

**Realization of the charism of the Congregation of Marian Fathers in the service of the
Catholic Church in Latvia**

Theological and historical study based on the archival sources of the congregation

Abstract

In the post-conciliar teaching of the popes about monastic life, there is often a deal with the theme of the monastic charism, as well as, there is emphasized the importance of the charisms in individual monastic communities and the necessity of fidelity to those charisms, thanks to which particular monks define and maintain their own identity. Aim of this dissertation is to present an overview of the Marian activity in Latvia from the time of the establishing of the first community in this country to the present day and to give to this activity a theological evaluation in terms of the realization of the charism of the Congregation.

The dissertation consists of three chapters. The first chapter presents the broader historical context of the Catholic Church in Latvia, paying particular attention to the history of the 20th and 21st centuries, since the congregation has been present in the country exactly since 1924. By researching the history of Marian communities in the context of the history of the Church in Latvia, it is denoted that there is a close dependency between functioning of the structure of the particular Church in Latvia and political and sociological processes. History of the Marian community is in some degree a reflection of the history of the local Church in 20th and early 21st centuries.

The second chapter is devoted to the analysis of the topic of the Marian charism. Based most notably on the laws of the Marians, it is denoted that the purpose of the congregation, according to the Founder - St. Stanislaw Papczynski, is a devotion of brothers to the reverence and defense of the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as well as supporting the died in Purgatory and helping parsons in their pastoral service.

The charism of the Congregation is a reality for the Marians, that must be constantly reflected on and the question of how to serve in the Church according to the charism, taking into account the changes occurring in the world. Over the 350-year history of the congregation it is possible to notice certain transformations, other distribution of accents in

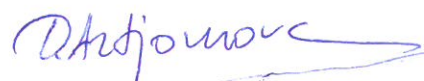
the understanding of own identity and mission, but with maintaining the essence of the Marian charism.

The last chapter reflects a synthesis of the first two chapters, demonstrating on the basis of the preserved materials, how during the almost 100-year history of the service in the local Church in Latvia, the Marians themselves understood and realized the charism of their congregation.

According to the research of the source materials, it is possible to conclude that Latvian Marians in the interwar period, in general did not consider about the topic of the Marian identity Church and the essence of the charism, this identity was manifested more in activity. During the Second World War and the invasion, especially after the dispersal, the Marians focused almost exclusively on parish work; in this period, when it was necessary to hide the belonging to a monastic congregation, the Marians were able to maintain the structure of the province, to keep in contact with each other and with the confreres who have emigrated. Despite unfavorable conditions and dispersal, they did not lose their monastic identity, realizing the Marian charism in the Church in Latvia.

After the country gained independence in 1991, the process of renewing of the monastic life lasted about twenty years, while the discovery of new directions of activity, which are in line with the Marian charism, is still going.

Summarizing the conducted research, it is possible to state that the realization of the Marian charism by the confreres in the local Church in Latvia is accomplished through activities that confirm the internal experience of this charism. In living of the spirituality and charism of their congregation and in the service, that is an implementation of this charism, the Marians in Latvia have shown elasticity and ability to adapt to the existing conditions.



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