

Zbigniew Sobolewski

Opus Aid “Ad Gentes” For Missions

Nurt SVD 50/2 (140), 125-139

2016

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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Opus Aid “Ad Gentes” For Missions

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Komisja Episkopatu ds. Misji



Born on 6 January 1963 in Bydgoszcz, fr. Zbigniew Sobolewski took holy orders from Bishop Jan Mazur on 6 June 1987. In 1996 he obtained a PhD at Accademia Alfonsiana in Rome. Since 1999 he has lectured moral theology at Higher Seminary in Siedlce. In 2005-2012 he was the secretary general of the Caritas Polska and an editor of the quarterly “Caritas”. Since 2013 he has been a director of Opus Aid “Ad Gentes”. He is also a consultor of the Commission of the Polish Episcopate for Missions and an author of many textbooks, books, science and popular science articles in the domain of moral theology, spiritual theology and catechetic.

Introduction

The Second Vatican Council reminded that Church is missionary by her very nature and confirmed the topicality of missions *ad gentes* in the contemporary world. Subsequent popes, especially Paul VI and John Paul II, referred to the Council’s thought in their teachings. They reminded that to fulfil her vocation to preach the Gospel, the Church needs preachers and witnesses and those who would support them with prayers, suffering and financial and material help.

For ten years the Opus Aid “Ad Gentes” financially and spiritually has helped over two thousands Polish missionaries working in 97 countries. The organisation is well known in the missionary society thanks to its animation and missionary formation of the faithful.

In this article we will present a short history of the Opus brought into existence by Polish bishops and the main domains of help given by the Opus. We will adduce the data showing the most important works of the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" and the ways of obtaining means for its activity.

The Opus Aid "Ad Gentes"

The initiative of establishing the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" was born during the meeting of Polish bishops with Pope Benedict XVI¹. The Holy Father asked the group of bishops from southern Poland who came with an *ad limina* visit if the Church in Poland helps her missionaries. He said

"I thank God because He continues to lavish upon Poland the grace of numerous vocations. The Southern Region, which you represent, dear Brothers, is particularly rich in vocations. Considering the enormous needs on the part of the universal Church, I ask you to encourage your priests to do their missionary service or pastoral work in countries where clergy are scarce. It seems that today this is a special task and, in a certain sense, also a duty of the Church in Poland. In the sending of priests abroad, however, especially to the missions, remember to assure them both of your spiritual support and adequate material resources"².

The Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" was established thanks to the attempts of Bishop Wiktor Skworc, the chairman of the Commission of the Polish Episcopate for Missions. Polish bishops endorsed it during the 333rd Plenary Session of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate. On 22-24 September 2005, Archbishop Józef Michalik, president of the Polish Episcopal Conference, erected the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" by decree of 3 October 2005 and on 24 March 2006 the department obtained legal personality³.

The name of the Opus refers to the Decree of the Second Vatican Council "Ad gentes divinitus", entirely devoted to the mission activity of the Church. The Council Fathers confirmed in it the topicality of the missions *ad gentes* and called on the Church community to zealously involve in missionary works⁴.

¹ See *Pomóż polskim misjonarzom*, Warszawa 2014, p. 6.

² Benedict XVI, *Słowo do biskupów polskich*, No 2, Rome, 2 II 2005, <http://opus-dei.pl/pl-pl/article/benedykt-xvi-do-biskupow-polskich-podczas-wizyty-ad-limina-apostolorum/> [accessed: 26.07.2016].

³ See Z. Sobolewski, *Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" in Service of the Missions*, in: "Studia Ełckie", Vol. 18, No 2, 2016, p. 198.

⁴ See *Ad Gentes* 2.

The objective of the new department of the Commission of the Polish Episcopate for Missions is supporting Polish missionaries of the Catholic Church – *Fidei Donum* priests, monks, nuns and lay missionaries – in execution of their mission *ad gentes*⁵. The Opus's task is to help missionaries with running the activity of charity, care and education, society and culture in the missionary territory. The Opus raises funds and material means for the execution of evangelization, medical, charitable and educational projects in the missionary outposts where the Polish missionaries work, whereas in Poland, the Opus is occupied with missionary animation and formation by gathering the information about the work of Polish missionaries and making it accessible and by being in service for missionary societies and local Churches. The Opus organises congresses and science symposia devoted to Polish missionaries and publishes publications on missionaries' service and their needs⁶.

