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THE ROLE OF THE EVANGELISING AND APOSTOLIC MISSION IN THE LIFE AND ACTIVITY OF BL. MARTA WIECKA (1874-1904)

Abstract of the doctoral dissertation

The aim of this dissertation is to show the evangelizing and apostolic mission in the life and works of Blessed Sister Marta Wiecka of the Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. Her short but dynamic life has resulted in her involvement in the work of evangelisation, which she learned to understand in her own family and in the convent. From the beginning of its existence, the Church has sought to fulfill Jesus' missionary command: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mk 16:15-16). This command has become essential to those who have met the Risen Christ on their life's path. It is continued in many ways because it has not lost its validity. Analysing the contemporary world, it is easy to see the currency and the need for all the baptized to commit themselves to this mission. This is also emphasized by the Church community in the official teaching of the Magisterium, the pronouncements of individual Popes and theologians, or the faith experience by the local communities. The Gospel of Jesus Christ does not change, but the ways in which it is conveyed are modernized according to the times, culture and the current problems experienced by the recipients and listeners of the Good News. However, this does not change the fact that the foundation of proclamation is always the Incarnate Word of God, who is Jesus Christ, the only Lord and Saviour. Blessed Martha discovered this, and therefore she can become an example of effective apostolate and evangelisation for the contemporary man, the fruit of which is the full union with God – holiness. This work is divided into four chapters, where the author shows the elements shaping the personality of the Blessed, their significance for the understanding the work of the evangelisation, the method of the accomplishment and the particular result.

The first chapter is a presentation of the biographical profile of the discussed figure based on the available materials, according to the specificity of the place and time of birth as well as cultural and historical transformations. The place of birth of the blessed, Nowy Wiec, is shown as well as the factors that shaped her evangelical thinking: parents, the closest family, friends from school and the playground, and many other people including the local community of believers in Skarszewy and Szczodrow. Next, the author presents the process of the discernment of vocation to the religious life and analyses it in the life of Marta Wiecka. Finally, he shows the characteristics of the Company of the Daughters of Charity based on the thinking of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac and reflects on the formation of vocations.

In the second chapter, the author presents a general outline of the idea of the evangelisation and apostolate in the vocation to the consecrated life. He underlines the basic and immutable method of preaching the Word of God, and discusses its fruit, which is the awakening of faith. It presents definitions of the concepts discussed, first in a broad sense, concerning all people, and then in a narrower sense, concerning religious life. The last part is devoted to the most crucial goal of the entire evangelising and apostolic mission, which is holiness. The author draws attention to the universal vocation resulting from baptism, sanctification through the union with God, and thus the invitation to continue the mission of the apostles for every human being.

The third chapter is a scholarly reflection on the individual-community character of the mission of Blessed Sister Wiecka. To show the worth of her personality, the author firstly refers to the evangelical counsel in religious life (chastity, poverty and obedience) on the basis of which the Blessed shaped her life. They are representative for the consecrated life and their very practice becomes an evangelizing witness. Other counsel written on the Gospel page and especially recommended by St. Vincent were also indicated: service to the sick and suffering, prudence, works of mercy, union with God through prayer, or the vow to work with the poor, characteristic of this congregation. They have all become a way of understanding and the realisation of the mission by Sister Marta. The next part is devoted to the specific work, interreligious and ecumenical dialogue. It is shown as a result of her living the gospel and following Jesus in the ministry of every human being, regardless of the origin or religion. The author draws attention to the thinking of the Blessed in the subject of ecumenism, which was ahead of her time. The last subsection is devoted to environmental

works. They are mainly related to her work as a nurse and religious ministry in Lviv, Pidhaitsi, Bochnia and Śnaiatyn.

The fourth chapter is an attempt to show the message of Sister Wiecka's evangelising and apostolic work. The author points out she set an example to follow in enduring suffering, especially at the moment of the unjust accusation, and the path of sanctification through a constant attitude of conversion. An instrumental discovery in the analysed attitudes and her biography was the recognition of the Blessed's motivation in the work of service. It is the attitude of love that Christ himself taught: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me [...] whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me" (Mt 25:40; 45). The Blessed One saw the face of the Saviour Himself in her neighbours and with such love she cared for their spiritual and physical wounds as if she had done it to Christ. The last section describes the nascent cult from the moment of death to the present day, including the graces obtained through the intercession of the Blessed, the liturgy of the church and piety of the people.

Keywords: apostolate, evangelisation, service, religious life

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