

## MISCELLANY

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### THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ESTONIA, 1918–2001

BY

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In the Middle Ages, Estonia was Catholic for roughly four centuries (1227–1626). Under Swedish rule (1561–1710) the Catholic faith was forbidden and, after the expulsion of the last faithful in 1626, the Catholic tradition in Estonia was totally wiped out.<sup>1</sup> Under the Russian Emperors (1710–1918), as the Catholic religion was permitted again, a diaspora Catholic community was born, belonging to the Archdiocese of Mohilev, which covered all Russia. Four missions (later parishes) were created: Tallinn (German: Reval, Russian: Revel, 1786), Narva (1835), Tartu (German: Dorpat, Russian: Jurjew, 1849), and Valga (German: Valk, 1915). They took care of Catholics, belonging to different nationalities of the Russian Empire.<sup>2</sup> For the Estonians, it remained a church of foreigners.

#### **The First Apostolic Administrator: Antonino Zecchini, S.J., 1924–1931**

After the Russian revolution of 1917, Estonia and its neighbors (Finland, Latvia, and Lithuania) grasped the opportunity to gain their national independence. In the year 1918 Estonians proclaimed the Republic of Estonia, a democratic state, which granted all citizens the freedom of religion.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>There is no information about Catholics in Estonia for the period 1626–1770.

<sup>2</sup>See Robert Aubert, "Estonie," in *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques*, XV (1963), 1068–1080; Boleslaw Kumor, "Estonia," in *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, IV (1983), 1153–1155.

<sup>3</sup>Independence manifesto (February 24, 1918), §§ 1 and 3; [First] Constitution of the Estonian Republic (1920), §§ 6 and 11. The separation of the State from the Church was de-

For the Catholics in the new independent States of the Baltic region, the political independence meant also ecclesiastical reorganization. The first step was the passage (1918) of Estonia from the jurisdiction of Mohilev to the newly re-erected Diocese of Riga (which had been the center of the Crusades against Estonia in the thirteenth century, and then the metropolitan see for Estonia's three Catholic dioceses until 1560). A second step was prepared and brought to conclusion by Archbishop Antonino Zecchini, who was first nominated Apostolic Visitor for the three Baltic States (1921), then Apostolic Delegate for the same (1922), and finally (1924) the first Apostolic Administrator of Estonia. This new Apostolic Administration was immediately subject to the Holy See, and thus no longer to the Archbishop of Riga. Until the present day Estonia has remained an Apostolic Administration.

In the year 1918 there were only four Catholic parishes (Tallinn, Tartu, Narva, and Valga) in Estonia, all of them urban communities. Before the beginning of World War I, there had been some 6,000 Catholics in Estonia, but as many of them were military and civil servants of the Russian Empire and after its collapse emigrated from Estonia, the first Estonian census (1922) found only 2,536 Catholics (or 0.2% of a total population of 1,107,000, vs. 79% Lutherans and 19% Orthodox) in the country.<sup>4</sup>

It was a little flock, but dispersed in many small groups, a typical Diaspora church. About the half of all the faithful resided in the capital city, Tallinn, forming the only sizable congregation. The main problem of the new Administrator was regular pastoral care for all those small groups outside Tallinn. Moreover, there was the language question to complicate the situation: a traveling priest or catechizer would have needed the knowledge of at least five languages (Polish, Lithuanian, German, Russian, and Estonian). Many of the Catholics were of Polish and Lithuanian origin, who did not speak Estonian at all (until 1918 they did not need to, as everybody was able to communicate in Russian, the language of the Empire); this is why the Estonians used the name "the Polish church." Indeed, this was the prevailing language in the most visible parish, that of Tallinn.

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clared in 1925 (*de facto* the separation had been there since the beginning of the independence). A special Law on Religious Associations and Their Alliances was issued in

At the beginning of his pastoral service (1924) Archbishop Zecchini had only three priests to take care of his four parishes, one diocesan and two Jesuit fathers (born respectively in Latvia, Luxembourg, and Germany). Fortunately, these parishes possessed relatively new churches: built in 1845 (in Tallinn), 1899 (in Tartu), and 1907 (in Narva and Valga). Unfortunately, the Archbishop had to reside outside Estonia, as he became also papal nuncio for Latvia. His diplomatic tasks did not give him much time for pastoral work, as even the legal conditions for the activity of the Catholic Church in Estonia had to be worked out on a governmental level, all of his three priests being of non-Estonian origin.<sup>5</sup> Among other things, he had to work out extensive parish statutes, required by the Estonian laws for religious communities.<sup>6</sup>

As the main object of Archbishop Zecchini's efforts was to lay the foundations for the normal functioning of his four parishes, approaching Estonians was out of the question, and not intended by him. Even so, he was glad to ordain (1926) a young man who had begun his seminary studies before Zecchini came to Estonia. His was the first Catholic ordination in Estonia since the Lutheran reformation. The new priest, Leon Abraitis was born in Estonia to Lithuanian parents, but also spoke Estonian and worked first in the parish of Tallinn, then in Narva. Unfortunately, he died after a service of only four years (1930).

