

The Light-Life Movement in Poland

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With the establishment of the Communist regime in Poland at the end of the last world war, atheism became an integral part of the new political programme. However, in a country where over ninety per cent of the population were members of the well-organised Catholic Church, programmed atheisation had to correspond to Lenin's dogma of "political compromise, zig-zags, manoeuvres of conciliation and retreat", depending on "the advance or decline of the Revolution", more than in any other Eastern European country. Nevertheless, the inculcation of a "scientific" or more precisely, a materialistic conception of the world has not ceased to be the ultimate goal of the State throughout the post-war period.

Restricted to activities within the four walls of churches, deprived of the right to form Catholic associations or catechise children unhindered, and with no access to the media, the Church in Poland turned to popular religion as the only means of transmitting the gospel message. These traditional forms of popular religion centred on the Virgin Mary: Marian services in May and October, devotions in honour of the Virgin and solemn coronations of images of Our Lady, and pilgrimages to Marian shrines. They were underestimated and therefore favoured by the authorities and often sneered at by Polish Catholic intellectuals, but undoubtedly ensured the survival of faith and saved the Church from secularisation. However, they produced believers who would fulfil the minimum of religious duties, but without growing systematically towards mature faith, ability to witness to Christ and evangelise during daily life. Under the conditions of official dechristianisation the harsh reality was that only a person who could share his faith with others could keep it himself. To combat this problem, the Church undertook a number of attempts at active Christianisation alongside the traditional forms. University chaplaincies, Catholic Intellectuals' Clubs, and weeks of Christian culture all formed part of the Church's limited "offensive".

Following this, a church renewal movement began to blossom in the 1960s. It was largely the vision of one man, Fr Franciszek Blachnicki. Over the years it developed into the 50,000-strong "Oasis" movement, latterly called the Light-Life movement. The movement is a synthesis of all renewal

movements existing in the Church. It contains the elements of biblical and liturgical renewal but is also a movement of prayer and evangelisation, with a new theology of liberation based on mature Christian witness and a new vision of a dynamic Church.

The symbols of the movement are the Greek signs *Fos* and *Zoe* (Light and Life). Light must become Life; there can be no gulf between that which is recognised as principle and that which one avows as an attitude to life. The light which is to become life is understood as the Light of God's word, Light which is transmitted to mankind as *Lumen Gentium*. The aims of the movement are explained in three slogans: "the new man", "the new society" and "the new culture". By forming mature Christians the Light-Life movement strives to build up and develop Christian communities (*koinonia*) which will radiate Christian values to all fields of human and social life. Though the movement's programme is deeply rooted in the programme for renewal of the Church proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council and Pope Paul VI's work on the evangelisation of the modern world, it is also the fruit of nearly 30 years of development in Poland.

Oasis retreats

The movement which later became "Light-Life" started in 1951, when Fr Franciszek Blachnicki, a newly-ordained priest in Katowice diocese, was put in charge of organising retreats for the diocesan altar boys. Dissatisfied with existing pre-war concepts, Fr Blachnicki decided to work out a new type of retreat. Three years later the first two-week Oasis-type retreat for 60 altar boys, called "Oasis for the children of God" was held in Bibliela. The main principle was to portray the childhood of Jesus, expressed in three Oasis commandments, purity, obedience and love; and to give boys a model of the Christian life which would be easy to follow in their daily lives. The daily routine included participation in the Mass, prayer, reading the Bible and writing thoughts on the passage read, but also allowed time for playing and physical exercise.

By 1957, the Oasis type of retreats had become the norm for the altar boys in the Katowice diocese and plans to organise similar retreats for girls were drawn up. The same year Fr Blachnicki began a national crusade for abstinence — an anti-smoking and anti-drinking campaign. The crusade quickly gained support and was endorsed by Cardinal Wyszyński. The growing popularity of the abstinence movement alarmed the authorities. In 1960 the police raided the offices of the crusade in Katowice and Fr Blachnicki was arrested and charged with illegal activity. Released from prison in 1961, he was invited by the Bishop of Tarnów to live in the village of Krościenko, which today is the centre of the Light-Life movement.

This was the year which marked the end of the "Polish thaw" that had started in October 1956. Crosses were again removed from classrooms, religious instruction was banned from schools and ideological indoctrination

was stepped up. Fr Blachnicki enrolled at the Catholic University of Lublin, where for the next two years he studied the importance of relating faith to everyday life and worked out a further programme of Oasis retreats. In 1963 these were resumed and in the summer of 1965 three types of Oasis retreats, following different programmes, were organised for 700 people: for girls, for boys and for priests and religious orders.

In 1965 the Second Vatican Council opened in Rome. The spirit of the Council, which called upon the Church to open up to the world and renew itself from within, strongly influenced the Oasis programme. Since 1965 the formation of the whole movement has been based on the Council's principle that the liturgy is both the source and the culmination of the Church's activity. The liturgy was taken as a model for educating young people. Since the Council replaced the Latin Mass by Mass in the national languages, Oasis members were enabled to experience and gain an insight into every aspect of the Mass. Fr Blachnicki was made responsible for introducing the Liturgy in the Catholic Church of Poland in accordance with the Second Vatican Council's instructions. Bishop Błaskiewicz was then delegated by the Polish Episcopate to watch over Oasis and liaise between the movement and the hierarchy.

The Living Church

At the end of the 1960s an increasing number of Oasis members asked for continuing spiritual instruction between the summer retreats. In 1969 the first "liturgical communities" of Oasis members were organised in the parishes. These groups met once a week for "Gospel-based renewal of life" — to pray and reflect on their spiritual life and become involved in liturgical renewal within the parishes. From these tiny but dynamic groups the concept of the Living Church emerged — a church which expresses its vitality through communities of believers building their new lives together. This concept of the Living Church became fundamental to the whole movement.

During the 1970s local parish communities were penetrated by Oasis groups, creating the *Living Church*. The Oasis retreats, now called the Oasis of the Living Church, spread rapidly throughout the country. In 1972 retreats for various groups — children, school pupils, students, young workers, adults, priests, seminarians and nuns — were organised, following one of three programmes not only according to age but also according to spiritual maturity. In 1973 the first Oasis for families, the so-called Home Church, was organised. As a result family communities of the Living Church were set up, based on the French *Équipes de Notre Dame*, and grew rapidly from 51 families in 1973 to 157 in 1976.

In 1973 a structure for the whole movement was introduced and it was decentralised. At the same time a detailed programme of spiritual formation was drawn up for the whole year, which remains in force to this day. It was divided into three periods: Oasis summer retreats, post-Oasis retreats which

fell during the school year and a pre-Oasis period of preparation before the summer camps. All members met together once a year during the so-called central Oasis which takes place on the feast of Pentecost. In between the summer retreats the work is carried out in small groups meeting once a week for prayer and Bible study. Every six or seven weeks a “communal day” is organised at diocesan level.

