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Pastoral Letter of BISHOP J. F. GAWLINA

JOSEPH

BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND FAVOUR OF THE APOSTOLIC SEE TITULAR BISHOP OF MARIAMME, MILITARY BISHOP FOR THE POLISH FORCES AND ORDINARY OF THE POLISH REFUGEES FROM RUSSIA EXTENDS TO THE POLISH FORCES AND TO THE REFUGEES UNDER HIS JURISDICTION, SALUTATIONS AND BLESSINGS IN THE LORD.

Dearest Brothers and Sisters in Christ :

In this so tragic hour for our nation, with a world mindful of the sorrowful plight of our country, your Bishop, alone possessing liberty to speak and jurisdiction, cannot turn a deaf ear to your plea as to whether " we shall be erased from the book of life ? "

On this Feast of Christ the King for Whom we carry the sword our hearts are lifted to the eternal heights ; and shortly, All Souls Day will bring to mind our dead and those who fell on the battlefield, enlivening our faith in the communion of saints and in the Mercy of God.

As the anniversary of our independence draws nigh, let us unite ourselves more closely in thought and prayer.

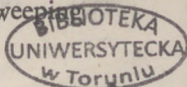
I.

Deeper than ever is the mourning that veils our Nation because Warsaw fell, and although fanfares announce to a world her glory, the sad roll of drums beats at our hearts, and our souls turn to God for consolation. Again we repeat the " De Profundis ", again we partake of " Poland's bitter bread. "

With the prophet weeping over the ruins of Jerusalem we pour out our complaints before God : our Capital, " weeping

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she hath wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. There is none to comfort her among all them that were dear to her." (1)

"Hear I pray you, all ye people, and see my sorrow: my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity. I called for my friends, but they deceived me." (2)

"Servants have ruled over us: there was none to redeem us out of their hand." (3)

"See, O Lord, and consider, for I am become vile." (4)

In ruins lies the Royal Palace — shattered is the monument of Sigismund, a symbol of the Cross and Sword — razed to the ground is the Cathedral of St. John in which the great Pope Pius XI was consecrated Bishop.

"The stones of the sanctuary are scattered in the top of every street." (5)

Who among us does not tremble over the fate of our loved ones that might be numbered among the 200,000 victims?

Why is it, my native land, that you must always be a battlefield, the victim of constant strife, with no one come to help you? Your best sons mowed down by an enemy's scythe fall as withered flowers from your crowning wreath. Too late does the world call to them: "Gloria victis."

Why is it that the sad pages of your history repeat themselves and only the aggressors change their roles? Asia and Germany, as in the past play with you the selfsame game. Seven hundred years ago Mongolian Asia marched against you — you were abandoned on the battlefield of Lignica — and then Germany merely stood by to watch your agony. Today, while you fight Germany, Asia stands by. "When her people fell into the enemy's hand and there was no helper, the enemies have seen her and have mocked at her sabbaths," (6) mocked at her devastation.

Thus perished the knight of Christian civilization; yet, before he breathed his last he planted the banner deep into the ground and said: "It matters not, that I perish, let my banner at least wave victoriously!" That banner emblazoned with the unstained feathers of the White Eagle above which dominates

(1) Lm. 1, 2.
(2) *ibid.* 1, 18, 19.
(3) *ibid.* V, 8.
(4) *ibid.* 1, 11.
(5) *ibid.* IV, 1.
(6) *ibid.* 1, 7.

the Holy Cross is fittingly the emblem of Christ the King, and remains unstained except with the knight's own blood.

From the immense tomb that is our Capital the hand of her defender stretches forth in an oath: "Unto death, for the rights, for the temple, for the city, for the nation and its citizens." (7) Oh knight, you have fought for Christian principles without ostentation because your mother engraved them deeply in your heart in childhood.

"Let us fight for sublime ideals" was the order of the Commanding General defending the Capital. "And we fight for the liberation of Poland and of all the Nations which share her fate, for the re-establishment of the universal order in a post-war Europe, and for the universal security of her citizens. We have fought for the reconstruction of the world."

II.

"We are deeply grieved, O Lord, so grieved as was Martha, when she said to the Master after the death of her brother: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." (8)

"Yes, indeed, the Lord was with our brothers during the battle and at their death. The Lord was amidst that struggling, suffering and triumphant throng. But was the Lord heard in all the places where their destiny was being decided?

