

# ŻEŃSKIE ZGROMADZENIA ZAKONNE W POLSCE 1939-1947

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## SUMMARY

The Congregation of Sisters Seraphims (Congregation of the Daughters of Immaculate Mary of Seven Tribulations) was founded in 1881 in Zakroczym (Congressional Kingdom) by Capuchin father Honorat Koźminski and Mother Małgorzata – Lucia Szewczyk.

The specific aim of the congregation was care for the poor, elderly, crippled and ill, both in hospitals and at home, in addition to care-upbringing work, especially amongst poor children and orphans. In 1932 the congregation was divided into three provinces: 1. Cracow, with headquarters in Auschwitz, 2. Poznań – with headquarters in Chodzież, and from 1935 on in Poznań itself, 3. Lvov, originally with headquarters in Stryj, from 1936-1939 in Lvov, and from 1946 on in Przemyśl.

On the eve of World War II the congregation numbered 400 sisters in 51 houses (convents). The general council resided (from 1932 on) in Cracow; Mother Leonarda – Aniela Łukasiewicz served as superior general. The Cracow-Auschwitz province numbered 155 sisters in 20 houses; the Poznań province – 117 sisters in 17 houses, the Lvov province – 128 sisters in 13 houses. With the outbreak of the war, the congregation was in the process of realizing various resolutions put forth by the General Chapter in 1938, for reviving charity and mission work in accordance with the aim of its founder.

The Division of Polish land by the occupants disrupted the organizational unity of the congregation. Eleven houses in the Cracow province along with 6 houses in the Lvov province were situated on the territory of the General Government. The provincial house in Auschwitz, along with 8 other houses in the Cracow province, were located on territories joined to the Reich. Almost the entire Poznań province belonged to the Warta Country, with the exception of the houses in Toruń and Białosławie (Western Prussia). The majority of homes comprising the Lvov province was incorporated into the Galicia Region, and the house in Vilnius to the Reich Commissariat-East.

The administration maintained contacts with the sisters from these houses by means of correspondence and visitations. During the occupation, 9 houses in the Warta Country were liquidated, 3 in the Reich and 2 in the Galicia Region. In order to meet new social needs created by the war, new houses were established (8 in the General Government and 2 on the Reich territory).

On Sept. 9, 1945 the congregation numbered 368 sisters in 49 houses. After the liberation, 5 of the congregation's houses were dissolved as a result of border changes and repatriation of sisters.

During the years 1939-1947, 17 sisters joined the order. In 1939 the novitiates existing in of Poznań and Auschwitz, from October 23, 1940 to April 24, 1941 ceased to function. From April 24, 1941 to the end of the war the novitiate was located in Cracow. After the liberation it was transferred to Auschwitz and eventually returned to Poznań.

In the period discussed above, 46 sisters died – a significant percent of these deaths was brought on by tuberculosis and typhus. Characteristic of this period was the decrease in the average life span (from 50.3 years to 40.3 years). Seventeen sisters left the order: 12 on their own initiative and 5 were dismissed. In the years 1941-1942, 11 sisters of the Poznań province were deported to special camps for religious sisters in Łódź and Bojanów.

The sisters' work during the period discussed was conducted in two directions: principle work – in accordance with the aims put forth by the congregation's founders, and new forms of aid to meet new demands directly resulting from war conditions.

Principle work took the following forms: 1. Care-upbringing work (orphanages, nurseries, workshops and technical courses, directing of religious organizations); 2. Care for the sick, elderly, and poor (work in hospitals, health centers, emergency rooms, establishments for adults, and at times, in private homes); 3. Care for the aesthetic appearance of churches.

The aid provided by the sisters to the local populations affected by the war consisted of the following: aid for soldiers and injured, work in epidemic and war hospitals, aid for those sought after by the Germans, for deportees and evacuees, POW's, prisoners and partisans. In the General Government the sisters ran camps and soup kitchens supported by the General Protection Council (RGO). They also provided various forms of spiritual aid.

The congregation came out of the war in a weakened state, though not broken down. The General Chapter, which met in 1947, laid out further plans for the congregations' development and methods for increasing religious discipline. It also elected a new Superior General, Mother Ludomila-Leokadia Stanisławska. On December 31, 1947 the congregation looked as follows: 475 sisters and 56 communities in 3 provinces: 1. Cracow – 31 houses, 2. Poznań – 13 houses and 3. Przemyśl (formerly Lvov) – 11 houses.



