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“AD LIMINA” REPORTS BY THE BISHOPS OF WROCLAW FROM THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES*

ABSTRACT: The article refers to the duty of paying regular visits at the Holy See, “imposed on diocesan bishops by the Council of Trent,” on the example of the Wrocław diocese in the 17th and 18th centuries. Pursuant to the *Romanus Pontifex* bull by Pope Sixtus V of 20 December 1585, bishops of Wrocław (as well as all the other bishops from this part of Europe) were obliged to regularly visit the Holy See, going to Rome every four years to submit a written report on the condition of their dioceses. Vatican sources contain 14 written reports from Wrocław from the period of 1603-1777. These reports lead to the conclusion that bishops of Wrocław treated the duty in a rather formalistic manner. The interval of four years required by the bull of Pope Sixtus V was rarely observed; often, there was just one visit throughout the governance of a given bishop. They also failed to pay visits in person, but were represented by special procurators approved by Rome, usually canons or trustees who also wrote the reports. Because, until 1740, there were no specific regulations or templates for writing the reports, their scope and contents significantly differed. The longest and the most abundant in contents were the ones drafted by bishops Sebastian von Rostock (1667), Friedrich von Hessen (1678), and Franz Ludwig (1708). In the report, the focus is on the static description of the diocese (seat of the diocese with the cathedral, chapter, and bishop’s residence, diocesan institutions, administrative structure of the diocese, convents on the premises), but the confession and political conditions in which the Catholic Church in Silesia had to proceed with its pastoral duties are rarely analysed. In the 17th and 18th centuries, it was always pointed out that the Church was unable to operate successfully, principally due to the aggressive behaviour of the Protestants, and the hostile attitude of rulers of particular Silesian duchies. There was much less information about the clergy and the faithful. Attention must be drawn to measures indicated by some bishops of Wrocław, aimed at eliminating the shortages and intensifying the religious life in Silesia.

KEYWORDS: ad limina, Wrocław diocese, reports, Friedrich von Hessen, Franz Ludwig.

* The Article was originally published in “Nasza Przeszłość” 68 (1987), pp. 93-132.

Introduction

The duty of each diocesan bishop to pay a visit “at the threshold of the [tombs of the] apostles,” thus in Rome, in the modern form, resulted from the spirit of the reform imposed by the Council of Trent.¹ The previously known, but later reorganised duty, was principally aimed at establishing stricter bonds between the capital of Christianity and particular local Churches, which was of particular importance in the circumstances of Protestant Reformation spreading in the 16th and 17th centuries. Apart from the contact between the Holy See and dioceses and centres in various countries, through the nunciatures that had already been well established in the 16th century, messages sent by the rulers of dioceses and their personal sojourns in Rome were aimed not only at making the pope aware of the situation of the Church at the difficult time of religious chaos, but also at encouraging the bishops themselves to responsibly try and keep the appropriate standing of their dioceses.

The reorganised duty of “ad limina” visits was legally resolved by the *Romanus Pontifex* bull of Pope Sixtus V of 20 December 1585.² According to this document, each diocesan bishop was to arrive in Rome at regular, strictly defined intervals, to certify one’s communication with the Pope. The intervals varied depending on the distance of the diocese from Rome: a 3-year interval was determined for Italian bishops, from Corsica and Sardinia, as well as from Greece and Dalmatia; a 4-year interval applied to the German, French, Spanish, Czech, Hungarian, English, Scottish and other bishops on the continent around the Mediterranean and Baltic coasts; while bishops from the edges of Europe and northern coast of Africa arrived every 5 (five) years, whereas the remaining ones (other continents) every 10 (ten) years. Poland was not expressly stated, but the context implies that Polish bishops were bound by the quadrennial intervals, similarly as bishops of Wrocław (Silesia was a Czech territory at the time).

Each bishop’s visit to Rome included: a pious visit to St Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican, and St Paul’s Basilica on the road to Ostia, from where the bishop received a special certificate, followed by the

¹ Cf. W. Müller, *Diecezja krakowska w relacjach biskupów z XVII-XVIII wieku*, RH vol. 13:1965 f. 2, pp. 5-149.

² Cf. S. Przygodzki, *Bulla papieża Sykstusa V „De visitandis liminibus apostolorum” i stanowisko wobec niej biskupów polskich*, CT vol. 14:1932, pp. 298-323.

audience at the pope, and finally submission of a written report about the standing of one's diocese in the Congregation, which carefully analysed the text and issued a reply.³ The aforementioned *Romanus Pontifex* bull also provided for an option of a bishop sending one's proxy, the “procurator,” if the bishop could not go to Rome himself (e.g. owing to illness, old age, dangerous times, etc.). Certainly, such a procurator needed to be a man with good knowledge of the situation and thus competent to represent the diocese in Rome. In any case, however, he had to carry a report signed by the bishop. With time, the focus of the visit shifted to the report because this showed the picture of the Church in various parts of the world and, on this basis, the Holy See could draw appropriate conclusions for the work of the Church.

At first, there were no rules on how the reports on the standing of dioceses were to be written; the bishops were absolutely free to write anything. On the one hand, this allowed the authors to speak freely about the matters of their dioceses, without the threat of listing the facts related to the diocese in the same manner; but, on the other, this posed a risk of not seeing the whole picture, or analysing only selected issues. Therefore, the reports from the 17th century took on diverse forms: from one- or two-page letters through diligent elaborated “treaties” on several long pages, usually of historical nature. The perceived shortcomings in formulating the reports thus required the central development of certain guidelines. At first, the recommended model referred to the problems listed in the questionnaire for bishop information proceedings from the early 17th century, followed by canon works devoted to methods for writing reports, particularly including the works by B. Gavanti (d. 1638) and P. Fagnani (d. 1678).⁴ Because they were not official, their impact was limited. It was only the instruction developed by the Congregation Secretary P. Lambertini on request of the Roman synod in 1725 that became the mandatory template, while the same Lambertini, already as Pope Benedict XIV, approved it in 1740 as an official requirement. He divided his detailed questionnaire/instruction into 62 sections grouped in 9 chapters, most of which referred exclusively to the person of the bishop and the

³ Cf. F. Chiappafreddo, *L'Archivio della Sacra Congregazione del Concilio*, [in:] *La Sacra Congregazione dell Concilio. Quarta Centenario dalla fondazione (1564-1964). Studi e ricerche*, Citta del Vaticano 1964, pp. 395-406.

⁴ P. Palazzini, *Prospero Fagnani, segretario della S. Cangregazione del Concilio e suoi editi ed inediti*, *ibidem*, p. 361-382.

capital of the diocese (in Italian conditions with territorially small dioceses this was absolutely sufficient). From the time the instruction was implemented, the invention and autonomy of the authors gave way to brief and template-style answers.

The reports, stored at the Archives of the Congregation of the Council (the function was taken over by the Dicasterium pro Clericis), nowadays form part of the Vatican Archives. These also include reports from the diocese of Wrocław.⁵ They constitute precious source material for researchers, principally since the Vatican Archives were made available to the public by Pope Leo XIII in 1881. Owing to their effort, we now have some achievements in analysing both the canon-legal duty of the bishops, and the contents of reports about the diocese standing left during the visit of the threshold to the tombs of the apostles in Rome.

Here, one must mention the works by L. Boratyński⁶ and T. Długosz,⁷ as the pioneers in investigating this subject. The analysis of how the duty of “ad limina” visits was performed is also the present starting point for further studies. After the war, one must record deliberations regarding the contents of reports from Warmia⁸, Krakow⁹ and Płock¹⁰ (reports from Wrocław have been discussed below). A certain canon summary has been provided in articles by Bishop W. Wójcik.¹¹ Also,

⁵ Ref. ASV SCC Relationes 884 A-B. I have not found the texts in the Archdiocese Archives in Wrocław. There is just a 20th-century copy of the report by Bishop S. von Rostock (ref. AAW IA 7 n). The reports were microfilmed within the framework of works of the Institute of Historical Geography of the Church, KUL, cf. J. Kłoczowski, *Kwerenda polska w archiwach watykańskich w 1962 roku*, PHIS vol. 55: 1964 f. 2, p. 257 ff/n.

⁶ L. Boratyński, *Najdawniejsze relacje biskupów polskich o stanie diecezji w Archiwum Kongregacji del Concilio w Rzymie*, SPAU vol. 21: 1916 No. 5.

⁷ His main work is: T. Długosz, *Biskupia „visitatio liminum”*, CT vol. 14: 1933, pp. 173-249, 273-338; *Idem Wartość relacji rzymskich biskupów polskich jako źródła historycznego*, STNKUL vol. 12:1961, pp. 89-92.

⁸ J. Obłąk, *Życie kościelne na Warmii w świetle „relatio status” biskupa Wacława Leszczyńskiego z r. 1657*, RTK vol. 7: 1959 f. 3, pp. 5-31; A. Szorc, *Relacje biskupów warmińskich XVII i XVIII wieku do Rzymu o stanie diecezji*, SW vol. 5: 1968 pp. 201-239.

⁹ P. Bober, *Stan diecezji krakowskiej w świetle relacji biskupów z XVII-XVIII w.*, PS vol. 1: 1948 f. 3-4, pp. 373-374; W. Müller, *Diecezja krakowska*, pp. 5-149.

¹⁰ W. Müller, *Organizacja terytorialna diecezji płockiej w XVI-XVII w.*, RH vol. 15: 1967 f. 2, pp. 129-174.

¹¹ W. Wójcik, *Wizytacje biskupów polskich „ad limina” do roku 1911*, PK vol. 18: 1975 f. 3-4, pp. 31-179; *Idem, Zwoływanie synodów w świetle relacji biskupów polskich „ad limina” do XX wieku*, ibidem, vol. 19: 1976 No. 1-2, pp. 149-184.

one needs to point out source publications of the reports from the archdiocese of Lviv,¹² diocese of Krakow,¹³ and dioceses from the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.¹⁴ There are thus some achievements in the field, particularly in the legal aspect; now, it is the time to proceed with research, even partial, with respect to particular dioceses or periods, in order to be able to synthesise the phenomenon one day. Until this is completed, any fragmentary attempts at the analysis will prove useful. Hence the decision to deal with the reports from Wrocław from the 17th and 18th centuries.

1. Information about reports from Wrocław

Research on reports from Wrocław

“Ad limina” reports from Wrocław are known to researchers. They were approached either from the angle of analysing how the bishops of Wrocław fulfilled their duties, or with a focus on the contents being the documentation of the standing of the Church in Silesia. The second approach prevailed, but none of the researchers has used the materials holistically.

