

JAN KOSMOWSKI, MIC
ANDRZEJ PAKUŁA, MIC



CHARISM
OF THE MARIAN FATHERS
THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES

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Front cover: *Copperplate depicting the Immaculate Mary against the background of the ten-ray star that symbolically represents evangelical virtues of the Mother of God. The image is taken from the book entitled “Gwiazda zaranna” [The Morning Star], which was translated and edited by the Venerable Servant of God Fr. Casimir Wyszyński. The book appeared in print in 1749, in Warsaw, and is now preserved in the Library of Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland.*

Back cover: *The seal of the Marian Order which the Venerable Servant of God Casimir Wyszyński took along on his journey to Portugal, where he established a new foundation of the Marians in 1754. Immaculately preserved imprint of this seal appears on a document issued by the Marians in Balsamão on October 23, 1755. General Archives of the Marians in Rome.*

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FOREWORD

The beatification of Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński, solemnly celebrated four years ago, was for our Congregation more than an historical event, which decades of generations of Marians awaited. This event also became the inspiration for delving attentively and profoundly into the Founder's writings, which were published for the first time in history and presented to the wide audience of those interested in them. Some of the Founder's writings were also translated into English and published under the title of *Historical Writings of Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński*.

The beatification of Fr. Founder, the studies made of his person and life associated with the process, the discovery of documents and writings pertaining to the circumstances of our Institute's founding and earlier history that had been confiscated by civil authorities and even thought for lost, as well as the instruction of the Second Vatican Council for Religious Institutes to seek renewal by returning to their roots, impel us to make afresh a thorough study of the original goals for which the Congregation of Marian Fathers was established in the Church by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Some from among the Marians with appropriate academic qualifications have already creatively entered into the stream of studies on the charism of the Congregation and its evolution during the first centuries of the existence of our religious community. As I write these words, I particularly have in mind the research on the spirituality of the Marians and on the development of their charism that was undertaken by Frs. Jan Kosmowski, MIC, and Andrzej Pakuła, MIC. The fruits of their labor constitute an immense contribution to the process of correctly understanding the transformations to which the Congregation's charism was subjected already at the very beginnings of its existence. For it is not possible to comprehend and establish the proper course to the path which our Institute should follow today in the Church without solid knowledge, based on authentic sources, about its origins and the goals that motivated Blessed Stanislaus and his first spiritual sons in the arduous shaping of the image of our community from the 17th up to the 19th century.

In 2010, Fr. Andrzej Pakuła, MIC, Ph.D., published his Doctoral thesis entitled *Religious spirituality according to Stanislaus Papczyński and the early tradition of the Marian Congregation*, which is presently

being translated into English. It is worth noting that this monograph is very important for the history and theology of Polish spirituality. It sheds light on the formation of religious spirituality, especially since Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński is historically the first to have founded a male religious congregation indigenous to Poland. One should infer that Fr. Andrzej Pakuła, MIC, thanks to the monograph mentioned above and other publications, is one of the best experts on the spirituality of the Marians. His study is a fundamental work for understanding the formation of the so-called *Marian's School of Spirituality*. We are including in the present publication the text authored by Fr. Pakuła that constitutes a short synthesis of the spirituality of the Marians as well as offers a summary of the history of the Congregation.

Father Jan Kosmowski, MIC, Ph.D., a trained historian, next shares with us the findings of his years-long research on the history and development of the Marian charism from the 17th to the 19th century. The facts provided by Fr. Kosmowski shed a new and hitherto unknown light on the beginnings of the Congregation. They also reveal the struggles of the first generations of Marians regarding the preservation in the community and in the apostolate undertaken by it the authentic spirit that inspired their Blessed Founder.

The articles of both these Fathers constitute an important contribution for a proper interpretation not only of the actual spirituality that should characterize our Institute but also of its mission in the modern world.

Eden Hill, September 16, 2011,
on the Fourth Anniversary of the Beatification
of Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński

Andrew R. Mączyński, MIC
Chair of the Provincial Committee
of the B.V.M., Mother of Mercy Province in the U.S.A.
on the History and Spirituality of the Marians

SHAPING AND FUNCTIONING OF THE MARIAN CHARISM DURING THE 17TH TO 19TH CENTURIES

PREFACE

A charism is a gratuitous, living, and dynamic grace of God imparted to a faithful or a community of the faithful for the purpose of building and serving the Church.¹ It is given for the good of the people, for carrying out a certain task or a specific mission in the Church. The charism of a religious order or a congregation is different from the charism granted to an individual faithful, because the religious order constitutes a group of people leading communal life according to a determined lifestyle and practicing the evangelical counsels.

The great number and variety of the religious orders and institutes frequently make it difficult to discover a specific form of their way of life, spirituality, and charism. Yet, it should be noted that all the communities have certain substances and forms, common to all and indispensable. They are basic truths of the faith, moral principles, all-Christian ideals of holiness, communitarian way of life, and evangelical counsels. Those are the essential and binding elements of religious life on the road of continual practice of the evangelical counsels and service to the Church, but they do not identify the community's specifics and spirituality, nor do they describe the characteristic features of the religious institute/order's charism. Instead, it is decided by a special

¹ K. Romaniuk, *Charyzmat*, EK 3, kol. 92-93; Also see: W. Makoś, *O. Stanisław od Jezusa i Maryi Papczyński. Badania i refleksje*, Warszawa 1998, 267-329. There are many works about the Marian charism, see: F. Brazys, "De spiritu nostrae Congregationis," *Marianus* (1963) No 22, pp. 38-45; J. Chrościechowski, *De spiritualitate CC. RR. Marianorum aliquae considerations*, Romae 1963, mps; A. Perz, "Congregatio CC. RR. Marianorum sub tit. Immaculatae Conceptionis B.V.M.," *Indoles Mariana*, Romae 1969, mps; W. Nieciecki, "Charyzmat założycieli – charyzmat zgromadzenia," *Immaculata* 21(1984), No 2, pp. 34-47; W. Makoś, "Charyzmat Zgromadzenia jako czynnik formacji," *Immaculata* 27(1990) No 7-8, pp. 22-36.; B. Hylla et al., "Ways of Interpreting the Marian Charism," in *Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński, Father and Guide of the Marian Vocation*, Ed. J. M. Rokosz, Warsaw–Rome 2011.

(non-generic) form of lifestyle and commitment to it, which is associated with a special goal and tasks of the congregation and is born out of the Founder's spirit.²

Another essential element is the heritage left behind by the Founder's generation, a selection of prayers and pious practices, ceremonies, ascetic exercises and mortifications, the manner of leading communal life, apostolic works, and the way of carrying them out.³

Since Vatican II, the Marians held hundreds of discussions and spirited debates, as well as wrote numerous articles about their charism; for this reason, the present essay will treat only certain aspects of our charism. Throughout the course of its history, the Marian charism and its form have been analyzed, deepened, even verified by such outstanding members and reformers of the Order as Fathers J. Kozłowski, M. Krajewski, K. Wyszynski, R. Nowicki, T. Białowieski, and others. Also, we must recognize the important role of Divine Providence in this matter. The above-mentioned verifications did not always produce positive effects, because the search for a slightly different vision of the Order led to disturbances and crises such as the unexplained "Rostkopian dispersion" or the "crisis-inducing" activity of Frs. Kozłowski and Krajewski.

A certain impact on the shaping and realization of the Marian charism was made also by the political and religious circumstances of the time. For example, after the partition of Poland such an important Marian ministry as bringing the light of faith to people through parish missions, retreats, and schools had become practically impossible, since it was incompatible with the policies of the partitioning powers. Instead, responding to the hostile and anti-Polish-national actions of the tsarist authorities, the 19th-century Marians wrote and sealed with great personal sacrifices a beautiful page in the struggles for national, religious, moral, and social rebirth of the Poles and Lithuanians.

² Cf. W. Nieciecki, *Główne cechy duchowości Zgromadzenia Księżi Marianów w świetle Konstytucji mariańskich z 1930 r.*, Rome 1965, 4-5.

³ Makoś, *O. Stanisław Papczyński*, 287; Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Vita Consecrata*, 48, 80-81.

THE BIRTH AND CRYSTALLIZATION OF THE MARIAN CHARISM IN BLESSED FR. STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI'S LIFETIME

We do not know the first-draft version of *Norma vitae*, most probably written by Fr. Founder in 1671. The one handed down to us had been published in 1687 and must have been adapted to the lifestyle of "hermits" and their program outlined by Bp S. Święcicki, as well as legal documents issued by Bp S. Wierzbowski.

According to Fr. W. Makoś, Father Papczyński not only considered this matter deeply but also undertook various steps to ascertain that God wished for a new order to be founded and that its charism was to be such.⁴ When Blessed Stanislaus began the work of founding of the Order, he was already convinced, as he stated in his *Origo foundationis*: "For this Divine vision imprinted in my soul in regards to the founding of the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary (...) drove me to its goal." Certainly, for someone of Fr. Stanislaus' sensitivity and profound faith, leaving a religious order and starting a new one was not an easy decision to make. He was a man of prayer and action who desired to bring into being an apostolic and active community with a Marian charism, which would combine three elements: promoting devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. helping souls of the dead, particularly victims of wars and epidemics and working apostolically, that is assisting pastors in their ministry through special means of teaching the principles of the faith among simple folks – the peasantry – a stratum still socially underprivileged as well as neglected religiously and morally.

In view of the needs of the Church and the Polish populace of the times, this program was opportune. Father Stanislaus encountered many and various difficulties in its realization, including those that threatened to undermine his vision of a new Order. For the first 50 years of the Order's existence, the Marians struggled with five powerful obstacles which, just like dams of a river, were stalling the Order's growth and endangering its charism as set forth by Fr. Founder. Those obstacles were:

⁴ "Origo foundationis", [in:] *Bł. Stanisław Papczyński, Pisma zebrane*, Warszawa 2007, nr 6-7, pp. 1458-1459.

- The visitation decree issued by Bp S. Świącicki on October 24, 1673, that distorted the vision of the Order so greatly desired by Fr. Stanislaus;
- The imposition of the *Rule of the Ten Virtues of the B.V.M.*, which was “neither apostolic nor priestly;”
- The placement of the Marians under jurisdiction of the austere Order of Reformed Franciscans and the acceptance of their Franciscan spirituality, practices, piety, discipline, formation, and customs;
- The unhealthy ferment in Fr. Kozłowski’s actions (see Father Wszyński’s opinion).
- Apostolate versus contemplation – a pastoral debate that led to what is known as “Rostkopian dispersion.”

However, the difficulties did not discourage Fr. Stanislaus. He believed that the Order was called into existence in accordance with the will of God in that very form and designated for apostolic work. He grasped the excessive severity of Bp S. Świącicki’s orders that complicated the realization of his own vision of the Community, but from a human perspective, he did not see any other way and therefore had to yield to them.