Since its beginning, the Opus has its seat at 1 Byszewska St., Warsaw, near to the Missionary Formation Centre (Centrum Formacji Misyjnej) and MIVA Polska. The Opus has a Missionary Formation House in Jastrzębia Góra, where missionaries can relax and participate in retreats and days of recollection⁷.

Effective help

Among the projects submitted by missionaries the most numerous are those concerning the evangelization and building the structure and organisation of missionary outposts. They are strictly related to their apostolic formation and cultic works.

Missionaries ask for financial help for building or repairs and renovations of churches, chapels, presbyteries and catechetical and retreat houses. Many projects concern directly evangelization led by religious congregations and parishes. Missionaries need catechetical aids, such as catechisms, copies of the Holy Scripture, religious books and magazines, biblical diaries and church songbooks. They also declare need of purchasing liturgical equipment, sound equipment, benches and confessionals for churches and chapels.

The Opus helps missionaries by giving grants for the courses for catechists and liturgical animators. It participates in the costs of con-

⁵ See *Statut Działa Pomocy "Ad Gentes"*, art. 6, TS, Archives of DPAG.

⁶ See M. Przekiszewski, *Kościół w Polsce dla misji*, in: IV Krajowy Kongres Misyjny, *Radość Ewangelii źródłem misyjnego zapału*, Górna Grupa 2015, p. 157-158.

⁷ See <http://www.adgentes.home.pl/dom-misyjny/> [accessed: 20.07.2016].

stant courses and formation cycles for people involved in the life of parish. There are grants for evangelization projects, such as retreats and days of recollection, camps for children and youth and holiday liturgical workshops. It is an important form of support for the missions thanks to which the groups of missionaries who collaborate together are created. It serves also to enliven religious life of young communities.

In many cases, the financial and material help for missionary Churches make their proper functioning possible. Without it, creating new communities of faith would be even impossible, especially in the areas where there is widespread poverty.

The second important group of projects in the missionary countries where the Polish missionaries work, which gain grants from the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes", are caring and charitable projects. Very often, missionaries are the only one who, in systematic and organised way, lead the fight against hunger, undernourishment, financial and spiritual misery, illnesses, illiteracy and violence in the countries of Africa, South and Middle America, Asia and Oceania. They are present among people socially excluded and rejected: orphans, lonely old people, disabled, refugees and economic emigrants, unemployed or homeless people, mothers rising their children alone, people ill with AIDS, leprosy and other fatal infectious diseases.

The Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" support financially and materially the services of missionaries by giving funds for building, repairs and upkeep of rest homes and orphanages, shelters for children and youth and for homeless and unemployed people⁸. It gives grants for the projects aiming to fight against hunger and undernourishment, especially among indigenous population of Africa. It helps victims of armed conflicts, driven out and persecuted because of the racial and religious reasons. The Opus funds the help for children – victims of wars and natural disasters, caring specially for orphans and incomplete large families.

Missionaries ask also for the help in the implementation of medical projects and those which serve propagation of healthy nutrition, access to potable water and preventive healthcare. These projects make possible the purchase of essential medicines for AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and infectious diseases, bandages and dressings, minor medical and laboratory equipment for missionary health centres. The Opus helps sisters with maintenance of missionary pharmacies, maternity wards and clinics where poor ill people can get free medicines and also food. With the money allocated for the medical projects the Opus supports renovations of

⁸ See *Pomóż polskim...*, op. cit., p. 7.

missionary health centres and hospitals and gives grants for feeding the ill. A part of the money goes for health prevention, especially education led by missionaries, which contributes to decrease in the spread of infectious diseases which decimate the population of children in Africa and Asia.

A considerable number of projects financed by the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" thanks to the funds from the donors concerns education. These projects make access to the education widespread, especially among children and youth from poor families. The Opus supports financially building, renovations and maintenance of kindergartens, schools and clubhouses for children. Thanks to obtained funds missionaries equip the school libraries with books and school textbooks, and classes – with didactic materials and teachings aids. The Opus executes also projects concerning the purchase of computers, school supplies and teaching aids, especially for teaching foreign languages. It supports financially and materially the work of clubhouses and work with street children. It keeps dormitories and boarding schools for young people and help centres for the victims of domestic violence. The Opus especially takes care of girls and women, discriminated because of their sex, by enabling them to get profession and education.

