

Władysław Rożkow

THE BEATIFICATION CAUSE OF THE SERVANT OF GOD
JAN OLSZAŃSKI (1919-2003)

INTRODUCTION

The rise to power of the Bolsheviks in Ukraine in 1917 marked the beginning of more than 70 years of persecution of the Church as she was viewed as a dangerous threat to the new order. The Soviet authorities aimed to create a new society free from religion, seeking to replace it with communist ideology. A key aspect of this ideology was the dismantling of the Roman Catholic Church, allegedly “steered from abroad.” The Bolsheviks did their utmost prevent her from operating. Ultimately, they failed. Thanks to the service of several members of the clergy, the process of sovietization of Catholics in Ukraine was not only slowed down but even halted. Bishop Jan Olszański was one of them. Throughout his life, he opposed the atheistic communist regime by actively engaging in pastoral work. Some time ago, he was named the Servant of God. His beatification process was launched on 23 February 2023 in Kamianets-Podilskyi. Given the widespread reputation for sanctity and the private worship of the candidate for sainthood, the investigation to reveal his heroic virtues became a major event not only for the Diocese of Kamianets-Podilskyi, which advanced the cause as petitioner, but for the entire Church across Ukraine.

WŁADYSŁAW ROŻKOW, MA – The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin; correspondence address: Al. Raławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, Poland; e-mail: wladyslaw.rozkow@kul.pl, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9577-564X>

Hence, both the figure of the candidate and the progress of the case deserve special attention. The article aims to discuss the course of the beatification process of Jan Olszański at the diocesan level as well as addressing selected issues from the ongoing process.

1. THE FIGURE OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

Jan Olszański was born on 14 January 1919 in Hucisko Brodzkie into a farmer family of Jan and Maria née Bojko.¹ In 1926 he entered a two-grade elementary school in his village. In the years 1930-1938, he continued his education in the town of Brody: first at a local elementary school and then at the Józef Korzeniowski State Middle School. Having passed his school leaving exams in 1938, he was admitted to the Higher Theological Seminary in Lviv. He was ordained priest on 15 November 1942 [Bizuń 1994, 170].

From 1942 to 1944, the Rev. Olszański worked as a vicar in Kaczanówka. In 1944 he volunteered to travel beyond the Zbruch River as a missionary. In October the same year, he was appointed parish priest at Gródek Podolski. In the autumn of 1946, facing restrictions and various forms of blackmail from the Soviet authorities, he left Podolia for Lviv where he assumed the function of vicar at the Parish of Our Lady of the Snows. While at Lviv, he devotedly assisted the clergy from the Lviv cathedral in pastoral duties while caring for the Catholics of the Eastern rite.

After two years of his work in Lviv, the Soviet authorities demanded that he returned to Podolia. In the autumn of 1948 he assumed the duties of parish priest at Gródek. In 1959, due to excessive pastoral activity, the priest was expelled from Gródek by the Soviet authorities and forced to move to a small village of Manikowce. Against all odds, he took active pastoral effort there [Wolczański 2001, 12].

From Manikowice he secretly travelled to the most remote Catholic communities, especially those deprived of priestly assistance for a long time. While under constant surveillance by the Soviet authorities, he attempted to continue clandestine pastoral work. He baptized hundreds of

¹ Hucisko Brodzkie: Natorum 1919, Central State Historical Archive in Lviv, fond 618, description 2, case 3390, book 26.

people, blessed married couples, preached to young people, secretly prepared candidates for priesthood, yet he devoted most of his time to hear confessions, sometimes all day long [Hlebowicz 2006, 77].

In the late 1970s, he entered the Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. In 1983 he professed his perpetual vows and, in May 1990, became the superior of the newly established vicariate of Marian Fathers in Ukraine [Pakuła 2018-2019, 395].

On 16 January 1991, Pope John Paul II appointed the Rev. Olszański diocesan bishop of the reinstated Diocese of Kamianets-Podilskyi.² Just a few months after the canonical takeover of the diocese, recognizing the urgent need for the formation of candidates for priesthood locally, Jan Olszański, first among the Latin bishops in Ukraine, established a higher theological seminary in Gródek Podolski. In 1998 he formed the Institute of Theological Sciences, which was tasked with the training of future lay catechists. Owing to the efforts of Bishop Olszański, pastoral centres began to mushroom, which later laid the foundations for the creation of two other dioceses: Kharkiv-Zaporizhia and Odessa-Simferopol [Wołczański 2001, 18].

