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## **LEADING POLISH MISSIONARY JOURNALS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, THEIR FUNCTIONING, MESSAGE AND REALIZATION OF PRESS FUNCTIONS**

In March 2020, the state of epidemic threat was announced in Poland. The lockdowns, limited pastoral opportunities and the crisis of the institutional church undoubtedly had an impact on the functioning of Christian media, including missionary media. The research carried out showed that, despite declines in circulation, leading missionary periodicals responded quickly to the epidemic crisis. It reported on ecclesiastical involvement during that period in ad gentes missionary countries, and sought to involve readers in the aid. The leading missionary journals carried out all the functions of the press during that period, although they focused primarily on information, advertising, fundraising and organisational functions. Nevertheless, there has been a noticeable decline in missionary journalism (in circulation numbers, in volume, for example), in favour of missionary online media, which are used for rapid fundraising. There is a need to change and centralise missionary journals and to focus them on a different audience than the Internet users.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the Polish press system, the missionary press related to the Catholic Church appeared in the second half of the 19th century, which

was largely due to the political situation and Poland missing from the world map (1772-1918). At that time, the possibilities of publishing a Polish-language press were limited to a different extent, depending on the partitioning power (Germany, Russia, Austria). The first missionary periodicals published worldwide were „Les Annales de la Propagation de la Foi” and „Les Missions Catholiques”, which had been published since 1822,<sup>1</sup> and a few years later „Die Katholischen Missionen” was published.<sup>2</sup> The first mission journal in Poland was „Rocznik Towarzystwa do Rozszerzania Wiary na Całej Kuli Ziemskiej” (Yearbooks of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith over the Whole Sphere of the Earth), published in Poznań between 1840 and 1842 (in 1843-1844 with an adjective „Catholic” along with the word „Faith”). However, at the time of the partitions it was difficult to maintain the publication and thereafter it changed its title and place of publication several times.

From the restoration of independence in 1918 until the outbreak of the Second World War, 38 titles of missionary periodicals were published in the country, although the largest number were published in 1935 and 1937 (25 titles in each year). They generally had small circulations and the main publishing centres were Warsaw, Lviv, Poznań, Kraków, Katowice, Vilnius and Łódź.<sup>3</sup> They quickly grew into an element of missionary animation in the broadest sense, which could reach, because of their mass appeal, a large part of the population. The onset of the Second World War in September 1939 led to the suspension of the publication of Catholic periodicals, including missionary ones, in the country. The post-war period and the estab-

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<sup>1</sup> See A. Kaleta, *Polskie katolickie czasopiśmiennictwo misyjne w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Kalisz 2001, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> See R. Malek, *Stulecie czasopisma „Die Katholischen Missionen”*, CT (44) 1975, pp. 189-195.

<sup>3</sup> See M. Wrzos, *Polskie czasopiśmiennictwo misyjne po II wojnie światowej. Studium misjologiczno-prasoznawcze*, Poznań 2013, pp. 34-39; A. Kaleta, pp. 11-278, extensively describes this period of Polish missionary periodicals in his research. M. Wrzos, *Główne idee teologiczne, historia i funkcje obłackiego czasopiśmiennictwa misyjnego w Polsce (1926-2016)*, Poznań 2016, pp. 13-50.

