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## Prayer in the Life and Pastoral Work of the Blessed Primate of the Millennium – Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (1901-1981)

The purpose of this publication is to present the role of prayer in the life and pastoral work of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. We used elements of the biographical method to discuss the main features of his personality and show that he constantly strove for holiness as he believed that the future of the world depends on saints. He respected the past and attributed great value to culture, tradition and liturgy. Being an unyielding defender of Poland and the Church in the times of the communist regime, he was a man of heroic prayer. In his view, the ideals of life are based on harmony between God and the people. Therefore, this paper recalls the figure of the Primate who, through his life witness, believed, dreamed, longed and worked to restore balance in Polish society shattered by opposing political or ideological trends.

In discussing prayer, we recall the Cardinal's attitude toward acts of personal devotion, the rosary, breviary prayer and the daily Eucharist. We also point out his devotion to the liturgical year, the Sunday Eucharistic celebration and his service to Mary, mother of God. Characterising the main fields of the Primate's pastoral activities, we distinguish individual periods associated with his ministry. We discuss in detail the period of his three-year imprisonment during which he sketched national pastoral programs.

**Key words:** Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, life, work, prayer.

## Introduction

A lot has already been written about Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. Even after his beatification, people are still writing about him, although they write differently, taking up issues that have so far been little discussed. For many reasons, he is a unique figure worth the continued interest of researchers in various scientific fields. His life and work can inspire us with the richness of his thoughts, as well as the ethical, moral and social messages. The Primate impressed his contemporaries with his consistency in action, broad intellectual horizons, excellent knowledge of social issues, personal charisma and his skilful coping with the numerous persecutions he experienced from the opponents.<sup>1</sup> This publication is therefore neither the first nor the last, and does not crown what has already been written about him either by me or by others. This paper aims to provide an insight into the Primate's inner man and attempts to capture his spiritual beauty seen through the prism of his prayer life. Prayer allowed him to discern his vocation in life and was not only a form of effective work on many fronts, but freed him from loneliness and gave birth to a new man. Its source and motive was steadfast faith in God, who sent His Son Jesus Christ for the salvation of man, guaranteeing the effectiveness of Primate Wyszyński's work. To understand the role of prayer in the life of the blessed and to look at its genesis, functions and forms, we will first draw attention to who Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński was and what he taught; it is not without reason that he is called the Primate of the Millennium. Next, we will present the main fields of his multiple pastoral work.

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## Who the Blessed Primate of the Millennium Was and What He Taught

Being an indomitable defender of Poland and the Church, he was a man of great work and heroic prayer. His ideal was life in harmony between God and man. "Throughout his life, he believed, dreamed, longed and at the same time did a lot to restore or create harmony in Polish society, broken by opposing political or ideological trends."<sup>2</sup> The Primate realised this ideal on many levels: human (unity between soul and body), educational (unity of spiritual and material values) and social (unity among citizens of different states and party affiliations). A deep unity between the Church and the nation was part of

<sup>1</sup> R. Łatka. *Prymas Stefan Wyszyński w realiach PRL*, Warszawa 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Z.J. Kijas, *Wyszyński. Narodziny nowego człowieka*. Warszawa 2021, p. 137.

this ideal. At the same time, he wanted to be a witness to Christ and a father to the faithful. Knowing the genesis of a person's dignity, he loved every person and the Church. He was unfamiliar with anxiety, which he bravely fought. He considered God his father and Mary his beloved mother, his helper and teacher of true love and freedom. He knew from experience that a high price is paid for valuable things. Being free himself, he was a voluntary slave of Mary and a teacher of true freedom. He delighted in the beauty of creation and considered patriotism to be part of the Christian life and a moral obligation.

Wyszyński believed in friendship and valued it greatly. He liked people and enjoyed meeting them. The Primate noticed the beauty of life and the value of the family. He respected women and they respected him and played an important role in his life and ministry.

At the same time, he was a man of great faith, hope and love who knew how to serve God, man, the Church and his homeland faithfully. His life bore numerous and tangible fruits. Despite the difficulties, he believed in Divine Providence and persisted in constant and trusting prayer. He believed that "there is no wrong that cannot be forgiven."<sup>3</sup> Heroically overcoming evil with good, following the example of St. Maximilian, he considered it a grace that, as a political prisoner, he saved himself, through his three-year imprisonment, from the hatred of his compatriots who exercised power in the State. Aware of the wrongs done to him, he forgave them in his heart for all the slanders "with which they graced him."