First of all, one must commend the works by J. Schmidlin.¹⁵ While appreciating the significance of the sources, or even looking at them with overestimated optimism, he analysed the reports from the Reich (understood very broadly because he also included Silesia, Warmia, and the diocese of Chełm in his analysis) from the introduction of the duty to pay “ad limina” visits until the mid-17th century, namely the end of the Thirty Years’ War. He did not perform a comparative analysis of the contents, but compiled a type of extended registries of such reports, wishing to accentuate exceptional information contained in each

¹² T. Długoś, *Relacje arcybiskupów lwowskich 1595-1794*, Lwów 1937.

¹³ *Relacje o stanie diecezji krakowskiej 1615-1765*, ed. W. Müller, Lublin 1978.

¹⁴ *Relationes status dioecesium in Magno Ducatu Lituaniae*, vol. 1-2. Pluribus adlaborantibus in unum rededit P. Rabikauskas, Romae 1971-1978.

¹⁵ J. Schmidlin, *Die Restaurationstätigkeit der Breslauer Fürstbischöfe nach ihren frühesten Statusberichten an den Römischen Stuhl*, Rom 1907; Idem, *Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland vor dem Dreissigjährigen Kriege nach den bischöflichen Diözesanberichten an den Heiligen Stuhl*, p. 3 Freiburg i. B. 1910, pp. 173-195; Idem, *Kirchliche Zustände und Schicksale des deutschen Katholizismus während des Dreissigjährigen Krieges (nach den bischöflichen Romberichten)*, Freiburg i. B. 1940, pp. 50-53.

report. Owing to this, the works by J. Schmidlin provide first-hand material that allows us direct access to the data.

A similar manner of treating the report as source material was applied by Bishop W. Urban.¹⁶ He did not perform thorough research on the sources, but simply enumerated them and described what he believed to be the most important data related to the Wrocław diocese. The very reference in the Polish literature to the phenomenon and contents of reports by Wrocław bishops is positive.

A major step in research on the reports from Wrocław was the study of J. Köhler on the reform of the Council of Trent in Silesia until 1620.¹⁷ The author focused on analysing all the manifestations of positive changes to the condition of the diocese, previously under strong Protestant influence, after the Council of Trent. Such manifestations certainly included “ad limina” visits as a means of implementing the Tridentine reform in the atmosphere of growing European conflict, its outburst in 1618, followed by a breakthrough related to the victory of the Catholic side in the Battle of White Mountain in 1620.

At this point, it is also worth indicating a publication of the full text of the report by Bishop R. Herzog of 1883 – thus later than the period analysed here – which is a warm-hearted encouragement to publish all reports in the future, which would be a major achievement, almost equalling the publication of 17th-century inspection reports from dioceses by J. Jungnitz.¹⁸

We actually have certain research achievements with respect to reports from Wrocław. This study aims at analysing this category of sources as materials for the history of the Church in Silesia in the 17th and 18th centuries (until the end of the governance by Bishop F. G. Schaffgotsch, who died in 1795). During the governance of Bishop J. Hohenlohe-

¹⁶ About the 17th-century reports, see: W. Urban, *Z dziejów duszpasterstwa w archidiecezji wrocławskiej, w czasach nowożytnych*, Warszawa 1971, pp. 18-31; About the 18th-century reports: W. Urban, *Z dziejów duszpasterstwa katolickiego w archidiecezji opolskiej i głogowskiej w czasach nowożytnych, p. 2 archidiecezji głogowskiej*, Warszawa 1975, pp. 289-292.

¹⁷ J. Köhler, *Das Ringen um die Tridentinische Erneuerung im Bistum Breslau, Köln-Wien 1973* („Forschungen und Quellen zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte Ostdeutschland” Bd 12). About the reports: pp. 120-130.

¹⁸ Text published by A. Strnad, *Relatio status Ecclesiae Wratislaviensis 1883. Ein Bericht von Fürstbischof Robert Herzog über den Stand seiner Diözese an den Papst*, ASKG vol. 28: 1970, pp. 183-215.

Bartenstein (1795-1817), the increasingly more painful interference of the Prussian government with the Catholic Church matters was already visible, with the progressing secularisation of institutions of the Church, principally convents and chapters. A qualitatively new situation emerged, causing the information in this bishop's reports to account for the amended conditions. Only the first report by Bishop J. Hohenlohe was submitted in Rome (1802), while the two subsequent ones (1806, 1814) could not be sent due to obstacles posed by the Prussian government.

A review of reports from Wrocław from the 17th and 18th centuries

The announcement of the *Romanus Pontifex* bull occurred during the governance of Bishop Andrzej Jerin at the Wrocław diocese (1585-1596).¹⁹ He eagerly continued the reform of religious life in Silesia in the spirit of Tridentine reform initiated by his predecessor, Bishop Marcin Gerstmann.²⁰ While pursuing his goal, Bishop A. Jerin remained in close contacts with the Holy See and the nunciature at the imperial court in Vienna. In this relation, special attention must be given to his report from 1586 submitted to nuncio Philip von Sega, which was passed further to Rome to inform of the difficult situation of the Church in the Wrocław diocese.²¹ The announcement of the duty to pay “ad limina” visits resonated with the eager bishop, although he could not travel to Rome in person. This was principally hindered by his function of supra-starost of Silesia, and thus his involvement in the contemporary grand politics.²² Nevertheless, there are traces of sending “ad limina” reports already for the first four years (falling in 1589) via the procurators, namely Wrocław canons P. Kozłowski and the

¹⁹ J. Köhler, *Das Testament des Breslauer Bischofs Andreas von Jerin (1585-1596)*, [in:] *Festschrift für Bernhard Stasiewski*, hrsg. G. Adrianyi, J. Gottschalk, Köln-Wien 1975 pp. 107-119.

²⁰ K. Borcz, *Synod Biskupa Marcina Gerstmannna*, RTSO vol. 1: 1968, pp. 293-313.

²¹ A. O. Meyer, *Zu Geschichte der Gegenreformation in Schlesien. Aus Vatikanischen Quellen*, ZGS vol. 38: 1904, pp. 340-350. A. Nägelle, *Documenta Jeriniana*, ASKG vol. 1: 1936, pp. 131-133. Cf. also: W. Wójcik, *Korektory rzymskie w statutach synodu diecezji wrocławskiej z 1592 roku*, PK vol. 17: 1974 No. 1-2, pp. 91-100.

²² Cf. S. Śreniowski, *Historia ustroju Śląska*, Katowice 1948, pp. 94-96.

bishop's nephew, B. Jerin.²³ Although the text of the report was not preserved, we have the reply from the Congregation, praising the bishop's activity and encouraging him to take good care, particularly with respect to the pious life of the priests.²⁴ Bishop A. Jerin acted in a similar manner with respect to the next four-year interval (1593), but here we also do not have the text of the report, only the reply in the same spirit as the previous.²⁵

The next visit was unsuccessful due to election problems following the death of A. Jerin. It is only from the term of Bishop Jan Sitsch (1600-1608) that we have two reports.²⁶ With respect to the fourth quadrennial term (falling in 1601), the bishop sent a report signed on 1 September 1603. He authorised Marcin Hilner, a canon from the collegiate chapter in Głogów, as his procurator. In the letter to the Pope, the bishop explained he could not arrive in Rome in person due to the difficult situation in Silesia, plus his duties of supra-starost required his stay on site. It cannot be clearly determined who authored the text of the report; it's in the form of an instruction for the procurator, to be orally supplemented in Rome. The report was signed by the bishop; his influence on the content and form of presenting the condition of the diocese appears undoubtful. The report by Bishop J. Sitsch describes the very difficult situation of the Catholic Church in the diocese, and accentuates the most important directions of his work on reintroducing Catholicism. In the first part, in the historical outline, the bishop pointed out that the Church in Silesia had already survived various commotions and unrests, particularly in relation to the Hussite movement, but it was only Martin Luther's move that resulted in significant losses to the diocese. Although both the imperial and church authorities banned the proclamation of the new, harmful teachings, they were unsuccessful because almost all the dukes in Silesia spoke for the novelty. Furthermore, the evil permeated among the clergy in the diocese, and into the convents, doing noticeable harm also in the Nysa-Grodków Bishop Duchy. The bishop himself attempted to raise a young generation of

²³ J. Jungnitz, *Die Breslauer Germaniker*, Breslau 1906, pp. 37-40, and *B. Jerina*, *ibidem*, pp. 63-65.

²⁴ J. Köhler, *Das Ringen*, pp. 120-121.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

²⁶ Cf. R. Wagner, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Breslauer Bischofs Johannes von Sitsch (1600-1608)*, ASKG vol. 4: 1939, pp. 209-222.

priests, imposing stricter censorship of the published heretic books, but all this was still rather ineffective. Furthermore, great trouble was caused by the Protestants demanding burials in Catholic churches and marriages between Catholics and Protestants, which contributed to the progressing spread of Protestantism among the people. The entire tone of the report was very depressing.²⁷

The second report by Bishop Sitsch for the fifth quadrennial term (1605) was maintained in the same style, drafted in 1607 and submitted in Rome by procurators in the persons of canon P. Gebauer²⁸ and secular secretary in the bishop's chancellery office, P. Kribelius. The text of the report was drafted by the procurators, basically repeating the description of the Silesian Church from the previous one. More detailed information referred to measures taken by the bishop to revive Catholicism: a diocesan synod took place,²⁹ with the bishop caring about the selection of members to the chapter, and pursuing the possibilities to reclaim churches from Protestant hands, while also making the effort to print Catholic books. It was true that the bishop trusted more in administrative measures and the aid of the secular authorities rather than in the internal and pastoral work of the Church.

The next “ad limina” visit (1609) was scheduled during the governance of a new bishop, being the Archduke Charles (Habsburg) of Austria (1608-1624).³⁰ From the very beginning, he was busy fighting against the Letter of Majesty by Emperor Rudolf II,³¹ hence he failed to prepare the report on time. He did so only with respect to the seventh quad-

²⁷ Cf. J. Schmidlin, *Die Restaurationstätigkeit*, pp. 16-24; W. Urban, *Z dziejów duszpasterstwa w archidiakonacie wrocławskim*, pp. 18-22; J. Köhler, *Das Ringen*, pp. 121-124.

²⁸ J. Jungnitz, *Archidiakon Petrus Gebauer. Ein Zeit und Lebensbild aus der schlesischen Kirchengeschichte des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Breslau 1892.