The flames of perishing Warsaw glaringly illuminated contemporary civilization. It is certain that compassion cannot be expected from "princes of the enemies", saying: "there is no one beside us." (9) Where pride reigns there is no place for Christ. Therefore, we fight to crush its head, so that in place of a disfigured and a dishonoured cross, — the true Cross, the ensign of love and justice, might be raised.

For this struggle the world does not begrudge us praise. From all sides we hear words of acknowledgement that there was no traitor nor any double-dealing in our nation.

But let not the world take it for wrong, that we express our anxiety — just as the defenders of Warsaw expressed theirs before her fall. Oppressive is the present moral atmosphere. Our problem has already become a problem of conscience.

Why is it, that for the past two years so little is being said

(7) II Mach. XIII, 14.
(8) John XI, 21.
(9) Eccles. XXXVI, 12.

about "christian principles" so loudly promulgated at the outset of this war? We are fighting on, and we will fight "until we breathe our last," just as we have sworn. We want to continue believing that a given word, that honour, the defending of the weak and the innocent have not ceased to be the ideals of knighthood. And yet, we repeat with St. Athanasius that "he who could have protected his fellow-man from harm and failed to do so, is as culpable as the injurer himself." With this conviction our men fought on, even after the signing of the armistice in France, forming a bulwark between the attacking enemy and the fleeing French women and children.

"Man redeemed by Christ can never be a slave of a man" — such is one of the ideals of Christian civilization. ⁽¹⁰⁾

"For our liberty and for yours" — long have we Poles sung.

In the struggle for the rebirth of the world our nation has not only manifested intellect but also will. It is true, that the intellect alone can perceive an approaching danger, but without a decision of the will it remains indifferent and is even ready to hold to the standards of moral and social order without fulfilling its claims.

Animated by moral and natural law, and by the thought of the inviolable dignity of human personality, we are fighting not only for Poland, we are also fighting for the right of existence and for the independence of all nations, great as well as small, powerful as well as weak. We are fighting, so that "the desire to exist on the part of one nation would not be synonymous with the passing of a death sentence on another." ⁽¹¹⁾

Anxiously, we await an international legal institution which will faithfully and loyally ascertain the fulfilment of agreements and pacts made without coercion.

It is not only the existence of an international machine that is most important to us, but it is that which puts it in motion and which stops it, for the construction of such a machine would only be a loss of time were it not based on the principles of Divine law.

The ultimate canons of law are moral canons. The existence of a "world brain trust" will not lead the world out of the abyss. The problem is at its base a problem of the will, a problem of morality and spirit.

(10) Lord Halifax.

(11) Allocutio Pii Papae XII, 24.XII. 1939.

It is not without reason that our Polish poet asserts that "spirits, which understand God's sublime thoughts and begin the construction accordingly, but because of the difficulty of the task withdraw from the Divine plan, are crushed under the ruins of the unfinished structure." ⁽¹²⁾

Perhaps, there is a confusion of tongues? Maybe we all do not have the same thing in mind when we say "freedom and independence," when we cry "justice and peace?"

Would it be just, that, notwithstanding the sacrifice of Warsaw and the fact that we stood up in defence of justice, our reward should be the giving up of half our country into bondage? There is not a voice in the world that would not admit that Poland suffered most and that she is still suffering. Is it fair, therefore, to expose again millions of Poles, in return for their generous shedding of blood, to a deportation from which more than a million of our fellow countrymen have not yet returned?

Can it be that the moral capital of Europe, inherited from Christianity, is already exhausted and that a spiritual blood transfusion is interrupted?

Away with such a thought!

We do not believe, because we do not want to believe, that Rejtan be called a traitor, and his opponents patriots.

Tomorrow's peace — what will it bring us? O, that we would not have to recall the words of the Lord uttered by Jeremiah, the Prophet: "They healed the wounds of my people disgracefully, saying: peace, peace. And there was no peace." ⁽¹³⁾ Our programme of peace and our most ardent wish is "opus iustitiae pax" — the work of justice is peace. ⁽¹⁴⁾

III.

