

## EXAMINATIONS FOR VICARS IN THE DIOCESE OF TARNÓW BETWEEN 1918 AND 1939

## EGZAMINY WIKARIUSZOWSKIE W DIECEZJI TARNOWSKIEJ W LATACH 1918-1939

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### Abstract

Since its inception, the Church has paid great attention to the intellectual formation of the clergy. After the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, for the pastoral and intellectual formation of the clergy of the Diocese of Tarnów between 1918 and 1939, theological examinations were of vital importance and they were carried out in accordance with the dispositions of the universal legislator contained in the 1917 Code of Canon Law in Canon 130. In the period under discussion, examinations for vicars were held in August in the auditorium of the Theological Seminary in Tarnów. The examination material included dogmatic theology, moral theology, pastoral theology and canon law. This study is a contribution to the history of canon law, as the development of the institution of examinations for vicars in the Diocese of Tarnów between 1918 and 1939 has not yet been studied.

**Keywords:** Diocese of Tarnów, interwar period, examinations for vicars, intellectual formation

### Abstrakt

Kościół od początku swojego istnienia wielką uwagę poświęcał formacji intelektualnej duchowieństwa. Po przyjęciu sakramentu święceń dla formacji pastoralnej i intelektualnej duchowieństwa diecezji tarnowskiej w latach 1918-1939 istotne znaczenie posiadały egzaminy teologiczne, procedowane zgodnie z dyspozycjami ustawodawcy powszechnego zawartymi w Kodeksie prawa kanonicznego z 1917 r. w kan. 130. W omawianym okresie egzaminy wikariuszowskie odbywały się zazwyczaj w sierpniu w auli Seminarium duchownego w Tarnowie. Materia do

egzaminów obejmowała teologię dogmatyczną, moralną, pastoralną oraz prawo kanoniczne. Opracowanie jest wkładem w historię prawa kanonicznego, gdyż rozwój instytucji egzaminów wikariuszowskich w diecezji tarnowskiej w okresie 1918-1939 dotychczas nie doczekał się jeszcze opracowania.

**Słowa kluczowe:** diecezja tarnowska, dwudziestolecie międzywojenne, egzaminy wikariuszowskie, formacja intelektualna

## Introduction

Since its inception, the Church has paid great attention to the intellectual formation of the clergy. The need for ongoing education for the clergy was pointed out by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical "On the Catholic Priesthood" promulgated on 20 December 1935: "He must teach the truth that heals and saves; and because of this teaching, like the Apostle of the Gentiles, he has a duty towards «the learned and the unlearned» (Rom. I, 14). But how can he teach unless he himself possess knowledge? «The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth», said the Holy Spirit in the Prophecy of Malachy. (Mal. II, 7). Who could ever utter a word in praise of sacerdotal learning more weighty than that which divine Wisdom itself once spoke by the mouth of Osee: «Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee that thou shalt not do the office of priesthood to Me» (Os. IV, 6). The priest should have full grasp of the Catholic teaching on faith and morals; he should know how to present it to others; and he should be able to give the reasons for the dogmas, laws and observances of the Church of which he is minister. Profane sciences have indeed made much progress; but in religious questions there is much ignorance still darkening the mind of our contemporaries. This ignorance the priest must dispel. Never was more pointed than today the warning of Tertullian, «This alone truth sometime craves, that it be not condemned unheard» (Tert. Apolog., year 1) [...]. Therefore, Venerable Brethren, it is necessary that the priest, even among the absorbing tasks of his charge, and ever with a view to it, should continue his theological studies with unremitting zeal. The knowledge acquired at the seminary is indeed a sufficient foundation with which to begin; but it must be grasped more thoroughly, and perfected by an ever-increasing knowledge and understanding of the sacred sciences. Herein is the source of effective preaching and of influence over the souls of others (Cf. Code of Canon Law, Can. 129). Yet

even more is required. The dignity of the office he holds and the maintenance of a becoming respect and esteem among the people, which helps so much in his pastoral work, demand more than purely ecclesiastical learning. The priest must be graced by no less knowledge and culture than is usual among well-bred and well-educated people of his day. This is to say that he must be healthily modern, as is the Church, which is at home in all times and all places, and adapts itself to all; which blesses and furthers all healthy initiative and has no fear of the progress, even the most daring progress, of science; if only it be true science”<sup>1</sup>

Bearing in mind the importance of intellectual formation of the clergy, this article will present the issue of examinations for vicars held in the Diocese of Tarnów between 1918 and 1939. This subject has not yet been elaborated on in the literature. Therefore, this article is mainly based on the source material which is the official journal of the Diocese of Tarnów – “Currenda”. In this periodical, the examinations were not called “vicar examinations”, but “theological examinations”. In practice, we know that they were taken by parish vicars. Therefore, the legal basis for these examinations will be discussed first, followed by a presentation of the examinations before 1918, the time and place of these examinations, the year groups obliged to take them and the subjects.

