

RYSZARD FICEK

**THE WŁOCŁAWEK PERIOD OF FR. STEFAN  
WYSZYŃSKI'S PASTORAL MINISTRY: PRESBYTERATE  
AND THE TIME OF PRIESTLY-SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP  
(PART 2)**

## **Introduction**

Stefan Wyszyński became convinced that there is no more beautiful vocation in life than that of a priest. Through it and in it, the mortal and sinful man receives sanctification and salvation in the Church's reality understood as the Mystical Body of Christ. For that reason, Wyszyński saw the greatness of his priestly vocation in the mystery of union with Christ the Highest Priest. At the core of this awareness was the nature and mission of the sacramental priesthood, realized by the power of God's love revealed in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, being aware of the gift of the vocation he had received, Stefan Wyszyński was deeply involved in the process of experiencing the sacrament of priesthood resembling Christ the Shepherd. It was connected with the conviction that the priesthood is the most extraordinary grace in the Church and towards

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the Church. In this sense, Wyszyński was convinced that the sacrament of priestly ordination rooted man in the consecration of Christ the Priest, and it is translated into his spiritual attitudes. In other words, the priesthood's sacrament was the content of his spiritual life shaping his priestly identity.

According to Stefan Wyszyński, the authentic realization of a priestly vocation is shaped by the process of constant and permanent spiritual formation. Since the above process has its theological justification, it is the duty of every priest who should be treated responsibly and carried out with evangelical commitment. In this context, Christ is the only model of the priesthood, so you need to adopt his lifestyle and actions, as well as his way of thinking and valuing. Moreover, since Holy Orders' sacrament mystically grafts man into Christ the Priest, the priest must continuously strive to put on "the garment of his life, presence, and work".

Therefore, it is necessary to devote oneself, be determined, and consciously submit to such intellectual and spiritual formation. Only then can it be said that all dimensions of the priest's existence will belong to Christ; that is, they will become more and more alike with His life. According to Wyszyński, then, the entire formation and subsequent priestly spirituality should be characterized by a spiritual attitude in which the main priority is to please Christ. It expresses priestly maturity, a personality integrated by the evangelical faith, the effect of which is the holiness of life. However, its fundamental source and agent is the Triune God and the priest who indeed participates in His grace, eventually, partakes in His spiritual life as well.

## **1. Priestly Ordinations**

Stefan Wyszyński was ordained a priest on August 3, 1924. However, he celebrated this moment alone. His classmates from the Seminary were ordained on June 29. So Stefan had to wait until August 3 because, on that day, he was only 23 years old. According to the legal regulations, a seminarian must be at least 24 years old to be ordained a priest.

In justified cases, though, the bishop could reduce the candidate's required age by one year. That applied to Stefan Wyszyński. Nevertheless, in his case, the more significant obstacle to ordination, yet seriously considered by his superiors, was not so much his age as his poor health. His admission to ordination was due to Bishop Stanisław Zdzitowiecki. Unfortunately, Stefan, who always was a sickly seminarian, became seriously ill at the end of June 1924, a week before his colleagues' priestly ordinations.

As a result, he was hospitalized with the symptoms of severe pneumonia. According to other accounts, doctors initially diagnosed typhus, at that time

a dangerous disease, of which many of his colleagues died. Fortunately, the physician who made this diagnosis went on vacation, and the other one realized that the previous physician's diagnosis was wrong. Thus, Wyszyński quickly left the infectious disease ward<sup>1</sup>. After leaving the hospital, he went to Licheń for convalescence. He came to Włocławek only for ordination. Stefan was ordained a priest in the Włocławek cathedral, in the chapel of the "Mother of God", at the hands of, nota bene, also a very sick with tuberculosis, Bishop Wojciech Owczarek. He was accompanied only by his sister Stanisława, with whom Stefan was related most strongly.

Yet, newly ordained Fr. Wyszyński was still very weak. During his priestly ordination, lying on the church floor, when the audience recited a litany to All Saints, he was afraid that he would not be able to get up and stay on his feet. For a long time, therefore, each day, when he was celebrating a mass, he thought that he was doing it for the last time<sup>2</sup>. "I did not have any other life ambitions then because I lacked strength and health to design any plans"<sup>3</sup>.

A newly ordained Fr. Stefan celebrated the first mass on August 5 in Jasna Góra Shrine, in front of the "Black Madonna" altar. He went over there, as he mentioned, "(...) to have a Mother who does not die, who will stand in each of my Holy Mass, as she stood with Christ at Calvary"<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, half a century after ordination, he said that Maria was always walking ahead of him as a light, life, hope, and support in challenging moments. "Furthermore, it seems to me that putting everything on the Mother of God, and I was not disappointed"<sup>5</sup>.

The next day, August 6, 1924, Fr. Wyszyński was already with his family in Wrociszew. From there, he went to Licheń/Konin again. In the "Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows, Queen of Poland", he stayed over there until the beginning of September. During that vacation, the symptoms of the disease miraculously subsided. Wyszyński was convinced that it happened through the intercession of the Mother of God. He later said that Mary healed him<sup>6</sup>.

