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THE DEVOTION TO OUR MOTHER OF
PERPETUAL HELP IN POLAND

1. – *The beginnings of the service of prayers and devotions to Our Mother of Perpetual Help*; 2. – *Father Bernard Łubieński – apostle of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help*; 3. – *Marian missionary service*; 4. – *Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the apostleship of letters*; 5. – *Confraternities and associations*; 6. – *Perpetual Novena*; 7. – *Coronations of the copies of the Roman icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help*.

The beginnings of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Poland go back to the mid-eighteenth century.¹ However, while investigating the traces of this form of Marian piety in Polish religiosity from the 18th century until the middle of the 19th century serious difficulties can be encountered, mainly related to the fact that the source-based material is dispersed and sparse. After the cult of this icon had been revived in Rome in 1866, the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help gradually developed in the Polish lands as well.

1. – *The beginnings of the service of prayers and devotions to Our Mother of Perpetual Help*

“This devotion spread first among the Polish people in Silesia thanks to fold bulletins, books and pictures published in Królewska Huta,” – wrote the Servant of God Fr Bernard Łubieński in *Podręcznik ułożony dla Bractwa Matki Bożej Nieustającej*

¹ B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Podręcznik ułożony dla Bractwa Najśw. Maryi Panny Nieustającej Pomocy i św. Alfonsa założonego w kościele OO. Redemptorystów w Mościskach* [The Book Prepared for the Confraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St Alphonsus Founded in the Redemptorist Fathers' Church in Mościska], Przemyśl 1895, 47; L. FRAŚ, *Cześć M[atki] B[ożej] Nieust[ającej] Pomocy w Polsce* [Honouring the M[other] of Perpet[ual] Help in Poland], “Chorągiew Maryi” 26:1930, no. 7, p. 199.

Pomocy i św. Alfonsa założonego w kościele OO. Redemptorystów w Mościskach [The Book Prepared for the Confraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St Alphonsus Founded in the Redemptorist Fathers' Church in Mościska]. – “From there, as well as from Kraków, this novena service spread all over the Kingdom, and even in Lithuania; it reached the province of Poznań as well as West and East Prussia.”²

A rapid growth of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the Polish lands took place after the arrival of the Redemptorists in Mościska near Przemyśl in 1883. On 8 September 1883, the Redemptorists carried a copy of the miraculous icon in a solemn procession to the monastery church in Mościska. From 1897 until 1900, 106 copies of the icon were sent from Rome to Poles living in the lands that had belonged to Poland before the partitions, and to Poles living in the depths of Russia. Additionally, ca. 50 copies were sent to Poland before 1897.³ In total, we can assume that ca. 150 copies of the icon were in the Polish lands before the year 1900.

The devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help developed slightly slower in the Poznań region than in Galicia and Congress Poland. The reason was that immigrants from the Poznań region faced a vivid Marian cult in the Rhine area and treated it as typically German: they called Our Mother of Perpetual Help “Our Mother of Germany.” Only after 1889, when the Polish Redemptorists began their missionary activities in the lands under the Prussian partition, the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help began growing rapidly there. On the other hand, in Congress Poland the clergy and believers regarded the vivid cult of the Roman icon from the Church of Saint Alphonsus as an expression of unity with the Holy See. The first propagators of the

² B. ŁUBIENSKI, *Podręcznik...*, 47.

³ The archives of the Redemptorist Province of Warsaw in Tuchów, The file with the correspondence concerning the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, Letter of Fr Franciszek Reuss to Fr B. Łubiński, Rome, 25 January 1916. A list of places in Poland and Russia to which copies of the icon were sent in 1891-1915 was attached to the letter.

devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the Polish lands were priests educated at the Polish College in Rome.⁴

2. – *Father Bernard Łubieński – apostle of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help*

Among the Polish Redemptorists, the most zealous propagator of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help was the Servant of God Bernard Łubieński, who as a Redemptorist seminarian in Bishop Ethon, England, experienced very profoundly the miraculous healing of a lecturer of philosophy after the alumni had prayed a nine-day novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help. This event made the Redemptorists bring a copy of the miraculous icon to the seminar chapel as early as on 2 July 1866. From then on, the whole life of Bernard Łubieński was filled with extraordinary confidence in Mary's protection and help.⁵

Fr Bernard's zeal was shared by his confreres and spread among diocesan priests who after listening to his sermons on Mary became convinced to this devotion. Bishop Jakub Glazer, the Latin Rite Auxiliary Bishop of Przemyśl, witnessed the foundation of the confraternity in Mościska. Moved by Fr Łubieński's sermon, he asked for a copy of the icon for his private chapel.⁶ Józef Weber, the Latin Rite Bishop of Lwów brought a copy of the icon from Rome himself and placed it in the local seminary. After retreats that Fr Łubieński gave to the seminarians in 1902, the Bishop blessed the altar of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and entrusted the seminary to Her special protection.⁷ Antal Nowak, a

⁴ B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Historia cudownego obrazu Matki Boskiej Nieustającej Pomocy* [*The History of the Miraculous Picture of Our Mother of Perpetual Help*], Kraków 1916, 223, 225-226.

