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ŻEŃSKIE ZGROMADZENIA ZAKONNE W POLSCE 1939-1947

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THE CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS

Summary

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, Under the Protection of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, Assistant of the Faithful was organized in the Warsaw area on October 10, 1887. In 1939, the congregation numbered 260 sisters and carried on its activities in 18 outposts under the name of the society "Science and Work", which was directed by Mother General Wincentyna Ostrowska (Mother Bernarda).

In the framework of its apostolic activity, which developed in two principle directions - educational and care work- the congregation directed 3 technical schools, 4 centers for technical courses, 1 secondary school, 1 general school, 5 boarding-houses, 3 orphanages, and 4 pre-schools. In 1939, the scope of this work, which was carried out in 27, different kinds of schools and care homes, embraced under the sisters' care about 1,960 children and young people, to a large extent poor.

During the occupation, as a result of the extermination policy of the Third Reich and the fighting, the congregation's livelihood and work was significantly limited. Difficult living conditions led to a decrease in the number of sisters, and an increase in the mortality. The number of new appointments fell and total of those received into the order was equalled by the total of those who left or were dismissed. In connection with this, in 1945, the congregation numbered 240 sisters, on the whole older and exhausted from the inordinate amount of work, malnutrition, etc.

The congregation's livelihood was greatly affected by the evacuation of sisters from 9 homes in the Warsaw area during and following the Uprising, and by their several-month long migration. As a result of the war, the congregation lost 3 outposts in Warsaw, along with losses in Vilnius, Poluknia, and Landwarów. In addition, it suffered significant material losses, which included not only the destruction of 3 large estates, but also of facilities at the homes, educational and care establishments owned by the congregation. Altogether, material losses encompassed 11 outposts, i.e. 61% of the total number of houses owned by the congregation.

Linked with material losses suffered, the liquidation of several outposts and the opening of new ones, the congregation carried its work at 17 outposts in 1945, and at 14 in 1947.

From 1939-1945 the outside activity of the congregation was not only restricted, but its former character underwent significant changes. The congregation, answering the needs of the time to the extent that occupation conditions allowed, actively engaged itself in social and charity work, which it carried out in a organized fashion or extemporaneously, without directives from above. As a part of its educational activities, the sisters ran 3 technical schools in Warsaw, Klimontów, and Suchedniów. This work represented a battle with the occupiers for Polish youth. Clandestine teaching took place at the secondary school in Częstochowa,

where 847 pupils attended secret classes organized by Maria Rynekiewicz (Sister Kamila). Of this total, 297 passed the so-called "small" secondary school examination (mała matura) and 123 passed the normal examination (matura). Similar work was conducted in Warsaw and Vilnius. It should be added that in the Częstochowa region, thanks to the initiative of Maria Rynekiewicz, clandestine courses were conducted at the university level also, in cooperation with the University of Western Territories.

As a part of its care work, the sisters directed 3 boarding-houses in Klimontów, Suchedniów, and Warsaw, 4 orphanages in Klimontów, Poluknia, Warsaw, and Suchedniów, 2 pre-schools in Klimontów and Warsaw, and 3 community clubs, where meals were served, in Suchedniów and Warsaw.

As for social-charity work, the congregation managed kitchens sponsored by the Chief Council for Protection (RGO), and, in emergency situations, offered immediate help to the civilian population, Polish soldiers, partisans, Warsaw insurgents and Jews. In connection with this work, about 41 sisters worked in 10 kitchens in an attempt to fight malnutrition amongst the Polish population. During periods of maximal activity, the sisters served about 9460 a day.

Relief aid provided to the civilian population was quite varied. In Landwarów, Piotrków and Suchedniów, the sisters helped several families by giving them clothing, food articles and, at times, pecuniary aid. In Częstochowa and Klimontów the evacuees from Poznań and Warsaw received help from the sisters.

In 1939, aid to Polish soldiers consisted of preparing meals, laundering clothes, facilitating the receipt of the holy sacraments, supplying medicines and bandages, and nursing the wounded in the congregation's homes and hospitals. The sisters provided similar help to partisans from the ranks of the Peasant Battalions, especially in the Klimontów area.

During the Warsaw Uprising the sisters helped not only the civilian populations, but also the insurgents. One should mention here the sisters' work during the Uprising at the dressing-station on Tyłżycka St. 2, and in the hospital on Schroeger St., where they worked as orderlies and helped in other ways with the maintenance of the place.

After the liberation the congregation gradually returned to its former activities and once again began to branch out in the direction of education - care work. The number of schools, technical courses, and care homes nearly reached the pre-war level. Apparently, the destructive influence of the German occupation, in the long run, did not introduce lasting changes in the principle direction of the congregation's outside work.

