

## **„MAITRI” Movement in brief – the mission, goals and activities**

MAITRI Movement – full name: The Movement of Solidarity with the Poor of the Third World „MAITRI” remains a federation of ordinary people’s communities working together to provide a support to those living in very poor economic conditions of the developing countries.

Our movement was born at the end of the pontificate of Paul the Sixth. It has been then set up by a student Jacek Wójcik who stopped by the Missionaries of Charity Centre in Calcutta during his travels in India and decided to volunteer there, inspired by the journey of Mother Teresa and the work of her congregation.

The Movement relied on the encyclical in which the Pope Paul the Sixth called for a fair distribution of wealth and on examples such as the Jesuit father Beyzym, Jesuit - Czesław Białek, Pallottine - Adam Wiśniewski, and Warsaw doctor Halina Koperska. They show us the way.

The example of Mother Teresa appealed to us. We have sent parcels to her home in India over the years, thousands of tons of gifts. From her we learned the respect for the poor. She learned us love the poor. She infected us with the appeal: Together we can do something beautiful for God. Working at Nirmal Hriday in Calcutta we were getting to know her spirit. We accompanied Mother from her first in Poland.

The bond between Mother Teresa and the Pope John Paul II was giving us courage. He was looking for a meeting with people pushed on the margin. By traveling to poor countries he paid attention to human problems. Also in Białystok he asked us: who will take responsibility for the Third World? In the message for Lent he wrote that hunger is a huge drama.

You have to support the movements which carry relief to people at risk of starvation. In Wrocław he said - At this moment millions of our brothers and sisters are suffering from hunger. On each of us hangs a small part of responsibility for this state. Let us learn to share.

He also said: Africa, despite its poverty, does not draw empty hands to the world. The love of life, the sense of mutual aid, openness to transcendence are the noblest gifts offered to us by the earth fertile by sandy dust. He did not stop emotion – he was talking about the values of the poor. And he said that they also love. Catching him up was not easy. At the turn of the millennium he asked for forgiveness of debts of poor. Thanking for "Fides et Ratio" we gave him our icon of Christ the King of Friendship.

After the carnage in Rwanda we have started to rescue the children by adoption. This form of assistance was recommended by Pope in "Evangelium Vitae". In the chain of support participate adoptive parents and missionaries. Among them are lay people, nuns and monks. We were admiring their courage, attentiveness and the joy with which they devote themselves to this work.

We have proposed Father Marian Żelazek for the Nobel Prize. He was comparing sufferings of the lepers to his own ones in the concentration camp. He was organizing settlements called rehabilitation centers and employment which was providing self-sufficiency to the lepers. Many of these families got a pump as a gift from the Poland. The real breakthrough was a school integration for children from families of lepers and healthy.

Father Marian brought a new quality into the interreligious relations. Friendship with the high priest of a Hindu temple broke many a taboo. After his death, Polish Senate recognized him as a model.

The movement also supports life schools. The graduates get the tools. Movement Maitri supports African hospitals, health centers, building schools and feeding children.

After the death of Mother Teresa, we have chosen her to be the patron of the Movement. Her beatification was hardly made by the weak John Paul the second. The ceremony was attended by people from all over the world. We were thanking the pope for this celebration in Rome. Papal teaching did not stop with the departure of John Paul II. The pope Benedict XVI continued to talk about love, and we continued to listen and thank.

And the desire of John Paul II has come true - the victory of love. Because this is also our desire. As participants of the Maitri Movement of the Solidarity with the Poor, we came to thank John Paul II for the care of the poorest people in the world. We thank him for his encyclicals and letters on this matter. Thank you for his trip to poor countries. And for his speaking not only as an economic matter, but also for emphasizing human dignity.

The constitution of our movement says that **MAITRI Movement mission is expressed through the acts of love and care towards the poorest.** The members of the community respond to their obstacles, as they believe, by answering the God's call. They are inspired and led by the example of Mother Teresa and Saint Francis of Assisi but mainly of Jesus Christ.

The word "maitri" was adopted from Sanskrit – India's ancient language. Contemporary meaning is a brotherhood, friendship.

#### **The values we follow**

The values shared by our participants are derived from the Bible Gospels and are consistent with those outlined in our constitution. We believe that the "Maitri" grows through those who:

- limit their expenses and needs in everyday life and share with those living in very poor economic conditions of the developing world;
- respect the dignity of those they help and look for the ways of getting closer to them;
- define the help they offer as a gift of a pure heart;
- promote equality;
- increase awareness of the situation that people of Third World are in, through their actions, statements and the attitude towards life.

#### **Our statutory goals:**

- to bring an aid to the poorest people of the developing countries;
- to raise people's awareness about the struggles of the poorest and their rights to live in dignity;
- to look for the ways of connecting people from different economic backgrounds.