In May 2002, Pope John Paul II accepted the resignation of Bishop Olszański as head of the Diocese of Kamianets-Podilskyi. After retirement, he maintained close contacts with the diocese. He continued pastoral work, provided advice, prayed extensively for the Church in Podolia, and offered his suffering for her. He passed away on 23 February 2003 in Kamianets-Podilskyi [Hlebowicz 2006, 81].

2. THE REPUTATION OF HOLINESS

According to the ecclesiastical legislation, the reputation of holiness, understood as the general opinion about the purity, integrity of life, and virtues practiced to an heroic degree by a candidate for sainthood, is a prerequisite for initiating the canonization process.³ Therefore, there can

² *Ioannes Paulus Episcopus Servus Servorum Dei dilecto Filio Joanni Olszański* (16.01.1991), Archive of the Diocesan Curia in Kamianets-Podilskyi [hereinafter: ADCKP], no file ref., no page.

³ *Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum, Sanctorum Mater. Istruzione per lo svolgimento delle Inchieste diocesane o eparchiali nelle Cause dei Santi* (17.05.2007), AAS 99

be no process if the candidate does not enjoy an authentic reputation of holiness, sacrifice of life, or martyrdom, a reputation for signs and private devotion [Misztal 2003, 285].

Church documents require that this opinion of holiness be relatively widespread. In other words, not only the closest relatives and friends of a candidate should be convinced of his or her holiness but also people who did not know them in person. It is also required that the reputation of holiness surrounded a candidate during his or her lifetime, during death and after it. This opinion should be free, spontaneous, true, and not imposed by any authorities. Moreover, it should also be long-lasting. It should not be limited to the life of a candidate or last only a few years after his or her death and then die out; in contrast, it should constantly grow, deepen, and gain in intensity (SM, Articles 4, 7) [Kijas 2023, 91-92].

The testimonies about Bishop Olszański available today reveal that he was an unquestioned moral authority for many, a symbol of steadfastness and courage in the face of persecution, a model of unwavering prayer, faith in God, and dedication to his folk. Held in high esteem, he drew crowds, many of whom were willing to travel hundreds of kilometres just to meet him, talk to him, share their life stories and troubles, seek advice and a blessing, confess, or simply listen to one of his preachings. Many people, convinced of Bishop Olszański's holiness, viewed him as a role model worthy of imitation. People treated letters or other items received from the bishop as gifts with special reverence, almost like his relics.

The opinion that surrounded Bishop Olszański was also reflected in some of his biographies. For example, in his article penned while the bishop was still alive, the Rev. Józef Wołczański wrote, "Both among the faithful and members of the clergy in the diocese and across the entire metropolitan area of Lviv, Bishop Olszański enjoys unquestionable respect and love... He is commonly regarded as a paragon of righteousness, nobility, and personal sanctity. No doubt, he fully deserves to be named a witness and symbol of unwavering faith, faithfulness to God and the Catholic Church, dedicated service to people, and a staunch patriotic attitude. For decades, he has stood in Podolia like a stronghold, defending universal religious, humanitarian, and national values" [Wołczański 2001, 19].

(2007), pp. 465-517 [hereinafter: SM], Articles 5, 7.

During the bishop's funeral, the Rev. Jan Niemiec expressed a conviction about the holy life of Bishop Olszański and hinted at the possibility of his beatification, "Many people who met the bishop say that he was a holy one. I think there are few who could claim to the contrary. We all pray for him, although the Church will make the final judgement. We pray that we can truly meet him in the Kingdom of God, that we may live forever and rejoice in this gift of Bishop Jan."⁴

In the years following Bishop Olszański's death, the faithful's opinion about his heroic virtues began to deepen, thus giving rise to private devotion. The spread of his worship resulted in the emergence of the reputation for signs, i.e. the opinion among the faithful about the graces and favours received from God through the intercession of the bishop (SM, Article 6). As a result, the diocesan bishop of Kamianets-Podilskyi, Leon Dubrawski, began to receive requests to initiate a beatification examination. Cognizant of the vivid interest of the faithful in the initiation of the process, Bishop Dubrawski decided to gather information on the reputation of holiness of Jan Olszański and assess whether a potential canonization cause would hold pastoral and missionary significance for the Church (SM, Article 8 § 2). The task was entrusted to the Rev. Aleksander Chałaim who was nominated postulator of the cause in 2018 (SM, Article 8 § 1).⁵

According to the SM, "the postulator must collect documentation on the reputation of holiness or of martyrdom and on the reputation of intercessory power."⁶ Indeed, the petitioner does not appoint a postulator if they are not convinced of the existence of such a reputation. However, the petitioner may not always be able to verify whether this reputation is true, as it is required in the canonization process. Hence, it is the postulator's duty to examine whether the reputation meets the requirements of church law [Misztal and Fiejdasz-Buczek 2017, 46].