The Light-Life Movement

By 1975 the idea of the Living Church had begun to influence rank-and-file Catholics as well as the clergy and hierarchy. Between 1974 and 1976 the number of members trebled from seven to twenty thousand while the whole movement went through a period of intensive development. In 1975 Pope Paul VI announced his programme of evangelisation in the modern world, arguing that if the Church is to be constantly renewed, evangelisation must continue within the Church. New men must be found to form the new society of the future. These words were taken as a directive by the leaders of the Living Church movement, who decided to make evangelisation one of their main aims.

In March 1976 during the first congress of Oasis leaders the movement adopted a new name, Light-Life, and formulated a new aim: all members of the movement, regardless of their age and status in the Church, should strive towards Christian maturity not only through studying God’s word, the liturgy and prayer but also through witness and active service. The next summer the first Oasis for evangelisation took place and the movement embarked on a programme of renewal of the Polish Church. A new type of instruction was introduced — “deutero-katechumenat” (second catechesis) which involved educating baptised Christians to confirm their absolute willingness to bear witness to Christ and accept all the consequences of their faith. The second catechesis was designed as a three-year programme, involving three stages of Christian maturity — meeting Christ, renewal of baptismal vows and witnessing to Christ in the community. This was to be carried out during summer retreats and during the post-Oasis period within the parish communities.

Reprisals: the struggle for full freedom for the Church

The Oasis or Light-Life movement, whose aim was to produce mature Christians genuinely living in the spirit of the Gospel, was a sign of the vitality of the Church. It totally contradicted the official model of a Church “confined within the four walls of the sacristy” and the atheist authorities could not tolerate it. Over the years, various attempts were made to infiltrate the movement, to restrict its activities and even to destroy it totally. In the sixties, when the movement was still small in size and influence, petty harassment such as interrogation, blackmail and refusal to permit travel

abroad (even to other communist-bloc countries), was directed only at the most active members. In the seventies, when the movement had grown to number thousands, systematic repression began, although by that time Oasis was under the protection of the Polish hierarchy, being described officially as "a part of the church's pastoral mission", and a special agreement on Oasis retreats had been signed by the Church and State authorities. The Oasis movement had also developed a special relationship with the bishop of Kraków, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, who since 1970 had regularly participated in the summer retreats; the last took place on 3 July 1978, a few days before the Cardinal's departure for Rome, for the conclave during which he was elected Pope. Cardinal Wojtyła promoted the Oasis movement not only within the Episcopate (in December 1976 he organised the official presentation of the movement before the Episcopal Commission for the Lay Apostolate, of which he was the head) but also among the diocesan believers.

Despite such protection, harassment of Fr Blachnicki and his close associates increased. The Oasis house in Krościenko was heavily taxed, and attempts were made to install bugging devices in it, as well as a compulsory "lodger". Oasis activists were continuously held for questioning without an arrest warrant. In the severe winter of 1977 Fr Blachnicki was suddenly forbidden to buy any coal for the house in Krościenko. The main efforts of the authorities, however, were concentrated upon hampering Oasis retreats. Administrative pressure, aimed both at the participants and the people giving them accommodation, increased steadily, reaching its height in the summer of 1977. By a special decree, the head of the local administration in Nowy Sącz, where two-thirds of retreats took place, formed a "unit for the liquidation of Oasis retreats". The unit was to treat Oasis retreats as "illegal camps", usually on the ground of breaking sanitary regulations. This unit, its actions enforced by members of the security forces, harassed Oasis members and local peasants, threatening them with heavy fines. In a number of cases the fines were actually imposed. The Polish Episcopate reacted sharply and sent a letter of protest to the Ministry for Religious Affairs. In the parishes where the retreats were held, letters from local bishops were read out assuring the peasants of the Church's financial assistance whenever necessary and encouraging them to continue taking in Oasis lodgers. Since 1978 direct harassment of Oasis retreats such as an unexplained fire which broke out during the 1979 retreat in Stasinówka has continued. The state authorities have pursued a policy intended to discredit the movement in the eyes of the Polish Episcopate and cut it off from Pope John Paul II. Anonymous memoranda and appeals alleging "serious doctrinal deviations" in the movement have been circulating among the Polish hierarchy and clergy. People posing as Oasis members have also appeared; they are openly critical of the Polish hierarchy and of all traditional methods of pastoral work, "popular religiosity" in particular. During the Pope's visit to Poland in June 1979 everything was done to prevent a mass meeting between the Pope and the

Oasis movement, and even a token meeting with 3,000 Oasis members during the Pontifical mass in Nowy Targ took place with difficulty. Since 1979, when the first Oasis retreats "Ecclesia mater — Mater ecclesia" took place in Rome at the invitation of John Paul II, many Oasis members have been refused passports to travel to Rome.

During its struggle for survival in the 1970s, the Oasis movement worked out a new theology of liberation. Its essence lies in the free acceptance of truth and faithful witness to it in personal life. In order to gain liberation through the truth people must overcome fear. Fear can be totally overcome only through faith in Christ and the Cross — a symbol of acceptance of suffering and sacrifice, even of one's life, in defence of the truth. This theology of liberation was first outlined in 1979 in the programme of the "Crusade for the liberation of man" — in origin a campaign against alcoholism — but was developed fully over the next two years. It was influenced both by the political situation in Poland and the teaching of Pope John Paul II, especially his two Encyclicals *Redemptor Hominis* and *Dives in Misericordia*, which emphasise the liberation of man through truth in Christ. In March 1980, at the national congress for the leaders of the Oasis movement, 460 delegates issued a declaration on the movement's involvement in combatting the nation's problems. It rejected any "escapist tendencies" — temptations to withdraw from an unpalatable life into "elitist" communities, or a kind of spiritual oasis, which would offer comradeship and friendship based on the Gospel instead of grappling with the real problems of the day. The document stressed that true Christians must participate fully in the Church and the community, serving as a source of regeneration and joining in the efforts of other opposition groups engaged in the struggle for truth and justice. The following year this programme of liberation through truth and love was re-adopted by the sixth national congress and the Oasis movement officially declared itself part of a worldwide "non-violent" movement, which would undertake a campaign to liberate people from any form of enslavement in the manner revealed by Christ in his Gospel. Since the enslavement of man in a totalitarian state is based on manipulation by means of fear and the lies of official propaganda, the theology of liberation through truth and love has acquired a clearly political dimension. Threats have been made that unless the Oasis movement restricts itself to religious activities its future existence will be put in jeopardy.