## 1. Examinations for vicars in the 1917 Code of Canon Law

After ordination, clergy should continue their education in the sciences, especially theology. In these studies they should be faithful to the teachings given by their forefathers, avoiding worldly novelties and false wisdom.<sup>2</sup> After completing their higher studies, diocesan priests, even if they have a parochial or canonical benefice, unless they have been exempted by the local Ordinary for a just cause, are to pass an examination in the various

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<sup>1</sup> Pius PP. XI, Litterae encyclicae de sacerdotio catholico *Ad catholici Sacerdotii fastigium* (20.12.1935), AAS 28 (1936), p. 5-53, here p. 30-31.

<sup>2</sup> Canon 129: “Clerici studia, praesertim sacra, recepto sacerdotio, ne intermittant; et in sacris disciplinis solidam illam doctrinam a maioribus traditam et communiter ab Ecclesia receptam sectentur, devitantes profanas vocum novitates et falsi nominis scientiam.” *Codex Iuris Canonici Pii X Pontificis Maximi iussu digestus Benedicti Papae XV auctoritate promulgatus* (27.05.1917), AAS 9 (1917), pars II, p. 1-593 [hereinafter: CIC/17].

disciplines of theology every year for at least three years, in the manner determined by the Ordinary.<sup>3</sup> Parish priests or current vicars were not obliged to take examinations before the local Ordinary. However, if it happened that they did not take these examinations before their own superior, in such a situation the local Ordinary should apply to the Congregation for Religious Affairs [Bączkiewicz, Baron, and Stawinoga 1958, 318; Sztafrowski 1976, 203-204; Grabowski 1948, 168-69; Lewandowski 2020, 100].<sup>4</sup>

A reference to examinations can also be found in Canon 130 § 2 CIC/17, where it is mentioned that in the conferral of ecclesiastical offices and benefices, among candidates who had equal conditions, those who did well during the examinations should be taken into account in the first place.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Examinations in the Diocese of Tarnów before 1918

Between 1886 and 1918, academic studies were attended by a small proportion of the clergy. A common form of further education for the clergy in the Diocese of Tarnów was the written preparation of papers on questions assigned by the Episcopal Consistory in four subjects: dogmatic theology, moral theology, pastoral theology and canon law. As Marek Łabuz notes, “Every priest within a few years of his ordination, as well as senior priests applying for the parsonage or the post of appointed catechist, were obliged to submit a written paper on four subjects. These papers were sent to the Consistory, then evaluated and on the basis of these, the priests were given more or less prominent vicar posts or parsonages” [Łabuz 2007, 284].

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<sup>3</sup> Canon 130 § 1 CIC/17: “Expleto studiorum curriculo, sacerdotes omnes, etsi beneficium paroeciale aut canonicale consecuti, nisi ab Ordinario loci ob iustam causam fuerint exempti, examen singulis annis saltem per integrum triennium in diversis sacrarum scientiarum disciplinis, antea opportune designatis, subeant secundum modum ab eodem Ordinario determinandum.”

<sup>4</sup> Paweł Lewandowski, while discussing decanal congregations in the Diocese of Tarnów between 1918 and 1939, notes that the first and second synods of the Diocese of Tarnów erroneously indicated Canon 138 as the legal basis for the examination related to *formtio permanens* referred to in Canon 130 § 1 CIC/17.

<sup>5</sup> “In collatione officiorum et beneficiorum ecclesiasticorum ratio habeatur eorum, qui, ceteris paribus, in memoratis periculis magis praestiterunt.”

For example, in 1913 these subjects were as follows: 1) In dogmatic theology: “Probetur thesis: Fidelibus peccatoribus jure divino officium incumbere confitendi omnia et singula peccata gravia postBaptismum commissa”; 2) In moral theology: “Quomodo fieri debet restitutio famae? An simul cum redintegratione famae adsit obligatio reparandi cetera damna, si quae e detractone seguuta sint?”; 3) In canon law: “Qualem innovationem in legislatione ecclesiastica quoad formam celebratuionis sponsalium et matrimoniii induxit Decretum “Ne temere?””; 4) In pastoral theology: “What qualities should a preaching style have?” [ibid., 289].