## SUMMARY

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Most Holy Family of Nazareth (Sisters of Nazareth) was founded by Polish woman Franciszka Józefa Siedliska (1842-1902) in Rome. The year 1875 is accepted as its founding date. The founder chose Rome as the headquarters of the congregation's main home where, in the beginning, sisters conducted catechism classes and retreats for laymen. In 1881 Mother Siedliska founded the congregation's first home on Polish soil in Cracow, and, in 1885, its first American home in Chicago.

During the lifetime of its founder the congregation's work was comprised not only of catechization and the organizing of retreats, but also of conducting grammar schools, private and parish general schools, day-nurseries, homes for working girls, boarding houses, along with work in hospitals and mission work amongst families.

The congregation grew and extended its activities on both hemispheres and, in 1921-1922, consisted of the following:

Poland	— 13 homes	241 sisters
USA	— 65 homes	884 sisters
Italy	— 2 homes	72 sisters
France	— 1 home	7 sisters
England	— 1 home	21 sisters
<b>Total</b>	<b>— 82 homes</b>	<b>1225 sisters</b>

In Poland the Congregation owned 6 grammar schools, 6 general schools, 8 boarding houses, 1 orphanage (located in its own homes). In addition, sisters carried on work in one district hospital.

In 1896 the Congregation received its Laudatory decree, and in 1909 it was confirmed by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. In 1923 its constitution was confirmed. The Congregation exists and functions in accordance with papal laws. Up to 1965 it consisted of 2 choirs.

Until 1919 the Congregation's Polish homes were directly dependent on the General Administration in Rome. In 1919 a curacy was created in Poland. In 1925 the first Polish province arose, with its headquarters in Warsaw. In 1931, the Polish province was divided into 2 provinces — Warsaw province, with headquarters in Warsaw, and Cracow province, with headquarters in Cracow. The novitiate for the entire congregation was located at first in Rome, then in Albano, outside of Rome. In 1892 a Polish novitiate was established in Cracow. In 1914 a second novitiate arose in Grodno, together with which the Cracow novitiate was joined in 1920. In November, 1939 the Grodno novitiate was transferred to Vilnius, where it remained until June 14, 1941. On October 2, 1943, after a break, caused by war conditions, the novitiate resumed activity in Karczew, located in a rented „printer's villa". As of September 21, 1946 the novitiate has been located in the congregation's convent in Ostreszew Wielkopolski.

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Until the outbreak of WW II the Polish branch of the Congregation conducted care, educational and guardian work in its own homes, in addition to work in two district hospitals. In 1939 the congregation owned 7 grammar and secondary schools, 9 general schools, 7 pre-schools, 12 boarding houses, one sewing school, and 2 day-nurseries (which took in 2,680 wards). In addition, they conducted workshops on church embroidery and hosiery and, in two of the homes, were actively involved in parish affairs.

The war caused certain changes in the direction of the congregation's activity. The sisters quickly adapted to the new needs of Polish populations located on occupied territories, not only caring for youth, children and the sick, but also for the homeless, evacuees, POW's of various nationalities and prisoners. They actively took part in the work of the General Protection Council (RGO), conducting kitchens in 7 homes (in an attempt to fight against malnutrition amongst thousands of adults and children). At the same time they did not neglect their educational work, and continued to teach children and youth: in underground schools located in 2 of the homes, and underground courses conducted at other of the congregation's outposts.

As a result of the war, 29 sisters from Vilnius ended up in Kazakhstan and there, with the permission of authorities, began educational-guardian work among Polish youth in the city of Kara-Su. These same sisters were transferred to Africa (Rongai) where they worked in a children's settlement until it was liquidated in 1947. A part of the sisters then undertook work in an establishment for Polish girls in Pilsford, England. Twelve sisters took part in the activities of the Polish Red Cross in Italy, working in hospitals and community centers for Polish Soldiers. Two ran an orphanage sponsored by the Polish Red Cross and 1 taught youth in a Polish grammar school, in Trani, near Barietta.

Therefore, even in these changed conditions of the war period, the congregation did not neglect its work with youth and Polish children both in Poland and abroad.

