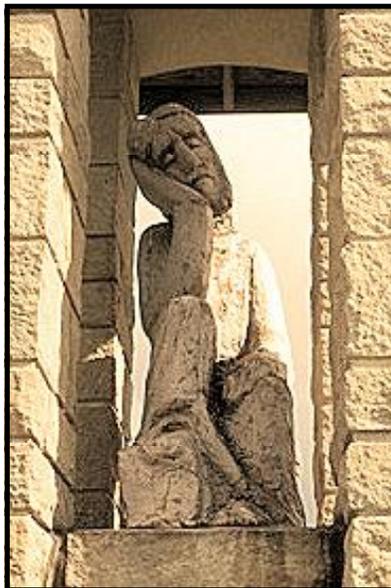
Since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and until 1991, Lithuanians have suffered much injustice at the hands of hostile neighbouring states.

- ◆ In 1795 the country was taken over by Russia;
- ◆ then, in 1915, it was occupied and controlled by Germans for a short time before it gained independence once again after W.W. I in 1918;
- ◆ in 1940, it was annexed by the Soviet Union, resulting in mass executions and deportations of many;
- ◆ then again, in June 1941 this small state was captured by German Nazis, who practically exterminated the entire Jewish population;
- ◆ after this, Lithuania was again occupied by the Soviet Union in July 1944, becoming a country under Communist rule, before gaining independence once again in 1991.

## LITHUANIA

## The Monument

Housed in a niche in the Garden's monument is a stone sculpture of Christ, scourged before His own crucifixion and bearing an expression of exhaustion and grief. He is depicted as One Who is con-



templating His own unjust treatment and the many injustices that have been waged against other innocent victims in world history. Symbol of the Persecuted As Christianity spread in Lithuania in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, so did images of this suffering Christ, as wandering woodcarvers of native folk culture carved it into hollowed-out tree trunks. Today it is found throughout Lithuania (*and where Lithuanian immigrants now live*) in churches, homes and shrines. It has become the iconic symbol of the inhabitants of this nation who relate the suffering of Christ to their own trials as a persecuted people.

### The "Lithuanian" Cross

An ornate cross, which Lithuanians designed and now identify as their own, is at the top of the niche. It is called, the Cross of Divine Redemption, surrounded by three symbols of different objects found in nature: a radiant sun, a crescent moon and tree branches.

## A Faith History

While pockets of Christianity existed in the territory of 'Kievan Rus' which we now know as the Ukraine, the widespread official governmental acceptance of Christianity did not occur until 988 A.D..

Olga, regent of 'Kievan Rus'

When Igor, the Prince of Kiev was killed in 945 A.D., the crown passed to his son Sviatoslav who was too young at the time

to rule. As a result, his mother, Olga, acted as regent to her son until 960. During her regency she travelled to Constantinople, then the centre of the Byzantine Empire. There, she chose to convert to Christianity and to be baptized. When she returned home, she urged her son, Sviatoslav to be baptized as well, but to no avail. Despite this

setback Olga still sowed the seeds of Christianity by having churches built in many cities in her nation.

Prince Vladimir the Great

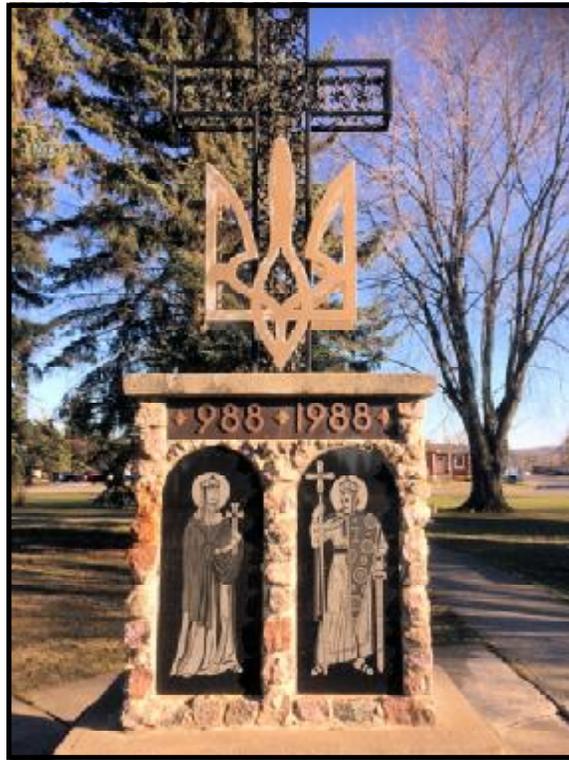
When Sviatoslav died, Olga's grandson, Vladimir, who succeeded his father, did convert to Christianity and, in 988 A.D. officially Christianized his nation. Because of their efforts, both Olga and Vladimir are venerated today, as Saint champions of the Faith by Ukrainians.

## THE UKRAINE

Two dates and three Christian symbols grace this imposing monument, which celebrates the 1,000 year anniversary of the Christianization of the Ukraine.