In his actions, we can observe attempts to free himself and his confreres from the restrictions that their legal eremitical status imposed on them in regards to apostolic work. Therefore, in his second, amended version of the *Norma vitae* of 1687, he clarified his intentions and encouraged the Marians: “It will not be forbidden nevertheless, for those who are so gifted and humbly inclined, to assist pastors in their parish work/.../, since the contemplative life does not bind strictly, although you are founded in the eremitical state.”⁵ One more encouragement (possibly given with regard to some “sticklers” that might have been afraid to take on such work) can testify to the importance that the apostolic charism had for our Founder. In the Introduction to *Norma vitae*, we read: “Over and above this, although this Congregation was regulat-

⁵ “Norma vitae,” [in:] *Pisma zebrane...*, 1/3, s. 47. [English-language quote comes from *Norma vitae* in “Resources” at padrimariani.org]

ed in the public status of Hermits, it does not insist so much on solitude as so distant as to sometimes engage also in spiritual services for ones neighbors.”⁶ It seems that he couldn’t speak more plainly and give a more explicit encouragement out of respect for Bp S. Świącicki and his rigorous decree. So telling is the initial legislation; however, we still have the example of Fr. Stanislaus’ life, his service, and the verbal instructions given to his confreres – a nearly unexplored area. After all, he taught his confreres, provided retreats, recollections, and recreation, but above all he was living among them. If he advised them in *Norma vitae* to “humbly help pastors” in spite of the unfriendly climate, we may assume that, spoken in the fraternal meetings, his encouragement would have been more direct and strong.

Blessed Fr. Stanislaus gave his confreres an example of an active apostolate through his apostolic actions in the Mazovian region, where he delivered sermons, ran parish missions, and, on Bp Wierzbowski’s orders, visited churches in the Archdeanery of Warsaw. For his zealous service, he earned the meaningful nickname “Apostle of Mazovian.” Upon opening the Congregation’s second post in Nowa Jerozolima (New Jerusalem), he gave it an apostolic character. He also chose this foundation for his place of residence, emphasizing that it was most proper for the Order’s character, and he spent 24 years there, being personally involved in various apostolic causes.

Although accused of breaking the law (not observing the rule of residency while a member of an eremitic order), he did not see that as a transgression and did not stop his apostolic activities. Instead, to open the door for the Marians in this field and free them from various accusations, he persuaded Bp Wierzbowski to lessen Bp S. Świącicki’s rigorous orders in regards to other Marian houses by his establishment decree of 1679, which the Bishop did thus: “We pronounce and decide that other houses shall not be bound by what has been set forth in the visitation decree by /.../ the Most Rev. H. Świącicki for the retreat house in the Korabiew Hermitage in regards to the strict discipline of meals, silence, and communications with the outsiders.”⁷

⁶ *Norma vitae*, “Informative Preface,” No 3.

⁷ *Beatificationis et Canonisationis Servi Dei Stanislai a Jesu Maria Papczyński, Positio*, Romae 1977 (here and after, *Positio, Papczyński*), No 9, p. 398.

It seems that the active apostolic character of the Marians was officially emphasized for the first time in the letter of recommendation sent by Bp H. Wierzbowski to the Apostolic See, in which he calls the Marians a “Congregation of Priests assisting the deceased and pastors.”⁸ His recommendation is full of kindness, fervent praise, and personal sentiment towards the Marians. The Bishop wrote: “With all our good will and fervor we support and humbly recommend /.../ this Institute of most wonderful love, [known] not only within the vast diocese of Poznań but in the entire area, where the harvest is rich yet the laborers are few, where churches are far between and simple folks are many; but most of all where, after the departure, by the grace of God of the enemy of the Name of Christ, the faithful have been left either tainted with new erroneous ideas and ceremonies or the teachers of the faith were lacking in Christian customs; [this order] is most urgently needed and is very beneficial because it possesses elect members of noble birth, endowed with knowledge and virtues, as well as [marked by] an exemplary life.”⁹ For the Marians, this is one of the most beautiful recommendation letters in the Order’s history.

Various dangers and difficulties that fell to the Marians’ lot inspired Fr. Papczyński to assure the Order’s perseverance by obtaining a papal approval. Thus, in 1699 he dispatched Fr. J. Kozłowski to Rome. The Apostolic See denied Fr. J. Kozłowski the approval of the Constitutions composed by Fr. Stanislaus (as well as associating the Marians with the Rule of St. Augustine that would emphasize most strongly the apostolic character of the Congregation). In view of such circumstances, Fr. J. Kozłowski chose the *Rule of the Ten Virtues of the B.V.M.* that was under the jurisdiction of the Order of Franciscans Observant [Reformed]. On September 21, 1699, he received permission from their General Superior, Fr. Matthew of St. Stephen. In his decree, the Franciscan General Superior imparted to the Marians numerous privileges attached to the *Rule of the Ten Virtues*, and gave the Marians his consent for making their religious vows upon the Rule. However, it was not

⁸ Ibidem., *Istanza alla Santa Sede del vescovo Girolamo Wierzbowski, 20 marzo 1699*, p. 521-525. The Bishop defined the Marians as „Congregatio Defunctis et Parochis suffragantium”.

⁹ Ibidem., pp. 524-525.; S. Sydry, *Czcigodny Sługa Boży o. Stanisław od Jezusa i Maryi Papczyński i jego dzieło w świetle dokumentów*, Warszawa 1937, pp. 225-228.

associated in any way with the Marians' legal dependency from the Franciscans Observant.

Then, on November 24, 1699, Pope Innocent XII issued a *breve* "Exponi nobis nuper," approving the already granted privileges along with "the decree of the General Superior of the Friars Minor Observant who gave the Marians his consent for adopting the *Rule of the Ten Virtues*, which allowed them *ipsa iure* to make solemn vows; therefore, according to the existing Church law, the Marians became *regulares*, thus receiving the exemption and other privileges granted to the Orders,"¹⁰ and consequently becoming an Order of solemn vows. The *breve* contains statements that speak of the goal and character of the little congregation that has an "obligation to assist Souls in Purgatory, as well as to help the pastors in administering the sacraments and instructing the faithful."¹¹

Father W. Niececki, a researcher of Marian spirituality, wrote that the imposed rule contained regulations so "vague that nearly every Order could adopt them. Being originally written for nuns, the Rule did not have any apostolic or priestly hallmarks. It was marked by unnaturalness for attempting to encompass the entire life of a religious – its spiritual and organizational aspects – into the framework of ten chapters

¹⁰ J. Kałowski, "Początki mariańskiego ustawodawstwa," in: *Błogostawiony Stanisław Papczyński, Pisma fundacyjne*, Warszawa 2007, p. 75. In his academic reflections Kałowski formulated and answered an important question: „Can we recognize the rescript *Exponi Nobis Nuper* for a formal papal ratification of the Marian Order? It is necessary to make clear while answering this question that a fully unequivocal response in this matter cannot be given today because of the great variety of forms of papal ratification of the newly created Orders existed at that time.” p. 74; *Positio, Papczyński...*, pp. 544-546. It is necessary to emphasize, contrary to certain opinions, that the *Rule of the Ten Virtues of the B.V.M.* has been written for a female community. It was done in 1501 by a Franciscan Fr. Gilbert Nicolas upon the request from Joan de Valois (canonized in 1951) – Foundress of Sisters of the Annunciade. The Rule received its first approval on February 12, 1502, by Pope Alexander VI. This was reaffirmed in 1506 by Pope Julius II, and then, in following of certain statutory changes, in 1517 by Pope Leon X, after whose wish the Rule has been adopted in such a way that it would be applicable for a male Order and provided an opportunity for establishing a Third Order. See: *Reguła Zakonu Xięży Marianów pod tytułem Niepokal. Poczęcia Bł. PM...., Bulla Julii II. Aprobationis Regulae Decem Virtutum Beneplicitorum B.V.M.*, Wilno 1791, pp. 1-6; K. Kuźmak, *Joanna de Valois*, EK, t. 8, k. 37-38; H. Cwikliński, *Ordine del'Annunziazione*, EK, t. 1, k. 633-634.

¹¹*Positio, Papczyński...*, pp. 544-546.

/.../; it did not contain any mention of the Marians' other tasks – their special devotion to the Immaculate Conception and helping the dead.”¹²

Blessed Father Founder accepted the Rule with certain reservations. He recognized its insufficiency and vagueness, which might open a way to different interpretations and visions of the Order in the future. For this reason, while making his solemn profession of vows, he added an explanation to the formula that specified that “...during my entire lifetime I will preserve the *Rule of Imitation ... of the B.V.M.* in everything that conforms to the regulations of our religious Institute.”¹³ This way he emphasized that his Order, although adopting the Rule approved by the Apostolic See, wished to remain faithful to the spirit, charism, and guiding idea of the Marians along with their guidelines and Marian laws.

Fidelity to the original Marian charism was further stressed in *Uwagi niektóre na Regułę* [Certain remarks about the Rule] of 1750, which explained that “This Rule was adopted by our Founder and first Superior General of the Order only in regards to such paragraphs that do not contradict our laws in any manner, having done thus to avoid scrupulous reservations.”¹⁴ With the adoption of the *Rule of the Ten Virtues* new relations have been established that impacted the Marian history, growth, and charism for a long time. They were:

1) Dependency on the Reformats, who possessed the jurisdiction over the Rule and who were an Order of close and strict observance, which became a resistance to the development of the apostolate, and specific Marian spirituality;

2) The attitude and activity of Fr. J. Kozłowski, who was the architect of the strong bond with the Reformats.¹⁵ Perhaps, some confreres rightly blamed him for insufficient efforts and sluggishness in the mat-

¹²W. Nieciecki, *Główne cechy duchowości ...*, p. 18 ; First edition of the Rule in Polish, see: *Reguła Braci Maryanów*, Warszawa 1750.

¹³ “Profesja ślubów uroczystych,” [in:] *Papczyński, Pisma zebrane...*, pp.1503-1504; Cf. *Positio, Papczyński...*, p. 553-554; Sydry, *O. Stanisław Papczyński...*, p. 244.

¹⁴ “Uwagi niektóre na Regułę naśladowania cnót Najświętszey Panny,” [in:] *Reguła Braci...*

¹⁵ In regard to adoption of the *Rule of the Ten Virtues* and incorporation into the Friars Minor Observant, J. Kałowski, researching this matter, formulated a question: “Who was the one that played a part in this either conscientiously or maybe not?” cf. Kałowski, *Początki mariańskiego ustawodawstwa...*, p. 66.

ter of getting Fr. Papczyński's *Norma vitae* approved. Still others accused him of being in opposition to Fr. Founder.