During ten years of existence, The Opus Aid „Ad Gentes“ realised 1 642 projects for a total sum of 6 951 690 PLN. The majority of funds was allocated to evangelization projects, among which the majority concerned buildings and renovations of churches, chapels and catechetical rooms as well as providing courses and constant formation for catechists. Second, as to the number of executed projects, come the educational projects, then charitable and medical ones. Thus far, the Opus allocated the most of the funds for the projects executed by Polish missionaries in Bolivia, Cameroon, Kazakhstan, Madagascar, the Central African Republic, Rwanda, Tanzania, Sudan, the Congo Republic, the Dominican Republic, Chad, Burkina Faso and Argentina. These are the countries from which come the majority of requests for grants.

The beneficiaries of the Opus's financial and material help are above all monks and nuns, then *Fidei Donum* priests and lay missionaries. It results from the structure of number of the missionaries, among whom the majority consists of consecrated people.

Missionary projects in 2005-2016

In the first year of its activity, the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" provided funding for 118 projects, submitted by Polish missionaries for a total sum of 179 000 USD. The taken actions consisted of projects such

as: financing feeding the children in Doumé (Cameroon), providing equipment for an educational and recreational room in Bulu Bulu (Bolivia), the help in the purchase of the house for nine orphans in Kigali (Rwanda), building of catechetical rooms in Reserva do Iguacu (Brazil) and building water installation for the mission in Makunka (Zambia).

In the next year, the Opus helped missionaries with execution of 101 projects for a sum of 145 000 USD. It was, among others, the projects concerning: the education of girls and the regulation of their documents (Aiquile, Bolivia); feeding orphans and providing medicines, school supplies and school charges for them (Lusaka, Zambia); building a kindergarten and a meeting room in Kimberley (South Africa). In that year the financial help was provided for the building of the Educational, Cultural and Social Centre in Guatemala and the pastoral and catechetical project in Huncayu (Peru) has been started.

In 2008 the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" allocated 255 440 USD for the implementation of 157 projects. Among them there were: building 5 water tanks for the poorest families in the mission in Bom Jesus de Lapa (Brazil); financing a new altar and an ambo for a church in Taldykorgan (Kazakhstan); building a new health clinic in Maggoty (Jamaica); medical help for Health Centre in Bumba (the Democratic Republic of the Congo); renovation of wiring in parish house in Tanlajas (Mexico).

In 2009, thanks to the funds from the Opus, missionaries could execute 124 projects for a sum of 208 000 USD and 6 000 Euro. The projects, among others, concerned: the purchase of a central heating stove for a parish house (Astana, Kazakhstan); providing food for children and purchasing educational aids for a clubhouse for children (Oruro, Bolivia). In that year the Opus supported the Apostolate of Divine Mercy of the Marians Fathers in Atok (Cameroon), building of a chapel in Chikawi (Zambia); rebuilding of habitations damaged by a cyclone and organisation of an equipped kinesiotherapy hall in Morondava (Madagascar).

In the following year, 167 aid projects were implemented with a sum of 180 000 Euro. There were projects such as: the purchase of materials necessary for ministry meetings in Tizi (Algeria); funding for the teachers' formation in Cochabamba (Bolivia); providing equipment for club house for street children and providing food for poor children in Kinshasa (the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and help in the purchase of medicines and food for 300 children with AIDS.

In 2012 the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" allocated 132 400 Euro for financing 134 missionary projects. This support helped, among the others, with building a chapel in Beroroha (Madagascar); buying a multi-

media projector for missionary outpost in Mtwara (Tanzania) and food for the orphans from Health Centre in Gikondo (Rwanda). The financing provided also the change of wiring and roof lining in the parish house in San Antonio (Portoviejo, Ecuador) and funding for catechists' and teachers' formation in Bertoua (Cameroon) as well as for teaching aids for them.

