



MIC INFORMATION

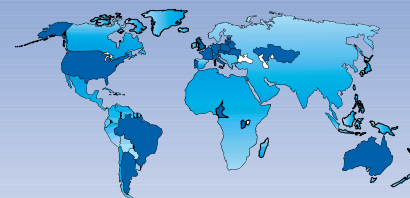


TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Word from the Editors	1
News from the Vatican	
• Percentage of Catholics in the World Slips	2
Canonization Matters	
• Communiqué of the Postulator General	2
Marians around the World	
• Rome (General House and Government).....	3
• Cameroon	4
• Lithuania	5
• Poland	6
• Portugal.....	8
• United States	9
Association of Marian Helpers	
• 6 th International Conference of the Association of Marian Helpers, May 9-13, 2004	12
Our Charism	
• “Blessed George Matulewicz’s spirituality. Three Matulewicz symposia.” About a book prepared by Fr. Vaclovas Aliulis, M.I.C.	12
Formation	
• The present day and perspectives on the Vocation ministry in the Congregation of Marians	14
From the General Council’s Meetings	16
Looking into the Future	
• Communiqué of the Superior of the Divine Providence Province regarding the conse- cration of the new Church of Our Lady of Licheń	17
From the Treasury of our Heritage	
• The history of the construction of a new shrine in Licheń. Votive offering of the Polish Nation for the Great Jubilee of Salvation. Testimony of the Custodian.....	18
Our Interviews	
• We were convinced that we were going to Siberia. . . An interview with Fr. Zenon Rostoń, M.I.C. conducted by Fr. Mariusz Janiszewski, M.I.C.....	24

WORD FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Confreres:

This issue of *MIC Information* features for the first time a new section – “Formation”. This section will be published in close cooperation with Fr. Paweł Naumowicz, M.I.C., the General Prefect of Formation. The materials published in this section will concern formation in the broadest respect. I hope they will attract your interest and be helpful in our development.

Two years have passed since the General Chapter (Fatima, June 3-8, 2002) dedicated to Vocation ministry. By featuring the article entitled: “The present day and perspectives on the Vocation ministry in the Congregation of Marians,” which was created during the Chapter, here Father General and the General Government wish to direct the entire Congregation’s attention to these important matters once again.

Among materials that were sent from different Provinces, one cannot pass over the Lithuanian Province’s efforts in promoting the thought of Bl. George Matulaitis-Matulewicz. They were demonstrated through organizing academic symposia and publications about the Renovator of the Marians. Special attention is due to a book entitled “The Spirituality of Bl. George Matulewicz: Three Matulewicz symposia” prepared by Fr. Vaclovas Aliulis, M.I.C. It contains materials of three symposia about Bl. G. Matulewicz organized in Lithuania and Poland during the year 2002. This book appeared in print on the 85th anniversary of Fr. Matulewicz’s installation at the Bishopric capital in Vilnius. In fact, yet another wonderful symposium has been held in Vilnius on that occasion by the Sisters of the Poor in cooperation with the Marians. Fr. Piotr Wojtonis, M.I.C. gives an account of the event in this issue of *MIC Information*.

The consecration of the new shrine in Licheń is an event of a great importance for the Polish Province. For many reasons, this venture ignites the interest of many confreres from outside Poland. In response to numerous questions regarding this venture, I asked Fr. Eugeniusz Makulski, M.I.C., the Shrine Custodian, and the initiator and executor of this venture to deliver his personal testimony. In this way we will learn first-hand the history of the creation of the new church in Licheń – an enterprise, which, after many controversies, was blessed by the Holy Father during his visit to the Licheń shrine and then recognized by the National Conference of Bishops in Poland as a votive offering of the Polish Catholic Church for the Great Jubilee of Salvation.

I wish you all pleasant reading and, as usual, I renew my request for sending us information about our different provinces and communities.

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

NEWS FROM THE VATICAN
 PERCENTAGE OF CATHOLICS IN THE WORLD SLIPS
 DIOCESAN PRIESTS INCREASE SINCE '78; RELIGIOUS DECREASE

The number of Catholics in the world is increasing, but their percentage has decreased slightly, according to newly released Church data.

The Statistical Yearbook of the Church for 2002, prepared by the Central Office of Church Statistics and just published by the Vatican press office, tracks data from the start of John Paul II's pontificate through 2002.

The yearbook indicates that the crisis of the dwindling ranks of diocesan priests has passed, but not the crisis of religious vocations.

The number of Catholic faithful rose from 757 million in 1978 to 1.07 billion at year-end 2002. By continent, the increase was 150% in Africa; 74% in Asia; 49% in Oceania; 45% in the Americas; and 5% in Europe. Yet, the percentage of Catholics as a share of world population dropped. In 1978, 17.99% of the world's inhabitants were Catholic; in 1990, the tally was 17.68%; and in 2002, 17.2%.

Half the world's Catholics are in the Americas (49.9%); 26.15% in Europe; 12.84% in Africa; 10.3% in Asia; and 0.78% in Oceania.

The overall number of priests decreased 3.78%, from 420,971 in 1978, to 405,058 in 2002. A closer study of the data reveals that the number of diocesan priests increased by 1.85%, to 267,334 from 262,485. The number of religious priests fell by 13.1%, to 137,724 from 158,486 in 1978. Professed men religious (non-priests) plunged by 27.67%, from 75,802 in 1978 to 54,828 in 2002.

Professed women religious fell by 20.98%, from 990,768 to 782,932 in the same period.

Permanent deacons grew by 441%, as their ministry was reintroduced after the Second Vatican Council. In 1978 there were 5,562 permanent deacons; by 2002 they increased to 30,097.

The number of candidates to the priesthood (students of philosophy and theology), both in diocesan as well as in religious centers, soared from 63,882 in 1978 to 113,199 in 2002. Of those, 65% are diocesan seminarians; 35% belong to religious congregations.

Zenit – International News Agency

CANONIZATION MATTERS

COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE POSTULATOR GENERAL
 ABOUT THE BEATIFICATION PROCESS OF FATHER FOUNDER

The process of recognition of a miracle through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God, Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński, is proceeding successfully in Rome. During the Ordinary Congress, which took place on May 7, 2004, the Congregation for the Saints positively accepted the *votum* prepared by one of the Congregation's experts regarding the canonical validity of the process held at the diocesan level in Ełk. A decree of the validity of the process makes it possible to study the matter further from the medical point of view, and then from the theological one, that is the consideration of the Founder's intercession.

Presently, a so-called *Summarium* (actions containing witnesses, depositions, and medical documents collected during the Ełk process) is being prepared. It will go to two medical doctors appointed by the Congregation for obtaining their opinion regarding the alleged miracle in light of medical knowledge. Should both doctors give a positive opinion, then a five-person medical council can gather for making a final decision in this matter. We hope to learn the opinions of the medical experts soon.

As always, I commend further developments in this process to your prayers.

Fr. Wojciech Skóra, M.I.C.
 Postulator General

MARIANS AROUND THE WORLD



ROME (GENERAL HOUSE AND GOVERNMENT)

March 18, 2004 – a keepsake left behind by Bl. Anthony Leszczewicz, M.I.C.

During the process of cleaning and renovating the liturgical vessels at the Roman House, we came across a chalice that is a keepsake left behind by Bl. Anthony Leszczewicz. The chalice bears an engraving: “To Most Reverend and Dear Pastor, Fr. Anthony Leszczewicz as a token of gratitude from the parishioners of St. Josaphat’s Church in Harbin. 15/VII 1937.” Most likely, this chalice was given by the Blessed to the then Superior General, Fr. A. Cikoto who happened to be his schoolmate. Having secretly left Harbin (China) in mid-February of 1938, Fr. Leszczewicz stayed in Rome. At that time he also asked the Superior General to be accepted into the Congregation. Blessed Anthony served as the pastor at St. Josaphat’s from 1924 until his departure from Harbin. He organized that parish from scratch and in 1924-25, built a church there.

April 15-21, 2004 – Father General in Cameroon

The Superior General, Fr. Mark T. Garrow, visited Cameroon. The main goal of his visit was to participate in the enthronement of the Merciful Jesus image and dedication of the church in Atok as the Divine Mercy Shrine. The solemnity took place on April 18 – Divine Mercy Sunday.

The Marians have served in Cameroon since 1999. In 2001, the local bishop entrusted the Atok parish to them in hopes that the Divine Mercy Shrine would be created there. Those plans were brought to life. Presently, three Marians work in Cameroon: Fr. Ryszard Górowski, House Superior and Treasurer; Fr. Krzysztof Pazio, Pastor; Fr. Franciszek Filipiec, Diocesan Promoter of the Divine Mercy Apostolate and Shrine Rector. Also, Fr. Grzegorz Mylek is now completing his training in Paris for work in Cameroon.

April 23 – May 1, 2004 – Canonical Visitation in Kazakhstan

The Vicar General, Fr. Jan M. Rokosz, conducted the Canonical Visitation of the religious house in Karaganda (Kazakhstan). This house belongs to the Divine Providence Province. Presently there are three Marians serving in Kazakhstan: Archbp. Jan Paweł Lenga, Ordinary of the Diocese of Karaganda; Frs. Krzysztof Erdzik and Stefan Wysocki who both live as a community in the neighborhood of Mikhaylovka in Karaganda. Almost 500 faithful belong to the Marian parish. Father Erdzik is also a deacon, a member of the Pastoral Council in the diocese, and a confessor at the inter-diocesan seminary in Karaganda. Now the Marians reside in a newly built religious house. Interior decoration works on the new church are under way.

April 31 – May 5, 2004 – meeting of the Marian Formatters

The Roman House was the place of a meeting of Formatters from our Congregation. The meeting was called by the Superior General, Fr. Mark Garrow, and the General Prefect of Formation, Fr. Paweł Naumowicz, M.I.C. Fifteen formatters from the following formation centers participated in meeting: Brazil, Poland, U.S.A., Ukraine, and Latvia (a detailed account on the meeting will appear in the next *MIC Information*.)

May 1-3, 2004 – representatives of the General Government attend celebrations in Portugal

The Archmandrite Sergiusz Gajek, M.I.C., General Councilor, and Fr. Wojciech Skóra, M.I.C., General Postulator, participated in the celebrations of the 250th anniversary of the Marians’ arrival in Portugal and the 50th anniversary of their return to Balsamão (*see the account of the event on p. 8-9*).

May 8, 2004 – Father General attends ordinations in Licheń

Father General, Mark T. Garrow, along with the Vicar General, Fr. Jan M. Rokosz, participated in the solemnity of ordination to the priesthood and diaconate that took place at the Marian Shrine in Licheń Stary. The following were ordained deacons: Marek Martiska, Adam Stankiewicz, Grzegorz Leszczyk, while Grzegorz Burdyński, Marcin Jurak, Karol Matlok, Krzysztof Trojan, Roman Wcisło, and Rafał Zalewski became priests. The ordinations were performed by Bp. Wiesław Mering, Ordinary of the Włocławek Diocese, where the Licheń Shrine is located.

May 10-13, 2004 – Father General at the 6th International Conference of the AMH

Father General, Mark T. Garrow along with the Vicar General, Fr. Jan M. Rokosz, attended the 6th International Conference of the Association of Marian Helpers. The conference entitled: “Formation of the AMH members in the spirit of the Marian charism” was held at the retreat center “Stella Maris” in Grzybowo (Poland). During the conference, the participants also celebrated the 10th anniversary of the founding of the AMH in Poland. The meeting was organized by Brother Andrew Mączyński, General Promoter of the AMH, and Fr. Piotr Marchewska, M.I.C., Director of the AMH in Poland (*see the detailed account on page 11-12*).

May 18, 2004 – Secretary of the Congregation for the Saints presided over celebrations of our Father Founder's birthday

Upon an invitation from Fr. Wojciech Skóra, M.I.C., the General Promoter, Archbishop Edward Nowak, the Secretary of the Congregation for the Saints, joined the community of our General House and presided over Holy Mass for the beatification of Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński on the anniversary of his birthday. The Archbishop delivered a homily, in which he emphasized the Founder's charism's lasting presence in the history of our Congregation and specifically stressed three aspects of it: love for God and neighbor, apostolic zeal, and the Marian aspect.

Also, Fr. Bogusław Turek, an employee of the Congregation for the Saints, who frequently accorded us his kindly assistance and served with his counsel, participated in the Mass. Sisters of St. Claire, St. Dorothy, St. Elizabeth, and Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, all of whom are friends of our Congregation, also joined us in the communal prayer. A solemn dinner followed the Eucharist.

The text of the Archbishop's homily and the information on our festivity were published in the Friday-Saturday issue of *L'Osservatore Romano* (May 22-23, 2004).

May 28, 2004 – Bishop Jan Ozga from Cameroon visits the General House

During his stay in Rome, Bishop Jan Ozga from Cameroon, the Ordinary of the Diocese of Doumé, where the Marian religious house is located, also visited the Roman House. The Bishop had a private meeting with Father General, Mark T. Garrow and Fr. Wincenty Pawlos, M.I.C., the General Treasurer. Among other things, the Bishop thanked Father General for the Marians' service in the Diocese of Doumé, particularly for promoting the Divine Mercy cult and taking care of the newly created Divine Mercy Shrine.

