

## PASSIONISTS IN

# UKRAINE

When Pope Pius XI sent the first Passionists to Poland in 1923, he expressed the hope that the new foundation would be a first step toward the establishment of the Congregation in the Soviet Union. After nearly seventy years this seems to be developing. On the 21st. July last Fathers Albin Sobiech and Piotr Czaplinski, members of our Polish Province dedicated to the Assumption of Mary, took charge of the church, only recently returned to the Catholic Church, in the small village of Smotrycz, located in the central part of the Ukrainian Republic. The two thousand Catholics living in an area extending some 50 Km. (31 miles) around Smotrycz, constitute a minority dispersed in small enclaves in the midst of Orthodox Christians, many of whom also attend the Passionist Catholic liturgies. Some of them, especially in cases of mixed marriages, are even asking to be admitted into the Catholic Church. There have been cases of Catholics who have brought their children to be baptized all the way from Siberia! Our trailblazer Passionists, who live in the sacristy, have now opened temporary chapels in two other villages where there are Catholics. The people help them as best they can, and in spite of empty shelves in the shops, they don't seem to lack food, with the exception of meat. The civic authorities have shown



themselves well-disposed toward our priests. Language, even though somewhat similar to their native Polish, is the biggest hurdle they have to overcome, and there is an urgent need for liturgical books and Bibles in the Ukrainian language. All in all though, they appear to be off to a great start! (Damiano Wojtyška, C.P.).

Above: Frs. Albin Sobiech (left) and Piotr Czaplinski (right), Poland, who have begun to work in the Ukraine. With their provincial Ladislao Zysk they stand at the road sign to Smotrych.

Center: Fr. Piotr Czaplinski near a church under construction in another village where there is a small group of Catholics.

Below: Some of the faithful after a religious service in Smotrych.

