

Monument built to fete selfless monk

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A monument commemorating the late Polish monk Zeno Zebrowski, who dedicated his life to volunteer activities in Japan, was unveiled last week in Poland.

The monument was erected by residents of his home village of Surowe and people from surrounding areas to mark the 100th anniversary of his birth.

Japanese people with connections to Zebrowski attended the unveiling ceremony and were reminded of his life through lectures.

Zebrowski came to Japan in 1930 to promote Christianity. During World War II, he was effectively put under house arrest at a monastery in Nagasaki.

After the war, he supported efforts to shelter those made homeless in the war and actively backed construction of facilities for war orphans and the disabled.

He became well known for his volunteer activities. For example, he was a leading proponent in a campaign for the preservation of a poor community near the Sumida River in Asakusa, Tokyo.

The monk continued such work for the underprivileged until his death in a hospital in Kiyose, Tokyo, in 1982.

His activities in Japan are widely known in Poland and residents of the village collected donations to fund the construction of the monument, a 3.6-meter high bronze statue.

It depicts a Japanese boy and a Polish girl standing side-by-side, with their hands pressed together as if in prayer, as Zebrowski stands behind them with a protective hand on each of their shoulders.

Participants in the unveiling ceremony included Hitohiro Ishida, a minister of the Japanese Embassy in Poland, and Shizuki Edami, director of the Fuji Welfare Foundation, who had cooperated with Zebrowski in his volunteer activities. Edami spoke at length during the ceremony about the monk's achievements in Japan.

The people of his home village also plan to convert a rectory into a museum devoted to the life of Zebrowski.

One room will be dedicated to an exhibition depicting the Japanese culture that the monk loved so much.

The Fuji Welfare Foundation, supporting the museum project, is seeking donations of typical Japanese items, such as kimono and furniture, to be put on display.

Edami said, "I hope the monument will teach people the spirit of Mr. Zebrowski and that it will become a bridge between the two countries."



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The monument to Zeno Zebrowski was modeled on this carved wooden image of the monk and two children.