lishment of the People's Republic of Poland, dependent on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as well as the domination of practical socialism, were not conducive to their restoration. Permission from the authorities to publish missionary magazines was obtained in the 1980s. After 1983 (it was then that permission was given to officially print the magazines, but on their own paper), 35 missionary titles were published on the domestic missionary press market. The largest circulation and the largest number of titles were published in the 1990s. Those included popularising, popular science and scientific periodicals, often reaching one-off circulations of more than 50,000 copies.<sup>4</sup> After 2000, during the two decades before the pandemic, there was a noticeable publishing crisis. Publishers' circulations declined by around 15 to 40 per cent, and nine titles ceased or suspended publication (including seven in 2015-20). This seems to have been influenced by: a decline in the readership of the printed press in Poland and the change in media technology from analogue to digital; a graphic design that seems not always interesting; content that is inadequate for the target audience; a drop in the number of people who regularly maintain contact with the Church; an increase in production costs with a declining circulation and increasing economic unprofitability.<sup>5</sup> Currently, the leading missionary periodicals in Poland include the following: „Misje Dzisiaj” (publisher: Pontifical Missionary Works), „Misje Salezjańskie” (the Society of Saint Francis de Sales – the Salesians of Don Bosco), „Misjonarz” (the Society of the Divine Word – Verbites), „Misjonarze Kombonianie” (the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus – Combonians) and „Misyjne Drogi” (the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate – the Oblates).

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<sup>4</sup> See M. Wrzos, *Polskie czasopiśmiennictwo misyjne po II wojnie światowej*, pp. 43-462. The author researches post-war missionary journalism.

<sup>5</sup> See M. Wrzos, *Od czasopism do Web 3.0. Polskie media misyjne po Vaticanum Secundum. Część pierwsza: Rozwój środków społecznego przekazu oraz nauczanie Kościoła na ich temat w polskim czasopiśmiennictwie misyjnym*, in: „Nurt SVD” 2018, 2 (144), pp. 85-108.

These titles have the highest circulation, recognition and reach among readers.

The first outbreak of the acute infectious respiratory disease Covid-19 caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus was reported in Poland on 4 March 2020 in Zielona Góra. In the period from 14-20 March, a state of epidemic emergency was in force in Poland, and from 20 March an epidemic state was introduced, which is still in force today.<sup>6</sup> The specifics of religious participation changed during that time, with a large proportion of believers participating online. The temporal research area are the years 2020-2021 and the beginning of 2022.

There seems to be a need for a missiological-praxiological study of the leading missionary periodicals in Poland. The first area of research undertaken will be to examine the current state of missionary periodicals, including an analysis of the publishing functions they perform, which include: informational and journalistic; promoting the mission and the missionary idea; catechetical and formative; newly evangelising and evangelising; fund-raising; awakening missionary vocations; organisational; opinion-forming and attitude-forming,<sup>7</sup> which will at the same time allow investigating, among other things, what topics were addressed in the pages of the periodicals at the time and in what ways and to what actions readers were persuaded. The second area of research will be the pastoral perspectives of a leading missionary journal, in view of changing circulation, the shift of readers to the use of missionary media communicating

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<sup>6</sup> The greatest pandemic restrictions for churches subtracted the days from 25 March to 10 April 2020, when only five worshippers at a time, not including the priest and liturgical service, could attend a church service: *Ordinance of the Minister of Health amending the Ordinance on the declaration of a state of epidemic in the territory of the Republic of Poland*, of 24 March 2020, Journal of Laws item 522.

<sup>7</sup> On the functions of missionary periodicals, M. Wrzos wrote more extensively in *Polskie czasopiśmiennictwo...*, pp. 511-528. The same author described the functions of Polish missionary media communicating via the Internet in *Media misyjne media komunikujące przez Internet. Studium misjologiczno-prasoznawcze*, Warsaw 2021, pp. 327-267.

via the internet, the increasing cost of publishing, and the decreasing number of those who practice and are committed to the church.

The fulfilment of publishing functions, the topics undertaken and the circulation of the leading missionary magazines seem to have been influenced by the changes in the religiosity of Polish society that have taken place during this period. Poles have become the most secularised society in Europe, which is particularly evident among the young. The decline in participation in religious practices and the smallest number of those positively assessing the activities of the Church in the history of the surveys conducted result from a decline in the habit of attending Sunday liturgies as a result of restrictions. But it is also a consequence of the disclosure of sexual offences committed against minors and dependents by the clergy in Poland during this period, and of the responses of the bishops, ten of whom were punished by the Holy See, as well as presumably others.<sup>8</sup>

Prior to the research, the following research hypotheses and theses were formulated, which then, in the course of the research, will be attempted to verify (hypotheses) or confirm (theses).