Since the 1980 Declaration the movement has become an especial object of interest for the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Special memoranda on the movement sent to the Polish hierarchy accused the Light-Life movement of taking part in political activities and allying itself with the political opposition. The movement chose, however, to follow its principles, obeying only the demands of the Gospel and uninfluenced by any diplomatic considerations. In 1981 it decided to promote its concept of liberation among members of the unofficial trade union Solidarity through retreats and literature.

In November 1981 a full programme for the "Independent Christian Service — Truth and Liberation" was formulated by the leaders of the Light-Life movement and presented to a group of Solidarity activists in Lublin. The programme was later presented to Solidarity members in other towns: Kraków, Wrocław, Poznań, Gdańsk and Warsaw. Fifteen hundred copies of the bulletin, "Truth and Liberation" were distributed. In addition, on 28 November 1981, during the sit-in strike at the Catholic University of Lublin, the first committee of the "Independent Christian Service — Truth and Liberation" was created. Since the imposition of martial law in December 1981 the Oasis Movement's founder, Fr Blachnicki, has been living in the West, where he has created the "Christian Service to Aid Poland — Truth and Liberation".

Despite martial law, the Oasis movement in Poland has not ceased to promote its programme of liberation, believing that it represents the only possible way of working for true freedom in Poland.

Appendix

Oasis Retreat

The retreat lasts 15 days and usually consists of 60-80 people divided into groups of eight to ten; each group has its own group leader, someone who is often only a few years older than the rest of the group but has undergone special training. The responsibility for the entire camp lies with a priest, called the "supervisor".

Living conditions are spartan; participants lodge with the local farmers, often sleeping in barns. Shopping and preparing meals has to be done by each group on a daily rota system.

The retreat has three aims: to bring the Word of God to the participants; to teach them to pray better and to bear witness to Christ in everyday life. Though slightly different in detail, the programme always follows one pattern. Each of the 15 days begins with common prayer, as early as 7 o'clock, followed by a Mass. The sermon corresponds to one of 15 mysteries of the Rosary, to which the whole day is dedicated. After the Mass and a meagre breakfast there is an hour of group work "sharing the Gospel". Extracts from the Bible are read and discussed under

the supervision of the group leader. Emphasis is put on the relevance of Christ's teaching to the everyday life of Oasis members. Then a break for lunch and a free period which allows for personal prayer, meditation, reading, etc. The groups meet again in the early afternoon for "a walk with open eyes" through the surrounding countryside. The idea of the walk is to intensify awareness of the beauty and perfection of nature and point to the Creator of all things — God, while contrasting this with the abuses of God's gifts by man.

In the late afternoon all groups meet together for "Bible school" — a theological lecture delivered by the priest. The day ends with a bonfire and then evening prayer at about 10 p.m.

There are three exceptions to this pattern. On the fourth day, the offertory day at the camp, a liturgy is held for the renewal of baptismal vows. By the simple gesture of lighting a small candle from a huge common candle the participants pledge themselves to follow the Light — Christ.

On the ninth day the Way of the Cross is

acted out. A huge cross, corresponding to the original size, is carried in turn by the participants. At the 12th station a Mass is celebrated at a makeshift altar. Whenever possible a hill is chosen for the Way of the Cross to add to the element of realism.

The 13th day is "Pentecost Day", also called Community Day. Several camps come together for a day, sometimes as many as a thousand people altogether. During a solemn Mass — the central point of the day — representatives from all camps share their spiritual experiences.

On the last evening before departure instead of the usual simple evening meal there is an *agape* banquet, a traditional Christian supper, lavish by Oasis standards, for the participants. *Agape* ends with an hour of witness — people pray and talk openly about the meaning and importance of the last 15 days to them.

Next morning the last Mass is celebrated and all participants are "sent" out into the world to spread the good news, as the Apostles were sent by Christ.

Testimonies of Oasis Participants

These brief comments by participants in Oasis camps come from people of all ages and many walks of life. They show that the camps have considerable spiritual impact, and that their influence continues to extend into many areas of Polish society.

"More than ever before I was made aware of God's unending, inexpressible love for humanity. Only the person who possesses a portion of this love can understand his neighbour and genuinely forgive him."

"I enjoyed the fellowship so much. There was no 'discrimination' among us. The older ones joined in with the younger ones. No one tried to put himself above the others. We had become one body."

"I appreciated the fellowship most of all. 'Oasis' restored my faith in people — in their goodness and selflessness. I was also impressed by the way the young men and women related to each other. Friendships were warm and considerate, something which has become unusual these days."

"Oasis has led to a change in my life and my behaviour. I want to join a group in which we can study the Bible together."

"I want Jesus's way to become my way."

"As priests from several dioceses gathered at an Oasis retreat, we express our joy and thanks to God for a renewed discovery and experience of Christ's presence in the fellowship of faith, hope and love." (From an Oasis for priests.)

"None of us expected much from the Oasis retreat. We came loaded with problems to which we hadn't been able to find answers. We usually kept our distance from the so-called Christian way of life. We chose the

easier way, accepting the deceptive values of today's declining civilisation. Here at the retreat we have seen a style of life based on inner conviction, which springs from meditation on Christ's teaching, in gentle wisdom and goodness." (From an Oasis for university students.)

"While we were standing for prayer I very much wanted the others to pray for me. But my shyness kept me from making this request. So I asked God to give me boldness . . . and after a few moments I was able to ask the group. I was so happy when they prayed for me. I was glad that I had finally been able to express my needs verbally. I truly believed in God that day, which is the most important thing of all."

"These two weeks of retreat have given me more than eight years of religion classes. I always felt that something was missing. Here I was able to find it . . . in the school of prayer, I drew near to God."

"In a way I came as an observer. I wanted to see what it was all about, to form my own opinion of 'Oasis'. Now I'm convinced. My desire is to tell people about Christ wherever I am."

"I felt so close to the Church. It seemed as if God had allowed me to attain the gift of His goodness and love. My heart is overflowing with joy." (62-year-old participant.)

"At Oasis I discovered who Jesus really is and what a central role he can play in my life. Now I know that I couldn't live without him. Here I have learned to love not only God, but my neighbour as well. I know now how to pray to God."

"The teachings at the retreat helped me

greatly. For the first time I realised just how great God is, and how much he loves us and what he expects from us. Therefore I resolved

to overcome my faults, with which I've always had trouble, to discipline myself and live for him."

Messages from the Pope

These letters from Pope John Paul II are evidence of his continuing interest in the Light-Life movement, dating from when he was Archbishop of Kraków.

Dear Brother in Christ,
I am sending Your Excellency a few words directed to participants of the Light-Life movement, and in particular to the youth.

Thank you for the letter and extensive materials concerning the life, activities and problems with which your fellowship struggles daily. This correspondence, as well as the personal contact I have with those of you who come to Rome, helps me to maintain the close relationship we enjoyed in Poland when I was Archbishop of Kraków.