In this way, in the summer of 1924, Fr. Stefan Wyszyński began his priesthood in admittedly poor health but with high intellectual potential recognized by his superiors. Hence, a year later, he was sent for further studies. Until then, Fr. Stefan worked as an associate priest at the cathedral in Włocławek. He was also a teacher in the school at the cellulose factory, gave evening courses for working youth, and

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1. Cf. A. Micewski, *Cardinal Wyszyński*, Sant Diego-New York-London 1984, p. 32-35.
  2. Cf. E.K. Czaczkowska, *Kardynał Wyszyński: Biografia*, Kraków 2013, p. 38-40.
  3. S. Wyszyński, *Droga życia*, Warszawa 2001, p. 31.
  4. Ibid, *Biografia w fotografiach*, Orchard Lake, Michigan 1969, 30
  5. Ibid, *Wszystko postawiłem na Maryję*, Warszawa 2007, 28.
  6. Cf. M.E. Romaniuk, *Życie, twórczość i posługa Stefana Kardynała Wyszyńskiego Prymasa Tysiąclecia*, Warszawa 1994, vol. I, p. 71-72.

worked as an editor of the diocese journal “Słowo Kujawskie” (Kuyavia Word). In October 1925, the Włocławek bishop Stanisław Zdzitowiecki sent Fr. Wyszyński to the University of Lublin<sup>7</sup>.

## 2. Studies at the Catholic University of Lublin

In those times, the University of Lublin was a relatively young scientific center founded in 1918, but already significant in Poland. Four years spent at the Catholic University of Lublin (1925–1929) inevitably were a crucial stage in the life of Fr. Stefan Wyszyński. First of all, over there, he could develop his socio-economic interests, listen to lectures given by the best professors, including Prof. Antoni Szymanski, long-time rector of the Catholic University of Lublin and founder of the “Lublin School” of Catholic social science, and Prof. Jacek Woroniecki, the famous moralist and Thomistic theologian<sup>8</sup>. Secondly, Wyszyński met Fr. Władysław Kornilowicz, who significantly impacted his spirituality and pastoral style. Thirdly, he became a member of the Catholic Academic Youth Association “Odrodzenie” (“Rebirth”), which in the interwar period was an active center shaping especially Catholic intelligence<sup>9</sup>.

Initially, Fr. Wyszyński wanted to study socio-economic sciences, but – on the advice of Fr. Szymański, formerly a professor at the Włocławek Seminary – chose canon law. Fr. Szymański knew that studies in law, in addition to substantive knowledge, would teach logical thinking. Furthermore, both are an appropriate asset in a church career. Perhaps, at that time, Szymański saw in Wyszyński more a type of Christian-social activist with deep intellectual formation than a typical theoretician, a scientist detached from life’s realities and focusing only on the theoretical problems<sup>10</sup>.

Overall, Wyszyński was a good student. In December 1927, he obtained a bachelor’s degree, and in June 1929, he defended his doctoral thesis in canon law. The contents of doctoral dissertations indicated that the thesis entitled “Prawa rodziny, Kościoła i państwa do szkoły” (Family, Church and State Rights to School) was planned as a more extensive work, but Wyszyński did not manage to finish it. However, one chapter of work was enough to obtain a doctoral degree: “Prawa Kościoła do szkoły” (Church’s right to school). This knowledge and experience

7. The University of Lublin received the name of “Catholic University in Lublin” (KUL) in 1928.

8. Cf. S. Wyszyński, *O Ojcu Jacku Woronieckim*, „W Drodze”, 8 (1974), p. 4.

9. Cf. E. Nitecki, *Ksiądz Stefan Wyszyński student Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego w latach 1923-1929*, Lublin 2006, p. 18-23.

10. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 32-35.

came in handy to Wyszyński after the war, when as the Primate, he had to fight communists for years to keep teaching religion at school<sup>11</sup>.

However, the Faculty Board evaluated Fr. Wyszyński's doctoral thesis only on four. Has the degree been underestimated? That is what said Fr. Zdzisław Peszkowski, a famous chaplain of the "Katyń Families". But, according to other historians, the problems with the thesis were more serious. In their opinion, Prof. Jan Wiślicki, a canonist, did not want to accept Fr. Wyszyński's doctoral dissertation because he believed that Wyszyński did not consider a significant part of the literature.

Nevertheless, Prof. Ignacy Czuma convinced Wiślicki that Wyszyński's thesis's innovative value was more important than that. Still, news spread throughout the university that the Faculty Board hurt Fr. Wyszyński. As a result, he received a reprimand from the faculty for disseminating comments challenging the degree. In this case, Wyszyński even wanted to defend himself. He already wrote a letter to the faculty's dean. However, talking to Fr. Kornilowicz, he sent another message – thanking the dean for everything he had learned at the Catholic University in Lublin (KUL)<sup>12</sup>. From the perspective of years, though, it can be seen that the knowledge of socio-economic relations, the theory of the political systems and the social teaching of the Church, which Wyszyński gained at KUL, was invaluable when he became the Primate of the country, where the communist regime had appropriated the political power.

### 3. Foreign Scholarship: Towards Profounder Understanding of Universal Church

The years spent at the Catholic University of Lublin were for the future Primate, and then the priest and social activist who began his scientific career, essential for intellectual and spiritual development. The year he spent abroad was also outstanding. Thanks to Fr. Kornilowicz, Dr. Wyszyński received a scholarship for a study trip around Europe. It was not his first trip abroad. In the summer of 1926, he visited Italy with a pilgrimage of Lublin students. He was, among others, in Rome, on Monte Cassino, and in Assisi. During the second trip, from September 1929 to June 1930, he visited research centers in Austria, Italy, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. He listened to universities' lectures, learned a lot about Catholic social teaching, and collected comparative material relevant to his future studies<sup>13</sup>.

11. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 28-29.

12. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 29.

13. Cf. A. F. Dziuba, *Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński*, Kraków 2010, p. 19.

Wyszyński was also acquainted with the “Catholic Action” activities, other Christian associations, and trade unions. In Paris, for example, he was a student at the “Institut Social” (Social Institute). The result of the trip were two books. In the monograph *Dzieło kardynała Ferrai* (“The Work of Cardinal Ferrai”), Wyszyński described the methods of apostolic work of the Archbishop of Milan among workers. And in *Główne typy Akcji Katolickiej* (“The Main Types of Catholic Action”), he included reflections on the work of this association among Italian, French, Belgian, German, and Dutch Catholics. Before the war, in 1936, the future Primate revisited Italy. All the time, he traveled with Fr. Jan Tyszka, a friend from Andrzejewo<sup>14</sup>.

After returning to the country in the autumn of 1930, Wyszyński worked as an associate priest in the Holy Family parish in Przedcz Kujawski, then in Włocławek cathedral. He also taught social economy and sociology at the local Seminary. In 1933, he became the Editor-in-Chief of the “Ateneum Kapłańskie” (“Priestly Athenaeum”) and served as a promoter of justice and defender of the marriage node in Curia Court. From 1938, Wyszyński was appointed as a judge in the Episcopal Court. He also ran the Christian Workers’ University and was active in “Christian Trade Unions”. He also organized the “Catholic Union of Workers’ Youth”. For some time, Fr. Wyszyński also headed the “Marian Sodality of Kujawsko-Dobrzyń Landowners”<sup>15</sup>. In the “Christian Trade Unions”, Fr. Stefan Wyszyński dealt mostly with the education of workers.

Commemorating these times later, he said: Sure, it is essential to fight for human rights, for just payment – there is a theory in Catholic social science, an idea of so-called “Family payment”. However, we have to remember that a man is working there – whether at the bottom of the mine or in the shipyard, in the steel mill or anywhere; man works, God’s man of high dignity – the first fundamental value in the nation and the state<sup>16</sup>. In social activities, Wyszyński was a strong supporter of reforms, which he always understood as a promotion of man’s good, as well as his moral and spiritual development. For that reason, he was in favor of land reform in the Polish rural areas. In his work entitled “Marian Sodality of Landowners”, he recalled: “I had several hundred landowners – older and younger people, whom, as part of religious education, I tried to explain the principles of Catholic social thinking, among others, regarding the enfranchisement of peasants. The Church advocated enfranchisement and extension of ownership, especially

14. Cf. M. E. Romaniuk, *Życie, twórczość i posługa Stefana Kardynała Wyszyńskiego Prymasa Tysiąclecia*, Warszawa 1994, vol. I, p. 116-127.

15. Cf. Dziuba, *Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński*, p. 20.

16. Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Najważniejszą wartością na świecie jest człowiek. Do delegacji NSZZ „Solidarność” Region Mazowsze 19.10.1980*, in: S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946-1981*, Warszawa 1990, p. 963.

when it comes to dwarf farms. This is referred mainly to the south-eastern part of our homeland, to full-fledged farms. Under the principles of Christian social science, I tried to teach how landowners should cooperate with the people working in farms and land estates. They adopted these principles with Christian submission and fruitfulness<sup>17</sup>.

The scientific, educational, and practical social activity of Fr. Stefan Wyszyński caused that despite his young age, he was appointed by Cardinal August Hlond in 1938 as a member of the "Social Council at the Primate of Poland". During these years, many of his works on social issues appeared, including "Główne podstawy przebudowy ustroju społecznego" ("Main Foundations of the Reconstruction of the Social System", 1933), "Zasięg i charakter zainteresowań katolickiej myśli społecznej" ("Range and Nature of Interests in Catholic Social Thought", 1937), as well as "Stanowisko i zadania duszpasterza wobec współczesnych ruchów społecznych" ("Pastor's Attitude and Tasks toward Contemporary Social Movements", 1938)<sup>18</sup>.

Above all, however, Wyszyński was an ardent patriot, as well as a social and independence activist. Referring to the experiences of this period, he underlined: "Respect for the past and recognition of "national" values makes it possible to effectively oppose all internationalist and cosmopolitan tendencies, which, apart from the nation's historical achievements, intentionally weakened the bond between the present and the past – and thus also the future"<sup>19</sup>. In other words, according to Wyszyński, national identity and the awareness of belonging to one's "native land" become a fundamental environment conditioning the development and improvement of every man and the nation, both in the spiritual and natural dimension.

#### 4. Dark Period of War and Occupation

World War II found Father Wyszyński in Włocławek. At the command of Bishop Michał Kozal, the future Primate had to flee from the city because the German Secret Police (Gestapo) was looking for him. His critical articles about the Nazi totalitarian system published in the "Ateneum Kapłańskie" ("Priestly Athenaeum") undoubtedly meant for him an inevitable death sentence. In 1935, two years after coming to power of the NSDAP, he wrote that Adolf Hitler sought

17. S. Wyszyński, *Nie dać sobie wydrzeć ziemi! Do Solidarności wiejskiej rolników indywidualnych. Warszawa-Miodowa 2.04.1981*, in: *Kościół w służbie Narodu*, p. 272.