Another hopeful beginning was made in 1928, as an Estonian orthodox priest wished to join the Catholic Church. Zecchini accepted him and, as early as 1929, opened a Catholic chapel of Byzantine rite, where Estonian was the liturgical language. But it did not work out due to various reasons, and the chapel was closed in 1934.<sup>7</sup>

In 1918 a tiny Catholic catechism (twenty-four pages, published in 1866)<sup>8</sup> was the only printed information the Church had to offer to Estonians, the bulk of the Catholics possessing copious religious literature in their respective languages. This situation did not change during the first Administrator's service; only one small leaflet of prayers was added.

<sup>5</sup>Zecchini had been instrumental in preparing the Concordat of 1922 between Latvia and the Holy See. In Estonia he was preparing the ground for an eventual agreement. It should be noted that Vatican archival materials can be consulted only on matters prior to the year 1922.

<sup>6</sup>See fn. 3.

<sup>7</sup>The second Administrator (Eduard Profitlich) preferred Narva as the residence for the priests of the Byzantine rite (also called Uniates), and the residence was transferred from Haapsalu to Narva.

<sup>8</sup>This was a bilingual booklet, *Katbolischer Katechismus / Kattoliko Katehismus*, by Johann Ignaz von Felbiger (Narva, 1866), forty-eight pages.

**The Second Apostolic Administrator:  
Eduard Profitlich, S.J., 1931–1941**

A new, more promising period began under the second Administrator, who was sent to Estonia in 1930 to help out with parish work, as there were only two priests left. These two were Jesuits, and so was Father Profitlich, born 1890 in Germany, but he was also fluent in Polish. As he proved to be suitable for the task, he was named Apostolic Administrator a year later (1931). Unfortunately, he was given only a short time—ten years—in this office.

Father Profitlich was a hard-working priest who realistically assessed the needs of the faithful and his own possibilities. Moreover, he was appreciated for his pastoral qualities and people of different views, even atheists, came to him for spiritual counseling. His activity was appreciated by Pope Pius XI; on December 27, 1936, he received episcopal consecration in Tallinn. As Bishop Eduard had already obtained Estonian nationality, he was the first citizen of this Republic to be elevated to this dignity in the Catholic Church.

The second Administrator had inherited from his predecessor the task of taking care of the small groups of faithful dispersed all over Estonia. He had luck in finding more priests and other helpers, among both his fellow Jesuits and German Capuchins: in the year 1939, which may be regarded the high point of his activity, there were fourteen priests, five religious brothers, and fifteen sisters to take care of ten parishes. He also managed to find funds to finance his pastoral activities, for the small number of faithful was not able to give substantial contributions. Thus, by 1939, the young Administration had received a solid pastoral organization.

Since his arrival in Tallinn, Profitlich was convinced that the Church of Estonia had to be open to Estonians. As the other churches of the country had traditionally close ties to certain nationalities, he had to convince his basically alien flock to accept his idea. To resolve difficulties of this kind, his former sojourn in Poland proved to be a great help regarding the Polish group. To be sure, the Administrator gave a good example, beginning very soon to preach in Estonian. With all this, Profitlich did not want any proselytism<sup>9</sup> and warned his helpers against it. He naturally would not try to reject sincere seekers, and there was a small, but growing number of converts.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>The census of 1934 registered 2,234 Catholics, slightly less than twelve years earlier. (For more detail, consult Risch, *op. cit.*, p. 133, and Hugo Reiman, "Kirikuelu 1930–34," *Eesti Statistika*, 160 (1935), 126–130.

