



Розділ II. ІСТОРИКО-ФІЛОСОФСЬКІ АСПЕКТИ ПЕДАГОГІЧНИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ

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Leszek Aftyka,

Katolícka univerzita v Ružomberku
(Ružomberok, Slovakia)

Leszek Aftyka,

Catholic University in Ružomberok,
Ružomberok, Slovakia)
aftyleks@gmail.com

CHARITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN MEDIEVAL POLAND

Abstract. Charity in the Christian tradition is a voluntary form of care and help, which consists in material support provided by wealthy people to the weak, poor and helpless.

The article discusses the most important form so institutional assistance provided by clergy, religious or deacons, confraternities and corporations - guilds. In the Middle Ages, the greatest social problems were poverty, begging and vagrancy. The actual guardian of the poor was the bishop, where he was obliged to collect funds "provided by the faithful members during the monthly services, from the Sunday collection and imposed penitential penalties. All lay people who performed this task by giving alms to the needy were obliged to provide basic help to their neighbours.

Very important institutions that helped the needy were monasteries, especially those that had their own agricultural economy. Their duties included providing a one-off accommodation and a modest meal for travelers. The monks regularly supported local poor people, often playing the role of seasonal employers, e.g. during the harvest season.

Various fraternities and corporations – guilds were created in medieval cities. From their members they required observance of moral principles and the provision of Christian love to their fellow men. From the collected contributions, as well as from fines for breaking corporate rules or privileges, a fund for charity was created. These organizations were created primarily by craftsmen. One of the most important goals was to care for old and sick members, as well as their decent burial. Some corporations had their own hospitals and shelters.

Keywords: charity, Middle Ages, church.

БЛАГОДІЙНІСТЬ КАТОЛИЦЬКОЇ ЦЕРКВИ В СЕРЕДНЬОВІЧНІЙ ПОЛЬЩІ

Анотація. Милосердя в християнській традиції є добровільною формою догляду і допомоги, яка полягає в матеріальній підтримці заможних людей слабким, бідним і безпорадним.

У статті обговорюється найважливіша форма інституційної допомоги, яку надають духовенство, релігійні організації, братства і корпорації – гільдії. У середні віки найбільшими соціальними проблемами були бідність, жебрацтво і бродяжництво. Фактичним опікуном бідних був єпископ, він був зобов'язаний збирати кошти, надані вірянами під час щомісячних служб, з недільного збору і накладених покарань. Усі миряни, які виконували це завдання, даючи милостиню нужденним, були зобов'язані надавати допомогу своїм сусідам.

Дуже важливими установами, які допомагали нужденним, були монастирі, особливо ті, що мали власну сільськогосподарську економіку. До їх обов'язків входило забезпечення одноразового проживання та скромного харчування для мандрівників. Ченці регулярно підтримували місцевих бідних людей, часто граючи роль сезонних роботодавців, наприклад, під час збору врожаю.

У середньовічних містах створювалися різні братства і корпорації – цехи. Вони з'явилися в другій половині тринадцятого століття, і їх найбільший розвиток відбувся в п'ятнадцятому столітті. Від своїх членів вони вимагали дотримання моральних принципів і забезпечення християнської любові до своїх ближніх. Із зібраних внесків, а також від штрафів за порушення корпоративних правил або пільг було створено фонд благодійності. Ці організації створювалися перш за все ремісниками. Однією з найважливіших цілей був догляд за старими та хворими членами, а також їхнє гідне поховання. Деякі корпорації мали свої власні лікарні та притулки.

Ключові слова: благодійність, середньовіччя, церква.

INTRODUCTION

In the Middle Ages, the greatest social problems were poverty, begging and vagrancy. The actual guardian of the poor was the bishop, where he was obliged to collect funds "provided by the faithful members during the monthly services, from the Sunday collection and imposed penitential penalties. He is assisted by male and female deacons, distributing collected donations to widows, orphans, the poor, the sick, prisoners and foreign wanderers. Their number forced them to reflect on the form of the provision of mercy and that is how the first hospital plants were born, operating under the spiritual or real leadership of the bishop".

RESEARCH RESULTS

These hospital facilities were derived from the old tradition of the shelter, where the traveler could get rest, sleep and eat. Over time, hospitalepauperum, or hospitals of the poor, were named. Their significant number appeared in the twelfth and thirteenth



centuries. The vast majority of these hospitals (asylums) in their activities focused on something like specialization, confining themselves to strictly defined categories of needy: orphans, invalids, lepers etc. Only a few of them offered comprehensive care. The organizer of this type of institution was primarily the catholic Church².

The founder of the hospital could be anyone who had adequate financial resources. Therefore, among the founders there are both lay people and clergy. One of the most prominent founders was the Italian bishop of Milan Datheus. His foundation was intended to help abandoned children³.