⁵ J. PALEWSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński jako apostoł nabożeństwa do Matki Boskiej Nieust. Pomocy* [*Fr Bernard Łubieński as Apostle of the Novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help*], Kraków 1937, 11-14; S. STAŃCZYK, *Ojciec Bernard Łubieński drugi fundator Zgromadzenia Redemptorystów na ziemi polskiej* [*Father Bernard Łubieński the Second Founder of the Redemptorists in the Polish Land*], "Homo Dei" 52:1983, no. 3, p. 192.

⁶ J. PALEWSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 50.

⁷ *Maryja jest Matką Nieustającej Pomocy dla Polski* [*Mary is the Mother of Perpetual Help for Poland*], "Chorągiew Maryi" 1:1905, no. 8, pp. 116-121.

canon of the Kraków Cathedral Chapter, who later became Auxiliary of Kraków, and then Bishop of Przemyśl, participated in the solemn introduction of a copy of the icon to the Church of St Bartholomew in Mogiła near Kraków in 1899. From that time he was not only a fervent worshipper of Our Mother of Perpetual Help but also as the rector of the seminary he made all of the seminarians join the confraternity, created in the Redemptorist Church in Kraków's district of Podgórze in 1903. He sent all of the freshmen to the Redemptorist Church to become members of the confraternity. After he had become Bishop of Przemyśl he placed a copy of the miraculous icon in his private chapel.⁸ Another zealous propagator of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help was Fr Bolesław Twardowski, a translator of the novena and then Metropolitan Bishop of Lwów.⁹ At the beginning of the 20th century, copies of the miraculous icon were placed in three diocesan seminaries in Galicia: in Kraków, Lwów and Tarnów.¹⁰

The largest field of the Redemptorists' influence was missions and retreats. Zeal in spreading the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help was shared by priests and believers. Missionaries, including Łubieński, managed to encourage parish priests to order copies of the miraculous icon for their parishes. Sometimes copies were ordered just after the missions or their renovation, and in other cases – after several years. Believers themselves often collected money spontaneously to buy copies of the icon.¹¹ Of great importance was the solemn ceremony of bringing copies of the miraculous icon to churches. This ceremony was usually preceded by a triduum, and sometimes by a mission renewal.

⁸ J. PALEWSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 62-63; *Obraz M[atki] B[ożej] N[ieustającej] Pomocy w Mogiła* [*The Picture of the M[other] of P[erpetual] Help in Mogiła*], "Chorągiew Maryi" 1:1905, no. 9, pp. 143-144.

⁹ M. PIROŻYŃSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński (1846-1933)*, Wrocław 1946, 228.

¹⁰ *Maryja jest Matką...*, 120-121.

¹¹ E. Nocuń, *Kult Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy w drugiej połowie XIX wieku* [*The Cult of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the Second Half of the 19th Century*], in: *Niepokalana. Kult Matki Bożej na ziemiach polskich w XIX wieku* [*The Immaculate. The Cult of the Mother of God in the Polish Lands in the 19th Century*], ed. B. Pylak, C. Krakowiak, Lublin 1988, 610-612.

Promoting the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, the Redemptorists were aware of the difficulties related to the existence of other miraculous pictures of Mary in Poland. "We have our beloved pictures: Our Lady of Częstochowa, Our Lady of Ostra Brama, Our Lady of Gostyń, Our Lady of Górka Duchowna, Our Lady of Kalwaria, Our Lady of Tuchów," wrote the Servant of God Bernard Łubieński. "This is not a problem but rather a reason why the picture that is so holy and dear to the Romans, has become holy and dear to us."¹² Fr Łubieński contributed to ordering ca. 85 copies of the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help from Rome and to introducing the icon to public veneration to churches or chapels.¹³

During Poland's political slavery, the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the Polish lands was most vivid in the years 1901–1906. Unfortunately, in Congress Poland there was a clear decrease in the devotion after 1906, which was caused by the creation of the Mariavite movement that tried to take over this devotion making it equal to the cult of the Blessed Sacrament. The spread of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help by the Mariavites, who were not in unity with the Roman Catholic Church, evoked considerable anxiety among believers, and even contributed to questioning this service regarded as a Mariavite service in some regions of the Russian partition. Facing the threat that the Marian cult would be endangered in Poland, the Church undertook an action of teaching believers the fundamental truths of Catholic Mariology mainly through parish missions during which missionaries, mainly the Redemptorists, taught listeners about the true devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help. The Church also showed errors in the Mariavites' teaching. This evangelisation effort caused that after a few years the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help began regaining its original meaning in the awareness of the faithful.¹⁴

¹² B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Podręcznik...*, 46.