⁴ *Burial ceremony of Bishop Jan Olszański* (25.03.2003), Archive of the Postulator of the Beatification Cause of the Servant of God Jan Olszański [video recording].

⁵ L. Dubravskyi, *Decreto* (14.02.2019), ADCKP, no file ref., no page; Interview with the Rev. Aleksander Chałaim carried out on 13 February 2024 by the author [audio recording in the author's collection].

⁶ Cf. Ioannes Paulus II, *Constitutio Apostolica Divinus perfectionis Magister. Modus procedenti in Causarum canonizationis instructione recognoscitur et Sacrae Congregationis pro Causis Sanctorum nova datur ordinatio* (25.01.1983), AAS 75 (1983), pp. 349-55, no. 2,1; *Sacra Congregatio pro Causis Sanctorum, Normae servandae in inquisitionibus ab Episcopis faciendis* (07.02.1983), AAS 75 (1983), pp. 396-403 [hereinafter: NS], no. 3b.

It is recommended that the postulator, when examining the reputation of holiness, also collect thanksgiving letters for received graces and favours as well as gathering testimonies about them. If any grace is found of a special nature, a more detailed account should be sought from the receiving persons. Among special graces, there may be ones that can later be submitted for investigation as miraculous [Misztal 2010, 30]. When gathering information on the opinion of candidate's holiness, the postulator should also pay attention to the ecclesial value of the cause, i.e. its relevance and significance for the Church [Bar 2010, 65].

After researching into the life of Bishop Olszański, collecting convincing evidence of the existence of a reputation for holiness and intercessory power, private devotion, and after analysing the significance of the beatification case for the Church, on 20 January 2019, the Rev. Chałaim drew up a *supplex libellus* to initiate an examination of the heroic virtues of the candidate for sainthood. He submitted the document to Bishop Dubrawski on 23 February 2019. He provided the following reasons behind the initiation of the beatification process, "The example and testimony of Bishop Jan's life is of great significance for the Church in Kamianets-Podilskyi and for the universal Church. For he was a man of prayer and loyalty to Christ in his turbulent times. Bishop Jan Olszański also possessed the quality of being poor in spirit. He had many virtues, but the one that we hold the dearest was his faithfulness to God's will, especially when that will exceeded the bounds of human reason. The poverty in which he lived testifies to what kind of person he was. He was the father of priests, the poor, and the lost. He was a man of prayer, a great-hearted "slave" of the confessional and priestly duties; he was a faithful son of the Most Holy Virgin Mary and venerated the saints. He was a man of faith and love for God's people."⁷

In accordance with the canonization standards (SM, Article 37), the postulator's request was accompanied by the bishop's biography, his published writings and manuscripts, as well as a list of witnesses.⁸

⁷ O. Chałajim, *Supplex libellus* (20.01.2019), ADCKP, no file ref., no page.

⁸ Ibid.

3. PREPARATION FOR THE DIOCESAN STAGE OF THE PROCESS

After reviewing the postulator's request and assessing the submitted documentation, on 10 October 2019, Bishop Dubrawski requested the Diocesan Council of Priests to express their opinion on whether the initiation of the beatification cause of Bishop Olszański was justified. Having heard the opinion of the council and having recognized the existence of a common opinion about the holiness of the candidate for sanctity and the significant ecclesial value of the cause, Bishop Dubrawski submitted a request to the Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops of Ukraine to issue an opinion on whether it was advisable to initiate the canonization process (NS, no. 11a; SM, Article 41 § 1).⁹

Bishop Dubrawski's request for opinion was debated by the Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops of Ukraine during their 53rd plenary session in Briukhovychi near Lviv. On the last day of the session, on 30 November 2019, the conference endorsed the initiation of the beatification process of Bishop Olszański.¹⁰