THE CONGREGATION OF THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF THE AILING

Summary

The Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Ailing was founded in Warsaw in 1882, by Capuchin father Honorat Koźmiński (1829-1916) and Kazimiera Gruszczyńska (1848-1927). The final confirmation of the congregation's constitution was given by the Apostolic Capital on March 3, 1937. The aim of the congregation was to work among the sick and suffering. To this day this aim remains the same.

Until 1952 the sisters were divided into 2 choirs. Those sisters serving the sick („infirmi”) belonged to the first choir, and those who managed the households belonged to the second. The 2-year novitiate was located in Warsaw until 1928, after which time it was moved to Kozienice. This secular order acted officially in the form of special societies whose work was conducted on the bases of statutes, confirmed by state administrators.

As with other religious communities, the years 1939-1947 were very difficult for the congregation. War conditions made it difficult for the congregation's authorities to meet all their obligations in accordance with the constitution. Convocation of the general chapter was put off until the war was over and canonical inspections were not conducted for the duration.

In 1939 the congregation numbered 287 sisters and 15 houses; in 1945 - 276 sisters and 17 houses; and by the end of 1947 - 272 sisters and 13 houses. Altogether, during the period 1939-1947, 81 sisters joined the order, 35 died and 61 left (24 of which were postulants).

The war had its impact on the religious group, which was evidenced in decreased enrolment, frequent deaths and an increase in the number of those leaving the congregation. Members of the congregation were imprisoned (4), taken away to labor camps (2), and camps of war (7). As a result of bombardment, 5 sisters perished and 1 died while being taken off to execution.

The sisters living in the General Government, where the congregation had the largest concentration of houses (8), experienced relatively less difficulties than those in other occupied territories. Sisters in the following areas carried out their work with serious difficulties, which were brought on by the policies of the occupying forces in regards to these lands: Reich Commissariat East - 2 homes in Vilnius, Reich Commissariat Ukraine - 3 homes in Grzybowyszczyna, Siejewicze, and Łuck, „Warta Country" - 2 homes in Łódź and Pabianice. The lack of direct contact with congregation authorities, the war situation, and the various degrees of pressure applied by the occupiers, all weakened the bonds between some of the sisters and the religious community.

The tragic fate of the Warsaw Uprising had repercussions on the fate of the congregation's homes located in the capital. Sisters were forced to evacuate 4 outposts in a dozen or so groups. They made their way to different places where they set up provisional outposts and undertook new tasks.

During the above-mentioned period the sisters worked in various types of hospitals - permanent, as well as provisional (so-called insurgent and field hospitals), in care homes for terminally ill adults and children, and in dispensaries and health centers. Aside from the organized outposts where the sick were nursed, the members of several homes provided all types of aid for the needy, wounded, soldiers in hiding, partisans, civilian population, and priests. This aid took the form of a campaign against malnutrition, the sewing of undergarments and clothes, sending of packages to prisons and camps. In addition, the congregation conducted apostolic work, such as catechization, baptisms, and finding priests for those sick and in need of holy sacraments.

Even though the congregation did not experience particular repression during the occupation, it still emerged from the war weakened to a certain degree by reduced enrolment and the loss of part of its homes and property.

The years 1945-1947 comprised a separate period in the history of the religious group, a period when the congregation was totally prepared to resolve its internal problems, (the general chapter was convoked in 1946). It undertook the reconstruction of damaged outposts, and once again concentrated on the problems of religious life and its adaptation to new demands. In addition, in order to meet the needs of the time, the congregation founded a nursing school with the aim of preparing new forces for the field.

THE CONGREGATION OF THE ASSISTERS OF PURGATORIAL SOULS

Summary

The Congregation of the Assistants of Purgatorial Souls was founded in 1889 by Father Honorat Wacław Koźmiński, with the assistance of Wanda Oleńska.

When the war broke out in 1939, the general administration, elected by the chapter in 1937, administered the congregation. Julia Maria Brochocka was Mother General. In September, 1939, the congregation owned 6 homes. One of them, located in Warsaw, was totally destroyed during the uprising. After evacuation from the city, the sisters were forced to search for new places to live. In the spring of 1945, the sisters in Vilnius were included in the repatriation operation. As a result of these translocations on May 9, 1945, the congregation owned 7 homes, a situation which lasted until 1947.

At the beginning of the period discussed the congregation had 68 members. As a result of deaths and the fact that some sisters abandoned the congregation, the number decreased to 12 in May, 1945. However, by the end of 1947, 65 sisters belonged to the congregation, which meant that it was gradually overcoming its personnel crisis.

The sisters escaped the fate of the concentration camps, though one spent 3 years in a labor camp. The novitiate was temporarily broken up. The Mother General, in consideration of the difficult living situations at the home in Sulejówek, decided that those novices who could make it back to their family homes should temporarily leave the novitiate. This took place in October, 1939. In 1941, the novitiate was transferred to Nowe Miasto.