¹³ A. BAZIELICH, *Sługa Boży O. Bernard Łubieński apostoł kultu Matki Boskiej Nieustającej Pomocy* [*The Servant of God Fr Bernard Łubieński, Apostle of the Cult of Our Mother of Perpetual Help*], Tuchów 1995, 32-41.

¹⁴ S. PIECH, *Maryja w apostołacie redemptorystów polskich* [*Mary in the Apostolate of the Polish Redemptorists*], in: *Wierni tradycji – otwarci na zna-*

3. – *Marian missionary service*

The widest influence of the Redemptorists was through missions. One of the most exposed services during the missions was the devotion to Mary. The Servant of God, despite his troublesome disability, did his best to proclaim the word of God. The apostolic zeal compelled him to action. In Poland he was involved in 224 missions and 58 renovations of missions. The lame missionary climbing the pulpit supported by others, preaching in a booming voice, full of zeal, exerted unforgettable impressions on his listeners. He used many images and comparisons. His every word was coloured with emotion. He had a unique ability to dramatize.¹⁵ “Feeling a special anointing he praised the power and goodness of the Blessed Mother, and encouraged believers to put confidence in Her since She is Our Mother of Perpetual Help,” wrote down Fr Józef Palewski, his collaborator.

Leading a mission, he placed all his confidence in the Perpetual Help of Mary; he encouraged his confreres and believers to renew confidence in Mary and asked them to pray to Her. As often as he could, he took her icon with him and put it on the altar

ki czasu. Materiały Sympozjum na Stulecie Warszawskiej Prowincji Redemptorystów i Kanonizacji św. Klemensa Marii Hofbauera, Tuchów, 9–10 Października 2009 [Faithful to the Tradition – Open to the Signs of the Times. Proceedings of the Symposium on the Centenary of the Redemptorist Province of Warsaw and the Canonisation of St Clement Maria Hofbauer, Tuchów, 9-10 October 2009], ed. M. Sadowski, Kraków 2009, 169-170, (Studia do Dziejów Redemptorystów Polskich 1); K. Piotrowski, *Rozwój nabożeństwa do Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy na ziemiach polskich do 1918 roku* [The Development of the Service to Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the Polish Lands till 1918], Kraków 2005, 25-27, manuscript, (Archives of the John Paul II Pontifical University in Kraków, call number H-361).

¹⁵ M. PIROŻYŃSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 243-246; S. PIECH, “Wszystko przez Ciebie, Maryjo!”. *Maryja w życiu i dziele o. Bernarda Łubieńskiego* [“Everything through You, Mary!” *Mary in the life and work of Fr Bernard Łubieński*], in: *Głosić Ewangelię posłał mnie Pan. Sympozjum na temat życia i działalności sługi Bożego o. Bernarda Łubieńskiego z okazji 150 rocznicy jego urodzin. Tuchów 6-7 października 1995* [The Lord has sent me to preach the Gospel. Symposium on the life and activities of the Servant of God Fr Bernard Łubieński on the 150th anniversary of his birth, Tuchów, 6-7 October 1995], eds. A. Bazieliuch, Z. Podlecki, Tuchów 1996, 100.

in the church in order to fire up the congregation to practice this devotion.¹⁶

The Servant of God followed the regulations of his congregation concerning this devotion. The Rules of the Redemptorists, Decree VIII, recommended preachers of missions,

In every exercise, whether a sermon or meditation or instruction or some other kind of speech, after mentioning Jesus Christ they should call the Blessed Virgin, at least implore her help, and order listeners to love her. Especially towards the end of these exercises, or giving some example where it may seem convenient, or mentioning some virtue of the Mother of God, and thus every one of them, according to their abilities, will try to make this service develop in every place, knowing that our eternal salvation depends completely – after Jesus Christ – on the merits and intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Therefore, during the whole mission the preacher should do his best to place a statue or picture of the Blessed Virgin next to the pulpit or on the altar between lit candles; for this purpose, before the end of the mission or other exercises a sermon on the protection of the Blessed Virgin should always be delivered. The sermon must be practical, referring to practical life and morals, and should not be too theoretical and filled with excessive learning. This sermon may end with a solemn dedication of the faithful to the protection and service of the Blessed Virgin.¹⁷

Commencing with the missions conducted in Borysław in 1888, the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help was exposed during the Redemptorist missions. The Redemptorist preachers brought the icon to all those places which did not have it. Sometimes they exposed it during all the days of the mission and sometimes only during the sermon dedicated to the Mother of God. They usually brought a chromolithograph with them.¹⁸ During the missions they sold thousands of prayer books and pictures of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. Commemorative pic-

¹⁶ J. PALEWSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 55.