Through correspondence and conversations I am struck by the great Christian maturity with which you are handling various matters, particularly the difficult ones, in your personal as well as in your communal life. Yes, only in faith does a person find the truth, the full truth about that which is within himself and around him. The times in which we live demand such faith from Christians today — simple, child-like faith, but at the same time conscious, mature and tested. Therefore I am glad that you are directing your young hearts and thoughts in precisely this direction. It is there that you are seeking and finding the truth about yourselves and others. I rejoice and thank God that the young people of Poland, as well as the youth of various countries around the world, are turning in this direction. I observe this with great hope, an open heart, and tremendous thankfulness to Christ the Lord and His Immaculate Mother. Through the disappointments and painful experiences which past generations have endured and which the present generation unfortunately continues to experience, God is visiting His people in a special way. This is

also a sign, a sign of our times, which we must interpret with great sensitivity and readiness of heart.

So how can we not be thankful to God, seeing that you are endeavouring to live out the great and unrepeatable adventure of your youth in a special way, in spiritual communion with Christ. This way, the way of spiritual communion and openness toward one's neighbour, was ordained by God in the mystery of Creation. It was confirmed and perfected by Christ, who brought the Church into being as the community of God's people. It is the way of self-realisation for man, created in the image and likeness of God. God and His salvation come to man by this way. Deepen your understanding of this truth as you meet together, in prayer, by reading and meditating on the Scriptures, and by active participation in the Eucharist. Serve the Church faithfully, especially that part of it which is the Church in our Fatherland. Take responsibility for her in the concrete aspects of your young lives. Be the Church in the modern world. Be the way by which God comes to you yourselves, and through you to your brothers and sisters.

I pray that the light of the Holy Spirit may enlighten you and all Polish young people. I dedicate you to the Mother of the Everlasting Word, the Seat of Wisdom. May She keep you in Her constant care and maternally protect you on your way.

Upon you, Your Excellency, patron of the Light-Life movement on the Church's behalf, and upon His Excellency the National Coordinator; upon the regional leaders, and upon all the Oases and their members, I bestow the Apostolic Blessing with my whole heart.

JOHN PAUL II

The Vatican, 15 August 1980

To: The Reverend Franciszek Blachnicki
Krościenko
Reverend Professor,
To the inhabitants of the villages: Tyl-

manowa, Ochotnica-Dolna, Ochotnica Górna, Grywałd, Krośnica and Mizerna — thank you all very much for the letter of 3 December, written in Krościenko, where

together with the diaconate of the Light-Life movement they were praying on the Pope's behalf. I am very grateful to them for taking into their homes young people who were participating in retreats during the summer holi-

days. I send a sincere blessing to all, along with best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

JOHN PAUL II

The Vatican, Christmas 1978

Government Response to the Movement

As the two following letters make clear, the Polish authorities have tried in various ways to hinder and restrict the influence of the Oasis retreats. The first letter shows that the Polish Episcopate stands four-square behind the Oasis movement and supports it in conflicts with the authorities. The second letter, from Father Blachnicki, reveals something of the problems which he has had to face.

Memorandum concerning the restriction of the Church's ministry in the province of Nowy Sącz, sent to Minister Kąkol on 11 April 1978 by the Secretariat of the Polish Episcopate.

1. Oasis retreats for liturgical renewal

The position of the Episcopate

The Oases organised by the Office of Liturgical Renewal take the form of retreats for young people. They aim to prepare participants for more meaningful religious experience. This ministry of the Church is in line with conciliar renewal. The retreats carried out by the Oasis method are organised on the recommendation and under the auspices of

the Conference of the Polish Episcopate. They are organised and personally led by priests acting on the basis of a jurisdictional decree of the Ordinary. Retreat activities take place in churches, chapels and other church locations. Participants rent private rooms like tourists and holiday-makers. They prepare their own meals in kitchens and private homes. Therefore they should be affected only by regulations concerning institutions, establishments and state-sponsored youth camps.

2. As a supplement to the above memorandum, the Plenary Conference of Bishops, convened in Warsaw on 14 and 15 June 1978, expresses the conviction that the Ministry of Liturgical Renewal should not encounter any sort of obstruction by local authorities. The owners of buildings who make lodging available for retreat participants should not be subject to harassment or sanctions. Any activity of this kind intended to impede such forms of ministry must be regarded as a violation of constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom.

An Open Letter from
Fr Franciszek Blachnicki to the
Minister of Internal Affairs of the
Polish People's Republic

Minister of Internal Affairs of the PPR,
Warsaw, ul. Rakowiecka

In a letter dated 30 August 1980 [L.dz. EANS 5032], I was informed by the Provincial Headquarters of the Citizens' Militia in Nowy Sącz that my request for a passport to travel to France had been refused on the basis of article 4, act 2, point 4 of the law of 17 June 1959 concerning passports.

My appeal against the above-mentioned decision, submitted on 16 September, remains unanswered.

This is the fifth refusal I have received in the course of this year and last which has made reference to either this same point of

the law or to the similarly-worded point 5. Since 1959, in other words since this passport law came into effect, I have received around twenty such negative decisions.

The document I am now submitting is not an appeal, but is intended as an expression of protest against those points of the passport law cited above.

By the vagueness and imprecision of its tone, the wording which permits "the proper authorities for issuing passports" (article 4, act 4) to refuse to issue a passport in cases where "other important state considerations speak against issuing a passport" (act 2, point 4), or "other important social considerations" (act 2, point 5), in practice opens the door to unlimited arbitrariness on the part of the security police in this regard.

In fact, since the very inception of the present political system of the Polish People's

Republic, the passport policy of the security police, based on just this type of vaguely-worded laws, has been an instrument for the limitation of freedom, the discrimination, vexation and blackmail of citizens, and the violation and deprivation of conscience. This policy has unavoidably given free rein to the mechanisms of bribery and corruption, as usual in situations where decisions affecting the vital interests of citizens are subject to arbitrary, legally insecureable, unenforceable and binding decisions on the alleged basis of "important state and social considerations" by the security police.

In every state of the world with a democratic system the permanent possession of a passport is an expression of citizens' rights, viewed in the same way as the possession of a personal identity card. In Poland, on the other hand, receiving a passport is an act of grace on the part of the security police. No one knows what must be done to merit it, and when one does one feels as though one had been released from prison. In the company of people from free, democratic states, we must constantly appear as slaves, answering invitations to take part in various meetings with: "I don't know whether I will receive a passport, or whether I will receive one in time, or whether they will let me go", etc. That is to say nothing of the fact that even when we finally "succeed" in travelling abroad, we must then appear to the world as beggars, unable to support ourselves with our own Polish money.

It therefore seems high time that this humiliating and disgraceful situation be changed. The present situation provides constant proof to the world that values such as democracy, civil liberties, and the rights and dignity of the individual are a myth in Poland. By their formulation, even the laws in force are a threat to these values.