Prepared by the Editorial staff of *MIC Information*



CAMEROON

ENTHRONEMENT OF THE MERCIFUL JESUS IMAGE AND DEDICATION OF THE ATOK CHURCH AS THE DIVINE MERCY SHRINE

The Divine Mercy feast, which is celebrated on the second Sunday of Easter (April 18th this year), was announced, awaited, and prepared for by our parishioners for a long time beforehand. First, Fr. Ryszard Górowski, M.I.C. completed the repairs of our church, which he later decorated in African style. Father Krzysztof Pazio, M.I.C., in his capacity as the pastor, visited every family in the parish. With a group of animators, I prepared all the Mercy groups that exist in our parish, as well as unorganized faithful, spiritually for the feast. Right before the celebrations, Bishop Jan Ozga, the Ordinary of the diocese, in his pastoral letter addressed to the entire diocese, invited everyone to participate in prayers and the novena spiritually preparing for the celebration. Father General, Mark Garrow, came to participate in the event.

On Saturday, April 17th, three walking pilgrim groups arrived in Atok; 250 people walked in one of them (20 km long). In another (17 km) – 150 people, and in the third – the longest – (22 km) – over 50 people. Despite the fact, that it had been raining heavily all during the night of April 16/17, no one had been prevented from going on pilgrimage on Saturday. The times of singing, praying, and religious education were very moving. Villages through which pilgrims passed prepared food and water. In one of the villages – Mbama – there were two pots of cooked plantains and manioc with sauce. To our amazement, it was enough to feed 200 people and there were leftovers.

The majority of pilgrims were young people. They learned to sing “Jesus, I trust in You” in three languages: Polish, French, and Maca. Pilgrims reached Atok around 3 pm. Together we recited the Divine Mercy Chaplet. The Image was still veiled. Later the pilgrims began to look for lodging and did some washing up after marching on the marshy road. That afternoon they received bread from the Shrine. Everyone returned to the church at 8 o'clock for so-called “animation” and the vigil before the feast.

The program of songs, prayers, and theatrical performances was very rich and lasted until 11 p.m. First, a so-called “seer” announced the feast and called everyone to come, striking a small tympanum. Next, it was the turn of drum players to announce the feast. They proved able to extract from their drums a melody, which seemed to say: “Zaga, zada Jeyi ni inkwonkwong” (“Come round, the Lord is merciful”). The word “merciful”, said several times, became very much alive. Next, dulcimer players began their performance, also calling everyone to celebrate. Finally, the festivity was announced by horns. Then we watched several stage performances based upon local traditions and everyday-life occurrences that showed lack of mercy: imprisonment without trial and evidence; abusive treatment of a woman after her husband's death; superstitions that did not allow the young to enter into marriage. Also, instances of theft from and exploitation of elderly parents by their children who were out of a job were presented. There was also religious education about the Divine Mercy and recitation of the Chaplet. At the end we showed pos-

itive examples of mercy, in which the young people presented victory over fear, divinations, and social pressure, and how they were able to obtain a high-school certificate, gain employment and start a family. We also showed scenes of mercy towards people with AIDS and the elderly. The teaching ended with a prayer to the Mother of Mercy.

On Sunday bells, drums, and the outcries of the seer began by 7 a.m. There was a lot of commotion to get everything done to a tee, to properly welcome the oncoming guests. At 9 a.m. sharp a procession took off. It was composed of altar boys, who were wearing new cassocks and surplices; the choir wearing special costumes; assistants, priests, and bishops. Bishop Jan Ozga carried in St. Faustina's relics. The welcome ceremony had begun. All the Church and State dignitaries were greeted. Before the Liturgy of the Word there was a procession with the Bible.

In his sermon, Archbp. Roger Pirenne from Bertoua emphasized the importance of piety and the Divine Mercy cult, and he encouraged the gathered to perform deeds of mercy in their lives and relations with others. After the homily, the solemn unveiling (enthronement) of the Merciful Jesus image took place. A procession of traditionally clad warriors and young girls, dancing in a gesture of welcoming a king, approached the altar. The image was unveiled by the both bishops, Fr. General, and the parish representative. There was an ovation as a sign of joy, as well as drumming on tympanums, playing on dulcimers, and blowing horns, while women were crooning their "impundu" as a special sign of appreciation. The choir sang a new song composed specifically for this event: "Jesus me di nebuge ne Wo" (Jesus, I trust in You). There were two lines for the offerings. The first was to the collection basket, where the faithful put their "small coins". Since there were many guests at the event, the basket contained also envelopes. People in the second line offered gifts of bananas, pineapples, and other fruits; among the gifts there also was a goat for the Bishop.



We should also mention another moment of the celebrations, which came after Communion. Choir-girls approached the altar in dancing steps and sang a great thanksgiving song for the Merciful Jesus' presence in the image: "Ncyuncyes na we ye da." To close, Bishop Ozga entrusted the entire parish and diocese to the Merciful Jesus, proclaiming at the same time the church in Atok the Regional Shrine of The Divine Mercy.

Thanksgivings and expressions of joy came in a torrent. One of the local priests sang the song "Jesus, I trust in You" in three languages; he then turned to the Bishop and said that the faithful offer their pastor the same trust and thank him for establishing the shrine. A solemn blessing and a synodal song of mission came as the conclusion and sending away of the faithful and pilgrims. All priests and religious sisters, as well as representatives of the local authorities, were invited to a communal meal.

Reflecting upon this festivity among friends, we experienced great joy because a new stage of the Marians' missionary work has been opened in Africa. We are responsible for the Divine Mercy Shrine, which finds its expression in the cult, formation of the faithful, and charitable help for those who were most painfully touched by evil, sin, and suffering.

Atok, April 18, 2004

Fr. Franciszek Filipiec, M.I.C

Promoter of the Divine Mercy Apostolate



LITHUANIA

GEORGE MATULEWICZ, THE BISHOP OF VILNIUS, YESTERDAY AND TODAY

International Academic Conference

The International Academic Conference entitled: "George Matulewicz, the Bishop of Vilnius, yesterday and today", dedicated to the 85th anniversary of Bl. George Matulewicz's ordination as bishop, took place on October 17, 2003, in Vilnius, at the Hall of the Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Science. The offices of the Academy Administration, located at 8 Pilies Street (formerly Castle Street) occupy a part of the Bishopric Curia of Bl. George's times. The facilities were thoroughly renovated through the efforts of H.E. Cardinal Juozas Audrys Bačkis, the Metropolitan of Vilnius, who then passed them on to the Academy.

The conference was opened by H.E. Bishop Jonas Boruta, SJ, the Ordinary of Telszen, who emphasized the importance of the person and work of the Blessed George from the point of view of the Church and history. In his welcoming words, Fr. Mark T. Garrow, M.I.C., the Superior General of the Congregation of Marians, recalled the Holy Father's opinion of our

Renovator, while Fr. Dr Vytautas Briilius, M.I.C., the Provincial Superior, spoke of the Bl. George's principle to influence people through other people, particularly the Catholic intelligentsia.

The 1st conference – “The service of a woman (a religious sister) for the Church in the thought of Bl. George and parts of its realization in the experience of the Congregation of Sisters of the Poor” was delivered by Sr. Dr Albina Pajarskaite, MVS¹, a long-time Superior General of this Congregation. She presented many facts illustrating the skillful interpretation of the signs of the times in order to offer service where it is most needed and to bring light where it is the darkest. For example, the Sisters copied as many as 2,008 religious books and booklets during Communist times.

Two conferences by members of the Marian Historical Institute followed: “Bishop George Matulewicz as a pastor of the Universal Church” by Rev. Tadeusz Górski, M.I.C., and “Bl. George Matulewicz in St. Petersburg” by Fr. Dr Jan Bukowicz, M.I.C., in which the authors presented the results of the research they conducted in Poland.

Two Lithuanian historians of the younger generation presented some episodes from the life of Bl. George in Kaunas and Vilnius, which were not well known before. Doctor Rimantas Maknys, a well-known scholar of the so-called Krajowski Movement of the first quarter of the 20th century (which embraced Polish activists favoring the idea of Lithuania's independence, such as Ludwik Abramowicz, Tadeusz Wróblewski, Michał Römer and others), demonstrated how close Bishop Matulewicz was to them in his heart, while keeping apart from their political actions. In order to stay informed of the progress of the Polish-Lithuanian negotiations in December of 1920, he used to send the chamberlain, Fr. Dr Antanas Viskantas (Wiskont) to the sessions.

Doctor Algimantas Kasparavičius presented in his conference new, interesting facts from the archives of the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that spoke of complicated preparations and the hesitancy of the Lithuanian government regarding Bl. George's coming to Lithuania as the Apostolic Visitor. Thanks to the Visitor's participation, the pontifical bull about the installation of the Church's Province in Lithuania was wisely edited, giving an opportunity for further historical development.

The next three conferences were dedicated to Bl. G. Matulewicz's role in creating religious congregations for women. Authors of those conferences are experts in this field: Dr Regina Laukaityte, Ms. Genovaite Gustaite, and Sr. Janina Samolewicz, SJE, who defended the thesis stating that it was Bishop George himself, not Fr. Andrzej Cikoto, M.I.C., who was a factual and legal founder of the Congregation of the Sisters Handmaids of Jesus in the Eucharist.

The last three conferences spoke mainly about social problems, namely: “Reflections upon social problems of the 21st century that were already considered by George Matulewicz” – Sr. Dr Daiva Kuzmackaite, MVS; “Bishop Antoni Baranowski and Bishop George Matulewicz – two tactics of overcoming nationalism” – Dr Paulius Subačius who specifically emphasized the patience and kindness of the latter; “Importance and timeliness of Bl. George today” – Fr. Lic. Vaclovas Aliulis, M.I.C. A discussion followed the lectures.

In the evening, Holy Mass was celebrated at St. Casimir's chapel in the archcathedral, by Bishop Juozas Tunaitis, the Auxiliary of Vilnius, who also addressed the assembled with a kind, warm sermon.

The majority of the participants were members of two of Matulewicz's congregations for women, among others: M. Halina Sklepkowska, SJE. Lay people were also present, among whom there were two full members of the Academy of Science: one of the State Academy and the other – of the Catholic Academy. The mass media covered the conference proceedings.

All conferences were delivered in the lecturer's native language with a brief summary in the other language. Texts of this conference will be published in this very format in the next Yearbook of the Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Science.

On November 11, 2003, a similar symposium took place at the Lithuanian State Academy of Science. Professor Dr. of Medical Science, Povilas Čibiras recalled his meetings with Bl. G. Matulewicz during his (Povilas's) young, student days in Vilnius.

Fr. Vaclovas Aliulis, M.I.C.



POLAND

THE YEAR OF MARY IMMACULATE AT THE MARIAN FORMATION CENTER “SALVATORIS MATER”

Since the beginning of its existence, the Marian Formation Center (MFC) has offered a Marian program of activities related to the current pastoral program of the Church in Poland. In its first years (1997-2000), it was a program preparing for the celebrations of the Jubilee of Salvation 2000. Since 2002, the proposed topics are related to the three-year pastoral program of the Church in Poland, with an emphasis on its Marian aspect: “Getting to know, to love, and to follow Christ with Mary.” This year's pastoral program

¹ MVS – Marijos vargdviniu seserys – Sisters of the Poor of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary

“Following Jesus Christ with the Immaculate Mary” is enriched by the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the MBVM.

The Center prepared 11 retreats, which are inspired by this year’s main topic. In addition, we planned three academic symposia and the publication of two books: “In search of a Marian way” (selected articles of Fr. W. Nieciecki, M.I.C.) and “The Vocation and the Mission” (collected works dedicated to Fr. C. Wyszynski’s spirituality, edited by Fr. J. Kumala, M.I.C.). This September in the latest, materials of last year’s symposium “The Mystery of the Divine Mercy in the Marian charism” will appear in print, as well as materials from the last two International Conferences of the AMH (2003-2004): “Mary Immaculate. The Gift and Inspiration” (Editor: Fr. J. Kumala) and “Novena through the intercession of the Servant of God, Fr. C. Wyszynski” (by Fr. J. Kumala).

As a part of the preparations for the consecration of the new shrine in Licheń, 12,000 copies of Fr. J. Kumala book “The Shrine of Our Lady of Licheń: The Gift and the Message” were also published.

Periodicals published by the Center also reflect current topics. Themes of the quarterly *Salvatoris Mater* are: Mary Immaculate in the experience of the Church; Mater Dolorosa (in relation to the consecration of the new shrine in honor of Our Lady of Licheń, the Sorrowful Queen of Poland); the Queenship of Mary (the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of the encyclical “Ad caeli Reginam”); Mary receives the Son of God (in relation to the International Mariological Congress in Rome).

Our bi-monthly for pilgrims to Licheń, called “Marian Notebooks” features topics related to the anniversary of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the pastoral program (Following Christ). The quarterly *The Mother of Peace* is still being produced as a publication of the Shrine of Our Lady of Peace in Stoczek Warmiński. This magazine offers formation for life in peace and encourages praying for peace.

The Center is a member of the International Pontifical Marian Academy, and the quarterly *Salvatoris Mater* enjoys its special patronage. About 100 theologians from Poland and abroad cooperate with the Center.

