

Ana Voštinić

Kraljevo City Library "Stefan Prvovenčani"

ŽIČKI BLAGOVESNIK (ŽIČA MONASTERY HERALD OF ANNUNCIATION)

Abstract. In search for the best solution in the last ten years (in some libraries even longer than that), the process of digitization has established itself as currently the best among the widely available methods for storing the material. It has also instituted itself as an integral part of everyday work, primarily in relation to local history collections. The local history department of the Kraljevo City Library “Stefan Prvovenčani” boasts a varied collection of local periodicals, giving a detailed insight into the city and its people’s eventful history. Local newspapers and magazines have established themselves as the most important source of information for (not only) local researchers - pupils, students, scientists, thus becoming a priority in the digitization process.

“Žički Blagovesnik” belongs among the most important and most challenging publishing tasks of its kind in many ways. It is a publication of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which was issued on the territory of the Eparchy of Žiča in the period from 1939 to 1941, only to see its publication renewed after a long break in 1997. This paper reviews the old issues (before the World War II) of “Žički Blagovesnik”, with a particular focus on the short history and dynamic of its publication, the structure of the magazine, but also the digitization process it was subjected to, in order to not only protect it, but also make it available to a much wider audience than ever before.

Keywords. Žički Blagovesnik, Eparchy of Žiča, library, local history department, digitization

1. About the magazine

At the initiative of Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović¹, the first issue of the magazine “Pregled crkve Eparhije žičke²” was issued in 1918 in Čačak, the seat of the Eparchy of Žiča at the time. As a *semi-official institution of the Eparchy of Žiča clergy* (as indicated in the subtitle), “The Review” was published for the length of twenty years, until 1938, when it changed its title to “Žički Blagovesnik”. At that the time, the seat of the Eparchy had already been in Kraljevo for four years.³

As stated in the introduction of the first issue of “Blagovesnik”, “The Review” was mainly available during the two decades of publication to the clergy of the Eparchy of Žiča and a few ministers from other eparchies.⁴ Lay persons had almost no knowledge of the existence of one such publication. However, the interest in the contents of the magazine surprisingly grew over the years and surpassed several times the circulation in which it had been printed. The structure of the readership slowly changed as well. They were no longer only ministers and monks, but also the everyday people, the “laymen”. This was caused by a growing population on the territory of the Eparchy between the two wars, but also by a noticeable increase in general literacy. However, one cannot say that this increase was steep. The magazine therefore had to undergo certain changes and adapt its contents to the new

¹ Saint Bishop Nikolaj of Žiča and Ohrid (Lelić near Valjevo, December 23 1880/5 January 1881, South Canaan, Pennsylvania, USA, March 5/18 1956).

² Pregled crkve Eparhije žičke / property of the clergy of the Eparchy of Žiča; editor Živojin Aleksić; editor Sreten Mihailović. - year 1, No. 1(1919) 20, No. 12 (1938). - Čačak : [Clergy of the Eparchy of Žiča (further referred to as “The Review”).

³ Čačak was the seat of the Eparchy of Žiča and the Church Court twice, from 1886 to 1890 and from 1898 to 1934, when the seat was transferred to Kraljevo.

⁴ Žički Blagovesnik - year [XXI], no.1 (January 1939), p. 2.

readers, while maintaining its primary task, to “bear and disseminate the Holy Gospel, i.e. the Annunciation”⁵. Due to a large number of magazines, not only ones issued by the church, with the same title (“The Review”), the management decided to adopt a new recognizable title that had to be “radiant and appealing and whose contents must flare up the flame of love and zeal towards the redeeming Holy Orthodoxy”⁶. Thus, “The Review” received a worthy sequel in the form of “Žički Blagovesnik”, a magazine whose title unequivocally indicated its essence and purpose, but also a strong spiritual bond with the monastery of Žiča, the place spreading the Serbian medieval philosophical thought.