In 2013 the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" financed 198 projects for a total sum of 217 000 Euro. Among these projects there were: the adaptation of a residential building for the needs of sisters congregation in Antananarivo (Madagascar); the medical treatment for the employees of the mission in Bertoua (Cameroon); the purchase of food and medicines for the prisoners in Toamasina (Madagascar); the purchase of medicines for the Health Center in Ngozi (Burundi) and the help for children and youth in Yaoundé (Cameroon). In that year it was decided that the grants would be given to all the missionaries applying for help, as far as it was possible.

In the following year the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" allocated 160 000 Euro for the implementation of 160 projects. They concerned works such as: renovation and painting of a chancel in the parish church in Cochabamba (Bolivia); providing food for children from poor families who participate in club house activities in Karaganda (Kazakhstan); extension and adaptation of a maternity unit and two hospital buildings in Dubie (the Democratic Republic of the Congo); financing a kitchen in Educational and Therapeutic Centre for children in San Ramon (Bolivia) and religious education for the youth in the mission in Kabwe (Zambia).

In 2015, 175 missionary projects for a sum of 150 000 Euro were implemented thanks to the funds from the Opus. Among those projects, there were: renovation of the parish house in Zamoira (Ecuador); purchase of milk, medicines and special nourishment for hospitals, and feeding the ill in Ayos (Cameroon); financing the running of the formation centre in Aktobe (Kazakhstan); purchase of paint and renovating of the buildings in the mission in Nguelemendouka (Cameroon) and the purchase of the seeds for the poorest families affected by the drought in Ngozi (Burundi).

In 2016, during the spring session, 90 000 Euro was allocated for the implementation of 116 projects. There are, among others: formation of the catechists in Bocas del Toro (Panama), reconstruction of the chapel in Portoviejo (Ecuador), purchase of copies of the Holy Scripture for the people from the parish in El Soberbio (Argentina), reparation of the kitchen and hearths in the formation house in Made (Madagascar),

formation of lay missionaries in Bahia (Brazil), purchase of medicines for the health centre in Magotta (Jamaica), purchase of medicines and dressings for the health centre in Buraniro (Burundi) and providing equipment for the maternity ward in Gikondo (Rwanda)⁹.

Big projects implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Thanks to the cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 2007 the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" implemented an aid project "Education in Subsahara's Africa". The project concerned nine African countries. Within its scope a boarding school for children from the bush in Madagascar was equipped with textbooks, exercise books and teaching aids. Also a clubhouse and a school library gained necessary supplies. In South Africa a computer course for 100 children was organised, the wicker and other materials for making baskets by the blind were bought and the school was equipped with teaching and technical aids. In Togo books for the school library and two computers were bought. In Central African Republic video and sound equipment for the work with the youth were bought. In Rwanda educational aids for schools were bought, in Kenya – teaching aids and RTV equipment and in Chad – books, magazines and dictionaries. In Cameroon, thanks to the project, musical instruments, RTV equipment and sewing tools, threads, zip fasteners and buttons were obtained¹⁰.

In 2016 the Opus signed a contract with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the implementation of the project "Improving access to education for children in the region of Dar es Salaam, through the development of the Educational Centre of St. Maximilian Kolbe, Segerea (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania)"¹¹. Within the scope of the project 18 classrooms for 800 pupils of the primary school will be built. Next to the school there will be a sport field and toilets.

⁹ The data comes from the annual publication *Komunikaty Dzieła Pomocy "Ad Gentes"* presented to the Commission of the Polish Episcopate for Missions by the director of the Opus, see Archives of DPAG.

¹⁰ See *Wniosek o dofinansowanie projektu "Education in Subsahara's Africa"*, TS, Archives of DPAG.

¹¹ See *Wniosek o dofinansowanie projektu "Improving Access to Education for Children in the Region of Dar es Salaam through the Development of the Educational Centre of St. Maximilian Kolbe, Segerea (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania)"*, TS, Archives of DPAG.

Annual grants

Every year the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" gives grants to *Fidei Donum* priests and lay missionaries. Since 2008 the Opus has financed also health insurances and national insurances for lay missionaries. In that year, a sum of 819 514.84 PLN was allocated for the annual grants. In the following year, the grants for the missionaries costed 980 000 PLN and the refund of the insurance for the secular missionaries costed 100 000 PLN. In 2010 the sum of grants given to diocesan priests and secular missionaries was 1 031 000 PLN. One year later the total sum of annual grants awarded to diocesan priests and secular missionaries was 955 500 PLN and in the following year this sum was 987 000 PLN. In 2013 a sum of 892 500 PLN was allocated to the annual grants of diocesan priests and missionaries. In 2014 the Opus awarded the diocesan priests and the missionaries with the grants of a sum of 966 000 PLN and in the following year – of a sum of 1 025 500 PLN. In 2016 the annual grants were awarded to 373 people (1 300 550 PLN).

