

ALL FOR GOD ALONE
A Spiritual Profile of
Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar



Mother Karolina Kasperkiewicz, SSCJ

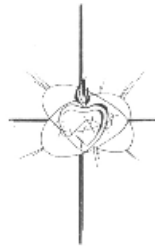
**ALL FOR GOD ALONE:
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Mother Karolina Kasperkiewicz, SSCJ

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FORWARD TO THE 1974 EDITION

The office of the Postulator General for Polish Causes was initiated in 1974 by His Eminence, Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński, the Primate of Poland, to spread the cult of the Polish Blessed, and to take care of matters related to the canonization and beatification of those Polish Servants of God whose causes are in process – such as the publication of biographies, printing of prayer cards and the like.

The Congregation of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, founded by the Servant of God, Bishop Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, requested the Postulator General to publish the Founder's biography, written from the viewpoint of his spirituality by Mother Karolina Kasperkiewicz of Poland, present Superior General of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart (as the Congregation is now known in English-speaking countries.) Undoubtedly, being his spiritual daughter, she became well acquainted with the life and spirit of the Founder, however she also, in great measure, [became so] through her many years of research on his life and work.

The first fruit of her studies was a series of articles that appeared in various Polish publications, the most important being her scholarly work entitled, *Sługa Boży Józef Sebastian Pelczar, Biskup Przemyślski* [The Servant of God, Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, Bishop of Przemyśl.] The Pontifical Institute of Ecclesiastical Studies in Rome published it in 1972. This book met with positive appraisal by scholars and readers in general.

This volume is a synthesis of that work, with emphasis on the spirituality of the Servant of God. The author chose as its central theme Bishop Pelczar's memorable words: "O God, would that I could give You every moment of my life." Thus, the title of this book, *All for God Alone*, tersely expresses the full meaning of his words. He truly served God alone and consecrated all to His glory. In God his thought and heart embraced all men, especially his fellow countrymen.

Bishop Pelczar was a great Shepherd of souls, lovingly devoted to God and country, as well as a prolific writer. One could say without exaggeration that he was one of the greatest Bishops and Poles of the last century, although he is not well known. The beatification process and the historical research connected with it, allow the discovery of ever-new facets of his personality and fields of activity.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Bishop Pelczar's death, under the auspices of the Archbishop of Kraków, His Eminence Karol Cardinal Wojtyła, on March 21, 1974 a symposium was held at the Cardinal's Chancery. The lectures and the resultant discussions revealed many unknown facts about Bishop Pelczar's life and work, of which one was his interest in mysticism, as evidenced by a recent analysis of his unfinished manuscript, "On Mysticism." All the papers and discussion notes from that session were collected into a memorial volume under the title, *Bishop Pelczar*.

The creativity of this Servant of God expressed itself in many fields: theology, law, history, biblical studies, pedagogy, and sociology. He worked fruitfully as

Shepherd of his flock, professor, founder of a religious community whose members he formed, writer, sociologist, and loving son and defender of Church and fatherland.

On the 25th anniversary of Bishop Pelczar's consecration, February 14, 1924, in a personal letter Pope Pius XI commended the Bishop for his dedicated service to the Church. At the same time, in appreciation of his work, the Polish government bestowed upon him its highest decoration, the *Polonia Restituta*.

It is the opening of Bishop Pelczar's beatification process, however, that is the greatest testimony to his moral worth. The Postulator of his cause in Rome and Secretary General of the Bishops' Synod, His Excellency, the Most Reverend Ladislaus Rubin, already in 1965 entrusted to my care the course of the beatification process. Encouraged to study the activities of the Servant of God, I happily discover ever new fields of his past endeavors and I admire the splendid harvest they yielded, all of which causes me to ask: "From whence came all that energy for such varied and unusually fruitful work?" I find that it was his deep union with God that gave him strength beyond the limits of nature, since he never enjoyed robust health. Indeed, all of his achievements were the result of an intense spiritual life and a ready cooperation with God's grace.