The congregation's work during the occupation did not submit to any principle changes. Its main activities continued to be work among those sick and in need of care. A home for the elderly was run by the sisters in Nowe Miasto. At other outposts, especially in Sulejówek and Vilnius, the sisters took care of the sick in private homes, and also provided emergency aid. Although there was a break for a certain period of time, tailoring courses were conducted as before at two of the houses. In Vilnius, as in the past, a candlemaking workshop was in operation, though its activities were somewhat limited.

To the extent that it was possible, and if the need arose, the sisters joined in other social-charity work. In Nowe Miasto they worked in field hospitals in 1944, in Vilnius, from 1941-1942, they supplied imprisoned priests and sisters with packages, and upon their release, gave them appropriate material aid. In Studzieniec they went to the train station with meals for Polish P.O.W.'s. In Warsaw they ran a dining hall; one of the sisters took part in preparing food supplies for the Uprising, and later worked bandaging the wounded.

The period 1945-1947 was characterized by movement towards a certain stabilization after the disorganized life during the occupation years. The general chapter, convoked in 1946, after a 3-year delay, served this aim. Along with former activities, the congregation also took on work in pre-schools.

THE CONGREGATION OF THE SERVANTS OF JESUS

Summary

The Congregation of the Servants of Jesus (Congregation Ancillarum Jesu) is one of the religious families of cloistral life founded by Father Honorat Koźmiński. Mother Eleonora Motylowska was co-founder. The congregation arose in Warsaw on December 8, 1884. On April 15, 1907, it received a decree of approval; on July 14, 1908, a confirmation for 7 years; and on April 6, 1924, a final confirmation from the Apostolic Capital.

In the beginning the novitiate was located in Warsaw, from 1911-1931 in Cracow, after which time it was once again transferred to Warsaw, where it functioned until October 15, 1944.

The congregation's task was to better the field of domestic assistance through apostolic work and care, which in turn would have an influence on families. Work with domestics consisted of catechization, career-training, protection against bad influences, arranging work, guardianship and extension of aid, organizing shelters for older and sickly maids, and the like. As the number of sisters grew along with social needs, the sphere of the congregation's apostolic work was extended. New outposts on Polish territory arose.

At the outbreak of World War II the congregation had 16 outposts. From September 1, 1939 to December 31, 1947, 3 new homes were set up (in Międzybórz, Łódź and Wrocław). At the same time, 3 homes were liquidated (in Poznań, Drohozycz, and Warsaw, on Jezuić St.) and the sisters from one home in Vilnius were repatriated, after which they resettled in Wrocław.

During the war, 1 house was totally bombarded in Warsaw, on Terezińska St., 4 were destroyed or devastated by the occupiers (2 homes in Przemyśl, 1 in Ciechocinek, and 1 in Warsaw, on Seweryn St.). Sisters were forced to temporarily desert 12 homes. Only 4 homes were saved from the evacuation operation.

On September 1, 1939, the number of sisters totalled 313. In the period up to December 31, 1947, 67 new members joined, 61 sisters died a natural death or perished during the fighting, and 24 sisters left the congregation. All in all, the number of members decreased by 85 people.

The congregation, desiring to fulfill the aim of its founders, conducted its work with domestics in nearly all of its outposts. This meant, primarily, charity and educational-upbringing work. In order to prepare girls for work, the sisters organized the following: a) technical schools: tailoring, home economics, and, in one case, a seminary for the education of pre-school teachers; b) courses: tailoring, home economics, knitting; c) boarding-houses and pupils' hostels; d) cafeterias, with the goal of teaching young girls, and feeding the poor and deserted; e) different types of workshops: tailoring, home economics, embroidery and sewing of liturgical gowns, knitting, hosiery-making; f) pre-schools and orphanages, above all, for post-war orphans, half-

orphans, and poor children; g) employment offices for young girls; h) station missions, with the goal of caring for, aiding, and advising young girls just arriving in town.

As much as possible during the occupation, the congregation gave aid to chaplains and others trying to hide from the gestapo. It attempted to free the imprisoned and sent food packages to those in jail and camps. For a certain time during the Warsaw Uprising there was a dressing-station in the house on Seweryn St. in Warsaw, a place where the wounded and needy were helped by the sisters.

In several homes the sisters performed services for churches. They taught catechism to children and youth. Also, for a certain time they worked with the wounded and suffering in hospitals.

On the whole it should be stated that the congregation, mindful of the task passed on by its co-founders, placed special emphasis on its work with young girls-domestica. The sisters provided them with moral and material care, and taught them how to work honestly. They also took part in various kinds of activities undertaken in an attempt to meet the special needs arising from the situation, both before, during and after the war.