In 1108, on the Sobótka hill in Poland, Piotr Włast founded a hospital. Later on, Regular Canons of St. Augustine looked after it. It is the oldest hospital in Poland, about which we know from the preserved archives. Probably earlier there were others, but there is no obvious evidence for that. In 1152, the Archbishop of Gniezno Janisław founded a hospital in Jędrzejów, managed by the Cistercians. Under their care there were also hospitals in Kołbacz (1185), Lubiąż (1203), Wieluń, Oliwa, Bukow, Wolin and Szczecin. In 1170 at the church of St. Michael in Poznań Mieszko II the Old founded a hospital, which was looked after by the Saint Joanists. In 1203, the Bishop Pełka of Krakow, founded a hospital for miners in Sławków, under the protection of the monks from the religious congregation of the Holy Spirit de Saxia, called the ghosts. In Poland, there were relatively few hospitals until the end of the Middle Ages. Their development took place only after the Council of Trent⁴.

Very important institutions that helped the needy were monasteries, especially those that had their own agricultural economy. Their duties included providing a one-off accommodation and a modest meal for travelers. The monks regularly supported local poor people, often playing the role of seasonal employers, e.g. during the harvest seasons⁵.

In Poland, the main centers of the charitable service were initially bishops and monasteries. From the twelfth century, they became hospitals (e.g. the first - Cistercian in Jędrzejów, the second - bishop in Zagórze). They were conducted or supported by religious orders, including Benedictines, the hospital brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints of God, the Knights of Saint John, the Knights Templar. Religious communities fed the poor, took care of orphans and crippled, as well as lonely women (especially Piarist and Poor Clares)⁶.

Order of Holy Spirit de Saxia, known as the ghosts, put his work in the hospital for his superior purpose. The ghosts, in addition to the three vows-chastity, obedience and poverty, filed an additional one in which they dedicated themselves to look after and care for the sick. Their special mission was to care for abandoned children who gathered around the city streets, and then raised them either in their religious houses, where they were given the right qualifications for the profession at the appropriate age, or passed on to fostering in foster families or, in the case of young women, they were prepared to get married. In the nomenclature proper to this era, all the poor and abandoned were called their masters⁷.

Katarzyna Antosiewicz presents their principles in this way: „Chapter 37 of the rules instructs ghosts - monks one day a week to look for sick, poor, orphans and children abandoned by their parents in the villages and streets of cities. [...] They raised in the hospital not only those that they found, but also those who were born in Holy Spirit Hospital, and mothers did not want to, or could not bring them up, and children brought to the hospital by others. In front of the hospital gate there was a place where foundlings were left, but it was forbidden to find out about the name of the person leaving the child, and even to follow this person with his eyes. Chapter 50 of the rule strongly emphasizes: abandoned orphans, poor pregnant women at any time of the day are to be welcomed and according to the wealth of the home gifted”⁸.

Parishes were also required for the basic form of help. This task was carried out primarily through the provision of alms⁹. As part of the parish activities, so-called hospital foundations that were supported by various church brotherhoods, especially the brotherhood of the poor (the first in Poland was founded in 1327 in Gryfino), and Third Orders¹⁰.

Various fraternities and corporations - guilds were created in medieval cities. These organizations were created primarily by craftsmen, but beggars and vagrants also founded them. One of the most important goals was to care for old and sick members, as well as their decent burial. An interesting example of a charitable activity is given by Jean Louis Goglin: "One of the Paris brotherhoods during the annual feast puts plates for dead members of the fraternities on the tables and distributes their portions to the local living poor”¹¹.

The brotherhood of Corpus Christi in Toruń (1394) and the "exulumseupiscatorum" fraternity in Tolknicko and Reszel dealt with the burying of travelers and the homeless. The charity fraternities included the confraternities of the poor, which were organized in cities from the beginning of the 14th century. Their aim was to maintain and support, from the contributions of their members, hospitals (shelters) for the elderly, homeless, travelers and the poor. These were communities available to all city residents, including the poorest¹².

The oldest brotherhoods of the poor are known from the areas of Western Pomerania: in Gryfino (1327), Banie, Goleniów (1512) and Stargard (fifteenth century). In the 15th century, the bishops Zbigniew Oleśnicki and Jan Rzeszowski propagated them in the diocese of Kraków. Created, among others in Borzecino, Porąbka Uszewska, Szczepanów, Wojnicz, Szczurowa, Mogiła and Jadowniki (15th century) and in Dąbrowa Tarnowska, Chodel and Lublin (16th century). In the archdiocese of Gniezno, the fraternity of the poor was founded, among others in Łekno, Łowicz (1557), Pajęczno (1607) and Lutomiersk (1530). In the diocese of Poznań there were such brotherhoods in Śrem, Krzywino, Grodzick, Poznań (1499), Chodzież (1474), Dolsk (1456), Gostyń (1460) and Krobia (1440). The diocese of Włocławek had the following centers: in Nowa Cerkiew, Kowale, Śmiłowice, Raciąż, Brdów, Służew and Izbica. In the diocese of Chełmno, the brotherhoods were in Toruń, Grudziądz, Kościerzyna, Koronów and Tczew. The Przemyśl Diocese had a brotherhood in Przemyśl. In Warmia, they operated in Elbląg and Reszel, and in Silesia, among others in Sroda and Raciborz (14th century), Żmigród (1481), Jawor (1484) and Bralin (1523)¹³.