Reception given to “Marialis cultus” in Poland

On March 12-13, 2004, an all-Polish Mariological symposium on the 30th anniversary of the proclamation of the Apostolic Exhortation “Marialis cultus” speaking of proper formation and developing the cult of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary took place in Licheń. Nine lecturers were invited who evaluated in their conferences the reception given to “Marialis cultus” in Poland. The meeting was opened by Fr. Prof. S. Napiórkowski, OFMConv with a conference “*Marialis cultus* – 30 years later.” It should be mentioned that Fr. Professor was one of the greatest contributors for the revival of the Marian cult in Poland in the spirit of the teachings of Vatican II and the exhortation “Marialis cultus.” For many years he has been enjoying great respect in international Mariological circles. He raised many disciples in Poland who now continue his work of renewing Mariology and the Marian cult. Among them are also people grouped around *Salvatoris Mater*.

Other speakers presented principles of the renewal as formulated by Pope Paul VI and brought to life in Poland: the Trinitarian principle (Fr. Dr K. Kowalik, SDB, of Lublin); Christological (Fr. Dr W. Siwak of Przemyśl); pneumatological (Fr. Dr K. Krzemiński), ecclesial (Fr. Dr T. Siudy of Czech Republic). The remaining lecturers presented the status of the realization of the renewal of the Polish Marian cult: biblical (Fr. Dr M. Rosik of Wrocław), liturgical (Fr. Dr W. Nowak of Olsztyn), anthropological (Dr E. Adamiak of Poznań), ecumenical (Sr. Dr Teresa Wójcik of Warsaw).

Out of all presentations a picture of the Polish Marian cult emerged, which to a great measure brought to life the directions of “Marialis cultus.” However, still more efforts are needed so that the process of renewal and deepening of the Polish Marian cult can go forth and correspond ever better with the modern teachings of the Church. All speakers, and particularly Fr. Napiórkowski, emphasized the important role of the Marian Formation Center and its magazine *Salvatoris Mater*.

Eighty people from around Poland participated in the symposium: priests, seminarians, religious sisters, and lay people. Documents of this symposium will appear in print in the near future through the efforts of the Marian Formation Center.

Bringing up for peace

This was the topic, around which the Theological and Pastoral Symposium organized in Stoczek Warmiński on May 8, 2004, centered. The symposium was inspired by Pope John Paul II’s message of for this year’s World Day of Peace – August 1st.

Father Dr Z. Żywica opened the symposium and presented the biblical image of man. Ms. B. Rozen, Ph.D., of Olsztyn spoke about the role of the family in the process of an upbringing for living in peace, while Ms. A. Zellma,

Ph.D. of Olsztyn reflected upon the role of the school. The problem of educating in a law-abiding spirit as a condition of a culture of peace was presented by Fr. Dr R. Szewczyk of Ełk, and Mr. Jan M. Ruman, an editor from Warsaw, spoke about the role of mass media in education for peaceful existence. An interesting conference entitled "Fight against terrorism in light of the teachings of John Paul II" was presented by Fr. Dr J. Guzowski, the Rector of the Major Seminary in Olsztyn.

The symposium on peace fits beautifully into the mission of the Shrine of Our Lady of Peace, encouraging a deeper reflection on the problems of peace, promoting the teachings of the Holy Father in this field, and encouraging a greater responsibility for peace in the world. Documents of the symposium will appear in print.

"You are all beautiful, O Mary"

On May 17-20, 2004, an all-Polish Mariological Symposium – "Tota pulchra est Maria" – on the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the M.B.V.M. and dedicated to that mystery of took place in Licheń. Twenty-two lecturers were invited, all of them well-known experts in different fields of theology. The program included all the most significant aspects of the mystery of the Immaculate Conception.

On the first day the biblical foundations of the dogma were presented by Fr. Prof. A. Tronina and Fr. Dr S. Hareźga; and the patristic aspect of Mary's holiness – by Fr. Dr S. Longosz. Also, the presence of the Immaculate Conception in the liturgy of the Roman Church was discussed by Fr. Dr M. Piszczak, M.I.C. during the afternoon session, Fr. Prof. J. Bolewski brought up a new and interesting topic: "New law of the Immaculate Conception", while Fr. Dr G. Bartosik, OFMConv discussed the pneumatological aspect of the Immaculate Conception.

The proceedings on the next day were opened by Ms. D. Mastalska, Ph.D. with a reflection on the relation of the Immaculate Conception to Mary's sufferings. The speaker explained in an interesting way the meaning of Mary's sufferings as a person free from sin, but being tested by suffering. The Christological aspect of the dogma was presented by Fr. Prof. Roman Rogowski, while the anthropological one – by Fr. Prof. Z. Kijas, OFMConv. Father Kijas showed Mary in her immaculate conception as a model of human being in the light of post-modern culture. Father K. Kowalik, SDB, present head of the Faculty of Mariology at CUL, spoke about the Immaculately Conceived in the experience of the Saints. At the end of the day (May 18th), Fr. A. Pakuła, M.I.C., delivered a conference about Mary Immaculate in the life and teachings of Fr. S. Papczyński. In the evening a Holy Mass for the intention of beatification of our Father Founder closed the second day of proceedings.

The conference by Fr. Prof. R. Knapiński "The Immaculately Conceived in iconography" opened the third day of the conference. The next lecturer, Fr. Prof. P. Liszka, CMF, discussed the ecclesiological aspect of the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, while Fr. Dr B. Ferdek gave an attentive analysis of the correlation between the gift of the Immaculate Conception and Mary's freedom of choice. The afternoon session brought an unusually revealing conference by Prof. K. Klauzy about the beauty of the grace of the Immaculate Conception. That was a reflection in the spirit of the Mariological "way of the beauty".

Fr. Prof. M. Chmielewski spoke about the inspiration that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception gives to Christian spirituality, and Dr J. Majewski attempted a symbolic re-interpretation of this dogma.

Ecumenical aspects of the dogma were discussed during the last day of the symposium: the stand taken by the Orthodox Church (Fr. H. Paprocki), by the Anglican Church (Fr. W. Życiński, and of the Evangelical-Augsburg Church (Fr. W. Nast, Fr. J. Lipniak).

Our Father Founder was the patron of these proceedings, in which 60 people participated. The Founder's words from the "Rule of Life" were taken as the symposium's motto: "But lest you remain without work in the Vineyard of the Lord, to the utmost of your strength you will promote devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God." Documents of this symposium will soon appear in print.

Fr. Janusz Kumala, M.I.C.
Director of the Marian Formation Center



PORTUGAL

Jubilee of 250 years since the Marians' arrival in Portugal and 50 years since their return

The main festivities were held on Saturday, May 1, 2004, in Balsamão. A Holy Mass, concelebrated by many priests, was led by the Ordinary of the Diocese of Bragança, Bishop Antonio Montes Moreira, OFM. The Eucharist, although celebrated in pouring rain, gathered about 300 friends of the Marians and diocesan clergy. On behalf of our Congregation the fol-

lowing participated: General Councilor Archmandrite Sergiusz Gajek, M.I.C., representing the Superior General; General Councilor Fr. Wojciech Skóra, M.I.C., Postulator General; Superiors of the two American Provinces – Fr. Walter Dziordz and Fr. Donald Petraitis; Lithuanian Province Superior, Fr. Vytautas Brilius; Brazilian Province Superior, Fr. Marek Szczepaniak; and the Vice-Provincial from Poland, Fr. Antony Skwierczyński.

After lunch, a stage performance was given along with testimonies and reminiscences crowned with the unveiling of the monument to the Venerable Servant of God, Fr. Casimir Wyszyński. At the closing of this part of the festivities, Archmandrite Sergiusz Gajek congratulated the Portuguese Vice Province on behalf of the Superior General and thanked them for the beautifully prepared event, while Fr. Wojciech Skóra presented a brief history and the present status of the beatification process of Fr. Casimir.

The next two days provided Marians who came from different parts of the world with an opportunity to get to know the diocesan capital – Bragança – where our Balsamão house is located, as well as former stations, where the Marians lived and worked in the past: Algozo, Viseu, and Cedovim. Naturally, Fatima was also included in this jubilee pilgrimage. The Marians run a pilgrim house there, as well as a Minor Seminary (which does not have candidates at the moment).

Fr. Wojciech Skóra, M.I.C.



UNITED STATES

ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA PROVINCE

Washington, February 20-12, 2004 – Marian Theological Symposium: The Immaculate Conception in the Life of the Church

On February 20th and 21st, the SSK Province sponsored a theological symposium at the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, DC, in honor of the 150th Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The symposium, “The Immaculate Conception in the Life of the Church” was well attended with approximately 100 guests, including Marians, other priests, religious, seminarians, and laity from as far away as Louisiana and California.

On Friday evening, the Symposium began with Mass at the Cultural Center’s chapel. Master of Ceremonies and Assistant Rector of the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy, Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC, opened the event by announcing that the Symposium was being held in honor of Our Lady during this anniversary year of the Dogma. The first paper presented – Dr. Stackpole’s paper on the Immaculate Conception in Catholic Apologetics – was read by Fr. Joseph Roesch, MIC. (Dr. Robert Stackpole, DD, was unable to attend due to family health problems.) It reflected on the development of doctrine and what the dogma meant from an ecumenical perspective. A lively discussion and a Holy Hour with Eucharistic Adoration in the Center’s Chapel followed the reading.

Saturday began with Mass celebrated by Fr. Joe. He spoke on the Immaculate Heart of Mary and God’s desire to transform our hearts to be like her heart. “Those who are pure of heart, – said Fr. Joe, – shall see God as the beatitude tells us.”

Afterwards, Sister M. Timothy Prokes, FSE, PhD, Professor of Theology and Spirituality, at Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College, spoke on how the Immaculate Conception relates to every human conception. She touched on genetic manipulation and bio-ethical challenges.

Father Peter Fehlner, FI, expert on Franciscan theology and Mariology, spoke next on the Immaculate Conception and the renewal of the Church – especially from a Franciscan perspective. “Consecration to Our Lady,” he said, “is the answer in our age-old struggle against evil.”

Following lunch and a Holy Hour, Dr. Mary Shivanandan, DD, Professor of Theology at the John Paul II Institute of Marriage and the Family, spoke on the Immaculate Conception and Theological Anthropology. She focused on Mary’s pilgrimage of faith and the connection between the rise in contraception and a diminution in preaching on Our Lady.

Father Donald spoke next of the Holy Father’s desire that the mystery of the Immaculate Conception be explored in new and creative ways. In response, he spoke on the Immaculate Conception in the writings of Dr. Adrienne von Speyr, a Swiss mystic. Von Speyr’s writings on the Trinity and the Immaculate Conception inspired the famed Swiss theologian, Dr. Hans Urs von Balthasar. Although not well known, Fr Donald recommended she be more widely read.

The final address of the evening was given after dinner by Dr. Mark Miravalle who spoke on the Immaculate Conception as the foundation of Our Lady's coredemption. Dr. Miravalle presented a wonderful history of the steps leading to the Proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, including contentious debates over the centuries. He concluded his talk by drawing some parallels with the efforts at this time to see the dogma of Our Lady's co-redemption proclaimed.

All the papers presented at the Symposium will be published in a book *entitled The Immaculate Conception in the Life of the Church*. It is edited by Fr. Donald and is already released.

Stockbridge, April 17-18, 2004 –Divine Mercy Sunday with a record crowd of pilgrims

On Saturday and Sunday, April 17-18, over 20,000 pilgrims joined the Marians of the Immaculate Conception to celebrate the Feast of Divine Mercy at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy – North America's largest Divine Mercy Sunday celebration. The theme of the warm and sunny weekend, "Mary Immaculate and the Marians" – in honor of the celebration of the 150th anniversary year of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception – was spread over two days of Masses, speeches, music, and presentations. Fifty-two priests from four states participated in the weekend and 1,634 confessions were heard. Two hundred and sixty-six buses arrived for the weekend with large pilgrimage groups of Hispanics, Filipinos, and French Creole in attendance. Individual pilgrims came from as far away as Iraq, Puerto Rico, California, and Louisiana.

Deacon Mark Baron, M.I.C., was the Master of Ceremonies for the field show – a three-hour event from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. – that included speakers, music, and for the first time, the Association of Marian Helpers' 13th of the Month Club that led the pilgrims in a moving recitation of the Rosary from the field altar.

Prefect of Formation, Fr. Joseph Roesch, M.I.C., and Director of the John Paul II Institute, Dr. Robert Stackpole, were the hosts of the Eternal World Television Network (EWTN) one-hour pre-show program, Mass celebration, and Chaplet. Guests of the program included Shrine Rector, Fr. David Lord, M.I.C., Director of Vocations, Fr. Anthony Gramlich, M.I.C., Deacon Mark, and Director of the Association of Marian Helpers, Fr. Shaun O'Connor, M.I.C. Father Shaun was also producer for the EWTN telecast.

The celebration from Eden Hill was broadcast live around the world by EWTN in English and Spanish to a potential viewing audience of over 20 million, primarily in North and South America. It was also carried live by *Ave Maria* Radio, a Latino radio network in the northeast. It was the 13th time that EWTN had broadcast the celebration, and the first time for *Ave Maria*.