### **MAITRI Movement communities**

MAITRI movement consists of the local parish communities which became the base of its organisational structure. According to MAITRI Movement constitution, the local community follows and promotes the mission through an increase of society awareness of the current situation in developing countries and constant support to the poorest. The main goal is the promotion of MAITRI values and advocacy for people in need. There are already ten active parish communities in Poland in the following cities: Białystok, Bytom, Gdańsk, Inowrocław, Lublin, Poznań, Toruń, Warszawa and Wrocław. We also have local structures in the Czech Republic.

The Board of our Movement consists of persons responsible for the local parish communities who oversee and monitor their formation and operations. Chairman of the Board is

elected by its members and represents them with the church authorities. MAITRI Movement is also one of the founding members of the “Polish Council of Catholic Associations”.

### **Where did the name Maitri come from?**

*Jacek Wójcik is speaking:*

For the first time I found out about the famine in 1973 when I was preparing a church paper as a penance. I read the sentence spoken by people from Africa: “Take your tents, and bring your hearts closer.” It was directed to donors. I began to wonder how to give so that the gift could fulfill its role. Not only the fact of giving, but its way is important. In 1975 I took a tour to India. I went there unprepared, I did not understand the surroundings, which was culturally and religiously different. I did not have money. I was using the cheapest means of transport, I was staying in cheap hotels. Thanks to that I got to know not only monuments, but also alive India - simple people living in the slums. I will give only one example.

During my stay in Calcutta I became ill with the flu and a little son of an employee was ill too. The boy was sleeping in the yard on the concrete. I gave him my sleeping bag, I paid for the examination and medication. When I was leaving the place, his father gave me back the sleeping bag thanking. I will not forget his eyes full of gratitude. I saw the eyes of a man who loves.

Thanks to such a meeting, nobody can convince me that a religion predestines to the lack of love. I was working symbolically in centers run by missionaries. The house for the dying was established in the bedroom for pilgrims in the temple of Kali, the patroness of Calcutta. The temple is still active. I will not let myself be told that Hinduism predestines a man to the lack of tolerance.

Before getting back home, I got from my mother Teresa a list of drugs needed. In Poland no one was interested in helping. I invented naively that I would speak and distribute flyers, how to send a parcel to India. After my speech in a parish, I was called to pick up and send the medication myself. Then people (sisters, priests, bishops) started supporting me. After two years, a movement was created.

About the fact that we have the charisma, I learned after 15 years. There was a problem of a designation that would emphasize what is the most important, what is also present in those people. In the Department of Indology in Warsaw I asked about it the director Krzysztof Berski. He gave me the book "Understand India". The word maitri was described there. This word is not equivalent to our concept of love.

A strong confirmation of the rightness of this choice is the opinion of Father Marian Żelazek, who spent half a century in India. He said there could not be a more beautiful name. The choice was not only based on personal experience, it is based on the teaching of Pope John Paul II: the encyclicals, the teaching of the council and the activity of Mother Teresa. In the early years it was our compulsory reading.

The origin of the Movement was the result of the action of the Holy Spirit. I see this from the perspective of external and internal opposites. The internal opposite is the intrinsic pride in good action resulting from work for others. The Movement is threatened by depravity, charisma must be reminded, in order not to become an organization, in order to be a Movement of heart that understands what love is. The Mother Teresa said in order not to spoil the work. Now we have to find a word for Africa, understandable for most of its people. The matter is more difficult, there is no Sanskrit counterpart there. Let's look for God's love, let's look for it in other people. The point is to get closer to each other.

## Heart Adoption

The first idea of organizing an aid program for children, especially for orphans in the Third World in the form of personal patronage, was born at the end of 1995. Then the Gdańsk community of the "Maitri" Movement began to support orphans in Rwanda. From now on, structures are created that enable it to be organized. We already have a lot of experience behind us, but the program is still evolving. From October 1999, we started promoting help not only for orphans, but also for other children in equally difficult situations. The program has also been enriched with new possibilities. Initially, it only involved supporting the children and possibly helping them to learn in primary school. We are now also helping to save starving children in missionary feeding centers.

Fr. Stanisław Filipek, the superior of the Pallottine priests in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, who helped organize the action and at the beginning acted as an intermediary between us and the immediate caregivers of the orphans, wrote: "The idea of organizing The Heart Adoption is a good sign of the formation of personal solidarity. So far, collective aid has been organized. We know the needs of the orphans and the poor. In order for the Heart Adoption to provide spiritual and material help to orphans and helpers, new structures and properly prepared card indexes are needed. This requires time and the involvement of contact persons and the selection of orphans most in need. It is a big job. But this form of help can be very interesting and effective. The needs are great. Each of us can help those who need it so much. I would like to thank everyone who took an active part in this action".

A special feature of our program is the possibility of establishing personal contact with the supported child through correspondence. This enables mental and spiritual support for the child, gives them a sense of security and the awareness that they are not alone and that someone cares for them and their fate. The missionary sisters emphasize the great importance of this contact for children and the disappointment of those who do not get responses to their letters.