²⁹ The statutes of the synod have not been preserved, cf. J. Sawicki, *Concilia Poloniae. Źródła i studia krytyczne vol. 10: Synody diecezji wrocławskiej i ich statuty. Na podstawie materiałów przysposobionych przy udziale A. Sabischa*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1963, pp. 278-282.

³⁰ J. Köhler, *Revision eines Bischofsbildes? Erzherzog Karl von Oestereich, Bischof von Breslau (1608-1624) und Brixen (1613-1624) als Exponent der habsburgischen Hausmachtspolitik*, ASKG vol. 32: 1974, pp. 103-126.

³¹ The letter of majesty by Emperor Rudolf II of 20 August 1609 was a concession to Protestants and caused a vivid response from the Catholic party, cf. F. Seppelt, *Geschichte des Bistums Breslau*, Breslau 1929, pp. 66-67.

rennial term (1613). The report drafted in September 1612 was submitted in Rome on 21 January 1613 by procurator Hannibal Grisonius, a canon from Nysa.³² The procurator also authored the report where, having briefly reminded about the history of the diocese (dating back, according to the author, to 965), he mentioned various sects and errors of the past (listing the Hussite movement), and moved on to discussing the most difficult period when the “diabolica Lutheri haeresim” appeared. The situation of the Catholic church became critical, which was clearly visible in the breakdown of the convent life and the order among the clergy. There were almost 1,200 parishes at the Wrocław diocese ca. 1500. The number of clergy in the period covered by the report is unknown, yet only 160 priests continued to recognise the jurisdiction of the Catholic bishop. At the Wrocław cathedral, however, Catholic pastoral work shone brightly, with seven collegiate churches at the diocese, and the seminar being taken care of. The report also suggested that an inspection was necessary at the Cistercian, Premonstratensian, Franciscan, and Dominican convents, to restore the appropriate discipline.³³

Bishop Charles Habsburg of Austria sent his second report for the eight quadrennial term (1617) in 1618.³⁴ Here again, after a brief historical introduction, the author moved to the most important issues to be presented in Rome. He began by listing the already applied preventive measures against the reformation, particularly including edicts and ordinances. He pointed to the need for improving discipline among the clergy of the diocese and convent, improving religious awareness, and the use of the aid from secular authorities. Next, he briefly mentioned the cathedral chapter, collegiates, parishes (the number of 160 in Catholic hands was mentioned again), convents, absence of a seminar due to the shortage of teachers; this was followed by sad deliberations about the standard of the clergy, and more optimistic remarks on the customs of the people, while finally information about the relics. Unfortunately, the name of the procurator during this “ad limina” vis-

³² Cf. R. V ö l k e l, *Die persönliche Zusammensetzung des Neisser Kollegiatkapitels während seiner Residenz in der Altstadt Neisse 1477-1650 an der Kollegiatkirche SS. Johannes Ev. und Nikolaus*, [in:] *42 Bericht der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft Philomathie in Neisse*, 1938, pp. 116-117.

³³ Cf. J. S c h m i d l i n, *Die Restaurationstätigkeit*, pp. 25-32; W. U r b a n, *Z dziejów duszpasterstwa w archidiakonacie wrocławskim*, pp. 22-24.

³⁴ Cf. J. K ö h l e r, *Das Ringen*, p. 125.

it, the date of signing the report, and its author, remain unknown. There is only a dorsal note from the secretary of the Congregation, stating that the report was submitted in Rome on 6 November 1618.

There is another document from the eight quadrennial term, considered by the Congregation of the Council as part of this report, although it was submitted in Rome on 3 August 1620.³⁵ It is not a report on the condition of the diocese, but about political events with the personal participation of Bishop Charles Habsburg, experiencing many humiliations, and even being forced to leave Nysa, who arrived at the Polish royal court. This first stage of the Thirty Years' War was indeed a difficult experience for the Catholic Church in Silesia, and particularly for the bishop.³⁶ He sent this report together with a report from the Brixen diocese, where he also acted as the ordinary from 1613.³⁷

The long governance of Bishop Charles Ferdinand Vasa (1625-1655), Polish prince and son of Sigismund III, belonged to the rather less successful in the history of the Wrocław diocese. The bishop himself, elected as a boy of eleven to hold the highest office in the diocese, rarely visited Silesia.³⁸ Furthermore, a major part of his governance took place during the Thirty Years' War, which was particularly destructive for the diocese territory in 1629 and 1642. The duty of care for the diocese basically remained with the administrators.

From the times of Bishop Charles Ferdinand Vasa, there is just one “ad limina” report signed in person during his last stay in Nysa on 21 April 1650, submitted in Rome by the procurator, the canon Jerzy Wawrzyniec Budaeus.³⁹ It was considered by the Congregation to be a report for the sixteenth quadrennial term (1649). After the historical introduction pointing out difficult experiences from the religious history

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 125.

³⁶ Cf. W. Urban, *Zarys dziejów diecezji wrocławskiej*, Wrocław 1962, pp. 189-190.

³⁷ The procurator was Antoni Crosinus, who passed both reports at the same time on 3 August 1620; the text of the report from Brixen diocese (ASV SCC Relationes 147 A) is characterised by the style identical with that from Wrocław, written by the same hand.

³⁸ J. Kopic, *Historiografia Diecezji Wrocławskiej do roku 1821*, ABMK vol. 45: 1982, pp. 313-314. The abstract from the report is contained in J. Schmidlin, *Die Restaurationstätigkeit*, pp. 35-43; *Idem*, *Kirchliche Zustände und Schicksale*, pp. 51-53; W. Urban, *Z dziejów duszpasterstwa w archidiaconacie wrocławskim*, pp. 24-26.

³⁹ W. Urban, *Księgozbiór kanonika Jerzego Wawrzyńca Budaeusa a Lohr z 1653 r.*, ABMK vol. 43: 1981, pp. 7-8.

of Silesia and the fall of the once blooming Church in Wrocław, the report is characterised by a statistical layout. Although the narrative is continuous, without separating particular items, one can see the planned scheme in the following order: the cathedral, cathedral chapter, collegi-ates, convents, archdeaconries, and parishes. The report does not present any analyses of the existing situation, but the statistical description is the first presentation of diocesan institutions after a long period of unrest caused by the outbreak of the Reformation. The general number of 804 churches in the diocese, 412 of which were Catholic at the time of the report, after the tragic numbers of the previous periods, can already be a sign of progressing religious stabilisation in Silesia.⁴⁰

After the death of Bishop Charles Ferdinand Vasa, the diocese was governed, consecutively, by two representants of the imperial Habsburg family. First, this was Leopold Wilhelm (1656-1662),⁴¹ who visited the diocese just once, and was not even ordained as a priest. He also never drafted any report or paid any “ad limina” visit from Wrocław.⁴² Similarly, the short governance of fourteen-year-old Charles Joseph (1663-1664), lasting just one year, did not favour report drafting.⁴³

However, attention must be drawn to the governance of Bishop Sebastian Rostock (1664-1671).⁴⁴ This very eager pastor in Nysa was honestly interested in reforming the religious and church life at the diocese still before he was nominated as the bishop. After a longer time, he was finally the ordinary consecrated as a bishop; he hastily proceeded with inspections at the diocese and with improving the life and habits of the clergy. This eager work at the diocese also involved an “ad limina” visit prepared for his first quadrennial term (1669). The

⁴⁰ Cf. W. Marschall, *Geschichte des Bistums Breslau*, Stuttgart 1980, pp. 86-87.

⁴¹ Cf. A. Strnad, *Wahl und Informativprozess Erzherzog Leopold Wilhelms von Oesterreich, Fürstbischof von Breslau (1656-1662). Nach römischen Quellen*, ASKG vol. 26: 1968, pp. 153-190.

⁴² One must remember that Leopold Wilhelm was also the bishop of Strassburg and Passau from 1625, of Halberstadt from 1635, and Olomouc from 1637. In 1641, he drafted one joint report from three dioceses (Strassburg, Halberstadt, and Passau), text in ASV SCC Relationes 624 A.

⁴³ Imposed to the chapter by the emperor, who died after a serious illness.

⁴⁴ Cf. J. Jungnitz, *Sebastian von Rostock, Bischof von Breslau*, Breslau 1891; also: W. Urban, *Sebastian Ignacy Rostock biskup wrocławski (1664-1671) jako zasłużony bibliofil*, NP vol. 45: 1976, pp. 73-189.

report features no signature or date, but the procuration issued to canon Jan Jakub Brunetti⁴⁵ on 28 September 1667, and the certification from the Congregation that the report was accepted on 21 May 1668, points to the year 1667 as the time of its drafting. The contents present a more optimistic analysis of the situation of the Church in Silesia. The layout is particularly interesting. Apart from statistical and descriptive data, there are analytical sections giving an insight as to how the contemporary diocesan authorities perceived the overall matters of the Church. And thus we have: a brief historical outline of the Silesian Church (for the first time, there is no reference to the year 965 as the date of establishing the diocese by Mieszko I, but to 1052 as the time it was renewed after the pagan reaction), followed by the description of the cathedral and the history of divine service there, collegiates, orders with particular convents (first in the city of Wrocław, and then on the territory of the diocese), and further by the analysis of the religious condition of the population, the position of the bishop as the supervisor of the diocese and supra-starost; finally, there is a listing of abuses observed in some convents, and diocese borders at the end.

Special attention must be paid to the part of the report with the analysis of the diocese condition in the religious aspect, particularly that it was the first time it was discussed more broadly in the reports from Wrocław to Rome. The author began by distinguishing the seventeen duchies into which Silesia was divided, to further point out that the dukes principally affected the religious character of the lands. It was, however, comforting that there were campaigns to return to Catholicism and conversions in some lands, just as the campaign of Count Lobkowitz in the Duchy of Ziębice (Münsterberg). Next, the report passes to the presentation of various forms of dealing with pastoral services: in parishes with the vast majority of Protestants and, in particular, in parishes where the owner of the town was also Protestant. Important issues also involved teaching the truths of the faith, maintenance of schools and teachers at parishes, burials, etc. As regards holding the function of the ordinary at the diocese, the bishop pointed to the following matters: inspections at the diocese are performed by archdeacons every three years; the ordinary has a suffragan bishop for assistance; the bishop did not summon a synod because there are rather new resolutions from

⁴⁵ Cf. J. Jungnitz, *Sebastian von Rostock*, pp. 93-94.

the synod of Bishop Charles Ferdinand Vasa of 1653, but they were not in fact approved by the emperor, hence their little use even as regards inspirations for specific pastoral proposals. A separate sentence was devoted to the organisation of diocesan offices (official and general vicar, five assessors with the superior chancellor), and the scope of their duties, particularly related to enforcing discipline among the clergy. The bishop's duties related to holding the office of supra-starost of Silesia also took up a lot of his time.