Throughout his life, Primate Wyszyński longed for heaven and lived thanks to the strength flowing from the Eucharist "uniting heaven and earth." He used the time given to him wisely, loved nature and was very curious about life. He respected the past and attributed great value to culture, tradition and liturgy. In his ministry as a good shepherd, he realised that the future of the world depends on saints, and therefore, he constantly strove for holiness. He was a man of "extraordinary measure" who exceeded the limitations of his times, and it was not without reason that he was called "the keystone of the Church and the Primate of the Millennium."<sup>4</sup>

Without a doubt, Reverend Stefan Wyszyński, beatified on September 12, 2021, already had rich religious and pastoral experience in his

<sup>3</sup> A. Rastawicka, *Maryjne drogi wolności Prymasa Tysiąclecia. Czytania majowe*, Warszawa 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Jan Paweł II o Kardynale Stefanie Wyszyńskim, in: *Człowiek niezwyklej miary. Ojciec Święty Jan Paweł II o kardynale Stefanie Wyszyńskim, Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński o sobie, Kardynał Józef Glemp o kardynale Stefanie Wyszyńskim*, red. M. Plaskacz, A. Rastawicka, W. Wojdecki, Warszawa 1984, pp. 127-144.

pre-primate period. Thanks to his excellent and in-depth philosophical and theological formation, he was a clear witness to Christ, loving God, the Church, the nation and every human being. Throughout his life, he was guided by the motto “Homeland-Education-Virtue,” which he took from his family home. He excelled in the love of God, other people and the homeland. This was particularly visible when, during the Warsaw Uprising as a chaplain of the Home Army under the pseudonym “Radwan III,” he served in the insurgent hospital in Laski near Warsaw.<sup>5</sup> From the beginning of his priestly ministry, first in Włocławek, then Wrocław, Licheń, Przedecz, Kozłówka, Żułów and Laski, he performed many responsible functions, leaving behind a trace of his exceptional steadfastness and presence. He started his episcopal ministry in the Lublin Cathedral. It was there that, on May 26, 1946, Rev. Stefan Wyszyński, PhD, made his first public appearance as the Bishop of Lublin, addressing his diocese as “my beloved children.” Wyszyński was only 45 years old at the time and already a well-known figure in Lublin. This was due to the fact that here in the years 1925-1929 he studied at the Faculty of Law of the Catholic University of Lublin, graduating with a PhD thesis on “Prawa rodziny, Kościoła i państwa do szkoły” [“The Rights of the Family, Church and State to School”]. During his studies, he was active in the Catholic Academic Youth Association “Odrodzenie” [“Rebirth”] and “Bratnia Pomoc” [“Brotherly Help”]. He also hid in the Lublin region during the German occupation in the Second World War. Wyszyński’s pastoral ministry as the Bishop of Lublin lasted only two years and eight months. Recalling this fact, although it is not widely known in Poland and even in Lublin itself, as a side note, I believe it should be a source of pride for the residents of Lublin and a great inspiration.<sup>6</sup>

Taking up the aspect of a life of prayer, which this exceptional and providential priest had at his disposal at the moment when he was condemned to confinement and loneliness, I put forward the thesis that Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, in his own way, from the very beginning of his pastoral, theological, social and journalistic work, highly valued his everyday prayer life with its subjectivity in man and reference to God. The value of prayer as an ordinary way of living the Christian

<sup>5</sup> J. Baszkiewicz. *Powstańczy kapelan Armii Krajowej*, in: *Czas nigdy go nie oddali. Wspomnienia o Stefanie kardynale Wyszyńskim*, ed. A. Rastawicka, B. Piasecki, Kraków 2011, pp. 74-76.

<sup>6</sup> A. Rynio. *Biskup Stefan Wyszyński jako ordynariusz diecezji lubelskiej i Wielki Kanclerz Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego*, in: *Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński. Droga życia i postugi pasterskiej*, ed. R. Czekalski, Warszawa 2021, pp. 157-186.

life was passed on to him by his closest family and the eminent priests he met along his life path.