Having obtained the opinion of the conference, Bishop Dubrawski, in accordance with the guidelines of SM, Article 45 §1, decided to inform the Congregation for the Causes of Saints of the initiated process and sought their opinion as to whether there is, on the part of the Holy See, any obstacle to the cause. The postulator, Rev. Chałaim, was himself responsible for preparing a document with an account of Bishop Olszański's life and the statement of the ecclesial value of the cause. In 2019 the entire material was delivered to Rome. After reviewing the request from the Diocese of Kamianets-Podilskyi and after examining the information about the candidate for sainthood received from other dicasteries, in a letter dated 17 December 2021, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints Cardinal Marcello Semeraro advised Bishop Dubrawski of the absence of obstacles, on the part of the Holy See, to the beatification process of Bishop Olszański.¹¹

⁹ L. Dubrawskyj, *Edykt pro widkryttia procesu beatyfikaciji i kanonizaciji Słугy Bożogo jępyskopa Jana Olszanskogo* (23.02.2022), ADCKP, file ref., no page.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ M. Semeraro, *Eccellenza Reverendissima* (17.12.2021), ADCKP, no file ref., no page.

In February 2022, prior to the decision to accept the postulator's request and launching the diocesan inquiry concerning the beatification and canonization of Jan Olszański, Bishop Dubrawski, as provided in NS, no. 13 and SM, Article 62, decreed to appoint two theological censors to examine the published writings of the candidate for sainthood.¹² After swearing an oath to faithfully fulfil their task and to maintain the secret of office, each of the censors received authenticated copies of the writings from the postulator of the cause.

According to applicable canonization standards, the published writings of the Servant of God, i.e. works published by him or others, are subject to examination (SM, Article 62 § 1-2). However, nothing prevents the theological censors from assessing the candidate's doctrinal writings that have not been published [Fiejdasz and Kijas 2010, 112]. This was the case with the process of Bishop Olszański. Along with dozens of pastoral letters penned by the candidate, a number of unpublished writings were also assessed, including recently discovered recordings of sermons, as well as sylabuses and spiritual notes.

Having received Bishop Olszański's writings, the censors began their work. The aim of the examination was therefore to determine the author's orthodoxy in the area of faith and morals, as well as presenting the spiritual profile of the candidate for sainthood, i.e. his virtues and specific qualities of character or personality that surface in his published writings [Misztal 2003, 241].

Bishop Olszański's writings were studied for two years. After completing their task and swearing an oath, the theological censors shared with Bishop Dubrawski their detailed opinions on the writings produced by the Servant of God. In accordance with canonization standards, the opinions were attached to the files of the inquiry (SM, Article 67).

¹² L. Dubrawskyj, *Dekret przyznaczenia bogosłowskiego cenzora* (21.02.2022), ADCKP, no file ref., no page.

4. INITIATION OF THE PROCESS. INSTRUCTION OF THE CAUSE

On 23 February 2022, Bishop Dubrawski announced that the beatification process of Jan Olszański can begin. He did so by issuing an edict in which he revealed the postulator's letter of request submitted in February 2019. He also encouraged the faithful to share information and provide materials relevant to the process, such as documents, photographs, video recordings, memorabilia, candidate's correspondence with private persons, and information about any obstacles to sainthood.¹³

In the absence of obstacles in the cause, on the 20th death anniversary of the candidate for sainthood, i.e. on 23 February 2023, the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Kamianets-Podilskyi witnessed the solemn opening of the beatification process. The ceremony began with the Eucharist celebrated by Bishop Dubrawski. Next, a session inaugurating the beatification process was held. After a short introduction, explanation of the procedure, underlining the significance of the session, and a joint prayer, the Rev. Chałaim read out and handed over to Bishop Leon Dubrawski a request to initiate the beatification inquiry and a list of witnesses. The chancellor of the diocesan curia, the Rev. Paweł Basisty, read the decree accepting the postulator's request and establishing a competent inquiry body (tribunal).¹⁴

The Rev. Piotr Miszczuk was appointed Episcopal Delegate responsible for conducting the inquiry on behalf of the diocesan bishop, as stipulated in SM, Article 53. The Rev. Vyacheslav Grumnytsky was appointed Promoter of Justice. His duties cover the thorough examination of all files and documents relating to the cause, and he must ensure that everything prescribed by the law be faithfully observed in the inquiry (SM, Article 56). The duties of Notary, including the recording of testimonies and drawing up the files of the inquiry, were entrusted to the Rev. Anatoly Postolovich.¹⁵

After reading out the acts of nominations, the members of the tribunal, along with Bishop Leon Dubrawski and the postulator, swore a solemn

¹³ L. Dubrawskyj, *Edykt pro widkryttia...*, ADCKP, file ref., no page.