When presenting the report by Bishop S. Rostock, it is worth drawing attention to the document attached to the basic text as its autonomous part. I mean the illustration of the religious standing of the diocese in particular towns and villages when discussing the religious activities of the inhabitants. The document is schematic, considering the division into archdeaconries, deaconries, and parishes, accurately presenting the religious status of each of them (using the terms: *omnes parochiani catholici, vel haeretici, magna pars lutherana*, etc.). The scheme also provides the names of most churches in the diocese. In this aspect, it provides a holistic view of the Silesian Church following the Reformation.

The suddenly deceased Bishop S. Rostock was replaced by Cardinal Friedrich v. Hessen-Darmstadt (1671-1682).⁴⁶ He was a convertite (originating from a Protestant family) engaged in papal service, a cardinal from 1652, striving to obtain the function of the bishop of Wrocław, which he finally did in 1671. He arrived in Wrocław as late as 1676. He became involved in works on restoring the full power and glory to the Silesian Church, which he attempted to achieve in the spirit of Baroque splendour. He also devoted a great deal of care to reclaiming the churches and inspecting the diocese. The cardinal's efforts can be illustrated by his sense of duty to pay the "ad limina" visit. While still in Rome, he should pay such a visit already after being appointed to hold the function in Wrocław, in 1673, for the twenty-second quadrennial term. Indeed, there is a note by the Secretary of the Congregation in Vatican materials that the cardinal visited St Peter's and St Paul's basilicas in person, but asked the Congregation to grant

⁴⁶ P. Buchmann, *Friedrich Landgraf von Hessen-Darmstadt, Malteserritter, Kardinal und Bischof von Breslau. Ein Beitrag zur Breslauer Bischofs-Geschichte*, Breslau 1883. Cf. also R. E. Scherdtfeffer, *Friedrich von Hessen-Darmstadt. Ein Beitrag zu seinem Persönlichkeitsbild anhand der Quellen im Vatikanischen Archiv*, ASKG vol. 41: 1983, pp. 165-240.

him dispensation from submitting a written report on the condition of the diocese, and promised to do so by the next deadline. This promise was, indeed, fulfilled.⁴⁷ While already working from Wrocław, he prepared the visit and the report, but being sick himself, and in view of the unrest in Europe caused by the continuing Turkish expansion, he appointed the Wrocław canon, Paweł Mossovius as his substitute.⁴⁸ The procurator authored the report that he signed, although he did not date the document. It has a similar layout to that of the report by his predecessor, Bishop S. Rostock, with the explanation of some of the issues quoted from the earlier version (e.g. parts about the condition of pastoral services). Only the fragments where one could write about the activities of the current ordinary were supplemented, particularly with respect to his construction activities and attempts to convert the Protestants, as the cardinal even received their confession of faith at the cathedral in several cases.

Among all bishops of Wrocław, the longest to govern the diocese was Franz Ludwig v. Pfalz-Neuburg (1683-1732), brother of Empress Eleanor, in time simultaneously acting as bishop of Worms, archbishop of Trier, and Mainz, chancellor of the Reich.⁴⁹ From this long period, there is just one report for the thirtieth quadrennial term, falling in 1709.⁵⁰ The bishop was aware he should fulfil the duty to pay an “ad limina” visit, but decided to draft a report only after twenty-four years of running the diocese. This was because he faced problems related to the Protestants, hence he could not draft it earlier. He appointed a canon from Nysa, Paweł Luzio, as his procurator, signing the procuration on 10 December 1708.⁵¹ It is only based on this date that we can determine the time of drafting the report, because the author failed to provide either his signature or the date in the document. The report is abundant, presenting similarities in the layout to the two previous reports. The brief historical introduction is followed by a report on the cathedral, chapter,

⁴⁷ Cf. ASV SCC Relationes 884 A.

⁴⁸ Canon of Italian origin, member of the Wrocław chapter in the period of 1677-1684.

⁴⁹ Cf. N. Conrad, *Die testamentarischen Verfügungen der Kurfürsten Franz Ludwig von Pfalz-Neuburg*, ASKG vol. 39: 1981, pp. 97-136; K. Dola, *Opieka społeczna w księstwie nyskim za czasów biskupa Franciszka Neuburga (1683-1732) i jej reorganizacja w 1725 roku*, SHTSO vol. 9: 1982, pp. 19-46.

⁵⁰ We have no “ad limina” report by this bishop from any other dioceses.

⁵¹ The procuration preserved at ASV – Segreteria di Stato: Lettere dei Principi, vol. 138, pp. 314-315.

institutions managed by the chapter (hospital and school), churches on the Ostrów Tumski cathedral island, male and female convents in Wrocław, as well as collegiate towns. The summary is formed by a statement about the diocese being divided into four archdeaconries, 50 deaneries, and 593 parishes. Further on in the report is a presentation of the bishop's curia, which functioned on the new terms introduced by the bishop by way of a pragmatic sanction of 1699.⁵² The report ends with a very clear accentuation of the merits of the Emperor's court in Vienna in restoring Catholicism in Silesia. The text of the report is attached with significant items of the Convention of Altranstädt of 1707, which the bishop clearly opposed.⁵³ During the subsequent twenty-four years of his governance in the Wrocław diocese, Bishop Franz Ludwig did not send any report to Rome.

The era of his successor in Wrocław, Cardinal Philipp Ludwig v. Sinzendorf (1732-1747), was one of the most difficult, particularly due to political complications and Silesia passing in its majority under Prussian rule.⁵⁴ Cardinal F. Sinzendorf previously held the function of the bishop of the Győr diocese, sending his report from there in 1730. After he took over the Wrocław diocese, his first report was submitted in 1739; it was accounted by the Congregation for three quadrennial terms (37-38-39, in the period of 1733-1741).⁵⁵ For the first time, the report from Wrocław was edited according to the new questionnaire of 1725.⁵⁶ The Cardinal signed it on 12 September 1739, and issued a procuration for his agent in Rome, attorney Francis Fargna, three days later. The latter visited the basilicas on 23 November 1739, and the Congregation confirmed fulfilling all formalities related to the "ad limina" visit on 12 December.

⁵² The text of the sanction was published by J. Jungnitz, *Die Sanctio pragmatica des Bischofs Franz Ludwig*, Breslau 1900. The most important innovation thereof was the division of the competences of the official and general vicar.

⁵³ N. Conrad, *Die Durchführung der Altranstädter Konvention in Schlesien 1707-1709*, Köln-Wien 1971 (Forschungen und Quellen zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte Ostdeutschland Bd 8), pp. 74-82.

⁵⁴ A. Strnad, *Der Kampf um ein Eligibilitätsbreve. Römische Quellen zur Breslauer Bischofswahl des Kardinals Philipp Ludwig von Sinzendorf (1732)*, ASKG vol. 35: 1975, pp. 68-124.

⁵⁵ W. Urban, *Z dziejów duszpasterstwa w archidiaconacie głogowskim*, pp. 289-290.

⁵⁶ This is clearly visible also with respect to reports from other Polish and Czech dioceses.

Following the requirements of the instruction – the questionnaire to draft the text of the report did not leave the space for the free selection of topics, but enforced answering the questions. The positive aspect thereof was that, finally, the matters of the diocese were treated holistically with respect to its organisation and functioning, providing much statistical data. The report by Cardinal F. Sinzendorf gives information about the history of the diocese (listing all the bishops of Wrocław, starting from 966 and the six earliest, legendary bishops known from the chronicle by Długosz), about the borders, exemption from metropolitan relation with Gniezno,⁵⁷ about the cathedral and its chapter, about collegiates, the territorial size of the diocese, number of cities (20), towns (45), small towns, (98) and villages (4554), parishes (634, including 93 managed by monks), and convents (71 in total). There were 30 students at the Seminar. According to the aforementioned questionnaire, the bishop also had to submit a report on his personal pastoral activities. Cardinal F. Sinzendorf confirmed his residence at the diocese, but could not inspect the diocese in person due to gout; he also did not preach, but delegated relevant priests to do so. This information was followed by further assessments of the clergy and the faithful who, according to the cardinal, rarely committed acts that would require reporting (drinking was the only major problem).

Cardinal F. Sinzendorf travelled to Rome in 1740 and visited Roman basilicas in person on 22 and 23 September, which formed the grounds for acknowledging the visit as one paid with respect to the fortieth quadrennial term (1745). The Cardinal, however, asked for exemption from the duty of submitting a new report because he had just submitted one a year earlier, and the condition of the diocese had not changed in such a short time. The Congregation conceded with the Cardinal's wish.

In the second half of the 18th century, the Wrocław diocese was managed by Bishop Philipp Gothard Schaffgotsch (1748-1795).⁵⁸ His personal, complicated history (he could not reside in Wrocław from 1766, and remained in the Austrian part of his diocese until the end of his life) clearly affected the situation of the Catholic Church in the new reality of the Prussian state under the rule of Frederick II.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ This issue was not present in earlier reports, except for the information from Bishop Charles (Habsburg) of Austria of 1620.

⁵⁸ W. Marschall, *Geschichte des Bistums Breslau*, pp. 105-107.

⁵⁹ J. Kopic, *Historiografia*, pp. 291-294.

Vatican materials provide information about the first report sent by Bishop F. G. Schaffgotsch almost one year after taking over the diocese for the first quadrennial term falling in 1749.⁶⁰ The bishop signed the report by his own hand on 24 February 1749, simultaneously issuing the procuration for his delegate in the person of Italian canon Kasper Ruggio, residing permanently in Rome, who also visited the basilicas on 28 and 31 March 1749, with the Congregation confirming the fulfilment of the formalities and submission of the report on 2 April. The report contains brief answers to the questions in the questionnaire, but does not provide any further explanations.

Six years later, Bishop F. G. Schaffgotsch submitted another report to Rome for the next (forty-second) quadrennial term (1753). He used the same procurator, and signed the drafted report on 2 May.⁶¹ The text is short but contains all the completed items of the questionnaire. The bishop often refers to his first report. We can find new details, for example that he inspected the entire diocese in the period of 1749-1752, there were growing difficulties from the side of the Prussian government, including limitations to the faithful with respect to participation in the Holy Mass on Sundays, and the new tariff of *iura stolae*.

