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SUMMARY

Christ's mission and his order to preach the Gospel to the whole world is being realized. The Church looks with great respect upon its way passed through the history and remembers several personalities who have left inefaceable traces upon it. We can learn a lot from history, we become wiser and we draw inspiration from our great examples. One of them is our compatriot, the missionary Ignacij Knoblehar who could be called the second charismatic personality among our missionaries of the XIXth century, the beginner of the mission in Sudan and the first pioneer of the European civilization along the White Nile. In the years 1848–1858 his name was pronounced with great respect in Egypt and Sudan, in Europe as well as in America. Arabs and the negroes from Sudan used to call him Abuna Soliman, our father Solomon, because his extraordinary wisdom. In 1857 he was appointed honorary member of Vienna Geographical Society because of his great merits for geofraphy and natural science. Our famous goeographer and priest Valter Bohinec wrote down that on April 13th 1858 one of our greatest men »had sunk into the grave«.

Ignacij Knoblehar was born on July 6th 1819 at Škocijan near Novo mesto. He attended the primary school in Kostanjevica, Celje and Novo mesto. He decided to become a missionary when he was reading the missionary letters of Baraga and when, in 1837, he listened to his sermon in Novo mesto. After two years of studies at Ljubljana lyceum he enrolled at Theological faculty af Ljubljana in 1839. In 1841 he left for Rome to enter the Mission Institute De Propaganda Fide, but he had to wait for two years to be accepted. In the meantime he studied languages because he had great talent for them. In the years 1843–1845 he was a student of the Institue Propaganda and on March 9th 1845 he was ordainded priest. In 1846 he became cooperator of the newly established Middle African Apostolic Vicariate. He started to prepare for his work in Africa, but before that he was awarded his Theology degree. He stayed among African brothers for 10 years.

Many facts that speak about the greatness and importance of Ignacij Knoblehar, as well as the facts that Knoblehar's letters which could help us to get an entire image of this great missionary and scientist havent been pub-

lished yet, stimulated the publication of the letters preserved at the Sacred congregation for the evangelization of peoples, in the State Archives of Vienna, in the Archdiocese Archives of Ljubljana and in the Archives of Slovenia.

The present publication of Knoblehar's letters wants to complete the history of the missions and at the same time to represent Knoblehar as a great preacher of the Crist's Gospel. However, the publication of Knoblehar's letters was absolutely urgent and justified because of the inexactness, want of clearness and ambiguity introduced by the researchers of the African mission in Knoblehar's time and of Knoblehar himself.

The first and surely the most important Knoblehar's contribution was the preservation of the mission after the death of the first leader of the mission, Father Ryllo. All the researchers of the mission agree that without this very clever Knoblehar's act, his brave decision and hope against hope the mission would surely have been stopped. We also have to mention Knoblehar's great endeavour to educate the local people and their priests, first in Africa and later the most gifted ones in Europe. He strove with all his might to abolish the slavery. His central care were the missionaries. In his letters, addressed to the Sacred congregation for the evangelization of peoples, he continually spoke about the conditions and needs of the new missionaries, who should be completely devoted to their sacrifice for the African brothers. He recommended special qualities and because of the weather conditions. It is worth admiring how he intuitively realized the need of laic collaborators. During his visit in Slovenia and Austria a lot of craftsmen and experts in all kinds of jobs responded to his invitation. He also felt the necessity of a larger collaboration for the success in preaching the Gospel. Therefore he endeavoured to establish a special association with the task to spread the missionary ideas all over Europe and first of all to give information about the state and needs of the African mission. In Vienna he founded St Mary's Congregation. He was able, in a specific way, to collaborate with the civil authorities and at the same time to remain true to his superiors.

There is also a tight connection between his missionary activity and his contributions to the domain of geography, ethnology and linguistics. He realized that the successful preaching of the Gospel largely depended on a deep knowledge of the culture, habits and customs of the people you were preaching he had seen. His notes were later used as a resource, not only by his followers but also by contemporary scientists. We can be proud that in the largest ethnological museum of Vienna we can find Knoblehar's collection of objects, in Vienna National Library his grammar in the language Bari. We can also be proud that he was appointed honorary member of the Geographical Society of Vienna. Although it may appear, and some people even reproached him, that he was too profane, that he was too much occupied with activities outside the mission, we can confirm once more, in Knoblehar's favour, this way of life to be only acceptable at that time, in those conditions and

circumstances and his intuitive proceeding to be the first step to a successful preaching of the Gospel.

Ignacij Knoblehar, the great pioneer of the christian civilization and the excellent apostle of the Blacks, responded God's call and remained faithful to it.

PREVOD

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