Three facts give grounds for accepting this interpretation:

a) Father Papczyński's warning to Fr. Kozłowski, which he included in his testament: "I put upon him an obligation under the threat of God's Judgment not to change anything."¹⁶

b) Father Wyszyński's testimony about Fr. Kozłowski: "Dispatched to Rome to get the Constitutions approved, he did not strive for it /.../. He changed certain decisions of our Founder, who by then was reaching his old age. /.../ Finally, realizing that he was planning to transform our Order and set himself up as its founder, I had to go to Rome to put a stop to all these novelties."¹⁷

c) Father Kozłowski's petitions, preserved in the Franciscans' archives, which he dispatched in 1702, 1703, 1709, 1715, 1716, asking them to send a commissary and a visitator, and to give protection. In 1703 he requested a [novice] master and a teacher of theology.¹⁸ Let us recall Bp H. Wierzbowski's letter of recommendation of 1699 (see

¹⁶ "Testamentum Venerabilis Patris Stanislai a Jesu Maria,"[in:] *Positio, Papczyński...*, pp. 493-499; Polish language version in: *Papczyński, Pisma zebrane*, pp. 1494-1501. In his letters Fr. C. Wyszyński frequently mentioned J. Kozłowski's destructive attitude, cf. *Stróż duchowego dziedzictwa marianów. Wybór pism o. Kazimierza Wyszyńskiego*, Transl. and Ed. Z. Proczek, Warszawa-Stockbridge, 2004. On p. 88 he says about J.K.: „a disobedient and stubborn brother”; on pp. 126 and 135: “he was full of vanity, he wanted to set himself up as a patriarch and the founder;” on p. 162: “he contradicted the Founder in numerous matters and even changed certain decisions of our Founder, who was reaching his old age;” and again on p. 164: “he wanted to transform our Order... I had to go to Rome in order to prevent him from doing so.” Accusations against Fr. Kozłowski are of a very serious nature.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ F. Koralewicz, *Additament do Kronik Braci Mniejszych S. Franciszka*, Warszawa 1722, pp. 175, 176, 181, 190, 191. The first petition was submitted in 1702, and the last – in 1716. The petition of 1703 states as follows: „Also, Fr. Matheus's letters were read... about admission in Consodalitium of our Seraphic Order, that supported also by their Praepositus Generalis O. Joachim a S. Anna himself as well as for giving help with religious observance and studies, he requested a Magister Novitiorum and Teacher of

above), stating that the Order “possesses members endowed with knowledge, virtues and [marked by] exemplary life,” would it be conceivable that all of them passed on during a four-year time?

3) A third strain – the Marians’ ambivalent attitude towards the apostolate – resulted out of the previous two (see “Apostolate versus contemplation”). These fears were unknown to Father Founder who, for this reason, added a warning to his testament: “Should they want to introduce some novelties let the priests oppose them with God’s help and assistance from the Nuncio Office; however, should whoever be unwilling let him no longer be considered my son nor a faithful servant of the Most Blessed Mother of God.”¹⁹ Father Founder’s worries weren’t futile because only a year after his death, the Chapter celebrated in 1702 – and presided over by Fr. Kozłowski and the Franciscan commissary L. Borzewski – a part of his testament was negated as contradictory to the vows of poverty and obedience. The Chapter forbade to accept new foundations, substantiating this decree by the Order’s small membership (as compared to the large Reformats’ monasteries). The term in office for the General Superiors was shortened from six years to three, and for the local superiors from three to one year.²⁰

Philosophiae et Theologiae Moralis; Fr. Fulgenty Jesse /.../ et o. Leporini Klein /.../ were dispatched. The same Fr. Joachim a S. Anna passed on to the Provinciae *Decretum Pontificium sui Instituti, SS. Nunciaturae et Reverendissimi Patris Generalis Nostri ...*,” (It would appear from the text that Fr. Joachim Kozłowski passed on to the Reformed Franciscans the most important Order-erecting documents of the Marians).

¹⁹ Sydry, *O. Stanisław Papczyński...*, p. 250; Papczyński, *Pisma zebrane...*, p. 1500.

²⁰ *Decreta-Ordinationes...*, Puszcza Mariańska 2001, *Dekrety kapituły 1702 r.* “... in qua invocato Spiritu Sancto proposita sunt sequentia, circa oboedientiam et paupertatem, quoniam aliqui Patres visi sunt in testamento piae memoriae Defuncti sui Fundatoris inscripti locis domorum; item pariter inscriptions particulares per eundem Defuntum. Item factae quod utrumque repugnant votes solemnibus professionis suae, sit primum contra votum oboedientiae et secundum contra votum paupertatis.”

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARIAN CHARISM IN THE MARIANS' LEGISLATION AND KNOWLEDGE

The extant documents on the life and work of the Marians in 1701-1723 are extremely scarce. Therefore, we don't know much about the way in which the Order's charism has been cultivated. The most important feature of the Marian charism – its Marian character in regard to the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary – has been largely nurtured in various forms. Aside from being expressed spiritually, it also found its external manifestations in the Order's title, white garb, devotions, sermons, and numerous Marian confraternities founded by the Marians.

Strange and difficult to explain is a longtime absence of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. Blessed Stanislaus recommended to have this confraternity established at all churches under the Marians' care.²¹ The first inauguration of the Confraternity did not take place until June 26, 1734, following an explicit order from the [General] Chapter, at that.²² The Marians implemented quite extensively the eschatological charism or the assistance for Poor

²¹ S. Papczyński, *Norma vitae*, The Superior [General] will assign to each house the promoter of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception assisting the souls of the faithful departed.(...) [it is to be ed in your churches] on the basis of the permission granted by the Holy Father Innocent XI on March 20, 1681," VII,8. It must be explained that the Marians of the 18th century did not have a permission to establish the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception at their churches. This erroneous notion resulted from a false interpretation of the *breve* of Innocent XI *Cum sicut accepimus* of 1681, in which the Marians are called "una pia et devota Christi Fidelium Confraternitas sive Congregatio Clericorum Recollectorum sub obedientia Episcopi" see *Positio, Papczyński...*, p. 406-409. First Bp Wierzbowski and later Fr. Papczyński have erroneously interpreted this as a permission to establish the Confraternity.

²² *Decreta-Ordinationes...*, 1734/12 „Tandem decisum est, ut Scapulare sue vestis Immaculatae Conceptionis ei distribuatur ab his qui licentiam habent et promoventur”. The Chapter of 1739/2 reinforced the previous decree, “Decisum est ut deducatur ad effectum punctum Capituli anni 1734 de promovenda Confraternitate Immaculatae Conceptionis B.V.M.ariae Skórcii et quam citissime introducatur”. Also see: AGM, *Prot. Gosl.*, k.243-244 „Introductio Confr. Immaculatae Conc. ad Ecclesiam Corab. die 26 Junii 1734. In all probability, this was the first inauguration of the Confraternity at the Marian monasteries.

Souls in Purgatory.²³ They offered this “highest manifestation of love” through daily recitation of the Office of the Dead and the entire Rosary; celebration of Holy Masses; and offerings of all of their merits, works, feasts, mortifications, and other pious and corporeal deeds.²⁴ This subject has been already extensively studied, thus we’re merely mentioning it here.

On the other hand, the Marians had problems with putting into practice their apostolic charism of “assisting the pastors in their ministry.” Their uncertainty as to the rightness of this service was further deepened in the Chapter of 1712 presided over by Fr. Bonaventura Klein, a Reformed Franciscan. The Chapter forbade the Marians to go into any pastoral work except running the missions, which, *nota bene*, were an extreme rarity at that time.²⁵ All signs in heaven and on earth encouraged them to carry out this apostolic work: the Diocesan law; the 1699 approval of the Holy See; the encouragement and example of the life of the Founder, “The Apostle of Mazovian;” as well as the great needs of the country in this regard. Yet in the first half of the 18th century these needs and signs did not meet with any response from the part of the Marians. Neither was there any sign of the Order’s growth. (The number of religious or religious houses did not increase).

After Fr. Papczyński’s death, the Marians split into two factions and the fissure continued to deepen because of the rise of conflicting pastoral tendencies. Some Marians were for leading an active life and pastoral work. The others, especially those closely bound to the rigorous monastery in Puszcza, insisted on an eremitic and contemplative way of

²³ The problem of the eschatological charism was treated in numerous works, some of which we are giving here: P. Brazys, “De spiritu nostrae Congregationis.” *Marianus* (1962) No 22, 38-45; P. Dębek, *Eschatologiczny wymiar życia zakonnego według Sługi Bożego O. Stanisława Papczyńskiego i wczesnej tradycji Zgromadzenia Księżki Marianów*, Lublin 1994, mps.; M. Pisarzak, „Element eschatyczny, [in:] *Marianie 1673-1973*, Ed. J. Bukowicz and T. Górski, Rzym 1975, p. 331-337.; W. Makoś, *O. Stanisław od Jezusa Maryi Papczyński. Badania i refleksje*, Warszawa 1998; W. Makoś, “Element eschatyczny charyzmatu Księżki Marianów na tle historii i w kontekście,” *Immaculata* 48(2009), No 12, p. 84-157.

²⁴ *Norma vitae*, I,2; Nieciecki, *Main Characteristics...*, p. 18-21.

²⁵ *Decreta-Ordinationes...*, 1712/1, „...nec poterunt in futurum Superiores Locales sub poena suspensionis ab officio quemquam pro subsidio spirituali extra religiosum expedire domicilium, nisi per modum missionum”.

life. Some displayed loyalty to the spirit and legacy of the Founder and called Fr. Kozłowski a traitor who sold the Marians to the Reformats. The others were inclined to side with Fr. Kozłowski and the Franciscans. Today, it is impossible to confirm the sentiment some Marians allegedly expressed, which Fr. K. Spourny quoted: “Am I still a Marian or have I already turned a Reformat?”,²⁶ although certain supporting evidence seems to be there. For example, 13 decrees passed by the General Chapter of 1710, which was presided over by Fr. Klein, a Reformat, above all speak of the punishments, rebellions, disobedience, and some “malitiosi conspirators.”²⁷

This dependency was spoken of more clearly, sharply, and negatively by the two illustrious Marians of the second half of the 18th century: the Procurator General N. Gołkowski and the Vice-Procurator J. Niezabitowski. In his comprehensive letters, the latter made cleared to his confreres in Poland that the Order was no longer the one of Fr. Papczyński but that of Fr. Kozłowski and the Reformats. He wrote thus: “Our Patriarch (Fr. Founder)’s goal and intentions weren’t for us to become the friars; the idea to thus degrade his spiritual sons never crossed his mind. He wrote and left us clear laws. May the Lord forgive him who, in the bygone days, having forfeited the Father’s Laws and interleaved them with the *Frateria* like grain with corn cockle, ensnared us so terribly and humiliatingly. Hence, they don’t say [about us] either among themselves that we belong with them, but that we are under them.”²⁸ Basing his conclusion on the facts, Fr. Niezabitowski told in his letters how the Reformats made it more difficult for the Marians to obtain new foundations and to undertake various pastoral works, including the assistance for the pastors.