During the war, the Polish branch of the congregation suffered significant losses. In total, from 1939-1945, 45 sisters died: of this number, 30 died from natural causes, 3 as a result of military activity, 1 from overexhaustion in a concentration camp (in Central Asia) and 11 were shot to death by gestapo in Nowogródek.

Material losses were enormous. Of all the congregation's outposts, the following completely ceased functioning: 5 large educational-guardian establishments located in the congregation's homes in Grodno, Lvov, Nowogródek, Strzy and Vilnius; a boarding-house for female students in Poznań, and homes in Równy and Wilczkowice.

After the war the congregation resumed its normal work in the remaining outposts and undertook parish work in newly-established homes in the countryside (Zdzary and Wroblowice), in addition to care work with the elderly in Wrocław.

## SUMMARY

The Congregation of Sisters of Divine Providence (Congregatio Sororum Divina Providentia) was founded in 1857 in Lvov through the efforts of Bishop Lukasz Baraniecki with the aim of directing the upbringing and education of morally-neglected young girls and orphans. The Congregation's founder was Mother Maria Antonina Mirska.

In 1939, before the outbreak of war, the congregation numbered 153 sisters and carried out its work in 17 homes scattered mainly around the south-east areas of Poland. The congregation ran 3 establishments for a total of 130 morally-neglected young girls, 7 orphanages, 7 pre-schools and 4 technical schools. Moreover, the sisters organized cutting and sewing courses and took part in parish work, teaching religion and organizing religious associations.

The outbreak of war had a fundamental influence on the work of the congregation, which was already offering all types of aid to thousands of war refugees and wounded soldiers. In the first period of the war, in accordance with resolutions passed by current authorities, the guardian establishments for young girls along with technical schools run by the congregation were liquidated. Of the total number of 17 homes, 9 were liquidated, and the sisters either moved on to other homes, or remained scattered around the country, undertaking various types of charity-social work, in hospitals for example.

During the war work at the following outposts continued despite very difficult conditions: orphanages located in 4 homes (in Przemyśl, Łąka near Rzeszów, Rzeszów and Międzyrzec Podlaski) pre-schools located in 5 homes (Lvov, Żelechów, Przemyśl, Sterdyń, Międzyrzec Podlaski). At 2 of the congregation's homes (Żelechów, Sterdyń) several sisters conducted underground classes at the secondary school level. Also, the congregation arranged various forms of aid for soldiers in German camps and prisoners. In 3 of the houses the sisters ran soup kitchens sponsored by the General Protection Council (RGO). The home in Żelechów took in 160 children from Polish families evacuated from the Zamość region. Against orders of the occupiers, three homes provided shelter to the local Jewish population. The sisters also conducted religious education classes for children.

After the war the congregation transferred its main headquarters from Lvov to Przemyśl. In place of the 9 liquidated homes (6 of which were found outside the borders of post-war Poland) the congregation established 9 new homes. Three of these new outposts were located on repatriated territory. As a result of the changes caused by war, in 1947 the number of homes totalled 17, and sisters, 132.

The congregation continued its founding work with morally neglected young girls in 2 establishments, in Jedlnik and Bytom. Its other principle activities in the sphere of care and education of orphans were continued in 4 of the original homes (in Przemyśl, Łąka, Rzeszów, and Międzyrzec Podlaski). Moreover, the congregation founded new orphanages in Katowice and Oleśno, a preventorium for children and a care home for young girls in Przemyśl. Work in pre-schools was continued in Konin, Przemyśl, Żelechów and Międzyrzec Podlaski, and resumed in Golin and Rzeszów. In Żelechów and Sterdyń the sisters ran a boarding house for grammar school pupils, in which 2 sisters worked as teachers. All of the congregation's homes participated in parish work, especially in the sphere of religious education for youth.

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## SUMMARY

The Sisters Canonesses formed the female branch of the Order of the Holy Spirit, founded in France in 1175 by Blessed Guignon of Montpellier with the aim of providing the most needy with aid. This aid took the form of upbringing and education of orphans and deserted children, care for single mothers, nursing of the sick and assisting the impoverished.

In c. 1220 Bishop Iwo Odrowąż of Cracow brought the Order of the Holy Spirit to Poland, and established it in Prądnik, near Cracow. In 1244 the order was transferred to Cracow by Bishop Jan Prandota, who also provided the order with funding for the Hospital of the Holy Spirit, and a convent for both brothers and sisters located at Holy Cross Church. Working out of this church the sisters cared for children and nursed the ill.

