

**Contribution of the Polish Missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word to the Church's Development in the Little Sunda Islands (Indonesia) based on letters written to the "Verbinum" and "Misjonarz" Periodicals (1965-2000)**

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### **Foreword**

The Catholic Church in Indonesia is now theoretically entirely self-sufficient<sup>1</sup>. The Catholics are very proud of the development of their Church and their contribution to the life of the nation in general, although there are always problematic political issues. This positive condition has its foundations in the hard work of the European missionaries, including the Polish Divine Word Missionaries (SVD). Twenty of them, the biggest group of missionaries ever to be sent at one time in

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. H. Boelaars OFM Cap. published a book about the process of the Catholic Church from being „in Indonesia” to „being Indonesian Church”. Although there are still many challenges, this process mostly has brought fruit. About this see the last chapter. H. Boelaars, *Indonesianisasi. Dari Gereja Katolik di Indonesia menjadi Gereja Katolik Indonesia*, Yogyakarta 2005, pp. 442 ff.

the history of the SVD, arrived in 1965<sup>2</sup>. In this article, which is basically a reworked version of my M.A. thesis written in Polish, I would like to honour them on the 100th anniversary of the SVD St. Wojciech / Adalbert/ House in Pieniężno.

At the end of my theological studies in Poland (Pieniężno) in 2004, I decided to write the master thesis about contributions of Polish missionaries in Indonesia. It was based on a selection of 230 letters they had written between 1965 and 2000 and that were published in the missionary magazine "Verbinum" – since 1984 known as "Misjonarz"<sup>3</sup>. The letters I interpreted come from the missionaries who arrived after 1965. I did not find letters of the three brothers who had arrived prior to that date. Reading and interpreting their letters gave me a lot of satisfaction. It was a great joy to see their daily concern and care for the future of the local Church.

The article is based on my master thesis and is enhanced by new information on the situation of the Polish missionaries<sup>4</sup>. It shows how they saw their mission and vocation in a rapidly developing country such as Indonesia. The analysed material covers the time until 2000. The year 2000, as the Jubilee year of Christianity, particularly encourages a reflection on the missionary work. Is the message of salvation fulfilled after two thousand years the Apostles were sent to the nations? An answer to this question is also sought after in this article.

Until today 30 Polish missionaries came to Indonesia<sup>5</sup>. Eventually, some of them went back to Poland or to other SVD provinces, others left the SVD. Fr. Józef Trzebuniak, who arrived in 2018, is the only recent newcomer. Apart from him, there are still 6 elderly (semi-) retired missionaries: Fr. Stefan Wrosz

<sup>2</sup> Fr. J. Glinka described in detail how they have been invited to Indonesia. See: J. Glinka, *Autobiografia. Indonezja – tutaj poczułem, że jestem misjonarzem...*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 47 ff.

<sup>3</sup> The letters were written in Polish and in this article we could see the English translations, which are done by myself with the help of Fr. Stanisław Grodź, to whom I am really thankful. Unfortunately not all Polish missionaries wanted to write for the mentioned SVD magazines. Date of writing appeared only in the letters that were written to *Verbinum*.

<sup>4</sup> My parish priests and then professors in the major seminary in Ledalero were Polish missionaries: Fr. Stefan Wrosz, Fr. Jan Ołęcki, and Fr. Józef Pieniążek. I still keep in touch with Fr. Wrosz via email and WhatsApp, where he tells about his daily activities.

<sup>5</sup> J. Tyczka, „Nurt SVD”, nr 25, 1977, pp. 53-54. Fr. Glinka wrote also a complete description of all Polish missionaries, see: J. Glinka, *Sto lat werbistów w Indonezji*, „Nurt SVD”, nr 2, 2014, pp. 189-274.

in Manggarai, Fr. Tadeusz Gruca in Ngada (both in Flores), Fr. Sylwester Pająk (in Rome), Fr. Tadeusz Piech, Fr. Jan Ołęcki and Fr. Jan Czachorek (all three in Poland).

### 1. The local context of their mission

Indonesia as an archipelago consisting of more than 14 thousand islands<sup>6</sup>. Sumatra, Borneo (Kalimantan), Java, Celebes (Sulawesi) and West Papua are the biggest islands. The so called *Nusa Tenggara* (Lesser Sunda) is the name for Bali, Lombok, Flores, Timor, Sumba and other smaller islands. Especially the eastern part like Timor, Flores, Sumba, etc. – known as *Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT)* – is a Catholic enclave and the Polish missionaries started their activities there<sup>7</sup>. It is about 73.614 km<sup>2</sup> (8). The eastern part of Timor, known as Timor Leste, is an independent state since 1999, but in our work we will treat the island generally as a whole.

The 272 Million population of Indonesia<sup>9</sup> is in all aspects diverse. There are more than 1000 ethnic groups with more than 750 local languages spoken throughout the large country<sup>10</sup>. Bahasa Indonesia is the official language. All Indonesian citizens should be affiliated to one of the officially acknowledged religions: Islam (87,18% of the population), Protestant (6,96%), Catholic (2,91%), Hindu (1,69%), Buddhist (0,72%) and Confucian (0,05%)<sup>11</sup>. The Lesser Sunda Islands

<sup>6</sup>The former name of Indonesia was *Nusantara*, which means: between the islands. This name is still in use today. The *Wielka Encyklopedia Geografii Świata*, vol. 8, Poznań 2000, p. 162, gives the number of 13.677 islands there and the area of 1.904.443 km<sup>2</sup>, among which 6000 are inhabited. See also: F. Lamoureux, *Indonesia. A Global Studies Handbook*, California 2003, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> There are seven dioceses in this area: Kupang, Atambua, Larantuka, Maumere, Ende, Ruteng, Weetebula. The number of Catholics in 2013 is 2.515.683. See: <https://ntt.kemenag.go.id/artikel/16267/data-penduduk-katolik-seprovinsi-ntt> [access: 31.03.2020].

<sup>8</sup>R. McVey (ed.), *Indonesia*, [in:] *Survey of World Cultures*, New Haven 1963, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> This number of population is based on the World meters statistics. See: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/indonesia-population/> [access: 23.03.2020].

<sup>10</sup> Based on official statistics of the Indonesian Government. See: <https://www.indonesia.go.id/profil/suku-bangsa> [access: 23.03.2020]. See also: S. Sofiah (ed.), *Statistik Kebahasaan 2019*, Jakarta 2019, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Census of BPS 2010. Cf. Suhadi, *I Come from a Pancasila Family. A Discursive Study on Muslim-Christian Identity Transformation in Indonesian Post-Reformasi Era*, Zürich 2014, p. 17.

are diverse culturally too, though Christianity is the dominant religion. The diversity on national level is protected and guaranteed under the national philosophy of *Pancasila* (five principles of daily life): belief in one supreme God; just and civilised humanity; national unity; democracy led by wisdom and prudence through consultation and representation; and social justice<sup>12</sup>. Despite many acts of terror or intolerance there is a stable /daily life in Indonesia.

The Manggaraians from west Flores are the biggest ethnic group in the eastern Lesser Sundas (NTT). Then come the Dawan people of West Timor and the Tetun from the eastern part of Timor (also in *Timor Leste*). Other smaller groups like Ende, Ngada, Sikka, Lamaholot, Solor and Alor have their own local languages and customs as well. This region is considered as one of the less developed parts of Indonesia with low incomes, slow economic growth and poor infrastructures. There is now a new trend forwarded by the president Joko Widodo to focus more on the eastern part of Indonesia and the Lesser Sundas are part of the project. Developing and promoting Labuan Bajo with its Komodo dragon called *varanus komodoensis* (the largest lizard on earth, which is named after the island), to one of Indonesia's main international tourism destination belongs to above mentioned project.