- Thesis 1. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the leading mission journals performed the press functions for which they were established.
- Thesis 2. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the leading missionary journals reported on the pandemic situation in the mission areas and publicised the social campaigns that were being conducted.
- Hypothesis 1. There is a deepening crisis of missionary periodicals in favour of missionary online communication media. It

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<sup>8</sup> Certified research by the Centre for Public Opinion Research: *Religiosity of Poles in the last 20 years*, dated: 8 June 2020; *Impact of the pandemic on Poles' religiosity*, dated: 25 June 2020; *Assessments of the performance of the parliament, the president, the Constitutional Court, the police and the Church*, dated: 17 December 2020; *Assessments of the performance of parliament, the president, the Constitutional Court, the police and the Church*, from: 20 January 2021; *Religiousness of young people vs. the general population*, dated: 24 November 2021; *Local parish – its perceptions and functions*, dated: 13 January 2022.

seems necessary to adapt the different contents to the two distinct target (audience) groups.

- Hypothesis 2. There is a need for change and centralisation in the missionary journalism market.

For the purposes of the study, a three-stage research methodology will be used.<sup>9</sup> Its first element is the search for and compilation of research sources, and the second is the interpretation of their results in the light of Revelation, present in Sacred Scripture, attested by Tradition and the Church's Teaching Office, and the derivation of conclusions and pastoral postulates. The first stage of this study will be extended by research methods known from media studies and the social sciences (content analysis, publisher survey). The present study will be divided into the following research stages: 1. Leading missionary periodicals during the pandemic; 2. The pandemic in the pages of leading missionary periodicals; 3. The implementation of press functions by leading missionary periodicals (2020-2022); 4. Conclusions and pastoral recommendations.

## 1. LEADING MISSIONARY PERIODICALS DURING THE PANDEMIC

The leading mission journals did not stop their press activities during the pandemic. For the purposes of the research, the following titles were analysed: „Misje Dzisiaj” (publisher: Pontifical Missionary Works), „Misje Salezjańskie” (the Society of Saint Francis de Sales – the Salesians of Don Bosco), „Misjonarz” (the Society of the Divine Word – Verbites), „Misjonarze Kombonianie” (the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus – Combonians) and „Misyjne Drogi” (the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate – the Oblates), as those with the largest reach and circulation. In order to learn more about

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<sup>9</sup> See A. Adamski, G. Łęcicki, *Teologia mediów i komunikacji – na styku nauk o mediach oraz nauk teologicznych*, in: „Studia Medioznawcze” 2 (2016), pp. 11-24 and L. Mazzei, *Chiesa e comunicazione. I mass media della Santa Sede*, Roma 1997.

their activities at this time, a questionnaire<sup>10</sup> was sent to the editors-in-chief, to which all replied.

„Misje Dzisiaj” is a bimonthly magazine published since 1997 by the Pontifical Missionary Works (hereafter PMW) in Warsaw; its publication was preceded by the bulletin „Papieskie Intencje Misyjne” (1980-1996). Generally, its editors-in-chief are the national directors of the PMW – currently missiologist Rev. Maciej Będziński, PhD. In terms of both content and graphics, it is one of the best missionary magazines in the country. Thanks to the publisher, missionary activity is described in its pages not only of one diocese, order or religious congregation, but of various missionaries, most often Poles. The articles publish content on the biblical foundations of missionary activity, the history and development of: missions, individual missions, and the figures of prominent missionaries. There is content related to the justification and apologetics of missionary activity, dealing with the Trinitarian and pneumatological aspects of mission, ecumenical cooperation in missions, the phenomenon of God in religions, as well as interreligious dialogue. A significant part is devoted to missiographical messages, as well as current information related to the publisher’s legal person, campaigns and projects. During the pandemic, the magazine’s circulation did not change and amounted to 14,500. The journal came directly to the parishes as formation material. There were no orders for the press for various festivals or missionary events. During the first lockdown the editorial team worked remotely, then hybrid, and the work of the sick was shared with the other members of the editorial team. Readers did not