18. Cf. Dziuba, *Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński*, p. 20-21.

19. S. Wyszyński, *Rodzina-Naród-społeczeństwo. Kazanie świętokrzyskie 18 I 1976*, in: S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946-1981*, p. 687.

to organize a pagan totalitarian state with its primary opponent: the Catholic Church.

A couple of years before the war, talking about the totalitarian Nazi system, Wyszyński pointed out: “The greatest disgrace to man would be any relationship with God, especially in the Christian sense. Man, God’s creation? This wording is enough to draw all the hatred that is exercised toward God. There is widespread contempt for God’s image in man, even easier to perpetuate because people do everything not to remind God in anything. A man stripped of the remnants of a relationship with God is considered directly as a fertilizer for future generations”<sup>20</sup>. As Wyszyński emphasized, such an inhuman system is characterized mostly by the hatred of all personalistic values, especially in the Christian sense.

Beyond doubt, the superiors were aware of the extreme threats to Wyszyński. Probably, for this reason, Bishop Karol Radoński decided that Fr. Stefan should go to Lublin, where he also sent seminarians from the last year. Over there, Bishop Karol intended to ordain them, out of Nazi German danger. Wyszyński arrived in Lublin, but – without meeting the ordinary bishop who left for Romania – he returned to Włocławek. Like the auxiliary bishop, Michał Kozal hoped that Germans would allow the Seminary to function<sup>21</sup>.

Unfortunately, in October 1939, the first arrests of priests in the Włocławek Diocese took place. Rector of the Seminary, Fr. Franciszek Korszyński, and then bishop Michał Kozal firmly ordered Wyszyński to leave Włocławek as soon as possible. He did so reluctantly, lingering. However, he quickly learned that the Gestapo was looking for him. His apartment had already been plundered, and a few days later, after the Germans had set fire to the part of the Seminary, they torched its substantial library.

On November 7, the Germans arrested almost all the seminary professors, Bishop Kozal, as well as 22 seminarians. A total of 44 people. Most of them died in Dachau’s German concentration camp (bishop Michał Kozal was beatified in 1987). The Germans also arrested Fr. Michał Szwabiński from Grabków, whom Fr. Wyszyński paid a visit, after leaving Włocławek. Yet, Stefan Wyszyński escaped with his life. If he stayed in Włocławek a couple of hours longer, he would share the fate of his colleagues. He was aware of this all his life<sup>22</sup>.

From November 1939 to July 1940, Fr. Wyszyński lived in his family’s home in Wrociszew. However, when the news reached him that the Gestapo wanted him, he decided to spend a short time with his sister Janina Jurkiewicz, living

20. S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość*, p. 47.

21. Cf. A. Micewski, *Kardynał Wyszyński, prymas i mąż stanu*, Paris 1982, p. 21-22.

22. Cf. J. Dębiński, *Duchowieństwo rzymskokatolickie diecezji włocławskiej w latach 1918–1939*, Toruń 2008, p. 87-98.



near Warsaw. After his intensive labors in Włocławek, his period of relative idleness in Wrociszew was so disquieting that he did not hesitate when he got an interesting offer of cooperation with Fr. Kornilowicz. He was to go to Kozłówka in the Lublin region and, as a chaplain, taking care of nuns working with blind children. They were refugees from the blind facility in Laski, which was destroyed at the beginning of the war.

Initially, the children lived in a center run by Franciscan sisters in Żułów near Krasnystaw. However, it was too small to accommodate all those in need. Therefore, some of them had to move to the palace of Count Alexander and Countess Jadwiga Zamoyski in Kozłovka. The Zamoyski family sheltered dozens of other people over there, mainly from the landed gentry, aristocracy, and intelligentsia<sup>23</sup>. In Kozłovka, Wyszyński was able to work in the pastoral ministry again, as well as teaching activity. Very soon, therefore, this place was humorously called the "Kozłovka academy". He also went to a manor in Nasutow, where he celebrated masses for farmworkers, and local guerrillas hiding in the nearby forests belonged to the owners of this fee tail<sup>24</sup>. So far, Fr. Wyszyński found himself in Kozłovka in the very center of the environment he already knew, but – in some sense – as a stranger. Despite even the fact that aristocrats and landowners hiding in the palace were often mutilated by the war, depleted, however, the hosts were extremely hospitable and patriotically awakened. Unfortunately, Count Zamoyski was arrested by the Gestapo for belonging to the "Home Army" (AK) a couple of months later.

Needless to say, Wyszyński had to leave a manor in Kozłovka quite quickly. This decision was caused by a roundup of the German gendarmerie, which only miraculously did not end in the execution of the palace's inhabitants. Fr. Stefan escaped to the farm in Nasutow, and from there, in September 1941, he went to Zakopane at the foot of the Tatra Mountains. Over here, he settled in the house of the Ursuline Sisters. Wyszyński already knew this place. As a young priest, he used to go there in the 1930s, sometimes even twice a year – in summer and winter – to treat renewing tuberculosis.

23. Cf. G. Antoniuk, *Niezwykły gość. Ksiądz Stefan Wyszyński u Aleksandra i Jadwigi Zamoyskich w Kozłowce*, Kozłowka 2000, p. 22-24.