Animation and publishing activity of the Opus

The Opus has a website www.adgentes.misje.pl which contains interesting information about Polish missionaries and their services on all continents. Also the interviews, letters and essays concerning their works are published there. The bank account numbers and instructions for SMS donations can be found there too.

The Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" publishes booklets promoting the work of Polish missionaries and encouraging to give them financial support and images with prayers for the missionaries. Every year the Opus prepares posters and liturgical and homiletic materials for parishes for the Day of Prayer, Fasting and Solidarity for Missionaries (the Second Sunday of Lent). Since 2014 a newspaper "Pomagajmy misjom" ("Let's help missions") has been published with circulation of 250 000 copies. It is distributed in 400 cities, towns and villages by Orszak Trzech Króli (an organisation preparing Cavalcades of Magi across the country) and in dioceses by the Commission for Missions. The Opus publishes its own calendar which is distributed to all the parish communities. Directors and employees of the Opus visit parish communities and religious congregations all over the country to talk about needs of the missions and to encourage them to cooperate with the missionaries. They also participate in missionary picnics organised by parish and religious communities.

The Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" engages Catholic and secular media in the promotion of missionary ideas. It passes on the information about missions to Polish broadcasting corporations: Polskie Radio and TVP. The Opus collaborates with Catholic redactions of Polskie Radio and TVP by participating in broadcasts. The cooperation with TV Trwam, Radio Maryja, Radio Warszawa, Radio Podlasie and with magazines: "Nasz Dziennik", "Różaniec", "Niedziela", "Gość Niedzielny", "Idziemy", "Przewodnik Katolicki", "Katolickie Echo Podlasia", "List do chorych" and "List do Pani" goes very well. Reports from the missionary events are also published on web portals: ekai.pl, gosc.pl, deon.pl, podlasie24.pl, katolik.pl, misje.pl¹².

In 2014-2015 the Opus was involved in the preparations and the conduct of the 4th Polish Congress of Missionaries. Directors of the Opus participated in the work of the Congress's office and the commissions preparing particular stations. Fr. Zbigniew Sobolewski was a secretary of the Congress and a member of a commission preparing the programme and a station for youth and adults and fr. Andrzej Sochal was responsible for logistics (preparation of meeting spots, alimentation, legal issues) and media support; he was also a member of the commission preparing the youth station.

The Opus contributed to the publication of scripts of catechesis on missions. The conferences and scripts of catechesis were distributed to all the parishes in Poland¹³. The texts were published on the website of the catechetical institute on the Catholic University of Lublin and on the Opus's website. An album "Radość Ewangelii źródłem misyjnego zapału" („The Joy of Gospel as a source of missionary zeal”), edited by Bishop Jerzy Mazur, was published¹⁴. The album, richly illustrated, explains theology and missionary works and shows the work of Polish missionaries on all continents.

On the occasion of the Congress, the Opus prepared liturgical and homiletic materials and a guidebook on the Congress, used during three days of the event. The Commission for Missions and the Opus contributed also to preparation of an exhibition showing the work of Polish missionaries. Particular dioceses, religious congregations, foundations and communities had a chance to present their work for the missions. The exhibition was showed in some Warsaw churches.

¹² See Z. Sobolewski, *Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" in Service...*, op. cit., p. 201.

¹³ See IV Krajowy Kongres Misyjny, *Radość Ewangelii źródłem misyjnego zapału. Konferencje dla poszczególnych grup wiernych. Scenariusze katechez dla dzieci, młodzieży i dorosłych*, Warszawa 2014.

¹⁴ See J. Mazur, *Radość Ewangelii źródłem misyjnego zapału*, Kielce 2015.

In the same year, the Opus has published, in the publishing house "Jedność" from Kielce, an illustrated book for young children "Mali pomocnicy misjonarzy" ("Little helpers of the missionaries")¹⁵. The book suggests how the children from primary school can cooperate with the missionaries.