He placed above all else the knowledge of God and union with Him. The talents of mind and traits of character with which nature endowed him, he enriched and developed with persevering work and prayer. The grace of God ennobled his natural inclinations and

directed them to the highest perfection, raising his soul to the heights of union with God. One can admire in this book the synthesis of the natural and the supernatural, of human nature and grace. His fervent devotion to the Heart of Christ and to Our Lady, brought him to the very source of all energy and strength – that is, to God. Through his faithfulness to grace, he changed his temperament, which by nature was inclined to instability and sloth, into a strong character that manifested unusual constancy, perseverance, conscientiousness, and diligence.

Bishop Pelczar had markedly broad intellectual horizons. His singular love for his country is particularly moving. He was vitally interested in her fate, and during his whole life he longed for her freedom, prayed for it, and believed in her ultimate liberation, “resurrection.” God, as though wanting to reward such filial love, allowed him to live to see a free Poland. Although he was sincerely glad for her independence, yet he followed very closely all the events in Poland. Nearly at the threshold of eternity, in the weak voice of a still fine orator and an inspired prophet, the aged and suffering Servant of God warned Poland of the dangers that he saw were besetting her.

Only in God and in Our Lady, Queen of Poland, did he see his country’s salvation. For that reason, he called on his people to draw strength and light from the fount of the Divine Savior, to learn life in the school of the Divine Master. In that school, founded on the Good News of the Gospel, he himself persevered unto the end. The Divine Master and His Mother formed that soul into

a perfect and holy man whose example shines before his countrymen and the world.

And that is the gist of the spiritual profile of Bishop Pelczar. May the reading of this book, illustrated with symbolic pictures and photographs and written in a colorful style, become for the reader a spiritual delight and an encouragement to follow in the footsteps of this holy Bishop and great Pole.

Rome, December 8, 1974

Father Michal Machejek, OCD
Postulator General for Polish Causes

Concerning the 2005 Re-printed Version:

While no changes were made to the style or content of Mother Karolina's 1974 English booklet, in this 2005 reprinted English version, it was deemed necessary to make some correction of grammar and usage, as well as to introduce several additional explanatory footnotes to clarify unfamiliar theological and historical terms. Likewise added was more recent information concerning the beatification and canonization of Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar.

Abbreviations

KDP - Chronicle of the Diocese of Przemyśl, Poland
ASK - Archives of Sister Servants of the Most
Sacred Heart of Jesus, Kraków
Rkp - Manuscript
Mps - Typescript



"O God, would that I could give You every moment of my life!" – St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar

INTRODUCTION

During the centuries, the Polish nature has produced many people of genius – famous writers and men of action, poets, musicians, painters, national heroes and saints. Often, however, we admire the talents and greatness of the spirit of people of other nations, and underestimate our fellow-citizens.

One of the most outstanding sons of our [Polish] nation was the Servant of God [now Saint] Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, (1842-1924), the Roman Catholic Bishop of Przemyśl, Poland. To remind us of her personality, very popular at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, I have written his biography containing 412 pages of print. I realize that this book, published in a small number of copies, cannot reach all the people who are interested in, or who would like to become more closely acquainted with Bishop Pelczar. We must reconcile ourselves to the fact that the contemporary person, accustomed to receive cultural values by means of the mass media, does not like thick books, but willingly reads concise, richly illustrated booklets. That is why I decided to re-examine once more all the material collected for the former work, and, out of many facts, choose only what is the most essential for the presentation of the spiritual silhouette of Bishop Pelczar. This is how this work came into being.

The main title, as well as the titles of the particular chapters of this work, was taken from the writings of the Servant of God. The quotations from his statements are placed under each illustration. Although during the

writing of this work, I made use of rich, first-hand material, I give reference only to more important documents, especially to those explaining less-intelligible titles or more important statements of Bishop Pelczar. Nor do I give the bibliographical list, since an interested reader will find it in my larger dissertation under the title: *The Servant of God, Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, Bishop of Przemyśl*.

1. "AS A TORCH BURNING IN THE FOG..."