¹⁴ Opening of the beatification process of the Servant of God Jan Olszański (23.02.2023) [video recording from the author's collection].

¹⁵ L. Dubravskyi, *Decreto dell'accettazione del libello di domanda e della nomina Degli Officiali dell'chiesta (Tribunale)* (6.02.2023), ADCKP, no file ref., no page.

oath to faithfully fulfil the entrusted task and to maintain the secret of office. Next, the chancellor of the curia read out a decree establishing the Historical Commission. This body is responsible for collecting and critically examining all the unpublished writings of the Servant of God as well as historical documents linked to the cause. Four members of the commission were appointed: Rev. Józef Wołczański, Rev. Dominik Jacków, Rev. Oleg Żaruk, and Władysław Rożkow.¹⁶ After the announcement of the decree, the commission members swore to maintain the secret of office.

During the session, questions intended for the witnesses and prepared by the Promoter of Justice were submitted in a sealed envelope to the Episcopal Delegate. Next, the minutes of the first session were read out, and Bishop Leon Dubrawski, the members of the tribunal, and the chancellor of the curia signed five identical copies of the documents. The chancellor of the curia transferred all the process files to the Notary.¹⁷ The session ended with a joint prayer and blessing of the attendees.

Speaking of the first session of the inquiry, certain deviations from the canonization practice should be highlighted, permitted at the opening of the beatification process of Bishop Olszański. The deviations are delays that occurred when ordering the examination of the writings of the candidate for sainthood and when appointing experts in historical matters and in matters that pertain to archives. As a rule, the Historical Commission is established following the opinion of the Theological Censors, that is, prior to the procedural phase of the diocesan inquiry (NS, no. 14ab) [Turek 2010, 189-90]. In turn, the gathered documents should serve the Promoter of Justice to prepare questions for the witnesses heard by the beatification tribunal (NS, no. 15a). According to SM, Article 89, the report of expert historians, as well as the opinions of censors, must be inserted into the files of the first session. In other words, the results of the work of the Theological Censors and the Historical Commission should predate the launch of the process in the diocese [Misztal 2010, 104]. In the case of Bishop Olszański, the Historical Commission began to operate at the procedural stage and before the censors completed their work. This approach is commonly adopted in beatification processes. It seems that this is largely due to the fact that the requirement for the completion of work by the Theological

¹⁶ *Idem*, *Nomina dei membri della Commissione Storica* (26.01.2023), ADCKP, no file ref., no page.

¹⁷ Opening of the beatification process of the Servant of God Jan Olszański.

Censors and expert historians at the pre-process stage is not formulated in a precise manner in the existing ecclesiastical legislation. Instead, it is governed by several conditions contained in NS, no. 14ab, 15a and SM, Articles 63, 67, 70, 89. Apart from the instruction itself, certain doubts also surround the provision of SM, Article 73 § 1. It permits the submission of reports and collected unpublished writings and documents from expert historians to the Episcopal Delegate after the commencement of the process. Part II of the document, covering the preliminary phase of the cause, lacks references to the examination of writings and the establishment of the Historical Commission. The regulations concerning experts were placed only in Part IV on gathering documentary evidence, that is, following the articles relating to the instruction of the cause and the tribunal.

Following the acceptance of the postulator's request and the establishment of the tribunal, the procedural phase of the inquiry began at the diocesan stage. A key element of this stage is the instruction of the cause, which involves the collection of evidence necessary to attain moral certitude. Given that the cause of Bishop Olszański is a recent one, the inquiry largely concentrates on gathering oral depositions of eyewitnesses to prove the heroic virtues of the candidate (SM, Article 29 § 2).