¹⁷ *Ustawy i przepisy reguły Zgromadzenia Kapłanów pod wezwaniem Najświętszego Odkupiciela* [*The Decrees and Rules of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer*], part. 1, 2 and 5, Mościska 1899, no. 140.

¹⁸ J. PALEWSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 66.

tures were also distributed on the occasion of confessions.¹⁹ The Redemptorist fathers who were especially eager to spread the Marian devotion included Henryk Bernacki, Franciszek Brzozowski, Jan Byczkowski, Józef Bułka, Stanisław Golec, Kazimierz Hołda, Eugeniusz Karpiel, Henryk Klimaj, Antoni Krawiec, Stanisław Kuczek, Józef Krok, Ryszard Marcinek, Tadeusz Sitko, Józef Sochacki, Stanisław Solarz, Stanisław Szczurek and Alfons Wittig. The image of a Redemptorist – zealous preacher of “abundant redemption” and apostle of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help was shaped in the Polish culture.

4. – *Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the apostleship of letters*

Religious books and periodicals also served to spread the Marian devotion. The first book dedicated to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, written in Polish, was published in Królewska Huta in 1881.²⁰ Father Łubieński, as an act of giving thanks for his recovered health, translated into Polish the novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help written by the Redemptorist Father Edward Omer. This novena was also translated by the above-mentioned Fr Bolesław Twardowski. Both translations had numerous editions.

Another very popular book was *Podręcznik ułożony dla Bractwa Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy i św. Alfonsa założonego w kościele OO. Redemptorystów w Mościskach* [*The Book Prepared for the Confraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St Alphonsus Founded in the Redemptorist Fathers' Church in Mościska*] published in 1890. Its three consecutive editions were printed in 20 thousand copies. The fourth edition appeared in 1895. The book contains the history of the miraculous icon, principles

¹⁹ *Pierwszy obraz Matki Boskiej Nieustającej Pomocy na ziemi polskiej w Mościskach* [*The first picture of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the Polish land in Mościska*], “Chorągiew Maryi” 1:1905, no. 7, p. 106.

²⁰ *Książka do nabożeństwa na cześć Najświętszej Maryi Panny Nieustającej Pomocy. Z dodatkiem modlitw św. Alfonsa* [*A Manual of Prayers in Honour of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. With the Prayers of St Alphonsus*], Królewska Huta 1881.

of pious life, information concerning the confraternity and a number of prayers, novenas and services. This book, in a slightly modified version, was edited in Warsaw in 1896 by Fr Zygmunt Skarzyński.²¹

The devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help was promoted by *Książka misyjna* [*The Mission Book*] published by the Redemptorists and sold during their missions. Its first edition appeared in 1892. Frequently reprinted, it was sold in ca. 300 thousand copies within 20 years.²² The cult of the miraculous icon was also spread by the periodical "Poślaniec Matki Boskiej Nieustającej Pomocy" [*The Messenger of Our Mother of Perpetual Help*] edited by Fr Walenty Szczepaniak.²³

In the years 1904-1939, the Redemptorists of Tuchów edited a popular monthly "Chorągiew Maryi" ["Mary's Banner"] dedicated to spreading the devotion to the Blessed Immaculate Virgin. From 1926 the monthly had a subtitle "Miesięcznik Arcybactwa Matki Boskiej Nieust[ającej] Pomocy" [*Monthly of the Archconfraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help*]. The monthly was dedicated mainly to Marian issues, especially to the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help. Its biggest circulation was 12 thousand copies in 1929. In the years 1938-1939, it was printed in 11 thousand copies.²⁴

²¹ *Podręcznik ułożony dla czcicieli N. Maryi P. Nieustającej Pomocy i św. Alfonsa* [*A Manuel of Prayers for the Worshippers of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and St Alphonsus*], Warsaw 1896. Fr Skarzyński also edited a little book entitled *Matka Boska Nieustającej Pomocy w kościele św. Alfonsa w Rzymie i wielu innych miejscach wstawiona. Na podstawie dzieł OO. Redemptorystów* [*Our Mother of Perpetual Help Venerated in the Church of St Alphonsus in Rome and Many Other Places. Based on the Works of the Redemptorist Fathers*], Warsaw 1900.