It is impossible to conceal the fact that the law of 17 June 1959 concerning passports contains within it and accepts the principle of concentration camps. This is a principle of deprivation or restriction of individual liberties without the opportunity for objection or due process.

As a former prisoner of the concentration camp at Auschwitz I make this accusation consciously and on the basis of personal experience. When, in September 1941, after fourteen months in the camp, I was handed an arrest warrant issued by the Court of Inquiry and we were transported from the camp to prison, I personally experienced with

stunning harshness the essence of the system of concentration camps: it depends upon the deprivation of freedom, not on the basis of law, but on the arbitrary decision of the political apparatus. The difference between the principle of concentration camps and the principle contained in the present passport law is thus one of degree and not of kind. Ultimately the number of cages is not essential. Essential is the fact that freedom is restricted and deprived in a manner which violates fundamental human rights.

The passport law in the points questioned above cannot be reconciled with the resolutions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights passed by the UN General Assembly on 16 December 1966 and ratified by Poland on 3 March 1977. This Covenant is incorporated in article 12, point 2: "Every person has the right to leave any country, including his own."

In formulating the above protest against the restrictions of individual rights and liberties on the basis of the passport law of 17 June 1959, I am speaking not only for myself but for about three hundred other people as well, throughout the entire country, who were refused passports by the security police in May and June of this year. These would have enabled them to travel to Rome to take part in a pilgrimage and a fifteen-day guided retreat by the so-called Oasis method. This group was made up primarily of high-school and university students who wanted to travel to Rome for purely religious reasons, at the invitation of Pope John Paul II. They were clearly aware that the refusal represented religious persecution and discrimination, all the more so since functionaries of the security police, in conversations with priests and young people, repeatedly and openly confirmed that the refusal to give them passports stemmed from the trip's purpose, participation in a so-called Oasis retreat, that is, practising their religion. So in addition, what has taken place here is an open violation of article 18 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights cited above, which reads: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right embraces the freedom to express one's convictions or practise one's religion whether as an individual or together with others, publicly or privately, by means of cultic activities and participation in ceremonies, as well as training and instruction."

As the head of liturgical renewal in Poland by appointment of the Conference of the

Polish Episcopate, and as the initiator and organiser of the above-mentioned pilgrimage to Rome, I feel authorised to speak in the name of the three hundred people who were refused passports and to lodge a protest on their behalf.

I would also like to protest in the name of my closest associates, priests as well as lay-people, who in the past several years have systematically been refused passports because of their association with me. This year and last they were refused the proper stamped seals in their personal identity cards which authorise one to travel to the other countries of Eastern Europe.

Since the situation described above, which results from the present passport law and the policies of the security police, amount to the restriction of freedom, and thus a form of imprisonment, you will find enclosed with this document my personal identity card [No. ZN 1988677], which I am relinquishing to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. After all, prisoners do not carry their personal identity documents with them, but must surrender them to the prison authorities. I do not desire to main-

tain the illusion, created by carrying a personal identity card, that I am a free person when in fact this freedom is denied me.

In taking this decision and expressing my readiness to accept all of its consequences, I am not attempting to compel you to grant me a passport. My intention is rather to bear a true testimony and in this way achieve inner freedom under conditions of external subjugation.

I would also like to contribute in this way to the acceleration of the process of authentic democratisation and national liberation. Among other things, this process must include a change in the passport law, giving citizens permanent passports and the right to cross the border at any time, as long as there is no legitimate cause, properly verified by due process of law, to restrict this freedom for the common good.

Aware of the important state and social considerations with which this document deals, I am taking the liberty of making it an open letter.

FR FRANCISZEK BLACHNICKI

Szczawnica-Krościenko, 24 October 1980

The two following documents were issued by the Fifth National Congress of the Light-Life movement in 1980 and the Sixth National Congress the following year. Both were held at the monastery of Jasna Góra in Częstochowa, the site of the shrine of the Black Madonna and the spiritual centre of Poland. These documents show that the Oasis retreats and the whole Light-Life movement have a deep underlying spiritual basis which is the result of

careful thought by all participants and of a prayerful consideration of the state of the Polish Church and the Polish nation. The Light-Life movement does not wish to organise retreats and other activities for spiritual renewal so that Christians can escape from the pressing problems of Polish life, but so that they can be equipped to make a distinctively Christian contribution to solving these problems.

Declaration of the Fifth National Congress of the Light-Life Movement

(concerning the involvement of members of the movement in combatting the nation's problems).

In his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, John Paul II wrote: "Out of regard for Christ and in view of the mystery that constitutes the Church's own life, the Church cannot remain insensible to whatever serves man's true welfare, any more than she can remain indifferent to what threatens it" (section 13). His words have been taken up by the Polish Light-Life Movement at its National Congress. The

movement, which is a part of the living Church, brings together Christians who want to express the mystery of the Church through their own lives and within their own communities. It has therefore resolved to remind its members of the following principles defining their position with regard to today's society, in which they are to fulfil their vocations and bear their Christian witness.

The Seriousness of the Situation and the Tendency Towards Escapism

We are all aware that the country is in an ex-

tremely serious situation. The political, economic, social, cultural, moral and religious spheres of life are all affected: in each of these areas there is a severe and ever-worsening crisis. Clearly outlined against the background of all these crises is the problem of the individual — humiliated, denied his freedom, trapped in a web of innumerable restrictions. Against this same background looms the problem of alcoholism, accompanied by the gloomy prediction that in about ten years time alcoholism will have caused our society to become completely degenerate (with approximately five million confirmed alcoholics and a further twenty million or so drinking to excess). This is just one symptom of the tragic state in which our country finds itself today.

Faced with this grim reality, members of the Light-Life Movement may be tempted to escape from it by forming communities founded on the Word of God and Christian love (*agape*). The atmosphere within these communities is such that they become "oases", where people feel at peace with themselves and forget about the problems and sufferings of their brothers. Whilst there is a need for such "oases", offering people the opportunity to be spiritually refreshed through rediscovery of life's true meaning and perspective, those who have found them should be encouraged to develop a greater sense of responsibility towards their suffering brothers and a fuller commitment to overcoming the problems of the society in which they live. This attitude towards our fellow men grows directly out of our unity with Christ in the Church — His Mystical Body: "... turning to man and his real problems, his hopes and sufferings, his achievements and falls — this too also makes the Church as a body, an organism, a social unit, perceive the same divine influences, the light and strength of the Spirit that come from the crucified and risen Christ, and it is for this very reason that she lives her life: that which is given her by her Spouse and Lord. Indeed, precisely because Christ united himself with her in his mystery of Redemption, the Church must be strongly united with each man" (*Redemptor Hominis*, section 18).