Although all people who are endowed with the divine life in the Sacrament of Baptism are called to holiness, yet not all make the proper efforts to realize this great and honorable vocation. Alas, most remain under the world's influence, disregarding the essential and eternal value of their lives.

Among those persons, however, who *are* willing to accept the gift of God's grace, it is possible to distinguish various groups of different degrees of involvement in the cooperation with grace. Some of them confine themselves to the fulfillment of duties. Others seek something more; they love God more, and make greater sacrifices for their fellowmen. Among these also are such who, urged by the love of Christ, place themselves completely at His disposal. Increasing incessantly in their souls, divine love makes them capable of considering all events as part of the economy of salvation, and enlarges their hearts, opening them to the needs of other people. At the same time, perceiving such needs urges that they be met. In such way their lives become a continual sacrifice, an incessant giving of themselves to God fully and completely, a ceaseless consuming in the service of His love.

Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar belonged to those lovers - of God, the Holy Church, and his own nation. All his life became a realization of the words of Pope Pius IX, addressed once to the students of the Polish College at Rome: "You must revive the ecclesiastical

spirit, and be as bearers or torches burning in the fog.”¹ These words of the Pope exerted a great influence upon young Father Pelczar, and became the guiding principle of his life. Subjected completely to the tutelage of the Mother of God, under her motherly care he made progress in theology and in canon law, but above all in priestly perfection. He was a man of prayer, knowledge and work. Contemplation of the mysteries of Christ motivated him towards a generous sacrifice, by which he lived trying constantly to use every moment of his life as much as possible, and through this, to include himself more and more fully in God’s work of salvation performed in the world.

The perfect synthesis of prayer, knowledge and work, which he brought to bear upon his spiritual life, enabled him to fulfill apostolic work on a larger scale. He was a conscientious and responsible lecturer, an outstanding educator of the clergy, a good confessor, a spiritual director of many souls thirsting for God, and the author of some works of asceticism by which he influenced the spirituality of our [Polish] nation.

He was an eminent preacher, and an apostle - of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Holy Eucharist and the Mother of God, Queen of the Polish Crown - as well as an energetic person engaged in the work of culture, education, and social charity. He was the Founder of the Congregation of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. He was a fervent arch-pastor of

¹ Letter of Father Pelczar from Rome, August 18, 1866.
Authorized copy in the Archives of the Sister Servants of the
Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Krakow (ASK).

the Diocese of Przemyśl, Poland, and a faithful servant of God in every stage of his life. He lived, worked and suffered only for Christ and for His cause realizing to a high degree the ideal of a priest and of a bishop. The question of how Bishop Pelczar could express himself creatively in many fields of theological knowledge and canon law, and work with good results in the cultural and social field, was accurately answered by one of the eye-witnesses of his life: "The people who are more in contact with God than with men have time for everything."

The torch-light of the grace of priesthood - kindled as it was in the cathedral of Przemyśl at the moment of the ordination of the Servant of God - burnt after that for the long 60 years and kept its flame of the vivid faith until it was all burnt out on the altar of love and sacrifice as an offering of reparation pleasing to God.



DREAM OF JOSEPH PELCZAR

(Picture by Sister Bernarda Sideko, SSCJ)

"From my boyhood, I remember also a singular dream: I dreamed that the Blessed Virgin descended from the picture as a living being, looking at me sweetly, and offering me her helpful hands, in order to draw me to herself. From that time, I have had a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin..."

(*Diary a*, p. 2)

2. "MY HEART WAS ALWAYS DRAWN TO THE PARENTAL HOME."

Joseph Sebastian Pelczar was born on January 17, 1842 in Korczyna, Poland (near Krosno), into a family of farmers of moderate means. He was the third child of Wojciech and Maria (née Mięslowicz). On the second day after his birth, the child was baptized and given as patrons Saint Joseph and Saint Sebastian. Some months before, his pious mother went on the pilgrimage to the sanctuary of the Virgin Mary in Leżajsk in order to offer to the Mother of God her baby who was to be born. It was her dream to become the mother of a priest.

