

POLAND  
Patricia Flynn, SSND

(Box at right begins with SSND founding date in Poland, number of missions, number of sisters in 1990)

PO
1. 1934
2. 23
3. 262

We arrived in Poland on September 12, (1990) the day the new government took over and in the following weeks of visitation we shared both the hope and the apprehension of the people, especially our sisters. Forty years ago, our sisters were forced out of schools and in many cases these institutions were confiscated by the government. In the intervening years our sisters were allowed to minister in parishes and diocesan offices, in two state institutions for the disabled and in community service in our convents. In all of these situations our sisters are engaged in a diversity of ministries and supported by the prayers and sufferings of the sick and elderly. Now the sisters are being asked to teach in schools again, and the government is offering to give back some of the property.

The sisters are aware of the many kinds of poverty in their own environment and despite their economic conditions, each house has committed 10% of its income to the poor. As the province prepares to send its first missionaries to The Gambia, (West Africa) the sisters also have their eyes on other new mission extensions, possibly Russia. With Mary, their Mother, they move into the future with hope and trust.

The following true story could represent a group of sisters about whom we cannot report here until we learn how permanent the recent political changes are.

An 86 year old sister lives in her little house in a remote village. The two women who had lived with her had died and left her alone and lonesome. Now and then one of her acquaintances comes to see how she is doing; otherwise the sister takes care of herself as well as she can.

When we visited her she told us about her everyday life; then she led us to a statue of Our Lady in her room and said: "If life gets too hard and I cannot go on any more, I come here, to the Mother of God, place my hand into her outstretched and open hands (which she really did at that moment) and pray: Mother, help me to make it through at least this day."

"God have mercy on her and those in similar situations and bless them,  
let your face shine upon them,  
So may your way be known upon earth;

**Among all nations, your salvation." ( Ps 67, 1-2)**