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<sup>10</sup> The survey consisted of the following questions: 1. Did the circulation of the journal change during the pandemic, if so, to what extent (number)?; 2. Did the way the journal was distributed change during the pandemic (postal subscription, electronic subscription, parish animation and other)?; 3. Did the way you worked in the editorial office change during the pandemic, what did it look like (stationary, online, hybrid, or did it change depending on the restrictions)?; 4. How did the way you contacted your readers change (stationary, letter, email, other forms of communication)?; 5. Finally, what do you think are the prospects for publishing work in the future?

turn up at the editorial office and were contacted by emails and letters. A chat room became available in the online shop. During the pandemic, due to the change of national director and his term of office coming to an end, Fr Tomasz Atlas, PhD, ceased to be editor-in-chief as of the 3/2021 issue. As of 2022, the volume of the magazine was increased by four pages, to 48.

„Misje Salezjańskie” is a bimonthly magazine published since 1987 in Warsaw by the Salesian Mission Centre (hereafter SMC). Its editor-in-chief is the director of the SMC as a rule, at present, i.e. Jacek Zdzieborski, SDB. In terms of circulation, it is the largest missionary magazine in the country. It features a broad panorama of Salesian missionary activity, carried out above all by Polish Salesians and Polish Salesian Sisters. It documents, in a sense, the contribution of the Polish Salesian missionaries to the missionary work of the universal Church. The magazine widely presents the activities of the Don Bosco International Voluntary Service with a great deal of coverage of the dynamic development of aid programmes. There are not many missiological articles, but the idea of helping the missions and missionaries through spiritual and material support and volunteer trips to the missions is emphasised. The magazine is a significant tool for systematic missionary animation.<sup>11</sup> During the period under study, its circulation varied between 20,000 and 34,500 copies – depending on the epidemic situation – and decreased. During the pandemic, the circulation of the magazine distributed by e-mail in pdf format increased to reach 10,000. Its recipients are contributors to Salesian missions (distribution in exchange for missionary donations). Initially, the editorial team switched to remote work but has returned to stationary work. In epidemically justified cases they work remotely. Contact with its readers (contributors) is maintained by telephone, e-mail and snail mail. The print version of the periodical is maintained, but there will be an emphasis on increasing the importance of the e-version.

„Misjonarz” is a monthly magazine published since 1983. The editorial office is based in Warsaw, and the publisher in Pieniężno

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<sup>11</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 207-232.



(Missionary Secretariat of the Polish Province of the Divine Word Missionaries – Verbites). The magazine separated from „Verbinum”, which was not a missionary periodical, but a bulletin of the congregation dealing with its internal problems (since 1968). The editor-in-chief is Lidia Popielewicz. The periodical contains articles on the history and development of the Church, the congregation, individual missions and the biblical basis of missionary activity. There are articles on the justification of missionary activity, apology, analysis of church documents, especially missionary documents. Other issues addressed are interreligious dialogue, ecumenical cooperation in missions and for missions. Inculturation or missiographical content is also present. The journal is edited in a communicative language. Most of the content is concerned with the Divine Word missionaries.<sup>12</sup> During the pandemic, the circulation has not decreased much and averages 26,000. It is distributed to subscribers, missionary parents and SVD contributors. One person in the editorial office works stationary, while the others work remotely, they sometimes meet. The editors are in contact with readers by phone, email and letter. No changes in the functioning of the editorial office are expected in the near future.