Joseph's childhood passed in the open air and healthy climate of the hills, and in the clean atmosphere of mutual understanding and family love. His father, Wojciech Pelczar, had quite a large farm and, like the majority of the inhabitants of Korczyna, was engaged in trade. He was hardworking and a man of foresight, while at the same time extremely gentle. He showed common sense, intelligence and broadmindedness. He collected Polish books and works of art in his house. He used to read much and was interested in the fate of his nation; longing for the independence of his native land, he prayed for it and believed in its deliverance from oppression.

Joseph's mother, Maria, was an economical, talented and energetic woman fulfilling her duties as a wife and mother. She was a good-humored woman fond of singing and music. She had an excellent memory so

that she learned all the hymns and recited by heart large fragments of poems. Both parents were characterized by traditional Polish piety and brought their four children up in this spirit.

Mr. and Mrs. Pelczar accustomed their children to work from an early age. They paid attention to the thoroughness and precision in the fulfillment of duties given to their children. Thanks to this, the vivid, sanguine temperament of Joseph - naturally inclined toward lightheartedness, instability and laziness – was captured and harnessed early to work on the construction of a strong character in which steadiness, perseverance, conscientiousness and unusual diligence are uppermost.

The profound piety of the family circle, suggested to the boy the possibility of priesthood, understood at that time according to his childish manner. Thus, asked why he wanted to become a priest he answered: "Because I want to be addressed 'Reverend Father' and to have my hand kissed."²

The patriotism of the parental home, the historical legends circulating in the neighborhood and the influence of the Reverend Father Michał Rapalski, his religion instructor, awoke in his mind both a love of his native land and an interest in the history of his own nation. These two interests were united together in the one youthful ideal of a priest-professor of history.

From the memories of his early boyhood Joseph recorded in his diary two characteristic events: the first

² A pious custom of reverence towards a priest

was the memory of the Galicia Uprising in when the rich citizens of Korczyna were in danger of attack by the poor peasants of Odrzykoń; the second, a curious dream awakening in his soul a great love of the Blessed Virgin.



THE STUDENT'S PRAYER

(Picture by Sister Bernarda Sideko, SSCJ)

"... I learned very easily. ... This awakened my imagination, ... but, thanks to God, I never allowed myself even the slightest doubt against the faith; I was never involved in love affairs; and I did not lose chastity. ... This was certainly caused by the care of the Blessed Virgin, before whose miraculous statue in the Bernardine Church in Rzeszów I had prayed many a time."

(Autobiography, pp. 11-12)

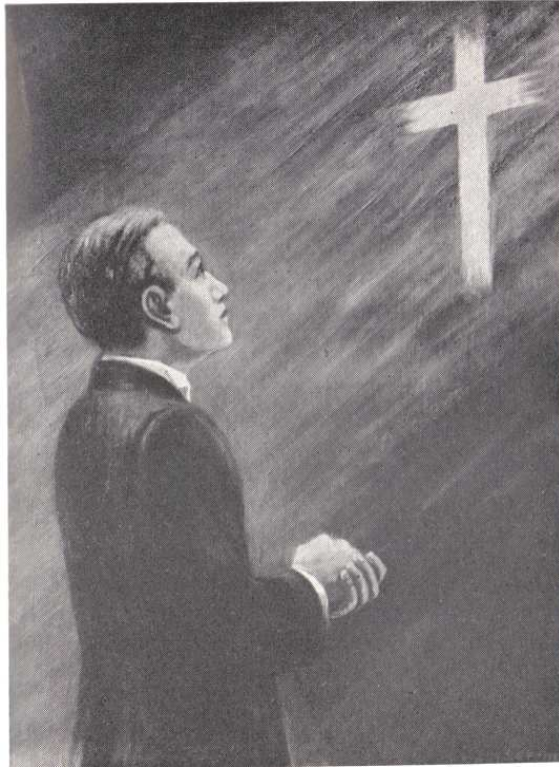
3. "I LEARNED EASILY..."