²² M. BARTYNOWSKI, *Redemptoryści w Polsce* [*The Redemptorists in Poland*], in: *Podręczna Encyklopedia Kościelna* [*The Concise Church Encyclopaedia*], vol. 23-24, Warsaw 1914, p. 189.

²³ The first issues were published in Poznań in 1891 by the Publishing House of "Kurier Poznański."

²⁴ S. PIECH, *Czasopisma religijne w diecezji tarnowskiej na przestrzeni dwóch wieków jej istnienia* [*Religious periodicals in the Diocese of Tarnów in the Two Centuries of Its Existence*], "Currenda" 136:1986, pp. 267-268.

5. – *Confraternities and associations*

One of the forms of promoting the icon was confraternities of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and Saint Alphonsus. The Pious Union of Our Mother of Perpetual Help was established in Rome in 1871. Five years later in 1876, Pope Pius IX raised it to the Archconfraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St. Alphonsus Liguori. New confraternities could be established in churches only after they had been approved by the bishop of the place. The Redemptorists founded the first Polish confraternity in Mościska on 2 July 1889, having the approval of Bishop Łukasz Solecki of Przemyśl. A month after the foundation, the confraternity had 1,594 members. Bishop Jakub Glazer, Suffrage of Przemyśl, signed the declaration of membership of this confraternity himself. The first members were the inhabitants of Mościska and the vicinity. Within 10 years the number of its members rose to 109,450.²⁵

The second confraternity was established in Piotrkowice near Tuchów in 1889. Then the confraternities multiplied in the Dioceses of Kraków, Tarnów, Przemyśl, Poznań and Culm.²⁶ In Kraków the confraternity was founded on Sunday, 25 October 1903 by the virtue of the decree of Cardinal Jan Puzyna of Kraków. The inhabitants of Podgórze had already known the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help since its paper copy hung in the parish church. “Hundreds, and even perhaps thousands of the inhabitants of Podgórze were listed as members of the book of the Confraternity in Mościska,” wrote down Fr Bernard Łubieński in the chronicle of the monastery in Podgórze, “because the former assistant priest Fr Ludwik Przygłudek was zealously trying to gather believers around the picture of this beloved Mother of ours in the parish church in Podgórze. However, this confrater-

²⁵ B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Podręcznik...*, 56; J. PALEWSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 54.

²⁶ “Litterae Annales Provinciae Austriacae Congregationis SS. Redemptoris” 1889, 67; *Spis miejscowości, w których zostało zaprowadzone Arcybractwo M.B. Nieustającej Pomocy [The List of the Places Where the Archconfraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Was Founded]*, “Chorągiew Maryi” 22:1926 no. 5 p. 136; E. NOCUŃ, *Kult Matki Bożej...*, 617-618.

nity was not canonically erected here.”²⁷ The confraternity developed very quickly. In 1903, it had 865 members. In the next year it accepted 2,470 new members while in 1905 as many as 5,300. Towards the end of 1905, the confraternity had 8,600 members. In total, the books of the confraternity listed 56,630 names in the years 1903-1960.²⁸ After the communist authorities had dissolved all religious organisations, the members of the confraternity continued to meet, though informally, every second Sunday in the framework of rosary circles and during the Perpetual Novena.²⁹

The aim of the confraternity was to spread the devotion to Mary in her title: Our Mother of Perpetual Help. The members of the confraternity should have recourse to Mary in all their spiritual and material needs. They were to imitate the virtues of Mary and to have a special devotion to St Alphonsus, the patron of the confraternity. It was stressed that adherence to the confraternity was not only external (membership) but first of all spiritual. In one of his sermons the Servant of God Bernard Łubieński compared the Church to a huge tree the boughs of which were the hierarchy, the branches – parishes and religious congregations, and the sprouts – confraternities.³⁰

The textbook of the confraternity recommended its members the following means of salvation: to remember eternal truths; to pray together; to receive the sacraments frequently; to practice forms of mortification, do acts of humiliation, deeds of

²⁷ Archives of the Redemptorist Monastery in Kraków, *Kronika domu Zgromadzenia Najśw. Odkupiciela pod wezwaniem Matki B[oskiej] Nieust[ającej] Pomocy w Krakowie na Podgórzu* [*The Chronicle of the Mother of Perpetual Help House of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in Kraków, Podgórze*], vol. 1, p. 29.