## **2. The history of Christianisation of the Lesser Sundas until the arrival of 20 Polish SVDs in 1965**

### **2.1. The mission before the arrival of SVD fathers**

The Christianisation in the Lesser Sundas begun with the arrival of the Portuguese traders searching for spices such as clove, pepper or coffee at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Under Vasco da Gama, they sailed from Malacca (Malaysia) to eastern Indonesia and stopped at Solor, Flores, and Timor<sup>13</sup>. A trader Joao Soarez baptised a local king together with about 200 people on Flores<sup>14</sup>. The king asked then for a priest, but there was shortage of personnel. At the same time the Spanish traders arrived. There was a Dominican friar Antonio de Taveiro who came around 1555-1556 together with the Portuguese traders.

<sup>12</sup> See: D. Bouchier, V. Hadiz (eds.), *Indonesian Politics and Society. A Reader*, London 2003, p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> K. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia. A documented history 1808-1900*, Leiden 2003, p. 7; K. Panikkar, *Azja a dominacja Zachodu 1498-1945*, trans. K. Kęplicz, Warszawa 1959, p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> M. Muskens, *Sejarah Gereja Katolik Indonesia*, vol. I, Ende 1974, p. 367.

In Timor, he baptised about 5000 local people<sup>15</sup>. When the Dominican priests later went to Flores and Solor they found a big group of Catholics. The Dominican friars worked in Timor from 1561 until 1859 and it was the official beginning of the Christianisation of the Lesser Sundas<sup>16</sup>. It was a difficult time, not only because of the local stern life conditions, but also due to the frequent attacks of the Islamic conquerors, with the help of the Dutch soldiers. Eight Dominican missionaries were killed by the malaria and in the riots during their mission (until 1854).

The arrival of the Dutch caused more conflicts between the local people and the Portuguese missionaries<sup>17</sup>. The Local people lost their trust in white missionaries and began perceiving them as “the Europeans” just like the dangerous Dutch<sup>18</sup>. Many people returned to their animistic belief. It was noticed that only one priest was able to serve the whole of Lesser Sundas until 1850. There were neither schools nor other institutions that could help to sustain the identity of the local people, so they were very prone to abandon their Christian belief for Islam, due to lack of pastoral care<sup>19</sup>.

The Jesuits (1859-1914) took over the neglected mission in Lesser Sundas. The first Jesuit Fr. G. Metz met two diocesan priests in Larantuka I.P.N. Sanders and H. Franssen who were sent from Batavia (Jakarta) to establish a school. He has noticed, that there were 11.000 baptized in the entire Lesser Sundas<sup>20</sup>. Fr. Metz worked alone until another Jesuit, Fr. Y. Kraaijvanger, came in 1883. Apart from the pastoral activities they also prepared the catechists who were to help them in the remote areas. The Jesuits relied heavily on that group of teachers in their missionary work.<sup>21</sup> The mission was developing well and growing to be the biggest Catholic mission in Indonesia. The Apostolic vicar in Batavia, Bishop A.C. Claessens called Lesser Sundae mission *l'ornement du vicariate apostolique* (the ornament of the Batavian mission)<sup>22</sup>.

In 1914 there were 17.402 Catholics in eastern Lesser Sunda. There were still no baptised people in the central and western part of

<sup>15</sup> L. Lame Uran, *Sejarah Perkembangan Misji*, Ende 1997, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> M. Muskens, *Sejarah Gereja...*, op. cit., p. 369. The mission Solor consisted of Flores, Timor, Adonara, Ende, and Lomblen. See: L. Lame Uran, *Sejarah...*, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> K. Steenbrink, *Catholics...*, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

<sup>18</sup> J. Glinka, *Sto lat werbistow w Indonezji*, „Nurt SVD”, nr 2, 2014, p. 191.

<sup>19</sup> K. Panikkar, *Azja a dominacja Zachodu...*, op. cit. s. 355.

<sup>20</sup> M. Muskens, *Sejarah Gereja...*, op. cit., p. 377.

<sup>21</sup> H. Djawa et al. (eds.), *Dalam Terang Pelayanan Sabda*, Ende 1990, p. 295.

<sup>22</sup> See about the hopeful situation [in:] K. Steenbrink, *Catholics...*, op. cit., pp. 32-42.

Flores, because the Dutch governor van Heutz did not allow missionaries to work there. The Jesuits sent the teachers (catechists) to these regions to teach religion in Dutch primary schools. When the SVD missionaries arrived, there were already people prepared for baptism<sup>23</sup>.

## 2.2. SVD (Divine Word Missionaries) mission until 1965

The SVD – the new order from Steyl (The Netherlands) – sent the first missionary to Indonesia in 1913. Fr. Petrus Noyen started to work in Timor in Lahurus on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1913 and this date is known as the official beginning of the SVD mission in Indonesia. Six more priests and 5 brothers arrived there in the same year, so they could also reach out to the removed regions in the western Flores. Fr. Noyen became the first Apostolic Prefect for Lesser Sundas and visited also Sumba, Sumbawa, Bali and Lombok. In 1914 bishop Noyen chose Ndona in Ende to be the first headquarter for the new prefecture. More schools, also for girls, were established and bishop Noyen invited the Holy Spirit Sisters (SSpS) to build a hospital in Lela (Flores)<sup>24</sup>.

The First World War brought no serious problems to the young SVD mission, though the Spanish flu killed 4 missionaries. Bishop Noyen died suddenly in Steyl in 1921. He left behind a developed mission with 35 priests, 13 brothers, 25 Holy Spirit Sisters, and 18 Franciscan sisters<sup>25</sup>. Bishop Verstaelen succeeded bishop Noyen.

In 1926, the SVD missionaries established a publishing and printing house (*Percetakan Arnoldus*) in Ende. The new bishop started also a minor seminary for local youngsters and two first Indonesian SVD priests: Karel Kale Bale and Bishop Gabriel Manek came from the first group of students. In 1935, the first Major Seminary was opened in Ledalero near Maumere. With the time passing, it developed into the biggest one in the SVD<sup>26</sup>.

The Second World War stroke a serious blow to the young mission. All German missionaries were arrested by the Dutch and many of them died in a sea accident in 1941. There were only 6 elderly missionaries left and two young Indonesians (Gabriel Manek and Karel Bale). In 1943, the Japanese sent two bishops (Paulus Yamaguchi and Aloysius Ogihara, the Jesuits) and two diocesan priests (Michael Iwanaga and Philipus Kyuno) to help the mission. It was a kind of rescue

<sup>23</sup> L. Lame Uran, *Sejarah...*, op cit., p. 130.

<sup>24</sup> M. Muskens, *Sejarah Gereja...*, op. cit., p. 386.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 163.

<sup>26</sup> K. Steenbrink, *Catholics...*, op. cit., p. 133.

for the mission without priests. At the time, Bishop Leven ordained seven theology students to priesthood earlier than usual so that they could work in the stations devoid of priests. Gabriel Manek became the first Indonesian SVD bishop of the Archdiocese Ende in 1951. At the time other religious orders also arrived in Lesser Sundas (Franciscans, Carmelites and others).

### **2.3. Mission in Sumba, Sumbawa, Bali, and Lombok**

The Jesuits took care of Sumba Island from 1889 until 1898. They established missionary stations and schools but had to leave due to the lack of personnel. Then the SVDs arrived in 1923 and took over the mission. The influence of a Protestant mission from Zending was strongly felt in the eastern part of the island. In 1957, the Redemptorists (CSSr) took over the mission in Sumba. Meanwhile, Sumbawa was a Muslim island and the Catholics were the workers from Flores and Timor, as noticed by father Limbrock during his first visit in 1931.