To You, we turn, Most Holy Father, to You Who have chosen those prophetic words as your motto. To You, Most Holy Father, through Whom our Redeemer governs His Mystical Body, our Polish soldiers have come. From the bloody battlefields, these homeless warriors have hurried to the home of their Father, so that they might hear with tears of gratitude words from the Highest moral Authority assuring them that "although your land is red with blood your rights are so certain, that

(12) Juliusz Slowacki: "Do Emigracji."

(13) Jer. VI, 14-15.

(14) Is. XXXII, 17.

We firmly hope that all nations will be conscious of their debt to Poland, which is the theatre and too often the object of their conflicts. Whoever possesses in his heart but a spark of real human and Christian feeling will endeavour to help Poland regain all that is due to her, in accordance with the principles of justice and an honest peace.”⁽¹⁵⁾

Daily the Representative of Christ on earth, during His audiences singled out these “men without a country,” fighting for justice. When “tribulation was near and there was none to help”⁽¹⁶⁾ when the fate of our Capital was at stake, the Polish soldier hastened to the “Capital of Fraternal Love”⁽¹⁷⁾ and from the lips of our loving Shepherd whose “heart bled over the ruins of Warsaw, our Capital, within whose walls the most painful, and at the same time the most heroic tragedy in the history of our nation took place,”⁽¹⁸⁾ he heard words of fatherly comfort, and the Voice of the Guardian of Truth calling all nations to “noble thoughts of justice which would respect our rights.”⁽¹⁹⁾

Following the strong voice of His Holiness came declarations from the Bishops of Scotland, whose golden hearts every Polish soldier admires, as well as from the American Bishops, who have always assisted us “in the Holy Ghost”, in “charity unfeigned.”⁽²⁰⁾ In their train, followed words from Their Eminences, the Cardinals Primates of Canada and of Ireland, as well as from the Archbishop of Westminster, in whose diocese Polish blood mingled with that of the English in a common chalice of struggle and suffering.

The Polish people will, with golden letters engrave in their hearts the words of encouragement and comfort that came from the Bishops of the universal Church, at a time when “iniquity hath abounded and the charity of many grown cold.”⁽²¹⁾

With our hearts full of filial gratitude we thank His Holiness, Who “governs the great and glorious Body of Christ.”⁽²²⁾ We also warmly thank the Cardinals and Bishops, for their

(15) Allocutio Pii Papae XII, 26.VII. 1944.

(16) Ps. XXI, 12.

(17) St. Ignatius Antioch.

(18) Allocutio Pii Papae XII, 15.IX.1944.

(19) *ibid.*

(20) II Cor. VI, 6.

(21) Matt. XXIV, 12.

(22) Iren. Adv. Haer. LV, 331.

testimony to the great truth that “if one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it.”⁽²³⁾

Only future generations will fully appreciate the great and comforting strength our Nation had drawn from the heart of our Supreme Pontiff and the Bishops remaining in union with Him.

Today, while turning over the pages of all the statements made by the Holy Father, and published from the outbreak of the war — the simplest soldier comes to the conclusion that there would be no spiritual “interregnum” if the nations would put into practice the counsels of Him, who is not only “Pastor Angelicus” but also the “Pontifex Maximus,” Who builds bridges of charity and justice between conflicting tribes.

IV.

We would not be full Catholics if we would think only of Poland, notwithstanding the fact that we love her dearly. For, although we shall always defend our national traits and traditions both conscientiously and relentlessly as a sacred heritage,⁽²⁴⁾ none the less we do feel ourselves to be an organic part of that universal and huge family of Nations for which the establishing of an new order is possible only if based on human law and Divine Revelation. Otherwise the world shall return to what “exteriorly seemed organized, in reality, however, was nothing but confusion and chaos.”⁽²⁵⁾

Since apprehension overtakes the human heart at the thought that the final result of this war may not be more promising nor more permanent than that of the last war, and since humanity is again driven into the blind alley from which there is no way out — there remains but one alternative — “Upwards!”

“I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from where help shall come to me.”⁽²⁶⁾

To the heights of the Apostolic See, to the Authority superior to all national powers, to the Authority beyond the reach of any political control, to Him Who possesses the Divine mandate to teach all nations and guards the natural law common

(23) I Cor. VI, 6.

(24) Encyclical “Summi Pontificatus.”