The Concept of Political Involvement — an Explanation

Poland is unusual in that all its moral and religious crises can be largely attributed to a single cause — the present political situation, both internal and external. The question

therefore arises as to whether activities aimed at liberating either individuals or the nation as a whole from all manner of evil will have to assume a political character. Certainly, from the "other side's" point of view, any activity which is effective, i.e. which leads to real changes in the existing situation, will be considered political. But how will Christians view such activity?

The documents of the Second Vatican Council, in particular the fourth section of the Pastoral Constitution concerning the Church in the Modern World, clearly define the principles by which Catholics should be guided in their political activities. Indeed, such activities, on the understanding that they are directed towards the common good, are approved of and are even, to a certain extent, considered to be the duty of all Christians. For example, article 75 of the Pastoral Constitution states: "Let every citizen remember that it is his right and responsibility to take part in free elections for the benefit of all".

However, it is impossible for people who live under a totalitarian régime to engage in legal political activity without being manipulated by the prevailing political forces in a manner contrary to their Christian conscience and the Church's directives. This is why Christians in Poland tend to deride the very idea of "political involvement" and have on the whole resigned themselves to avoiding all political activity. Is there not a danger, however, that as a result of this we will abdicate our responsibilities and withdraw into "oases" for the élite? Does this mean that we are exempt from having to bear the heavy burden of problems under which our fellow men stumble and fall, simply because, without opportunities for "political involvement", we are powerless to help solve these problems? Ever since the emergence in Poland of the various democratic movements formed to defend basic human rights and freedoms — movements whose members are prepared to risk persecution, imprisonment, even death — these questions have confronted us. Clearly, we can no longer evade them.

Liberation Through Witnessing to the Truth

Christians have found one way which, though not "political" in the true sense of the word, does have the power to liberate individuals and even a whole nation. It is the way of Jesus Christ, of which John Paul II reminded us in his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*: "Jesus Christ meets the man of every age, including our own, with the same words: 'You will

know the truth, and the truth will make you free' (John 8:32)". These words contain both a fundamental requirement and a warning: the requirement of an honest relationship with regard to truth as a condition for authentic freedom, and the warning to avoid every kind of illusory freedom, every superficial unilateral freedom, every freedom that fails to enter into the whole truth about man and the world. Today also, even after two thousand years, we see Christ as the one who brings man freedom based on truth, frees man from what curtails, diminishes and as it were breaks off this freedom at its root, in man's soul, his heart and his conscience. What a stupendous confirmation of this has been given and is still being given by those who, thanks to Christ and in Christ, have reached true freedom and have manifested it even in situations of external constraint! (*RH*, section 12).

It is the fact that we are forced to live in a permanent state of hypocrisy that is the real source, even the essence, of our captivity. The man who lives in harmony with himself, with his conscience, with his calling and, ultimately, with the divine concept of himself as a free spirit, is truly free. Even though he be in chains, behind prison bars, or surrounded by the barbed wire of a labour camp the promise that "the truth will make you free" is fulfilled.

This also means, however, that no one can deprive us of our freedom except us ourselves. Christ, whether standing before Pilate or nailed to the cross, remained completely free, bearing witness to the truth that God is Love.

This way of freedom — through bearing witness to the truth — is open to everyone, but to reach it we must first break down the one barrier which prevents us from bearing witness — the barrier of fear. If only everyone, or at least a majority, were bold enough simply and straightforwardly to bear witness to the truth, regardless of the consequences (for such witness is based on the recognition that truth must be valued above all else), their combined effort would be a liberating force affecting the life of the nation at all levels, including the political level. Thus Christians would be fulfilling their obligation to work for the common good, but their actions would be prompted by conscience rather than by political motives.

Practical Application

On a more practical level, we would like to stress one or two instances in which a Chris-

tian is urgently required to bear witness to the truth.

First let us take the forthcoming "election". Clearly, the term "election" in this country conveys something very different from that which is generally understood by the same term in today's democratic societies. In fact, what we have is not an election, but a heavily weighted referendum, in which we are expected to express our support for a totalitarian, one-party system of government and to vote for anonymous candidates in whose selection we have no say whatsoever. Moreover, we are expected to accept unquestioningly the policies of the government and of the powerful influence behind it. In this situation, taking part in an election is for a Christian, and for anyone with a sense of human dignity, not so much a political act as a matter of conscience. Those who can say in all sincerity that they have confidence in the present system of government and in its programme, aims and methods, should assert this publicly by taking part in the election. Those, on the other hand, whose conscience does not allow them to express such confidence in the government should abstain from taking part in the election since this is the only possible way for people in their situation to witness to the truth.

In the same way, those who consider themselves Christians, but who also belong to the Communist Party or to some other association with a similar ideological basis and similar aims, should reconsider their position. We cannot ignore the clear and unequivocal words of Christ: "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5: 37); "No man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6: 24); "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10: 32-33).

Another question which must be raised concerns our attitude towards those brave people who, at great risk to themselves, undertake in various ways, but without using violence or force, to fight for justice, freedom and basic human rights in our society. Without entering into any discussion of their political views, or of the Light-Life Movement's attitude towards such views, we would like to suggest that by their courageous witness to the truth and defence of basic human rights, sometimes at the risk of their lives, these people have earned our deepest admi-

ration, moral support and any further help we can give them within the dictates of Christian love and wisdom.

Conclusion

Finally we would like to express our conviction that Catholics and other Christians in Poland are now in an exceptionally advantageous position, in that the present situation affords many opportunities to bear witness to Christ and His truth. Such witness has always been a source of strength to the Church and contributed to her growth, the more so when it has involved risks, great sacrifices, or even martyrdom for the sake of Christ's truth and love. The Church in Poland will suffer irreparable damage if we fail to respond to God's call to bear witness to the truth in our everyday lives.

Since we are a renewal movement with

"Light-Life" as our motto, we feel a special responsibility to reflect in our lives the light of truth which we perceive through faith, and to eliminate all contradiction between the faith we profess and the way we live.

In accordance with the above principles, we shall try to liberate our nation from the dangers which threaten it. We want to do so in a spirit of Christian love towards all men, in particular those enslaved by false doctrines and those who, although they know the truth, are not courageous enough to follow Christ and allow the truth to set them free.

This declaration was passed by the General Assembly of the Light-Life Movement at Jasna Góra, Częstochowa on 2 March 1980 and was signed by 460 delegates.

Text authorised by

FR FRANCISZEK BLACHNICKI
(leader of the Light-Life Movement)

Recommendations of the Sixth National Congress of the Light-Life Movement

At the Sixth National Congress for leaders of the Light-Life Movement, held in Częstochowa from 27 February to 2 March, we became more aware of our vocation — to build unity through unselfish service. We would therefore like to share with all members whom we here represent the fruits of our reflections, and ensuing from them suggestions concerning our attitudes and actions in daily life.