Also in the next term, Bishop F. G. Schaffgotsch attempted to fulfil his duty to pay the "ad limina" visit. Loose notes preserved in the file with visits from Wrocław indicate he wished to pay the visit but was prevented from doing so due to the Silesian wars. He was exempted with respect to the forty-fourth quadrennial term (1761), but the visit by the aforementioned Kasper Ruggio in 1765 was made for the forty-fourth and forty-fifth terms, performing all the formalities, although there is no text of the report in the materials from Wrocław, and there are no grounds to conclude on any dispensation as to submitting the report.⁶² This was already the time of the King's disfavour with respect to the bishop, and the resulting restrictions in his mobility.

Certificates issued in the name of Fr Francis Maspani in Roman basilicas on 9 April 1773, and the note by the Secretary of the Congregation, indicate that the bishop fulfilled his duty for the forty-

⁶⁰ Cf. W. U r b a n, *Z dziejów duszpasterstwa w archidiecezji łódzkiej*, pp. 290-291.

⁶¹ See: *ibidem*, pp. 291-292.

⁶² We only know this from the reply by the Council Congregation, *Libri litt. Vis. SS. Liminum*, vol. 30 (1864-1769) f. 84v-86v. Date of the reply: 2 March 1765.

seventh term (1773), simultaneously being exempted from the duty of submitting reports in the following two years.

Bishop F. G. Schaffgotsch's last duty to pay the “ad limina” visit and report was fulfilled for the forty-eighth term in 1777. The bishop, facing problems with managing his entire diocese, fulfilled his duty exclusively with respect to the Austrian part, delegating canon Bernardo Giordani as his procurator. The report, submitted to Rome, was signed by the bishop on 18 December 1777; it was not drafted in accordance with the questionnaire, but as a continuous narrative: presenting the situation of the Catholic Church in two offices of the diocese on Austrian territory (Nysa and Cieszyn) on nine pages. The religious situation in both these parts significantly differed, hence the bishop devoted more attention to the Cieszyn area, with a significant Protestant majority.

There are two other reports from this period, submitted by Wrocław's suffragan bishop Maurice Strachwitz, who, having transferred to the Austrian part, held the office of apostolic vicar (1766-1781).⁶³ He submitted his first report for the forty-eighth term (1773) via the procurator Matteo Ciofani, who visited the basilicas on 29 November and 2 December 1773, and the Congregation confirmed the fulfilment of the formalities on 9 December. The report was signed by Bishop M. Strachwitz in Wrocław on 20 September 1773, and contains all the answered items of the questionnaire, although the answers are rather limited. The bishop pointed to restrictions imposed by the Prussian authorities on Church activities. This was expressed by the very fact of preventing the ordinary from fulfilling his pastoral duties, while it was only he himself, the apostolic vicar, who could guarantee the undistorted pastoral work, without the option of innovations. No diocesan synod could be summoned without the consent of the authorities, and the income of the clergy was also controlled. All this resulted in the rather limited options of pastoral service by Bishop M. Strachwitz. The report also pointed to the exemption of the Wrocław diocese. In the organisational aspect, the diocese then included 651 parishes (579 of which were in the Prussian part), 54 male monasteries, 17 female convents, and a seminar with 25 alumni. Only the suffragan bishop performed

⁶³ Cf. W. Marschall, *Geschichte des Bistums Breslau*, p. 108.

pontifical functions. The report gives a positive testimony of all the clergy doing the pastoral work.

Four years later, Bishop M. Strachwitz sent another report, signed on 12 September 1777, submitted in Rome, while fulfilling all the formalities, by Wrocław canon Franciszek Troillo.⁶⁴ The text of this report faithfully repeats that of the former; the only remarks added referred to the poor health of the bishop, who could not be as active in his work as before. Apart from that, even the numerical items illustrating the organisation of the diocese were repeated from the previous report.

Both reports by Bishop M. Strachwitz correspond with the documents sent by the ordinary. It cannot be excluded that they were somehow agreed upon between the two, so that Rome could receive information from the entire diocese, while they indirectly showed differing operating conditions of the Church in both parts of the diocese.

There are no traces of later reports by Bishop F. G. Schaffgotsch for the following 18 years of his governance in the diocese, nor of the reports of the next apostolic vicar, Bishop A. Rothkirch, who held the function from 1781. It is likely that the increasingly difficult conditions of the growing European conflict in the late 18th century resulted in the suspension of relations between the diocese and the Holy See. The next report on the diocese was the aforementioned one by Bishop J. Hohenlohe from the early 19th century.

While reviewing the “ad limina” reports by bishops of Wrocław from the 17th and 18th centuries, as available to historians, the following general conclusions can be drawn:

1. Bishops of Wrocław generally obeyed the duty to pay the “ad limina” visits and submittal of reports about the condition of the diocese. Difficult conditions, both personal and in Silesia, often resulted in the need to send procurators to Rome to fulfil the duty. The Congregation always accepted the explanations of the bishops.

2. The initially diligently fulfilled duty, at least formally, as to subsequent quadrennial terms, began to be treated rather loosely with time, with the bishops often being satisfied with submitting just one report during their governance.

3. There were certainly more visits than the reports submitted in Rome. Bishops often asked for dispensation from submitting a written report

⁶⁴ J. Jungnitz, *Die Breslauer Germaniker*, pp. 307-308.

about the condition of the diocese (e.g. Card. Fryderyk v. Hessen-Darmstadt and Card. F. Sinzendorf).

4. The reports were usually written by the procurators delegated to pay the visit, who supplemented them with oral information, as sometimes pointed out by the bishops in their cover letters, e.g. J. Sitsch, S. Rostock, and Franz Ludwig.⁶⁵

We thus have the following reports from Wrocław from the 17th and 18th centuries:

Date of report	Bishop	For the 4-year term	Procurator
1 Sept. 1603	J. Sitsch	4	M. Hilner
13 Aug. 1607	J. Sitsch	4	P. Gebauer P. Kribelius
31 Jan. 1613	Charles Habsburg	7	H. Grisonius
1617-20	Charles Habsburg	8	A. Crosinus
21 April 1650	Charles Vasa	16	J. W. Budaeus
1667	S. Rostock	21	J. J. Brunetti
1678	Cardinal Friedrich	23	P. Mossovius
1708	Franz Ludwig	31	P. Luzio
22 Sept. 1739	F. Sinzendorf	37-39	F. Fargna
24 Feb. 1749	F. Schaffgotsch	41	K. Ruggia
2 May 1755	F. Schaffgotsch	42	K. Ruggia
20 Sept. 1773	M. Strachwitz	47	M. Ciofani
12 Sept. 1777	M. Strachwitz	48	F. Troillo
18 Dec. 1777	F. Schaffgotsch	48	B. Giordani

⁶⁵ This was not exclusive to reports from Wrocław because analogical conclusions were drawn for other dioceses by W. Müller and A. Szorc, *op. cit.* Similar attitude visible in Czech reports.

2. The contents of reports from Wrocław

In the period before the introduction of P. Lambertini's questionnaire of 1725, the selection of the material for the report was entirely at the discretion of the authors. It was obvious that every bishop, including bishops of Wrocław, wanted to present the matters of his diocese, as well as his own personal matters, so that the Holy See could obtain a rather convincing picture of the condition of the local Church. Such approach involved a more static and more external description of the diocese, with the exposed bishop's city, cathedral, chapter, number of diocesan institutions, etc., while treating other areas briefly and in a more abbreviated manner.⁶⁶

The analysis of the diocesan situation, as well as its religious and political environment, was rather marginal, with simple statements about the difficult situation of the Church due to the dukes' support of Protestantism. The consequences of such support included poor efficiency of the entire administration campaign undertaken both by secular and Church authorities. The picture of the diocese submitted to Rome was unilateral, and often failed to explain the genesis of the situation. Nevertheless, the information in the reports constitutes a starting point for researchers as a testimony of the contemporary situation and description of diocese functioning at a particular time in its history. Let us then review the leading themes continuously exposed among the data submitted from Wrocław to Rome.

The approach to the history of the Silesian Church

Apart from the only report from Bishop S. Rostock of 1667, all the other reports begin with the historical lecture on the establishment of the diocese by Mieszko I in 965.⁶⁷ From the beginning, on the territory of the Wrocław diocese, the Church developed well and bloomed. This was not hindered by any wars or religious unrest in the past (in particular the dangerous Hussite movement). It was only Martin Luther whom the authors of the reports did not spare harsh words,⁶⁸ who tore the reli-

⁶⁶ A. Szorc, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

⁶⁷ E.g. in the report of 1603: The tradition dating back to medieval times, popularised owing to the lives of Wrocław bishops by Jan Długosz of 1468.

⁶⁸ Terms used: *haeresiarcha* (1603), *pestifera haeresis lutherana* (1607), *diabolica haeresis Lutheri* (1613).

gious picture of Silesia apart. In the authors' opinion, the development of the reformation was so successful thanks to the dukes, who supported the new religion.⁶⁹ The situation at the duchies was perceived in dark colours in 1603, but one can see progress in their return to Catholicism later on.⁷⁰ The dukes perceived the new religion as an opportunity to accrue wealth by taking over Church property and becoming independent of the imperial power. Some clergy and convents did not rise to the challenge at the time.⁷¹ This is because the people remained faithful, and if they followed the new trends, it was only due to a lack of education or strong will.⁷² The bishops hoped to overcome this difficult situation for the Catholic Church by way of ordinances issued by secular authorities, limiting the freedom of the Protestants. Hence the visible disappointment with some concessions to Protestants, such as the Letter of Majesty by Emperor Rudolf II of 1609, or the Convention of Altranstädt of 1707.⁷³ This did not, however, change the general attitude to the emperors as the rulers of the land, continuously perceived by the governors of the Wrocław diocese as defenders of the Catholic faith, and simultaneously their protectors.⁷⁴

The historical presentation of the problems of the diocese also preceded the most abundant part being the presentation of the situation of the Church in Silesia, described by the enumeration of all the institutions. The description of the diocesan institutions was supplemented with remarks about its religious situation.

The structure of the Wrocław diocese

Since medieval times, the Church in Silesia stood out with the dynamic development of its structures and particular institutions.⁷⁵ As mentioned before, the Reformation undermined their position. The renewal of the

⁶⁹ J. Drabina, *Z dziejów badań początkowego okresu reformacji wrocławskiej*, CS vol. 13: 1981, pp. 163-178; cf. J. Kopiec, *Historiografia*, pp. 277-291.