The first missionaries arrived in Bali in 1916 at the Balinese king's request<sup>27</sup>. However, there is no documentation for their work. The SVD missionaries came in 1933 and they found no Catholics but CMA Christians (The Christian and Missionary Alliance) without pastor. In 1936 twelve local leaders of this mission asked Fr. Kersten SVD to allow them to join Catholic mission. Fr. Simon Buis arrived in the same year and opened a new mission and school in the thick jungle of Palasari. That has been the best Catholic school until today in Bali<sup>28</sup>. In the next years, many other religious orders arrived there and a new diocese was established with the headquarters in Denpasar. Lombok was a Muslim stronghold (the same case as Sumbawa). Lombok belonged to the Bali mission.

## **3. Forms of Polish missionaries' mission work in Indonesia until 2000 as presented in their letters**

### **3.1. Facing a new reality**

Being a missionary means to be ready to negate one's own identity: descent, language, and culture<sup>29</sup>. It is the willingness to change

<sup>27</sup> M. Muskens, *Sejarah Gereja...*, op. cit., p. 345.

<sup>28</sup> N. Shadeg, *The Church in Bali*, [in:] T. Krosnicki, M. Derdzinski (eds.), *Word in the World*, Missionswissenschaftsinstitut Sankt Augustin, Steyl 2001, p. 41.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Constitutions of the SVD 102.

one's way of life to a totally new reality<sup>30</sup>. The young Poles faced the new experience right at the moment they crossed their country's border. In Jakarta, they encountered a completely new culture, people, weather, life conditions and, above all, "a new homeland". People were cheerful and had a different life-style<sup>31</sup>.

When the missionaries landed in the Lesser Sundas, Ende was the only haven city in Flores. They admired the nature as an important element of the new reality. "We finally landed at the coast of Flores in the early evening. We saw the inscription: ENDE. It is really the end, end of our long trip but also like the end of the world. Nevertheless, here is the beginning of our mission. [...] Only a poet could describe the wonder of the nature here. [...] It is the most beautiful nature I have ever seen in my life", wrote Fr. Siwiec<sup>32</sup>. They knew, however, that they had a holy mission to fulfil: bringing the Gospel to the end of the world. Fr. Glinka wrote from Ende: "We knew it is not an excursion, it is God's mission"<sup>33</sup>.

Ability to adapt to a new context is very important for being a missionary. The tropical climate was not a problem for them at all, even they considered it as "more pleasant"<sup>34</sup>. Local cuisine was more difficult, since rice became the staple food<sup>35</sup>. Apart from the climate and cuisine, the encounter with the local people was the most important thing. Their simple and calm life style could seem strange to the Europeans, but they were friendly and polite in general. "They have no sense of time, they do not need watch. They always stay calm, they have always time," wrote Fr. Gorgoń<sup>36</sup>. "Their external appearance could disgust the European, their simple clothes, their different faces, they look like unclean. Their wooden chapel is very simple, no benches.

<sup>30</sup> J. Pawlik mentions some necessary attitudes a missionary should have in forming a multicultural personality: openness, humility, and dialog. J. Pawlik, *Kształtowanie osobowości wielokulturowej jako wypełnienie powołania misyjnego*, „Nurt SVD”, nr 3, 1995, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. S. Wrosz's letter of 28<sup>th</sup> August 1965, "Verbinum", nr 20, 1965, pp. 21-24; S. Pająk's letter on Christmas in 1966, "Verbinum", nr 33, 1966, pp. 8-11.

<sup>32</sup> A. Siwiec' letter, "Verbinum", nr 25, 1966, pp. 12-13. A. Biesik wrote also about the natural wonder [in:] "Verbinum", nr 30, 1966, p. 31; J. Glinka, "Verbinum", nr 23, 1965, pp. 21-22; H. Gzella, "Verbinum", nr 28, 1966, pp. 10-11.

<sup>33</sup> J. Glinka's letter to the mission's friends of 25<sup>th</sup> February 1965, "Verbinum", nr 23, 1965, pp. 21-22.

<sup>34</sup> S. Ograbek's letter of 28th August 1965, „Verbinum”, nr 20, 1965, pp. 17-18.

<sup>35</sup> W. Gorgoń wrote: "I did not lose weight, I could eat rice as much as Br. Pius and Fransiskus could", "Verbinum", nr 2, 1971, pp. 46-47.

<sup>36</sup> W. Gorgoń's letter of 9th May 1972, "Verbinum", nr 4, 1972, pp. 32-33.



But I think, God had to love them," remarked Fr. Glinka during his first pastoral visit in Soa<sup>37</sup>.

Glinka's impression was not uncommon in the rural areas, where the education had not brought effects, yet. Bamboo houses, lack of roads, low level of agriculture, etc. also contributed to that<sup>38</sup>. At other places, where the education system was more developed, like the centres of parishes or urban areas, the standard of life was already better. This also became a big challenge for the missionaries.

### 3.2. Pastoral care – the religious life

**Sacramental ministry.** In the encyclical *Redemptoris missio* John Paul II distinguished three areas of Church's evangelical activities: mission among the pagans (*ad gentes*), ministry among the Christians, and re-evangelisation among the "no-more-Christians" as new evangelisation<sup>39</sup>.

Indonesia was already at the second stage at that time. The Polish missionaries came to areas, where all had already been baptised. Their task would be to strengthen and deepen the faith of the local Christians<sup>40</sup>. They supplied work in parishes at weekends or at Christmas and Easter during their language course. Still not speaking the language well, they were only able to celebrate masses or to baptise, without hearing confessions. "Yes, we have to do our best. These things are what we have to do in the next years," wrote Fr. Biesik from Mataloko<sup>41</sup>.

They began their ministry in the parishes or in the seminaries after almost a year of language course<sup>42</sup>. The SVD brothers were generally sent to the central places, where they could establish workshops or run technical courses. The young missionaries were to start with an elder or experienced priest. The parishes were generally inland with no roads, no telephone, and no electricity. The areas were large and

<sup>37</sup> J. Glinka's letter, „Verbinum“, nr 26, 1966, pp. 15-25.

<sup>38</sup> It is not only confirmed by the missionaries, but also by other people, who visited Flores, like Janusz Wolniewicz, a journalist of „Kurier Polski“. He wrote: „Flores is not overloaded with civilisation (...). In the upcountry, they still live like their ancestors“. J. Wolniewicz, *FLORES - wyspa, gdzie kwitną... słupy telegraficzne*, „Verbinum“, nr 1, 1975, pp. 47-48.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. W. Kowalak, *Misja-postannictwo, misje*, „Nurt SVD“, nr 3, 1997, pp. 35-43.

<sup>40</sup> *Evangelii nuntiandi* 47.

<sup>41</sup> A. Biesik's letter of 10th January 1966, „Verbinum“, nr 30, 1966, p. 24.

<sup>42</sup> H. Gzella, *Jubileusz pracy misyjnej...*, art. cit., pp. 3-4.

could be accessed only on foot or by horse. They spent months visiting people<sup>43</sup>. The so called "education-missionaries" (those who worked in the seminaries) had also the possibilities to help in surrounding parishes. The missionaries played a complex role of a priest, a medical doctor, or a psychiatrist<sup>44</sup>.

As the time progressed, the conditions were getting better. There were more local priests and the villages were more accessible. The roads were built and electricity was supplied to a bigger number of people. The style of ministry also changed. Fr. Wyparło underlined the need for establishing new parochial groups and a new approach to missionary work, since the lay people were more active in the parishes<sup>45</sup>.