The education of Joseph Pelczar began very early. From 1848 to 1850 he attended the parish school in Korczyna. His natural talents stimulated his enthusiasm for knowledge, and his religious education had such an influence that he put the knowledge of God in first place. From the religious instructors, who were very often changing, the priest Francieszek Jabczyński most influenced the spirituality of the young Pelczar. It was before him that the boy made his first confession, and at his hands he received his first Holy Communion.

In September of 1850, urged by his schoolteacher Franciszek Rogowski, and religion instructor, Father Jabszyński, the Pelczars sent their son to the elementary school in Rzeszów where in a short time he became first in his class. In the summer of 1852 Joseph, then ten years old, received the Sacrament of Confirmation in his parental parish from the hands of Bishop Franciszek Ksawery Wierchlejski, later, metropolitan archbishop of Lwów. In the autumn of the same year he began to study at the grammar school in Rzeszów. He was an excellent student. Acute intelligence, an absorbing memory and great diligence enabled the boy to quickly absorb the information received during lessons. He applied himself especially to religious instruction and to history because in these two branches of learning he saw the realization of the ideal of an historian priest. The personality of Feliks Dymnicki, an eminent religious instructor, influenced his religious and patriotic formation.

Especially worthy of notice is Joseph's youthful devotion to the Mother of God, manifesting itself by many pilgrimages to the Marian sanctuaries and by frequent prayers before the miraculous statue of Our Lady in the Bernadine church in Rzeszów. As he says, a special protection of the Blessed Virgin kept and developed in his soul the valuable grace of purity.

In 1858, upon completion of the sixth grade of grammar school in Rzeszów, and influenced by the seminarians from Korczyna whom he had met during the holidays, Joseph Pelczar, moved to Przemyśl where he attended both Minor Seminary and the local Academy, and received his secondary school certificate.



**THE INTERNAL STRUGGLE
OF YOUNG PELCZAR**

(Picture by Sister Bernarda Sideko, SSCJ)

"Earthly ideals are fading away. I see the ideal of life in sacrifice and the ideal of sacrifice in priesthood."

(*Autobiography* pp. 17-18)

4. "EARTHLY IDEALS ARE FADING AWAY..."

He who has completed the secondary school sees various perspectives open before him and experience conflict as he stands before the necessity of deciding in favor of one of them. Joseph Pelczar likewise experienced such a struggle within himself prior to his final choice of priesthood. The talented youth was attracted not only to religion but also to history. His love of historical studies increased in July 1860 when, together with his companions, he visited the monuments of Kraków's old city, particularly the famous Jagellonian University. But he soon understood what a great grace priesthood is. In September 1860 after a definite break from the world with his rejection of the enticing career of the scholar, he began theological studies in the Seminary in Przemyśl. At that time he wrote in his diary: "Earthly ideals are fading away. I see the ideal of life in sacrifice and the ideal of sacrifice in priesthood... I admire the vocation of a Polish priest and pious work for the people becomes my leading idea."

In the Seminary of Przemyśl at that time a healthy atmosphere of true piety and brotherly love reigned, caused by the sensible direction of then rector, Father Marcin Skwierczyński, as well as by the kind-hearted devotion to the students of their spiritual director Ignacy Łobos (later bishop of Tarnów.) It was especially to these two priests that Joseph Pelczar owed the stabilization and the development of the grace of vocation. They also turned their attention to his eminent abilities and directed him to university studies.

Most likely it was in the Seminary that Pelczar discovered in himself a talent for writing, and with encouragement by his rector, he read much and learned French and Italian.

On the 17th of July 1864, Joseph Sebastian Pelczar was ordained a priest. The ideal formed in the Seminary of the Polish priest-pastor of the people, now became the program of his life.



VIEW OF ROME

"I thank God continuously for leading me to Rome, for there my mind and heart profited much."

(Autobiography, p. 30)

"... likewise from there I brought forth that internal fire, that does not give rest to the soul."