In 1800, on order of the Austrian authorities, the sisters were transferred to St. Thomas convent on Szpitalna Street. Here, the sisters established a boarding-school for girls and, from 1920 on, opened up various filial homes, which remained dependent upon the central home in Cracow. Any departure from the Cracow convent required a revision of the orders constitution, and eventually, transformation into a congregation based on Papal law.

In 1939 the congregation ran the St. Thomas grammar school at 10 Szpitalna St., Cracow, a liberal arts secondary school in Lublin, a woman's technical school in Chmielnik, a 3-year sewing school in Pacanów, 7-year general schools in Lublin and Biskupice. In addition, sisters worked in pre-schools in Biskupice, Proszowice and Pacanów. In connection with the congregation's educational work at these schools, boarding houses were established in Lublin, Cracow, Chmielnik and Pacanów. The sisters also conducted cutting, sewing, and home economics courses for girls past the school age, who did not have the opportunity to be educated.

At the outbreak of World War II the congregation owned 7 homes, in which 58 sisters and 13 postulants lived and worked. According to Church administration, 3 homes belonged to the Cracow diocese (Szpitalna Street, 4 Lotnicza St. in Cracow, and in Biskupice), 3 belonged to the Kielce diocese (Proszowice, Pacanów and Chmielnik) and 1 to the Lublin diocese (Lublin). During the occupation all the homes were located in the General Government. At this time the sisters' work was dependent upon the location of the home, and the type of activity conducted there, which was often dictated by the needs of the moment.

Already in the last days of August, 1939 the sisters at 12 Szpitalna St., Cracow were sewing uniforms for Polish soldiers. In Lublin, Pacanów and Proszowice they began work in soup kitchens, health stations, in addition to shelters for escapees, and, later on, for the Polish Army. On September 8, 1939 the sisters in Pacanów set up a field hospital for wounded soldiers on the grounds of the convent.

After secondary and higher education was declared illegal by the Germans, with great difficulty the sisters in Lublin opened up a 2-year trade school with a boarding house for 230 female pupils. In 1944, this school was transformed into a grammar and secondary school. On October 23, 1939 the sisters in Pacanów opened up a sewing school and boarding house which remained active until June, 1944. In September, 1943, the sisters from Pacanów opened another sewing school in Busko-Zdrój. On Sep-

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tember 24, 1940 the locutory found in the convent at 12 Szpitalna St., Cracow, was transformed into a lecture hall for students of Polish philology, attending classes of the underground Jagiellonian University. In Chmielnik, Proszowice and Nasutow the sisters conducted cutting, sewing and home economics courses. All girls interested in these studies were accepted both to the schools and courses because a student identification card and a course certificate with the order's stamp were effective means of sheltering young girls from being taken to Germany to work. Aside from youth, the sisters also worked with pre-school children whose families had been evacuated or were involved in conspiratorial work. In 1940, the congregation opened day-nurseries in Lublin, Chmielnik and Cracow. Throughout the entire occupation period the pre-schools in Proszowice and Biskupice remained active.

Sisters located at all the congregation's outposts were confronted with the problem of evacuated populations, especially in Cracow, Lublin, Proszowice, and Biskupice. The congregation offered one of its town houses in Cracow and one in Lublin to evacuees, in addition to providing them with material aid. In Proszowice, Biskupice, and Pacanów the sisters took part in the fight against malnutrition amongst the poor and evacuees. In Chmielnik they ran a kitchen, sponsored by the General Protection Council (RGO).

In Cracow, Lublin, and Chmielnik the sisters prepared Jews for baptism and enabled them to obtain necessary documents. The congregation provided them with material aid and shelter. The sisters from Lublin managed to free one Jewish family from the concentration camp in Majdanek.

The congregation joined in the efforts to help prisoners in concentration camps by sending food packages and hiding those pursued by the gestapo. The Lublin home, located not far from the castle, where packages, medicine, letters, and information about families were sent to prisoners, was most active in this help campaign. Food packages from the Lublin home were also sent to Dachau and Auschwitz.

The sisters in Lublin, Biskupice, and especially in Proszowice helped those involved in the underground by providing meals, laundering, storing newspapers and journals. Throughout the entire occupation the Home Army radio station operated in the congregation's home in Proszowice.