The tribunal, established to conduct the diocesan investigation into the cause of the Servant of God, commenced its work less than two months after the initiation of the beatification process. During the first year of its operation, it gathered depositions of about 1/3 of the postulator's witnesses, i.e. those listed in an annex to the postulator's request. For the sake of the beatification process of Bishop Olszański, eyewitnesses, private witnesses, and witnesses having direct and immediate knowledge about the candidate were heard. Initially, 40 witnesses were scheduled for the giving of testimony. Over time, their number decreased. The main reason for the exclusion of witnesses was their insufficient knowledge about the Servant of God, most often second-hand information received from eyewitnesses. At the current stage of the process, it is expected that around 30 persons will make depositions. Most of them knew the Servant of God when he served as the parish priest in Manikowce and the Bishop of Kamianets-Podilskyi. Among the witnesses registered by the postulator, there are individuals who met the Rev. Olszański during his work at the

Gródek Podolski parish. Clearly, no eyewitnesses from the childhood and youth of the Servant of God can testify as they have long passed away.¹⁸

According to SM, Article 61, the hearing of witnesses should take place on the premises of the diocesan or eparchial tribunal. Therefore, if any circumstances arise that prevent the taking of depositions at the seat of the diocesan or eparchial tribunal, the Episcopal Delegate may choose another appropriate location, with the exception of a house of the institute of consecrated life, or of the association to which the Servant of God belonged (SM, Article 61 § 2). In the beatification process of Bishop Olszański, due to the size of the diocese, as well as the need to take depositions from elderly people and other bishops, who can choose the place of the meeting, the sessions are generally held outside the tribunal.¹⁹

Given that Bishop Olszański spent almost 60 years of his life performing pastoral work in Podolia, most of the witnesses registered by the postulator of the cause come from the local diocese. Yet, among them, there are individuals currently dwelling elsewhere, including abroad. If it is necessary to hear testimony of a witness residing outside the diocese in which the process is being conducted, there are three options for the tribunal: to invite the witness to come to the seat of the canonization tribunal; to go to the diocese where the witness resides once the relevant consent of the local bishop is given (the consent should be given in writing and included in the inquiry files); to ask the local bishop to instruct a rogatory inquiry [Misztal 2010, 124].

Due to possible difficulties in selecting duly prepared persons to conduct the rogatory inquiry, in the case of witnesses residing in Ukraine, there are two options in Bishop Olszański's process: travel to another diocese or invite the witness to the seat of the tribunal. As for witnesses residing abroad, the only solution is to conduct a rogatory inquiry since, due to the military conflict in Ukraine, men of conscription age (18-60) are unable to leave the country, which also applies to the members of the tribunal. Fortunately, the dioceses in which the witnesses reside have episcopal courts, so appointing competent persons to collect depositions should not be a challenge.²⁰

¹⁸ Interview with the Rev. Aleksander Chałaim.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

The war in Ukraine has an adverse impact not only on the operation of the tribunal but also on the work of the Historical Commission. According to SM, Article 68 § 2, the basic task of the experts is to gather all possible historical documents concerning the candidate for sainthood. Considering that the Servant of God served as bishop of the largest diocese in Europe for more than ten years, the list of archival units to be searched through is quite impressive. The challenge, however, is not the amount of work to be done but rather in the inability of carrying it out to the greatest possible extent. Some of the archives cannot be searched at the moment because they are located in territories occupied by the Russian Federation. Also, the reading rooms of archive facilities near the front line are also unavailable. The Archives of the Security Service of Ukraine, which may hold valuable documents about the candidate for sainthood, have also suspended research visits. Given the circumstances, the work of the commission mainly focuses on examining the documentation collected to date. It has been sourced mainly from the regional archives in Khmelnytskyi and Lviv, the Central Archives of the Higher Authorities of Ukraine in Kyiv, the Archives of Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak in Kraków, the Archives of the Generalate of the Marian Fathers in Rome, as well as from private collections.

5. THE SPREAD OF PRIVATE DEVOTION

The reputation of holiness of the Servant of God and miracles attributed to him give rise to private devotion. Unlike public ecclesiastical cult overseen by a Church official, private worship is not only allowed but even desirable before beatification. The spread of worship is a sensitive matter that requires a fair amount of prudence and moderation. It may manifest itself in acts of private devotion until the Holy See declares the Servant of God saint [Misztal 2003, 131-32].

One of the most frequent forms of spreading private devotion of a candidate to sainthood is prayer. It can take the form of a public, private collective, and individual worship. Public prayer occurs when, in the name of the Church, a Church-designated person leads the prayer of the faithful or prays in their intention. In contrast, private prayer is when the faithful pray on their own behalf or on behalf of others, but the prayer is not led by

a person designated by the Church. Both public and private prayers can be collective or individual. As regards beatification causes, it should be kept in mind that public prayers may only be offered for the beatification of the Servant of God, persons engaged in the beatification process, those who spread the worship of the candidate for sainthood, and those who seek his or her intercession. Yet, prayers through the intercession of the candidate, which are to be strongly encouraged anyways, should be offered as part of private devotion. The content of prayers, both regarding beatification and through the intercession of the Servant of God, requires the approval of ecclesiastical authorities.