24. *Ibid.*, 65-68. The future Primate, because of his socio-political views, aroused intellectual revival among the Zamoyski guests, but also a kind of anxiety. Zofia Czacka recalled for years that, despite divergent views, and especially the assessment of life before World War II, everyone was aware that they were dealing with someone extraordinary. "Tall, slim, with a slightly leaning figure, light complexion and a cheerful smile, Wyszyński made the impression of a man who was focused, balanced, not succumbing to violent emotions", wrote Monika Znamierowska-Kozik. Nevertheless, with her father, Prof. Czesław Znamierowski, the future Primate led very passionate discussions about politics and ethics (cf. *ibid.* p. 42-43).

Nevertheless, this time the stay in Zakopane could be ended tragically. Unexpectedly, Wyszyński was arrested by the Gestapo and detained for several hours in the torture chamber. During the interrogation, though, he realized that the Gestapo had known nothing about his pre-war activity. However, immediately after release from detention, he decided to leave Zakopane as soon as possible<sup>25</sup>.

In the next few months, Wyszyński worked among blind children in Żułów, together with Fr. Kornilowicz. Without a doubt, again, they had time for Thomistic discussions. However, an unexpected event occurred over there. Walking around the area, he found himself in a cottage, where a young woman, rejected by the village, was lying on a pallet in the last stages of labor, too late for him to go for help. Hence, he had to assist the delivery by himself.

A newly born life emerged from the desolation and graveyard of the horrendous bloody war.

## 5. Laski and the Experience of the “Warsaw Uprising”

In June 1942, Fr. Wyszyński left Żułów. At the request of Fr. Kornilowicz, he went to Laski near Warsaw to become a chaplain of sisters and a catechist of a group of blind children. In this way, he replaced a priest wanted by the Gestapo, Jan Zieja, who was at that time a chaplain at the Home Army Headquarters (AK). Wyszyński lived in Laski until the end of the war. During these three years, he became very close with all inhabitants of Laski center, and with the founder of it, the mother superior, Sr. Róża Czacka. Here, Fr. Stefan also met Antoni Marylski, the closest collaborator of Sr. Czacka, but their friendship developed, especially after the war. From then on, Laski became Fr. Wyszyński’s home. “Contrary to my intentions, I drowned in Laski much more heart than reason. Actually, it is impossible to say what binds the heart there – not individual “entities”, but rather “air” in Laski”, he wrote right after the war.

This specific atmosphere was created, first of all, by a community of people open to others – they may be blind on the body but endowed with an extraordinary potential of the soul – sensitive to the world and continually praying at the foot of the cross. It was the spirituality of the Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross, which was co-founded by Fr. Kornilowicz, which grew up from Franciscan devoutness. However, in its evangelical simplicity of life, such piety was deeply grounded in Wyszyński’s identity, shaping his spirituality.

The “Institute for the Blind” was established in 1921 in the former farm, donated by the Daszewski family to the blind countess Róża Czacka, who in 1911

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25. Cf. Czackowska, *Kardynał Wyszyński*, p. 63.

founded the "Society for the Care of the Blind". In 1917, Róża Czacka assumed the Franciscan habit, and next year, as Mother Elżbieta founded the "Congregation of Franciscan Sisters of the Cross Servants", which is still a leading institution working especially with blind people<sup>26</sup>. Wyszyński recalled after many years, "I tried to maintain the spirit of overwhelmed by the situation of frontal life, mainly by prayer to the Mother of God. A significant thing. Although the Institute went through tough times of artillery fire, pacification of Kampinos, etc., we were never forced to put down the evening rosary"<sup>27</sup>.

When the local AK-insurgents went to action, Fr. Wyszyński always conducted night adorations in their intention before the Blessed Sacrament. "Children, we join the action", then, he began to celebrate the worships. He also encouraged to pray "for Pawiak prisoners, concentration camps and "oflags", as well as for deportees, and the army fighting in Poland and on all fronts of the world"<sup>28</sup>. Pieces of paper with such intentions were drawn at the end of prayer meetings, where the "Fr. Professor", as he was called in Laski, preached homilies, delivered lectures, and listened to the latest information about the situation on the front<sup>29</sup>. In Laski, in the spring of 1944, Fr. Wyszyński joined the Home Army (AK). From that moment, he became its official chaplain. After that, he took an oath from the hands of Fr. Jerzy Baszkiewicz, the chief chaplain of the "Home Army District of Kampinos Forest", adopting the codename Radwan III.

On the eve of the Warsaw Uprising's outbreak, Radwan III consecrated an insurgent hospital in Laski, to which the first wounded were sent on August 1, 1944. From then on, throughout the entire uprising, Fr. Wyszyński took charge of the spiritual protection of in Laski of wounded insurgents. Therefore, he celebrated Holy Masses for them, confessed, absolved, encouraged, and prepared for death. He was doing the same a couple of weeks later, at the end of the uprising wounded Germans, Hungarians, and Ukrainian soldiers arrived in the hospital. Fr. Wyszyński also assisted in the operations carried out by the outstanding sur-

26. During the September 1939 war campaign, the center became a battlefield and, despite material losses of up to 75 %, provided help by running a field hospital. However, in the time of war, the Institute was officially suspended. Some students were evacuated to Żułowo. Even though the Center in Laski still provided many services, among others, taking care of war orphans. Residents were also involved in underground military activity. In 1944, Mother Superior Czacka decided to join the outpost in Laski to the Warsaw Uprising. Over there, an insurgent hospital and AK contact point were established. In this tense atmosphere, the residents and staff of the center desperately needed a spiritual guardian (cf. M. Żółtowski, *Blask prawdziwego Światła. Matka Elżbieta Róża Czacka i Jej Dzieło*, Lublin 1999).