²⁸ Archives of the Parish of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Kraków–Podgórze, *Spisy członków Bractwa Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy i Świętego Alfonsa* [*The List of Members of the Confraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St Alphonsus*], vol. 1-3.

²⁹ S. PIECH, *Kult Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy w kościele redemptorystów w Krakowie-Podgórzu* [*The Cult of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the Redemptorists' Church in Kraków-Podgórze*], “*Folia Historica Cracoviensia*” 6:1999, p. 232.

³⁰ B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Podręcznik...*, 78-80; E. NOCUŃ, *Kult Matki Bożej...*, 618.

mercy towards the sick and poor and have devotion to the Mother of God. However, no practices and services recommended to the members were obligatory under the penalty of sin.³¹ If someone decided to join the confraternity, they obliged themselves to wear a medal of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St Alphonsus, to have a copy of the miraculous icon in their homes, to pray every morning and evening *Hail Mary* to honour the Mother of God and *Glory be to the Father* to honour St Alphonsus and to pray for the conversion of schismatics. All members should recite the Act of Consecration to Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St Alphonsus once a month on a day they choose, and as far as possible they should receive Communion. They should go to Mass on the liturgical feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St Alphonsus and attend the services of the confraternity on every second Sunday of the month. They should offer all their pious practices to God for the Church, the Pope and members of the confraternity, for the conversion of sinners and schismatics as well as for the souls suffering in purgatory.

In Toruń, the district of Bielany, in St Joseph's Church the Guard of Honour for Our Mother of Perpetual Help was founded on 8 December 1936 – it was probably the first such a body in Poland. This association was a form of the Confraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St Alphonsus, modified in 1926 by the Alsatian Redemptorist Albert Stocker. He wanted the members of the Guard of Honour to gather for prayer before the copy of the miraculous icon. The new association was quickly accepted in Central Europe and South America. In Toruń the Guard was to conduct its activities according to the small brochure entitled *Straż Honorowa Matki Boskiej Nieustającej Pomocy* [*The Guard of Honour for Our Mother of Perpetual Help*] written by Fr Ludwik Frańś and published in Kraków in 1936 by the Redemptorists. The association had three branches. The members of the first branch obliged themselves to participate in a novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help every week and to receive Communion at least once a month. The members of the second branch decided to pray together only in a weekly service.

³¹ B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Podręcznik...*, 51.

The third branch embraced children under 15 years of age who were to pray daily three times *Hail Mary* and *Glory be to the Father* as well as make a short prayerful invocation *O Maryjo, Matko Nieustającej Pomocy módl się za mną* [*O Mary, Mother of Perpetual help, pray for me*]. A service with a sermon or a reading should be celebrated before the picture of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in church. During the service the prayer intentions, which the members of the confraternity had written and thrown into a special box, were read. All of the members as ‘apostles of Mary’ were recommended to do their best to develop the confraternity, wear or at least “piously keep a locket or a badge of the confraternity” and to have a copy of the picture of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in their homes.³² During the first service held in Toruń, 704 adults and 92 children joined the Guard of Honour.³³

6. – *Perpetual Novena*

The event that was most decisive in spreading widely the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help and to make it very vivid was the introduction of the Perpetual Novena, i.e. common prayer before Mary’s icon on a chosen day of every week, most frequently on Wednesday, in order to receive some special grace. This form of Marian piety was born in the United States in 1922, in the Redemptorist Church of St Alphonsus de Liguori in San Louis, Missouri, where Fr Andrew Browne initiated weekly services to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, attended by numerous people. Fr Henry Sutton called this practice *Perpetual Novena*.³⁴ In Poland the novena service was officially conducted for the first time in the Redemptorist Church in Gliwice on Tuesday, 23 January 1951. The main celebrant was the Provincial Fr Ludwik

³² L. FRAŚ, *Straż Honorowa Matki Boskiej Nieustającej Pomocy* [*The Guard of Honour for Our Mother of Perpetual Help*], Kraków 1936, 15-16, 25-28.

³³ M. NOWAK, *Kult Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy na toruńskich Bielanach. Studium historyczno-duchowościowe* [*The Cult of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Toruń-Bielany. A Historical-Spiritual Study*], Tuchów 2010, 22-23, manuscript, (the Archives of the Warsaw Redemptorist Province in Tuchów).

³⁴ S. PIECH, *Sanktuarium Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy w Krakowie-Podgórzu (1903-2004)*, [*The Sanctuary of the Mother of Perpetual Help in Kraków-Podgórze (1903-2004)*], “*Studia Redemptorystowskie*” 2:2004, p. 39.