## SUMMARY

The Sisters of the Passion of Our Lord, Jesus Christ (popularly known as the Sisters of the Passion) is a habited, one-choir congregation which was founded in 1918 by Mother Józefa Joanna Halacinska. The congregation's general home is located in Plock. On May 1, 1921 Plock Bishop A. J. Nowowiejski approved the congregation in accordance with canon law. Upon receiving its commendatory decree, the congregation's existence was confirmed on March 25, 1953 according to Papal law.

In 1939 the congregation numbered 206 sisters, who, through their work at 26 outposts, attempted to realize the order's goals: raising orphans and neglected children in guardian establishments, teaching, religion in schools, managing pre-schools, conducting courses in home economics, embroidery, and tailoring for girls, nursing the sick in hospitals and private homes, caring for the elderly and crippled in care homes, and performing necessary parish work. In 1939 the congregation ran 16 pre-schools and day-nurseries in 13 homes, 3 community clubs for school-aged children and youth, cutting, sewing, embroidery, and home economics courses in 10 homes, 4 guardian establishments and orphanages and 5 homes for the elderly. Moreover, sisters worked in 7 hospitals, taught religion in schools in 6 parishes and handled the economic-upkeeping duties for the People's Catholic University in Proboszczewice and for the religious seminary and bishop's house in Plock. At certain parish outposts they took care of the upkeep of the church and liturgical groups.

The war and occupation hampered or completely interrupted this work, causing huge morale, personnel and material losses. Throughout the entire war and occupation, sisters continued work in only 6 pre-war outposts (5 hospitals and 1 day-nursery). At the other outposts sisters were removed, evacuated, or forced to desert the homes as a result of destruction. The Germans deprived the sisters of the possibility of continuing activities conducted up to that time, a policy which became especially strong in 1941. Only the guardian establishment in Janów Lubelski managed to continue its activity, despite total destruction of its locale. This work was continued, though the sisters were forced to constantly move from one location to another.

As a result of the evacuation and liquidation of the congregation's outposts, many sisters were left without work. For this reason, beginning in 1941, the general administration undertook new forms of work. In the period 1941-1945 (up to May 9) 16 new outposts arose, in which sisters undertook care of war orphans, impoverished and deserted pre-school children and school-aged (3 day-nurseries, 2 infant care centers and 1 orphanage), work in hospitals (4), in care homes for the elderly and crippled (3). They also took over the operation of soup kitchens for evacuees and the impoverished, (2 outposts) and a hostel for travellers, escapees, and those in search of work. Aside from these fundamental, organized activities, the sisters also performed various types of odd jobs in order to support themselves.

To the extent possible members of the congregation helped those in need: they provided shelter for escapees, those being persecuted by the Germans, members of the resistance, Jews in hiding. They shared food, clothing, especially with the evacuees, organized food and clothing packages for prisoners and P. O. W's, protected people from being taken away to camps and to work in Germany. They also worked together with the resistance movement, supplying partisans with food, bandages,

and clothes, offering shelter, distributing underground newspapers and other secret materials, and organizing and facilitating the escape of wounded partisans and prisoners. Moreover, the sisters conducted underground classes at the grammar and secondary school level, in addition to organizing cultural activities and religious-patriotic celebrations.

During the war and occupation, the congregation suffered serious personnel losses. From 1939-1945, 17 sisters left the order, 10 sisters died (of which only 2 died due to causes unrelated to war conditions). In addition, many sisters were arrested, and deported to camps (63), interned (4), evacuated (44), and taken to work in Germany (10). The novitiate was deactivated from 1941, i.e. from the time when sisters in the general home in Plock were evacuated.

The congregation also suffered serious material losses. Sisters were evacuated from all of the congregation's 5 homes, in addition to being displaced from many work outposts taken over by the Germans for personal use. These locales were to a large extent destroyed. Pre-schools, embroidery and sewing workshops, chapels were stripped of furniture and equipment. The congregation's archives and library located in the general home were also victims of destruction.

In the first post-war years (1945-1947) the sisters returned to the congregation's 5 private homes, as well as to 7 outposts with living quarters. They continued work at 6 homes which survived the occupation, and 7 outposts which were founded during the course of the war. There were 6 pre-war homes to which the sisters did not return. Also in the post-war period discussed above two new outposts arose. Therefore, on December 31, 1947, the congregation numbered 27 homes, in which 202 sisters were active.