27. S. Wyszyński, *Zapiski Więzienne*, Wrocław 1982, p. 32

28. Cf. A. Gościmska, R. Kamiński, *Laski w czasie okupacji 1939-1945*, p. 78-80.

29. Cf. M. P. Romaniuk, *Życie twórczość i posługa Prymasa Tysiąclecia*, vol. I, Warszawa 1994, p. 204-205.

geon, Prof. Kazimierz Cebertowicz<sup>30</sup>. In 1959, in his speech to medical students, Wyszyński recalled: “Legs and arms were carried out in baskets. At that moment, they could not be buried honestly, so they were put down into the pit”<sup>31</sup>.

When in 1976, Wyszyński blessed a plaque commemorating the uprising events in Laski, he noticed that despite many dangerous situations, the twice pacification of Kampinos forest, none of the people living in the center were even injured<sup>32</sup>. According to Fr. Baszkiewicz, the Polish government in London wanted to give the Primate the Order of “Virtuti Militari”, and the Home Army command the “Cross of Valor”. However, he did not specify when it was. Nevertheless, it is known that Wyszyński did not accept any of these high decorations<sup>33</sup>.

During the war, Fr. Wyszyński, while living in Laski, also was engaged in secret education conducted in Warsaw. For young people from the University of Warsaw, as well as the University of the Western Lands, he taught Catholic social teaching, history of economics, and history of social doctrines. He also preached retreats for various groups and communities organized by religious congregations, including Ursuline’s Congregation and Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent De Paul. For conspiracy purposes, he adopted even the pseudonym: “Sister Cecylia” (in Kozlovka, however, he used to have the alias “Basia”), which sounded quite

30. In 1968, the Cardinal stated in his speech to the lawyers: “During the uprising, I was a chaplain of the Home Army, and I had a lot of contact with suffering, misery, and human torment. I remember the operation of a courageous soldier whose leg had to be amputated. He said that he would agree to the surgery on the condition that I would stand by him all the time (...). Years of work among the blind, and especially the long months of work in the insurgent hospital, taught me a lot. It is more than a university because this experience taught a deep understanding of our neighbor, which we do not generally learn from books. Respect for man is acquired not when he is seen in a heroic position, but when he is seen in terrible anguish” (Wyszyński, *Zmaganie się sprawiedliwości i miłości. Do prawników Warszawy 6.04.1968*, in: S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946-1981*, p. 359-360).

31. Wyszyński, *Po śladach Chrystusa-Lekarza. Do absolwentów studiów medycznych w Warszawie 7.06.1959*, in: *Nauczanie społeczne 1946-1981*, p. 131. In his memoirs Wyszyński mentioned that he delivered the seriously wounded from places of really severe insurgent fighting to the hospital. Once, he carried on his back a young female liaison officer, who was wounded in the leg, for four kilometers. After the war, the girl called the Primate, asking him for another favor. “Now I baptize her children, because the married couple, they are both medical doctors, had set their minds on the twelve apostles” (cf. *Ibid.*, p. 134).

32. “Sometimes bullets cut branches, but they did not touch people. (...) During these various pacifications, we never stopped serving God in this chapel. And although sometimes the artillery roared during the day, when it arrived at 6 p.m., when we made a rosary here, everything calmed down. It was, in some way, a bizarre schedule of God’s providence” (quotation after: A. Gościmska, R. Kamiński, *Laski w czasie okupacji 1939-1945*, p. 81-86).

33. Cf. *Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński (1901-1981)*, in: <http://stefwysz.blogspot.com/2011/05/ksiazd-kanonik-jerzy-baszkiewicz-ksiazd.html> (retrieved October 14, 2019).

funny, especially when people asked: Will Sister Cecylia will celebrate the holy mass? Or, when will she hear confessions?<sup>34</sup> It needs to be emphasized that the Primate's scientific achievements developed during World War II seem to be also very interesting. His lectures on the "theology of work", which he delivered during the war, were published in August 1946 in the form of a book entitled „Duch pracy ludzkiej” (“The Spirit of Human Work”)<sup>35</sup>. Apart from the book “Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna” (“Love and Social Justice”)<sup>36</sup>, this is one of the essential works considering the theology of earthly reality, which – in some way – sum up his thoughts on this topic from the pre-war period.

## 6. Return to the Diocese

Fr. Wyszyński returned from Warsaw to Włocławek as soon as possible. It was in March 1945. The Seminary was destroyed. Most professors and seminarians arrested in 1939 did not return home. Slowly, it became clear that most of them had been tortured and died in the Dachau concentration camp. The Włocławek diocese was one of three (next to Chełmno and Poznań), which during the war suffered enormous losses among the clergy. Almost half of the priests died over there. Among them were Wyszyński's classmates from the Seminary. Of the sixteen priests ordained with him in 1924, thirteen were imprisoned in concentration camps, nine of them died.

For a long time, Fr. Wyszyński felt guilty that he had survived the war safe and sound, and he had not participated with them in the suffering experience. He believed that he should experience torment in the name of persecuted Christ just like them. Therefore, when he was jailed, he wrote from prison in October 1953: I was already afraid that I would not get the honor that almost all my colleagues had experienced. Today fear has left me. And that is why I am moving in a way that You, Father, will understand<sup>37</sup>.