The highlight of Divine Mercy Sunday was Holy Mass celebrated by Bishop Elliott Thomas, DD, retired Bishop of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Bishop Thomas was also the homilist. During his homily the Bishop emphasized that the Feast of Divine Mercy was a way of life and not just another devotion. And in reference to the theme of Mary Immaculate and the Marians, the Bishop said: "In the encyclical *Rich in Mercy* the Holy Father writes, "Mary is the one who has the deepest knowledge of the mystery of God's mercy. She knows its price. She knows how great it is. She experienced mercy as no one else did because she was preserved from original sin and enriched with the fullness of grace. ... We confidently invoke her aid with the prayer: «Hail, Holy Queen Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope,» and end it beseeching her 'to turn your eyes of mercy towards us.' And you know what – 'Never was it known that anyone who sought her intercession was left unaided.'"

In an encouraging demonstration that the Divine Mercy Sunday celebration is growing to a weekend-long event, Saturday showed an increased crowd of approximately 2,000 pilgrims – an increase of over four times the amount from the previous year. The Divine Mercy Sunday Vigil Mass on Saturday was celebrated by Fr. David Lord, M.I.C. Shrine Rector, who also delivered the homily.

The complete homilies of Bishop Elliott and Fr. David are available on the Marian Web site: www.marian.org/mercysunday

Divine Mercy around the SSK Province

Marians of the SSK Province and its lay organization Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy (EADM) celebrated Divine Mercy Sunday throughout the world. Afghanistan, Maine, Washington, DC, Hawaii, and Lithuania are a few examples of locations where Divine Mercy Sunday was celebrated.

Provincial Superior, the Very Rev. Fr. Walter M. Dziordz, marked the fifteenth anniversary of Mercy Sunday in Washington DC at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the Archbishop of Washington, DC, was the celebrant and homilist.

In his remarks, Fr. Walter said, "The Congregation of Marian Fathers and Brothers, who are privileged to spread devotion to the Divine Mercy, have as their motto: «For Christ and the Church.» St. Faustina has endeared herself to our Congregation as she made a point of her desire to also serve the Church: «Now I can be wholly useful to the Church by my personal sanctity, which throbs with life in the whole Church for we all make up one organism in Jesus» (*Diary* 1364). How wonderful it is that we have come here today to experience this Mercy! We are seeking by our presence today to stand beside St. Faustina and become apostles of Divine Mercy, extending our experience here to all of our brothers and sisters."

In his comments after Communion, Cardinal McCarrick asked the people in attendance to pray for vocations to the Marians and, in addition, to pray for the canonization of Blessed George Matulaitis.

In Portland, Maine, Fr. Ireneusz Chodakowski and Fr. Bernard Backiel marked the fifth anniversary of their popular Divine Mercy Sunday celebration at St. Louis' Parish. In Fairbanks, Alaska, Fr. Gerald Ornowski was the celebrant and speaker for a gathering of 100 people, which he noted was an impressive turnout for the area. EADM Cenacle Facilitator, Gretchen Robens, traveled to Hawaii for a Divine Mercy Sunday celebration to address a convocation from across the Hawaiian islands.

Father Seraphim Michalenko, who was joined by Paul Regan of EADM, traveled to Kaunas, Lithuania.

Marian Helpers Center of the SSK Province undergoes management restructuring

Since April 15, 2004, the Marian Helpers Center – the operating office of the Association of Marian Helpers of the St. Stanislaus Kostka Province – has undergone a significant restructuring of its management team. Father Shaun O'Connor, M.I.C., has resigned his position as Director. The Provincial Superior, Very Rev. Fr. Walter M. Dziordz, M.I.C., and a newly organized management team has assumed control of the day-to-day operations.

Effective immediately, the Marian Helpers Center (MHC) operation reports directly to the Provincial Administration. Provincial Superior, Fr. Walter Dziordz, M.I.C., will approve all pertinent management recommendations as outlined: The Provincial Treasurer's Office – consisting of the Provincial Treasurer, Fr. Kazimierz Chwalek, M.I.C., and Richard Cervera, Chief Financial Officer – will be an integral part of the MHC's management structure. Accordingly, a senior management committee has been created and will consist of Fr. Kaz Chwalek, M.I.C.; Richard Cervera; Fran Bourdon, MHC Executive Director; Ralph Tassone, MHC Controller; and Jim Morrison, Manager of Marketing/ Donor Development at the MHC. Former MHC Directors are invited to participate. Father Shaun as former Director will participate in the weekly meetings of the senior staff management committee during his transition period, which concludes May 31, 2004. This newly formed committee functions as an advisory body to the Provincial Superior and his Council and is charged with the responsibility to manage all affairs of the MHC including, but not limited to: fund-raising strategy and direction, staffing and morale, cost management and control, and strategic planning.

SSK Province participates in groundbreaking program to safeguard children: "CMSM's Instruments of Hope and Healing"

Under the leadership of the Provincial Superior, the Very Rev. Fr. Walter M. Dziordz, M.I.C., the SSK Province of Marians of the Immaculate Conception has joined with over 175 priests and brothers who head religious orders in the United States to participate in the first steps of what the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) calls the "Instruments of Hope and Healing" program. CMSM is coordinating the program to implement the U.S. Catholic Bishops Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and the Norms approved by the Vatican specifically as they apply to religious priests and brothers.

The goal of the "Hope and Healing" program is to provide training for the men's religious orders and their members with respect to the reporting and the investigation of sexual abuse allegations, providing resources for prevention and response, and ultimately accrediting member religious orders and holding them accountable for being in compliance with nationally-accepted standards for child-serving organizations. Leaders of religious orders in conjunction with CMSM have launched the Hope and Healing program as a workable, replicable plan to ensure that their members and organizations are safeguarding children and young people. The congregations of religious brothers voluntarily decided to be part of the CMSM program at the 2002 Assembly of the Conference.

Training for the program started in fall 2003 at regional meetings held throughout the country and is continuing throughout spring 2004 in a developmental curriculum. The workshops offered presentations on accreditation standards, supervision of at-risk members, and development and use of review boards. A follow-up session is scheduled for the day prior to the next national meeting of the leaders in August 2004.

ASSOCIATION OF MARIAN HELPERS

6th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MARIAN HELPERS GRZYBOWO (POLAND), MAY 9-13, 2004

Representatives of the Association of Marian Helpers of the Congregation of Marians met for the sixth annual International Conference of the Association of Marian Helpers held in the Marian retreat house in Grzybowo, near Kołobrzeg on May 9-13, 2004.

These conferences started in 1999. Their principal organizer is the General Promoter of the Association of Marian Helpers, Brother Andrew Mączyński, M.I.C., who coordinates the works of the Association centers around the world.

This year's conference was attended by representatives of the Association branches in many countries: Brazil, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, the United States, Ukraine, and Great Britain. The following people came as honorary guests: Superior General of the Congregation of Marians, Fr. Mark T. Garrow, Vicar General, Fr. Jan M. Rokosz, and the Polish Provincial Superior, Fr. Andrzej Pakuła.

The topic of this meeting referred to the formation of the Association's members in accordance with the charism of the Marian Congregation. The lecturers shared their work experience, which helped the assembled to look deeper and wider upon their own experiences. The following conferences were delivered: Fr. J. Kumala, M.I.C. – "Marian Formation in the Association of Marian Helpers. Its inspirations and source;" Mr. Krzysztof Kuczera, the all-Polish Coordinator of the Association of Salesian Helpers – "Association of Salesian Helpers, what it is, its formation, activity, and structures;" Fr. Tomasz Maślanka, OCD, animator of the Scapular Family for the Kraków Province of the Barefoot Carmelites – "The Carmelite Scapular as a form of organizing the faithful and the way of following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary." In addition, representatives of all centers presented reports on their work.

The meeting in Grzybowo also provided an opportunity for opening the celebration of the 10th anniversary of establishing the Association in Poland. The Vicar General of the Congregation, Fr. Jan M. Rokosz, who provided the idea and was the co-creator of the Polish branch of the Association, related to this anniversary in his homily delivered during the solemn Holy Mass at the archcathedral in Kołobrzeg. He thanked the Lord for His guidance and development of this work.

As a token of gratitude for the care given by the General House, a chasuble bearing the Marian crest was offered to the Superior General by the Director of the AMH in Poland, Fr. Piotr Marchewka, M.I.C.

Conferences of the AMH help share experience and inspirations, as well as support the development of centers in different countries according to the spirit and charism of the Congregation of Marian Fathers and contemporary challenges of the Church.

The next conference will take place in 2005 in Fawley Court, in Great Britain.

Grażyna Michalak

OUR CHARISM

"BL. GEORGE MATULEWICZ'S SPIRITUALITY. THREE SYMPOSIA ABOUT BL. G. MATULEWICZ."

About the book prepared by Fr. Vaclovas Aliulis, M.I.C.

"Spiritual Journal" of Bl. George Matulewicz, decrees and statutes of the renovated Congregation of Marian Fathers and of communities of founded by him – the Congregations of Sisters Handmaids of Jesus in the Eucharist and the Sisters of the Poor of the Immaculate Conception of the M.B.V.M., and Writings and Letters are a living and abundant spiritual source, from which people thirsting for holiness, religious and lay alike, can still draw. The book contains papers of three symposia about Bl. G. Matulewicz that were held in 2002 in Lithuania and Poland. This publication appeared in print on the 85th anniversary of Bl. George's installation at the Bishopric Capital in Vilnius, thanks to the efforts of the Association of Marian Helpers in Kaunas (2003, pp. 336).

The first symposium had the motto: "Holiness for everyone according to St. Francis de Sales and Bl. George Matulewicz" since both holy men showed the way to holiness for people of every walk of life. The symposium was held on January 25-27, and it had a "traveling" character. It began in Vilnius and was continued in Kaunas and Marijampole. The introductory paper entitled: "The place of the theology of spirituality among the body of theolog-

ical studies” was delivered by Bishop Dr Jonas Boruta, SJ, Chairman of the Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Science. It is appropriate to mention among authors of the following conferences Fr. Prof. Stanisław Urbański (“Ways to holiness of the lay people according to St. Francis de Sales and Bl. George Matulewicz”, “The greatness of two great holy men: St. Francis de Sales and Bl. G. Matulewicz”, “Bl. G. Matulewicz – great in God for the modern times”); the prelate Dr Vytautas Vaičiunas, OFS (“Spiritual education of the academic community at the faculty of Catholic Theology at the Vilnius the Great University”); Fr. Dr Vytautas Brilius, M.I.C. (“The Church as an institution requiring holiness”); Fr. Lic. Vaclovas Aliulis, M.I.C. (“The pedagogy of holiness of St. Francis de Sales”); Ms. Elżbieta Matulewicz, M.A. (“The essence of holiness according to Bl. G. Matulewicz”, “Prayer as an universal mean of sanctification according to Bl. G. Matulewicz”, “The mysticism of Bl. G. Matulewicz”, “Realization of holiness through service to God and the Church”); and Ms. Genovaite Gustaite (“Genesis of the motto «Vince malum in bono»”). It has been demonstrated in this paper that the motto “Conquer evil with good” became the Blessed’s principle of acting since 1905, amid accusations of his alleged anarchist and socialist orientations.

The second international symposium took place in Warsaw, at the Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński University, on October 23, 2002, on the 84th anniversary of Fr. G. Matulewicz’s elevation to bishop of Vilnius. Further opportunities for organizing a symposium, which had the motto: “Realization of love in a dialogue among nations, creeds, and religions according to Bl. G. Matulewicz” were provided by such memorable dates as: the 75th anniversary of his death, the 100th anniversary of defending his Doctoral thesis, and 15th anniversary of his beatification. Conferences were presented by: Prof. Dr Sr. Maria B. Pecyna, SJE (“The Personality and activity of Bl. G. Matulewicz”); Fr. Dr Vytautas Brilius, M.I.C. (“Ecclesiality as the idea of unity by Bl. G. Matulewicz”); Sr. Dr Janina Samolewicz, SJE (“Realization of love in the dialogue according to the theological thought of Bl. G. Matulewicz”); Dr Elżbieta Matulewicz (“Holiness for everyone according to Bl. G. Matulewicz”); Fr. Lic. Vaclovas Aliulis, M.I.C. (“Historical background of Bl. G. Matulewicz’s activity within Lithuanian society”); Sr. Ewa Orzechowska, M.A. (“Bl. G. Matulewicz as a model of a Christian educator”). The book also contains the homily delivered by Fr. Wojciech Skóra, M.I.C., in which he spoke of the “art of loving” in the spirit of Bl. G. Matulewicz.

The third symposium “Jesus Christ in Bl. G. Matulewicz’s vision” took place in Lublin, at the Major Marian Seminary, on November 11, 2002. The following conferences were delivered: “Bl. G. Matulewicz’s Doctoral thesis a hundred years later” (Fr. Prof. Dr Lucjan Balter, SAC), “Christ of G. Matulewicz – Teacher and Guide” (Fr. Dr Piotr Kieniewicz, M.I.C.); “Christ of G. Matulewicz – Servant” (Fr. Dr Kazimierz Pek, M.I.C.); “Presentation and likeness of Christ in Bl. G. Matulewicz’s bishopric service” (Fr. Dr Piotr Smoliński, M.I.C.). This chapter of the book also contains a paper “The Divine Mercy in the teaching and life of Bl. G. Matulewicz” (Dr Elżbieta Matulewicz), delivered on April 23 at the Holy Spirit Church in Vilnius as part of celebrations of the Divine Mercy Week.