Just after the 4th Polish Congress of Missionaries, the Opus, together with the Commission of the Polish Episcopate for Missions, published a collection of documents from the Congress¹⁶. The extensive publication gathers description of preparations to the Congress and its conduct, presents speeches, papers, homilies and press interviews from the event. Thanks to the publication, the achievements of the Congress reached all the parishes in Poland.

In 2015 the Opus prepared scripts of catechesis on missions for all types of schools¹⁷. The publication, entitled "Idźcie i głoscie" ("Go and preach"), consists of two volumes and 66 scripts of lessons for the children in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. A group of 17 catechists was involved in the preparation of the publication.

During the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, the Opus promotes the works of mercy on the missions and the prayer book "Miłosierdzie Boże na wieki wysławiać będę" („For ages I will praise the mercy of God")¹⁸. Directors of the Opus visited many parishes asking for the prayers for the missionaries and for the financial support for their evangelization projects. They distributed missionary rosaries, prayer books and images with prayers.

In 2016/2017 the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" encourages to pray the rosary for the missions. The texts of meditations of the mysteries of the rosary and missionary rosaries were prepared. In October directors of the Opus will visit different parishes to engage the faithful in the rosary prayer for the missions.

Missionary contest

One of the valuable initiatives held by the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" since 2008 has been a nationwide contest "My schoolmate

¹⁵ See Z. Sobolewski, *Mali pomocnicy misjonarzy*, Kielce 2014.

¹⁶ See IV Krajowy Kongres Misyjny, *Radość Ewangelii źródłem misyjnego zapału*, Górna Grupa 2015.

¹⁷ See Komisja Episkopatu Polski ds. Misji, *Idźcie i głoscie. Scenariusze katechez dla dzieci i młodzieży*, part I-II, Górna Grupa 2016.

¹⁸ See Z. Sobolewski, *„Miłosierdzie Boże na wieki wysławiać będę”*. Modlitewnik, Kielce 2015.

from missions". At the beginning its name was "My schoolmate from Africa" and was organised by the Commission for Missions and the Pontifical Mission Societies. The organisers invite to participate in the contest the students from primary and secondary schools as well as teachers and catechists. The contest is held in two stages: in school and nationwide. The school commissions send winning works to the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes". The catechists and teachers present scripts of the lessons concerning missions and the students compete in the following categories: art (the most popular), music, literature and charity work.

The charity work category consists of team working – students organise different undertakings, meetings, picnics, lotteries, disco parties, etc. to collect funds for an implementation of a particular missionary project. During few months of participation in the contest, they try to involve in the project as much peers and adults as they can.

The money was passed for a particular missionary project for a first time in 2009. Then, the children collected money for the renovation of a school in Papua New Guinea and for the help for children in Pakistan. In 2010 children collected money for building a shelter for children from streets of Oruro (Bolivia) and the help for children in Uganda. During 9th edition of the contest, the children supported building of a boarding school for poor girls in Nguemendouka (Cameroon). In 2013-2015 the contest participants passed money for building a kindergarten held by Salvatorian sisters in Kolwezi (the Democratic Republic of the Congo). In 2016 the children allocated money for the renovation and equipment of a nursery of Benedictine sisters in Santo Domingo (Ecuador)¹⁹.

The contest is very popular, both among the children from primary schools and youth from secondary schools. Public schools participate in it as well as Catholic ones, schools named after John Paul II, card. Stefan Wyszyński and fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko. Among the participants of the contest there are also volunteers from school Caritas clubs. The awards ceremony of the 15th edition of the contest "Mój szkolny kolega z misji" took place in the Presidential Palace on 22nd April 2016. There were many distinguished guests: Bishop Jerzy Mazur SVD, president of the Commission of the Polish Episcopate for Missions; Mrs Anna Zalewska, Minister of National Education; Mr Jan Dziędziczak secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr Adam Kwiatkowski from the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland and

¹⁹ Zob. Konkurs „Mój szkolny kolega z misji”. XV edycja: „Wszyscy jesteśmy uczniami-misjonarzami”, za: <http://www.adgentes.misje.pl/konkurs-314> [accessed: 20.07.2016].

parliament members. The guest of honour was Mrs Agata Kornhauser-Duda, the wife of the president of the Republic of Poland. The first lady met the prizewinners and devoted to them a lot of time²⁰.