The magazine was issued once a month, continuing with the same publication dynamic as its precursor – “The Review”. In the first year (1939), seven issues were printed under the new title, with the last one being a double issue (July-August). In the following 1940, the magazine was published in continuity during all twelve months, only to see just two issues coming out in 1941 (January and February), due to the war and general poverty that tightened their grip already in spring.

Minister Dragoslav Obućina was the editor-in-chief of the “Blagovesnik” during the first year of publication (1939) and the task was then taken over and carried out until the end by Aleksa Todorović. The magazine was printed in Kragujevac from the first issue in January 1939. until the sixth issue in 1940, first in the “P.N.H.Z.”⁷ printing office and then in “Šumadija”. From then on, printing took place in Kraljevo, in the “Studnica” printing office.

The structure of the magazine itself was simple and did not change much over the years. The issue usually started with a note from the management to the readers or a sermon by Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović related to the current church holiday. His sermons, finding their way to the believing people, were later much analyzed and published in several reprinted editions on homiletics as good examples. After the introduction, texts that followed were discussing numerous theological topics, but also legal issues and uncertainties within the church organization. Space was made for poetry inspired by religion, the artistic and literary value of which was not prioritized. Quite quickly, the “News” and “From the Life of the Eparchy of Žiča” were instituted as relatively regular sections. These small contributions although seemingly less important, brought information to the believing people and provided regular statements about the activities of the Church and the clergy on the territory of the Eparchy. Careful reading of these sections shows that they are extremely useful and informative texts, giving a truthful picture of certain aspects of everyday life and the economic situation in the community, in the period preceding the Second World War. “Žički Blagovesnik” also announced the regular sessions of the Association Assembly and published reports and minutes thereof. The editors also made an effort to regularly publish brief reviews of contemporary books by home and foreign authors.

It should be noted that Bishop Nikolaj was one of the most represented authors in the “Blagovesnik”, not only through his sermons and epistles, but also educational gospel stories intended for his congregation, “the common people”. The majority of authors were ministers and monks, although there were also secular authors contributing to the “Blagovesnik”. Even students got the opportunity to contribute. Dr Justin Popović, a newly canonized Serbian saint, published his texts in “Blagovesnik” as well. At that time, he was a Doctor of Theology and a professor at Belgrade University, later becoming archimandrite of the Ćelije Monastery.^{8 9}

⁵ Žički Blagovesnik - year [XXI], No.1 (January 1939), p. 2

⁶ Žički Blagovesnik - year. [XXI], No.1 (January 1939), p. 3

⁷ Orthodox National Christian Community

⁸ Dr Justin Popović (Vranje, April 6, 1894/ Ćelije Monastery, April 7, 1979) : *Spiritual Unity of Serbs*, Žički Blagovesnik, year XXII, No.11 (November 1940), p. 9-12

The “Blagovesnik” was the property of the *Clerical Association of the Eparchy of Žiča* and it was edited by the *Board*. The years of publication were marked in two ways: I (XXI) – 1939, II (XXII) – 1940 and III (XXIII) - 1941. The pagination method from the first issue (January 1939) runs through the whole year and then for each volume separately.¹⁰

The texts and announcements in “Žički Blagovesnik” from February 1941 did not suggest that it would be the last issue to be published. The only subtle indication of the tragedy soon to befall the whole nation was a warning to “the ones accounting for things” and church cashiers, who received more frequent military drill summons, to urgently hand over to responsible officials all the church money, bills and books in their possession, in order to minimize the possible damage. The Second World War put an end to all the efforts for the magazine to survive. A half-century break in its publication ensued.