Frąś, assisted by Fr Edward Juniewicz and Fr Michał Jędryka. The novena was prepared and conducted by the Rector of the Gliwice monastery Fr Stanisław Szczurek, who was extremely meritorious for spreading the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help. The novena service began with a solemn procession to the altar of the Mother of God at 6 p.m. The number of believers was so big that not all of them managed to enter the church. During the novena Fr Szczurek suggested that for the next weekly services each family should send their representative. Each participant of the service chose an intention which he/she was to present to Our Mother of Perpetual Help. The participants of the novena were to present their prayer intentions – petitions and thanks – written on pieces of paper before the icon of Mary. All of them should go to confession and receive Communion on ten Tuesdays in a row. Moreover, they were to encourage others to attend the service. The novena ended with the blessing of the Blessed Sacrament. Because of a great number of those who attended the service in the Redemptorist church in Gliwice, the novena was celebrated twice a day (at 6 and 7:15 pm) from May 1951. From August of that year, the Mass sung before the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help at 6 am included the petitions and thanks brought by the participants of the novenas.³⁵

As far as we know the second Perpetual Novena in Poland was introduced in the Redemptorist Church of St Joseph in Toruń. The inauguration of this service was preceded by retreats. The novena was solemnly celebrated for the first time on 12 December 1951. The service was presided over by Fr Franciszek Nowakowski. The sermon was delivered by Fr Stanisław Szczurek who had especially come from Gliwice to lead this novena service.³⁶

In the district of Podgórze in Kraków the novena was not introduced in the Redemptorist Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help until 24 September 1952. This event, which was ex-

³⁵ S. GRUSZKA, *Dzieje kultu Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy przy kościele św. Krzyża w Gliwicach w latach 1951-2001* [*The History of the Devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the Holy Cross Church in Gliwice in the Years 1951-2001*], "Studia Redemptorystowskie" 4:2006, p. 60.

³⁶ M. NOWAK, *Kult Matki Bożej...*, 34-35.

tremely important to the development of the Marian cult in Kraków, was described in detail by Fr Tadeusz Ozga, the chronicler of the monastery.

The much awaited day of the introduction of the Perpetual Novena has come – numerous phone calls from various offices, clerks asking when the novena will be celebrated. The number of believers who came for the novena service surpassed all our expectations. Although it was a weekday the church was filled with pious worshippers of Our L[ady] of P[erpetual] H[elp] who came from all the districts of Kraków. They put 362 petitions and 50 thanks into the prayer box, which was an imposing number for the first celebration of the novena. [...] A few minutes before 9 pm, we went in a procession to the main entrance of the church to wait for Bishop Stanisław Rospond. When he came he was solemnly brought in by the sounds of trumpets and organs. Then, as usual the exposition of the Sacred Host and reciting the first Roman prayer to Our L[ady] of P[erpetual] H[elp].

Afterwards several dozen girls dressed in white and Kraków national costumes along with altar boys sang the doleful song *Daj mi Jezusa* [*Give Me Jesus*].

[...] The sermon after the song performed by the children was preached by Fr Ryszard Szczurek. He also had the privilege to read the prayer requests and thanks. When he finished reading them, the other priests recited interchangeably with the faithful the invocations to Our L[ady] of P[erpetual] H[elp] arranged in a litany. [...]. A moving moment was when the small altar boy Stanisław Kowalczyk sang three times the invocation *Matko Pomocy Nieustającej proś Boga za nami* [*Pray for us, O Mother of Perpetual Help*], which everyone knew. [...] The service ended with the blessing of the Blessed Sacrament and the song *Gdy trwoga nas ogarnie* [*When Fear Overtakes Us*], which in Kraków all people can sing.³⁷

³⁷ Archives of the Redemptorist Monastery in Kraków, *Kronika domu Zgromadzenia Najśw. Odkupiciela pod wezwaniem Matki B[oskiej] Nieust[ającej] Pomocy w Krakowie na Podgórzu*, [*The Chronicle of the Mother of Perpetual Help House of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in Kraków, Podgórze*], vol. 5, pp. 250-252.

The Perpetual Novena was extremely popular with believers. In Gliwice, in the 1950s, the novena was celebrated five times every Tuesday because of the big number of those who wanted to attend the service. Believers filled the church, the adjacent monastery corridor and sometimes even the church courtyard. In the 1960s and the 70s the novena was recited three times a day. At present the Redemptorists celebrate the Perpetual Novena in their church in Gliwice on Wednesdays, at 8:30 am and 6 pm.