When he became the bishop of Lublin, he placed on his desk a fragment of human bone brought from the concentration camp in Majdanek. It was engraved deeply into his memory what he had seen there: “Large prisms of several meters in length, side by side, each at least two meters high, at the base up to three meters wide. Just like in the “Ezekiel field”. I thought: «Here is a man. This is what the world of unbelief can do to a man when he loses faith that man is a child of

34. Cf. A. Micewski, *Kardynał Wyszyński. Prymas i mąż stanu*, p. 33-34.

35. Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Duch pracy ludzkiej. Konferencje o pracy*, Poznań 1957.

36. Cf. *ibid*, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna. Rozważania społeczne*, Poznań 1993.

37. Cf. *ibid*, *Zapiski Więzienne*, Wrocław 1982, p. 44.

God”<sup>38</sup>. He considered the bone brought from there to be a precious relic, one of those that the Church stores and places on the altars.

Probably the memory of his colleagues, professors, and seminarians of the Włocławek Seminary forced him to work even harder to open the school for students as soon as possible. The Seminary lectures began in April 1945, but they took place in Lubraniec, 30 kilometers away from Włocławek. Wyszyński performed his duties until the rector of the Seminary, Fr. Franciszek Korszyński, return from Dachau. He shared them with Fr. Adam Jankowski. Unquestionably, he worked very hard. Due to the lack of priests, he also performed the duty of associate priest in Lubraniec and pastor in two other parishes – in Kłobia and Zgłowiączka<sup>39</sup>.

Already in May 1945, some of the seminar’s departments were moved to Włocławek. Until autumn, when the entire Seminary was already working in the former headquarters, he commuted from Lubraniec with a two-wheeled carriage, looking almost like an Amish buggy, which he drove himself. Sometimes, as the Primate, he told the young priests when they had complained about work in small parishes or that they had had too many pastoral responsibilities. He was used to intensive work and modest living conditions. In such an environment, he had been brought up and educated.

On August 14, 1945, Fr. Stefan Wyszyński was appointed the canon of the Włocławek cathedral chapter. Before he received the nomination of the Bishop of Lublin, he managed to start a weekly newspaper in Włocławek for Catholic families titled „Ład Boży” (God’s Order). Many young people had come to Włocławek from Poznań and Warsaw to hear his sermons or for confession, and some of them had listened to his lectures<sup>40</sup>.

On March 4, 1946, Fr. Stefan Wyszyński was appointed by Pope Pius XII as the bishop of Lublin. At that time, he was less than 45 years old. In old pictures, we can see a face – seemingly – much younger, brighter, and slimmer. He learned about the nomination on March 25, 1946. The Vatican’s will was announced to him by Primate August Hlond, who for this purpose called him to Poznań. “At the first moment – he confessed after years – I could not imagine that I could leave Włocławek and just organized Seminary”<sup>41</sup>.

Wyszyński, who wanted to be a priest since he was a child, unquestionably, did not dream about a bishopric. He saw himself as a lecturer in Catholic social

38. Quotation after: J. Góra, J. Grzegorzczak, *Skrawek nieba albo o Ojcu i Królu*, Poznań 165.

39. Cf. M. P. Romaniuk, *Życie twórczość i posługa Prymasa Tysiąclecia*, p. 216-238.

40. Cf. Dziuba, *Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński*, p. 23.

41. Wyszyński, *Sursum corda. Z kazania do górali tatrzańskich (Zakopane 1957)*, in: S. Wyszyński, *Wszystko postawiłem na Maryję*, Warszawa 1998, p. 198.

teaching, a journalist, and a social activist. After many years, he confessed that he was “afraid” because he felt that it surpassed his strength. That is why he asked the cardinal to think about it. “However, I had to give in, because Cardinal Primate August Hlond, who announced to me the will of the Holy See, said: “You cannot refuse the Pope”<sup>42</sup>.

## 7. Epilog

Stefan Wyszyński, as an only just ordained priest, began his ministry in independent Poland. However, newly reborn Poland was looking for its sovereignty and independence. On the eastern side of the border, an aggressive, expansive Soviet state emerged with the utopian and ominous doctrine of communism. Western states also experienced severe economic problems caused by the effects of World War I, shaken by cyclically coming economic crises. Above all, however, Wyszyński was an ardent patriot and a social and independence activist. Referring to the experiences of this period, the Cardinal underlined: “Respect for the past and recognition of “national” values makes it possible to effectively oppose all internationalist and cosmopolitan tendencies, which, apart from the nation’s historical achievements, intentionally weakened the bond between the present and the past – and thus also the future”<sup>43</sup>. In other words, according to Wyszyński, national identity and the awareness of belonging to one’s “native land” become a fundamental environment conditioning the development and improvement of every man and the nation, both in the spiritual and natural dimension<sup>44</sup>. It was of great importance, especially in the time of recovery of Polish independence and sovereignty after 123 years of partitions.