In addition, the book “Guiding Thought and Spirit” of the Congregations of Marians and Sisters of the Poor, written by Bl. George, was also published. H.E. Cardinal Audrys Juozas Bačkis, the Metropolitan of Vilnius, provided a Foreword, in which he gave his evaluation of the book in the following words: “This book can be generally speaking called a soulful and practical program for many communities of active consecrated life, and, to a certain degree, for Catholic Apostolic movements of the lay people.”

The book’s contents prove that Bl. G. Matulewicz’s life and writings were timely not only for his contemporaries but still influence new generations. Among the audience, aside from spiritual sons and daughters of the Blessed, are also all of those who thirst for holiness gained through self-sacrifice and entrusting oneself to Divine Providence.

It is worth mentioning that all symposia were held under the patronage of esteemed academic institutions of Lithuania and Poland. All conferences delivered in Polish are published in their meticulous translation into Lithuanian along with footnotes or bibliography.

The Marian Fathers and Sisters of the Poor incurred the publishing expenses and offered as a gift one copy of this book to every bishop in Lithuania and to each order or religious congregation. They also gave two copies to the library of each of the four seminaries in Lithuania and to the library of the Pontifical Lithuanian College of St. Casimir in Rome.

Fr. Piotr Wojtonis, M.I.C.

PRESENT STATE AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE VOCATION MINISTRY
IN THE CONGREGATION OF MARIAN FATHERS²

It should be noted that the general situation with vocations to our Congregation is good. However, just like evangelization, the Vocation Ministry of today demands renovation in order to be directed with a new zeal, with the use of new means and methods, to the *new judges* of the world.

A modern candidate

We find a very apt image of today's Vocation Ministry in the biblical story about disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-33). Just as Christ's disciples left Jerusalem fleeing before the cross and passion, in the same way the modern youth flee before toil, seeking the meaning of life, decision-making about their vocation. Frequently they possess an egocentric attitude, narcissism and lack of permanent, strictly defined values. They advocate freedom understood liberally. They are restless with different options in life. They are very critical about the adult world, often being disappointed with their own lives.

However, at the same time the youth are looking for something stable, seeking an educator and guide. They long for love and radicalism. They long for someone who could stand near them and lovingly speak their names, while leaving them free. They seek someone who could help them to understand the world, life, and sense of existence. Even though they do not admit it, they wish to find Christ in their lives. On this road they need prayers, counseling of someone experienced, concrete requirements and clearly defined proposals as to their life's vocation.

It is necessary to remember that each candidate is different, each has his own life story, different way of dealing with people and God. This brings up the necessity of an individual, personal, yet integral approach to each of them.

Vocation Counseling

The promoter of vocations is the one who stays close to a young man in order to explain to him the Scriptures and life, to continuously commend him to the Lord in prayer, to break bread – to celebrate the sacraments. This is the **stage of evangelization**, of proclaiming the Good News, of helping to discern the place in today's life, and of offering Christ.

When a young man will get to know the Savior, when he'll come close to Him and begin to follow in His footsteps, he can hear an appeal of walking the road of religious life with Jesus, even of priesthood. When this man will make a decision about a possible realization of this challenge in his own life, then we can talk about the **beginning of candidacy (or a trial period)**.

During this stage the promoter is called to counsel the young man on his road. He ought to help the candidate to discover his identity, to accept the history of his life, and to submit it to Jesus for healing so that he can mature as a person and a Christian to be able to join the Congregation, possibly. It would be good, if at that time the candidate meets with the promoter of vocations at least several times during the year, participates in vocation days or special retreats. He can also stay for some time at one of our Congregation's religious houses to share our life.

The time of candidacy seems to be very important. Its length and course ought to be adjusted to the individual needs of each candidate, to the level of his maturity and dynamics of his growth. It is a good time for completing necessary documentation, to do appropriate medical and psychological tests, to complete required education, to learn about the candidate's family background, to conduct conversations with him through other people (other than the promoter) who could provide their opinion about the candidate.

After the Major Superior recognizes that a required level of maturity has been reached by the candidate, the latter can be **accepted to the postulancy**. His formation should be continued there, particularly in the general and spiritual aspects. Should a need be discovered at this stage, an appropriate therapy can be applied (for example, DDA or other groups of psychotherapy). However, it is recommended that it be completed before the novitiate.

Promoter of vocations

A recommendation inscribed in our *Ratio Formationis* on nominating and forming provincial and house promoters of vocations ought to be put into effect as soon as possible. Should it be necessary, we may even resign from some other works in order to establish promoters of vocations on the provincial level. Ignoring the importance of the promoters and their work may result in a vocation crisis.

² This document was created during the General Chapter in Fatima (May 3-8, 2002) as fruit of work of an international group.

During the Convention, the necessity of establishing the office of the General Promoter of Vocations whose duties would be to inspire and coordinate Provincial and Local promoters' activities, was identified. Promoters at every level, but particularly the Provincial Promoters, ought to have a program of action and funds guaranteed by the respective superior.

It is a good idea for the local promoters to meet at least once a year at the provincial level, while the provincial promoters may meet once every three years to share their experiences and deepen their knowledge, which would result in more effective animation of vocations. Regional meetings are also recommended.

Marian community

Each Marian, as well as each Marian community, ought to be concerned about vocations, showing it at least through prayer and example of life in every place of their pastoral involvement. We propose to hold adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament for the intention of vocations in our houses and parishes monthly; to join all-Church events on the Day and Week of Vocations and the monthly prayer for vocations. Many of our houses and parishes hold different forms of divine services for the intention of vocations.

It would be good if our religious houses open up to candidates for communal prayers and for sharing with them our communal life for a certain time. It happens frequently that our communities may be the first place, where a young man can see and experience healthy mature relationships thanks to which he can open up ever more to his relationship with God and others.

If we want to give an attractive witness to Evangelical radicalism we must take care of our own being with God and continuous formation, first. We need to reflect in a very concrete way about the life of our communities and each one of us. If we want to create a new form of Vocations Ministry we must learn anew to live in Christ and our consecration first.

Areas of action of the Promotion of Vocations

The Promotion and animation of vocations ought to embrace people able to support this work through prayer, finances, and any other way, as well as prospective candidates.

Cooperators in the animation of vocations

The first place of our vocations' animation should be parish and prayer communities under our pastoral care. Personal meetings, special homilies, religious education, and divine services seem to be particularly important here.

The Promoters are under obligation to create special groups that dedicate themselves primarily to prayer and care for vocations to our Congregation. It would be good to find people wishing to personally dedicate their spiritual and material offerings for supporting a specific candidate or member of the Congregation (spiritual adoption).

It is necessary to ascertain that appropriate information about our Congregation is spread through broadcasts, books, leaflets, newsletters, Website pages, parish displays, etc. Staying in touch personally, or at least through correspondence, with people dedicating themselves to promoting of our vocations is extremely important.

Possible candidates

There are people who inquire about our Congregation and conditions for joining it on their own accord. However, it is necessary to enter wherever possible and to proclaim Christ, the Gospel, and an invitation to consider a Marian, religious or priestly vocation and at the right (or not so much) time. Each Marian, but particularly the promoters of vocations ought to seek young people everywhere to give them a drink out of a fount of living water, because a vocation is born out of a meeting (of God with man). It would be good to engage young members of our Congregation into awakening and animating vocations.

Our parishes are important places for seeking and awakening vocations. And within them groups of altar boys, religious education, biblical and prayer communities are the most privileged places of action. Sacraments of ordination and profession of religious vows at one's native parish, as well as a public celebration of their anniversaries, can become a good opportunity for promoting vocations. We can also seek vocations outside the parishes through shrines, pilgrimages, camps, and vocation retreats; through our publishing activity, parish retreats, movies, broadcasts, our presence on the Internet, etc.

Stipulations

While summing up, some frequent and distinct needs and challenges were voiced: ✧ our own and our communities' more radical way of life ✧ deeper reflection on our religious life, identity, and continuous formation within the Congregation ✧ nomination of the General Promoter of vocations and his cooperators on the provincial and

local levels, as well as assigning necessary funds for their work ✧ more full introduction into life of our *Ratio Formationis* ✧ prolonging and making formation before the postulancy more personal ✧ mobilizing every Marian and our community towards more full participation in animation of vocations ✧ activating evangelical works and specifically vocation works among the youth, especially through retreats (both in parishes and outside) and personal contacts ✧ creating and running specific groups supporting vocations ✧ developing a spiritual adoption of the people called to religious life ✧ greater care for spreading vocation information through publications and signs in our religious houses and parishes ✧ producing a brochure for people interested in our Congregation that contains quotes from our Fathers.

Fr. Paweł Naumowicz, M.I.C.

Fr. Franciszek Filipiec, M.I.C.

FROM THE GENERAL COUNCIL'S MEETINGS

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE**Communiqué of the Divine Providence Province Superior
on the consecration of the new church of Our Lady of Licheń**

Dear Confreres, I am glad to inform you that, upon the decision of the National Conference of Bishops in Poland, a consecration of the Church Our Lady of Licheń, newly constructed through our efforts, will take place in our shrine in Licheń near Konin on June 12, 2004. By the decision of the Polish Bishops, this shrine is recognized as a votive offering of the Polish People for the Great Jubilee of Salvation 2000. In 1999, we received at that shrine the Successor of Saint Peter himself. John Paul II blessed the shrine under construction and also said: "I am looking in amazement at this great construction, which in its architectonic force becomes an expression of faith and love for Mary and her Son, Jesus. Thanks be to God for this shrine!"

On the eve of the consecration, the 328th Plenary Meeting of the National Conference of Bishops in Poland will begin in Licheń. For all of us this event is a reason for joy that comes from our participation in the construction of the Church: the spiritual one – as a community of the faithful united through love of the Holy Trinity, and the outward one, which is expressed in this very building meant for the service of God. Sharing with you this joy, I invite everyone to participate in this event, uplifting and important for our Congregation, as well as to concelebrate the Holy Mass on June 12, 2004, at 3 p.m., during which Archbishop Józef Kowalczyk, the Apostolic Nuncio to Poland, will consecrate the shrine.

Fr. Andrzej Pakuła, M.I.C.
Superior of the Divine Providence Province

HISTORY OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE “BASILICA” IN LICHEŃ

The offering gift of the Polish People for the Great Jubilee of Salvation

The Custodian's Testimony

It was a foggy, cold, autumn day of November 4th 1954. Only a week earlier I had obtained my Masters in World History at the CUL. I still did not have a chance to rest, sleep enough, or come to myself after my last exams, when I received a new assignment. Father Provincial Leon Szelaż came to Lublin with a nomination and a command for me: I had to prepare the coronation of the image of Our Lady of Licheń.

During the five years of my studying history not once did I hear a conference on how to crown a queen, not to mention the Mother of God herself. The Very Reverend Father Provincial gave me his blessing and left for Warsaw. And the newly made Master in History felt completely helpless. Thus, totally unexpectedly, began my lifelong venture with the Licheń Shrine.

When I recovered from the shock and regained my senses, I went to work, being an obedient religious. I searched libraries and archives, read chronicles and collected testimonies of witnesses. One hundred and fourteen years since the establishment of the Licheń Shrine is a long period, but also a short one. Despite two wars, I found out that many documents still remained. Also, people's memory proved to be a rich treasury of events.

I had known Licheń for 15 years, since the time when our Congregation took over the pastoral care of the parish and the Shrine in 1949. This was a very superficial knowledge, barely a vacation-type one. Now, from the printed documents, manuscripts, and people's testimonies a totally new picture of this unusual place, endowed with a special grace from Heaven, began to be unveiled before me. And what a wonderful picture that was. Here was revealed the message of Our Lady for our people, a message that had both terrifying and consoling prophecies. Here was born and developed a great cult of the image of the Madonna and many graces, miracles, and extraordinary occurrences that were still flowing down. All efforts to suppress the cult attempted by the Moscow authorities, Nazis, and Communist powers of the People's Republic of Poland proved to be totally unsuccessful. The town itself was very tiny, exceedingly poor, lost among lakes, forests, and marshes. It lay far away from great cities and highways. The Shrine had been devastated during the occupation, but the small miraculous image of

Our Lady, famous for its many graces, escaped destruction. My tedious historical research was not wasted. We were able to obtain from Pope Paul VI a coronation decree for the Miraculous Image. Until that time I was the promoter of the cult, and now, on December 22, 1966, I was named the Pastor of the parish and the custodian of the place by the Congregation and Bishopric authorities. I had to interrupt my work on my Doctoral thesis and abandon all dreams of an academic career. From that moment on, I became permanently involved with this small, poor town of Licheń, forgotten by the world at large. Oh, how many attempts, efforts, and quests for funds it took to have the image of Our Lady renovated and crowned with the papal crown by the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński and the National Conference of Bishops in Poland.

The coronation of Our Lady image on August 15, 1967, opened a totally new page of the Licheń Shrine's history. Kneeling before the Primate of Poland, I thanked him for coming and crowning the image. He, in turn, gave me a thanksgiving offering, meant for a bell, for his health being restored in Licheń. He put his hands over my head, imparted his blessing, and said: “My son, work and spread the Licheń Madonna cult in such a way that not only the entire Polish nation would hear about Our Lady, but also the whole world.”