(Letter to Z. Odescalchi, 10.6.1873)

5. "I THANK GOD CONTINUOUSLY FOR LEADING ME TO ROME"

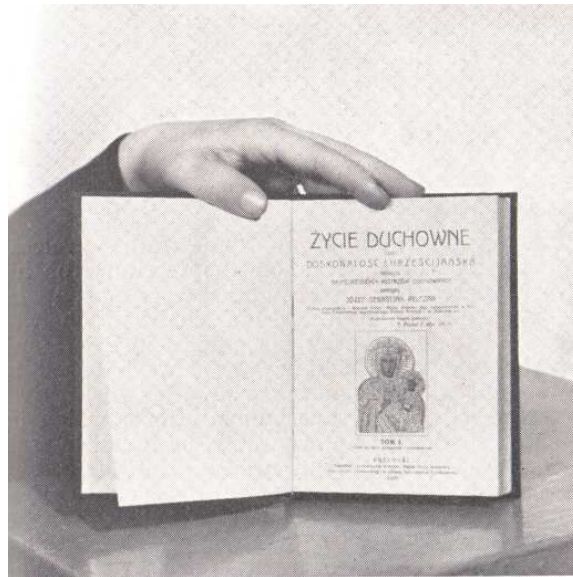
After the work of about a year in the parish of Sambor, Father Pelczar was directed to Rome for higher studies of theology and canon law. Thanks to his intellectual abilities, great diligence and solid elements of learning obtained in the Seminary in Przemyśl, he was able to obtain two doctor's degrees during less than three years (December 1865 to April 1868). He received his doctorate in theology on the 3rd of December 1866 at the papal university "Sapienza" and a second doctorate in canon law on the 2nd of April 1868 at the Institute of St. Apollinary.

Father Pelczar showed still greater fervor in the continual ascent to God by profiting from all the accessible ascetic means such as prayer, spiritual exercises, penance, regular examinations of conscience, spiritual direction and retreat. His spiritual formation was then influenced not only by the professors of the Jesuit college and the rector of the Polish College, Father Piotr Semenenko, but also by the personality of his contemporary [Blessed] Pope Pius IX, who was for Father Pelczar the personification of priestly and episcopal perfection. He would later dedicate to his beloved Pope three large works; moreover, his very life was a vivid reflection of the virtues of Pius IX.

Love for the spiritual life and an ever-increasing desire to give himself more and more fully to God awoke in Father Pelczar a longing for the monastic life. The honest priestly attitude of Jesuit professors with whom

he met every day in college, together with his visit to the cell of St. Stanisław Kostka, gave to this tendency a definite direction. He resolved to become a Jesuit. This desire was never to be realized, however, for the will of God was different for him.

The years spent in the Eternal City were for Father Pelczar a time of special graces. As he writes in his "Autobiography" he always thanked God for the intellectual and spiritual gifts that he received from Him during his studies, and first of all for the fire of priestly fervor that he carried from Rome.



**PHOTOGRAPH OF THE BOOK
"THE SPIRITUAL LIFE"**

" ... Dear Reader, before you delve into the vast sea of Christian perfection, kneel at the feet of Our Lady, "the Morning Star;" and, with a fervent heart, ask for her care; and, through her, for the help of the Holy Spirit, since interior light flows not from the lifeless word but from divine grace. When the Holy Ghost is your Master and our Lady is your Guide, you will soon know the way of perfection, and you will follow it easily."

(*The Spiritual Life*, Przemyśl 1873, p. IV)

6. "FIRE THAT DOES NOT GIVE REST TO THE SOUL..."

After returning from Rome Father Pelczar worked for some years in the territory of his own diocese. The first months were not as he had expected. The professor's chair promised him during his studies in Rome and for which he was always urged to work in haste, was not vacant upon his arrival in Przemyśl. After superhuman efforts that influenced his health unfavorably, he found himself unemployed and felt unneeded. But his strong dependence upon God protected the young priest from depression and sadness. Wholly given to God and to God's interests, Father Pelczar was ready for everything. He asked for the job of parish priest and having three posts to choose from he chose the poorest one of all – Wojutycze near Sambor. After some months he was transferred to Sambor where he began social work and founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. From October 1869 he performed the duties of the prefect of alumni of the Seminary in Przemyśl. In 1870 he received appointment to the post of professor of pastoral theology and from 1873 on he also became a professor of canon law. His occupations in the Seminary did not prevent him from his pastoral and social work. His sermons, ascetic conferences and lectures were inspired by a great love of Christ and of His Church, as well as respect and a humble submission to the Holy Father. For this reason, they caused an awaking of the Christian spirit in an age of general indifference.