The Reformats particularly insisted on the Marians’ praying in choir and remaining inside their monasteries. In Fr. Niezabitowski’s opinion,

²⁶ Library of the University of Vilnius. The Manuscripts Section (after: BUViL), F4-A4559. *Protocollum triennale (...) P. Cajetani Wetycky, 1750-1780*. The collection contains letters of Frs. J. Niezabitowski and K. Spourny sent to their superiors in Poland from Rome.

²⁷ *Decreta-Ordinationes...*, 1710/1-13.

²⁸ BUViL, F-4-A4559, *Protocollum triennale...*, Letter of J. Niezabitowski to the Marian Fathers’ General Councilors, 14, sept. 1777. The content of his letter of June 23, 1777, to Fr. General R. Nowicki is similar.

praying “in choir” was interfering with the reform and the beatification processes of Fr. Stanislaus and Fr. Casimir. “At first, when we were telling a Cardinal or a Monsignor about our Institute, we would emphasize our praying in choir to which they would usually respond: no, no, these are *monachalia* [monastics] . . . , but when we spoke of the essence and matter of our Institute, saying that we were /.../, *promotores ad erudiendam plebem missioni* and were predisposed to administering the sacraments, he gave us his accolade, saying: *Quanto e buono*.”²⁹ The above-mentioned opinion expressed by Frs. Spourny and Niezabitowski may be possibly substantiated by the event known in the Marian historiography as “the Rostkovian dispersion.”

The Chapter of 1715 elected Fr. M. Krajewski the General Superior. He was a young, educated, and energetic man. He surrounded himself with a group of men supporting the reform who were advocating the need for a dynamic growth of the Order and were seeking to do pastoral ministry in its broadest sense, according to the Fr. Founder’s vision. They accused the other faction of “giving themselves exclusively to meditation and spending time in the choir, while simple folks needed priests to care for them spiritually.” As the General Superior, Fr. Krajewski “tilted the scale” in this debate towards his group, although he had to deal with an enormous opposition from the supporters of the contemplative way of life. It is characteristic that his first order as the General Superior was to dispatch three Marians on missions to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.³⁰

He was the first who tried to introduce the breath of reform into the Order, and he was counteracting the pro-Reformats initiatives of Fr. J. Kozłowski. Bishop A. Rostkowski, a famous pastor and reformer, knew the Marians and their problems well, because he lived in Komorniki-near-Tarczyn in the vicinity of the Korabiew Forest. He also knew the Order to be *defunctis et parochis in cura animarum suffragantium*, and therefore he allowed these of the Marians who so wished to minister at

²⁹ Ibid., Letter of June 23, 1777.

³⁰ AGM, *Protocollum Ordinis Beatae Mariae Virginis Immaculatae Conceptionis Congregationis Polonae (...)*, Anno Virginei partus 1705 in Colle Mariano Eremi Corabieviensi die 13 Maii (1705-1744), p. 272. (hereinafter: *Protocollum Ordinis...*). This is the most important document regarding the early Marian history; it has been copied from the so-called “Stanislawists,” and is available in a typeset format.

the parishes. This period in the Marian history is known as the “Rostkovian dispersion.”

The “dispersion” ended in 1722, after Bishop P. Tarło took over the Diocese of Poznań on January 29, 1721. He was a pious and zealous man, known for his severity. Bishop Tarło ordered all the Marians to return from parishes to their monasteries under the penalty of excommunication. His verdict deepened the Marians’ sense of uncertainty and alarm in regards to undertaking pastoral ministry: Was it permissible? To the majority of the Marians, it was obvious that providing “assistance to the pastors” in the four little Marian churches located in secluded areas was impossible.

After this phase, the leading place in Marian history was taken by Fr. C. Wyszynski. A charismatic, eminent personality and a main organizer of the religious life, he was a saintly, energetic, and influential man with connections to prominent families. However, his first decade in the Order was marked by unprecedented difficulties. The Marians still pursued various religious lifestyles. Father Wyszynski’s attempts at reforms met with an opposition from Fr. Kozłowski and his supporters. All Fr. Wyszynski’s efforts towards spiritual renewal and improvement of the novitiate formation were fruitless. Not all of the Marians accepted the *Rule of the Ten Virtues* and regarded Fr. Kozłowski as “a traitor” for placing the Marians under the jurisdiction of Reformats. Those people refused to make religious vows and some of them even wanted to leave the Order (and several did), giving as their motivation that the Order was no longer the one they joined. They claimed that *Institutum hoc sub titulo Stanislai Primi Fundatoris est abrogatum* and that *mutata substantia Instituti mutatur et obligatio instituentis*. Some of the Marians – faithful sons of Fr. Papczyński – fervently wished to go back to his spiritual legacy and publicly proclaimed that the *Rule of the Ten Virtues contra formam et mentem primi Stanislai est*.³¹ The rift was deep and painful. [This topic requires an extensive explanation].

³¹ ABViL, *Documenta Vilnensia*, F4-A166, (1733, loose). The folder contains lots of information regarding the debates and misunderstandings among the Marians in the first three decades of the 18th century, the reason of which was considered to be the dependency from the Reformats and Fr. J. Kozłowski’s attitude. Some analysis of these events has been already done by Fr. B. Jakimowicz, see *Positio, Wyszynski...*, pp. 76-83.

The opposition to Father Wyszyński suffered a debilitating blow because on February 11, 1730, its protagonist – Fr. Kozłowski – drowned in the Wisła River. In these circumstances, at the end of 1730, Fr. Wyszyński left for Rome to “seek remedy for the rift.” He spent three years there. Although personally he did not advocate the bonds with the Reformats, in his search for ways of healing the Marians, he fell back on their Order. While in Rome, he strove to get a visitorator [for the Order]. Upon Fr. Wyszyński’s personal suggestion made to the General Minister, Fr. Rochus Chełstowski was appointed to this post. He was given some unusual authority “*cum plenitudine potestatis* ... to visit religious houses and brethren both in the governing body and in general membership; to reprimand, conduct trials, and issue verdicts; to punish the religious by imprisonment; and to issue whatever decree he deemed appropriate.”³²

The Chapter of 1731 under his leadership produced penal decrees *Canones pœnales* to which a high legal rank was communicated by the Nuncio Nicholas Spinola’s approval. These decrees imposed severe punishments on various *rebelles*, *conspiratores* and on a large array of religious that rebelled against the status quo. For some vague “muttering [against the superiors]” those decrees even authorized a penalty of several months in solitary confinement.³³ Father Chełstowski interfered even with the smallest details of the Marians’ life.

He also prepared the Marian Book of Protocol *Horologium Marianorum* published in 1732 that was permeated with ceremonies borrowed from the Reformats. The extant documents provide only general information about the ensuing situation. Yet the Marians’ debates slowly started to die out and their factions began to reunite. Two factors played an important role here: intimidation of one side and understanding and acceptance of the communally elaborated religious lifestyle by the other.

Meanwhile Fr. Wyszyński, acting as a General Procurator in Rome, undertook various actions for the good of the Order, its development,

³² *Positio, Wyszyński*, 79-80; *Decreta-Ordinationes...*, 82-83, *Litterae Innotescentiales*, die 24 Maii, anno 1731. Fr. Rochus Chełchowski.

³³ Penal Canons were published outside of the Chapter Decrees in the work called *Horologium Marianum*, Varsaviae 1732, pp. 54-58, which gave them indefinite validity until revocation.

and spiritual growth. However, this is not the topic of the present work. He contributed to the Marians' firmly establishing themselves spiritually and to raising the new generation of zealous and bright religious. Nonetheless, the question of *parochis in cura animarum suffragantes* still remained more of a challenge than a practice.

The fact that the "eremitic and contemplative tendency" was still very much alive among some Marians is supported by the following introduction, possibly written by Fr. Wyszynski, to the *Constitutions of 1750*: "By approving our Constitutions and taking us under his protection, his Majesty the King, along with the entire Republic of Poland, calls us hermits for the reason that originally the Korabiew Forest was inhabited by some hermits whom *Venerabilis Pater* Stanislaus visited and whom, upon their hermits request, he admitted into his Institute established at that place, which he chose for his residence. And thus, our confreres began to be called hermits out of habit and in regard to the original hermits, although our Order still hasn't been approved at that time, and only after the arrival of a greater Congregation that the Marians were approved as true Religious, confirmed and acknowledged by the Holy Father Innocent XIII."³⁴

During Fr. Wyszynski's second term as the General Superior (1747-1750), a dynamism in undertaking the apostolic works could be noticed. Several priests dedicated themselves to teaching children. After Fr. Wyszynski left the office, the Chapter celebrated in November of 1750 in Raśna forbade this kind of activity, stating that "external work weakens the religious practices and adherence to religious rule."³⁵ Nonetheless, the Order's crisis had been overcome. The reins of the Order were taken over by Fr. Wyszynski's trainees. The Order experienced a spiritual and quantitative growth, and several new foundations were opened for the first time in 40 years. The last one was established in Skórzec in 1710-11.

A powerful spiritual and intellectual potential was contributed by the Czech-born vocations. These were world-class men, many of whom were graduates of the prestigious university in Prague. Their commitment took form of many-faceted activities in the apostolic, social, and

³⁴ *Reguła Braci Maryanów*, Warszawa 1750. (*Uwagi niektóre na Regułę naśladowania cnót Najświętszej Panny, uwaga piąta*).

³⁵ *Decreta-Ordinationes...*, 1750/41.

national fields, as well as in their discreet efforts of extracting themselves from under the Reformats' jurisdiction.

Following document excerpts, given in the chronological order, show the most important stages of evolution of the Marian charism in the legislation and knowledge of the Marianists.

“The goal of the Congregation shall be above all bringing assistance for Poor Souls in Purgatory. All means shall be used towards this goal, but primarily the celebration of the Most Holy Sacrifice, daily recitation of the Office of the Dead and the entire rosary, as well as mortification. Particular care must be extended to those who perished in incessant wars, frequent plagues and various disasters.”³⁶

*From the Establishment Decree issued
by Bishop S. Wierzbowski on April 21, 1679*

“This Institute has been founded by the power of the Bishop in order to support the deceased through daily prayers and Holy Mass, as well as to assist the pastors in their pastoral work, especially in teaching the basics of faith to simple folks.”³⁷

*Bishop H. Wierzbowski's Letter of Recommendation
of March 20, 1699, to the Apostolic See*

“What are this Order's goals? The goals of this Order are: 1. giving honor to the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculately Conceived and promoting it most zealously even to the point of shedding their blood and giving up their life for it; 2. assisting the reverend pastors in their spiritual services; 3. reciting daily the Office of the Dead for the souls of the departed; 4. running parish

³⁶ *Positio, Papczyński...*, pp. 394-400.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 522-525.

missions for simple folks teaching them the mysteries of the holy faith both at the churches of their Community, as well as at the parish churches with permission from the superiors; 5. educating the youth everywhere at any opportunity and with permission.”³⁸

Father Hadrawa's response to the request from the Consistory of Vilnius, October 7, 1822

“Approbatione Constitutionum Ordinis obligamur ut ubicunque in communis II_ habitatio erigatur devotio pro defunctis a die Commemorationis OO. FF. Defunctorum eum (?) Octava denuntiatur cum Indulgentia plena. Inservire parochis et instruere rudes tam in articulis Fidei quam principis litterarum. In Regno antiquo Poloniae sunt octo Domus, quorum sex habent affixus parochias cum cura animarum”.³⁹

J. Dziewulski, OIC to the Apostolic Nuncio in Vienna, 1844

Looking through the above documents, one can see clearly the evolution of the Congregation and its particular goals. The most important, always timely, and zealously practiced is the devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. that first started with prayers for the deceased and then developed into a broad-range of apostolic work, including the running of as many as six parishes, some schools, and missions.