**Activities in the mass media.** Following the example of St. Arnold Janssen, the Founder of the SVD, the missionaries tried to bring the Gospel closer to people by using mass-media<sup>46</sup>. The Polish missionaries supplied news and wrote reports to local Catholic newspapers, e.g. *Dian* and *Kunang-kunang* in Ende. They were active in preaching in the Catholic SVD Radio Tirilolok in Kupang. Fr. Osiecki travelled to the parishes with "Christian touring cinema"<sup>47</sup>. He also published many prayer booklets, which are still in use and popular today<sup>48</sup>.

**The role in the social development.** Missionaries are obligated to support the justice according to the Gospel of Christ in the solidarity with the poor and oppressed communities, so they could achieve a proper life based on their own initiatives<sup>49</sup>. The Lesser Sundas, except Bali, were isolated and this also affected people's mind sets. They remained powerless and had no ambition to develop their life conditions. The subsistence agriculture used to be the only possible way to survive<sup>50</sup>. Fr. Wyparło wrote: "I know, that these people do need help to stand on their own"<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> S. Ograbek's letter to the mission's friends of 6<sup>th</sup> January 1967, "Verbinum", nr 36-37, 1967, pp. 10-11.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. S. Pająk's letter of 11<sup>th</sup> October 1966, "Verbinum", nr 31, 1966, pp. 10-13 and of 7<sup>th</sup> March 1967, "Verbinum", nr 36-37, 1967, pp. 7-9; J. Czachorek's letter of 15<sup>th</sup> August 1969, "Verbinum", nr 6, 1969, pp. 39-40; S. Wyparło's letter of 4<sup>th</sup> October 1966, "Verbinum", nr 32, 1966, pp. 9-11.

<sup>45</sup> S. Wyparło wrote in 5<sup>th</sup> March 1980, "Verbinum", nr 1, 1980, p. 17.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Constitutions of the SVD* 115; cf. *Evangelii nuntiandi* 45.

<sup>47</sup> *Zapiski Misjonarza*, „Misjonarz”, nr 3, 1984, p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> Cz. Osiecki's letter, „Misjonarz”, nr 2, 1990, pp. 29-30.

<sup>49</sup> *Constitutions of the SVD* 112; cf. *Ad gentes* 12.

<sup>50</sup> B. Baack, *Karya SVD di Flores dalam bidang sosial ekonomi*, [in:] H. Djawa et al. (eds.), *Dalam Terang...*, op. cit., p. 144 ff.

<sup>51</sup> S. Wyparło's letter from 4<sup>th</sup> October 1966, "Verbinum", nr 32, 1966, pp. 9-11.

**Thorough education.** Education is fundamental for social development and also important means for the mission<sup>52</sup>. Most of the Polish missionaries worked in parishes, where Catholic primary or secondary schools already existed. Few of them were actually teaching, but all of them helped to improve the school conditions and the competences of the local teachers<sup>53</sup>. Some missionaries taught in the minor or major seminaries and universities. Fr. Glinka worked at the State University Airlangga in Surabaya among the Muslim students. The purpose was to educate students to be good and open-minded citizens<sup>54</sup>.

**Practical training courses.** For the local youth, who could not continue their education, the missionaries established practical (technical) courses to train them as car mechanics or carpenters<sup>55</sup>. At the beginning, there was almost nothing to start with, as described by Br. Ławicki<sup>56</sup>. Nevertheless, after some years he found out that the difficulties and successes were the key to finding the answer for so many questions, like the role of brothers in the process of evangelisation. On finishing the courses many of the young people went to other parts of the country and established their own businesses.

**Charity work.** People in the eastern part of Indonesia still lived below the medium standard. They had neither good drinking water system, nor electricity, nor medical help. That became one of the main tasks of the missionaries ever since. Fr. Glinka described the deep sorrow of the people when a Dutch SVD missionary, Fr. Mommersteg, passed away: "I can understand the tears of this people. For them he used to be the specialist for everything: a priest, a doctor, an adviser, a counsellor, a teacher, an engineer, a mentor for agriculture and construction; all in order to raise their life standard"<sup>57</sup>. Fr. Biesik was

<sup>52</sup> Cf. J. Bettray, *Znaczenie dokonania Arnolda Janssena* (tłum. J. Tyczka.), "Zeszyty Werbistowskie", nr 12, 2000, p. 5; *Constitutions of the SVD* 109, 2.

<sup>53</sup> W. Gorgoń's letter of 10<sup>th</sup> October 1972, "Verbinum", nr 1, 1973, pp. 26-27.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Constitutions of the SVD* 109. Fr. J. Glinka was a professor and a spiritual father for catholic students. He wrote: "We have to form them properly, so that they could be lay apostles in the future". See: J. Glinka, *Misja na uniwersytecie*, "Misjonarz", nr 7-8, 1994, p. 27. Cf. S. Pająk's letter in 27<sup>th</sup> August 1969 about the urgency of education for lay persons, "Verbinum", nr 6, 1969, pp. 33-35.

<sup>55</sup> In general there were eight Polish SVD brothers. The first were: Br. F. Derlik, founder of a mechanic workshop in Larantuka and Br. Z. Jażdżewski, the founder of a carpentry workshop in Ruteng.

<sup>56</sup> H. Jerzmański, *Misjonarz z Indonezji, brat Józef Ławicki*, „Misjonarz”, nr 2, 1987, pp. 21-22.

<sup>57</sup> J. Glinka wrote to the mission's friends, "Verbinum", nr 26, 1966, pp. 15-25.

concerned about the roads, although the civilisation was already better developed in general<sup>58</sup>. Fr. Ograbek built 48 kilometres of road and five massive bridges in Manggarai<sup>59</sup>.

A missionary should be well prepared for this multitask. The people come to him looking for solution of all problems<sup>60</sup>. Fr. Wrosz underlined the helplessness of the people in his letter: "My parish people are really poor. A missionary is the richest one here, since he has more than a shirt, shoes and a radio..."<sup>61</sup>. Nevertheless, the missionaries had to experience the same daily problems, due to the lack of accessibility of things. These were generally the problems of the upcountry missionaries. Fr. Wrosz wrote from Mukun, "Now I know how difficult it is to love one another. When I saw a poor hungry boy I told him to wait for me after the lessons at the church backyard, so I could give him some food, also for his family"<sup>62</sup>. Some missionaries were engaged in helping poor children or youth, not only the Catholics, to continue their education<sup>63</sup>.

### Commitment to vocations and lay education

**Promoting religious vocations.** It is also the responsibility of the missionaries to support the progress of the local Church by promoting local vocations<sup>64</sup>. There are nine minor seminaries and three major seminaries today in the Lesser Sundas. Twelve Polish missionaries were appointed to work in the seminaries<sup>65</sup>. Even though they were not completely fluent in the language, they would try their best, as Fr. Pająk wrote from Ledalero<sup>66</sup>. The students were all Indonesians with different character or background, which was not easy for the Europeans.

<sup>58</sup> K. Biesaga's letter of 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1972, "Verbinum", nr 5, 1972, pp. 36-38.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. S. Ograbek, *Praca jest modlitwą*, „Misjonarz”, nr 3, 1985, pp. 15.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. J. Czachorek's letter in 9th December 1966, „Verbinum”, nr 36-37, 1967, pp. 11-13. He wrote: "After the holy mass my room was changed in to medical clinic, psychological practice, marriage centre, neighbourhood trial, youth or job centre, or even mode advice".

<sup>61</sup> S. Wrosz's letter of 16<sup>th</sup> May 1966, "Verbinum", nr 28, 1966, pp. 12-15.

