

The Person and the Challenges
Volume 2 (2012) Number 1, p. 269-274

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“Work of the New Millennium” Foundation, Poland

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The Foundation of the Polish Bishop’s Conference “Work of the New Millennium” was created in 2000. The main goals of the Foundation include popularizing blessed Pope John Paul II’s teaching, supporting the development of Christian culture and studies but, most importantly, improving the educational opportunities for young people from small towns and villages through funding scholarships which enable them to obtain high-level education. The idea of creating the Foundation arose after John Paul II’s pilgrimage to Poland in 1999. During this visit the Pope emphasized the necessity of solidarity with the people in need.

The Foundation “Work of the New Millennium” realizes these objectives by organizing the annual Day of the blessed Pope John Paul II, awarding TOTUS prizes, organizing the Competition for the academic books for Journalistic and Law studies and running a broad scholarship program for young people of school age.

The latter program, known as “the living monument” in honour of John Paul II, is currently helping 2500 people all over Poland. The scholarship fund is made up of the donations of people of goodwill. Every year, the public collection called “Let’s Share Love” is organized during the celebrations of the John Paul II Day. The money collected on that day is allocated for the Foundation’s scholarship fund. The basic form of help is granting scholarships to particularly talented and at the same time, poor young people from the neglected rural areas and small towns with not more than 20 000 inhabitants.

Apart from funding scholarships, the Foundation also organises formative programmes for the scholarship holder. Every year, the Foundation invites scholarship holders to take part in the integrative–formative camps, which aim at familiarizing them with Polish history and culture, shaping their civic, patriotic and Christian attitudes, and teaching them about practical areas of contemporary life (ecological - for example). The camps have previously taken place in

Kraków, Warszawa, Gdańsk, Poznań, Wrocław, Katowice, Łódź, Częstochowa, Bydgoszcz. This year the camp will be in Lublin. These camps are organized in the touristic regions of Poland.

In order to realize its statutory goals more effectively and to increase sensitivity to the cause of common good, the Foundation co-operates with a number of Church and lay organizations and circles.

1. The Scholarship Program of the Foundation “Work of the New Millennium”

The program consists of granting scholarships to particularly talented and at the same time poor gymnasium students from the neglected rural areas. The Foundation’s aim is to provide assistance for a particular student for a number of years: since gymnasium through high school and the period of academic studies, accompanying them not only with the scholarship help, but also with formation. In this way the Foundation wishes not only to contribute to redressing educational opportunities and erasing the “white stains” from the map of Poland’s civilization development, but also to work to build the intellectual capital, to create Christian elite, which is especially useful in integration with European structures.

Currently up 2,500 students in 40 dioceses from all over Poland are included in the scholarship program. Our scholarship holders come from the poorest regions of Poland. Our policy is to include gymnasium students in the program in order to lead them to graduation through formation and help them over many years. At the moment over 1000 scholarship holders have begun their studies, 800 study in high schools and over 700 in gymnasiums.

A lot of the Foundation’s scholarship holders not only have great academic results but are also successful in other fields. There are musical, artistic, sports and even singing and acting talents among them.

All scholarship holders without exception engage in the work for their communities: for the parish, school, town/village. They take up the voluntary service in a number of organizations, look after elderly and sick people, help their less talented friends in their studies, and become active as scouts, animators of Church communities, collaborators with the local media and even with voluntary fire brigades.

2. Camps for the Foundation's Scholarship Holders

Every year during summer vacations, the Foundation invites its scholarship holders to the summer integrative camp, which complements the scholarship's help and serves to enable the young people from remote corners of the country to get to know one another and undergo formation. For all participants in the camp – young people from villages and little towns from all over Poland – the attraction is the visit to the great city, being at the culture and academic center and the witness of Polish history.

From the year 2005 to the year 2010, during the winter vacations, the Foundation supported by RENOVABIS organized a language camp in Warsaw and in Krakow for a group of one hundred scholarship holders. It was intended for the people wishing to improve their knowledge of German. The classes took place in the Goethe Institute in these two cities and the participants received appropriate certificates. They also took part in the meeting with the Apostolic Nuncio, Polish bishops and participated in cultural events.

3. The Day of the blessed Holy Father John Paul II

With regard to realizing one of its most fundamental statutory aims, namely, popularizing John Paul II's teaching, the Foundation put forward the initiative of organizing "The Day of John Paul II". In response to this initiative, in June 2001, the Conference of the Polish Episcopate authorized the project of the annual day promoting the Holy Father John Paul II's teaching. Every year, the October Sunday directly preceding the anniversary of John Paul II's election to the Holy See (which falls on 16th October) is celebrated as "The Day of Pope". It is the day of spiritual connection with the Holy Father, which encourages us to familiarize ourselves with the papal teaching. The Day of Pope is accompanied by a number of attractive events as well as a nationwide fundraiser aimed towards redressing educational opportunities. The Day of Pope attracts the interest of a wide range of media.

The celebrations of the Day of Pope proceed in four dimensions: prayer, intellectual, cultural-artistic and in the dimension of actual solidarity with those in need.

The initiatives of events associated with this Day arise and are prepared locally (at the level of diocese, parish and town/village). The Foundation supports them by preparing and distributing some of the materials.

On the Sunday preceding the Day of the Pope, the Polish Bishop's Conference addresses the pastoral letter to the faithful, in which it encourages them to take part in the celebrations.