⁷⁰ Cf. Report of 1603 and the report of 1667.

⁷¹ Cf. Reports by J. Sitsch and Charles (Habsburg) of Austria.

⁷² Cf. Report of 1618.

⁷³ Cf. Report by Bishop Franz Ludwig of 1708.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁵ B. Panzram, *Die schlesischen Archidiaconate und Archipresbyterate bis zur Mitte des 14 Jahrhunderts*, Breslau 1937. See also: J. Kopiec, *Historiografia*, pp. 298-303.

Church after the Council of Trent was characterised with the strive to reclaim Catholic properties. One could expect that the reports would actually provide very detailed information on that matter. In fact, the materials do not give grounds for exhaustive presentation of the issue. The authors often provided imprecise numbers illustrating the organisation of the Church in the diocese. Furthermore, not each report quoted such data. Hence the presentation of this aspect of the history of the Wrocław diocese requires using other categories of sources for further research.

The reports provide numbers (summarising the 17th and 18th centuries) regarding particular degrees of territorial division of the diocese. We thus read that the division into four archdeaconries was preserved throughout the discussed period; the number of deaconries (also referred to as archpresbyteries) was only provided in the report by Bishop Charles Vasa in 1650, when there were 33 of them (still before the re-converted territory of the duchy of Legnica); that number changed to 38 in 1667, 50 in 1708, while at the beginning of Bishop F. Schaffgotsch's governance, there were 80 deaconries.⁷⁶

In early reports, no precise number of parishes was provided. According to J. Köhler,⁷⁷ the statistic of 60 Catholic parish priests in the entire diocese, first stated by Bishop Charles Habsburg seems to not reflect the factual status. Bishop Charles Vasa declared the number of parish priests as 412, Franz Ludwig – as 593, Cardinal F. Sinzendorf and Bishop F. Schaffgotsch stated the number of 634, whereas Bishop M. Strachwitz listed the total of 651 parishes, 579 of which were located in the Prussian part of the diocese, while 72 in the Austrian part. It is obvious that the numbers of parishes and parish priests alone do not reflect the complete picture of pastoral work in the diocese, but may give insight into some processes: in this case they allow us to imagine the scope of the re-conversion campaign and the stabilising volume of the Catholic population in Silesia.⁷⁸

The greatest attention in the reports was given to the centre of the diocese. Each of them, particularly by Bishop Charles Vasa, presents all the Church institutions in Wrocław. The number of Catholics at the

⁷⁶ C. L. Schattauer, *Catalogus Almae Dioecesis Silesiae (1748)*, ASKG vol. 26: 1968, pp. 289-326.

⁷⁷ J. Köhler, *Das Ringen*, p. 124.

⁷⁸ J. Jungnitz, *Visitationsberichte der Diözese Breslau*, vol. 1-4, Breslau 1902-1908.

centre of the diocese was low. In 1650, there was just one thousand. In 1667, Bishop S. Rostock provided the number of four thousand Catholics out of the total population of 70 thousand inhabitants. This number of Catholics comprised officials at various levels of imperial service living in Wrocław, and partly their servants. Finally, Catholics were also employed in crafts.⁷⁹ Ten years later, there were 6,000 Catholics, in the early 18th century: 15,000 (including the outskirts) out of 80,000 inhabitants, while in 1755 – as many as 26,000 out of the total number of 100,000 residents. The reports do not explain the causes behind this growth in numbers. One can assume that, likely, apart from the reasons listed by Bishop S. Rostock, the growth in the number of Catholics was a result of the pastoral work of the clergy, including the zealous Jesuits.

The description of Wrocław in the reports generally begins with the presentation of the cathedral, the grand church of St John the Baptist. Despite the development of Protestantism at the heart of the diocese, this church continuously remained in the Catholic hands, with the Divine service continuing, and bishops taking care of it. Cardinal Frederick founded the chapel of St Elisabeth there, referred to as electoral chapel, funded by Bishop Franz Ludwig. The reports pointed to the care of model prayers at the cathedral, and assuring continuous services to the penitents and catechesis.⁸⁰ The cathedral was severely damaged by the wars of 1740-42 and the fire of 1759.⁸¹

There was a chapter alongside the cathedral, with great medieval traditions.⁸² It was then that the number of seven chapter prelates was established (provost, dean, archdean, scholastic, cantor, curator, and chancellor), mentions of which can also be found in the reports from our period. During the Reformation period, the chapter faced the challenge and acted as the main support for Catholicism in the diocese. It was also praised by Bishop Charles Habsburg, Cardinal Frederick, Bishop Franz Ludwig, which was an intermediate expression of their appreciation for the people working there.⁸³

The number of canon offices in the 17th and 18th centuries fluctuated from 26 (1618) to 29 (1739, 1749), to drop to 22 in 1773. How-

⁷⁹ Cf. Report by Bishop von Rostock of 1667.

⁸⁰ Cf. Report by Bishop F. Ludwig of 1708.

⁸¹ Cf. Report by Bishop M. Strachwitz of 1773.

⁸² J. K o p i e c, *Historiografia*, pp. 317-320.

⁸³ Cf. Reports of 1618 and 1667.

ever, there were 15 permanently residing canons, and 12 in 1749. The authors of the reports explained this by general poverty and drop in the value of particular compensations.

The next item to be presented among the Church institutions in Wrocław were the collegiate.⁸⁴ The first to be listed was the collegiate at the Church of the Holy Cross with five prelates and twelve canons, who were almost all members of the cathedral chapter. The emperor held the patronage over the collegiate. Further, there was the former St Giles collegiate which, in the 17th century, acted as the parish church for the residents of the Ostrów Tumski island.⁸⁵ Apart from this, the Church complex included three other churches: St Barthelemy (with the tombs of the former rulers of Silesia),⁸⁶ St Martin, and Saints Peter and Paul. The authors referred to them only briefly.

Having discussed the Ostrów Tumski island, excluded from the jurisdiction of the Wrocław City Council, the description passed to the Church institutions at the heart of the diocese starting with the BVM Abbey of regular canons (the Abbey "On the Sand") to the proper city. Churches of particular orders were listed, and thus: St Vincent of the Premonstratensians, St Mathew of the Military Order of the Crusaders of the Red Star with the hospital, St Adalbert of the Dominicans, St Dorothy of the Franciscans, St Hedwig of the Capuchins (since 1670), and the church of the Jesuits dealing with education, and running the university since 1702. The authors devoted some attention to each of the orders, either providing the current number of the monks (e.g. in 1667), or informing of problems with the convents (particularly disputes with the Premonstratensians and regular canons) versus the bishop's jurisdiction with respect thereto (1650, 1667, 1678, 1708), or about difficulties with observing monastic discipline (the early 17th century).⁸⁷ Other churches in Wrocław were also mentioned, which remained in the hands of the Protestants (churches of St Elisabeth, Mary Magdalene, Christophe, Barbara, Bernardin), and the Church of Corpus Christi, once belonging to the Johannites but, in the 17th century, held

⁸⁴ J. K o p i e c, *Historiografia*, pp. 320-322.

⁸⁵ Cf. Report of 1667.

⁸⁶ The church of St Barthelemy is actually a crypt at the Collegiate Church of the Holy Cross.

⁸⁷ From the response of the Congregation in this scope, it appears that Rome supported the bishops of Wrocław in their controversies with monasteries.

by the Wrocław City Council. On the outskirts of Wrocław were the Catholic churches of St Nicholas and St Maurice⁸⁸ and, from the early 18th century, also of St Michael the Archangel. The churches acted as parish churches and provided pastoral services to residents of villages near Wrocław.

After discussing the centre of the diocese, the authors described the collegiate towns, where they not only listed collegiats and their chapters, but also presented other institutions, principally convents and church hospitals. The list began with Głogów with its BVM collegiate, where the Catholic City Council was based from the 17th century. Orders working there included the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits. Nysa was the seat of the bishop, and his residence was a characteristic element of the architecture of the city where secular authorities also supervised the diocese as the dukes of Nysa and Grodków. Until 1650, the collegiate was connected with the Church of St John at the Old Town, and later with the parish church of St Jacob and Agnes in the city centre. After the bishops dealt with the Protestants, starting from the mid-17th century, Nysa was already Catholic.⁸⁹ There were 14 hospitals here,⁹⁰ supported by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, the Jesuits (running the famous “Carolinum”), the Bernardines, and the Capuchins. In Opole, there was the Collegiate of the Holy Cross, population almost entirely Catholic, with convents of the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits, who had held a college in town since 1670. Racibórz was predominantly Catholic, with the convent of Dominican monks and nuns, and the provostship of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Nysa outside the city walls, and with the convent of the Reformed Fathers since 1687. In Głogówek, according to the reports, were only remains of the collegiate chapter (with just one canon doing the pastoral work residing there in 1667), but the population was almost entirely Catholic owing to the activities of the city owner, Count Oppersdorf. The reports also listed Niemodlin but, apart from the memory and title of the parish priest (provost), there was no chapter there in the 17th century. The authors also expressed their regrets concerning Brzeg and

⁸⁸ The parishes of St Nicholas and St Maurice were the seats of Wrocław’s deaneries as it was not possible to establish a deanery there.

⁸⁹ Cf. Report of 1667.

⁹⁰ K. D o l a, *Opieka społeczna*, pp. 25-28.

Legnica, once strong Catholic centres, but turned Protestant in 1530. It was only during the governance of Cardinal Frederick and Bishop Franz Ludwig that the pastoral institutions of the Jesuits and Capuchins appeared.

The panorama of Catholic institutions in the Wrocław diocese was supplemented by listing the convents according to particular order, both male and female. Apart from listing the locations with their convents, the report of 1708 also provided brief historical information about the work of the orders, principally pointing to the Jesuits and their successes in converting the Protestants into Catholicism.⁹¹

The fragments of the reports dealing with organisational and institutional matters of the Catholic Church in Silesia reveal the actual interest of contemporary governors of the Wrocław diocese exclusively in the external structure of the Church. There is no visible mature analysis of the situation or significant Protestantization of the diocese.