On the other hand, in 1918, which is covered by the scope of this study, only two subjects were given: 1) Subject I: “Punishment from the pulpit in the light of Benedict XV’s encyclical “Humani generis” of 10 June 1917”; 2) Subject II: “Discrimen inter veterem ac nova legislatonem ecclesiasticam quoad: 1) festa 2) ieiunia 3) vota” [ibid.].

As it seems, these were the beginnings of examinations for vicars and parish priests. Before 1918, private study was also a form of further education for the clergy. In order to familiarise the clergy with valuable books and magazines that could deepen the spirituality of priests and broaden their mental horizons, Bishop Ignacy Łobos as well as Bishop Leon Wałęga recommended a number of publications, books and magazines in the “Currenda”. “In total, they encouraged the acquisition and reading of valuable books (often by diocesan authors) more than 190 times. More than 30 times, they recommended magazines such as: “Catechetical and Pastoral Biweekly” (Polish: “Dwutygodnik Katechetyczny i Duszpasterski”), “Priestly Athenaeum” (Polish: “Ateneum Kapłańskie”), “Good Shepherd” (Polish: “Dobry Pasterz”), “Theological Review” (Polish: “Przegląd Teologiczny”), “Catholic Guide” (Polish: “Przewodnik Katolicki”), etc.” [ibid., 290].

### **3. The time and place of the theological examination in the Diocese of Tarnów between 1918 and 1939**

As already mentioned in the first point, CIC/17 recommended that ordinaries arrange examinations for young priests in dioceses. Implementing the idea of ecclesiastical law, Bishop Leon Wałęga ordered such examinations in 1919, which took the name of theological examinations. They were held every year with the exception of 1928 and 1938, because in those

years diocesan synods (the first and the second one) took place in the Diocese of Tarnów. The dates of these examination meetings and their locations are presented below:

1919

26 August 1919, 10.00 am

Auditorium of the Seminary of clerics<sup>6</sup>

1920

25 August 1920, 10.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>7</sup>

1921

23 August 1921, 10.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>8</sup>

1922

22 August 1922, 10.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>9</sup>

1923

22 August 1923, 10.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>10</sup>

1924

26 August 1924, 10.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>11</sup>

1925

25 August 1925, 10.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>12</sup>

1926

24 August 1926, 10.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanae Tarnoviensis" 3 (1919), p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanae Tarnoviensis" 3 (1920), p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanae Tarnoviensis" 4 (1921), p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanae Tarnoviensis" 5 (1922), p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanae Tarnoviensis" 4 (1923), p. 35.

<sup>11</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanae Tarnoviensis" 4 (1924), p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanae Tarnoviensis" 5 (1925), p. 36.

<sup>13</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanae Tarnoviensis" 3 (1926), p. 32.

1927

23 August 1927, 10.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>14</sup>

1929

21 August 1929, 9.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>15</sup>

1930

20 August 1930, 9.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>16</sup>

1931

19 August 1931, 9.00 am

21 August 1931, 9.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>17</sup>

1932

30 August 1932, 9.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>18</sup>

1933

11 August 1933, 9.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>19</sup>

1934

17 August 1934, 9.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>20</sup>

1935

20 August 1935, 9.00 am

21 August 1935, 9.00 am<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 5 (1927), p. 35.

<sup>15</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 5 (1929), p. 43.

<sup>16</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 8 (1930), p. 106.

<sup>17</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 7 (1931), p. 71.

<sup>18</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 5 (1932), p. 48.

<sup>19</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 6 (1933), p. 71.

<sup>20</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 6 (1934), p. 86.

<sup>21</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 8 (1935), p. 97.

1936

18 August 1936, 9.00 am

19 August 1936, 9.00 am

20 August 1936, 9.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>22</sup>

1937

20 August 1937

24 August 1937

25 August 1937

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>23</sup>

1939

7 March 1939, 8.00 am

Auditorium of the Theological Seminary<sup>24</sup>

#### **4. Priests obliged to take the examination and its scope**

The Bishops of Tarnów of the interwar period were faithful to the teaching of the universal Church and consistently implemented the provision of Canon 130 § 1 CIC/17. Therefore, the issues related to who was obliged to take the theological examination in particular years and what matter had to be passed by priests taking the examination are presented below:

1919

Ordination year 1918

Fundamental theology and moral theology (*De principiis*, Noldina vol. I)<sup>25</sup>

1920

Ordination year 1919 and 1920

Detailed dogmatics and the second part of moral theology (Noldin vol. II)<sup>26</sup>

1921

Ordination year 1918, 1919 and 1920

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<sup>22</sup> "Currēndae Curiae Dioecēsanae Tarnoviēnsis" 6 (1936), p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> "Currēndae Curiae Dioecēsanae Tarnoviēnsis" 12 (1937), p. 159.