<sup>10</sup>One of them, Ignace Lcopp, came from Marxism, began to study theology, and was ordained a priest. He later became an internationally known author (writing some twenty-

From the beginning of his ministry, one of Profittlich's main objectives was religious education and religious vocations. A boarding home for boys in Tallinn and a kindergarten in Narva were among his first foundations. He also pioneered the publication of Catholic books and periodicals in Estonian. In 1931 a Catholic catechism<sup>11</sup> appeared, in 1932 a missal for the faithful, in 1933 the monthly *Kiriku Elu* (The Life of the Church), and, in 1935, the quarterly *Übine Kirik* (The Shared Church), dedicated to church union themes. His personal contribution as a theological writer was remarkable: in seven years he published at least 127 articles in Estonian. A series of them was even published in book form. In 1935 a church-owned printing office began to operate. In 1940 the first two Gospels in a new translation with commentary were printed there.<sup>12</sup> They were a part of a new Catholic New Testament edition. The printing of the Gospel of Luke was interrupted by the Soviets, who confiscated the shop.

In the early 1930's there were great hopes for a possible union with the Orthodox Churches. As both Estonian- and Russian-speaking Orthodox communities were present in Estonia, Profittlich tried to start the dialogue in more than one way. In Narva (a town on the eastern border of Estonia, with almost 8,000 Orthodox) a Catholic chapel of Byzantine rite was opened as early as 1932, followed by a kindergarten in 1933. The chapel was taken care of by two Dutch Capuchin Fathers, the kindergarten by three Polish nuns.

One of the pioneers in the ecumenical field was a French Jesuit, Father Charles Bourgeois, who came to Estonia in 1932 and, after working for some years in Haapsalu and in Narva, founded a small monastery of the Byzantine rite at Esna (Central Estonia), from where he edited the unionist quarterly and organized conferences in various places. Like Bishop Eduard, Father Vassily (his monastic name) was soon fluent in Estonian.<sup>13</sup>

In 1935 two Estonian Orthodox seminarians joined the Church, and Bishop Profittlich sent them to Rome to follow their studies for the

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five books, mainly about religion, philosophy, and psychology, translated in many languages), especially because of his autobiographical book *From Karl Marx to Jesus Christ* (1st English edition 1958). Lepp lived and worked in France. Another convert of Bishop Profittlich was Alexander Dordett, who similarly became a priest. He later worked as a professor in the University of Vienna.

<sup>11</sup>*Katoliku usu katekismus* (Tallinn, 1931), 101 pages.

<sup>12</sup>*Uus Testament*, Greeka keelest tõlkinud ja lühidalt seletanud Henri Verling (Tallinn, 1940). *Püha Markuse evangeelium* (Tallinn, 1940).

<sup>13</sup>He has published an overview of his activities in Estonia and Moscow: Charles Bourgeois, S.J., *A Priest in Russia and the Baltic* (London, 1955).

priesthood. They had found their way without contacting Catholics, though. At the same time, Alexander Dordett and Ignace Lepp (mentioned above) were studying theology, and Profitlich was glad to have four seminarians preparing themselves to continue his work.

Besides all this, Bishop Eduard had to dedicate considerable time to diplomatic questions. His predecessor had brought about the concordat between Latvia and the Holy See. He also had initiated talks with the Estonian Government for a concordat. Bishop Eduard continued these talks, and Estonia named its representative to the Holy See (1933), which, in turn, named a nuncio for Latvia and Estonia (1935).<sup>14</sup> The talks about a concordat went on till 1939.

In the late 1930's so many Polish workers came to Estonia that they outnumbered the Catholics living here. The bulk of them were miners, concentrated in the northeastern Estonian mining area. In 1938 two chaplains were sent from Poland for them. One of them remained in Estonia until 1945.

#### The First Soviet Occupation, 1940–1941

In September, 1939, an agreement (known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) divided Eastern Europe into two *spheres of interest*. The Baltic States happened to be in the Soviet "sphere." One of the first effects of the pact (which was not published at that time) was the forced repatriation of Baltic Germans. Among them were a number of Catholics; even some priests and religious (brothers and sisters) had German nationality. They all had to leave for Germany, and Bishop Eduard had to witness the first step toward the destruction of his life's work. This was but the beginning; in 1940 the Soviet authorities confiscated all church property (including the printing press) and began to apply more and more severe restrictions to religious activities. The last issue of the Catholic monthly appeared in July, 1940.