Sources of funding

The Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" could not exist and help Polish missionaries without a multitude of donors and collaborators. They are the faithful from all the dioceses who give their offerings to collection boxes on *ad gentes* Sunday – the Second Sunday of Lent²¹. Apart from these donations, the contributions from individual donors arrive on bank account of the Opus. Some of the donors regularly pay donations to support the missionaries.

Within a decade of its existence, the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" developed its own forms of communication with missionaries as well as with donors and sponsors. The Opus informs extensively about the needs, collected sums and the way of using them by means of booklets, letters and calendars.

From the beginning of 2009, the Opus collects funds for the implementation of the missionary projects by the SMS donation (text "MISJE" to 72032). Thanks to the kindness of mobile phone network operators (Orange, T-Mobile, Plus, Play) the means collected by the text messages are entirely allocated to the missionary projects. In 2009-2015 the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" thus obtained the funds in a sum of 1 366 465 PLN, which were allocated to the implementation of 115 projects. The money is given to the missionaries twice a year. It is our desire that all the missionaries who asked for financial help, would obtain it.

Conclusion

Modest, just 10th anniversary of the existence of the Opus gives an occasion to reflect on the involvement of the Polish Church in the missionary work. Undoubtedly, a lot has been already done for the missions. The 4th Polish Congress of Missionaries, which took place in Warsaw on 12-14 June 2015, showed the missionary achievements of the dioceses, religious congregations, movements, societies and foundations.

Thanks to the generosity of the faithful of the Church in Poland who are the main donors of the Opus Aid "Ad Gentes", it may join the

²⁰ See <http://www.prezydent.pl/kancelaria/aktywnosc-ministrow/art,304,final-konkursu-moj-szkolny-kolega-z-misji.html> [accessed: 23.04.2016].

²¹ See J. Mazur, *Radość Ewangelii...*, op. cit., p. 244.

amazing circle of missionary collaborators. We hope that the Opus will grow and take more and more new initiatives for the good of Polish missionaries.

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ZBIGNIEW SOBOLEWSKI
Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" For Missions

Abstract

The Opus Aid "Ad Gentes", established by the Conference of the Polish Episcopate, for ten years serves the Polish missionaries with great dedication. The Opus supports missionaries in the implementation of the evangelization, medical, charitable and educational projects. Thanks to the donors and sponsors, the Opus co-financed to 1 642 projects for the total sum of 6 951 690 PLN. The Opus gives annual grants to lay missionaries and *Fidei Donum* priests. In Poland, it is occupied with the missionary animation and formation, promotion of the missionary ideas and it engages children and youth in the help for missions. It organises nationwide contest "Mój szkolny kolega z misji" for children and youth from primary and secondary schools.

Keywords: The Opus Aid „Ad Gentes”, missionary animation, charitable projects, education projects, evangelization projects, medical projects, help for the missions.

ZBIGNIEW SOBOLEWSKI
Opus Aid "Ad Gentes" dla misji

Streszczenie

Organizacja Opus Aid „Ad Gentes”, powołana do życia przez Konferencję Episkopatu Polski, od 10 lat z wielkim zaangażowaniem służy pomocą materialną polskim misjonarzom pracującym w wielu krajach świata. Korzystając ze wspólnaomyślności ofiarodawców i sponsorów, do tej pory współfinansowała 1 642 projekty na ogólną sumę 6 951 690 PLN. Dotyczyły one pomocy medycznej, szkolnictwa, ewangelizacji oraz pomocy najbardziej potrzebującym. Organizacja zapewnia roczne zapomogi dla świeckich misjonarzy i kapłanów *Fidei Donum*. Na gruncie krajowym Opus Aid zajmuje się formacją i animacją misyjną wśród dzieci i dorosłych oraz ukierunkowywaniem młodych

ludzi na pomoc misjom i misjonarzom. Jednym z przykładów tej działalności jest ogólnokrajowy konkurs pt. *Mój szkolny kolega z misji* dla dzieci i młodzieży szkół podstawowych oraz ponadpodstawowych.

Słowa kluczowe: Opus Aid „Ad Gentes”, animacja misyjna, projekty charytatywne, szkolnictwo, ewangelizacja, opieka medyczna, pomoc misjom.