All parishes receive pastoral materials: plans of sermons (for adults, youth and children), proposals for the prayer of the faithful and the evening prayer assemblies, as well as plans of catecheses, thematically related to the motto of the Day.

The All-Polish Organizational Committee of the "Papal Day" is composed of representatives of Catholic Action, Catholic Youth Association, Catholic Intelligentsia Clubs, "Light-Life" Movement, three scout organizations: Polish Scouting Association, the Scouting Association of the Republic and Catholic Scouting Association "Zawisza", as well as Student Ministries and the Family of John Paul II Schools and others. All preparations are coordinated by the Foundation "Work of the New Millennium".

Almost since its inauguration, the "Papal Day" has been celebrated in different forms by Poles living beyond the borders of Poland. The celebrations were concentrated in parishes and establishments of the Polish community ministries.

The main celebrations of the Day are organized in Warsaw and Krakow. In addition to the High Masses with the participation of the Polish Primate, Archbishop Józef Kowalczyk, the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Celestino Migliore and the Krakow Metropolitan, Archbishop Stanisław Dziwisz, each year a scientific conference devoted to the person and teaching of John Paul II takes place at the University of Warsaw. It is attended by eminent guests from the Vatican, luminaries of Polish science and members of the diplomatic corps.

An intellectual dimension of the Papal Day also finds its expression in dozens of other academic sessions and public lectures organized in many Polish cities by Catholic Intelligentsia Clubs and branches of Catholic Action.

On the eve of the Day, the ceremony of presenting the TOTUS prizes, awarded by the Foundation "Work of the New Millennium", takes place in the Royal Castle in Warsaw. The celebrations of the Day begin on Sunday morning at 9:00 with the Mass in the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Warsaw, broadcasted by Polish Radio1.

At 13:00, the Mass broadcasted by Polonia Television is celebrated. Throughout Poland the High Masses are celebrated by bishops in the cathedrals of particular dioceses. Furthermore, the faithful gather for prayer vigils in the places visited by John Paul II during his pilgrimages to his Homeland and in numerous sanctuaries.

The liturgical celebrations of the Papal Day in Warsaw, similarly to other places in Poland, conclude with the solemn "Prayer Assembly with the Holy Father" at the Castle Square. The prayer of the large numbers of Warsaw residents is led by

Cardinal Józef Glemp and Cardinal Kazimierz Nycz. Thanks to live television transmission and satellite connection, tens of thousands of people gathered in other places of shared prayer vigils (Cracow, Częstochowa, Wadowice), as well as millions of viewers, can all participate in the prayer. An important place in the main celebrations of the Day is occupied by a special Papal Day concert, dedicated to the Holy Father and broadcasted by TVP 1 and Polonia TV.

The Papal Day attracts a great deal of media attention. The media Partners include the largest mass media in Poland, state, Catholic as well as commercial: TV and radio stations, information agencies, internet portals, Catholic weeklies and high-circulation dailies. The Day topic is taken up by a number of press titles and many radio stations and TV channels.

The most precious gift for the Poles celebrating the Day has always been the blessing of the Holy Father and His words on the occasion. The Holy Father John Paul II followed the celebrations of the Papal Day through television broadcasts and in 2005 he agreed to take part in the special connection with the Vatican prepared by TVP. On the occasion of this year's Day, the Holy Father Benedict XVI granted the interview to Polish TV, enclosing regards, in Polish, to the Poles celebrating the V Papal Day.

The dimension of actual solidarity, realized in the course of the Papal Day celebrations, is not solely confined to the above-mentioned campaign. Every year, on that day the collection "Let's Share Love" towards the scholarships for the poor talented young people, the protégés of the Foundation is organized. In the city streets, scouts and members of Catholic movements and organizations collect money to the money boxes. A collection also takes place in front of the churches. Everybody who makes a donation receives a sticker with the logo of the Papal Day and the picture of John Paul II with the reflection taken from his teaching.

4. The TOTUS Awards

TOTUS is an award of the Foundation of the Polish Bishop's Conference "Work of the New Millennium". The award's aim is to appreciate the accomplishments and efficiently promote the people and institutions whose work contributes remarkably to emphasizing the human values which are the essential component of the Holy Father John Paul II's teaching.

The TOTUS prizes are awarded annually (their amount is approx. 50 000 PLN) in a few categories, for the accomplishments:

- in the promotion of man, charity and educational work
- in the field of Christian culture
- in the promotion of the Holy Father’s teaching
- in the field of the media

The prizes are awarded by special Commission and their formal presentation takes place during the ceremony at the Royal Castle in Warsaw. The money for the awards is donated by the patrons from among the prestigious large Polish companies.

Former laureates include, among others: Rev. Jan Twardowski, Prof. Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, Prof. Zygmunt Kubiak, Prof. Jerzy Nowosielski, Youth Center “U Siemachy” in Krakow, Catholic TV program for children “Ziarno”, Catholic Association of the Disabled of the Warsaw Archdiocese, Adam Bujak, Prof. Władysław Bartoszewski, Wojciech Kilar, Michał Lorenc, Foundation of the “Pro Publico Bono” Contest, John Paul II Institute of the Catholic University of Lublin, Tertio Millennio Institute, Catholic weeklies “Sunday Guest” and “Sunday”, the group of filmmakers of “Edi” and others.