

SEASIDE EVANGELIZATION

In 2010 Sister Mary Aurelia Kazaryn (WA) participated in a new way of evangelization that began in Poland in 2009 by the Baltic sea shore. The main point of this evangelization is to go equipped only in God's Word and God's love to the places where people come to spend their Summer vacation to proclaim to them God News and invite them for the evening prayer to the Churches. This year the group consisted of over 80 young people, priests and religious Sisters. Below is Sister Aurelia's report about

this evangelization experience:



We keep singing, dancing and telling every person they meet that "God loves you" and that it is enough to ask, and He will take care of everything. To go as "beggars," this is what we become convinced of all the time because when we set off for our apostolic mission, we take with ourselves nothing but faith. Faith is the subject of our talks and sharing. We do not book in advance a place to sleep, nor do we take any food or money. We totally depend on God's Providence. It was even the preparation for this mission which allowed us to experience that God would take care of everything.

"The sponsors appeared and donated thousands of zlotys for fliers. One married couple bought equipment worth 4 of zlotys," Fr. Radek Sliwinski, the originator of the "begging" evangelization, says. Last year the evangelizing team numbered 6 people. Now we are an over 80-person powerful team including clergymen, members of male and female religious congregations, the young and the old, and even whole families. Fr. Radek imbues with his idea not only the north of Poland but also the south. People from Krakow and Lublin, as well as from abroad, volunteered for the mission of evangelizing seaside places. "There are various

banners or thousands





communities of the Church among us: Renewal in the Holy Spirit, Oasis (youth movement), St. Michael Archangel Knighthood, and people with experience of the Bieszczady Evangelization or “Przystanek Jezus” (Polish nationwide evangelistic initiative),” Fr. Radek explains. “People are drawn by the Gospel. When they are told that they can, like the disciples of the Lord, go and preach and God will take care of everything, just as it is written in the Gospel, they want to experience it.”

We get up very early and go to the Blessed Sacrament to...“recharge their batteries”. As young people say, we derive energy directly from the source – from Jesus. And it remains unknown to us what will happen next. If God could make the sea to go apart or manna from heaven to fall down in the wilderness, what is it for him to provide a few sandwiches? God provides even for the simplest things daily. Because if a person is “on fire”, he wants to carry this experience of God to others.

This is the second time that the evangelizing team set off to the seaside settlements. Walking through beaches and promenades, young people distribute fliers inviting people for an evening meeting in the church. They do not take anything with themselves. Like the Apostles, they depend totally on Jesus.

“Catechesis is not enough. One needs to become a witness,” the evangelizers of the Good News believe. Ilona already knows what to expect. A year ago, I thought: “Lord Jesus, so I am putting you to the test. There is no



accommodation? Ha! I caught you!” Suddenly a woman appears taking all of us to her house. “Well, how one cannot trust Him?” she says laughing. Immediately afterwards she tells about the miracles they had witnessed. About a boy, who came to the church on his own, and so far he had not been able to get out of his house without help, about a girl who started to hear, about a woman who eventually forgave her mother. “God works at every step. We did not expect that we would experience so many conversions, churches filled

with people to the full and so much evidence that it is enough to ask,” she says. Some of us doubted chances of success in preaching the Gospel to the tourists basking on the beach. The beach? This place is as good for evangelizing as any other. Jesus also walked everywhere and talked with everybody. He would also go at the beach. So we go to the seaside beaches, housing estates and promenades, inviting for an evening meeting in the church.





They travel the length and breadth of the town, singing, giving personal testimonies of their encounter with God, performing mime and proclaiming the message of evangelization. Warm welcome and churches filled to the brim during the evening prayers are for evangelizers confirmation that their conduct makes sense. People stop; they want to talk and join us when we dance and sing, and then they reply to the invitation and attend the evening Mass and common prayer at the church.

Today anti-evangelizing processes have gone so far that there is no other solution than to go out and preach Jesus on the streets, because catechesis is no longer sufficient. "It is especially young people that have had enough of theory, of catechesis in the form of questions that need to be passed before the First Communion or Confirmation. They want to see that something real is going on in someone's life. They just need a witness. I am a 'child of mercy' myself. I was not in the Church for a long time. I was very far from God and He had



many

things to heal in me. Now I give witness to it," says Jacob.



This year the evangelizers visited during their eight-day mission the following places: Dźwirzyno, Grzybowo and Kolobrzeg. And Fr. Radek already devises a new tour. "We are also preparing a professional video that will be spread in Poland, and I hope there will be even more volunteers to proclaim the Good News. If the Lord God blesses perhaps within a year or two we might be able to go through the whole coast," the chaplain wonders. The beach is good place for evangelizing as any other. Contrary to

as skeptics,
Characteristic T-shirts leave no doubt as to what the evangelizers want to talk to pedestrians about.

sunbathers willingly respond to the invitation of evangelizers.