<sup>62</sup> S. Wrosz's letter of 12<sup>th</sup> October 1969, "Verbinum", nr 7, 1969, pp. 39-42.

<sup>63</sup> J. Glinka, *W nowej ojczyźnie*, "Misjonarz", nr 7-8, 1995, pp. 5-6. Cf. J. Glinka's letter, "Misjonarz", nr 2, 1996, pp. 29-30.

<sup>64</sup> *Constitutions of the SVD* 102.

<sup>65</sup> H. Gzella, *Jubileusz pracy misyjnej...*, art. cit., pp. 3-4.

<sup>66</sup> S. Pająk described the language problem at the beginning of his work in the major seminary in Ledalero; see the letter of 7<sup>th</sup> March 1967, "Verbinum", nr 36-37, 1967, pp. 7-9.

"It is not easy, the responsibility is huge. They have different characters than we, the Europeans. But we should try to understand them," wrote Fr. Pająk already as the rector of the major seminary in Ledalero<sup>67</sup>. Since Christianity was still young and the old local religions were still practiced, many things were unfamiliar for them, e.g. celibacy<sup>68</sup>. Nevertheless, the number of candidates was increasing, as Fr. Ołęcki described many years later<sup>69</sup>. Fr. Czachorek took care of the new candidates for SVD brothers by establishing a formation house in Ende in 1972<sup>70</sup>. He himself described, that the mentality was the biggest problem in the intercultural mission: "An educator should be also a psychoanalyst or charismatic to access the jungle of those young people's hearts"<sup>71</sup>.

**Lay education.** *Ad gentes* underlined the importance of a cooperation with the lay people, so that the Church could be rooted in the world and becomes a living community of people<sup>72</sup>. An SVD publicist, Fr. Marcel Beding gives the reason of the rapid development of the local Church in Indonesia: "the missionaries were taking the right way by cooperation with lay people"<sup>73</sup>. When the Polish missionaries arrived, they found many lay catechists and teachers, who graduated from mission schools in Larantuka and Ende. They were sent to all parts of East Indonesia to help missionaries in their mission<sup>74</sup>. As described above, some of the Polish missionaries worked in the educational institutes, where most of the students were lay and were being prepared to be lay co-workers of the missionaries in their own ways<sup>75</sup>.

**Inculturation.** The Gospel is intended to all nations, as the apostle Paul showed it among the Greeks. This is the funding stone

<sup>67</sup> S. Pająk's letter of 11<sup>th</sup> December 1971, "Verbinum", nr 2, 1972, pp. 44-46. Since 1970 he moved to Java (Malang) and began a novitiate and a major seminary house there. He welcomed the first three SVD candidates from Java. Cf. letter of 7<sup>th</sup> December 1979, "Verbinum", nr 6, 1979, pp. 28.

<sup>68</sup> H. Jerzmański, *Misjonarz z Indonezji, ojciec Sylwester Pająk, „Misjonarz”*, nr 5, 1986, pp. 8-9.

<sup>69</sup> J. Ołęcki's letter, „Misjonarz”, n. 3, 1991, pp. 29-30. He repeated the description [in:] "Misjonarz", nr 9, 1993, p. 29.

<sup>70</sup> H. Gzella, *Jubileusz pracy misyjnej...*, art. cit., pp. 3-4.

<sup>71</sup> J. Czachorek's letter of 19<sup>th</sup> March 1978, "Verbinum", nr 1, 1978, pp. 45-46.

<sup>72</sup> *Ad gentes* 21.

<sup>73</sup> M. Beding, *SVD merintis karya*, [in:] H. Djawa et al. (eds.), *Dalam Terang...*, op. cit., pp. 181 ff.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189 ff.

<sup>75</sup> These people were pupils of mission schools, so they could read and write. After school, they stayed a while in the mission centres to deepen their knowledge of religion. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 190.

of inculturation. Inculturation in our times enables a mutual enrichment of the Church and a local culture<sup>76</sup>. Respecting the local tradition is also one of the tasks of missionaries, where the old local cults and worldview are still strong. Fr. Czachorek wrote from Larantuka: "I saw a man under a palm tree. He told me he is bowing down before his ancestors. So I understood the animistic belief is still alive here". He knew, he had to respect that but also intended to give it a Christian foundation<sup>77</sup>. The missionaries also noticed, that there were even local names for God in the local languages<sup>78</sup>.

Apart from the sole usage of the local language, the Polish missionaries tried to engage people to praise God through their local cultural elements like songs, dances and clothes<sup>79</sup>. Fr. Kozłowski wrote from Mataloko: "Once I have seen a holy mass with dances. All songs are based on local melody and they sound so smooth and familiar for our ears"<sup>80</sup>. Fr. Olecki added from Kisol: "Please do not think, that we are going mad. It is all approved by the local bishop and is in accordance with *Vaticanum II*"<sup>81</sup>. Then he wrote: "Please come and see and you will accept this way of praying"<sup>82</sup>.

### Dialogue with other religions and ecumenical efforts

**Interreligious dialogue.** Dialogue aims at supporting the unity and love for human being in the diverse world<sup>83</sup>. The Constitutions of the SVD motivate the missionaries to find out the spiritual enrichment

<sup>76</sup> *Redemptoris missio* 53; *Gaudium et spes* 58.

<sup>77</sup> J. Czachorek's letter at Christmas of 1966, "Verbinum", nr 33, 1966, pp. 7-8.

<sup>78</sup> In the animistic belief the ancestors used certain attributes to name their Supreme Being and these attributes are used nowadays to name God, after the Christianity came. For example in Manggarai local language: *Mori kraeng* or *Mori agu Ngaran* = Lord, the Owner. Cf. H. Gzella, *Imiona Boże u ludów*, [in:] R. Malek, W. Wesoly (eds.), *W służbie Słowa Bożego*, Płock 1978, pp. 25 ff; S. Wyparło, *Szczęście jest w nas*, „Misjonarz”, nr 3, 1986, pp. 14-15. In Dawan language from Timor: *Uis Neno* = the owner of heaven and earth. More about adaptation of terms and rites, see: J. Czachorek, *Echa posoborowe*, "Verbinum", nr 3, 1977, pp. 131-132; H. Jerzmański, *Lolo liman - rozmowa z o. Bartkowiakiem*, "Misjonarz", nr 5, 1985, pp. 10, 14-15.

<sup>79</sup> S. Wyparło's letter of 8<sup>th</sup> October 1978, "Verbinum", nr 2, 1978, pp. 97-100; T. Bartkowiak's letter of 10<sup>th</sup> April 1966, "Verbinum", nr 30, 1966, pp. 15-17.

<sup>80</sup> J. Kozłowski's letter of 1<sup>st</sup> March 1970, "Verbinum", nr 4, 1970, pp. 48-50.

<sup>81</sup> J. Olecki's letter of 19<sup>th</sup> July 1970, "Verbinum", nr 4, 1970, pp. 46-48.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *Nostra aetate* 1.

in local beliefs, in other Christian religions or beyond them<sup>84</sup>. Dialogue with Muslims is the most important task in Indonesia. It works well, except for some attempts of the fundamentalists to change the country into an Islamic state<sup>85</sup>. Although east Lesser Sundas are the enclave of Christianity there are also many Muslims with whom the Church has to collaborate. Fr. Wyparło wrote from Borong that they were the same people like others and we could share our daily joys or problems with them<sup>86</sup>. He was also often invited to Muslims' events and he invited them to parish events as well<sup>87</sup>. It was of course different from the situation in Java, where Islam became the majority religion<sup>88</sup>.

