

FROM THE CRADLE OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE HORROR OF THE HOLOCAUST

We all know very well where Christianity dawned, how difficult and full of wisdom the path led humanity to the civilization of the 20th century, which we all thought was a mature society. However, Christianity, the Bible, the Torah, the treatises of other religions did not mature a conscious, tolerant and empathetic world community. Horror of the 20th century: Nazi and Stalinist actions of genocide destroyed humanity by instilling xenophobia, stereotypes and narrowness.

The 21st century still reminds us that the perception of humanity lacks knowledge, critical thinking and solutions that would strengthen empathy, tolerance and understanding. Today's catastrophes in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, other Asian, African and South American countries encourage active action: cooperation, learning and teaching, communication in various social and cultural environments.

The excellent initiative of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, which received a moral support from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania, and successful cooperation with the Yad Vashem Institute (the Israeli memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, founded in 1953) gave the opportunity to 24 Lithuanian educators, including three Lizdeika gymnasium teachers to participate in an internship at the Yad Vashem Institute in Israel and improve knowledge about Jewish cultural heritage, the Holocaust catastrophe and the nation's experiences. This knowledge and experiences are a priceless investment in education, enriching the content of lessons. History, literature, arts teachers and school principals participated in the Lithuanian pedagogic delegation.

The internship program prepared by Ingrida Vilkienė, the deputy secretariat and coordinator of educational projects of the Yad Vashem Institute and the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, expanded not only the knowledge of Jewish cultural heritage and the survival of the Holocaust, but also added general details of the history of the emergence of Christianity and the perception of the world. The participants of the internship listened to a series of lectures about the Jewish faith and the strength of the nation in the context of historical events, the ideas of Theodor Herzl and the Zionist movement, the nation's experiences in the Holocaust nightmare, and the wonderful literary and artistic masterpieces created. Such a series of lectures is a very valuable material for enriching the educational content. Several sessions were devoted to the teaching methodology of how to integrate the Holocaust theme to school education programs. Participants were awarded with methodical literature and books, which will be excellent material for enriching the educational content. Yad Vashem teachers shared experiences and facts about the Israeli education system, its advantages and disadvantages, and what problems Israeli schools face. It is interesting that the cultural heritage is different, but the educational problems remain similar to those in Lithuania.

In addition, the participants visited Jerusalem, learnt what it is like now and what it was like in various periods of history, as well as visited Masada, a UNESCO cultural heritage, where already in the 1st century the Jewish people showed their strength by not surrendering to the Roman conquerors. Excursions around the Yad Vashem memorial exhibits are difficult to lift emotionally: a museum with a cone of names, an art gallery, a memorial for dead children, which especially strongly affects everyone's emotions, when in the dark, the names and surnames of the children are heard and their ages are indicated. The huge yellowish rectangular

stones, which commemorate the places where the Jewish communities lived, look impressive. It was possible to find almost all Lithuanian cities and towns. The memorial also includes the Park of the Righteous of the World, where trees are planted to honor every non-Jewish citizen who saved Jews during the Holocaust. Several lectures were devoted to separate arts that could be integrated into the educational content: literature readings, music and painting, films presenting events and people's experiences.

The organizers also devoted time to discussions about how the attitude to the topics covered by the Holocaust has been changing, how this topic is taught and integrated into the educational content of Lithuanian schools. We raised the question of whether we still face outbreaks of anti-Semitism in our communities and how these xenophobic outbreaks can be prevented. It was nice to come to the conclusion that in Lithuania, and especially among young people, this is no longer a problem. The situation has changed a lot compared to the last century, and it is obvious that the decisions of educational content and educational communities, non-formal education initiatives, projects, education of pedagogues, participation in internships are changing society's stereotypes and forming values that need to be constantly strengthened.

During the internship, while participating in the activities, connections were established, we shared our ongoing activities, new cooperation ideas were born, applying the knowledge gained during the internship. The seminar at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem inspired us to act even more actively in fostering tolerance, developing awareness and critical thinking, realizing the manifestations of xenophobia and forming a responsible citizen of the 21st century not only in our community, but also in the world.

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