We discovered the ultimate source of the unity which we wish to serve. This is the compassion of God, to which we turn in the third eucharistic prayer with the words:

"In your mercy, O Father, unite your children scattered throughout the world."

This discovery we regard as the main fruit of the Sixth National Congress.

We also turned to John Paul II's encyclical on God's mercy, *Dives in Misericordia*. [The document quotes from sections 9, 58, 11, 15 and 62 of the encyclical.] In these commendations of the Holy Father we seek inspiration for outlining our tasks and responsibilities in the present-day situation. Firstly we must briefly describe that situation.

1. The Polish form of menace and anxiety

Against the background of the general situation of threat and fear described in the Pope's

encyclical, we want to analyse our own Polish form of this menace which is arousing anxiety at present. At the time of our Congress, tensions seem to be relaxing and the political and social situation is quietening down. Nevertheless, unease remains. Everyone recognises the temporary nature of the understandings reached. True, there have been plenty of declarations of wonderful programmes, optimistic assurances and calls for reforms. The question is, what intentions do these declarations conceal? Do those who make them really want what they assert or can they not frame their words differently at present? Amidst this flow of written and spoken words, the dividing line between speaking the simple truth or voicing authentic convictions, as opposed to talking for the sake of achieving personal objectives which one may shamefully try to conceal but which can be guessed anyway, is being disturbingly whittled away. It is disturbing that we search in advance for a code to decipher the message concealed in every declaration. We look for the true intention which the spoken words do not reveal but which is veiled with all the skill of rhetoric. It is particularly sad that even avowed Catholics at times use "diplomatic" speech unhesitatingly, afraid to call a spade a spade.

Of those who hold power, few convince us that their words are not just another form of

political propaganda used for the sake of achieving hasty, i.e. political objectives. Few would believe that apart from this external propaganda shield they have any intention other than defending their authority. (Nobody is even surprised by this behaviour, because this is how most people who enjoy a "taste of power" elsewhere behave.)

Those who declare themselves for liberty are also faced with the dilemma of truth: between truth to the bitter end, and truth which it is proper to reveal at a given moment — "tactical" or limited truth. Their speech is veiled too; some words have to be guessed at, some still can not be spoken out publicly because of certain taboos.

In short, the situation shows no prospect of an ultimate solution but bears the hallmarks of improvisation, which in itself is a source of anxiety or fear, a fear shared by all who have not yet discovered the way to true freedom. As the Pope declares in his encyclical "Anxiety is not suffered only by those who take advantage of the privilege of wealth, progress or authority" (DM 58).

Anxiety and fear describe not only our internal situation but also our relations with neighbouring countries.

We are afraid about "what may be inflicted upon others by military means" (DM 55). The very existence of this fear means that the words "freedom" or "sovereignty", used to describe our situation, become words of diplomacy. We use the words because everyone else uses them, or because we do not dare say anything to the contrary, and therefore persuade ourselves that they convey the truth. This is a double-edged fear. Those who hold powerful means of pressure in their hands cannot stop worrying over what will happen to them when others cease to fear these means.

Our country and the world need nothing more today than people who have attained such freedom. Only those who are freed in this way can bring liberty to others; people set free by the truth because they had the courage to admit it and act accordingly. Only then does Our Lord's promise become fulfilled: "No follower of mine shall wander in the dark; he shall have the light of life" (John 8: 12). Our country and the world need teachers of the truth, not formal teachers but those who witness by the purity of their intentions, disinterestedly and devotedly yielding their lives to the truth, and if necessary, sacrificing them for it. [. . .]

In this very sketchy, brief manner we may

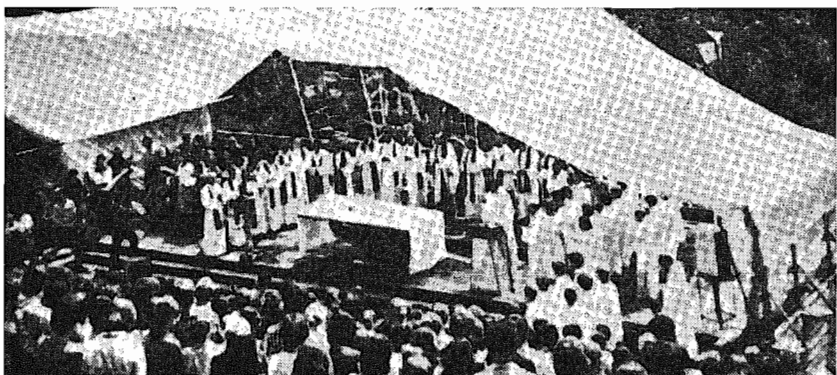
characterise the Polish form of menace and anxiety at the present time. It consists of a manifestation of the general crisis over truth in human relationships, lack of responsibility toward the truth, a purely materialistic relationship to fellow-men, and loss of a sense of the common good, all of which the Pope speaks of in his encyclical (DM 61).

2. *Liberation through the truth as a basic work of mercy*

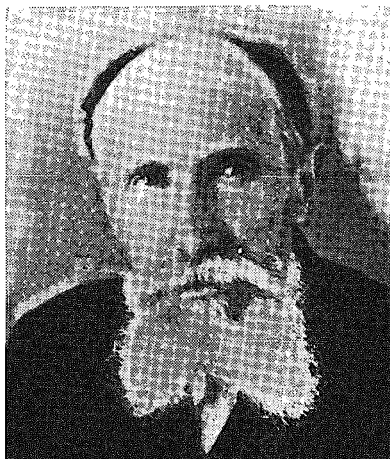
In such a situation, requiring deep reflection and final settlement, we must look to the words of Christ: "The truth will set you free" (John 8: 32). [. . .] For if, in the spirit of Christ's words, truth liberates man, then it follows that his enslavement depends on falsehood. Belief in the basic lie suggested to man by the tempter: "You will become like gods"; that is, a lie concerning metaphysical self-awareness, is the origin of man's state of serfdom and the ultimate source of all servility. The man who is insincere within the depths of his self-awareness and who gives way to lies and reliance on falsehood is the most pitiable and the most deserving of help. To confirm him in this falsehood, leaving him with his delusions, "sparing" him from being told the truth, actually injures him, whereas freeing him from falsehood is a true and basic work of mercy — on the condition, of course, that the motive for acquainting a man with the truth and convincing him of it is not prompted by a desire to triumph or exult over him, to shame him or humiliate him. The motive should be love and the desire to free him from evil, to raise and free him.