**Ecumenical efforts.** Most of the Protestants live in Sumba and Timor but they live together with the Catholics since they are of the same cultural and historic background. The Polish missionaries in these areas tried to live in agreement with them and to collaborate for example in the matters of liturgy. Fr. Bartkowiak called them "separate brothers and sisters" while they celebrated liturgy together in Atambua<sup>89</sup>.

#### 4. General evaluation of missionaries' work in Indonesia until 2000

##### 4.1. Self-evaluation expressed in the letters

**Trust in God as the foundation for being a missionary.** The Polish missionaries tried to familiarise the readers of their letters with the missionary activities. Everybody could notice how humble their descriptions were. There was no sense of triumphalism only deep trust in the Holy Spirit, who sent them and would be always with them<sup>90</sup>. The essence of the problems remains the same both in the

<sup>84</sup> *Constitutions of the SVD* 114.

<sup>85</sup> J. Glinka, *Misja na uniwersytecie*, „Misjonarz”, nr 7-8, 1994, p. 27.

<sup>86</sup> S. Wyparło described in an interview in Vatican Radio the peaceful coexistence with Muslims in Borong, where Ursuline Sisters have also Muslim pupils in their school. See: *Wywiad o. Stanisława Wyparły dla Radia Watykańskiego* from 9<sup>th</sup> September 1975, „Verbinum”, nr 3, 1976, pp. 103-106.

<sup>87</sup> S. Wyparło's letter of 26<sup>th</sup> November 1973, „Verbinum”, nr 6, 1973, p. 57.

<sup>88</sup> J. Glinka's letter, „Misjonarz”, nr 9, 1996, p. 30.

<sup>89</sup> T. Bartkowiak's letter of 10<sup>th</sup> April 1966, „Verbinum”, nr 30, 1966, pp. 15-17. Cf. Z. Stężycki, *Powrót na Sumbę*, „Misjonarz”, nr 1, 1987, pp. 14-15.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *Redemptoris missio*, chap. VIII, 87 etc. discusses missionary spirituality. The Pope underlined, that missionaries should let themselves be guided by the Spirit, live the mystery of Christ, love the Church and people as Christ loved them and

education and in parishes. Let us begin with the descriptions coming from the "education missionaries".

The beginning was really difficult in all aspects as already described above. Fr. Bloch wrote still ten years later: "For now my work is a struggle, which costs me nerves and health"<sup>91</sup>. Nevertheless, they tried to be optimistic as Fr. Glinka wrote: "The reality, where I live and work is becoming slowly normal and common for me"<sup>92</sup>. Fr. Pająk thanked God for being missionary and the prosperous first year at the major seminary in Ledalero<sup>93</sup>. The total belief in God's providence has been expressed poetically in Fr. Czachorek's letter: "I drank his example, forbearance, I drank his sacrifice. I was overcome by His endurance, His silent strength in the same form and in the same position. His persistence was not commanded, but gained by His own desire. My continuance before Him is also gained by my own desire..."<sup>94</sup>.

The missionaries in the parishes dealt most of the time with people without educational background. But they did not give up. Fr. Siwiec wrote from Wolowaru: "they think the missionary has everything and is rich. [...] and every missionary feels it very painfully. Only the thought of God that we ultimately do everything for Him gives me consolation and encouragement to do well regardless of payment or word of thanks"<sup>95</sup>. The trust in God gives them strength all the time as Fr. Wrosz wrote 25 years later:

"What does it mean to be a missionary? Hang yourself, bury yourself, shoot yourself for Christ, or... go on a mission for life for Christ. It's almost the same thing. The former only lasts for a few minutes and the latter for life. [...] As a missionary you can only find happiness in total dedication to your neighbour for Christ. And this is impossible without faith. [...] A missionary must constantly pray and meditate so as not to lose the sight of faith"<sup>96</sup>.

The self-assessment whether the work is well done is the other side of trust. Fr. Osiecki wrote: "And so one day has passed again. Before I fall asleep I'm going to think whether I'm getting closer and

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be holy. Cf. also: *Ad gentes* 5, 25; *Redemptoris missio* 39; *Lumen gentium* 8.

<sup>91</sup> J. Bloch's letter, „Verbinum“, nr 46-47, 1976, pp. 193-194.

<sup>92</sup> J. Glinka's letter of 4th August 1966, „Verbinum“, nr 31, 1966, pp. 13-17.

<sup>93</sup> S. Pająk's letter of 11th October 1966, „Verbinum“, nr 31, 1966, pp. 10-13.

<sup>94</sup> J. Czachorek's letter of 6th June 1973, „Verbinum“, nr 5, 1973, pp. 71-72.

<sup>95</sup> A. Siwiec's letter of 23rd January 1969, „Verbinum“, nr 4, 1969, pp. 36-37.

<sup>96</sup> S. Wrosz's letter, „Misjonarz“, nr 7-8, 1990, s. 29.



closer to God and whether I'm getting closer and closer to others with my activities and my life – because that's all that matters!"<sup>97</sup>.

Prayer is also the medium to fight the kingdom of darkness in the form of hedonism, indifference and religious fanaticism in that young Christianity. "We could overcome it only with prayer" – wrote Fr. Glinka<sup>98</sup>.

#### **Self-evaluation after many years of missionary work.**

The Polish missionaries went to Indonesia in a difficult period both for Poland and Indonesia. Poland's communist rule forbade the citizens to go abroad. Indonesia was in the immediate aftermath of a strong political turmoil and not yet well developed especially the areas where the missionaries should work. Fr. Bartkowiak wrote about the difficulties: "There were many problems, but my fascination for local culture helped me to overcome them"<sup>99</sup>. It helped also Fr. Wrosz to be closer to the local society<sup>100</sup>.

The big number of Polish missionaries was a big help to the young Church. They became involved in the multitasking missionary work, basically to build the mentality of local people. In 1980 Fr. Wyparło wrote from Ruteng: "As you can see daily life makes me to engage myself in current problems of the folk"<sup>101</sup>. In the same letter he added: "One thing makes me happy these people are avid for spiritual care"<sup>102</sup>. Evangelisation should give a testimony of love, which exceeds the cultural or religious differences<sup>103</sup>. A missionary should not put himself higher than others.<sup>104</sup> As a professor at the state university in Surabaya Fr. Glinka has to testify the absolute love. He wrote: "We try to plant God's grain with our life"<sup>105</sup>.

Years after they could finally see the fruit of their mission. The Church was rooted in the local culture and tradition. How did

<sup>97</sup> Cz. Osiecki, *Dwadzieścia lat temu*, „Misjonarz”, nr 3, 1984, p. 15.

<sup>98</sup> J. Glinka, *Ciągle niepokoje*, „Misjonarz”, nr 3, 1995, p. 23.

<sup>99</sup> H. Jerzmański, *Lolo liman*, art. cit., pp. 10, 14-15.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. S. Wrosz's letter of 10<sup>th</sup> October 1976, "Verbinum", nr 4-5, 1976, p. 182.

<sup>101</sup> S. Wyparło's letter of 5<sup>th</sup> May 1980, "Verbinum", nr 1, 1980, p. 29.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. J. Czachorek's letter from 25<sup>th</sup> June 1978, "Verbinum", nr 4, 1978, pp. 189-190;

Cf. J. Glinka's letter, "Verbinum", nr 23, 1965, pp. 21-22.

<sup>103</sup> On the day of the inauguration of the 68 km long stone road built by Fr. S. Ograbek with his parishioners on Flores Island, one of the local old men said: "Finally now we do see Christ in you". It has given him a lot to think about. Cf. S. Ograbek, *Praca jest modlitwą*, "Misjonarz", nr 3, 1985, p. 15.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. J. Walerowski, *Służyć misjom* (interview with fr. Z. Stężycki), „Misjonarz”, nr 4, 1994, pp. 9-10.