(25) *ibid.*

(26) Ps. CXX, 1.

to all men, we direct our faith, and hope, for a future, in this our "hour of darkness."⁽²⁷⁾

"Watchman, what of the night?"— rises a voice from the abyss: "The watchman said: The morning cometh, also the night. If you seek, seek. Return, come."⁽²⁸⁾

Most probably, you yourselves are convinced that peace is indivisible, that the solidarity of the human race is an indispensable principle, that the laws of man depend upon the origin of law which lies beyond man; and finally, that it is not a State which is the definite origin of law, but that there is a natural law whose Creator and Lord is God. How can international law be effective if the different governments in keeping with their outlook upon the world and according to their own liking, created various conflicting conceptions of that law based upon their so called "Weltanschauung"? International law as such is moral law. While the tragedy of Warsaw was being discussed in the British House of Commons a very valuable discovery was made which confirmed the fact that not all nations used the same moral code.⁽²⁹⁾

Since the world so definitely rejects totalitarianism, let it at least bring matters to a logical conclusion. High-sounding phrases will not prevent the ruin of the ideals of brotherhood and social collaboration, because neither legends about the inborn goodness of man, nor fine speeches in which the nation is presented as the amoral provider of material wealth, nor individualistic, artistic, or gentlemanly ethics, will suffice.⁽³⁰⁾ A man who would be only a humanist, only a nationalist, only a biologist, will never be a reformer, but he must be a "full man", a man once again "religious" taking into consideration the entirety of his nature — body and soul⁽³¹⁾

Let humanity therefore, return to the basic principles of Christianity which it has lost; let it fortify itself with them as the only secure bulwark behind which human liberty can defend itself.

Since the Apostolic See is above any national interests, its universal mission was never, perhaps since the days of peace under Constantine the Great, so free from suspicions of the hostile nations as it is today. From His Papal Throne, the

(27) Luke XXII, 53.

(28) Is. XXI, 12.

(29) Lord Dunglass.

(30) Card. Newman: "Idea of a University."

(31) Dorothy Sayers: "Begin Here."

"Angelic Pastor" shortly after His election, delivered His first allocution on the subject of the unity of the human race, summoning all nations to "peace and to mutual brotherly love, understanding, and to a collaboration for the higher interests of the great human family."⁽³²⁾

And again, on the sad anniversary of the outbreak of the war, His Holiness made a strong appeal to all His "sons and daughters throughout the world, as well as to those, who although they do not belong to the Catholic Church, yet, unite themselves with us in this hour of irrevocable decisions, in order that all might consider the unusual gravity of the present moment and that all might reflect how loyalty to the heritage of christian civilization and its heroic defence against the godless and anti-christian tendencies is a principle, which cannot be sacrificed for any momentary profit, or any changeable combinations."⁽³³⁾

And yet, if the sons of the Holy Father permit themselves the freedom of ignoring His warnings and petitions proclaimed with such apostolic sincerity, then, they do it at a price which must be paid to God in due time.

We Poles, as a nation which "in prison more frequently, in stripes above measure"⁽³⁴⁾ have experienced on our own bodies the lashes of Nazism and Communism; as a nation which knows them as they actually are and not from any propaganda or posters, feel that it is our duty to cry out to the whole world: "Brethren, beware, a great danger is threatening you." It does not concern us only. Do understand us. The avalanche is rushing down with lightning speed. Not only the Encyclical "Mit brennender Sorge" but also "Divini Redemptoris" both signalize a tempest, which perhaps is even yet to come.

It is to you, however, our Dearest Brothers, military as well as civilians, that I extend my hearty gratitude for not having compromised with the wrong; for not having "given up the spirit." You have stood firmly by the chosen plan of action; as your Pastor I implore you: Let not the shedding of your blood be in vain.

Although events follow each other in capricious alternation forming incomprehensible zig-zags, curves and turns—it matters not! God can write straight even on crooked lines. . . . When human wisdom will be exhausted then the hour of God

(32) Allocutio "Dum gravissimum."

(33) Allocutio "Oggi al compiersi."