In 1949, when the Marians came to Licheń, it looked totally different. There was a small sandy hill with a brick, war-devastated church, which could host no more than 600 people. Its windows were partially covered with boards; its floors had rotted through planks. There were empty walls with no altars, a tower without a roof, not even a yard of fencing, sidewalks or stairs. There were no liturgical vestments or electricity. On top of the hill there were only a few old trees growing with stumps of cutoff branches. In the cemetery a rotting wooden chapel was bending over to the ground. By the church stood an old, sinking presbytery built out of unbaked bricks that had only four poor rooms. There also was a ruined small byre, behind which stood an outdoor wooden toilet. There was no barn since it burned down during the war. The entire village included about twenty some houses made out of clay and thatch. The closest town – Konin – is 16 km

away. A field, forest-bordered road, which was at times sandy and at times marshy, led to this town. It was a blessing that there were at least a parish meadow and a piece of arable land. Brother Peter Grad, M.I.C., cut the grass for hay, fed three cows, planted potatoes and rye. Thanks to his work we weren't hungry. There was enough curdled milk (buttermilk) and potatoes. The bread was another story...

Thus began for us, the Licheń Marians, strenuous toils there, on this fallow ground, with no means and only a small staff. In addition, we had to work in times of severe Church persecutions by the Communist authorities. For small repair and construction works on the Shrine grounds I was sentenced to seven years of penitentiary as a result of three trials. I do not even count magistrate sessions and fines. That was a dead-end situation since the Communist powers would not allow any legal construction or repairs.

The folk tradition kept repeating a prophecy of Our Lady given during her apparitions that a magnificent Marian Shrine would be built in Licheń. For dozens of years this prophecy seemed to be totally unrealistic. There was no room on the Licheń hill for a larger shrine. There also was no hope for obtaining necessary funding or chance for the Communist authorities to permit the construction of a new church in times when one couldn't even put a cross in one's own backyard.

Such were the conditions under which I worked for 27 years trying to develop the Licheń shrine. A great help to me was the realization that I was not alone, that I had near me my beloved confreres from the Marian Family. The shrine was growing spiritually, the Miraculous Image cult started to spread far and wide year after year, and – despite great difficulties and obstacles – ever more pilgrims began to come to Licheń.

While paying fines and discreetly giving gifts, shaking from fear of being put behind bars, I rebuilt the entire church, erected the Church of Our Lady of Czestochowa, and did landscaping. But it still did not measure up to the constantly growing needs of pilgrims. Conditions for praying in those narrow churches were unbearable. On hot, rainy, windy or cold days my heart ached at the site of all those exhausted people. "Our Lady," I pleaded before the Miraculous Image, "it cannot go on like this any longer, you must do something for your children." The faithful still remembered Mary's promises that she would send angels to build a new church, if the people fail to do so. Years went by, but neither people nor angels were getting ready for the construction...

When serving in Licheń, I had over me the following superiors: six bishops, six provincial superi-

ors, and nine house superiors. Throughout all those years 75 priests and 9 brothers served in Licheń. As it often happens, they were not unanimous in many cases and on different work methods. Each person contributed his work and sacrifice, but also his own vision of the Shrine and its further development.

A new church was badly needed, but how to build it? The only available lot was a narrow coronation place located in the very middle of the village, at the foot of the mountain. This place is not fit for any construction. The only solution was to buy private lands around the shrine. I began to visit my neighbors asking them to sell some of their lands to Our Lady. This way I obtained more than 60 lots in Licheń and Grąblin. And thus the needy Mother of God became an owner of over 100 hectares.

I often bothered Fr. Provincial Stanislaus Kurlandzki with a request to give permission for preparing the plans for the shrine. After many such insistent demands, I obtained his agreement. Six architectural teams started in the competition. Presentations and meetings of diocesan, congregational, and civil authorities took place. Discussions followed. Time and money were running out, but nothing had come of it. Modern-style buildings were proposed that looked more like monsters than churches. Finally, the project of an engineer from Poznań, Mr. Szulc, was approved. But the Lord called the man to Himself, and everything collapsed. Only bills remained that I had to pay off to the architect's widow. A year later another project by engineers from Poznań – Mrs. Chmielewski and Marzyński – was approved; but when they named a considerable price for their work, the Provincial Council rejected it. Twelve months later, in the fall of 1993, Ms. Barbara Bielecka, an architect from Gdynia, arrived. I asked her to make plans for a large, traditional, usual church.

We were sitting at table and I was drawing on a sheet of paper the outline of the Licheń shrine: five naves, a large sanctuary, large choir loft, and a dome so that there would be enough light all day inside. Beautiful transepts, portals, and some staircases so that the building would not be standing directly on the ground. Then, some crypts, for the people of merit to be buried in, and a tall tower so that Licheń would be seen from afar. I wanted comfortable sacristies with lots of light and air so that people would not pass out during celebrations. A few months later I went along with the lady-engineer to Warsaw taking with us a tube full of drawings. Provincial authorities and several expert architects selected by Fr. Provincial from among Warsaw circles gathered at the Provincial House. They studied the drawings, made jokes, they criticized saying that it was old-fashioned, ugly, and trashy. In spite of such an opin-

ion of the architects, the Congregation authorities were in favor of Ms. Bielecka's project. The only suggested corrections were to shorten the tower of 25 meters and to resign from the construction of the lower church. The way had been opened, but there still was no official permit to begin the construction.

On May 29, 1994, Archbishop Józef Kowalczyk, the Apostolic Nuncio to Poland, blessed the large shrine construction lot; and on June 13, 1994 the new Provincial, Fr. Jan M. Rokosz signed the permit for beginning the construction and sealed it with the Congregation's gold seal. On June 22, 1994, I celebrated a Holy Mass in the empty lot, blessed the construction tools, and with the so-called "first spade" began to dig the hole for the foundation.

It was a sunny, beautiful day. Many pilgrims arrived. There were Masses celebrated continuously from 6 in the morning before the Miraculous Image. A small procession of just a few faithful people carrying some gonfalons and feretories started out from St. Dorothy's Church before noon. The procession was small because the beginning of the new church's construction had not been announced. A small altar to celebrate Holy Mass was placed on the construction lot. When the procession came to the lot and the Mass was about to begin, a strong, hurricane-type wind suddenly blew. Black clouds covered the entire sky. Clouds of dust swirled over the place. The gale broke four gonfalons' poles, overturned the feretories, shook the altar, rolled up the carpet, threw down flower pots, extinguished candles, tore down the electric wires of the public address system. Terrified people were cowering, looking at what was happening.

It looked as if some evil forces decided to blow us away from the lot and not allow the beginning of construction of the House of God. Lying prostrated, I adhered with my entire body to the earth, becoming its small particle. It was not a prayer but the lament of a helpless child: "Oh, Mighty God, not my will but Yours may come to pass in this place."

The square was considerably large, fenced with a tall stonewall, with hardtop roads, iron gates, water and electric systems. On its sides, there were piles of golden-colored clinker bricks. We already had a permit from Diocesan and civil authorities and the blessing from the Holy Order. After eight years, having survived a stroke and paralysis, as well as heart failure, I became the director of this great construction project although I felt like a grain of sand on this Licheń hill.

Holy Mass came to an end, the clouds disappeared somewhere and the wind died. The procession was going back to the church carrying along

broken poles of gonfalons torn up scarves, and dusty feretories. Budimex, the construction firm that won the bidding, started the work.

A year later, on May 26, 1995, Cardinal Józef Glemp, the Primate of Poland, laid in Licheń a cornerstone that was taken from the tomb of Apostle Peter in Vatican and blessed by the Holy Father, John Paul II, on December 21, 1994.

On June 6, 1995, I was celebrating my 40th anniversary of priesthood. I said Holy Mass in the future chapel of the Holy Trinity. This chapel, which was already finished then, was consecrated on June 29, 1996, by Bishop Bronisław Dembowski. Since that day, despite the continued construction, a Holy Mass was celebrated daily and the Most Holy Sacrament kept there. Four years after the beginning of the construction, Bishop Roman Andrzejewski, now deceased, consecrated three more completed chapels: St. Joseph's, St. Adalbert's, and St. Hedwig's.

On September 18, 1999, Bishop Bronisław Dembowski consecrated the most beautiful chapel of 108 Martyrs of the WWII. A year later, on June 25, 2000, Archbishop Józef Kowalczyk, the Apostolic Nuncio to Poland, baptized and consecrated the bell "Mary – Mother of God". The bell was made in Italy; it weighs 15 tons and is the largest bell in our country.

The Great Jubilee – year 2000 since the birth of Jesus Christ – and the end of the millennium and 20th century was approaching. After many deliberations, doubts, and fervent discussions, the National Conference of Bishops in Poland recognized the shrine in Licheń, still under construction, as a votive offering of the Polish People for this Great Jubilee. Two other votive offerings are the Divine Mercy Shrine in Kraków-Łagiesniki and the Divine Providence Shrine in Warsaw.

December 25, 2000, marks a great anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on earth. Before this date, the Licheń shrine was roofed, had windows and doors installed, and could do for celebrations of the midnight festive Mass. Cement floors were covered with carpets, a wooden altar erected, chairs and benches were brought in as well as illuminated Christmas trees. Also, electronic organs were installed. Midnight struck. The Holy Mass, concelebrated by more than 20 Marian priests, began. An orchestra played and several thousand people sang the most beautiful Christmas carols. That was a Mass celebrated in the new century, the new millennium, and a new Marian jubilee shrine. Two thousand years ago Our Lord Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem, and on this holy night He was born on the altar at Mass in Licheń. Kings

and shepherds brought such gifts as they could afford. Our Spiritual Marian Family was giving to the Infant and His Mother, Mary, although not entirely completed, but already magnificent, a church.

The Basilica in Licheń is the largest shrine in Poland, seventh in Europe, and eleventh in the world. Its measurements are: cubic content – 300,000 cubic m, surface – 23,000 sq. m, length – 139 m, width of the front elevation – 162 m, width of the main nave with side chapels – 77 m, width of the transepts – cross bars – 144 m, height of the main nave – 44 m. The dome with cross stands 104 m high, and the tower with cross – 142 m. The Basilica has 365 windows, 54 doors, sacristies on four levels, 8 passenger elevators, 3,000 seats and several thousand standing places. The side basilica has 14 chapels, a large conference room, and an exhibition room.

The upper basilica holds the main altar that will have the Miraculous Image of Our Lady of Licheń in the future. The altar of the Holy Cross is decorated with a beautiful statue of the Lord Jesus, made of alabaster in Italy. There is also the altar of the Lord's Resurrection and several chapels. The church has three choir lofts. An organ to be installed will have over 150 tones. Marble, oak, gold, granite, stainless steel, hand-made wrought iron items, stained glass decorations, aluminum are basic finishing materials used. An area of several hectares around the shrine has already been landscaped, decorated with granite and tiles, trees, small ponds, statues, monuments, and fountains. The tallest church tower in Poland will be completed shortly and made available to visitors.

From time to time someone would say that there is no need for such a big and richly decorated church in this small village of Licheń. There are so many homeless, sick, or addicted people in Poland. Instead of building a church, the money should go to people. My response is brief: people gave the money, and the offerings should be used according to the donors' will. For the greater glory of God, we must not stint anything in thanksgiving for the multitude of graces that Polish people, and each of us personally, received from God and Mary. Our Congregation also has something to be thankful for: it's been 330 years since the founding of our Order, 95 years since the renewal of the Marian Family, and 55 years of the Marian presence in Licheń. During those years we obtained great graces from Divine Providence. Licheń itself is a true gift of the Immaculate Mother for our Province. It is a great honor to work and praise the Lord here.

One of the God's great graces for Licheń and the Marians was the visit of His Holiness, John Paul

II to this place and his blessing of the shrine under construction. No one ever dreamed of it, no one ever said a special prayer for it, but it came to pass upon the Vicar of Christ's personal wish. And it was necessary to urgently send an invitation to the Vatican. Three days of biblical stay of the Pope in Licheń also speak about the fact that our cause gives joy to His Holiness's concerned heart. After the Pope's visit, strengthened by his blessing, we continue our construction work day after day, year after year.

Beginning construction of a large church in a small, poor village was a cause of joy for some people, while making others sad and upset. Some of the national and foreign newspapers did not spare us criticism. Not only lay people showed their discontent. However, the Holy Father's visit to Licheń caused the voices of pessimists and nonbelievers saying that the shrine would never be built to die out in great measure. Well, if the Pope himself blessed and praised the cause undertaken, then it was not fitting to express an adverse opinion.

Each year the shrine acquires ever more beauty, sacred character, and splendor. More images, sculptures, decorations for chapels and walls keep coming in. Sixteen large images of the Way of the Cross have been installed already. Beautiful steles have been placed in the presbytery. Carved oak benches and confessionals are ready to be placed in the upper basilica. In the spring of 2003, three harmony bells: St. Joseph, weighing over 11 tons, St. Peter – 5 tons, and St. Paul – 3 tons were brought from Mr. Janusz Felczyński's foundry in Przemyśl. Thus, Licheń now has the 2 largest bells in the country, putting the historical "Sigismunt" from the cathedral in Wawel in third place.

In June of 2003, the late Bishop Roman Andrzejewski and Fr. Provincial Andrzej Pakuła blessed the new organ.