<sup>105</sup> J. Glinka, *Abyśmy byli jak ten kwas*, „Misjonarz”, nr 4, 1992, p. 23.

they talk about their mission? Fr. Bartkowiak saw a new stage of their mission i.e. an urgency to concentrate more on the religious quality formation<sup>106</sup>. And Fr. Gorgoń thought the same: "It seems, however, that the zeal alone is no more enough. We need something more like maturity, prudence, patience and persistence"<sup>107</sup>.

Fr. Pająk remarked about the contribution of the Polish missionaries: "I would also like to emphasize that we, Poles, play a fairly large role in the life of this young Indonesian Church. First of all because we are brave, we are not afraid of risk and we think ahead. The people in the areas where we work can see it clearly and there will be no exaggeration in saying that we are highly respected"<sup>108</sup>. Fr. Wrosz wrote after 15 years of work: "I think, after 15 years of missionary work, I find myself in a point where I could say, that everyone here is my sister, brother and relative. It is not me, but they support me with their life style"<sup>109</sup>. He explained further in this letter, that the mission at the time was easier in a sense that there was no more big nervousness. Fr. Glinka expressed his pride in a letter but stayed humble: "Our (Polish missionaries') contribution here is really small. There were already many other European missionaries before us. We should be thankful above all to our benefactors and sponsors"<sup>110</sup>.

**The role of the benefactors.** The benefactors are the supporting power in the missionary activities through their financial help and prayer<sup>111</sup>. The Polish missionaries always expressed their thankfulness to benefactors in their letters. Fr. Czachorek wrote: "Together with my brothers and sisters from eastern Flores I would like to thank you for your prayer and help, so that we do not feel alone. Here we (missionaries) represent you, your belief and your love"<sup>112</sup>. Fr. Wrosz noticed, that the Western European missionaries had more financial support from their own benefactors than the Polish missionaries. But that should not

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<sup>106</sup> H. Jerzmański, *Lolo liman*, art. cit., p. 15.

<sup>107</sup> W. Gorgoń's letter of 6<sup>th</sup> March 1977, "Verbinum", nr 2, 1977, p. 88.

<sup>108</sup> H. Jerzmański, *Trzeba być odważnym...*, „Misjonarz”, nr 5, 1986, p. 8-9.

<sup>109</sup> S. Wrosz's letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1980, "Verbinum", nr 6, 1980, pp. 257-261; S. Pająk's letter of 11<sup>th</sup> December 1972, "Verbinum", nr 2, 1972, pp. 44-46.

<sup>110</sup> J. Glinka, *Po trzydziestu latach*, „Misjonarz”, nr 9, 1997, p. 23.

<sup>111</sup> *Redemptoris missio* 78; cf. S. Pająk's letter, „Verbinum”, nr 1, 1970, pp. 42-44.

<sup>112</sup> J. Czachorek's letter, "Verbinum", nr 1, 1972, pp. 31-32; J. Ołęcki's letter of 19<sup>th</sup> February 1969, "Verbinum", nr 3, 1969, pp. 36-38 and other missionaries' letters. Once again, it is worth emphasizing that in all the letters we can find words of gratitude especially addressed to benefactors and friends of the mission.

have been a problem. He wrote from Mukun: "We have to continue God's work. But we also need our benefactors to put it into practice it"<sup>113</sup>. He always wrote about his thankfulness to the benefactors from Poland<sup>114</sup>. Fr. Osiecki wrote in another letter: "The Gospel tells us not to take care about tomorrow. And I hope, the benefactors will never leave us alone"<sup>115</sup>.

**Evaluation of missionary work in the light of *Redemptoris missio*.** The activities of the Polish missionaries in Lesser Sundas could be comprehended in nine dimensions, which John Paul II called "the paths of mission" in his encyclical *Redemptoris missio*<sup>116</sup>. They form the essence of all missionary signposts and perceptions, which are included in post-council documents about mission, especially *Ad gentes*, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, and *Redemptoris missio*<sup>117</sup>. Here we would like to evaluate their missionary activities.

**Bearing witness.** This is primarily about evangelical testimony as a way of service to people and love to the poor and abandoned<sup>118</sup>. The Polish missionaries ran a very simple and humble life style from the beginning. They tried to witness that all human beings belong to one family of God. They also described in their letters how the lay Catholics went to non-Christian parts of Indonesia and actively preached the Gospel.

**Proclamation of Christ the Saviour.** The mission of the Church and all other activities should concentrate on this purpose<sup>119</sup>. We can see that in the witness of the Polish missionaries. They built schools, churches, roads or hospitals but they never forgot the main task: the proclamation of the Gospel. Lesser Sundas are the source of vocations to religious life today.

**Conversion and baptism.** Conversion and baptism aim to unite people in the family of God<sup>120</sup>. The missionaries tried to convert people

<sup>113</sup> S. Wrosz, *Podziękowanie*, „Misjonarz”, nr 11-12, 1992, p. 25. S. Wrosz, *Jest za co Bogu dziękować*, „Misjonarz”, nr 10, 1995, p. 23; cf. W. Gorgoń's letter of 3rd March 1971, „Verbinum”, nr 2, 1971, pp. 46-47.

<sup>114</sup> S. Wrosz, *Święta i po świętach*, „Misjonarz”, nr 1, 1995, pp. 14-15.

<sup>115</sup> Cz. Osiecki, *W Ogródzie miłosierdzia*, „Misjonarz”, nr 2, 1998, pp. 14-15.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. *Redemptoris missio* 42-60.

<sup>117</sup> In the Vatican Council II Decree on the missionary activity of the Church, *Ad gentes*, Pope Paul VI broadly and deeply resolved the missionary function of the Church, which is missionary by nature. The evaluation refers also to the exhortation of the Pope *Evangelii nuntiandi*, a document on how to evangelize.

<sup>118</sup> *Redemptoris missio* 42; *Ad gentes* 11-12.

<sup>119</sup> *Redemptoris missio* 44; *Evangelium nuntiandi* 15; *Ad gentes* 13-14.

<sup>120</sup> *Redemptoris missio* 48; *Ad gentes* 2.

away from their animistic practices and to free them from all other non-Christian influences. Baptism did not guarantee that, so the missionaries undertook steps to deepen the belief with the aid of professional educated lay people.

**Establishing local Church.** When they arrived they found a really young Church still threatened by the recent animistic practices. Missionaries helped the Church to get better rooted locally and led her to self-sufficiency. The self-sufficient Church of today and even the big numbers of Indonesian missionaries working in other countries are the fruit of their work.

**Grass-root communities.** These communities should meet in order to pray and share the Bible or their daily cares.<sup>121</sup> The Polish missionaries continued to keep that as the practice of the parishioners. There are many basic groups in the parishes which are really active and serve the bigger community the parish.

**The embodiment of the Gospel in the cultures.** Here we are talking about inculturation. The Polish missionaries were obliged to learn official Bahasa Indonesia and local languages and accept the inculturated liturgy. To keep people on the true path of the Council, both in the theology (view of life) as well as in the liturgy, was the most important task.

**Interreligious dialogue.** The missionaries met a reality where an interreligious dialogue was urgent. They realised it through cooperation and respect. Frs. Glinka, Pikor and Wyparło were quite active in these areas.

**Supporting development and formation of conscience.** As already described above the Polish missionaries engaged themselves in all aspects of life in the local society. They used to be alpha and omega for the people during a long time, until the local Church was able to be self-sufficient. They helped the people but at the same time tried to teach them how to survive and how to be on their own.

