

The Gospel Explained Through Poetry

By Ray Dabrowski

Zita Kirsnauskaite, “the rising star of religious poetry” in Lithuania reads her poetry to packed houses during her frequent literary evenings. “What we do is not only read poetry, but I invite our best actors to read the Bible aloud. It brings the word of God closer to the people,” Kirsnauskaite says.

The poetry readings also often include musical performances. Irena Jeriominaitė, an opera star from Vilnius, has included in her repertoire one of Kirsnauskaite’s poems that has been set to music.

With four poetry books that have won acclaim from Alfredas Guscus, Lithuania’s renowned columnist and literary critic, Kirsnauskaite is often on the road now sharing her art. Several of her poems have become lyrics to music set by Lithuania’s well-known contemporary composer and professor, Lioginas Abarius. The latest book of poetry, *Spindinti giesmė* (Glittering Song) includes these songs and Kirsnauskaite seems overwhelmed by the attention the artistic community of Vilnius is giving her. She explains that she doesn’t ask for it:

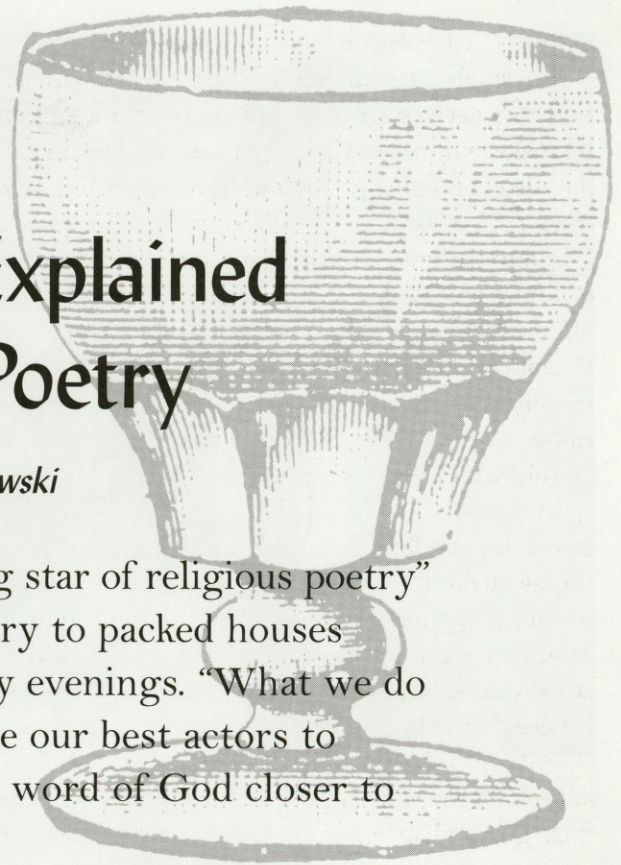
“Look at this collection of poems,” she summons. “One of my poet colleagues has written a poem about my poetry,” she blushes as she showcases

dozens of publications, newspaper and magazine articles, about her and her poetry. On the walls of her two-room apartment are memorable pictures of meetings, as she explains, with “important (United States) presidents, (Bill) Clinton and (George W.) Bush.”

This public acclaim comes after years of restrictions under the Soviet system, when she wrote solely for herself.

“I lived in the capital of Latvia for many years, but I was not able to show what I wrote to anyone. It was not possible to write and share it publicly. The police frequently came and checked on people. The police often looked for people like me. They were suspicious of anyone expressing themselves freely,” Kirsnauskaite explains. “But I continued to write just for myself. It kept me going.

“Now that Lithuania is free, I concluded—after returning in 1996 (to





Lithuanian Adventist Zita Kirsnauskaitė has won critical acclaim for her poetry.

Vilnius)—that I should write again. And now that’s what I do,” she joyfully explains.

“My poems are about relationships between God and people. I write about him and where to find him—in nature, in the word of God, which is the source of true happiness.

“But I also write to comfort people. Sadness of this world is temporal, but hope is eternal and we need to cling to it. My poetry aims to turn the reader’s attention toward God and not to end their lives senselessly, but to cling to hope. There is a better life that we all are waiting for—that’s what I am saying.”

A nurse by profession, Kirsnauskaitė is a widow who lives with her son, David, in a two-room apartment on Subaciaus Street. The Soviet-style block of apartments is like many that dot the landscape in the Lithuanian countryside. She has been a Seventh-day Adventist for thirty-one years.

“On the Wings of an Angel,” her fifth book of poems, is ready now. She is waiting for a sponsor to realize the project. “The poems are about everlasting life, joy, and a feeling of calm for the disturbed and about the everlasting truth of the gospel,” she says.

Ray Dąbrowski is communication director for the General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists.

1.
Do not enter into despair
Do not enter into despair
When the frozen earth of pain
 disturbs the silence . . .
Do not enter into despair
When the time comes to drink from the glass
 of anxiety . . .
Do not enter into despair
Even if a bitter tear
Eats away deep folds on your cheeks
Tempting towards despair.

Do not enter into despair
Never, never
Never ever,
Do not leave the hope of Faith . . .
He who gives it up easily
Is the one that is abandoned by Hope . . .
Do not enter into despair
Even if the time comes
When the sun does not rise!
Do not go! I pray! Do not abandon hope!

2.
When you Look around in Pain
The goblet of concerns is full
Even though I drink from it each morning and in the
 evenings.
I cannot quiet the soul with prayer,
If, dear heart, you look with pain upon the past,

Look ahead, broadly, at the clear Distance,
Embrace the bright space with your eyes
It is good for the soul if we wave with hope at
 Expectation
And ennoble the depths of the heart with love and
 patience.

3.

If an icy drop of pain penetrates the heart,
And having melted turns into a bitter tear
The consoling song will seem like a miracle
All will seem light and good.

Lead to heartbreak—a temporary arrow . . .
The black shield of pain will soon fade
And nothing similar to suffering will remain
Flowers of bliss will bloom again in the soul!

4.

Anxiety came to my heart
Inebriated me with pain
Placed a heavy burden of worries . . .
Oh dear Lord, look onto my soul,
For you see how sad it is there!
I knelt before you, crying . . .
Help me, save me, great God,
You have healed so much pain!
Now, shines a ray of light hope.
Grant peace and acceptance of daily life!
Cover me with Your holy wing
And guard from misfortunes and danger!

5. As the Sunset Approaches

When I am similar to a dimming sunset,
To a yellowing ripe autumn,
Care for me Lord, refresh and brighten,
May the energy of the soul never become weak, never
run dry.

When I am similar to a wilting lily,
When blossoms die out and only green is left,
I pray, good Lord, strengthen with the threads of love,
Brighten the heart. . . May tranquility be born in the
world.

When I am similar to a dimming sunset,
I pray, Almighty in the highest, do not leave me!
Care for me like at daybreak when you blessed with
blooms,
Strengthen with vigilance, illuminate my gloomy eyes.

May the soul, like the hidden sun, never die out,
Until it meets Your heaven-beckoning voice!

6. For Love

Bloom together with the roses
In the flower gardens—
The churchyard of reflections.
Scented with aromatic fragrances,
Incense.
The rim of the eyes
Lead the feelings of the heart with prayer. . .
Diffuse the rays of good from the soul.

In the churchyard of reflections,
Gently lower the
Beauty of the flowers whose blooms have expired
Into the depths of the heart.
As if on an Altar
Covered with roses
For the Lord,
Shine with sacred pearls
In the chest of Hope!