„Misjonarze Kombonianie” is another journal that was surveyed. It is a bimonthly magazine published since 1993 in Krakow by the Missionaries of the Combonian Heart of Jesus, known as the Combonians. At the beginning of their activities, many of the missionary studies were reprints of foreign authors and, accordingly, the topics covered were not found in other journals. From year to year, the number of in-house authors has increased. Its editor-in-chief is Bro. Tomasz Basiński MCCJ. The journal boasts a professional composition.<sup>13</sup> During the pandemic, the circulation decreased from 4,000 to 3,500. The journal was mainly sent to subscribers. It was not possible to conduct missionary animation with its help in parishes. At the beginning of the pandemic, the editorial staff worked remotely for a month and then stationary. Associates of the title both before and during the pan-

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<sup>12</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 232-288.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 396-418.

demic worked remotely. The pandemic and its restrictions did not affect the communication with readers, as it is by phone and email, not face-to-face. The volume of the magazine has been reduced from 36 to 32 pages. No changes are expected in the near future.

„Misyjne Drogi” is a bimonthly journal published since 1983 in Poznań by the Polish Province of the Missionaries Oblates of Mary Immaculate (Oblate missionaries). Compared to other titles, the magazine is distinguished by its volume of 72 pages and the publication of a children’s insert „Misyjne Dróżki Dreptaka Nózki” from 2014. Its editor-in-chief is missiologist Marcin Wrzos OMI, PhD. The journal includes texts on the description and development of the universal Church, missions, congregations, individual missions, the biblical basis of missionary activity and missionary translations of Scripture. The authors deal with the justification of missionary activity, apologetics, religious studies and intercultural, ecumenical and religious dialogue, as well as inculturation. The journal offers missiographical content.<sup>14</sup> During the pandemic, the magazine’s circulation decreased and ranged from 17,000-19,000, depending on the need. The magazine is distributed to subscribers, missionary parents and Oblate contributors, as well as through kiosk sales. During the first lockdown, the editorial team was on remote work, then hybrid. The mode of work depended on the pandemic situation of individual staff members and their families, a situation regulated on an ongoing basis. Readers did not show up at the editorial office at first, and kept in touch via phone calls, emails, social media, apps and letters. Subscriptions to the magazine online, as well as the editorial-run portal [misyjne.pl](http://misyjne.pl) have become increasingly popular.

## **2. THE PANDEMIC IN THE PAGES OF LEADING MISSIONARY PERIODICALS**

The first cases of the acute infectious respiratory disease Covid-19 caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus appeared in Poland in early March

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<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 351-395.

2020. Leading missionary magazines published the first mentions of the virus and the pandemic in the following editions „Misje Dzisiaj” (3/2020 – first single mention in a feature, 4/2020 – subsequent mentions<sup>15</sup>), “Misje Salezjańskie” first single mention in an editorial, 3/2020 – subsequent single mentions<sup>16</sup>), “Misjonarz” (5/2020 – first single mention in the news, 6/2020 – several mentions<sup>17</sup>), “Misjonarze Kombonianie” (3/2020 – first mentions, 4/2020 – subsequent mentions<sup>18</sup>) and “Misyjne Drogi” (2/2020 – first mentions, 3/2020 – subsequent mentions<sup>19</sup>). They overlapped the months of their publication for