As regards the beatification cause of Bishop Olszański, a prayer for grace was prepared in February 2022. Bishop Dubrawski approved it very soon, i.e. on 1 March.²¹ This prayer effectively conveys the ecclesial significance of the process. It reads as follows, “God of Mercy and Justice! The life of Your Servant, Bishop John, was marked by an incessant sacrificial service to You and to the persecuted and wronged. He was a man of fervent prayer, brave in the face of evil, a stronghold of faithfulness in times of oppression, a loving father to the faithful and lost sinners.”²² The prayer for grace through the intercession of Jan Olszański was initially shared with the faithful only via the Internet. However, since the beginning of the beatification process, it has been distributed in printed form with an image of the Servant of God.

In January 2024, the faithful of the Diocese of Kamianets-Podilskyi proposed another prayer through the intercession of the Servant of God. It was a novena for Ukraine. The prayer has nine segments corresponding to nine days. Each segment highlights specific qualities of the candidate for sainthood. Reflections from the sermons and pastoral letters of the candidate for sainthood were matched with the themes of the individual days. The prayers closing each of the nine segments link to the central idea of the reflections.²³ On 5 February 2024, after receiving the opinion of the di-

²¹ L. Dubravskyi, *Imprimatur* (01.03.2022), ADCKP, no file ref., no page.

²² *Prayer through the intercession of the Servant of God Jan Olszański*, <https://credo.pro/pl/2022/03/314917> [accessed: 28.02.2024].

²³ *Nowenna za Ukrajinu za zastupnyctom Slugy Bożogo jepyskopa Jana Olszansko-go (dla prywatnego wżytku)*, <https://www.camenecensis.org/новенна-за-україну-за-заступництвом/> [accessed: 28.02.2024].

ocesan censor, Bishop Dubrawski approved the novena for Ukraine through the intercession of the Servant of God Jan Olszański.²⁴

In order to spread the worship of Bishop Olszański and to demonstrate how lasting and relevant his legacy is, in 2024, an extract from the Servant of God's sermon preached in 1989 during the ceremony of the recovery and consecration of the sanctuary in Latyczów was added to the Liturgy of the Hours of the Diocese of Kamianets-Podilskyi. The public reading of the text was scheduled for the Hour of Readings on the feast of Our Lady of Latyczów, the main patron saint of the diocese, on 6 July.²⁵

As mentioned earlier, private devotion surrounding Bishop Olszański is also spread through printed images of the Servant of God. Canonization laws allow for the creation of images of a candidate for sainthood, provided, however, that they are not displayed in sacred space nor do they portray the Servant of God with attributes intended for saints and the blessed [Krakowiak 2023, 112-13]. When spreading private devotion of the Servant of God Jan Olszański, all the norms and standards named above are carefully observed.

An important element encouraging the private cult of Bishop Olszański is also the spoken and printed communication, especially occasional sermons preached on death anniversaries of the candidate for sainthood, radio broadcasts, documentaries, published testimonies of eyewitnesses, numerous articles and books, both of research and journalistic nature. They are too many and various to list them all, yet it is worth noting that they effectively disseminate knowledge about the Servant of God and help treasure the memory of him for future generations, which is pivotal given the likely duration of beatification processes.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with the standards of canonization law, the diocesan inquiry into the canonical recognition of sanctity closes with last session of the tribunal. After that, a copy of the original acts (transcript) and a public copy (along with translations) are submitted to the Congregation for

²⁴ L. Dubravskyi, *Imprimatur...*, ADCKP, no file ref., no page.