The increasing popularity of this devotion influenced parish priests in the neighbourhood. Seeing the blessed fruits of the novena they invited the Redemptorists from Gliwice to introduce the novena service to their churches. In order to meet this need numerous copies of the Roman icons were brought and installed in special altars before which the novena was recited. This specific pastoral action was undertaken under strict control of the superiors of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. The rapidly developing devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help encouraged other priests to spread it widely and to deepen its theology. Several “schools of prayer” and ways of introducing and celebrating this novena were created. The phenomenon of the Perpetual Novena lies in the fact that it has a stable form, with captivating prayers and songs, often written by talented Redemptorist poets and composers. Suffice it to mention Fr Tadeusz Sitka and Alfons Klaman. The characteristic feature of the novena is that believers bring their prayer requests and thanks that are then read during the service (as mentioned above). Worshippers of Mary bring all their anxieties, troubles and problems and present them before her icon. They implore Mary’s help, support and protection in their troubles. They cordially thank her for the graces they have received. These prayers show authentic zeal of faith, confidence and gratitude.

The conception of the novena included several essential elements: all of the participants celebrated as if it was their own novena, and thus the novena was of a much individualised character. Believers prayed together through the form of written, personal petitions or thanks. Participation in nine consecutive novenas assured adherence to the devotion to Our Mother of

Perpetual Help and created the possibility of regular Marian catechesis. During the novena service believers received the sacrament of reconciliation and Eucharist. Moreover, they prayed the novena with their families, and every Tuesday and then Wednesday at least one family member attended the service in church.³⁸ The Perpetual Novena celebrated on every Wednesday was very popular with believers and this popularity has continued to this day.

7. – Coronations of the copies of the Roman icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help

A special form of venerating Mary is the crowning of the miraculous pictures or statues with papal crowns. In Poland seven pictures of Our Mother of Perpetual Help have received the papal crowns so far. The earliest coronation took place in the parish Church of St Martin in Poznań. It was on 11 October 1961. After six years, on 1 October 1967 the papal crowns were put on the icon in the Redemptorist Church of St Joseph in Toruń, in the district of Bielany. During his fourth visit to his Homeland, on 7 June 1991 in Włocławek, Saint John Paul II crowned the picture of Mary from the convent of Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Niedźwiady near Kalisz. In the district of Podgórze in Kraków, the icon placed in the main altarpiece in the Redemptorist Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help was crowned with the papal crowns on 26 June 1994. During his seventh visit to Poland, Pope John Paul II put the crowns on the icon from the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Jaworzno, Osiedle Stałe (14 June 1999) and from the basilica of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in his hometown Wadowice (16 June 1999). The last crowning was held in the cathedral of Saint Apostles Peter and Paul in Gliwice on 22 June 2014. The coronations revive the devotion to the Mother of God. Sanctuaries with the crowned icons of Mary create a specific “geography” of faith and Marian devotion. In such churches pilgrims “seek to meet the Mother of God in order to find, within the radius of the maternal

³⁸ S. GRUSZKA, *Dzieje kultu Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy...*, 60-62.

presence of her 'who believed,' a strengthening of their own faith."³⁹

In Poland the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help is flourishing and meeting spiritual needs of millions of believers. Copies of the Roman icon can be found almost in every church in Poland (frequently in the main altarpieces). Many churches bear the title of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. Looking at the latest history of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help one should mention with gratitude and appreciation the special merits of Fr Eugeniusz Karpiel, C.Ss.R., in spreading the devotion and copies of the miraculous icon.

SUMMARY

The article attempts to outline various forms of devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the Polish lands from the second half of the 19th century to this day. The author depicts the special role of the Polish Redemptorists, in particular their doyen and great worshipper of Mary the Servant of God Fr Bernard Łubieński, in propagating this devotion. He also analyses the historical conditions and development of the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help in writings, missionary services and the Perpetual Novena. Forms of fraternal life and Marian associations as well as numerous coronations of the icon in the Polish lands have also been described.

RÉSUMÉ

L'article tente de cerner les diverses formes de dévotion envers Notre-Dame du Perpétuel Secours en terre polonaise depuis la seconde moitié du XIXème siècle jusqu'à nos jours. L'auteur décrit le rôle spécial des Rédemptoristes polonais, en particulier de leur doyen et grand dévot de Marie Servante de Dieu, le Père Bernard Łubieński qui a propagé cette dévotion. Il analyse aussi les conditions historiques et le développement de la dévotion envers Notre-Dame du Perpétuel Secours par les écrits, les missions et la Neuvaine Perpétuelle. Sont aussi mentionnées les formes de vie fraternelle et les associations mariales ainsi que les nombreux couronnements de l'icône en terre polonaise.

³⁹ Saint John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, no. 28.