It was not until 1997 that, by order of the then Bishop of Žiča, Mr. Stefan Boca, the primary publishing idea about the publication of the magazine such as “Žički Blagovesnik” was renewed. It was restarted, of course with a slightly different visual identity, but it did stay true in its essence to the original ideas and goals of its first editors and associates. The magazine is published with short breaks even today and the editor is the EUO of the Eparchy of Žiča. Mr. Radoš M. Mladenović was the editor-in-chief since the first issue. Aleksandar Stojanović has been the editor-in chief since the issue January-March 2014. The magazine was first printed in the printing office “Novograf” from Novo Selo and since the issue of January-March 2014 in the printing office “Grafostil” in Kragujevac. Since the issue of April-June 2014, it has been printed by “Slovo” Čačak. At the moment, the website of the Eparchy of Žiča offers the possibility to scroll through the Christmas issue of 2014 and the issues of January-March, April-June, July-September, September-December 2014.¹¹

2. Acquisition

A look at the periodical volumes of the local history department of the Kraljevo City Library “Stefan Prvovenčani” has shown that the periodical publications of the Serbian Orthodox Church issued or printed on the territory of the Eparchy of Žiča are almost nonexistent. A humble local history collection of the “Žički Blagovesnik”, as the most important periodical publication on this territory, includes a total of 10 original (pre-war) issues. These are: No. 2 (February 1939), No. 3 (March 1939), No. 4 (April 1939), No. 5 (May 1939), No. 6 (June 1939), No. 1 (January 1940), No. 2 (February 1940), No. 3 (March 1940), No. 4 (April 1940) and No. 10 (October 1940). Further research shows that unfortunately neither the Eparchy of Žiča (the eparchy library and church archives) nor the Monastery of Žiča are in the possession of preserved issues of this magazine. As the original proved almost impossible to obtain (without insight into private collections), decision has been made to keep the magazine in digital form and place it as such at the disposal of its readers.

The Library of the Serbian Patriarchy is one of a few libraries in Serbia that stores in its archives the original issues of the magazine. It is a closed type library, but thanks to the understanding and readiness to cooperate on behalf of the then manager and library employees, Kraljevo Public Library has been allowed to digitize the original issues.

⁹ Dr Justin Popović: *Saint Sava's Clergy and Political Parties*, Žički Blagovesnik, year XXII, No.12 (December 1940), p. 20-24.

¹⁰ Branko A. Cisarž: *A Century of Periodical Publication of the Serbian Orthodox Church*, Belgrade, Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 1986

¹¹ <http://eparhija-zicka.rs/arhiva-blagovesnik>



Figure 1: Cover page of the first issue of "Žički blagovesnik" (January 1939)

3. Digitization

Each volume of the format 240x160 mm was printed on a thin, yellowish paper and it had up to 32 pages (the number of pages varies slightly). The front and the back cover (as well as the inside pages) were made from the same paper, but they were outlined in blue. The cover was dominated by the title of the magazine, which was printed in red only for the first issue (January 1939). The remaining issues had the title printed in black. Below the title, almost in the middle of the front cover, the motif of the Žiča rosette, a stone ornament from the western wall of the Žiča church narthex dominates. At the bottom of the cover page there was the month (written in letters), year and place of publication. The inside of the cover page included the contents of the issue. Above the contents, it was made clear that the magazine was published with the blessing of Bishop Nikolaj. It also held an explanation that the Association of Ministers was publishing the "Žički Blagovesnik" instead of "The Review". We deliberately chose not to write the exact quotations, because they slightly changed over the years. Below the contents, there was usually information about the editorial board and the printing office. This structure of the page has also changed with time and the data on printing ended up on the last page. Since issue No. 6 in 1940, the heading on the cover page specifies that the magazine is an *Organ of the Association of Ministers of the Eparchy of Žiča*. Ever since, the information about the year of publication (in Roman numerals) and the number of the issue have been more clearly specified. The last page, including the back cover, was reserved for various announcements, precautions and invitations to subscription, as well as recommendations for the purchase of books and church calendars.