From the beginning of his priestly ministry, he defended the Church, Poland's traditions and its national identity. In doing so, he set new horizons for their development and was a reliable guide. He already had a well-established priestly, ecclesial and social formation, which was revealed in his profound vision of the Church, nation and state. By his attitude, Rev. Wyszyński taught how to take responsibility for one's social, family and professional life thanks to his experience of personal prayer and ministry among workers in Włocławek or Lublin. He encouraged verifying the present intellectual and economic trends and evaluating them morally using the Christian system of values.

Always, even before his arrest on September 25, 1953, or after his unjust imprisonment in Rywałd, Stoczek Warmiński, Prudnik and Komańcza – his fourth place of confinement, where he remained until October 28, 1956 – it was his aim that people should change and love each other socially. He taught that those who do not love lose in life, and that “only eagles glide over the crests.” Wyszyński showed, especially to the young, how to gain a moral takeoff, to love one's enemies, to learn to overcome oneself, to gain fortitude in faith and the Christian life. At every stage of his ministry, whether as an editor and professor, and later as the Bishop of Lublin or the Primate of Poland, without bowing to circumstances and boldly calling things by their true name, he warned against godless atheism, individualism, collectivism and abuses by civil authorities. He sought the moral renewal of the entire nation through the proper education of young people and the renewal of human consciences.<sup>7</sup> He emphasised religious and moral order in the family, social and national life. A visible sign of respecting this order was freedom, despite the growing enslavement, and responsibility in the personal and social dimensions that required courage.

## Main Fields of His Pastoral Work

The life of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland, allows us to see him not only as a priest, but also as a theologian, social activist, publicist, pastor and teacher of the Church, the Great Chancellor of the Catholic University of Lublin and the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw, educator of the nation, guardian of justice, defender of

<sup>7</sup> A. Rynio. *Wychowanie młodzieży w nauczaniu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, Lublin 2001; *ibid.*, *Idea narodu i odpowiedzialności za naród w kazaniach milenijnych Czciwego Sługi Bożego Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, Lublin 2020.

man, marriage and the family, promoter of patriotism and Christian tradition, a person enjoying authority and, finally, a blessed and even saint. Considering the pastoral work of Rev. Stefan Wyszyński, we can distinguish several periods: the Włocławek period, the Lublin period, the Gniezno-Warsaw period, the period of imprisonment, the period of the Second Vatican Council and the conciliar liturgical renewal in Poland, and the period of pastoral ministry to the Western Territories and the Latin Rite Catholic Church in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine between 1949 and 1981.

Keeping in mind the subject and nature of this publication, this part of the paper is limited to a brief approximation of the fruits of the Primate's planning of pastoral work from the very difficult and painful time of his confinement.<sup>8</sup>

On May 16, 1956, at the request of the General of the Pauline Fathers, Fr. Alojzy Wrzalik and the Prior of Jasna Góra, Fr. Jerzy Tomziński, supported by the insistence of Maria Okońska, he edited the text of the Jasna Góra Vows of the Nation in Komańcza. They were arranged according to the model of the (unfulfilled) vows taken by King John Casimir in the Lviv Cathedral on April 1, 1656. The Primate wanted Poles to "incorporate in their minds, wills and hearts the content of the vows and that they become a programme of their personal, family and social life." The vows reached Jasna Góra on May 22 thanks to Janina Michalska. Invitations to the Feast of Our Lady of Częstochowa were sent out from the Jasna Góra Monastery to all parishes in Poland. The Primate's vows were read aloud on August 26, 1956, at Jasna Góra, in front of the miraculous image of Our Lady of Częstochowa, which had been raised high by the President of the Polish Episcopal Conference, Bishop Michał Klepacz, in the presence of about a million faithful and more than a thousand priests. An armchair was prepared for the Primate, which was left vacant, and a bouquet of red and white roses was placed on it. Meanwhile, Cardinal Wyszyński, in Komańcza, after celebrating Holy Mass in front of the image of Our Lady of Jasna Góra, aware that a great event was taking place, read out the act of vows. Based on what happened at Jasna Góra, the idea of the Great Novena of the Millennium and the programme of the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland were born in the heart of the Primate. From

<sup>8</sup> *Zapiski więziennicze* [Notes written in prison], which are a testimony to his struggles, are evidence of how difficult this period was for him. In addition to his daily chronicle, they also contain such texts as a spiritual notebook, letters, memorials to the authorities and extensive statements that are a personal reflection on his experience of imprisonment and the situation of the Church in Poland.