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<sup>15</sup> See A. Ilczuk, *Tajemnica wiary*, in: „Misje Dzisiaj” 3 (231) 2020, p. 41; M. Krystecka, L. Bovii, *Na misyjnych drogach*, *ibid*, 4 (231), 2020; [No author], *Apel papieża Franciszka*, *ibid*, p. 27; M. Czajkowski, *Archidiecezja Gdańska*, *ibid*, pp. 30-31; M. Pawłowski, *Misja przez Serce*, *ibid*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>16</sup> See J. Zdzieborowski, *jak być chrześcijaninem?*, in: „Misje Salezjańskie” 2 (194) 2020, p. 3; J. Zdzieborowski, *Chrystus nasza nadzieją*, *ibid* 3 (195) 2020, p. 3; [No author], *15% etiopskich dzieci*, *ibid*, p. 8; H. Kamińska, *Etiopskie zapiski*, *ibid*, pp. 6-13; G. Kayobera, *Dzięki wam jestem tym, kim jestem*, *ibid*, pp. 14-17; B. Rusin, *Dominik Savio. Święty w masce ochronnej*, *ibid*, pp. 26-29; [No author], *Wielki salezjanin odchodzi z powodu koronawirusa*, *ibid*, p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> See W. Madziar, *Spotkanie z panią DīngLī*, in: „Misjonarz” 5 (455) 2020, pp. 12-13; [No author], *Obrazy na misje*, *ibid* 6 (456) 2020, p. 14; [No author], *Apel Jasnogórski on-line z rodziną arnoldową*, *ibid*; W. Madziar, *Zmiana czasu*, *ibid*, pp. 18-19; Z. Szablowski, *Przestawienie kursu na Boga*, *ibid*, pp. 20-21; A. Mochalski, *Wyjątkowy czas*, *ibid*, pp. 22-23; M. Madej, *Papua Nowa Gwinea*, *ibid*, p. 27.

<sup>18</sup> See [No author], *Południowe Kiwu zmagają się z powodziami*, in: „Misjonarze Kombonianie” 3 (158) 2020, p. 4; A. Marek, *Działalność misyjna w czasach epidemii*, *ibid*, p. 5; E. Gwóźdź, *Edukacja dla wszystkich*, *ibid*, p. 29; E. Gwóźdź, *Misjonarka w czasach zarazy*, *ibid*, p. 34; [No author], *Nowe przypadki eboli*, *ibid* 4 (159) 2020, p. 4; [No author], *Kościół pomaga podczas pandemii*, *ibid*; [No author], *Z ubogimi też trzeba się liczyć*, *ibid*, p. 5; [No author], *Słowa papieża Franciszka dla Polaków*, *ibid*; T. Marek, *Nierówne szanse młodzieży*, *ibid*, pp. 16-20; A. Zagaja, *Gotowi na wszystko*, *ibid*, pp. 22-23; E. Gwóźdź, *Czy wszyscy mogą żyć długo i w zdrowiu?*, *ibid*, p. 29; P. Opióła, *Stałem się wszystkim dla wszystkich*, *ibid*, p. 30.

<sup>19</sup> See [No author], *Trwa walka z koronawirusem*, in: „Misyjne Drogi” 2 (200) 2020, p. 4; M. Wrzos, *Papież misjonarz*, *ibid* 3 (201) 2020, p. 2; [No author], *Papież na pustym placu św. Piotra: przyjmijmy Boga, aby przyjąć nadzieję*, *ibid*, p. 5; [No author], *Wirtualnemedi.pl: Duży wzrost oglądalności mszy św. w telewizji*, *ibid*,

the months of May-June and, due to the cyclical nature of the editions, seem to have appeared quickly. „Misje Salezjańskie” and „Misyjne Drogi” posted the first mentions slightly earlier.

Two editors have decided on an issue theme on the virus and pandemic in missions. These are chronologically: the Oblate „Misyjne Drogi” in issue 4/2020 entitled „Missions in the time of the coronavirus,”<sup>20</sup> „Misje Dzisiaj” published by PMW in issue 6/2020 entitled „Eucharist and missions during the pandemic<sup>21</sup>” and again „Misyjne Drogi” in issue 5/2021 entitled „They are going to help. Covid-19 in the missions.”<sup>22</sup>

A quantitative analysis of mentions of the pandemic and the coronavirus shows that each issue of the mission journals returned to this topic and presented, usually in missiographical texts, current information and journalistic content from the life of the mission during that period. Those issues were covered ( from issue 5/2020 onwards, not including thematic issues) by: „Misje Dzisiaj” (from 6 to 23 times), „Misje Salezjańskie” (from 2 to 22 times), „Misjonarz” (from 4 to 37 times), „Misjonarze Kombonianie” (from 2 to 19 times) and „Misyjne Drogi” (from 20 to 65 times). „Misje Salezjańskie” and „Misjonarze Kombonianie” referred to the virus and the pandemic the least.