There is a lot to thank the Lord and people for. Neither God nor people became poorer because of this construction. I asked many benefactors about it. No one heard of a person who made a donation for this construction and consequently became so poor that he or she had to beg for a piece of bread on the church steps.

There were extremely difficult years and months. Several firms were working in the spring, summer, and fall, and some even during the winter. People worked both by sunlight and electric lamps. Every month considerable bills came in for payment. I admired the great trust my superiors showed to my humble person that I wouldn't go into any great debts, which the Holy Order would need to pay to creditors upon my demise.

The flour jug of a poor widow from Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, when she was feeding the prophet Elijah during the famine never went empty, and her barrel with olive oil never dried up. For the 10 years of construction of the basilica and other shrine objects, the drawer of my desk never went empty. I paid all the invoices on time thanks to help from people and from the other world. Everything is closely related and entangled in our priestly and religious life: things of people, and things of God; things that are of this earth and spiritual things; money and sanctifying grace; inspiration of the Holy Spirit and human incompetence.

Now we await the consecration of the shrine, which is planned for June 12, 2004. This act will be performed by Archbishop Józef Kowalczyk, the Apostolic Nuncio to Poland, with the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, delivering the homily. Maybe, I would be lucky enough to at least hold the caldron with the holy water during this wonderful event. On the eve of this day, the meeting of the National Conference of Bishops in Poland will take place at our new pilgrim house "The Ark".

Intensive masonry, painting, gilding, and cleaning works still continue. Brand-new grass grows green all over the perfectly even square in front of the basilica. In the rays of the sun the entire church building shines like a field of golden rye.

The Licheń clearing is surrounded by forests, green meadows, and the blue waves of a lake. The spiky tower and great dome are clearly outlined against the sky. On the southern front elevation of the building the figure of Our Lady with the Infant Jesus sits on a throne. The stone statue is 5 m high. Three Archangels and three angels flew down from the golden-colored skies and, instead of helping with the construction, stay in adoration of the Mother of God. The eastern front elevation bears symbols of the Holy Spirit whose rays flow down upon the four Evangelists. Porticos are supported by columns, which are the tallest ones of all the columns that have ever been built in the world. The cornice and balustrades, that encircle the entire building, are supported by 260 columns. Every 15 minutes the carillon chimes from the bell-tower, playing Marian songs. The bell "Mary" proclaims the glory of God everyday at 11:45 a.m. Musicians give performances on the new organ throughout the whole summer. Everything is done for the glory of God and Mary. Large groups of pilgrims move silently and in deep concentration around the naves, chapels, stairs, and hallways.

For the past 10 years I was present at the construction lot almost daily. I am an eyewitness to the creation of this House of God – day after day, week

after week, year after year. Today I look at this monumental shrine, rub my eyes and greatly wonder. How did it happen that we had enough funds and there is not a single penny we still owe? How could one not to believe in God's acting here, on Polish soil?

During the Holy Father's visit in Licheń, I was approached by Cardinal Sodano, a tall big man, who stood over me full of wonder. "I pictured the Licheń Custodian totally differently," he said. "I thought that it was a big, young, and energetic man enjoying good health and resembling a buffalo from Białowieża. Yet, I see a short, nondescript, frail man in glasses who limps around on his weak legs." I was tilting my head back as far as I could to look into the eyes of the great cardinal; and the cardinal was looking down at me from the height of his office and his stature. Once again the words of the Lord found their confirmation. God chose a weak and infirm messenger so that it would be made clear that it is He who acts, not the man.

The Licheń shrine was built from the offerings of retirees, laborers, farmers, handicapped people, the wanderers in different countries of the world, small merchants, residents of little towns and rural hamlets. They were people poor in material treasures, but rich in treasures of faith, wealthy with fervent and tender love of our Blessed Mother. They are the ones who built her this beautiful palace. Polish architects, engineers, artists, and workers created this work on a European, and maybe even world scale. Polish minds, hearts, and hands toiled for 10 years on this project for the greater glory of God Almighty – One in the Holy Trinity. This shrine, closing the old and opening the new centuries, is a monument of our generation and a dowry for those to come. May the great glory of God and great veneration of the Mother of God remain for centuries at this place. May the stream of the Divine Mercy and God's graces flow down at that place on each human heart that comes here. May countless graces flow to human hearts through their hearts, hands, and service. May the great moral renewal of the Polish people and all people of the European Union continuously come to life here.

The old Licheń – the one from the time of the Marians' arrival and the coronation – remains only on black and white photos. Today there are three churches, numerous chapels, large pilgrim houses, conference halls, a big monastery, kitchens, diners, and bars. We built three artesian wells, two power plants, and handsome parking lots on several hectares. We planted thousands of trees and decorative bushes. We laid out many kilometers of road, walkways, and attractive fencing. We created places of worship, small ponds, numerous monuments,

small chapels, and sculptures. Everything is brand-new, sturdy, and comfortable. We provided good service facilities and comfort for pilgrims.

Before the coronation event, only one church fair used to take place at the shrine on the Assumption of Our Lady. Approximately two to three thousand faithful used to come for the event. But they would go back home after the main Mass, and aside from the parishioners, not a living soul would be seen in Licheń throughout the whole year. Now, one to two millions pilgrims come to the shrine during a year. And this is the greatest achievement of Our Lady of Licheń. And who is to serve those countless masses of people? There are still too few of us to properly nourish those starving souls. Very many vocations to the Congregation of Marian Fathers pass through Licheń. Our Lady expects that the Marians will help her to heal millions of souls and that they will not treat the shrine harshly.

The present-day Licheń is a modern, well-to-do village with 1,300 residents. Today's shrine is also a wonderfully organized location of Marian apparitions. The Marians possess 25 hectares of land there. Everything is solidly fenced, planted with trees, and decorated. There are hardtop walkways, stations of the Way of the Cross, numerous chapels, and a large parking lot.

In the past year of 2003, 6,054 priest-pilgrims celebrated Holy Mass before the Miraculous Image. We registered 7,059 large pilgrim groups and distributed 740,000 communions. It is impossible to count all the services celebrated, all the sermons and conferences delivered, or all confessions heard.

Also, the Center for Assistance to Families and Addicts and the Marian Formation Center bring forth fruitful results. They organize congresses, symposia, and retreats for formation.

Licheń is pulsating with life, is a heartbeat of the Marian devotion that leads people to confession and the Eucharist. Licheń now occupies second place, after the regal Jasna Góra, as the most frequently visited shrine in Poland. The action of God and people can be seen in the 55 years of the Marians' fruitful service and in the 37 years that have passed since the coronation of the Miraculous Image. Ripe and sweet are the fruits of close cooperation and blessing of bishops and authorities of the Diocese of Włocławek. This is also a result of the special care given by the Provincials and the Marian Congregation's Superiors. And finally, this is a result of the sacrificial work of the Licheń religious house superiors and the large group of 75 priests and 9 brothers of our Congregation serving in succession at the shrine.

Our Lady, Mother of God, bless and reward your simple, humble, sacrificial, and diligent sons with generous graces. O Mary, multiply our ranks so that your beloved Polish and European children will always be well nourished by the Word of God and the Eucharist, so that through the sacrificial love of their hearts they come to know your fervent love.

Our Lady of Licheń, Sorrowful Queen of Poland, accept into your eternal ownership this church, which we built as best we could and can afford. Please come to reside at this place and shower your children with generous graces here. Our beloved Mother, I humbly and modestly ask you to kindly grant me a modest place in the Kingdom of God, as well as to all benefactors, donors, and builders of the Licheń basilica. Thank you for making me a part of the Marian Religious Family, which is so much dear to my heart. Bless all my confreres. Amen.

Licheń, January 30, 2004

Fr. Eugeniusz Makulski, M.I.C.
Shrine Custodian

WE WERE CONVINCED THAT WE WERE DUE TO SIBERIA...

Interview with Fr. Zenon Rosłoń, M.I.C. of the Brazilian Province, conducted on the golden jubilee of his priesthood by Fr. Mariusz Janiszewski, M.I.C.

Mariusz Janiszewski – *It seems to me that not too many Marians had an opportunity to participate in so many important events related to our Congregation and the Universal Church in the second half of the 20th century. The history of your life is divided into three periods: Polish, Italian, and Brazilian. They were filled with difficult and responsible tasks, extraordinary occurrences, and meetings with interesting people. Let us talk about some of them. Let's start with your entering the Congregation.*

Zenon Rosłoń – Since my youth I was closely united with the Marian Sodality.³ Within this organization I also had a chance to get acquainted with conspiratorial activities during the war.⁴ Those activities included at the time all sorts of youth education, attending so-called “completion groups”⁵, universal and religious formation, political and social awareness, and military training. During Sodality meetings I got to know Włodek Okoński⁶ who was connected with the Marians, and our acquaintance weighed heavily on my life. The question of religious and priestly vocation often appeared among the discussed topics. Very quickly a group called “vocationists” emerged, the members of which entered the diocesan seminary or different religious communities at later date. I joined the Marian Sodality in 1942, and in 1943 I was already in the Marian novitiate in Skórzec.

M.J. – *The year 1943 was the height of Hitler's power in Poland and in conquered Europe. How did it impact your young hearts and minds then?*

Z.R. – I remember that our retreat at Bielany⁷ coincided with the beginning of the Warsaw Ghetto Insurrection. When we were going back home each

day we passed the gates of the fighting Ghetto.⁸ Such a coincidence in time.

M.J. – *What was this wartime group of novices like?*

Z.R. – First, there were 15 of us, and three more people joined later. Father Jan Seferyński was our Novice Master. He was undoubtedly a holy man, although spirituality he was somewhat differently oriented than the need of times demanded, those times that the Congregation had to live through. I also think that having so many of us from the “vocation group” joining the community at that time was a great challenge for him, and that it was a little beyond his abilities.

M.J. – *When joining the Congregation, Włodzisław Okoński was a little older than the rest and he possessed more life experience (having completed medical studies). Thus, he undoubtedly had an influence over his former “charges”. How was it looked upon by the educators and other novices?*

Z.R. – A certain tension existed without doubt. All priests of the old generation were brought up in a different spirituality. However, in spite of everything, our integration with the community was completed. Some of our novice group later went to Rome for theological studies, which helped us to get a broader outlook on religious and priestly life. Already at that time, Fr. Jarzębowski in England was working on the idea of creating educational centers for boys; thus Włodek Okoński's educational plans were not entirely a novelty in the Congregation.

M.J. – *And now we enter the period after liberation from German occupation. The time after the end of the war, particularly the first half of 1950's, is the strengthening of the Communist regime asso-*

⁸ The Warsaw Ghetto was organized by the Nazis who isolated several Warsaw neighborhoods in order to complete the extermination of the Jewish population of Warsaw. In 1943, an insurrection led by Jewish activists burst out. It was ended by the total destruction of the ghetto and evacuation of the entire Jewish population to extermination camps, particularly, to Treblinka.

³ The Marian Sodality is one of the best known Catholic organizations for lay people before Vatican II.

⁴ By this we mean WWII (1939-45).

⁵ “Completion groups” were organized for young people wishing to continue their education during the Nazis' occupation.

⁶ Fr. Włodzisław Okoński, later a longtime youth minister for immigrants in England, was a hygiene teacher during the period of the German occupation.

⁷ Former hermitage of Cameldolite Fathers. Main Marian center in Warsaw embracing a College, provincial house, and formation house for seminarians. In 1954, its works were brutally interrupted by the Communist authorities.

ciated with an painful occurrence for Marians: expulsion from Bielany and the beginning of the seminarians' exodus to other places in Poland. Those events also had a tremendous impact on your own history...

Z.R. – To this day I remember the fright. Everything began with Bielany being surrounded. At that time I was the treasurer of the Bielany House. There was an important meeting of Communist dignitaries taking place in the building of the Academy of Physical Education nearby. While this meeting proceeded, the UB⁹ agents surrounded our property. I remember being stopped at the entranceway to our property, while coming back from shopping. The interrogations followed. Everyone was interrogated, and at that time there were 80 residents at the Bielany House.

M.J. – *What did exactly the UB accuse you of?*

Z.R. – We were accused of sabotage, cutting the city cable. Naturally, quickly enough, it became clear that everything had been staged by the Communists themselves. During the interrogations, one of our seminarians was asked point blank: “What do you think about the alleged cutting of the cable?” Later on the true reason behind this action became quite clear. Naturally, it was a case of a long-planned invention by ACT¹⁰. The officials were only looking for a pretext to expel us and to give our property to the center for influencing Catholic circles in the capital.

M.J. – *And thus the Marians were arrested and expelled from Bielany...*

Z.R. – Only Bro. Ramotowski, who worked with Bro. Czerwiński on the cars' upkeep, was arrested. They were both directly under the treasurer's supervision, and thus the UB agents judged the three of us to be responsible for cutting the cable. This fact hurt me the most. They were supposed to begin interrogations starting with me, as the treasurer. Later, Bro. Czerwiński was summoned to the Agency several times. I was also interrogated several more times, so that I grew quite used to it. At the moment of the “invasion” of Bielany by UB agents, I was not arrested. I only got interned in one of the small Bielany buildings. After a week of investigation “in situ”, agents left our premises and continued it for several more weeks at the Agency offices.

⁹ UB – acronym for Polish Homeland Security Agency.