August 15-29, 1956, while still in Komańcza, he drew up a plan for the nation's spiritual preparation for the Jubilee of the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland, known as the Great Novena.

The text of the Jasna Góra Vows set out the main programme of the Great Novena before the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland, whose fruits were to be “a new man [...] born of God by the grace of Holy Baptism.”<sup>9</sup> The content of the Jasna Góra Vows was meditated on during the nine years of the Great Novena (1957-1966) and prepared the faithful for the celebrations of the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland in 1966.<sup>10</sup>

The motto of the first year of the Great Novena (1957) referred to the first invocation of the vows: “Fidelity to God, the Cross, the Gospel, the Church and its Pastors.” The second year of the Great Novena (1958), referring to the content of the first year, focused on sanctifying grace, thus encouraging the nation – following the precepts of faith – to regain a new life in Christ. The following third year of the Great Novena (1959) referred to the value of life of soul and body, which is a gift of God and the light of people. The motto of the fourth year of the Great Novena (1960) was “Marriage – a Great Sacrament in the Church.” When outlining the foundations of the theology of marriage and family, the Primate emphasised the importance of sacramental grace. The fifth year of the Great Novena (1961), celebrated under the motto “The Family is Strong with God,” remained in the same vein. The Primate called for the formation of the Catholic family on the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

The sixth year of the Great Novena (1962) was celebrated under the motto “Youth Faithful to Christ.” It was a year of Christian education under the patronage of the Mother of Christ, with the patron saint of young people St. Stanislaus Kostka as a model of fidelity. The next year (1963) focused on social justice, love, and deepening responsibility for the Church and the homeland by caring for the common good through honest work, which, according to the Primate, could become a mystical experience.

In the eighth year of the Great Novena (1964), celebrated under the motto “New Man in Christ,” the centre of the Church's efforts was the fight against national defects and cultivating the Christian

<sup>9</sup> S. Wyszyński. *Jasnogórskie Śluby Narodu Polskiego*, Komańcza 1956, in: *Wielka Nowenna Tysiąclecia*, Paryż 1962, pp. 17-20.

<sup>10</sup> M. Kowalczyk. *Prymasa Tysiąclecia program Wielkiej Nowenny (1957-1966) w perspektywie teologicznej po odzyskaniu wolności (1989)*, in: *Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński. Droga życia i postugi pasterskiej*, ed. R. Czekalski, Warszawa 2021, pp. 87-102.

virtues. That year's patron was St. John Cantius – a professor at the Jagiellonian University.

The last year of the Great Novena (1965), celebrated under the protection of the Mother of God, the Mother of the Universal Church and the Queen of Poland, was associated with the crowning of the first millennium of Catholic Poland as Christ's and Marian. The motto "Through Mary to Jesus, desiring to cross the second millennium of Christianity with Her and expecting to reach the fullness of Christ through this path" (Pastoral epistles) was invoked at that time.<sup>11</sup>

An analysis of the genesis of the renewed Jasna Góra Vows and the elaboration of the programme of the Great Novena, which was in fact the first integral all-Polish programme aimed at reviving all areas of pastoral ministry on a national scale, shows how intensely and creatively the Primate was experiencing his time of forced confinement. At this point, in the context of the subject of the paper, it is also worth noting what happened at the beginning of his confinement. Indeed, while still in Rywałd, the Primate of Poland set a daily schedule, which he did not change until the end of his stay in confinement.<sup>12</sup> This schedule shows how much time each day he devoted to various forms of prayer.

Undoubtedly, the fruit of the confinement and persecution that accompanied the Primate throughout all the stages of his priestly path and pastoral ministry is that Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński became an outstanding leader of the Church and, at the same time, a great Pole and statesman who went down in history as one of the most eminent personalities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> Had he not been there, who knows what the fate of the Diocese of Lublin and the whole Church in Poland would have turned out to be. Who knows what would have been the fate of the Catholic University of Lublin, the Academy of Catholic Theology, the Church in the Western and Northern Territories and the fate of the Eastern Church.

Were it not for the Primate and his heroic faith and persistent prayer, there would most likely have been no renewal of the Jasna Góra Vows of the Nation, nor would there have been the nine-year-long pastoral programme of moral renewal in the form of the Great Novena of the Millennium, the Visitation of dioceses and parishes by a copy of the Jasna Góra painting. There would not have been the Millennium

<sup>11</sup> *Listy pasterskie Episkopatu Polski 1945-1974*, Paryż 1975.