Looking for ways of getting closer to those we help is also an important goal of the "Maitri" Movement and the life principle of its participants. In this way, by giving, we receive, we enrich ourselves, getting to know the supported person, the conditions of their life, their country, culture, values... Saint John Paul II writes: "Merciful love in mutual relations between people never remains a one-sided act or process [...] We must constantly purify all our actions and intentions in which mercy is sometimes understood and practiced unilaterally: as a good done to others [...] If this two-sidedness, this reciprocity is missing, then [...] the conversion, the way of which Christ showed us through his word and example, up to the cross has not yet been fully accomplished" (John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*).

By participating in the Have a Heart Adoption programme, the adoptive parents voluntarily agree to pay the monthly fees which are spent on education, nutrition and medical care of the children they decided to sponsor. After a waiting period of about 3-6 months the adoptive parent receives a welcome pack. The pack includes the photo of the child, his/her story and further information on where the sponsored child lives. The adoptive parent will receive regular updates about the child and will be able to exchange letters with him/her. We provide information, photos and correspondence from the mission as well as correspondence from donors to orphans. It occurs usually twice a year, the letters being translated by our volunteers.

If a donor doesn't wish to take part in the long-term sponsorship, he/she can still help by making a one-time donation for one of our projects accompanying the Heart Adoption, for example purchase of medicines etc.

## **The commitment period**

Assigning a donor a specific child and trying to establish personal contact with him or her only makes sense in the event of a longer involvement. Of course, no one can predict what will happen in the future. If someone could not continue the help (e.g. due to job loss, illness, death or other serious random events), we will have to look for another donor. However, if someone foresees problems (e.g. financial), he can take care of it himself and find someone who will jointly cover the costs of maintaining the child or assume this obligation. Changing the donor means breaking contact with the child. If someone wants to get involved for a shorter period of time (up to 1 year), it is also possible, but anonymously.

The ideal is to keep a child until they reach the age of majority (18 years old), to enable them to acquire even minimal education and a profession, so that they can take care of their future on their own. Long-term commitment enables, apart from material help, also getting closer to the child, as far as possible at a distance.

## **What is the money used for?**

All the donations are sent to Catholic missionary centers (mostly Polish) that cooperate with us. The first donations from the donors of "Heart Adoption" go to the General Fund "Heart Adoption". This is due to the fact that by receiving a new list of children from the sisters (priests), we do not have all the parents for them yet, and we want to finance their education and other needs immediately after receiving such a list.

After receiving the photo, the donor can be sure that his money will go to the specific child in the photo. The real administrative costs - thanks to the involvement of many volunteers - are lower than the monthly contributions of 1 € paid by the donors. We allocate the unused portion to the General Heart Adoption Fund, from which we support children for whom we have not yet found parents, and additional mission projects sent in by the sisters; as in the case of receiving a higher payment than it results from the euro exchange rate (we are very grateful for these higher payments, because thanks to them we can avoid problems with liquidity and transferring money to supported children).

Children receive support partially or entirely in kind (e.g. food, school supplies, school fees, home furnishings, etc.), some of the cash is sometimes transferred to their current caregivers. Donations save many children from hunger, disease, poverty and even death, enables them to live in dignity and get even a minimal education. It is a great reward for all of us. We believe that it will also be a great joy for our donors. From time to time missionaries send us accounts. We publish more interesting ones in our magazine "We and the Third World".

We ask the adoption parents not send money for gifts for a specific child, even if requested in a letter or for any specific purposes that have not been agreed with us. Everything the children need is provided on site. Neither should be preferred - it awakens jealousy. Instead, the adoptive parent can make additional donations for starving children relief or for urgent needs through our relief programs.

## **Spirituality**

All participants of our Movement unite spiritually at 12:00 and 22:00, reciting the prayers of our community. We invite all our associates and donors to join us. Our missionaries are also

spiritually united with us by praying and celebrating Holy Masses for us. Orphans and other people who use our help also pray for the donors.

## **Prayers**

### **Prayer of Blessed Paul VI**

Make us worthy, Lord, to serve our fellow men  
throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger.

Give them through our hands this day their daily bread,  
and by our understanding love, give peace and joy.

### **Franciscan prayer**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is discord, union;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is error, truth;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console:  
To be understood, as to understand;  
To be loved, as to love:  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
And it is in dying that we are born to  
eternal life. Through Christ, our Lord.

### **Prayer of Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman**

Dear Jesus, help me to spread Your fragrance everywhere I go.  
Flood my soul with Your spirit and life.  
Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly,  
That my life may only be a radiance of Yours.

Shine through me, and be so in me  
That every soul I come in contact with  
May feel Your presence in my soul.  
Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus!

Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as You shine,  
So to shine as to be a light to others;  
The light, O Jesus will be all from You; none of it will be mine;

It will be you, shining on others through me.

Let me thus praise You the way You love best, by shining on those around me.  
Let me preach You without preaching, not by words but by my example,  
By the catching force of the sympathetic influence of what I do,  
The evident fullness of the love my heart bears to You.

Amen.