The periodicals also featured information on social campaigns, actions aimed at organising aid, both spiritual and material (financial, in kind) for those particularly affected by the disease and those in poverty, which was one of its consequences in missionary countries. These actions were most widely reported in the „Misje Salezjańskie” and „Misyjne Drogi” from the very first editions on coronavirus, i.e. 2-3-4/2020. These were usually single actions or were reported

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p. 6; [No author], *Spowiedź drivethru*, *ibid*; [No author], *Strona swietawdomu.pl pomogła przeżyć Wielkanoc w czasie epidemii*, *ibid*, p. 10; [No author], *Miłosierdzie w czasach zarazy*, *ibid*, p. 11; M. Józwiak, *Kościół w kwarantannie*, *ibid*, p. 12; H. Marciniak, *Walczymy z koronawirusem*, *ibid*, p. 61; M. Hamny, „*Merci*” lub „*thankyou*”, *ibid*, p. 66.

<sup>20</sup> See „Misyjne Drogi” 4 (202) 2020, pp. 1-76.

<sup>21</sup> See „Misje Dzisiaj” 6 (234) 2020, pp. 1-44.

<sup>22</sup> See „Misyjne Drogi” 5 (209) 2021, pp. 1-76.

in inserted aid forms.<sup>23</sup> It is noteworthy that much more widely all editors promoted actions in the online communication media: portals, websites, social media. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the aid collected there is, in principle, immediate support.<sup>24</sup>

### **3. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PRESS FUNCTIONS BY LEADING MISSIONARY PERIODICALS (2020-2022)**

The informational and journalistic functions are one of the reasons why the press exists. The realisation of this function is carried out by publishing articles both on history and missiographics from the present of the mission, such as a description of the work of the missionary or the life of the local and universal Church, as well as its teaching. During the period under study, the missionary media reported extensively on the current activities and situation of the missionary Church, individual missions and missionaries, in the context of the ongoing pandemic. A conspicuous drawback in some mission media is the reduction of the scope of articles most often to the missions run by the publisher. Such an action detracts from their universal character. The missionary work shown thus becomes less universal. Reliable information and missionary journalism result in a deeper realisation of the other functions of the press, such as mission advocacy.

The function of promoting mission and missionary ideas is one of the elements that characterise missionary media. Missions, as a platform for broader evangelistic, as well as charitable and social activities, are widely positively perceived by the public. They should therefore be promoted not only to those associated with the Church, but also to those who are religiously indifferent. This function is

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<sup>23</sup> See „Misje Salezjańskie” 2 (194) 2020, pp. 1- 32; Ibid 3 (195) 2020; „Misyjne Drogi” 2 (200) 2020, pp. 1-76; Ibid 3 (201) 2020, pp. 1-76.

<sup>24</sup> See <https://www.missio.org.pl>; <https://www.misjesalezjanie.pl>; <https://www.misjonarz.pl>; <https://www.kombonianie.pl>; <https://www.misyjne.pl> and their social media.

not performed properly. The recipients of the missionary press are usually those involved in the Church's missions, and this function is therefore fulfilled by strengthening their involvement.

A catechetical and formative, newly evangelising and evangelising function is also clearly present in the missionary media, implemented in the ongoing work of the outlined media. Because the periodicals are intended for those involved, through press activity, not only in the pandemic period, it primarily serves as a formation aid for believers. Only one title, „Misyjne Drogi”, is available for sale openly and therefore there is an opportunity to reach out to those not involved in the Ecclesia with this content. Another possibility is for the magazine to be passed on by the person who receives it.

The collection of material resources is another function that was at the heart of the idea of creating the missionary media titles analysed. It seems that, during the pandemic, information about actions, social campaigns related to missions was present from the very beginning in all the titles, most notably in „Misje Salezjańskie” and in „Misyjne Drogi”.