<sup>12</sup> S. Wyszyński. *Pro memoria*, vol. 3:1953-1956, ed. I. Czarciańska, A. Gałka, Warszawa 2018, 38, pp. 147-148.

<sup>13</sup> Z.J. Kijas, *Wyszyński. 40 spojrzeń*, Kraków 2021, pp. 88-89.



celebrations of the Baptism of Poland so important for our national identity, the Social Crusade of Love, the Movement of the Helpers of the Mother of the Church, the preparation for the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jasna Góra, the care for pastoral ministry in Marian sanctuaries and the support for the pilgrimage movement. No efforts would have been undertaken to proclaim Mary as the Mother of the Church and to offer her the world during the Second Vatican Council or to give a full answer to the Message of Fatima. It is also difficult to foresee the course of the social changes in Poland that led to the fall of atheistic totalitarianism and Cardinal Karol Wojtyła would quite possibly have not become the See of Peter.

## Prayer in the Life of the Blessed Primate. Its Genesis, Functions and Forms

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By analysing biographical data in the context of the role of prayer in the life of Stefan Wyszyński, understood as a conversation with God in which a man discovers his authentic dignity, vocation, tasks and obligations, one's sense of suffering, illness or adversity, it can be concluded that he treated prayer as an essential element of everyday life, without which it would be difficult to live a good day, not to mention life with all its drama.

Prayer seen through the prism of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński's life and pastoral activity can be considered in the context of man's vocation to holiness and his dialogue and union with God, which are both its means and manifestation. It follows from his teaching that man can establish prayerful contact with God because he has been enabled to do so by the gift of grace. Therefore, prayer appears to be a natural need in the normal life of the baptised. It is related to the actual situation a person experiences. On the one hand, the state of grace allows man to find himself before God in closeness, friendship, and family intimacy; on the other hand, the practice of prayer allows one to grow in grace.

The essence of prayer in this case is dialogue with God the Father through Christ's mediation by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is a consequence of the Trinitarian nature of divine childhood made real through Christ's mediation and the Holy Spirit's active presence in people's hearts. The Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is mainly the addressee of prayer, but Mary, the saints, angels or the souls of those suffering in purgatory are also frequent addressees. The subjects of prayer are both individual believers and communities (family, parish, professional, religious, priestly, seminary, institutional

and other) to whom the Primate addresses his message expressed in various forms. These include Pastoral Letters, appeals, conferences, incentives, exhortations, messages, speeches, occasional lectures and sermons.

Primate Wyszyński derives the qualities of prayer from the nature of man's relationship with God. These include, among others, divine childhood, friendship, openness to God's will, humility (understood as walking in truth), trust and perseverance. Concerning forms of prayer, in the teaching of Cardinal Wyszyński, especially in his Pastoral Letters, we can readily find the recommended forms of adoration, petition, propitiation and thanksgiving. Concerning types of prayer, it is worth noting that prayer in its essence is one, yet its division into forms, types and degrees does not result from theological motives, but from formative ones and the pursuit of a certain methodological system. Analysing in detail the texts of the Primate's Letters, speeches or conferences of a formative character, we can distinguish liturgical prayer (e.g., the Eucharist or the Liturgy of the Hours), personal prayer, a life of prayer, mental prayer, oral prayer or contemplative prayer. Keeping practical aspects in mind, the Primate's teaching does not lack reflections on the conditions, attitudes, methods, difficulties or effectiveness of prayer.

The limited framework of this publication does not allow for a more detailed analysis of the indicated issues; therefore, we will take up in more detail some issues related to the analysed topic. One such issue will be the apostolate of prayer.

Wyszyński taught that "there is a duty to apostolate with prayer for all the beaten and tormented children of the Church. There is also a need to be sensitive to the 'tares,' meaning human moral misery, human anguish, the anguish of the Church in her poorest, most unhappy children."<sup>14</sup> The Primate extended this duty to all those rejected and in need, not excluding the enemies of the Church and those who were personally its abusers. He, following the example of St. Paul the Apostle, repeatedly set an example of supplicatory prayer for those who are going to perdition and need to be saved. Wyszyński was convinced that "one must finally open to others the granaries of one's soul and the wardrobes full of the garments of grace, eaten up by moths."<sup>15</sup>

Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński, through his practice of continual prayer, believed in its power and encouraged others to persevere in a prayerful state (meaning to be in a state of grace and internally uphold God's

<sup>14</sup> S. Wyszyński. *Dzieła zebrane*, vol. V, 1959, Warszawa 2006, p. 38.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

sovereignty). He was a man of great works, and, one can say, as he breathed working, so he breathed prayers, regardless of what was happening around him. Arguing that prayer was also work for the Primate, the above cited Fr. Zdzisław J. Kijas writes:

Live, constant, sometimes very ordinary prayer, often a traditional rosary prayer, was very important and in fact most important for Wyszyński. Prayer for him was the source of his spiritual life, but also an inexhaustible source of hope and trust, which he needed very much, considering the office he held and the times in which he was given to live. Prayer was also a source of his joy, a strength for friendship, a source of grace for forgiveness.<sup>16</sup>

An example of such a prayer can be the one composed by Wyszyński during his internment in Stoczek Warmiński (his second place of forced confinement). It was recorded in “Zapiski więzienne” [Notes Written in Prison] and dated January 18, 1954. This is a short but very moving example of agreeing with God’s will, even if it involves suffering and imprisonment, and in the difficult situation the Primate found himself, he saw a manifestation of God’s goodness and love.

All Your ways are mercy and truth! Suffering is diluted in the experience of love. Punishment ceases to be retaliation, because it is a medicine administered with fatherly gentleness. Sadness that torments the soul becomes the ploughing of fallow ground for new seed. Loneliness becomes the act of gazing at You more closely. The malice of men is an education in silence and humility. Separation from one’s work brings an increase in one’s diligence and dedication. The prison cell reveals the truth: we have no permanent dwelling here. Let no one, then, think ill of You, Father; let no one assault You with accusations of severity – for You are good, for Your mercy is everlasting.<sup>17</sup>

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński had a great devotion to God the Father, exemplified by his meditations on the Lord’s Prayer in the publication “The Our Father.”<sup>18</sup> He was devoted to the Mother of God, who never failed him, and to the saints and blessed of the Church in Poland and the Universal Church. The numerous *Pastoral Letters of the Primate of Poland* bear clear testimony to this.<sup>19</sup> Many prayers, testimonies and acts of personal devotion to Our Lady, in whom he trusted

<sup>16</sup> Z.J. Kijas, *Wyszyński. Narodziny nowego człowieka*. Warszawa 2021, p. 135.

<sup>17</sup> S. Wyszyński. *Zapiski więzienne*. Warszawa 1995, p. 48.

<sup>18</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Ojciec nasz*, Poznań 2020.

<sup>19</sup> *Listy Pasterskie Prymasa Polski 1946-1974*, Paris 1975, 20-29; 68-70; 123-124; 133-135; 183-184; 185-186; 202-206; 215-216; 311; 349-351; 375; 382-388; 412-413; 442-443; 491-492; 527-528; 535- 536; 553-557; 599; 630-631; 661-662.

unconditionally, desiring to be Her voluntary slave, have also been preserved.

An eloquent example of individual prayer is the Act of Personal Devotion to the Mother of God composed at Stoczek Warmiński on December 8, 1953, for which the Primate prepared himself by reading the *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary* by Louis-Marie Grignon De Montfort.<sup>20</sup>

With this act, Cardinal Wyszyński gave himself unconditionally as a slave of Mary's love in order to become through Her a servant and slave of Christ.

His relationship with Mary is that of a child to his Mother and a servant to his Lady. At the same time, the ultimate goal of this devotion is the glory of the Holy Trinity. This act in a special way shows the content of the main maxim of the Primate of the Millennium: *Soli Deo – per Mariam!* He lived this maxim himself and wanted the sheep entrusted to his pastoral care, i.e., the entire Polish nation, to follow it.<sup>21</sup>

In the Primate's teaching, we find elements of a correct understanding of Mary's role in the history of salvation and spirituality. By God's decree, Mary is the Mother of God, the Mother of the Redeemer, the noble companion and humble servant of the Lord. She cooperates in a special way with the work of the Saviour by becoming Mother in the order of grace from the moment of consent to the incarnation to the fulfilment of the salvation of all the elect. Interceding for people, She intercedes for them with the gift of eternal salvation by caring for them as brothers of Her Son. The Primate calls Her the Mother of the Son of God, the Advocate, the Helper, the Mediatrix of all graces, the Immaculate, the Mother of God of Częstochowa, Our Lady of Jasna Góra and the Queen of Poland, the Royal Daughter, the Bride of the Holy Spirit, the Mother of the Church and the Virgin seeking God's will in everything. Yet, these are by no means all the titles, names and designations given by him to the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>22</sup>