Bishop Eduard was urged by many to leave the country with the Baltic Germans, but he chose to stay with his flock, although knowing what would most probably happen to him. On June 27, 1941, he was arrested, accused of spying, and deported to Russia, where he was condemned to death on November 21, in the Kirov Prison. Formally, he was accused of counter-revolutionary activity. He was not executed, be-

<sup>14</sup>Otto Strandman was accredited at the Holy See on September 26, 1933. On October 18, 1933, Antonino Arata became the chargé d'affaires of the Vatican in Estonia. On July 12, 1935, he advanced to Papal nuncio for Latvia and Estonia. After the Soviet occupation of Estonia, he was expelled on August 26, 1940.



cause he died there on February 22, 1942. His burial place is not known.<sup>15</sup>

**Without an Administrator:  
Foreign Occupations, 1941–1991**

The deportation of Bishop Eduard left Estonia with five Catholic priests, and the events of World War II had further immediate effects on church life. After the first Soviet occupation (June, 1940–August, 1941), Estonia was occupied by the Germans (August, 1941–September, 1944), then a second Soviet occupation followed (September, 1944–August, 1991). From 1940 to 1991, thus for half a century, we cannot speak of a normal life of Christian churches in Estonia. Most of this period must be called the open persecution of the churches.

**The German Occupation, 1941–1944**

During this period, Father Henri Werling acted as temporary Administrator of Estonia. The attitude of the German authorities toward churches was unmistakably negative, but it was moderated by political calculations. They had no haste in returning church property confiscated by the Soviets, nor did they hesitate to interfere in church life, but there was no actual persecution comparable with the preceding period of Soviet occupation. Surely they would not tolerate any kind of communication between the clergy and the Holy See. That is why they imprisoned (June 23, 1942) Father Bourgeois, who had tried to inform Nuncio Antonino Arata (then residing in Rome) about the situation of the Church. Fortunately, on May 10, 1942, the vicar Bishop of Riga, sent to visit the Estonian parishes, had ordained a new priest. It was Alexander Dordett, who had recently completed his studies and was able to take over the Parish of Tartu (as well as the pastoral care of all Southern Estonia) after Father Bourgeois was imprisoned. It is a telling fact that the Visitor, who found four priests in service, was not even aware of the presence of a fifth one, gone underground during the first Soviet occupation (he died in 1945). In the beginning of the German occupation, numerous Catholics serving in the German Army also caused an unexpected increase of liturgical life, as many special Masses were celebrated both in Tartu and in Tallinn for the soldiers by their fellow

<sup>15</sup>For more details, see Lambert Klinke, *Erzbischof Eduard Profittlich und die katholische Kirche in Estland 1930–1942* (Ulm, 2000).

priests in the Army. But this did not last long: after three years the German Army was forced to withdraw from Estonia.

On March 6, 1944, a massive Soviet air attack destroyed the city of Narva, including the Catholic parish church. This meant the end of Catholic activities in that town for almost fifty years, as even those faithful who had managed to flee were not allowed by the Soviets to return. Among the survivors was the pastor of the Narva parish, Capuchin Father Tadeus Kraus.

#### The Second Soviet Occupation, 1944–1991

By September the Red Army reoccupied the Estonian mainland and the atheist Soviet laws were this time reintroduced immediately. The authorities were a bit perplexed in the case of Father Bourgeois, whom they freed from the German prison, but they did not allow him to work as a priest. According to the Soviet view, two priests (meaning Father Werling in Tallinn and Father Kraus in Tartu) were more than enough for all the Catholics in Estonia. So Father Bourgeois left Estonia for Moscow in May, 1945, where he first acted as chaplain of the church at the French Embassy, but as he applied for a position at the Catholic parish of Leningrad, he was expelled from the USSR (March, 1946).

Father Werling, the pastor of the parish in the capital, who after the deportation of his bishop had acted as his successor *ad interim*, was not allowed to continue his work either; on August 15, 1945, he was arrested and deported. It was only in March, 1946, that the Archbishop of Riga could send a priest to replace him. Unfortunately, the Soviets did not like Werling's successor either, and he had to leave after only fourteen months of service. Father Janis Grishans, sent from Riga in his stead, had more luck; he took care of the parish from 1947 to 1952, leaving the service then for health reasons. He was replaced in 1952 by another priest from Riga, Mikelis Krumpans, who worked as pastor of the Tallinn parish until his death in 1987. He was compelled to live in a tiny room behind the organ of the parish church.

The situation was only a little bit better in Tartu, where Father Kraus served the parish from 1944 until his retirement in 1964 (he had come to Estonia in 1931), followed by another Capuchin Father (Janis Pavlovskis, a Latvian), who was able to stay until he was sent to Kazakhstan by his superiors in 1977. From now on, Father Krumpans had to take care of this parish too, being the only Catholic priest residing in the country. To be sure, Father Werling had returned from exile as early



as in 1954, but his health was badly damaged (he died in 1972, on February 22—the same day as Bishop Profitlich).