An important part was played by Father Pelczar in the local church after the First Vatican Council, when pure theology - based upon the inflexible foundations of the Holy Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church - was being contrasted with the propaganda of liberal contenders fighting against the truth of the pope's infallibility.

Thanks to his broad-mindedness Father Pelczar saw pastoral needs in different fields of life and tried to meet them as best he could. He influenced people not only by sermons but also by the long afternoons spent in the confessional. He spent Sunday afternoons among the young artisans united in the "Gwiazda" (Star) Society. His religious talks counterbalanced the influence of the atheistic founders of manufacturing unions.

The desire for more and more fervent service of Christ and closer following in His footsteps became the cause of an internal struggle for him. Father Pelczar had no certainty as to his further way of life: either to work for the diocese or seek out a monastic order. Seeking divine light, he went to various shrines, and in 1872, undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The recollections from this pilgrimage he described in the book *The Holy Land and Islam*. (Lwów 1875) and which revealed the contemplative abilities of his soul in love with God.

In 1873, his first ascetical work was published, *The Spiritual Life or Christian Perfection*. This work would gradually be revised and expanded and would culminate

in eight editions.³ It reached Poles throughout the entire partitioned Poland as well as emigrants. It played a leading part in the spiritual formation of clergy, as well as of religious and secular persons.

³ Its ninth edition would be published in Kraków during the year of his canonization – 2003.



**FATHER PELCZAR IN THE ACADEMIC
ROBE OF PROFESSOR OF THE
JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY, KRAKOW**

"... at a meeting of the writers, I suffered a public offence from one of the professors of Lw.:w... This neither broke my pen nor paralyzed my spirit, for I did not speak and write for miserable human glory. To my soul, humiliation and disappointment have always been like a heavenly call: "Sursum Corda! ..."4

(Autobiography, p. 72)

⁴ Latin for "Lift up your heart."

7. "SURSUM CORDA."

In April of 1877, Father Pelczar was appointed to the newly established chair of history and canon law at the Jagiellonian University. Three years later he would replace this with the chair of pastoral theology, affording him greater possibility to influence the souls of the priests taught by him. From 1881 to 1885 he was dean of the faculty of theology. Thanks to his endeavors the faculty regained its formerly lost right to confer doctorate degrees, three new chairs were formed, and the theology faculty could now stand on equal status with the university's secular faculties splendidly developing at that time. In the academic year 1880-81 Father Pelczar became the vice-rector of the Jagiellonian University and in 1882-83 was named its rector. Directing the Alma Mater he contributed to enlarging the University buildings and obtained the sites under the building of the clinics. At the University he was very popular in the circle of his colleagues as well as among the students. He was respected as a good lecturer known for his wide social and cultural – educational activities.

The first years spent in the environment of Kraków were not easy for him. The Kraków diocese, at that time administrated by an Austrian apostolic vicar, was undergoing a moral crisis. There was a scandalizing dissonance between the administrator of the diocese and a faction of the Chapter. All possible kinds of human envy served mutual antagonisms. There would even be a trial in secular court. Although Father Pelczar

did not take part in any of this he could not avoid the suspicions and dislike of Bishop Antoni Gałęcki because of Pelczar's friendly relations with Bishop Albin Dunajewski, the future local Ordinary of the diocese of Kraków.

Father Pelczar also experienced much unpleasantness from some members of the clergy. The mere fact that he arrived from another diocese was sufficient cause for distrust by some. Another beam in the eye was his university chair – for many an object of ambition. On account of the sermons that he preached on various occasions he was accused of rivalry with the eminent preacher of that time, Father Zygmunt Golian. Then too a conflict arose with the cathedral canons due to Father Pelczar's opinion concerning the duties of university canons and his manner of following his convictions. The disagreement even had repercussions in Rome, with the Holy See taking the part of the university canons, and explaining that they have the same rights as cathedral canons.