In the development of social care in medieval Poland, corporations - guilds played an important role. They appeared in the second half of the thirteenth century, and their greatest development took place in the fifteenth century. These were the associations (corporations) of craftsmen. They watched over the observance of Christian moral principles in their professional work. They fought counterfeiting and negligent service provision. From their members they required observance of moral principles and the provision of Christian love to their fellow men. From the collected contributions, as well as from fines for breaking corporate rules or privileges, a fund for charity was created. The money was spent on funeral services, care for the sick, widows and orphans, old and



impoverished people, help in the event of various disasters and loans for corporate members. Some corporations had their own hospitals (e.g. characteristics of weavers in Głogów, Lubin, Lwówek and Świebodzin, a corporation of fishermen in Gdańsk) and shelters (e.g. shoemakers' guild in Środa Śląska maintained a shelter for widows of deceased members)¹⁴.

CONCUSSION AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The medieval scheme of the seven deeds regarding the soul and the body became an expression of the universalisation of the duty of charity. The aim of the spiritual works of mercy is to relieve spiritual suffering and they are as follow: to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to admonish the sinners, to bear patiently those who wrong us, to forgive offenses, to comfort the afflicted, to pray for the living and the dead.

Corporeal works of mercy are those that tend to the bodily needs of other creatures and they are: to feed the hungry, to give water to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to visit the sick, to visit the imprisoned, or ransom the captive, to bury the dead¹⁵.

¹ J. L. Goglin, *Poverty in medieval Europe*, Warsaw 1998, p. 133-134.

² Cf. T. Kamiński, *Social and charity work*, Warsaw 2004, p. 13-14. See. T. Tokarek, *History of charity in the Polish lands until the end of the 19th century*, in: *Wound healing – Spiritual healing – Helping*, ed. B. Płonka-Syroka, A. Syroka, Wrocław 2007, p. 425-428.

³ Cz. Kępski, *The idea of mercy and charity and care*, Lublin 2003, p. 24.

⁴ Cz. Kępski, *The idea of mercy and charity and care*, Lublin 2003, p. 25, 32; J. Pils, *From the history of church charity activity in pre-partition Poland*, in: *Works of Christian mercy in Poland and in the Archdiocese of Lublin*, ed. A. Mieczkowski, Lublin 1997, p. 38-51. See. M. Surdacki, *Education and social care in Urzędów: XV-XVIII centuries.*, Lublin 2004; M. Stoń, *Hospitals of medieval Wrocław*, Warsaw 2000.

⁵ Cf. T. Kamiński, *Social and charity work*, Warsaw 2004, p. 14.

⁶ R. Łukaszyk, F. Woronowski, *Charity pastoral work*, in: *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, ed. R. Łukaszyk, L. Bieńkowski, F. Gryglewicz, Lublin 1989, column. 1387; J. Radwan-Pragłowski, K. Frysztacki, *Social history of helping people: from Greek philanthropy to social work*, Warsaw 1996, p. 215-217.

⁷ J. Flaga, *Charitable activity of the Church in Poland in the Saxon era*, *Scientific Bulletin KUL* 43:1999, nr 3-4 (167-168), p. 65.

⁸ K. Antosiewicz, *The Order of the Holy Spirit de Saxia in Medieval Poland*, „Our Past” 1966 nr 23, p. 195.

⁹ See. J. Pils, *From the history of church charity activity in pre-partition Poland*, in: *Works of Christian mercy in Poland and in the Archdiocese of Lublin*, ed. A. Mieczkowski, Lublin 1997, p. 36-38.

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¹¹ J. L. Goglin, *Poverty in medieval Europe*, Warsaw 1998, p. 161.

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¹⁴ J. Pils, *From the history of church charity activity in pre-partition Poland*, in: *Works of Christian mercy in Poland and in the Archdiocese of Lublin*, ed. A. Mieczkowski, Lublin 1997, p. 53.

¹⁵ R. Łukaszyk, F. Woronowski, *Charity pastoral work*, in: *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, ed. R. Łukaszyk, L. Bieńkowski, F. Gryglewicz, Lublin 1989, column. 1387.

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