All missionary media also perform the function of awakening missionary vocations, both long and short term, but most often this remains limited to the activities carried out by their publisher. It seems that reporting on the commitment of missionaries to evangelisation (also through short-term trips, e.g. medical trips), also expressed through human promotion activities (e.g. aid to the poor, education, health) during the pandemic, can help to fulfil this function.

The organisational function is also represented in missionary journalism. It has become the aim of the publishers to organise individuals in mission-formed groups and communities, e.g. in communities of various kinds of mission friends. In the journals such individuals were invited to become involved. At the time of the pandemic, readers were invited to such communities, as through them a wider outreach to people in missionary countries is possible.

The realisation of the opinion-forming and attitude-forming function in missionary magazines is present by creating a positive image of the Church and by communicating its missionary and charitable

commitment. This is usually done by publishing positively oriented missiographical material, which was also the case during the pandemic period. It was expressed through articles showing the commitment of the missionaries to prevention and to helping those suffering from Covid-19 or those who were starving.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS AND PASTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results of the ongoing study are related to the derivation of conclusions and pastoral postulates that are worth implementing in missionary periodicals.

- The missionary periodicals kept up to date on the pandemic situation in mission countries, some of them monetising information for material and spiritual assistance to those in need in the missions. Some editors ran campaigns in the online communication media rather than in paper.
- During the pandemic, despite a fluctuation in the circulation, a reduction of a further 5% can be identified. The exception is one title that is compulsorily distributed to parishes.
- Missionary magazines are involved, although they could contribute to a greater extent, in building a positive image of the Church, which seems to be very much needed today. Missionary news, especially those related to the broader work of human promotion during a pandemic, should be used in ecclesial media coverage as building a positive image of the Church. It is necessary to show the universality of the Ecclesia.
- There seems to be a need to create a platform for cooperation and an evangelisation-media strategy of the missionary media. There is a need for cooperation (formation, training, information) for leading missionary magazines. It is worth making use of the existing structures of the Polish Episcopal Commission on Missions and the National Missionary Council.
- Showing the universality of the Church seems necessary in view of the atomisation of the missionary media, the publication

of content, including missiographical content, related to the legal person of the media broadcaster, the acquisition of spiritual and material goods for their benefit – it is worthwhile that they are complemented by content showing the universality of the Church's missionary activity.

- An individual evangelisation-media strategy needs to be developed for each missionary media centre, so that journals and media communicating via the Internet are complementary to each other.
- It seems that, in order to survive on the publishing market, a solution may be to publish 2-3-4 leading titles of missionary magazines in the future, which will add inserts to the main part of the magazine of a given religious jurisdiction or diocese that finds it unprofitable to publish one of its titles. Atomisation and labile publishing will continue to exacerbate negative publishing trends.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research has confirmed the need for missionary periodicals on the Polish press market, which have specific tasks and functions to perform. Declining circulation should lead to some consolidation of press titles and to cooperation and raising the standard of individual titles. The period of the pandemic proved that the leading Polish missionary periodicals react quickly to the crisis situation, provide reliable and wide-ranging information about it, and in some titles this translates into an invitation to readers to commit themselves spiritually and materially to specific needs. From the course of the analyses carried out, we can verify the hypotheses or confirm the theses posed before the research began.

Thesis 1. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the leading missionary journals carried out the press functions for which they were established – confirmed, although mainly in terms of information-publicity, fundraising and organising functions.

Thesis 2. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the leading missionary magazines reported on the pandemic situation in mission areas and



publicised the social campaigns that were being conducted – confirmed, although some titles more than others.

Hypothesis 1. There is a deepening crisis of missionary journalism, in favour of missionary media communicating via the internet. It seems necessary to adapt different content to the two distinct target groups (audiences) – verified positively.

Hypothesis 2. There is a need for change and centralisation on the market of missionary journalism – verified positively.

**Key words:** pandemic, Covid-19, missions, missionary media, missionary journals, mission aid

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