**Love as the resource and reliability of mission.** Christ's incarnation is the foundation of mission on which the missionaries should proclaim his absolute love<sup>122</sup>. Simple lifestyle of the Polish missionaries was the sign of their solidarity with the poorest. They tried to help people especially the orphans and the widows. They built dormitories for poor children. Fr. Wrosz always prepared milk for babies from the poorest families.

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<sup>121</sup> *Redemptoris missio* 51.

<sup>122</sup> *Ad gentes* 12.

## Conclusion

The mission of Christ takes place in a suspense between “already” and “not yet”. All efforts made by the Church to extend the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth in spite of the difficulties are bearing visible fruit. Also in the way of martyrdom and sacrifice the truth about God and the Saviour of all creation will be visible. The missionaries, who were sent out, have also reached Indonesia especially the Lesser Sundas and some of them are still sowing the seeds of Christ’s Word among the inhabitants of those islands.

During the research work I noticed great progress in the development of the Church in Indonesia especially in the Lesser Sundas. The presence of missionaries among others those from Poland contributed to the progress in religious and social life of the islanders and they themselves have noticed that. The Church’s messengers came to a foreign world. However, they quickly entered the daily rhythm of life of local people. They taught them a dignified life and invited them to join the great family of God. The difficult work often in primitive conditions resulted in incredible progress. Thanks to the schools established by the missionaries the local inhabitants achieved better education and improved their living conditions. Professional workshops educated the village boys to cope with modern technology.

The situation of the Church itself brings hope. The number of Catholics is constantly increasing. The faithful are becoming increasingly responsible for their faith and are proud of it. In all respects, the local church communities are moving towards self-sufficiency and are even sending missionaries to mission territories themselves. Local Catholics are primarily role models for other people through their presence in offices, schools, universities and other public positions. This often results in jealousy in fundamentalist circles of other religions, which also sometimes causes unexpected clashes. Today the vast majority of Indonesian Catholics live in the Lesser Sunda Islands.

The achievements of the missionaries must be seen in the great salvific work of the Church. It is the Church which still sees the need for greater missionary commitment not limiting herself to ordinary sacramental service. The Polish missionaries in the Lesser Sundas performed their mission in the spirit of the Church. Even though they firstly had to do the sacramental ministry they did not forget the effort for social development. They did everything to enable people to live with dignity. The missionaries are still concerned with that even if they often had to give up their own comforts.

The work of the Polish missionaries deserves recognition especially their great dedication and efforts to create a young Indonesian Church. It is the Church that is constantly looking for its status and place in the modern world. The dedicated missionaries, who carried out the divine mission have invaluable merits in this work. Thanks to their commitment the local Church can look forward to a better future. Thanks to the increase in the number of local clergy, these problems are slowly being taken over by them. It is easier for the local clergy to take on these tasks because they know their own culture and customs well.

Despite the successes and hopes for the future the missionaries in the Lesser Sundas were and are still facing various difficulties. As a still young community the Indonesian Church is facing the increasing demands of the modern world. It is threatened by such ideas as liberalism, relativism or pragmatism. Catholics affected by the processes of globalization face, on a daily basis, a new way of thinking, which is quite a challenge for further evangelization. For this reason new forms of faith are constantly being sought, so that the Gospel is the only source of living hope and love for its followers.

Above all, they were concerned about building a culture of respect and tolerance towards other religions. It is particularly important in this situation to cooperate successfully with the followers of Islam in dialogue. The missionaries who have been dealing with Muslims have constantly contributed to the realization of this call. Today other problems such as the pastoral care of emigrants and financial self-sufficiency are also an important area of the missionary message.

We hope that this article will be a small contribution to showing that the missionary activity of the Polish missionaries in the Lesser Sunda Islands has not been fruitless. At the same time it shows that the mission is still valid all over the world today. The need to proclaim the Gospel of Christ will never cease because there are still places all over the world where the desire for the Good News is alive.

In the strict sense of the word missionary commitment is more relevant than ever. There are still people who have not heard of Christ while many Christians of the old continent have left the Christian tradition. In Indonesia too there are many people who want conversion, but the Church does not have sufficient resources. A similar situation exists throughout Asia, Africa and the Americas.

Although this article concerns only one missionary area it has shown the importance of the missionaries' efforts to develop the Church's missionary work in Indonesia and the development of a young Indonesian country. The Lesser Sunda Islands are one of many

examples of the Church's fruitful mission. Problems also arise in the light of aroused hopes. However, these problems must be looked at not as obstacles but as important challenges. This is how Fr. J. Glinka reflected on the missionary work from the perspective of years: "There was a clear hand of God in all this. This can only be seen today in retrospect"<sup>123</sup>.

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VINSENSIUS ADI GUNAWAN SVD

**Contribution of the Polish Missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word to the Church's Development in the Lesser Sunda Islands (Indonesia) based on letters written to the "Verbinum" and "Misjonarz" Periodicals (1965-2000)**

**Abstract**

The Polish SVD missionaries' contribution to the evangelization of the Lesser Sunda Islands can be followed on the basis of letters written by them between 1965-2000 to the Polish periodicals: "Verbinum" and "Misjonarz". The said correspondence shows that the missionaries took up various challenges encountered in their then-current pastoral work: they taught catechizes and celebrated the sacraments, proclaimed the Gospel including the use of mass media (parish bulletins, films, radio broadcasts). Their activities contributed to the integral improvement of the living standard of their parishioners. Particularly noteworthy is the missionaries' contribution to broadly understood education: they founded Catholic primary schools, minor and major seminaries as well as institutes for lay people. The pastoral work of missionaries proceeded in a spirit of dialogue with the religions and cultures of evangelized peoples of the Lesser Sunda Islands. From the Polish missionaries in Indonesia one can learn how to wisely proclaim the Gospel, taking into consideration inculturation of the Word in non-Christian cultures.

**Keywords:** Polish missionaries, Indonesia, missions, Indonesian Church, Lesser Sunda Islands.

<sup>123</sup> J. Glinka, *Po trzydziestu latach*, art. cit., p. 23. See also: Fr. Glinka's final reflection [in:] *Autobiografia*, op. cit., p. 177.

VINSENSIUS ADI GUNAWAN SVD

**Wkład polskich Werbistów w rozwój Kościoła na Małych Wyspach Sundajskich (Indonezja), na podstawie listów pisanych do czasopism „Verbinum” i „Misjonarz” (1965-2000)****Streszczenie**

Wkład polskich misjonarzy werbistów w ewangelizację Małych Wysp Sundajskich można prześledzić na podstawie listów, które pisali oni w latach 1965-2000 do polskich czasopism „Verbinum” i „Misjonarz”. Ze wspomnianej korespondencji wynika, że misjonarze podejmowali wyzwania, jakie napotykali w bieżącej pracy duszpasterskiej: katechizowali i sprawowali sakramenty święte, głosili Ewangelię również poprzez środki masowego przekazu (biuletyny parafialne, filmy, audycje radiowe). Działalność misjonarzy przyczyniła się do integralnego podniesienia poziomu życia ich parafian. Na szczególną uwagę zasługuje wkład misjonarzy w szeroko rozumianą edukację: zakładali katolickie szkoły podstawowe, niższe i wyższe seminaria duchowne oraz instytuty dla świeckich. Działalność duszpasterska misjonarzy przebiegała w duchu dialogu z religiami i kulturami ewangelizowanych ludów Małych Wysp Sundajskich. Od polskich misjonarzy w Indonezji można się uczyć mądrego głoszenia Ewangelii z myślą o inkulturacji Słowa w kulturach niechrześcijańskich.

**Słowa kluczowe:** polscy misjonarze, Indonezja, misje, Kościół Indonezyjski, Małe Wyspy Sundajskie.