(34) II Cor. XI, 23.

will strike, — and this new “Undivine Comedy” will end with a cry: “Galilee vicisti.” Through the intercession of the Blessed Mother, Queen of Poland, our country shall arise “as if from a labyrinth, uncorrupted.”⁽³⁵⁾

“The Prayer of the Exiled” recited by many of you in the hopeless year of 1940 after the Russian deportation, still re-echoes in my soul. There you implore the Heavenly Queen not only to dry your tears and grant the resurrection of Poland, but you pray also for the “universal brotherhood of the confessors of the true faith, that they be brothers in spirit, thought and heart, as they are brothers in Christ — and for the reign of Christ’s Kingdom on earth for ever and ever.”⁽³⁶⁾

May Christ’s Kingdom come — a kingdom eternal and universal, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.⁽³⁷⁾ Oh, if only again “the earth was of one tongue and of the same speech.”⁽³⁸⁾

V.

“Regem cui omnia vivunt — venite adoremus” — Let us adore the King for Whom all live — so chants the universal Church during these doubly sad days of November. With this antiphon of All Souls Day our thoughts hasten to our fallen brothers. It is impossible, when we think of the victims of September’s campaign, of the French and the Norwegian campaigns, of the aviators perished in England and the sailors who rest at the bottom of the ocean, of those killed in the battle for Africa and the victims at Monte Cassino and Ancona, to forget those who died in Katyn, and in particular, the 200,000 that perished in our venerable Capital. As your Bishop, I weep with you over the death of so many of our brothers and sisters, as well as over our seven military Chaplains who were killed recently in Poland. My soul trembles at the thought, that in the meantime their number has already increased.

“I grieve for thee, my brother. Jonathan” — so cries the Polish soldier with the Prophet-soldier. “As the mother loves her only son so did I love thee.”⁽³⁹⁾ With the Captain-warrior of the Old Testament they seemed to say: “For it is

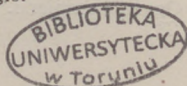
(35) Encyclical “Summi Pontificatus.”

(36) “Oratio deportatorum” 1940.

(37) Praefatio “Christi Regis.”

(38) Gen. XI, 1.

(39) II Sam. 1, 26.



better for us to die in battle, than to see evils of our nation and of the holies.”⁽⁴⁰⁾

Dear Brothers, you have given the world an example of how we understand liberty and you have manifested to the world the kind of defenders of justice we have. You have measured up to the ideals of our forefathers in the defence of faith and civilization. “More terrible than death itself, which you have disdained, you have drawn upon yourself the burden of the battle, and crushed by the defeat of the enemy, you have died in your triumph.”⁽⁴¹⁾

Menacingly, you cried to your enemy: “Thou shalt eat, but shall not be filled, and thou shalt take hold but shall not save.”⁽⁴²⁾

While you were shedding your blood on the battlefield in defence of Divine principles and of our beloved country, the Precious Blood of the Divine Lamb from our altars cried aloud for your salvation. How many golden-haired youths there are upon whose foreheads has already been inscribed the name of the innocent Divine Lamb! How many children have perished, whose Angels in heaven always see the face of their Heavenly Father! You did not fear death, knowing that Christ has conquered it. “O death, where is thy victory?”⁽⁴³⁾

We will ardently pray for you, with our hearts and lips. And to our grief and to our prayers you will respond with words imbued with faith: “The King of the world will raise us up, who die for His laws, in the resurrection of eternal life.”⁽⁴⁴⁾

* * *

We then, Dear Brothers, who enjoy the gift and grace of life, shall remain faithful to our vocation and to our soldiers’ oath.

“I am not only a Polish general, but a Christian general as well, for I stand guard by the Cross,”⁽⁴⁵⁾ — so said the great Sobieski in the past in a situation similar to that of today. Nor did our nation think otherwise, when she was the first to oppose

(40) I Mach. III, 59.

(41) Ex Libro Officiorum St. Ambrosii I, 40.

(42) Mich. VI, 14.

(43) I Cor. XV, 55.

(44) II Mach. VII, 9.

(45) H. Sienkiewicz.

the powers of Antichrist. What would have become of Christian civilization had we then hesitated, and had our allies not made such gigantic effort of which we are witnesses and participants ?

Amidst the terrible suffering of today a new world is being born. As the woman in the Gospel, "remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world. So also you now indeed have sorrow : but soon your heart shall rejoice. And your joy no man shall take from you." (46)

In the name of God we are fighting, and in the name of God we will conquer.

In the name of the Lord, Poland will rise again.

May the Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, bless you. Amen.

Italy, Feast of Christ the King, 1944.

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