While discussing organisational matters of the diocese in the reports for Rome, it is worth pointing out certain details related to metropolitan nature of Wrocław. It is known how interesting this is to science, predominantly due to the political aspects.⁹² In the reports before the instruction from 1725, the issue of metropolitan affiliation appeared just once, rather marginally, in the aforementioned additional material classified as the report of 1620 submitted for the eighth quadrennial term. While informing about the dangers pending in the first period of the Thirty Years' War, Bishop Charles Habsburg mentioned seeking refuge in Poland, within the borders of the Gniezno archbishopric, at his metropolitan bishop's.⁹³ In the background of later separatist tendencies in Wrocław, this statement by Bishop Charles Habsburg of Austria was not used to conclude on consistent metropolitan relations between the Wrocław diocese and Gniezno. The subject is not present in the reports until 1739. This is because, starting with the mandatory drafting of the report according to the questionnaire, paragraph 1 section 3 required listing the privileges of the diocese. Cardinal F. Sincendorf provided a brief historical outline of the issue of the metropolitan affiliation of Wrocław with Gniezno, limiting the duration thereof

⁹¹ Cf. Report of 1708.

⁹² J. K o p i e c, *Historiografia*, pp. 327-330.

⁹³ Cf. Report of 1620.

exclusively to the period when Silesia politically belonged to Poland. During the governance of the Cardinal, Wrocław enjoyed exemption, namely reported directly to the Holy See. At the same time, however, the cardinal believed he had the duty to participate in the synods in the province in Gniezno, if summoned, and in the absence of obstacles posed by the King of Bohemia.⁹⁴ Further reports from the 18th century only briefly referred to the privilege of exemption for the Wrocław diocese “for centuries”.⁹⁵ It can be thus deemed that, in that era, the Wrocław diocese treated its exemption as an obvious fact.

The Bishops of Wrocław and their activities

The head of the diocese was at the centre of attention of the entire post-Tridentine reformed work of the Catholic Church. Bishops were also aware of this and, in their reports sent to Rome, attempted to present themselves as worthy pastors, devoted to the duties imposed on them. The reports from Wrocław rarely provide more thorough opinions or analyses by governors of the diocese. Written basically by the procurators from the bishop’s closest circles, they contained praises of the bishops, stressing their external activities. One can also say that, while approving the text of the report, the ordinaries perceived themselves as sufficiently zealous promoters of the entire Church life in Silesia, understood the importance of religious revival in the diocese, and did not spare funds to restore the possessions of the Church. These conclusions can be drawn pursuant to the information contained in the documentation.

The presentation of the ordinary usually begins with a statement of concern for the “ad limina” visit to the capital of Christianity, immediately followed by the excuse for absence in Rome for objective reasons, which, in the eyes of the bishops, were sufficient to obtain an exemption from the duty of arriving to see the Pope in person. Apart from illness (Bishop S. Rostock, Cardinal F. Sinzendorf), there were more frequent reasons of a political and religious nature. Bishops J. Sitsch and Charles Habsburg of Austria argued the need for their presence on site with the aggression of the Protestants invading places in the diocese that continued to remain in Catholic hands. The need to

⁹⁴ W. Urban, *Jeszcze o egzempeji diecezji wroclawskiej*, PK vol. 9: 1958 No. 1-2, pp. 319-325.

⁹⁵ ASV SCC Relationes 366 A-B.

remain in Silesia was also related to their holding of the function of the supra-starost, which office was an outcome of the goals related to re-conversion to Catholicism pursued by both the Church and the Empire.

The subject of the bishop's residence in the diocese reappeared in the reports from Wrocław in the second half of the 18th century, in accordance with the requirements of the new questionnaire. Both Cardinal F. Sinzendorf and Bishop F. Schaffgotsch responded YES to the question about residence, loyally informing of the necessary travel to the court in Vienna or Berlin.⁹⁶ Apart from the residence, other important duties imposed on the bishops were enquired about. These included: inspecting the diocese, preaching the Gospel, confirmation and ordination, as well as holding diocesan synods. All these tasks are presented in the reports as having been performed diligently. Although the bishops often could not undertake performing all the duties in person, they perceived the importance of these activities and delegated special representatives, thus fulfilling the requirements of the Church law.⁹⁷ However, they did not summon synods; the last diocesan synod in the era was the assembly held in April 1653 during the governance of Bishop Charles Vasa.⁹⁸ The controversies around approving its resolutions, as well as difficulties related to summoning the clergy from the territory of such a vast diocese stopped the bishops from fulfilling this task.⁹⁹ During Prussian rule, summoning of the synod was additionally complicated by the required consent from the authorities in Berlin.¹⁰⁰

The person of the bishop of Wrocław still seldom appeared in the reports on other occasions, such as the aforementioned care of the cathedral and its decoration, guaranteeing the education of new generations of priests, interest in reclaiming the churches and parishes that used to be Catholic, as well as extension of the parish and deanery network. Such information constitutes some data for historians, but this data is too limited to shed the light on the holistic service of the ordinary in the difficult times following the Reformation, and during Catholic Counter-Reformation.

⁹⁶ See: Report by Bishop Schaffgotsch of 1749.

⁹⁷ See: Report by Cardinal Sinzendorf of 1739.

⁹⁸ Cf. J. S a w i c k i, *Concilia Poloniae*, vol. 10, pp. 282-323.

⁹⁹ See: Report by Bishop von Rostock.

¹⁰⁰ See: Report of 1749.

Three reports (from 1667, 1678, and 1708) provide information about the diocesan offices directly related to the person of the ordinary and the governance of the diocese. This is about the offices of the vicar and general official. Both those central offices were held by one priest, generally one of the cathedral canons. He was aided by a chancellor and five assessors, two of whom were secular, educated and tested Catholics. With respect to marriage matters, there was a tribunal guided by the requirements posed by the Council of Trent. With respect to the matters of the clergy and control thereof, the bishop appointed four deans in the diocese.¹⁰¹ A certain novelty in the functioning of such central offices can be found in the report by Bishop Franz Ludwig. He divided the offices and their competences, appointing one vicar and one general official.¹⁰² This innovation (separation of the area of grace and justice) was certainly driven by the intention to facilitate the management of the diocese, which was all the more necessary since the bishop rarely resided in Silesia, but managed several more dioceses in the Reich.

When analysing the reports, one can have the impression that the authors perceived the presence and service by the bishops of Wrocław as sufficient and positive. At the same time, the output of existing research indicates that such an assessment would be too optimistic. Although the bishops of Wrocław did not purposefully neglect their duties, what they achieved was but a minimum contribution into the work of the Church in Silesia.

The clergy and the faithful

One could expect to find more information about the Catholic population in Silesia in the “ad limina” reports. Already earlier argumentation indicates that the authors of the reports showed increasingly lower interest in the matters more distant from the heart of the diocese and the person of the bishop. Certainly, the picture of the life and work of the clergy and their relations with the people was formed by the Church law and ordinances of the diocesan authorities. Bishops and their officials had significant information about the clergy and their diocese (for example, through inspections), but the “ad limina” reports only contained summary listings.

¹⁰¹ So stated in the report of 1667, and the following two repeated this.

¹⁰² Cf. Report by F. Ludwig.

There was little information about the number of clergy. The aforementioned numbers of parishes rather referred to Catholic priests managing such institutions. Personal support was certainly not guaranteed to the satisfactory extent, but the authors of the reports did not complain of an overly low number of priests at the disposal of the diocese. The assessment by the bishops in the early 17th century was very negative, certainly overly general, but also clearly pointing to the far-reaching interdependence between the moral and intellectual qualifications of the Catholic clergy and the progressing expansion of Protestantism. The significant shortage of relevant merits among the clergy rendered the zeal of diocesan authorities useless. With time, the assessment grew more moderate, to become clearly positive in the mid-18th century. Indeed, there were some shortcomings, and even scandals (predominantly cases of drunkenness and violation of celibacy), but these were exceptions.¹⁰³ At the time, the engagement of the priests in zealous preaching of the Gospel and catechesis was pointed out, informing about the education of the clergy via theological conferences.¹⁰⁴

Some remarks refer to raising new generations of priests. In post-Tridentine conditions, the establishment and maintenance of a seminar marked the zeal of the bishop and the reformed style of work at the diocese.¹⁰⁵ Wording used in reports from Wrocław indicates that the bishops appreciated this area of their work. Bishop J. Sitsch wrote about the necessity of having valuable professors, which is why he supported some using his own income.¹⁰⁶ Bishop Charles Habsburg of Austria complained that the seminar in Nysa did not meet the needs of the large diocese, but did not point to the reasons behind such difficulties. In his second report, he informed of closing the seminar due to the absence of professors, while he himself kept several alumni in Jesuit colleges.¹⁰⁷

More data was provided by Bishop S. Rostock in 1667, stating he paid for 12 alumni with his own funds. He also gave some information about the requirements posed to them: the seminar accepted candidates aged no younger than twenty-one who had graduated from the humanities and philosophy; they also had to show progress in learning

¹⁰³ See: Report by Cardinal Sinzendorf.

¹⁰⁴ See: Report of 1739.

¹⁰⁵ H. H o f f m a n n, *Die Geschichte des Breslauer Alumnats*, Breslau 1935.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Report by Bishop J. Sitsch of 1603.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Report of 1607.

the two languages used in pastoral work at the Wrocław diocese, namely Polish and German. Several candidates for priests studied theology at the Jesuit college.¹⁰⁸ The report by Bishop Franz Ludwig (1708) also added that, in order to be admitted to the sub-deaconry, one had to successfully pass the exams before the general vicar.¹⁰⁹

The questionnaire developed by P. Lambertini contained the entire sixth paragraph with questions regarding the seminar. These referred to the number of alumni, inspections at the seminar, any bylaws, etc. Hence little use of the information in the reports for studies on the history of the seminar. In 1749, there were 30 alumni, whereas Bishop M. Strachwitz declared the number of 25 alumni 25 years later.

The population of the diocese belonged to various states. Higher states were already mentioned when speaking about the religious situation at the diocese. Reports spoke negatively about dukes and the nobility; the bishops even accused them of causing the Reformation in Silesia. When it came to poorer people, the subjects, a more moderate attitude, and even some compassion, can be observed. In 1618, Bishop Charles Habsburg of Austria generally spoke of the people as being morally good.¹¹⁰ Bishop S. Rostock performed a certain analysis of pastoral work at the diocese depending on the religious situation of a parish. Wherever parish priests were Catholic among a majority of Protestants, the work was difficult and resonated poorly among the Catholics. The latter read Lutheran postils, and parents raised their children in the Protestant spirit. Parish priests in such parishes baptised children of Protestant parents and buried the Protestants at Catholic cemeteries. In parishes with a Lutheran majority, where the owner of the village was also a Protestant, the work was particularly difficult because non-Catholic teachers were kept, as well as those preached religion in the spirit of Martin Luther.¹¹¹ This situation prevailed throughout the period of interest, causing distress to Church authorities, because it was hard to expect fast effects of work on reconverting people to the Catholic Church. In reports from the 18th century, in paragraph eight, there were brief opinions about the believers. In 1739, Car-

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Report of 1667.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Report of 1708.