The Cross, A Trident and Icons

◆ An ornate 3 dimensional iron cross is the symbol which dominates the monument. Its large size and position denote how important and how cher-



ished Christianity is in the lives of Ukrainians.

◆ Placed in front of the cross is a trident, an ancient and now readily recognized Ukrainian symbol that was used by the original rulers of the 'Kievan Rus' nation and was officially adopted as the coat of arms of the Ukrainian Republic in 1918. This medieval symbol not only depicts the Trinity

but it also resembles a descending dove, which represents the Holy Spirit.

◆ Icons of Saints Olga and Vladimir Below the 1,000 year span of Christianity represented by the two dates, are the figures of St. Olga and St. Vladimir. True to historical facts, Olga is depicted, presenting the cross to her people (*introducing Christianity*) and Vladimir, firmly planting the cross in his land (*officially establishing the Faith there*).

## The Monument

## The Monument

Close to the area adjoining St. Joseph's Hogarth-Riverview Manor is where we find the large imposing Monument to the Slovak Nation.

### Mountain Ranges

As we approach, we see three concrete triangular pyramids, firmly planted close

together and reaching up to the sky. They artistically depict the majestic mountain ranges that are found in this part of Eastern Europe. Two of the three represent the Tatra and Fatra ranges in the Carpathian Mountains in what is present day, Slovakia. The third monolith represents the "Matra" mountains, now

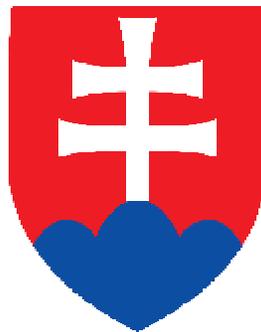
located in neighbouring Hungary.

### The Christian Crest

Engraved on the face of the middle stone pyramid is a blue rectangle which contains the coat of arms of Slovakia. At its base is a double barred cross of Christ, which is often used by Christians of Eastern Europe. This double barred cross was introduced to this region by the two missionaries from the Byzantine Empire who brought the Christian Faith to the peoples

## SLOVAKIA

of this land. It is used on the crest to represent Slovakia as an heir and guardian of Christian Faith! missionaries from the Byzantine Empire who brought the Christian Faith to the peoples of this land. It is used on the crest to represent Slovakia as heir and guardian of Christian Faith!



### Two Great Saints

In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Ratislav, the Moravian Prince requested that the Byzantine Emperor send missionaries to Moravia, (*which today encompasses Slovakia and other Eastern nations*), "to explain the Christian truths to his subjects, in their native language". The brothers, Cyril & Methodius were sent. They translated

prayers and rituals in the language of the people and Christianity became well established throughout the land.

### An Important Castle and Village

Adjacent to the principle Monument is a painstakingly fashioned replica of a castle built in the thirteenth century on a mountain above the Orava river in the northern Slovakian village of Oravský Podzámok. According to the attached information plaque, the majority of the original Slovak immigrants to Thunder Bay came from this area.

"Polonia Semper Fidelis"

In 966 A.D., when Poland emerged as an independent state, its ruler at the time embraced Christianity with his entire nation. Since then and, throughout much of Polish history, the Catholic Church has continued to play a major role in Poland's education, culture and morality. Hence,

the Latin phrase, "Polonia Semper Fidelis" (*"Poland is Forever Faithful"*) is the motto on the lips of proud Poles all over the world. It underlines their conviction that Poland will continue to always be a Christian State!

The Polish Eagle  
The principle monument of Poland which stands on top of a grassy hill in the Park displays the secular side of the Polish Republic.

There, between two stone pillars is depicted a crowned white eagle, the centuries old and universally recognized image of the Polish State. The crown, as well as the eagle's beak and talons, are golden, its wings are outstretched and its head is turned to its right. Of course, the Monument's displayed dates, (1867 and 1967), pay tribute to Canada's centennial of Confederation.

**POLAND**A Memorial Prayer Shrine

.. *The Black Madonna of Czestochowa*  
This famous icon of Mary, venerated as the Queen of all Poles, has been intimately associated with Poland for the past 600 years. It has become a symbol of protection and of the cultural identity of the entire population of Poland.

Hence, it is not surprising that her image would appear at the top of this second monument in our local Polish memorial!

.. *A Very Popular Pole*  
A bronze plaque below the Madonna pays tribute to one of the

most famous and popular Poles of all time, St. John Paul II. Canonized a Saint shortly after his death, John Paul is the only Pole who was ever elected to the Papacy in the Church's two thousand year history. Under the Holy Father's image

are engraved these loving and memorable words: *"In Memory of Pope John Paul II, Beloved son of the Polish Nation; dedicated by grateful fellow citizens of Thunder Bay"*.

Below, two other plaques complete this shrine. One commemorates Poland's millennium as a nation and the other celebrates its 1,050<sup>th</sup> year of Christianity.