³⁸ ABViL, *Doc. Vilnensia...*, II, (loose documents)

³⁹ ASV, Arch. Nunz. di Vienna, 281, I, k. 840

REFORMS MADE BY FATHER RAYMOND NOWICKI (1776-1788)

“This Order is no longer the one of Fr. Papczyński but that of Kozłowski and the Reformats.⁴⁰” This scalding opinion, belonging to a well-educated and respected Fr. Niezabitowski, was shared by other enlightened Marians such as Frs. Spourny and Gołkowski. In the second half of the 18th century a fervent desire “of returning to the roots” – to the spirit, legacy, and charism of Fr. Papczyński – spread among the Marians. The starting point of this noble burst should be placed within the period of Fr. Wyszyński’s second term in the office of the General Superior. It found its expression in new foundations; attempts at conducting a more extensive apostolate, international vocations; and reforms.

Father Wyszyński began to learn more deeply about Fr. Founder and to present him as a model to his spiritual sons. He was the one to show his brethren the depth of Fr. Founder’s spirit, and from this source he drew strength for himself and his confreres. Father Wyszyński educated a new generation of Marians, to whom he showed the ideal of holiness as the main goal of religious life, emphasizing in its development the devotion to Mary Immaculate and honor for Fr. Stanislaus. His letters and diaries are imbued with a fervent, child-like love for and trust in Mary, an immeasurable reverence for the Founder, and an undisputable conviction and belief in Fr. Founder’s saintliness. His followers, pupils, and Marian confreres who underwent his formation, unflinchingly strove to put his program into life and advanced even further in the matter of reforms. As soon as it was possible, they opened their beatification processes as a token of their deep reverence and gratitude toward Frs. Stanislaus and Casimir.

Crises, falls, surges, and efforts to overcome various conflicts resulted in the Marians’ strengthening in spirit, changing mentality, and discovering their own Marian identity, as well as gradually shifting the emphasis in the Order from hermitical and contemplative characteristics to apostolic. The quest for this lifestyle was not easy, as shown by the analysis of work of Frs. J. Kozłowski, M. Krajewski, and C. Wyszyński; of the Reformats’ commissaries and visitators who had

⁴⁰ BUViL, F4 – A4559, *Protocollum triennale...*, Letter of J. Niezabitowski to the General Councilors of the Marian Order, Romae 14 Sept., 1777.

supreme power even over the Marian General Chapters and General Superiors, along with independently promulgating their own decrees and regulations.

We ought to highlight here the impact of the Age of Enlightenment's political factors, as well as the ecclesial ones. In the second half of the 18th century, the Marian apostolic charism was becoming not only a theory but a life objective and inspiration for breaking away from under the Reformats' severe supervision. In 1763, in response to the need of the faithful, the Marians took over in full *cura animarum* their first parish in Mirosław. However, it was only Fr. Raymond Nowicki who conducted the revolutionary reforms in the apostolic field while in the office of the General Superior, which function he carried out for four terms (1776-1788). In great measure, these reforms were a result of his energetic activity, understanding of the need of the times, and pastoral zeal. He realized that his Order needed a courageous and deep reform to survive, develop, and successfully join in the religious, moral, and cultural revival of his declining Homeland. A group of Marians was involved in the difficult work of implementing this reform. The following demonstrated the greatest activity: T. Białowieski, K. Hondlewski, N. Gołkowski, J. Niezabitowski, and K. Spourny.

Father Nowicki paid close attention to the necessity of running parish missions, retreats, and elementary schools.⁴¹ This was a charism new to the Marians. Therefore, an internal opposition sprang up at once, because it required breaking away from so "monastic" lifestyle. Some people opted for the old lifestyle only out of their comfort-loving nature. Still the others out of a strong conviction, because they believed that the proposed reform was a deviation from the century-long order, tradition, and legislation. In order to have a free reign in his actions, Fr. Nowicki decided to complete the task of gaining independence from the Reformats – the act in which many Marians already strongly believed. For this

⁴¹ AGM, *Odpisy dokumentów związanych... z historią XX. Marianów*, Ed. S. Sydry, typeset, Raśna, 1933, I, p. 196. In his letter to Bishop Kossakowski Fr. Nowicki wrote: "There is nothing sweeter for me than to read the most celebrated opinions of the Illustrissimi Excelentissimi Domini on my Order's the running of parish missions and schools, especially because they come from clergymen so much concerned with the good of the people..." Letter of September 29, 1782. Also see: *Decreta-Ordinationes...*, pp.397-400, Fr. R. Nowicki's circular letter to the Marians of January 30, 1777.

purpose, on October 26, 1776, he named Fr. K. Spourny the General Procurator in Rome.⁴² Father K. Spourny received the task of setting up a permanent Procure in Rome, to prepare and conduct the beatification processes of Frs. Papczyński and Wyszyński, to seek an opportunity for the Marians to have a church and a monastery in Rome, as well as to become independent from the Reformats' jurisdiction.

As the General Superior, Fr. Nowicki particularly advocated the Marians' involvement in education. Already in his first year in the office, schools had been opened in Marijampole and Miroslav.⁴³ Presided over by Fr. Nowicki, the General Chapter of 1782, which was the most important one for the cause of reforms, decreed the opening of parochial schools at every Marian Religious House. Since the volunteers for this new kind of work were lacking, the decrees persuaded the Marians to undertake it by granting various privileges, employing pious encouragements: "this is a God's-pleasing occupation," "you shall be generously rewarded from God," and using direct orders.⁴⁴

The Chapter of 1782 also achieved a decisive reform in the external apostolate, which has been recognized as the utmost important service to the faithful in the Homeland provided through wide-range parish missions and retreats. By his pastoral letter, which he called *Encyclical for the entire Marian Order*,⁴⁵ Fr. Nowicki encouraged his confreres to undertake this new cause. This letter is not only a fervent appeal to all, but it calls the 28 most suitable Marians by name to take up this work and to stay readily available to go into the parish missions at first summon. Father Nowicki personally prepared a large, detailed, two-week long program of parish missions. He also appointed prefects in charge of organizing and running the missions: Fr. M. Zielonka for the Kingdom of Poland and Fr. T. Białowieski for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.⁴⁶ In his

⁴² B. Jakimowicz, "Ojciec Aleksy Fischer komisarz generalny w Portugalii," [in:] *Marianie 1673-1973*, Rome 1975, p. 59.

⁴³ T. Wierzbowski, *Szkoły parafialne w Polsce i na Litwie za czasów KEN (1773-1794)*, Kraków 1921, p. 216; J. Totoraitis, *Marianie na Suwalszczyźnie*, Stockbridge 1962, p. 9.

⁴⁴ *Decreta-Ordinationes...*, 1782/7, 1785/17, 1791/1

⁴⁵ *Decreta-Ordinationes...*, pp. 440-449, "Literae Encyclicae ad Universum Ordinem Clericorum Regularium Marianorum, A.D. 1783."

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

letters, Fr. Nowicki instructed the missionaries to avoid in their sermons any subtle aspects and scholastic matters, proclaiming instead simple teachings based on the Roman *Catechism* and writings of the Fathers of the Church. To make their teaching more effective, the missionaries had to deepen their own spiritual life and theological knowledge.

During this period, the General Procurators – first Fr. K. Spourny and from 1783 Fr. N. Gołkowski – were busy in Rome, trying to arrange all matters entrusted to them with the Roman Curia. Father Gołkowski successfully concluded the already-advanced matter of separating the Marians from the Reformats. On September 24, 1784, Pope Pius VI appointed Cardinal Henry Stuart (King Jan Sobieski's great-grandson) the cardinal-protector for the Marians instead of a Reformat commissary. On July 16, 1785, the Cardinal celebrated a solemn Mass at St. Vitus Church and pledged his protection and friendship for the Marian Order.⁴⁷

Issuing a *breve* on March 10, 1786, the Pope gave consent to free the Marians from under the jurisdiction of the Reformed Franciscans. “For the reasons explained in the petition, the above-mentioned Norbert, the Procurator General fervently entreated that we separate and detach his Order from the Order of Friars Minor called the Observant, to which, as it was said, it has been previously aggregated and attached (...), we separate and detach [it].”⁴⁸

The Constitutions of 1723, revised and adopted for the new legal situation by Fr. N. Gołkowski, crowned the work of reform and were ratified by Pope Pius VI on March 27, 1787. The introduction to these Constitutions explained in detail the reason of separation from the Francis-

⁴⁷ *Decreta-Ordinationes...*, Letter of Fr. Nowicki to confreres, A. D. 1785, in which he informs them with joy that „...Sanctissimum Papam Nostrum singulari gratia, studio, ac voluntate die 24 Septembri anno praeterlapso 1784 elegisse eiusdem Ordinis nostri in Protectorem Serenissimum ac Eminentissimum Henricum Ducem Eboracensem, S. R. E. Episcopum Cardinalem /.../ dignatus est eligere et destinare in Protectorem Congregationis Immac. Conc. B. V. Mariae. /.../ Quibus ita gestis, Serenissimus Protector noster die 16 Iulii anno currenti solemniter cum apparatu descendit ad Conventum Nostrum S. Viti, ibique Missa Solemni decantata, adhibitis solitis caeremoniis, sedendo in throno in Protectionem suam nostrum Marianum suscepit Ordinem...”