²⁵ *Wzirec Liturgiji Godyn Kamianec-Podilskoji dijeceziji*, "Informacijnyj Biuleteń" 12 (2023), no. 4, pp. 6-7.

the Causes of Saints. Based on past practice, the duration of the inquiry at the diocesan level can be said to take from several to more than ten years. At the current stage of Bishop Olszański's process, nobody can predict how long the diocesan phase will last. It will depend, but not only, on the work progress at the tribunal and the Historical Commission, on the careful observance of the procedure, and on whether any obstacles emerge that might slow down the process. Today, the greatest hindrance to the procedure is the war in Ukraine. The closure of some archives, restricted travel abroad, and the engagement of the participants of the inquiry in other affairs and projects that address the current needs of the state at war and the local Church are anything but conducive to expediting work on the process. Given the circumstances, the diocesan inquiry will probably take more time than average. Although the decree of heroic virtues of the candidate for sainthood has not been announced yet, it is worth emphasizing that such an open beatification process has a measurable didactic value. The cause of Bishop Olszański is a message of genuine love of prayer, brevity in the face of evil, dedication to work for others, sensitivity to other people's needs, conscientious performance of duties, and defence of universal human and religious values. Along with its tremendous social relevance, as it is intended for all the faithful, it conveys a powerful message for those of the People of God who are members of the clergy, consecrated persons, and candidates for priesthood. Bishop Olszański's zealous ministry, as "a loving father to both the faithful and lost sinners," offers an example that can inspire them to discover what is at the heart of their vocation and to keep the oath that they have made in service to the Church and the salvation of souls.

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**The Beatification Cause of the Servant of God
Jan Olszański (1919-2003)**

Abstract

Bishop Olszański is certainly one of the most distinguished pastors in the history of the Catholic Church in Ukraine. Given that Bishop Olszański had a reputation for sanctity while still alive and an uninterrupted private cult after his death, preparations for his beatification process began in 2019. The Diocese of Kamianets-Podilskyi has stepped in as a plaintiff of the case. In February 2019, the postulator of the case submitted a request to Bishop Dubrawski to initiate an investigation into the heroicity of Jan Olszański's virtues. After hearing the opinion of the priestly council, the Bishop of Kamyanets-Podilskyi asked the Bishops' Conference to express a judgement on the rightness of starting the case. Having obtained a positive opinion from the Conference

in November 2019, Bishop Dubrawski sent a nihil obstat request to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. On 17 December 2021, in response to the request of the Bishop of Kamyanets-Podilskyi, the aforementioned dicastery stated that there were no obstacles from the Holy See. The ceremonial opening of the beatification process took place on 23 February 2023. At the present stage of the conduct of the beatification cause, it is difficult to determine how it will proceed, especially as its implementation has been significantly hampered by the escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian war.

Keywords: beatification process; Bishop Jan Olszański; Diocese of Kamianets-Podilskyi.

Sprawa beatyfikacyjna Sługi Bożego Jana Olszańskiego (1919-2003)

Abstrakt

Bp Olszański z całą pewnością jest jednym z najbardziej zasłużonych pasterzy w dziejach Kościoła katolickiego na Ukrainie. Zważywszy na to, że jeszcze za życia wyróżniał się on opinią świętości, a po śmierci nieprzerwalnie odbierał kult prywatny, w 2019 r. rozpoczęto przygotowania do jego procesu beatyfikacyjnego. W charakterze powoda sprawy wystąpiła diecezja kamieniecko-podolska. W lutym 2019 r. postulador sprawy przedłożył bp. Dubrawskiemu prośbę o wszczęciu dochodzenia na temat heroicznego cnót bp. Olszańskiego. Po wysłuchaniu opinii rady kapłańskiej biskup kamieniecko-podolski zwrócił się do Konferencji Biskupów z prośbą o wyrażenie osądu na temat słuszności rozpoczęcia sprawy. Uzyskawszy pozytywną opinię Konferencji w listopadzie 2019 r., bp Dubrawski skierował do Kongregacji Spraw Kanonizacyjnych prośbę o nihil obstat. 17 grudnia 2021 r. w odpowiedzi na wniosek biskupa kamieniecko-podolskiego wspomniana wyżej dykasteria stwierdziła brak przeszkód ze strony Stolicy Apostolskiej. Uroczyste otwarcie procesu beatyfikacyjnego odbyło się 23 lutego 2023 r. Na obecnym etapie prowadzenia sprawy beatyfikacyjnej trudno jest określić, jak ona będzie się toczyła dalej, zwłaszcza że jej realizacja została znacząco utrudniona przez eskalację wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: proces beatyfikacyjny; bp Jan Olszański; diecezja kamieniecko-podolska.

Informacje o Autorze: MGR LIC. WŁADYSŁAW ROŻKOW – Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II; adres do korespondencji: Al. Raclawickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, Polska; e-mail: wladyslaw.rozkow@kul.pl, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9577-564X>