¹¹⁰ See: note 72.

¹¹¹ The case must have been topical for a longer time if Cardinal Friedrich, and Bishop Franz Ludwig expressed themselves in a similar style in their reports.

dinal F. Sinzendorf spoke well of the faithful in his diocese, with the plague of drinking apparently contained after the Jesuit missions.¹¹²

It appears that the most accurate assessment of the Catholic in the diocese was provided by Bishop M. Strachowitz in 1773, when he stated that the habits of the people were “*bona mixta malis*”.¹¹³

Measures to revive religious life

Undoubtedly, in the first period of submitting the “ad limina” reports in Rome, the bishops of Wrocław perceived them principally as an opportunity to express their anti-Protestant attitude.¹¹⁴ Written reports were treated as a forum to express their true faith; they could also be used to speak of sad events related to the Reformation, as well as raise the importance of initiatives undertaken to revive the Church and religious life. Therefore, the first reports contained more information on reintroducing Catholicism in the diocese, and provide more details on measures to strengthen Catholicism.

Bishop J. Sitsch was truly devoted to seeking the opportunities for healing the general situation in Silesia. He perceived them predominantly through improving the discipline and impact on the clergy to motivate them to more intensive work. While pursuing this goal, he decided to inspect the diocese, summon the synod, and issue detailed regulations against the priests neglecting their duties and violating the rule of celibacy. He believed stricter censorship and control of printed religious books would play a significant role in restricting the free spread of Protestantism. In his second report (1607), he informed about the inspection, the synod where a number of important resolutions were adopted, and their implementation. The bishop also succeeded in placing Catholic priests in several parishes, while the imperial authorities restricted the right to construct non-Catholic churches. The bishop did not neglect another important area: the education of new priests, by caring for the selection of appropriate lecturers. One must admit that Bishop J. Sitsch defined the appropriate direction of his duties, although there is often a long road to perceiving the problems and issuing the right decisions for their implementation.

¹¹² Cf. report by Cardinal F. Sinzendorf of 1739.

¹¹³ Cf. the report by Bishop M. Strachowitz of 1773.

¹¹⁴ Cf. A. S z o r c, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-236.

To the detriment of Silesia, after the imminent death of Bishop J. Sitsch (1608), the following bishops originated from the imperial Habsburg family and the royal Vasa family, when the bishops' power was poor and the political situation during the Thirty Years' War did not favour the work of the Church. It was only in the late 17th century when one could perceive the positive results of pastoral work.

The successor of J. Sitsch, Bishop Charles Habsburg of Austria, followed his predecessor as the governor of the diocese. He perceived his dispositions as the most effective measures for improving the situation of the Church. In this spirit, he did not abstain from expressing his negative opinion about the Letter of Majesty of 1609, which did not contribute to supporting Catholicism in Silesia. He sustained the need for inspecting the convents, which were the source of significant evil during the Reformation, pointing to the convents of the Cistercians, Premonstratensians, Franciscans, and Dominicans in 1613, where inspections should be carried out first. Five years later, the bishop accentuated the appropriateness of using the edicts and imposing high penalties on all who opposed. Nevertheless, because such measures were ineffective, and the power of the opponents was significant, the bishop also turned to other measures: strengthening the clergy in both the diocese and the convents in the spirit of Tridentine discipline; purchasing the Duchy of Krnov, which was spreading the Protestant faith, to be reinstated in its entirety to the Catholic Church as an imperial property (King of Poland, Sigismund III, the bishop's brother-in-law, could be of great help here); the panacea to all these ailments was to improve the intellectual level, principally of theological clergy and the faithful, so that they could become more aware members of the Catholic Church. The measures for improving the religious condition of the diocese proposed by Bishop Charles Habsburg of Austria can constitute an interesting example of how the Church continued to seek the opportunities for effective work. The bishop, however, rarely visited Wrocław, and was also engaged in holding a political function in the country, so his personal involvement in the outlined plan was rendered impossible.

In reports from the later period, there are no formulations of a specific programme for Church activities. The records contained in the reports appear to indicate their tendency to follow the path of legal enforcement of claims for Catholicism at the expense of the Protestants. One could

see the effort to educate the clergy, strengthen discipline, and reclaim churches. The lists of churches and parishes provided since the reports by Bishop Vasa seem to confirm this rule. For historians, this is an indirect but interesting trace in interpreting the awareness of the bishops for whom, in spite of everything, status and legal order were sufficient markers for the positive or negative assessment of the condition of the Church. This is further confirmed by the replies from the Congregation to the reports sent to Rome about the condition of the diocese. There is no case of considering a report as insufficient or incomplete. The tone of the reply was simply kind, and full of appreciation for the bishops. It was likely about moral support to the governors of the dioceses in their uneasy situation. Such an approach of the Holy See was an important element of the entire conversion work, also in Silesia. Nevertheless, the replies from the Congregation to reports pointed to matters which, according to the members of the Congregation, seemed particularly delicate or insufficiently elaborated.

While chronologically reviewing replies to the reports, one can clearly ascertain the selective nature of the problems referred to by the Congregation. The report of Bishop A. Jerin of 1589 (text unavailable) was answered to by the Congregation by pointing to the work of the seminar;¹¹⁵ the reply to the subsequent report of 1593 provided remarks about priests who lived in cohabitation;¹¹⁶ and Bishop Charles Vasa was reminded of the rightfulness of subjugating the orders to the ordinary.¹¹⁷ There was an interesting reply from the Congregation to the extensive report by Bishop S. Rostock (1667), where he provided certain suggestions regarding the relations between Catholics and Protestants. The Congregation spoke against the bishop's proposal to bury the Protestants in Catholic churches. Other remarks of the Congregation referred to the canons and abuse on the part of such monks who led processions outside the area of the convent without the consent of the ordinary. Such cases of abuse were the source of conflicts negatively affecting pastoral work.¹¹⁸ The legal-institutional approach to the religious life of the diocese is also visible in reports written in the 18th

¹¹⁵ Lib. litt. Vis. SS. Lim. vol. 1 (1587-1592) f. 44 r.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, vol. 2 (1593-1601) f. 47 v.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, vol. 8 (1648-1652) f. 127 v -128 v.

¹¹⁸ SCC Liber decretorum, vol. 26 f. 18 r - v.

century. The reply to the report by Cardinal F. Sinzendorf of 1739, apart from ascertaining the zeal of the bishop, contained indications regarding the establishment of offices of confessors and theologians at the cathedral chapter, summoning the synod as the most beneficial measure of reviving the activities of the clergy, and suggested legal-pastoral directives for canons and parish priests.¹¹⁹

The analysis of the replies from the Congregation to the “ad limina” reports does not result in extraordinary supplementations of the information provided in the reports. Rome never questioned the problems presented, even if they required supplementation or a different setting. The replies repeated the contents already presented by the report’s author. This indicates that the guidelines from the Congregation were in line with the decisions of the governors of local Churches, with the Congregation not interfering too much with their work and plans. The reports can also indirectly prove that the bishops had acted in line with the requirements of the Holy See. The analysis of replies to the reports from other dioceses may provide an additional comparative material.¹²⁰

Conclusions

The bishops’ duty to pay visits to the Holy See, resulting from the reform of the Council of Trent, principally had to account for the reformatory attitude in the description of particular dioceses. The threat posed by Protestantism affected the established model of pastoral service particularly of the bishops, but also of the priests. The criteria used for assessing the engagement of governors in work on the reform included their mobilisation with respect to inspections. Good awareness of their own territory was not only to provide detailed data about the society, but also to contribute to working out more effective methods of pastoral work. A similar interest can be observed a step higher: information sent to the Holy See about each diocese was to comprise a broad panorama of the Church, considering its needs, and guaranteeing the appropriate level of pastoral services. The phenomenon of “ad limina”

¹¹⁹ Lib. litt. vis SS. Lim. vol. 26 (1737-1748) f. 34 v - 36 v.

¹²⁰ I have reviewed, in the Archives of the Congregation of the Council, the replies to the reports from Czech dioceses (Prague, Litoměřice, Olomouc, Hradec Kralove) – the Congregation’s attitude in writing the replies was identical as for Wrocław, considering local problems.

visits and drafted reports about the situation at the diocese, constitute an important source for historical research on episcopacy in the modern era. On the example of the Wrocław diocese, we can ascertain that the duty was treated rather formalistically; observance of the intervals of the visits in the initial period can be considered a testimony to canonical diligence. However, gradual shifting of the focus on submitting written reports transformed, in time, into considering one report for the entire period of governing the diocese as sufficient. Importantly, the Holy See did not react to such interpretation of the law by the bishops, and was satisfied with this status.

The preserved texts of the report deserve attention. Undoubtedly, writing the reports was not easy. The large diocese of Wrocław did not facilitate a holistic perspective, particularly if, in the discussed period, there were few bishops truly devoted to exclusively pastoral work in the diocese. The opinion prevailed that the Holy See expected submitting the material pursuant to which it would be possible to develop new and more decisive measures against the spread of the young and quickly developing Protestantism. With all the reservations as to the value of the reports – written documents from various dioceses, as expressed in existing historical literature, they cannot be underestimated. The reports were certainly schematic and incomplete, but this does not disqualify them as a source. Even considering the current interests of the bishops expecting approval for their work, these reports can provide much data for researchers. They certainly allow determining the orientation of the works by the Church and its representatives. The “ad limina” reports are no less a reliable historical source than, e.g., the highly praised inspections of the dioceses,¹²¹ and the source nature is granted to them by the fact that the information about the diocese was drafted by a team of competent officers from the bishop’s chancellery. Owing to consecutive reports, the review of the condition of the diocese at a specific moment of its history can be perceived as a certain historical process, in this case striving to counteract the effects of conversion to Protestantism. Even the authors of the reports adopted the assumption that one cannot detach the view of the present condition of the diocese from its historical perspective.

¹²¹ Cf. S. Li b r o w s k i, *Wizytacje diecezji wrocławskiej*, ABMK vol. 10: 1965, p. 36 ff.

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