However, the privileged prayer of the Primate of the Millennium was the rosary. This is clearly confirmed in his Pastoral Letter *On the Daily Recitation of the Holy Rosary*, written in Lublin on August 15, 1947. In this Letter, the Bishop of Lublin, following the instructions of the late Primate August Hlond, encouraged "Every Pole [to] ... recite

<sup>20</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Wszystko postawiłem na Maryję*, Paryż 1980, p. 74.

<sup>21</sup> G. Bartosik. *Maryjność kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*. in: *Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński. Droga życia i posługi pasterskiej*, pod red. ks. R. Czekalskiego, Warszawa 2021, p. 589-590.

<sup>22</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Wszystko postawiłem na Maryję*.

the rosary daily,”<sup>23</sup> explaining why in difficult post-war times special trust should be placed in the Holy Rosary. By calling it “a humble and effective remedy for the most dangerous times,” he refers to the long tradition of praying the rosary in the Church, which was encouraged by such popes as Leo XIII and Pius XI.<sup>24</sup> Calling the rosary “the summit of simple prayer and at the same time the summit of theological depth,”<sup>25</sup> out of the needs of his heart and to adore the Blessed Virgin Mary, Wyszyński prayed the rosary daily, and during his imprisonment even more often.

He wrote and spoke extensively and beautifully about this form of conversation with God and contemplation of the extraordinary mysteries of Christianity that rosary prayer brings about. He constantly encouraged it to become the property of all the faithful.<sup>26</sup>

Encouraging the systematic recitation of the Rosary, he taught:

Theology of  
Spirituality

The Rosary is the prayer of the little ones and the humble but also the prayer of the loftiest spirits in the Church; it is the prayer of theologians, doctors, thinkers and saints. It is undoubtedly a Marian prayer, but at the same time it is a most Christ-like, Christocentric prayer centred on Christ. Every Hail Mary reminds us of Mary's presence in the mystery of Christ and the Church, just as each penetrates into the wonderful mystery of the presence of the Child of God under Mary's heart. While our thoughts, feelings and words greet Mary, they nevertheless turn towards her Son, rejoicing in Jesus and reflecting on his life. (...) All of us together constitute a “communion of saints” in which Christ is always present and acting, and the Mother co-present and cooperating with Him. Mary always leads us to her Son.<sup>27</sup>

He argued that the rosary is also a summary of the history of every Christian family:

Every family – like the life of Jesus and Mary – also has its sorrowful mysteries. Christ lived them, Mary lived them, and so do we. They are the inseparable fate of every human being. We have more and more sorrowful events. They may worry us at times, but when we meditate on the sorrowful experiences of Jesus and Mary, we acquire a special peace of mind and learn how to live through difficult moments with the calmness of the task at hand. Yet, it is not only sorrows that are

<sup>23</sup> *Listy Pastorskie Prymasa Polski*, 68.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 69.

<sup>26</sup> E. Boniewicz. *Weźmy do ręki różaniec*, <https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/P/PR/rozaniec.html> (accessed:20.07.2023).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

the fate of every family's life. Glory, great hopes and expectations are also ours. Even though we live through the sorrowful mysteries, we know that the resurrection will come, the way to heaven will come, the Comforter Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude, piety and fear of God will come. The moment will come when, following Jesus and His Mother, we will find ourselves before the throne of God and the joy of God's friends will be our joy.<sup>28</sup>

He encouraged others to persistently recite the Rosary with the following words:

When today we find ourselves unable to cope with various adversities, one thing remains: to have the rosary beads in our pocket and to pray for those who cause us so much anguish in our Homeland. Let us pray for these people. Cursing will not help. Repeating various rumours or political jokes to ourselves will not help either. Yet, prayer can help. It can enlighten minds and improve the human will. In your difficult life, the rosary will support you. Let us grow accustomed to the rosary so that we recite it constantly, return to it easily, and devote all our free moments to it. (...) Home bustle with many activities, the journey to work, the field, school or the office, patiently walking behind the plough or the harrow, the waiting at bus stops, in waiting rooms at public offices, the long hours in the car, in the railway wagon, the sleepless nights. All this can be sanctified, enriched, and made more pleasant by praying the rosary. Many voluntary mortifications and sacrifices should be combined with it in the spirit of shrift and expiation.<sup>29</sup>