⁴⁸ The full text of this *breve* can be found in *Constitutiones Ordinis Immaculatae Conceptionis B.V.M.ariae Clericorum Regularium Marianorum*, Romae 1787.

cans and revision of the Constitutions. In view of the fact that this document is important but not readily-available, it is worthwhile to quote it at length here. The document states thus: "...the papal *breve* contains a note that our Order joined the Seraphic Order of St. Francis to which our old laws give clear witness /.../ and of which union the new laws, recently published in print in Rome /.../ contain no trace for the following reason: At its inception our Order was composed of just a few members and could not achieve an immediate growth, therefore, it had to seek protection of the Seraphic Order in order to ascertain its reinforcements and further support. However, later on, thanks to the blessings of the Lord God and the protection of the Immaculate Mother of God, [our Order], having grown and produced in its midst members endowed with knowledge and virtue, decided to free itself from its dependency of the Seraphic Order, being now able to rule itself. For this purpose petitions have been put to /.../ the Holy Pius VI, asking to disengage [the Order] from that incorporation and to ratify through a new bulla our latest religious laws that have been amended in certain paragraphs and made more conform to the original status of our Order."⁴⁹

The new Constitutions crowned the painstaking, decade-long works of reform conducted by the Order's Government in 1776-1786. They cancelled unduly humiliating punishments, severe fasting, eliminated monastic solitary confinement, and called to practice the virtue of Christian love and mutual kindness. They breathed humanism, understanding of the human nature, and respect for human dignity. Aside from the priorities unchanged, such as devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. and assistance for Poor Souls in Purgatory, they obliged the Marianans to work pastorally, in other words to run parish missions, teach basics of the faith to simple folks, and educate children in parochial schools: "Let no Marian be tolerated who does not apply himself to schooling the others or himself, or to delivering sermons both at his house or in the missions, or to teaching the youth the basics of the Faith and Knowledge."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ See the front page of *Konstytucje Apostolskie Kleryków Regularnych Maryanów /.../, ułożone y powtórnie przejrzone, od Piusa VI papieża potwierdzone y aprobowane, dnia 27 marca 1787 roku*, Wilno 1791, as well as „Przedmowa”, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁰ These tasks are listed in the chapter three and chapter sixth entitled *O nauce chrześcijańskiej i misjach* and also in the supplement *Uwagi niektóre na Regułę naśladowania cnót Najświętszej Panny*.

This was a definite shift from emphasizing the numerous prayerful obligations to ever more encompassing apostolic works. The *Officium Defunctorum* was abbreviated and only one nocturn recited during the Lauds and Vespers. Instead of the entire Rosary for the deceased, only one decade was offered. Besides, both Frs. Makoś and Sydry maintain that the process of minimizing pious practices for the intention of the dead began as soon as 1730, still in Fr. Kozłowski's time,⁵¹ but we could not find substantiation in presently available sources. The eschatological charism of the Order was dear to Fr. Wyszyński, who during his stay in Rome spent much effort to obtain for the Order various indulgences, privileges, and confraternities that brought help to the deceased. He obtained for the Marian churches a permission to have "the privileged altar" and later, in 1752, indulgences for the entire Octave of the Day of All Faithful Departed.

He thus wrote about encountered difficulties: "I'm sending you the indulgence granted by the Apostolic See for the Day of All Faithful Departed. I met with great difficulties in procuring it, not so much from the Holy Father, for he commended my efforts and gave his consent, but from the part of the Congregation for Indulgences. I was told that the request concerned a special and unheard off matter. Again, I had to submit to the Congregation several memorials and then to go there personally about 10 times. It was necessary to show our Constitutions to prove that we are an Institute helping the deceased."⁵² To the matter of helping the dead, the revised Constitutions of 1787 dedicated an entire chapter (No 8) entitled "Concerning Salvation of Poor Souls."

The chapter put four obligations upon the Marians:

1. To recite one nocturn every morning and night (except for holidays) and to particularly uphold "the said Devotion and to promote it" during the Octave of the All Faithful Departed Day. The rosary wasn't mentioned;

2. To install confraternities for assisting Poor Souls "especially under the title of the Immaculate Conception ... or else of the Saint Mary de Suffragio;"

⁵¹ W. Makoś, *Element eschatyczny...*, p. 107

⁵² Proczek..., *Stróż duchowego...*, pp. 296-297.

3. To pray particularly for their deceased brethren, including the celebration of a sung funeral Mass, recitation of the entire Office of the Dead, and additional celebration of three Masses by each priest.

4. To celebrate each month one sung memorial Mass for their deceased benefactors and another one for the Marians, with the seminarians and religious brothers reciting the Rosary in these intentions.⁵³

After the initial, difficult years of reforms, the Order gained stability, accepted its apostolic works, and the entirety of monastic life with all its manifestations. The Marians were performing important and needed services in the fields of religion, education, public and national life. The Order had an international character both because of its membership and of posts located in Poland, Lithuania, Portugal, and Italy. The reign in spiritual and theological and philosophical formation was taken over by the worthy, well-educated religious. Thirteen Marians (in total throughout a period of 100 years) served as chaplains for the princely and magnate's families, thus increasing the Order's prestige and securing the protection of these families for the Marians. The Roman House provided an opportunity for studying on an international level. All seemed to foretell a wonderful future.

However, catastrophe arrived in the form of partitions of Poland, followed by persecution of the Church and religious Orders, which slowly annihilated hope for growth and development. The time of struggle for "daily survival" had come not only for the religious Orders but for the Church and Homeland. The Marian Order joined this struggle actively and sacrificially in the 19th century.

It must be noted here that norms and recommendations enclosed in the Constitutions and Statutes of 1787 regarding the fulfillment of the main Marian charisms remained binding without any further legal alterations until the reform of 1909 conducted by Father Renovator, Blessed George Matulaitis-Matulewicz.

⁵³ *Apostolic Constitutions of the Marians*, Chapter 8 "Concerning the Salvation of Poor Souls."



Ant. Joach.^m Imbrat.
Maria imaculada Filha de Anna e Joaquin.
q.^o se venera no ermo Corabievienſe, pr.^o convento
dos Religioſos da imacul.^a Conceição em Polonia.

Previous page: a copper plate that depicts the Blessed Virgin Mary as a daughter of Sts. Joachim and Anne. The hand-written inscription in Portuguese underneath suggests that this work was inspired by an image from the Marian monastery in Puszcza Mariańska.

This copper plate is located in the cell of the Venerable Servant of God Fr. Casimir Wyszynski at the Marian monastery on Mount Balsamão, Portugal. Second half of the 18th century.

SPIRITUALITY AND BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION OF MARIAN FATHERS¹

The Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary (*Congregatio Clericorum Marianorum ab Immaculata Conceptione B.V.M.*: MIC) is a clerical religious congregation founded in 1673 in Poland by Blessed Stanislaus of Jesus and Mary Papczyński. On November 24, 1699, it was ratified by Innocent XII (breve *Exponi nobis nuper* upon *The Rule of Ten Virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary*), as the last congregation of clerics regular with solemn vows in the Church. It was renovated and reformed by Blessed George Matulaitis-Matulewicz (†1927) in 1909-1910.

SPIRITUALITY OF THE MARIANS

The spirituality of the Marians was shaped by – and partly formed as a reaction to – religious and social circumstances of 17th century Poland. The positive influence of two movements: the Marian one – with its ideal of the Marian bondage and privilege of the Immaculate Conception, and a Christological movement with an accent on the Passion. Those two movements and contrasting negative effects of continuous wars and social processes of the time (progressing corruption of public life, alcohol abuse, the matter of the *liberum veto*, and the negligent pastoral care of ‘the simple folk’) produced an idea of a new religious community, the creation of which Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński initiated in 1670. Discerning the signs of the times, he collected and organized the basic ideas in his *Norma vitae*, which he based on the Scriptures and modeled after St. Augustine’s rule of life (*Reguła życia*, Lublin – Warszawa 1996), giving it the form of religious statutes. In this work, he specifically emphasized the chapter *De charitate (On Love)*, recognizing the love of God as the essence and primary means for

¹ A shortened version of this article (regrettably, with editorial errors) was published in *Encyklopedia Katolicka* [Catholic Encyclopedia], t. XI, Lublin, 2007, kol. 1353-1355.

achieving the goals of the spiritual life, which embraced all facets of life of the Marians (*omnia apud vos in charitate fiant*, NV, II 1). In his writings and work of founding the religious order Fr. Papczyński included the essential elements of Marian spirituality:

- **Trinitarian** – It strongly accentuates the [idea of] following Christ – God-Man, suffering for sinners and for their salvation (*sequela*) and realizing His near and loving presence, as well as the idea of men becoming like Christ (*Orator crucifixus*, Kraków 1670, *Christus patiens*, Warszawa 1690);

- **Marian** – Immaculateness that sets Mary the Immaculate Conception, the Mother of God, (*Deipara, Dei Mater*) as the specific Patroness of the Marians and their model of life (*imitatio Mariae*). Devotion to Mary is to be promulgated as the specific goal of the new community. Surrendering to her in bondage (*pro mancipio*) was included by Fr. Papczyński in the first version of his *Norma vitae* (Warszawa 1687). However, it was dropped from the subsequent Marian rules;

- **Eschatological** – Concerned with praying for those who died in wars, plagues, and unprepared for death. It was closely associated with constant remembrance of the last things;

- **Apostolic** – Instructs to teach the truths of the faith to «simple and pastorally neglected folks», to provide for their formation, and to guide them to an evangelical holiness (*Templum Dei Mysticum*, Kraków, 1675, in which Fr. Papczyński included a comprehensive concept of holiness for the laity). The Founder of the Congregation of Marian Fathers further deepened an understanding of the elements of spirituality in his other writings, especially in his manuscript *Inspectio cordis* (critical edition, Roma 2000), which provides meditations for Sundays, feast days, weekdays, and thematic interests, and in his *Prodromus reginae artium*, (Warszawa, 1663). In this book he included, among other things, sermons of Marian character and a criticism of inequality and social deprivation.

The acceptance of *Regula decem placitorum* (*Reguła dziesięciu cnót NMP*, Lublin 1984), which is based on the Gospel passages that account Mary's life through her virtues and privileges (*virtutes/beneplacita*) as a model to be imitated further strengthened the ecclesial-typ-

ical aspect of Marian spirituality and the assurance of the evangelical sources of this concept.

Marian spirituality was further developed and theologically deepened by the Founder's successors and disciples in two ways: substantiating the imitation of Mary, the Immaculate Conception; and strengthening the Marians' apostolic dimension by placing it in a wider Christological and ecclesial context. The first aspect was represented particularly by the Venerable Servant of God, Casimir Wyszyński, and his work of 1749 *Gwiazda zaranna* [*Morning Star*]. In the "Introduction," he justified the imitation of Mary: "He who tied himself to Mary should imitate her virtues and follow the path, on which she trod after Christ, who left us in Mary – his dearest Mother – the first and the most perfect example of how to imitate His life." Father Wyszyński strove to demonstrate the continuity of this idea by constantly turning in his preaching and activity to the person of Fr. Founder, while emphasizing the idea of the Marian character in Fr. Papczyński's biography.