<sup>24</sup> "Currēndae Curiae Dioecēsanae Tarnoviēnsis" 2 (1939), p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> "Currēndae Curiae Dioecēsanae Tarnoviēnsis" 3 (1919), p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> "Currēndae Curiae Dioecēsanae Tarnoviēnsis" 3 (1920), p. 14.



Canon law and pastoral theology<sup>27</sup>

1922

Ordination year 1919, 1920 and 1921

Fundamental theology and moral theology (Noldin, vol. I)<sup>28</sup>

1923

Ordination year 1920, 1921 and 1922

Detailed dogmatics and moral theology (Noldin, vol. II)<sup>29</sup>

1924

Ordination year 1921, 1922 and 1923

Canon law and pastoral theology<sup>30</sup>

1925

Ordination year 1922, 1923 and 1924

Fundamental theology and moral theology (Noldin, vol. I)<sup>31</sup>

1926

Ordination year 1923, 1924 and 1925

Detailed dogmatics and moral theology (Noldin, vol. II)<sup>32</sup>

1927

Ordination year 1924, 1925 and 1926

Ecclesiastical law and pastoral theology<sup>33</sup>

1929

Ordination year 1926, 1927 and 1928

Detailed dogmatics and moral theology (Noldin, vol. II)<sup>34</sup>

1930

Ordination year 1927, 1928 and 1929

Canon law and pastoral theology<sup>35</sup>

<sup>27</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 4 (1921), p. 29.

<sup>28</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 5 (1922), p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 4 (1923), p. 35.

<sup>30</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 4 (1924), p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 5 (1925), p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 3 (1926), p. 32.

<sup>33</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 5 (1927), p. 35.

<sup>34</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 5 (1929), p. 43.

<sup>35</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 8 (1930), p. 106.

1931

Ordination year 1928, 1929 and 1930

Fundamental theology and moral theology (Noldin, vol. I)<sup>36</sup>

1932

Ordination year 1929 and 1930

Detailed dogmatics and moral theology (Noldin, vol. II)<sup>37</sup>

1933

Ordination year 1930 and 1932

Canon law and pastoral theology<sup>38</sup>

1934

Ordination year 1932 and 1933

Fundamental theology and moral theology (Noldin, vol. I)<sup>39</sup>

1935

Ordination year 1932, 1933 and 1934

Detailed dogmatics and moral theology (Noldin, vol. II)<sup>40</sup>

1936

Ordination year 1933, 1934 and 1935

Canon law and moral theology (Noldin, vol. III)<sup>41</sup>

1937

Ordination year 1934, 1935 and 1936

Dogmatic theology, fundamental theology and moral theology (Noldin, vol. I)<sup>42</sup>

1939

Vicars who did not pass their examinations in previous years

Dogmatic theology, moral theology (whole), pastoral theology, fundamental theology<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 7 (1931), p. 71.

<sup>37</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 5 (1932), p. 48.

<sup>38</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 6 (1933), p. 71.

<sup>39</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 6 (1934), p. 86.

<sup>40</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 8 (1935), p. 97.

<sup>41</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 6 (1936), p. 97.

<sup>42</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 12 (1937), p. 159.

<sup>43</sup> "Currendae Curiae Dioecesanæ Tarnoviensis" 2 (1939), p. 7.

As can be seen from the above presentation, in principle, priests of three ordination years were obliged to take the examinations. The matter covered four subjects: dogmatic theology, moral theology, pastoral theology and canon law.

### Summary

After the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, for the pastoral and intellectual formation of the clergy of the Diocese of Tarnów between 1918 and 1939, theological examinations were of vital importance and they were carried out in accordance with the dispositions of the universal legislator contained in Canon 130 CIC/17. In the period under discussion, examinations for vicars were held in August in the auditorium of the Theological Seminary in Tarnów. The examination material included dogmatic theology, moral theology, pastoral theology and canon law.

The form of examinations for vicars presented in this article, initiated in 1919, has survived to the present day. This is evidenced, for example, by the current synodal legislation, where Statute 401 reads: "During the first year of priesthood, priests hold periodic meetings with their superiors and professors of the Seminary, according to a programme established and approved by the local Ordinary. [...] Priests after their second, third and fourth year of priesthood are required to take the examinations for vicars. For these priests, the practice of lectures combined with retreat exercises during the summer holiday is maintained; this practice replaces the annual retreat"<sup>44</sup>

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