In arguing in favour of praying the rosary, Cardinal S. Wyszyński also gave an example from his childhood:

I will never forget my childhood years, when, in the family home, every evening ended with the common recitation of a part of the Holy Rosary. This was done not only in October, but all year round. Perhaps for us, children, it was sometimes difficult, perhaps we wanted to go to sleep, but our parents made sure that the day ended with the rosary.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to these mentioned forms of prayer, the daily prayer of the breviary (Liturgy of the Hours), which is so rich in content, mental prayer, meditation and careful celebration of the Eucharist are also worth mentioning in one's person prayer life. Among the community prayers, noteworthy are the celebrations during the liturgical year,

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>30</sup> S. Wyszyński, *Mówcie Różaniec!... Instytut Prymasowski. Podczas Nabożeństwa różańcowego w parafii św. Teresy, Włochy 1 października*, <http://wyszynskiprymas.pl/mowcie-rozaniec> (accessed: 24.07.2023).

presenting the history of salvation taking place here and now, the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist prepared under the applicable pastoral programme and the celebration of important Church and national anniversaries or various types of uniquely Polish Church services. This includes the Hours of the Blessed Virgin, Stations of the Cross, May Marian devotions, June devotions to the Heart of Jesus, Rosary, First Saturday of the Month for Mary, Rorate Mass, the Bright Mount Appeal, the Angelus, vespers and the Bitter Lamentations. The Primate of Poland desired to win all people so that they support the Church through the Mother of Christ. He appealed to all the baptised to take responsibility for the holy Church, its future growth, to protect the Homeland and pray for the faith of our brothers.<sup>31</sup>

## Conclusions

The mentioned forms and functions of prayer, which can be considered in the individual and community dimensions, in no way exhaust all the richness that we find in the life and pastoral work of the Blessed Rev. Cardinal S. Wyszyński. After all, not all types, forms, and even more so functions of prayers resulting from Marian theology and theology of earthly realities practised by the Primate of the Millennium have been properly articulated. However, a detailed discussion exceeds the accepted framework of this publication, which is intended to be introductory.

Finally, it is worth noting that the genesis of this attitude to prayer is to be found in the experiences of the family home, in seminary and non-seminary religious formation, in the possessed image of God and in such and not another understanding of man and his nature. The way he understood and lived his vocation and mission, the people he met and the experiences he had, were also not without influence. Worth pointing out here is the prayerful attitude of his family, the liturgical attitude of Rev. Władysław Korniłowicz, the attitudes of the saints and the blessed, or the prayerful attitudes of the women who formed him and whom he formed. The works of the great masters of spirituality, the daily liturgy of the breviary, the manner in which the daily Eucharist was celebrated and the valuable literature he systematically read throughout his life were also important. However, he read the most in prison. There, as he confesses, he read, among other things, six volumes of the collected works by Cyprian Kamil Norwid, *Story of a Soul* by St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the *Summa Theologica* by St. Thomas

<sup>31</sup> *Listy Pasterskie Prymasa Polski oraz Episkopatu 1975-1981*, Paris 1988, p. 17.

Aquinas, the works by St. John of the Cross, the writings of the Fathers of the Church, books by Henri Daniel-Rops, several books by Henryk Sienkiewicz, *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy, *Dzieje Pawła z Tarsu [Acts of Paul of Tarsus]* by Eugeniusz Dąbrowski, and many others.<sup>32</sup> Good reading, both in prison and after leaving it, was a great comfort to him and allowed him to overcome his painful solitude and discover the value of true loneliness.<sup>33</sup> However, for such celebrated prayer, both in the individual and community dimensions, proper preparation is needed, involving various formation and educating environments, as well as personal participation and significant persons. What is needed is knowledge of the truth about the nature and destiny of man, faith in God, which is faith in Christ, following Him, belonging to the Chosen People and a readiness to give one's life for the work of someone else, as we saw in the life and work of Primate Wyszyński.

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<sup>32</sup> Z. Kijas, *Wyszyński. Narodziny nowego człowieka*, 41; p. 111.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem.



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