For ten years (1977–1987) Father Krumpans remained the only Catholic priest in Estonia, but then things changed. A new period was prepared by growing interest in the Catholic Church among young Estonians, many of whom visited Lithuania to have a firsthand experience of Catholic spirituality. There was a great interest in Gregorian chant as well. So it happened that between 1975 and 1990 some 200 adult Estonians joined the Church, and at the beginning of the Gorbachev era, which offered new possibilities for the churches, two young Estonians were ordained priests: Rein Õunapuu (1987) and Väino Nüitvägi (1989).<sup>16</sup> The first was able to take over the parish of Tallinn and to take advantage of the new possibilities. So the monthly *Kiriku Elu*, closed since 1940, reappeared in 1989, followed by a little missal in Estonian (1990). Visits of Catholics from abroad were a most welcome moral help. Catholics of Finland, Germany, and elsewhere promptly contributed material help, which was badly needed. In 1989 the Estonian Council of Churches was created, the Catholics being among the founding churches. Among other things, this status granted them regular access to religious radio transmissions. In December of the same year, Paul Verschuren, Bishop of Helsinki (Finland), solemnly confirmed one hundred persons in Tartu and Tallinn. In 1991 a Ukrainian parish of Byzantine rite was founded.

Fortunately, Father Õunapuu was able and willing to celebrate and to preach not only in Estonian but also in Polish, Latvian, and Russian. For the first time the Estonians now had a priest of their own tongue, but there was evidently too much work for one man, beginning with the most urgent repairs of church buildings, which had been neglected for half a century. So the last years of the Soviet occupation had rather a preparatory character for the years to follow.

#### **The Third Apostolic Administrator: Justo Mullor García, 1992–1997**

Already before the restoration of Estonia's independence in August, 1991, had brought back full freedom of religion, a Papal envoy (Francesco Colasuonno) had visited Estonia and contacted the authorities about the possibilities for a reorganization of the Catholics here. In Novem-

<sup>16</sup>They were educated in the Riga Seminary. See Janis Cakuls, *Latvijas Romas katolu priesteri 1918–1995* (Riga, 1996), pp. 208 and 229.

ber, 1991, Justo Mullor García was named Nuncio for the Baltic States and, from April 15, 1992, also temporary (*ad nutum S. Sedis*) Apostolic Administrator of Estonia. Bishop Justo was not given a long time for this task; in 1997 he had to leave the Baltic States to become the new Nuncio in Mexico.

After an interruption of half a century (Eduard Profitlich was arrested in 1941) the regular hierarchical status of Estonia was now restored. Unfortunately, it was the status of 1924, where the Administrator did not reside in Estonia, had to fulfil other duties, and was therefore not able to visit his flock too often. He therefore first named a vicar (Father Guy Barbier, a French priest residing in Helsinki, Finland).

Like his predecessors, the new Administrator began to look first for more priests to take care of the small parishes to be restored, and also for financial help. Unfortunately, as he soon lost the two Estonian priests who were there at his arrival,<sup>17</sup> and as the small community did not dispose even of material resources, he had to look for help abroad.

The high point of this period was the papal visit of Estonia on September 10, 1993. This was appreciated as a great event not only by Catholics but also by Estonians of all walks of life. Curiously, the international media did not even mention the Pope's farewell words focusing on a new Europe, where the large nations would not try to intimidate the small ones.<sup>18</sup>

In 1993 Estonia's first Catholic school was opened in Tartu; in 1995 the new small church of Ahtme<sup>19</sup> was consecrated; and in 1996 the bishop named a new vicar general, residing in Estonia. Like the bishop himself, he was an Opus Dei priest.<sup>20</sup> As all of the new helpers were foreigners and newcomers, their first task was to learn the Estonian language and to find their own way in the new situation.

In 1997 there were seven Catholic parishes working in Estonia, with ten priests, representing five religious families and as many languages. Moreover, there were one religious lay brother and eighteen sisters, representing six communities.

<sup>17</sup>In 1994 one of them asked for laicization; in 1995 the other one left for studies in Germany.

<sup>18</sup>The original text was first published in *His Holiness John Paul II in Estonia* (Tallinn, 1993).

<sup>19</sup>Ahtme, formerly an independent town, is now incorporated in the town of Kohtla-Järve.