С благословом Његовог Преосвештенства Епископа Жичког Господина Николаја Свештеничко удружење Епархије Жичке идаје часопис „Жички Благовесник“	
САДРЖАЈ:	
Епископ Николај:	Христово царство.
Алекса Тодоровић:	Проповед на Богојављење.
Dr Василије Костић:	Ни „раскол“ ни „немањинке традиције“ већ Српска православна црква.
Dr В. К.:	Високопречасни Стефан Илкић и уједињење црква.
	Зрица
	Шта су Словени доживели
	Западњак о Западу
	† Dr Лејтон Пулан
	Херцеговачки соколи
	Добојска резолуција
	Егземпларна окружница
	Посланица еп. далматинског.
	Из живота Жичке епархије.
	Прикази
Методије Гоговић:	Књига о Јовану Кронштатском.
М. Г.:	Књига о Св. Сави.
<hr/> Претплата на „Жички Благовесник“ је: за цркве и манастире 50 динара а за појединце 30 динара годишње. Претплату слаати на чековни рачун број 55 220 или Свештеничком удружењу Епархије Жичке, Краљево. „Жички Благовесник“ излази једном месечно на 32 стране. Рукописе слаати Уредништву „Жичког Благовесника“, Краљево. Рукописи се не враћају. <hr/> Главник: СВЕШТЕНИЧКО УДРУЖЕЊЕ ЕПАРХИЈЕ ЖИЧКЕ. Одговорни уредник: Алекса Тодоровић, свештеник — Краљево.	

Figure 2: An example of the inside of the cover page with the contents

If we take into account the age of the original at the moment of scanning (above 70 years), we must acknowledge that the volumes are in relatively good condition. The majority of pages have become yellow with age, many are creased or partly torn in corners and covers. The text itself fortunately has not been damaged. Some pages are slightly folded in the middle, which slowed down the digitization process, but it has in no way made it impossible.

Regardless of its good shape, the volumes still demanded careful shuffling through pages, in order to prevent the falling out of pages due to poor binding. Since we were dealing with three years worth of publishing and 22 issues with a total of around 1000 pages for scanning, it became clear that this was a demanding and delicate task impossible to complete at once, but rather in stages.¹²

Soldiers under civilian service in library with previous knowledge about the digitization and computer literacy have been mobilized to scan the documents. Volumes were first scanned in standard resolution of 300 dpi and in jpg format. Such scans are clear and can be magnified to allow for unobstructed reading. Since the format of the scanner (A3) allows for two pages to be scanned at once, the magazine was then cropped in such a way so as to make each page a separate picture, to which the Library's water mark was later added as a sort of copyright protection. After the scanning and cutting, the magazine was divided into years of publication and individual issues under years. Each picture was marked with the number used to numerate the page, but the specificity of the pagination made the librarian resort to a slight improvisation in marking the non-paginated pages (scans).¹³ The digital

¹² Digitization Center of the Čačak City Library "Vladislav Petković Dis" has digitized all the issues of "Pregled crkve Eparhije žičke". The whole collection is available on the website of the Digital Library of Čačak (http://cacak-dis.rs/dig_bibl/index.html).

¹³ The first year of the "Žički Blagovesnik" is characterized by the pagination that continues through all the issues in the year (No. 1, January 1939 - No. 7-8, July-August 1939), but the last two or three pages and the beginning of the following issue are not numerated. All the issues from 1940 and the only two from 1941 have a separate pagination, but also with a couple of non-numerated pages.

version of the magazine was in this way prepared for further analytical processing and the paper original volumes were returned to the Library of the Serbian Patriarchy and can be viewed on spot, with a permit.



