

The Birth and First Activities of Antiochia

The pastoral activity of young people of Antiochia was created among students of Theological faculty in 1991. In preparatory year of Theological faculty in Litoměřice was about sixty capable students. The prefects of that time Petr Bartonek and Marek Dunda observed the conditions to carry out such an action. The idea emerged from their heads long before then but they start to realize it these days. The basic thought of the program is that young people spend their holidays in a parish of small religious eagerness. This should help finding ways to get closer to native inhabitants, so that they can meet Christians and find out that Christian religion is something close to their hearts.

The first place to do this was Vysoké Žibidovice u Starého Města pod Kralickým Sněžníkem. Single runs were carefully planned for these first holidays in Žibidovice. Each run had its head and several assistants from the preparatory class of Theological faculty who took their friends with. It was arranged that each run would continue in the activity of the former run, whose participants would try to hand over all the contacts and information they had. Students of the preparatory year gathered regularly to pray together for this plan. They were preparing various programs and catechesis for the participants of Antiochia.

The first run came with more than thirty young people and their big deal was to make a good start. Moreover, they managed quite well. Groups of people set out for Žibidovice and other village Žleb, they had almost uninterrupted adoration in front of the house of God, which the members of Antiochia took turns at. In the evenings, they played a game called School. It was a kind of arcade game in an old abandoned school building. In addition, local boys played it a lot. We gave a dancing party in Staré Město in the second half of the first week. A band from south Moravia came and it meant a big propaganda for Antiochia. We were puzzled when we were told that parties were hardly organized in this town. We get to know why after midnight. There was an unwritten rule that each party has to end with a fight and local people beat properly the others. This explained why we felt a bit odd when people gradually faded out and only the fighters and we stayed. We won on knocked out teeth. Luckily, everything came out fairly well.

Next runs of Antiochia picked up the threads of the first run and made many new personal contacts. In Žleb, they prayed rosary every afternoon and sometimes they come together for a night-long adoration. The latter were accepted with a great amazement of local young people. One of them checked the praying people a few hours after midnight and threw in "Jeez! They are really praying in there!"

Many friendships were made and members of Antiochia sometimes visited their new friends. The second year of Antiochia happened during the summer holidays in 1992.

On holiday in 1992, the idea of Antiochia was carried over to north Bohemia. Students of Theological faculty chose four parishes, which provided perfect conditions for Antiochia; these were almost no religiosity, usable church and presbytery, and easy communication with clergyman. Each place was chosen to suit us to try some new methods. In Ústí nad Labem we tried Antiochia in a small town. In Chcebuž prevailed small groups of participants and Antiochia got on only after we helped to find a thief who stole petrol from car. In Krešice, the priest exposed the sacrament and the participants waited a few days for him to put the sacrament back on its place, so that they can stop the adoration.

In Kravaře, there was a prayer centre. This pilgrims place was to support the activity of other places of Antiochia with its prayers. In Kravaře, there were larger groups of participants and Blochin University under terms of Antiochia took place here in one run. We used a special element in this year of Antiochia. In the first run there was so called Rapid Company consisted of a few enthusiastic young men. When there was a problem, they drove

to the place and helped with solving it. All four places pan out. It brought either several conversions or prolonged cooperation with local members of Antiochia. Antiochia in Úst k had worked for several years and was effective either in the spiritual field or in human relationships.

Another interesting event was the pilgrimage of all Antiochias in the first run. All four groups met on the hill at Úst k on the place Ostré. This happened at the time when our bishops consecrated our country to Madonna at the pilgrimage to Velehrad. Father Jaroslav Stríž celebrated the mass at our meeting and Antiochia was consecrated to Our Lady as well.

We did not specialize only on children and young people in first years of Antiochia. Our attention was devoted to other generations. We always emphasized the prayer and personal contacts. There were many enthusiastic people at the beginning of Antiochia, who were willing to go the extra mile for Antiochia.

Lot of new avid people follows their footsteps.