However, the key to understanding the sequence of events after World War II led Wyszyński to the Lublin bishopric and then to the title of “Poland’s Primate”, was rooted in his education and pastoral experience based on the social involvement in the community of Polish workers. At that time, though, Fr. Stefan Wyszyński favored changing social relations in the country but rejected Marxist-ideological solutions. His activity in Catholic social science was noticed by Primate Hlond, who appointed him in 1937 to the “Social Council at the Primate of Poland”. In the new social, economic, and political situation in which Poland

42. Wyszyński, *Nie oczekujemy życia łatwego. Podczas ingresu do katedry lubelskiej 26.05. 1946*, in: S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946-1981*, p. 9-13.

43. Wyszyński, *Rodzina-Naród-społeczeństwo. Kazanie świętokrzyskie 18 I 1976*, p. 687.

44. Cf. Wyszyński, *Z komentarza do Jasnogórskich Ślubów Narodu*, in: *Dziela zebrane*, vol. II, Warszawa 1995, p. 85-86.

found itself after World War II, the episcopate needed people who understood the unique challenges facing the Church in Poland. Therefore, the authority of Fr. Stefan Wyszyński was irrefutable. Moreover, it was strengthened due to his underground involvement during the time of war and occupation.

After many years, in that time as Cardinal and Primate of Poland, Wyszyński said: "It seems that the most direct force in my life is Mary. Through an unusual mystery that I do not fully understand, she has been put on my new path of life. (...) If at the head of my program of service to the People of God (...) I accepted the call of "Soli Deo", which I placed on the top of the rebuilt Lublin cathedral because I decided in my childlike faith that a mortal man spends his life most effectively in communion with the One who does not die"<sup>45</sup>.

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45. S. Wyszyński, *Wszystko postawiłem na Maryję*, Warszawa 1998, p. 9-11.



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## Summary

The presented article analyzes the completion of formation for the priesthood in the Seminary and, then, the “Włocławek period” of the pastoral ministry of Fr. Stefan Wyszyński. The author’s interpretation of the source materials aims to display the meaning and significance of that time for the overall activity of Fr. Stefan Wyszyński, the future Primate of Poland. The exploration of the above research is based on analyzing source texts using the historical method to reconstruct historical facts and, after that, their reinterpretation by the inductive-deductive method. Therefore, the above article’s primary research goal is to present the “Włocławek period” of Wyszyński’s priestly life in the context of Poland’s social and political situation. However, the threats posed by the invasion of the then anti-Christian Marxist-Leninist ideology and Nazi Hitlerism with all the horrors of World War II were dire. They threatened the existence of both the Polish Church and the Nation. After all, even in the period of the most brutal repressions, Wyszyński

defended each man's personal dignity and the Christian identity of Poles. Moreover, according to the author of this study, the seminarian formation, pastoral ministry in the Diocese of Włocławek, studies at the Catholic University of Lublin, foreign scholarships, as well as the time of World War II were a kind of testing ground, where Fr. Stefan Wyszyński was able to gain and develop the pastoral experience necessary for his future activity as ordinary of the Lublin diocese, and, later, the Archdiocese of Gniezno and Warsaw, and the Primate of Poland.

**Key words:** Fr. Stefan Wyszyński, the diocese of Włocławek, priesthood, World War II, communist enslavement

## **WŁOCŁAWSKI OKRES POSŁUGI DUSZPASTERSKIEJ KS. STEFANA WYSZYŃSKIEGO: PREZBITERAT I CZAS KAPŁAŃSKIEJ POSŁUGI DUCHOWEJ (CZEŚĆ DRUGA)**

### **Streszczenie**

Prezentowany artykuł analizuje finalizację formacji do kapłaństwa, jak też „włocławski okres” posługi pasterskiej Ks. Stefana Wyszyńskiego. Dokonana przez autora interpretacja materiałów źródłowych ma na celu ukazanie roli i znaczenia tego czasu dla całokształtu działalności Ks. Stefana Wyszyńskiego, przyszłego Prymasa Polski. Eksploracja powyższych badań będzie polegała na analizie tekstów źródłowych metodą historyczną, polegającą na rekonstrukcji faktów historycznych i ich reinterpretacji metodą indukcyjno-dedukcyjną. Podstawowym zaś celem badawczym powyższego artykułu jest przedstawienie „włocławskiego okresu” życia Wyszyńskiego w kontekście ówczesnej sytuacji społeczno-politycznej Polski. Trzeba bowiem przyznać, że zagrożenia, jakie niosła inwazja ówczesnej antychrześcijańskiej ideologii marksistowsko-leninowskiej, jak też nazistowski hitleryzm z całą grozą II wojny światowej były niezwykle poważne i zagrażały istnieniu polskiego Kościoła i Narodu. Mimo wszystko, nawet w okresie najbardziej brutalnych represji Wyszyński bronił zarówno osobistej godności każdego człowieka, jak też chrześcijańskiej tożsamości Polaków. Co więcej, zdaniem autora niniejszego studium, formacja seminaryjna, posługa pasterska w diecezji włocławskiej, studia w Katolickim Uniwersytecie Lubelskim, stypendia zagraniczne, jak też czas II wojny światowej były swego rodzaju poligonem doświadczalnym, gdzie Ks. Stefan Wyszyński mógł zdobyć, jak również rozwinąć doświadczenia duszpasterskie niezbędne dla późniejszej działalności jako ordynariusza diecezji lubelskiej, a później archidiecezji gnieźnieńskiej i warszawskiej oraz Prymasa Polski.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Ks. Stefan Wyszyński, diecezja włocławska, kapłaństwo, II wojna światowa, zniewolenie komunistyczne