<sup>20</sup>The first center of Opus Dei was opened in 1996 (in Tallinn).

**The Fourth Apostolic Administrator:  
Erwin Josef Ender, 1997–2001**

Like his predecessor, Bishop Ender was first named Nuncio for the three Baltic States and then temporary Apostolic Administrator of Estonia, with residence in Vilnius. There was a significant difference, though; now he had a vicar general, residing in Estonia, who had already mastered the Estonian language. But there were still many foundational problems, beginning with the endless repair works on church buildings, neglected during the long period of foreign occupations. So the ruins of the church in Valga had been returned to the parish and had even received a new roof, but because of a lack of funds the church could not be reopened and the liturgy was confined to an improvised chapel in the parish priest's house. A number of personnel changes in the clergy occurred, due to the availability of foreign priests.<sup>21</sup>

By January, 2001, regular Sunday liturgy was offered, besides in the seven parishes (Tallinn, Tartu, Valga, Pärnu, Narva, Ahtme, and Sillamäe) and Kiviõli, also in three other places (Kohtla-Järve, Rakvere, Sompä) where there were no church-owned liturgical facilities. In Narva a larger room in the parish house was used for the liturgy; in Pärnu there was a small church-owned house chapel; in Kiviõli a new small church was dedicated in August, 2000, and one in Sillamäe in July, 2001. The Ukrainian parish had not gotten a resident priest yet, but since 1997 there were two Ukrainian Sisters taking care of the community. A new convent of the Brigidine sisters (near the ruins of their once very beautiful monastery near Tallinn, destroyed in 1575) was opened on September 15, 2001.

Nine priests, two deacons, twenty religious sisters, and one lay brother were serving in the Apostolic Administration of Estonia. Among the clergy, besides Dominicans and Franciscans (both with an old tradition in Estonia), priests belonging to the Opus Dei, and priests of the Neocatechumenate movement were working. The Sisters represented six different communities. All priests were foreigners, but there were also two seminarians.

On the organizational level there were no significant developments in this period. The most conspicuous organization was Caritas, operating mainly in Tallinn, Narva, and Tartu. The Catholic school continued to function in Tartu, where there also existed a Catholic kindergarten.

<sup>21</sup>The presence of regular clerics depends on the needs of their Orders in other countries.

Among lay initiatives, there was a small Catholic publishing house, operating since 1996. On May 19, 2001, Archbishop Ender was transferred to Prague. On November 15, 2001, Archbishop Peter Stephan Zurbruggen, previously an apostolic nuncio, was appointed Apostolic Administrator of Estonia.

No official figures exist for religious statistics in Estonia today. The number of Catholics is estimated to be 1,000–6,000, the first figure indicating the churchgoers.<sup>22</sup> After the period of 1970–1990, which brought a couple of hundred of new church members, the situation seems now to be a stable one. The Estonians are a conspicuous group (they even number a deacon, two seminarians, and three Brigidine sisters), but services are regularly held in Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, and Lithuanian as well. As almost all Christian communities in Estonia today, the Catholics too, still depend essentially on foreign help, both for clergy and for funds. Most of her members being of foreign origin, they are commonly regarded as a church of foreigners.

### Outlook

Estonia is a relatively young nation-state, narrowly escaped from the recent attempt of genocide, now struggling for survival and a place among other nations. With her, the Christians of Estonia can look back—after some fifty years of severe repressive measures—to the first ten years of life in freedom. Among other churches of the country, the Catholics belong to the small ones, but the ecumenical climate is favorable. At the beginning of a new millennium, this community is definitely a multinational body, as is fitting for the Catholic ideal of one Church for all, but—as in all young national countries—the ethnic aspect remains very much in the focus of public attention. Here the Catholics, being a clearly multinational group, have a good chance to offer exemplary constructive solutions of ethnic problems.

<sup>22</sup>In the USSR religious statistics were not published. For the period 1934–2001 only estimates of religious statistics are available. The estimates of the *Annuario Pontificio* oscillate between 3,000 (ed. 1993) and 5,500 (ed. 1995). The first census, which includes a question on religious affiliation, was taken in March, 2000, and the results were announced in March, 2002, as follows: Among persons older than fifteen years (total 1,121,582), 13.6% declared themselves to be Lutherans, 12.8% to be Orthodox (104,698 Russians and 38,856 Estonians), 0.5% (6,009 persons) to be Baptists, and 0.5% (5,745 persons) to be Roman Catholics. All other Christian denominations had fewer than 4,000 adherents.