The second trend was represented by Blessed George Matulaitis-Matulewicz. Through the reform of the Marian Order, as well as in his writings, such as the *Konstytucje Zgromadzenia Księży Marianów* [*Constitutions of the Congregation of Marian Fathers*] (Kraków 1933), the *Dziennik Duchowy* [*Journal*] (Warszawa 1988), *Idea przewodnia i duch Zgromadzenia* [*The General Idea and Spirit of the Congregation*] (Warszawa 1988), he gave Marians' spirituality a new dynamism and interpretation adopted for his times. He emphasized the universality of the Church and the Congregation, and he harmoniously united the Marian way of life with the ideal of the universal apostolate after the example of St. Paul the Apostle. Instead of instructing the «simple folks», he introduced "every means, which zeal will offer, for the salvation and sanctification of souls," accentuating the "acquiring and spreading knowledge and instructing others," united with the apostolate of Eastern rite and amongst non-Catholics, especially "wherever the need is the greatest."

In his *General Idea*, Blessed George expressed in a new way the essential elements of Marians spirituality: "The motto of the Congregation is: 'For Christ and the Church.' Therefore, desiring to be imbued with the spirit of Christ and the Church, the members should try to seek

God in all things, to please God in all things, to do all things for the greater glory of God, and to bring God into everything, so that truly God would become the center of life of the whole Congregation and of the individual members. (...) Therefore, Christ shall be the leader and example for the whole Congregation and for everyone of its members, while our special Patroness, the Immaculate Virgin Mary shows us the way and helps us along it: «If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him.»”

The interpretation of spirituality worked out by Fr. Matulewicz became the point of reference for the Marians in the last century, which found its reflection in our newest Constitutions that took into account the guidelines of Vatican II.

Most recently, one can note a development tied to pastoral work, theological reflection on the mystery of the Immaculate Conception as a fruit of Divine Mercy, as well as the interpretation of the charism in the context of the apostolate. This resulted in undertaking new works regarding addicts, the dying (hospices), Marian formation, the Apostolate of the Divine Mercy in its instructional, and practical aspects.

Father Matulewicz recognized anew – manifest from the beginning of Marian spirituality – the sharing of the Congregation’s charism with laity, so that through their mediation “all who are still pilgrims here on earth, as well as those who are being purified after this life, may attain the fullness of maturity and eternal happiness in Christ with all the saints” (*Constitutions*, §2). This was made fruitful in the forming of the Association of Marian Helpers, which gathers men and women, associated in a formal manner with the Congregation, and participating in various ways in its spirituality, mission, and apostolate. The worldwide Association embraces more than one million members in total. The Association also comprises *vir aggregatus* or *Associate Members*, the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M., and the Eucharistic Apostles of the Divine Mercy. Also, the apostolic dimension of the spirituality includes the running of parishes and Marian Shrines (i.e., in Poland, Portugal, and Rwanda), Divine Mercy Apostolates (in Brazil, Cameroon, Great Britain, and the U.S.), publishing activities (in Lithuania, Poland, and the U.S.), work in Catholic schools (in the U.S., Argentina, and Lithuania), and teaching and scholarly work at university centers.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MARIANS

Father Stanislaus Papczyński mentioned first his idea of a new Congregation on December 11, 1670, upon departing from the Piarist Order with a previously obtained indult of departure and while performing an act of Oblation, by which he dedicated himself to God and Mary Immaculate. He also promised to observe religious vows in the Society of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception. He was convinced that the “Divine vision was engraved on [his] soul as to the founding of the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M.” He also made what is known as “vow of blood,” thus expressing his readiness to defend the truth of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. even at the cost of his own life. A particular goal to which he wished to dedicate his community, was above all to spread devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. A few years later, he formulated additional goals: praying for the departed, particularly those who died suddenly and unprepared, i.e. soldiers and victims of plagues; as well as assisting priests in their pastoral work, especially among the “simple folk” and the religiously neglected.

With the support from Stefan Wierzbowski, Bishop of Poznań, Stanislaus Papczyński settled at the Karski Estate in Lubocza, in the Mazovian region. In 1671, he donned a white habit in honor of the Immaculate Conception. He was also working on the rule for his future Congregation, which he called *Norma vitae*. To begin his Institute, in 1673 he went to a small community of hermits residing in Puszcza Korabiewska (today’s Puszcza Mariańska – Marian Forest) and offered them his vision of a religious lifestyle. The “Marian Hermits” received the Church’s approval on October 24, 1673, on the strength of a decree issued by Bishop Stanisław Świącicki during his visitation of the Warsaw Archdeanery in the Diocese of Poznań. On November 22, 1677, Stefan Wierzbowski, the Bishop Ordinary of Poznań, gave the Marians the Church of Our Lord’s Cenacle in Nowa Jerozolima [New Jerusalem] (today’s Góra Kalwaria), and on April 21, 1679, he canonically erected the Marian Order in the Diocese of Poznań.

The Marians were first legally recognized by the Holy See and received various graces through Pope Innocent XI’s *breve Cum sicut accepimus* of March 20, 1681. Papal approval was granted in 1699.

However, the Marians failed to obtain permission for making solemn vows without adopting a religious rule, which left them only with the Constitutions known as the *Norma vitae* composed by Fr. Stanisław Papczyński. Although they expected originally to obtain their ratification (*constitutiones pro regula*), they had to accept one of the religious rules approved by the Holy See. They chose the *Rule of Ten Virtues of the B.V.M.*, written by Blessed Gilbert Nicolas († 1532) under direct guidance of St. Joan de Valois for the Order of the Virgin Mary (OVM) – commonly known as the “Annunciades” – which she founded. Because this rule was under the jurisdiction of the Order of Friars Minor Observant, this choice resulted in the Marians’ aggregation into this Order. However, Fr. Papczyński, concerned with the safety and steadfast growth of his new Order, as early as 1691 had already asked the Franciscans Observant to take his community under their jurisdiction, to which they consented the same year.

After obtaining the consent of Franciscans Observant for their making the solemn vows on the *Rule of Ten Virtues* on September 21, 1699, the Marian Order was legally ratified by Innocent XII on November 24, 1699. The Pope also instructed his nuncio in Warsaw to receive their vows. The Order numbered then about 20 members in three monasteries (the third was founded in Goźlin on October 15, 1699). The Marians wore the white habit in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M., under which was placed a white scapular, decorated in blue, with either an embroidered or embossed picture of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. At their sash they had a “decade” or ten black Rosary beads, symbolizing ten evangelical virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Father Papczyński was the General Superior until his death on September 17, 1701. His vicar, then also his assistant – Fr. Joachim Kozłowski (†1730) – was elected General Superior, which the Founder personally confirmed.

In 1710, the Marians received another foundation in Skórzec near Siedlce. However, shortly afterwards their growth was impeded. As a result of inner tensions within the young community and a generally-felt shortage of priests, Bishop Adam Rostkowski, acting on behalf of Bishop Szembek of Poznań, closed the novitiate and ordered the Marians to leave the monasteries around 1716 and engage in pastoral work

in the parishes. Only eight men stayed in the monasteries. This crisis was serious, indeed, because the Marians still remained without approved Constitutions, although the Holy See ratified the Order after 1699. For this reason, after the community came out in 1722 of what was dubbed as “Rostkovian dispersion,” Fr. Kozłowski went to Rome, where he received from Innocent XIII a papal approval of the Order, together with the approval of the Constitutions, based on *Norma vitae* and adapted to the *Rule of Ten Virtues of the B.V.M.*

The new recognition of the Order contributed to its gradual growth. The period from 1725 – 1750 was marked by the [presence] of the outstanding personality of the Venerable Servant of God Casimir Wyszyński (†1755), who held many offices, including two terms as General Superior (1731–41, 1747–50). He initiated and directed the continuous spiritual renovation of the Order, placing particular emphasis on strict fidelity to the Founder’s spirit and upholding of the *Rule and imitation of the Ten Virtues of the B.V.M.* He also started preparations for Fr. Papczyński’s beatification. During Fr. Wyszyński’s time in office the Order grew and acquired new foundations: Raśna and Marijampole in the Duchy of Lithuania, 1749; Berezdov in Volhynia region, 1750; and Balsamão in Portugal, 1745, where Fr. Wyszyński came to stay and where he died in the opinion of sanctity (October 21, 1755).

In the second half of the 18th century the Order went through a period of relatively fast growth and became in time an international community. Two new foundations were opened in Portugal and new monasteries were built in the former Polish Commonwealth (today Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine). In 1779, the Marians also settled in Italy, where they purchased from the Cistercians a monastery and St. Vitus’s Church in Rome. A noticeable growth of the Order under Fr. Raymond Nowicki, General Superior (1776–88) followed: in 1781 the community had 147 members in 13 monasteries. On March 10, 1786, Pope Pius VI granted the Marians their independence from the Franciscans Observant, and on March 27, 1787, consecutive approval of their Rule and Constitutions, adapted to their new legal status, also came through. During this period, answering the Bishops’ request, the Marians intensified their activity of preaching parish missions, doing charitable works (hospitals for the poor), and starting parish schools at their monasteries. Their parishes frequently became centers of new parishes.

At the end of the 18th century the Marians entered a stage of decline, caused by hardships and political circumstances, as well as persecutions by governments hostile to the Church. Saint Vitus's Monastery in Rome was the first to be closed down by Napoleon's authorities in 1798. Three monasteries in Portugal were suppressed by the government in 1834. From the beginning of the 19th century, the Order started losing its members and monasteries in the Republic of Poland following the country's partitioning.²

The territorial changes in Poland, together with the ruthless policy of isolation enforced by partitioning powers, led to the creation of the Order's new administrative and ecclesial structures, which were dependent on the location of its monasteries. This way, the Russian and Prussian Provinces emerged in 1797. The Marians, who found themselves under the Austrian occupation (until 1809), did not create a provincial structure, possibly because the Order's General House was there (in Skórzec). Problems grew worse after the creation of the Kingdom of Poland and especially after the failure of the 1830 Uprising against Russia.

In fact in 1835, there were only 63 religious in seven monasteries. Similarly, in 1860 there were 71 Religious in eight houses. Furthermore, after suppressing the 1863 Uprising, Czar Alexander II started in 1864 to gradually eliminate all religious institutes in the Kingdom of Poland. In the Marians' case, these actions were catastrophic, because they embraced the majority of their houses and consequently brought about a nearly total annihilation of the Order.

Seven Marian monasteries were suppressed between 1864 and 1866 and 11 members were exiled to Siberia, among them Fr. Christopher Szvernicky (†1884), who became the missionary in Irkutsk and Siberia. Only one Marian priest was left at each church previously belonging to the Marian community to assure further service for the parish community. All others were forcibly transferred to the last monastery in Marijampole, Lithuania.

Subjected to a rigorous police control, the Marians lived in Marijampole in prison-like, cramped conditions. Thus, it is not surprising

² There were three partitions of Poland between 1764 and 1795, which brought about the end of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

that many of them left the monastery and obtained incardination into various dioceses to carry on their pastoral work. The remaining Marians were gradually dying out. Seeing that it was practically impossible to accept novices, the number of Marians dramatically decreased. In 1865 there were 40 Marians left, only three in 1897, and in 1908 there was just one Marian with full canonical rights – Fr. Vincent Sękowski (Senkus), elected earlier the General Superior.