¹⁰ Academy of Catholic Theology, the mission of which, according to the Communist authorities' plans, was to ideologically indoctrinate that part of clergy and laity that was inclined to compromise with the reigning political regime.

One day Fr. Łysik, the Provincial Superior at the time, was summoned to UB. He was told that for the “good of the Homeland” we must leave Bielany definitively within a week. We were not told where we had to go. There was a special train of 13-14 cars waiting for us at the Gdańsk Train Station¹¹. We were told to begin packing up starting Monday, since the train was leaving on Saturday. I said to myself: “It's impossible!” Nevertheless, they succeeded. Having hired many hands, they loaded our belongings on the train. We, naturally, were not helping them in this work. During the nighttime we were evacuating the most valuable things, images... and hid them from confiscation or destruction. On the last day of the allotted time, on Saturday evening, we left Bielany for an unknown destination riding in two escorted buses and taking with us remaining possessions. Our buses displayed plates with the inscription “vacation trip” on them.

M.J. – *In this way the Bielany community's homeless wandering began ...*

Z.R. – We did not know where we were going. Through the covered up windows, Fr. Łysik tried to read on the information boards the names of towns through which we passed during the night. At a certain moment he became very scared, because, having misread one of the signs, he thought that we had already crossed over to Russia. We all believed that we were going to Siberia. In those times everything was possible.

While the convoy was getting ready to depart, my mother and my 11-year old sister, Teresa, succeeded in getting through the cordon of watchmen and reaching me to say goodbye. Needless to say our goodbyes were very emotional.

Later we found out that we were not going to Siberia, after all. Having read some more road signs, we learned that we were being taken to the north of Poland. And thus we came to Gietrzwałd.¹²

M.J. – *In this way your “vacation trip” ended up in Warmia...*

Z.R. – Besides our buses and agents' vehicles, our convoy also included a car and a motorbike. UB agents also arranged that our “vacation trip” would not attract much attention. Somehow, Bro. Czerwiński, who was driving our car, managed to vanish somewhere along the road; the agents proved

¹¹ Gdańsk Train Station in Warsaw was the railroad depot for trains going north and east.

¹² Small town in Warmia, nearby Olsztyn (northeast of Poland). There was a small Marian shrine connected with Marian apparitions from the time of Kulturkampf (1871-78).

incapable of guarding him. I was driving our motor-bike from Warsaw. And although I hadn't slept for three nights running, I managed to reach our destination safely. When we finally learned that we were not being taken east, we sighed with relief and the atmosphere in the convoy improved greatly.

A few days later the train carrying our belongings reached the Biesal depot. From there we took them to Gietrzwałd. At the end of our stay at that place all our possessions were successfully returned to Bielany.

M.J. – *Your return to Bielany is a new story ...*

Z.R. – As the house treasurer, I had a responsibility to “fix up” our stay in Gietrzwałd, but we were mostly concerned with our return to Bielany. While in Gietrzwałd, I made several trips to speak with PAX¹³ officials who were in charge of taking over our house for the needs of the newly created Academy. One of the PAX directors turned out to be by “accident” Dr Hagmayer, an old acquaintance of my family, who lived in the same house and on the same floor as my parents. I had known him since my childhood. This man helped us as much as he could, including financially. One day I received from him my largest Mass stipend: 15,000 zlotys of the time for three Holy Masses. However, it was not an attempted bribery on his part. He truly wanted to be of service.

M.J. – *Your religious formation and first years of life as a religious and a priest also coincided with the time of rebuilding of Marian structures after the wartime turmoil. However, it was also a time of a great tension within the community and time of controversies caused by Fr. Łopatecki's activity. Would you please share with us your vision of those events?*

Z.R. – As far as I remember, Fr. Łopatecki had many colorful moments in his lifetime, one of which was his stay with the French Carthusians. In my time he was nominated superior of the Bielany house. Holding this very office, he began introducing some of his radical ideas that agitated the entire community. My personal contacts with him began in the time of a “partial” Marian return from Gietrzwałd to Bielany. His great strictness in preserving rules of religious life coincided with a quest for a new zeal, which emerged within our community after the period of “investigation” and expulsion of the Marians from Bielany. An informal group of people gathered around Fr. Łopatecki, which embraced with its activity the Provincial Curia and the seminarian

community of Marians, a part of which returned to Bielany while the other part was installed in Włocławek.¹⁴ The fact of the seminarians' dispersion, organizational problems and many other troubles caused by the circumstances then were in the background of those discussions and disputes. I recall that at times it came down to some unbelievable things, such as a directive about the quality of soap to be used: a perfumed or an unscented one.

M.J. – *What were other practical signs of this strictness?*

Z.R. – For me, in my capacity of the house treasurer, getting up early in the morning (5:00 a.m.) was a problem. I usually arranged many matters regarding my duties in the late evening hours, thus was only able to go to bed at 2:00 a.m.. In those difficult times, obtaining almost anything for the needs of a religious community's life demanded a great effort and was related to the necessity of adopting my lifestyle to the schedules of my coworkers and benefactors. Because of this, I wasn't always able to get up at the same time as the other community members.

M.J. – *But what was it in this man which made him capable of influencing his superiors and confreres with such a great conviction? Was it really the matter of a true religious-order radicalism?*

Z.R. – I think that it was not an authentic Evangelical radicalism. Father Łopatecki went too far in his radicalism. When confreres noticed that he was trying to make the Marians into “some sort of Cameldolites,” they began to oppose him openly. The Provincial Superior at the time, Fr. Nassalski, however, remained under his influence. Fr. Nassalski was later removed from the office upon the decision of Fr. Jakimowicz, first General Visitor, who came to Poland from Rome in the post-war period. I must admit that I also belonged to the group oscillating around Fr. Łopatecki, but my departure to Rome, which occurred exactly at that time, terminated this influence. In Rome I underwent “certain dialysis of blood purification”.

M.J. – *How did this story end? What happened to Fr. Łopatecki?*

Z.R. – Aside from holding the office of the House Superior in Bielany, Fr. Łopatecki had no more responsible functions and left the Congregation shortly after. Later on he also left the priesthood and the Catholic Church. I know that this entire matter

¹³ Pro-government Catholic organization, openly collaborating with Communist authorities.

¹⁴ City in Kujawy, northern part of central Poland, which is a Bishopric Seat and a Seminary.

was under the influence of a certain woman, a “visionary”; but I don’t know any details. Fr. Łopatecki’s departure from the Congregation calmed down the situation. Leading personalities, such as Fr. Nieciecki and Fr. Honkisz, removed themselves from this “movement.” Others, such as Fr. Wieprzkowski, left the Congregation; yet others just stopped talking about it. Being in Rome already, I saw how much the entire matter had upset the General Government.

M. J. – Your stay in Rome happened at the same time as the preparations for Vatican II. What did it look like from the General House’s perspective?

Z.R. – One can say that the General House lived right in the middle of the events. Aside from being the only “harbor” in Rome for visiting Poles¹⁵, it was also the place of meetings of other bishops and prelates. At that time we hosted “in permanence” Lithuanian bishops and their secretaries, 17 people altogether. Also, so-called “language dinners” used to take place. Practically, every Sunday the following groups used to gather: Polish, Lithuanian, and American. Bishops of dioceses and countries, where the Marians served and had their religious houses, also attended.

As the General House Treasurer, I had an opportunity to drive them around Rome. Bishops invited different guests, people who came to take care of their business in the Eternal City. Thanks to my acquaintance with Fr. Stefan Wesoły, now an Archbishop, I obtained press accreditation as the *Messenger of Mercy* correspondent and was able to participate in the press conferences of Vatican II. This gave me access to official documents that were distributed during conferences.

Bishop Sipowicz, our General Superior at the time, took part in the Vatican II proceedings by right of his work at the Congregation for the Eastern Churches and his office of the Ordinary for the Catholic Belarusian Diaspora in the world.

M.J. – And what were the contacts of Archbishop Karol Wojtyła and the Primate of Poland, Stefan Wyszyński, with our General House?

Z.R. – Archbishop Karol Wojtyła used to come to “Polish dinners” organized at our house. I remember that sometimes he called off his participation at the last minute, leaving the serving personnel inconsolable. I do not recall Cardinal Wyszyński visiting

¹⁵ We mean the time before other Church institutions supporting the Poles from Poland and from abroad began to develop. The height of this development coincides with the beginning of John Paul II’s pontificate.

our house during this time. Instead, many photos remained showing the Marians participating in the official farewell given to the Primate departing for Poland from Termini Train Station.

M.J. – The time of Vatican II is also the period of our Congregation getting ready to undertake the mission in Brazil. How did it come to pass? It has been said that it happened because of Bishop Sipowicz who had a Brazilian Bishop – José Brandão from the diocese of Propriá in the state of Sergipe for his neighbor in the hall of Vatican II.

Z.R. – We, at the General House, had a somewhat different outlook on the matter. The idea of our Congregation’s greater involvement in missions had its roots in John XXIII’s encouragement for missionary work in the Universal Church. We responded to the Holy Father’s appeal also for the reason that the Marians were reproached for not being involved enough in serving among *Polonia*. The idea of getting involved in ministry in Brazil came from the Government and was undertaken by the first group of Marians, who came from the U.S. confreres from Poland joined them at a later time. It was very difficult in those times to go to work in missions from Poland. To the authorities, people used to state that it was a matter of working among *Polonia* in Portugal.

M.J. – The first Marian team came to the state of Sergipe, however, the local climate and their personal problems made it impossible to continue their work in that region. This caused the “transplantation” of the Marians to Parana. And how did you happen to go to work in the missions?

Z.R. – When I was still a seminarian and lived in Bielany, I came across a book about missions by Fr. Beyzym.¹⁶ I was fascinated by this missionary’s work at the lepers’ reservation on Madagascar. I began to think and talk about missionary service, but at that time one couldn’t even dream about going to work in missions. It appears that the only people who were getting permission to go to missions at that time were the Verbist Fathers. For the second time this very idea visited me with impact at the time when the Marians began returning to Portugal. In further plans, this return was related to preparation for missionary work in Brazil. The reality of my going to Brazil began taking shape after completing my longtime service at the General Curia. During the Chapter of 1975, I asked for dismissal from my office of the General Treasurer and permission to go to Brazil.

¹⁶ Polish Jesuit, esteemed longtime missionary among the lepers on Madagascar.

M. J. – But when you came to Brazil you were entrusted again with care of the material aspects of the mission...

Z. R. – Yes, it turned out that there was such a need there. It was necessary to build religious houses, a Minor Seminary, etc. It was necessary to take care of the economic matters. In truth, I did not have much time to think about it, I had to act. Such was the need of the moment. However, it all went somehow “painlessly”. I also had short “pastoral spells” in the Marian parishes in Adrianapolis, Jaguariaiva, and others, of which I still treasure pleasant memories. I was in charge of economic matters until the end of 2001.

M. J. – Your intensive work weakened your strength and was the cause for undergoing a complicated heart surgery. How did that fact reflect in your memory?

Z. R. – My heart troubles first appeared in Rome. During my stay in Jaguariaiva, doctors warned me about the seriousness of my heart condition. My first heart attack also happened there in 1978. The following years brought about a slow deterioration of my health. Finally, in 1989, I had to undergo a complicated surgery, which was successfully completed in São Paulo by a certain surgeon, who later became the Brazilian Minister of Health. I was flown to the hospital by a special plane. After the surgery, doctors gave me a “warranty” for 5 years. Since that time 15 years have passed, thanks to the Lord! And my heart is still working. The surgery was performed at the time when I held the office of the Brazilian Vicariate Superior. During my recuperation period I did not have much fear: I always had hope that I would live beyond those five promised years, for which now I thank the Lord daily.

M.J. – Thank you very much for this conversation.

MIC INFORMATION

Bulletin of the General Curia of the Congregation of Marians

Editors:

Jan M. Rokosz, Executive Editor;
Wojciech Skóra;

Translation into English, print and mail coordinated by:

Br. Andrew R. Mączyński,
Stockbridge, MA, U.S.A.;

Computer design and layout:

Marina Batiuk

Translation into English and proofreading:

Fr. Casimir Krzyzanowski,
Marina Batiuk, Ellen Volkman;

Polish version edited by:

Grażyna Michalak, MHC, Poland

Correspondents:

Argentina:Cristian Ugarte;
Belarus:Viachaslau Pialinak;
Brazil:Mieczysław Jastrzębski;
Cameroon:Franciszek Filipiec;
Lithuania:Vaclovas Aliulis;
LatviaAndris Sevels;
Poland:Dariusz Mażewski;
Portugal:Jose Morais;
Czech Republic: ..Mariusz Sierpniak;
U.S.A.:Walter Dziordz, Donald Petraitis;
Rwanda:Marek Ciebierń;
Ukraine:Victor Lutkovskiy.

**CASA GENERALIZIA DEI PADRI MARIANI
VIA CORSICA, 1; 00 198 ROMA, ITALIA
www.padrimariani.org**

E-mail: micinfo@micanet.net

tel. (39) 06 853 703

fax (39) 06 853 701 22

E-version of the MIC Information bulletin is now available at: **www.padrimariani.org**

It is possible to receive the e-version of MIC Information to a private e-mail address.

Please e-mail your requests to: **micinfo@micanet.net**