Figure 3: The example of damaged pages

4. Processing and availability

Local history department of the Kraljevo City Library has created their own unique software for the processing of book and non-book material and periodicals – KNP (KNP is a copyright protected work of advisor librarian E. Dimovska and computer programmer Dr. G. Miodragović). The software package is compliant with the International Standard Bibliographic Description¹⁴ for all types of material respectively. The material processed under this software is searchable according to several criteria: author, title, topic, key word, location and language. Local history collection of monographic publications is the only one that has been processed and is searchable in the COBISS system¹⁵, whereas all other types of material undergo the KNP program processing. The digital version of the “Žički Blagovesnik” has been entered in the KNP program with all the necessary data prescribed by ISBD (CR)¹⁶. It should be noted that, in spite of its utmost importance, the analytical processing of texts from the magazine is at its earliest stage. Three years of this magazine contain around two hundred bibliographic units that differ in their essence – their volume, the topic they cover and the importance they could have for future research. The analyst is thus under the dilemma whether they should adopt an opinion about the value of the texts themselves and become a sort of a “censor”, or simply process even the tiniest contribution in the magazine. The key criterion for the selection of articles for analytical processing must be the quality and the purposefulness of the information provided to the user.

¹⁴ ISBD

¹⁵ Monographic publications will also be processed in the KNP program, but it is still not a priority.

¹⁶ ISBD (CR) - International Standard Bibliographic Description for Serials and Other Continuing Resources

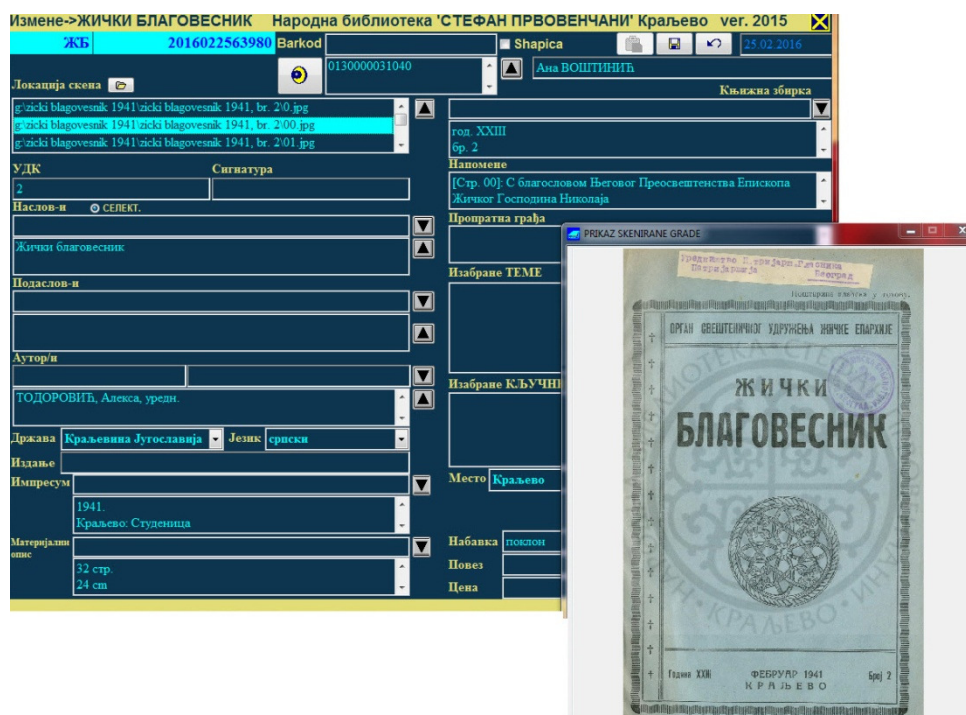


Figure 4: KNP (book, non-book material and periodicals) application

Local history volumes are the detail that distinguishes one library from other libraries and the types of material in these volumes are the ones distinguishing the local history department from all other departments in a library. In order to make their collections as visible and available as possible to all, without environmental and time limitations, all the material that has been digitized so far will be posted on the website *kraljevcani.rs*¹⁷. The users will be able to search this material before all according to key words and topics, but also according to all other above listed criteria (the same as in the KNP program). The website has not been conceived as an overview of collections that are to be found in the local history volumes, but rather as a virtual library that “grows”.

“Žički Blagovesnik” and all other local magazines that have not been mentioned here will be posted on the website in pdf format and it will only be possible to scroll through the issues for now.