In imitating God, the Father of mercy whose countenance was revealed to us by Christ in the parable of the prodigal son, the man wishing to free another through the truth concentrates particularly on the dignity of man, wishing to save that dignity and human nature itself (DM 32). To preserve human dignity is voluntarily to surrender one's will and give up one's life to the imparted truth: "let us speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4: 15). Such true love is described in the New Testament as *agape*, liberated through the "ability to come down to every prodigal son, to every moral degradation, especially to sin. When it does that, he who receives such mercy does not feel humiliated but retrieved and his values restored". (DM 33) [. . .]

In this manner we are to undertake a diaconate of liberty through truth in our country. Unless that mission were linked to love and mercy it would be threatened by distortion



Scenes from "Oasis" camps in Poland (see article on pp. 49-66). Members of a camp near Krościenko eat breakfast outdoors in all weathers (*top*). A feature of every camp is the performance of the Stations of the Cross carrying a large wooden cross, which is left in place at the twelfth station, where Mass is said (*centre*). Mass is concelebrated on the camp "Community Day": here fifty priests, including two bishops and Fr Blachnicki, concelebrated at an Oasis for priests at Krościenko (*bottom*). All photos © Keston College.



Believers from Eastern Europe who have died by violent means during the last decade (see pp. 83-88): Cardinal Trochta of Czechoslovakia (*above*); Soviet Adventist Vladimir Shelkov (*above right*); Soviet Baptist Ivan Biblenko (*right*); Soviet Buddhist Bidiya Dandaron (*below*) (all photos courtesy of Keston College); and Romanian Baptist Sabin Teodosiu (*below right*) (photo © Misjon bak Jernteppet).



through pride, contamination through hatred and a triumphalism founded on a desire for victory and the downfall of the other side, rather than a desire to save or help the other. Only by associating the two missions — liberation through the truth and liberation through love — can we call ourselves the disciples of Christ, who suffered death on the cross after delivering his testimony of truth to Pilate. We regard the grasping of the deep, inward ties between the testimonies to truth and to mercy as a great gift for this year's Congress and a valuable complement to the Declaration published last year at the Fifth National Congress. We consciously associate ourselves with the great, world-wide movement of "non-violence" which campaigns to liberate people from all forms of enslavement and violence, in the manner revealed by Christ in the Gospels. This path renounces the use of force but aims to reinstate justice and freedom by liberating those who forcibly perpetrate injustice and violence. It liberates them because it converts and transforms them, even if in the process the liberator becomes a victim. This path represents hope for contemporary man and is a dawn foretelling the coming of a new civilisation of love. It is the path favoured by Pope John Paul II.

3. Confrontation with reality

This heightened awareness, due mainly to the papal encyclical, must be confronted with reality, and met with action. This confrontation sets us before a nation which in recent months has made great strides towards liberty. It is striving to tear off the mask of falsehood, reminding us of the values of religious and moral law, and restoring the dignity of man. We are confronted by the splendid revolution of the workers, signified by the word "Solidarity" which has shaken the country and the whole world. It was launched, not in the name of materialism, but in order to rescue man, whom the system had overlooked. We stand before this reality with amazement, gratitude and a new hope.

However, we are uneasy about its future and further development, being aware of the dangers which threaten it from within and without as a result of human weakness and imperfection. The question arises: what can we, what should we do as members of the Light-Life movement? The following positive replies come to mind:

(a) We must respond through the *diaconate of prayer*. We accept this call to prayer in the conviction that what has occurred in Poland is in response to the thrilling call by

John Paul II in Warsaw when he said: "May Your spirit descend and change the face of the land! *This land!*" We also respond to the Pope's call contained in the last chapter of his encyclical: "At no time, however, in any period of history, and especially at a time as crucial as ours, may the Church overlook prayer, which is a call for the mercy of God in the face of multiple sins weighing on humanity and menacing it." (DM 78.) Obedient to this call, we wish to undertake a great campaign of prayer, first of all prayer for God's mercy and for His intercession for our country and the world today. We wish to send up this prayer in the spirit of truth and conciliation, admitting to and confessing our sins before God, for which we are rightly punished. We wish to ask for help from the Holy Spirit for those who are struggling for truth and justice, that they may continue. We must pray for those who especially need mercy, who are still slaves to falsehood, to the rule of lust and egoism. During all oases of prayer this year, also traditional services on the first Sunday in each month and prayer meetings, we should pray fervently for the mercy of God for the entire human race and particularly for our country.

(b) Faced with conditions in Poland, our response must be a *diaconate of evangelisation*. In the conviction that only Jesus Christ is the ultimate guarantor of freedom and respect for the dignity of man, we wish to introduce Him to all those who do not yet know Him, who have not received Him personally into their lives as their one and only Lord and Saviour. We wish to be included in the great evangelistic work of *Ad Christum Redemptorem*, in the conviction that we are bringing that most essential, joyous news of the mercy of God revealed through Jesus Christ. Receiving with gratitude the film version of *St Luke's Gospel** — evangelism through the mercy of God — as a gift and a means of evangelisation, we wish through it to reach the greatest possible number of people in our homeland, especially those in places of work and workers associated with Solidarity. By organising evangelistic retreats for them we hope to help them discover the foundation and sources of true Solidarity in Christ.

(c) Our next response will be a *diaconate of mercy*. We realise that evangelisation,

*A film made in association with Warner Bros. in numerous languages for evangelistic use throughout the world — Ed.

declaring God's mercy, cannot be credible or fruitful without demonstrating that mercy to our brethren, and especially to the suffering, the hungry and the persecuted. In our movement we wish to start a "diaconate of mercy", to help with those charitable works which the Church must carry out now in Poland for the sake of the hungry, the sick and the lonely, large families, the families of alcoholics, etc.

(d) Finally there must be a greater involvement in a *diaconate of liberation*, especially in the crusade for the liberation of man. In this field, three definite tasks stand out as the most urgent:

— Liberation by *testifying to the truth* in a spirit of love and in a spirit of non-violence. This has been the subject of comprehensive discussion in part 2. Definite "acts of liberation", courageously undertaken, are needed, but caution must be observed on every occasion, in consultation with sensible, competent people;

— Liberation *from alcoholism* (the most common form of subjection) which renders man incapable of preserving his dignity and self-respect. Unless it overcomes this disaster,

our nation will be incapable of attaining and preserving true freedom of spirit. The road to that freedom is love, expressing itself in the practice of self-controlled abstinence to help others;

— Liberation from the most developed form of egoism, dependence upon abortion. This form of bondage, arising from man's treating another human being as the subject for exploitation (so common among us) represents a biological threat to the nation's existence. We wish to undertake a special diaconate in defence of life within the framework of the crusade to liberate man.

All these tasks should become our diaconate among the Polish people as we search for the attainment of true freedom. We commend them to our brothers and sisters in the movement as the subject of special solicitude and effort.

Jasna Góra, 1 March 1981

Participants of the Sixth National Congress of the Light-Life Movement.

*Translated by Paul Keim and
Grażyna Sikorska*

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