In order to save the Order from extinction, it was necessary to transform it into a clandestine institute. Such was a proposal, with which Fr. Vincent Sękowski was approached in 1908 by a former pupil of the Marijampole Marians, Blessed George Matulaitis-Matulewicz (beatified in 1987), a Professor at the Catholic Academy in St. Petersburg. Having obtained Fr. Sękowski's consent, Fr. Matulaitis-Matulewicz went to Rome in the summer 1909. Upon the power of attorney granted by Fr. Sękowski, he petitioned the Holy See for permission to replace the white Marian habit with a plain cassock worn by the diocesan clergy (religious brothers were to wear lay clothes, but later the General Chapter of 2011 allowed them to wear ecclesiastical garb in the manner of priests), and to open a clandestine novitiate in St. Petersburg. It was also necessary to adapt the Marian Constitutions (*Statuta*) to the new situation in which the community found itself, and to *Normae* published by the Apostolic See in 1901. Eventually, to prevent the Order's extinction that might have been caused by Fr. Sękowski's unexpected death, the Holy See was asked to allow Fr. Matulaitis-Matulewicz to make his religious vows without undergoing the obligatory novitiate first.

Having received favorable answers from the Holy See, Fr. Matulaitis-Matulewicz took his religious vows on August 29, 1909, and his friend, Fr. Francis Bučys (†1951), began his canonical novitiate. This day is regarded as the date of Renovation of the Marian Order. The renovation and reformation were canonically confirmed on November 28, 1910, on the day when Pius X approved the considerably changed Marian Constitutions:

- Final vows were changed to simple vows;
- The daily Office for the Dead was replaced with an obligatory daily celebration of a special service for souls suffering in Purgatory (its precise form was not defined);

- Apostolic activity was extended to include any apostolic means;
- The religious habit was replaced by plain diocesan cassock worn by the clergy.

The then-Superior General, Fr. Sękowski, died on April 19, 1911, having led the renovated Order for 19 months and 12 days. At the time of his death, the Marian community had two professed members, and Fr. Matulaitis-Matulewicz was elected the new Superior General (July 14, 1911) after Fr. J. Totoraitis (†1914) completed his novitiate the same year as the third professed.

The growth of the Renovated Congregation of Marian Fathers progressed dynamically. The number of candidates, initially mostly Lithuanian and Polish, steadily increased. To ensure a necessary religious formation, Fr. Matulaitis-Matulewicz opened a religious house and novitiate in Fribourg in Switzerland in 1911, with the approval of the Apostolic See. Ten novices started the novitiate that same year: seven priests, one seminarian, and two lay men. However, this house was closed in 1919 because it had become possible, thanks to political changes, to organize religious life in Poland and Lithuania. Also, the large numbers of candidates required more novitiate houses to be opened.

The first totally functioning religious house in the U.S.A. was opened in Chicago in 1913. A year earlier, the Marians started working in Warsaw, where in 1915 Fr. Matulaitis-Matulewicz founded a Bielany religious house and a grammar school. In 1918, the Marian Monastery in Marijampole was reactivated as the main center of the Lithuanian community. That year, the Marians numbered 57 religious in three houses, of which more than half resided in Poland. Although nominated in 1918 as the Bishop of Vilnius, Fr. Matulaitis-Matulewicz remained the Marian General Superior until his death. He appointed general vicars for each individual country. In his report on the state of the Congregation to the Apostolic See in 1923, Fr. Matulaitis-Matulewicz wrote that there were 94 religious in all, 48 residing in Poland, 31 in Lithuania and 15 in the U.S.A. Also the same year, the Marians took over a former Bernardines' Church and Monastery in Druya, with the purpose of working among the Belarussians. A year later a monastery, was also opened in Vilani, Latvia, for pastoral work in that country. In 1925, the General Curia was moved from Marijampole to Rome where an international college was opened for Marian students.

In 1928, the Marians undertook the running of a Mission in the Byzantine-Slavic Rite for Russians in Harbin, Manchuria. They set up a religious house there, appointing as its Superior the Archimandrite Fabian Abrantowicz (†1946). The foundation and its schools were forcibly closed in 1948. The Marians in the monastery at that time were arrested and deported to Soviet labor camps, where some of them died a martyr's death. The others, after regaining freedom, went to other countries where they served in the Eastern Rite in Great Britain, the U.S., and Australia. In 2003, the beatification process was begun for the Servants of God, Fabian Abrantowicz and Andrzej Cikoto (†1952), Superiors of the Mission in Harbin. Both were martyred by the Communist regime.

Along with the approval of the new Constitutions in 1930, three new provinces were established: St. Casimir's Province in the U.S., Divine Providence in Poland, and St. George's in Lithuania. At that time, the Congregation had 319 religious in 17 houses.

In 1939, the first Marian house was founded in Argentina. At first, the activity concentrated on pastoral care for Lithuanian emigrants. In time, it extended to new pastoral challenges among the Argentineans, such as the running of parishes and Catholic schools. In 1987, the Argentinean Vicariate of the B.V.M. of Lujan was established under the jurisdiction of the St. Casimir's Province.

In 1940, the Province of St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus was established in Latvia. In 1948, a second U.S. Province, St. Stanislaus Kostka came into being. Contrary to St. Casimir's Province – whose principal activities included running parishes, publishing, and education (in Chicago and Thompson among others) – the new Province concentrated on spreading the Divine Mercy message. In time, this led to establishing in Stockbridge, Mass., the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy and gatherings of the faithful within the Association of Marian Helpers, the Eucharistic Apostles of Divine Mercy, and the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception.

In 1954, the monastery in Balsamão was recovered and more religious houses were opened (Fatima, Lisbon). Along with pastoral ministry, the Marians there served at the Marian Shrine (Balsamão), developed the Divine Mercy Apostolate, and created retreat and recreational centers. The Portugal Vice Province was established in 1993, and in 2005 it re-formed into a General Vicariate.

In 1950, the first Marian religious house was opened in Great Britain to provide pastoral care for Polish emigrants there. Other centers appeared later, among them in Ealing, London, that carried out various forms of the apostolate, which included running for a time educational and cultural institutions in Fawley Court. In 1970 the Province of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy was established in Great Britain and in 2002 re-formed into a Delegacy of the Province of Poland.

The year 1951 saw the onset of the Marian pastoral ministry to Russians of the Byzantine-Slavic Rite in Australia, and in 1962, the Marians begun ministering to the Lithuanians.

In 1964, the Marians began working pastorally in Brazil. Initially, their efforts were concentrated on missionary work in the interior (State of Paraná) and parish service in large cities (Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba). In time, other forms of ministry beyond the parish level were also embraced. These included establishing of the Association of Marian Helpers, the Divine Mercy Shrine, a hospital for the poor, and minor and major seminaries. In 1998, the Divine Mercy Province was erected Brazil.

The Marians took over their first parish in the Augsburg Diocese, Germany, in 1968. Following the Bishops' requests, more centers came later under their care. This led to the establishing of the German Delegacy in 1994.

During World War II and under the Soviet occupation, the Marians suffered considerable losses in personnel, particularly in the Eastern regions, where many of them died a martyr's death, i.e. Fr. Anthony Leszczewicz (†1943) and Fr. George Kaszyra (†1943). Both were beatified in 1999. In 2003, the beatification process of the Servant of God Janis Mendriks (†1953) was initiated.

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought about a renewal of the Marians in Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, and Ukraine, where the Congregation survived in secret, suffering great losses. Coming out of hiding, they began to organize normal religious structures, re-establishing along the way the old and initiating new forms of apostolic work.

Along with serving in parishes (i.e., Vilnius), the Marians in Lithuania run the Blessed George Matulaitis-Matulewicz Shrine in Marijam-

pole. After regaining independence, they founded a Catholic high school in Marijampole and the Association of Marian Helpers in Kaunas. However, in view of the heavy losses in personnel under the Soviet regime, the Province was reorganized into a Vicariate.

Similarly, the Congregation never abandoned parish work in Latvia (Daugavpils, Rezekne, Vilani). The Marians also recovered their pre-war print shop and resumed publication of Catholic materials. In addition, they established the Association of Marian Helpers.

The Marians first came to Africa in 1984 upon receiving an invitation to spread devotion to Mary in the Diocese of Ruhengeri, Rwanda. Concentrating initially on parish work, they began serving at the Our Lady of the Word Shrine in Kibeho (Diocese of Gikongoro) In 2004, where they also opened the Marian Formation Center. In 1999, their activity was extended to Cameroon, to the Diocese of Doumé Abong-Mbang. After serving three years at the minor seminary in Doumé, they took over the Atok parish, where they founded the Divine Mercy Shrine.

In 1990, the Vicariate of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was established in Ukraine. Along with pastoral ministry in parishes (Kharkiv, Khmelnickiy, Sevastopol, Gorodok Podilski, and Chernivcy), its work included repair work on church buildings, publication of books and periodicals, and charitable works.

In 1999, in view of shortage of priests in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic, the Marians set up their first religious house in Drietoma (Slovakia), followed by the house in Brumov-Bylnice, Czech Republic, in 1993. Pastoral activity in these countries concentrated mostly on parish work (among other places, in Prague), with some extra-parochial activity: serving at the Marian Shrine in Hradek near Prague and running of individual, group, and parish retreats. In 1994, the Czech–Slovak Vicariate of Sts. Cyril and Methodius was called into being.

In 1993, the Belarussian Delegacy came into existence. First, its activity focused on restoring and building centers of worship, later augmented by running parishes (among them in Barysauv, Druya, Minsk, and Orsha), retreat centers, and the Marian Martyrs in Rosica Shrine.

In 1992, the Marians opened their first mission post in Karaganda, Kazakhstan.

Along with administering parishes, the Marians in the Polish Province concentrate their work in multiple forms of extra-parochial activities. This work includes running the Marian Shrines in Stoczek Warمیński and Licheń, including the Marian Formation Center there; doing publishing, academic, and specialized work (pertaining to managing a hospice for the dying in Warsaw; operating counseling centers for family and addicts in Licheń and Warsaw); running retreat houses, and leading the Association of Marian Helpers and the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M..

Changes experienced by the Congregation in the U.S.A. led to a unification of the two American Provinces and the establishment of the B.V.M. Mother of Mercy Province of in 2006.

Recognizing that the Marians have been official promoters of the authentic Divine Mercy message since 1941, Church officials in the Philippines invited the Congregation to have a physical present in this faith-filled nation. Since 2008, the Marians have been present in the Philippines as a votive offering of thanksgiving for the gift of the beatification in September 2007 of Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński, Founder of the community. In 2010, the Asian Vicariate with its headquarters in the Philippines was established and the novitiate house opened in El Salvador, accepting the first candidates to the community from the Philippines, India, China, and Australia. At the same time, the Congregation organized a house in India for candidates to the community.

At the beginning of 2011, the Marians had in total 493 members in 60 religious houses and 20 residences located in 19 countries.