5. Importance

“The number of periodical magazines and journals of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the period between 1968 and 1970 is not to be neglected. Even though a considerable number of them turned quite short-lived, they were still many that saw a decade or two and even more of publication.”¹⁸ “Žički Blagovesnik” is one of those magazines that were issued relatively briefly (not the full length of three years), although, if we acknowledge the fact that it is a sequel to “Review of the Church of the Eparchy of Žiča” (1919-1938), one could state that this is a magazine with considerable tradition. Several magazines were published on the territory of the Eparchy of Žiča at the time, mainly as publications of the Žiča evangelical

¹⁷ Website is under preparation

¹⁸ Branko A. Cisarž: A Century of Periodical Publications of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Belgrade, Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 1986, p. 13.

activity in Kraljevo: “General Resurrection” (1939), “The Orthodoxy Week” (1939-1940), “The Orthodoxy Glory” (1940), “The Letter” of the Žiča monastery (1939-1940), “Žiča Wreath for the Youth” (1937), “Žiča Treasury for the Youth” (1940) and others. These publications came out intermittently and were very popular among common people. Most of them were short-lived and there are almost no preserved copies. After the Second World War, there were almost no periodicals of the Serbian Orthodox Church on this territory. In his bibliography, Cisarž notes only “The Žiča Herald” – the magazine of the United Orthodox Clergy of the Eparchy of Žiča, the first issue of which was published in January 1965 in Čačak and the fourth and the last one in October the same year.¹⁹ Publishing activities of the Eparchy of Žiča continued beyond 1970, but it was not before 2000 that it gained momentum.²⁰ The Žiča monastery emerged as the increasingly present publisher of spiritual literature on this territory, publishing mainly the works of Greek theologians.

The clergy of the Eparchy of Žiča has, by continuing the publication of the “Žički Blagovesnik” after almost 60 years (in 1997), raised the awareness about the importance of the missionary work of the Serbian Orthodox Church that was nurtured for such a long time in the past, only to be nipped harshly in its peak. In comparison to similar periodicals that were published at the same time or still are being published, “Blagovesnik” stands out by tradition, volume and seriousness in approach to the topics it treats.

The Kraljevo City Library “Stefan Prvovenčani” continues to collect and digitize the issues of this magazine as they come out.



Figure 5: "Žički blagovesnik", the first issue January 1997 and October/December 2008.

6. Conclusion

Local periodicals are very precious materials stored in local history departments. Although they are often ideologically biased and impartial, they still provide a picture of everyday life of people from different perspectives. Be it daily or weekly newspapers, occasional editions,

¹⁹ Branko A. Cisarž: A Century of Periodical Publications of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Belgrade, Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 1986, p. 45.

²⁰ <http://eparhija-zicka.rs/objavljena-izdanja-euo-eparhije-zicke>

school or factory magazines, they collectively make up the mosaic of a troubled time that we are trying to understand from what still seems to be a short distance, historically speaking. "Žički blagovesnik" is such a type of publication and certainly represents a part of Serbian and thus world cultural digital heritage that needs to be preserved and made available to every user.

References

1. Cisarž B. A, *A Century of Periodical Publications of the Serbian Orthodox Church*, Belgrade, Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 1986.
2. Matović M, *Čačak Years of Bishop Nikolaj*, In: *Voice of the Library*, 13 (2006), 89–110.
3. *Žički Blagovesnik* - year [XXI], 1 (1939), 2–2.
4. *Žički Blagovesnik* - year [XXI], 1 (1939), 3–3.
5. *Žički Blagovesnik* - year XXII, 11 (1940), 9–12
6. *Žički Blagovesnik* - year XXII, 12 (1940), 20–24.
7. <http://eparhija-zicka.rs/arhiva-blagovesnik>
8. <http://eparhija-zicka.rs/objavljena-izdanja-euo-eparhije-zicke>
9. http://cacak-dis.rs/dig_bibl/index.html

ana.vostinic@gmail.com