# HUNGARY

## The Monument

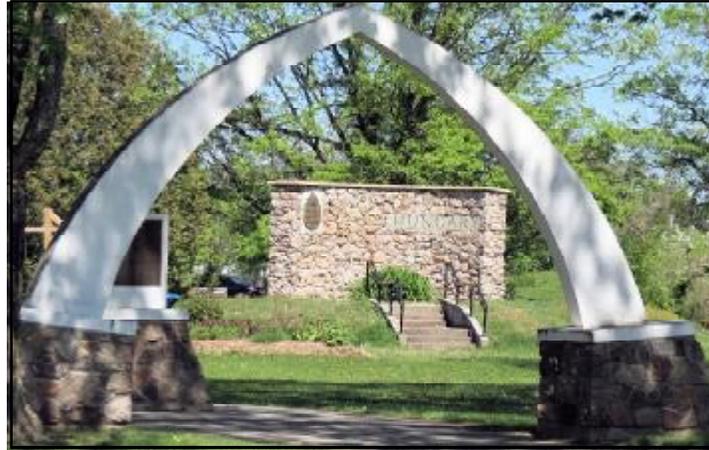
As we enter the Friendship Gardens from its western arched walkway, we encounter this curved stone Monument, with its Christ-centred coat of arms.

### Early Settlers

“Magyars”, are the ancestors of the Hungarians of today. They migrated westward from the region of the Urals in the late 9<sup>th</sup> century, to settle in the

Carpathian basin and to establish a principality there. Their faith then was a paganism based on ancient myths. Hungary’s First King Christianity was first established in Hungary during the

reign of St. Stephen I, venerated by all Hungarians as their first King and founding Father of the Nation. Stephen was baptised into the Christian Faith just before he succeeded his father as ruler, in 997. As leader, he unified the various tribes of the Carpathian Basin into what is now Hungary and pledged to protect its independence. Then, he set about to transform his nation into a Christian state. His endeavour was rewarded by Pope Sylvester II, who sanctioned and blessed his reign as sovereign of Hungary. On Christmas Day in 1000 A.D. he was crowned as Hungary’s first king with a



crown which was sent to him by the Pope. It is still enshrined in their Parliament.

### Christian Symbols

Two Emblems of the Christian Faith are prominently displayed on our Monument’s Coat of Arms: the “Double-barred Cross” on its shield and the “Holy Crown” at the top (see inset). The left “secular” side of the

divided shield features 4 horizontal stripes, which represent the 4 rivers of Hungary. The right “religious” side, with its 3 hills is dominated by a double-barred cross, the symbol of Christ, commonly used in most Eastern European states .

### The “Holy Crown”

Although Hungary is no longer a Kingdom but a Republic, a royal crown was left to sit atop the shield because it is a model of the one worn by St. Stephen. Unique to this “Hungarian” crown, is its slanted cross at the top. Legends abound as to why it is bent. Some say that it happened when it was sent from Rome, while others believe it was damaged in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when it was hastily hidden from invaders. In any case, it was decided to leave it in this way, since this odd feature identifies it as a Christian crown, unique to Hungary.



## Scotland's Patron Saint

# SCOTLAND

Andrew, the Apostle, has been celebrated in Scotland for over 1,000 years, by annual feasts being held in his honour on his day, November 30<sup>th</sup>. However, it was not until 1320 that he was officially proclaimed Scotland's Patron Saint.

### St. Andrew

The Gospels tell us that Andrew was a fisherman who was born in Bethsaida, Galilee, the then principal fishing port of Palestine. He and his brother, Simon Peter were

called by Jesus to be two of His 12 Apostles. After the Ascension of Jesus, Andrew went on to preach the Gospel around the shores of the Black Sea and

throughout what is now Greece and Turkey. Like most of the Apostles and

disciples of Jesus, he was imprisoned for his preaching and was executed by order of the Roman Governor. He was martyred in 60 A.D. in Greece by crucifixion on an "X" shaped cross. His relics were first brought to Constantinople (*modern day, Istanbul*) and later to Italy. It is believed that some of Andrew's



relics were brought to and enshrined in the town of St. Andrew, in Scotland.

### Saint Andrew's Cross

After he was officially recognized as their Patron Saint, Scots have used Andrew's "X" shaped cross as an identifying sym-

bol of their land. It is found on their flag in white on a blue field (*called, the Saltire*), and as one of the symbolic Saints' crosses on the U.K.'s, Union Jack. It is also

worn as a badge on hats in Scotland and appears on souvenirs everywhere throughout the nation.

### Our Canadian "New Scotland"



In our country, the flag of Nova Scotia (*New Scotland*) bears the same "X" sym-

bol though it is a blue cross on a white field with the Royal Lion in the centre. Finally, it is also used as an identifying symbol of Christian Scotland right here in Thunder Bay's Friendship Gardens. The "X" shaped cross of Scotland's Patron, St. Andrew, emanates in four directions from the base of this Memorial!