The conferences in apologetics that Father Pelczar preached to university students and to the intellectuals of Kraków met with acute criticism by one of the professors of Lwów, although later they would later be regarded as pearls of Polish homiletics. The efforts of Father Pelczar to gain a rectory in Kraków ended twice in humiliation. Nonetheless, Father Pelczar would declare that these defeats did not break his spirit; on the contrary, every humiliation or sign of contempt was for him like a heavenly call: "Sursum corda."



**FATHER PELCZAR IN ACADEMIC ROBE OF
RECTOR OF JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY**

"Who would not be saddened in seeing so many people deprived of faith, and - despite their strenuous search for happiness - unhappy... Aware also of the dangers threatening the students of the Jagiellonian University, I considered it my duty to warn some of them and to fortify others in the faith. For this purpose, I undertook a series of apologetics⁵ conferences."

(Apologetics Conferences, Krak.:w, 1885, Preface)

⁵ Apologetics refers to the science of dogmatic theology that aims at explaining and justifying religious doctrine so as to show its reasonableness in answer to objections.

8. "LEARNING ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH..."

Work at the university was favorable to the development of writing abilities of Father Pelczar. He published at that time some larger scholarly works such as *Pius IX and His Age*; *Pius IX and His Pontificate*; *Catholic Matrimonial Law*; *An Outline of the History of Homiletics in the Catholic Church* and also *Meditations on Priestly Life*; *Meditations on Religious Life*; *Sermons about Polish Patron Saints*; *Sermons for Marian Feasts*; *Apologetics Conferences*; *Memoirs of the Pilgrimage to Annecy and Paray-le-Monial*, and *Memoirs of the Pilgrimage to Compostella*; as well as a number of sermons for various occasions. Although he did a lot of research he was convinced that learning alone is not enough. Besides, it is necessary to have the wisdom of life that teaches how to submit the lower faculties to reason and reason to the divine law so as to discern the highest Truth and the essential Goodness.⁶ According to this truth Father Pelczar taught and at the same time spiritually formed his listeners. With great veneration, his students describe his lectures on pastoral theology by means of which Father Pelczar delivered knowledge and pointed the way to priestly perfection.

During his stay in Kraków Father Pelczar was interested in all the signs of Catholic and social life, joining actively in the work of various religious and cultural societies. He was the president of the Priestly Confraternity of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament,

⁶ Cf. *Sermon of Father Pelczar, Rector of the Jagiellonian University* (December 1st 1882.)

directed the Priests' Marian Sodality, was a vice-president of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and helped the Felician Sister Samuela, who for many years ran an inexpensive kitchen on Smoleńska street for school children and university students. Father Pelczar contributed to the foundation of the Saint Luke Society that attracted artists interested in religious art.

In order to neutralize the influence of atheistic propaganda, Father Pelczar, in connection with the local Ordinary, edited a Catholic monthly newspaper called *Prawda (Truth.)* From 1883 he became the head of Kraków's Society for the Education of the People, which during the fifteen years of his administration produced abundant fruit. It founded at that time over 600 reading-rooms and lending libraries. It promulgated over one hundred thousand good books, and published a number of pamphlets and booklets. The Society arranged hundreds of different national celebrations and organized a school for servants on Smoleńska Street.

All the multidirectional activities of Father Pelczar aimed at one purpose: he wanted to protect Polish society from the impending dangers threatening faith and morality.



**PICTURE ON THE CEILING OF THE CHURCH OF
THE SISTER SERVANTS OF THE MOST SACRED
HEART OF JESUS, KRAK[W**

"May God forgive my boldness, for until now the founders of religious congregations have been saints; yet I can be somewhat justified, for in the strange course of events, I saw God's will."

(Autobiography, p. 87)

9. "MAY GOD FORGIVE MY BOLDNESS..."

As a professor of the Jagiellonian University, Father Pelczar took an avid part in political life. He belonged to the most influential party in Galicia at that time – the conservative party that took upon itself what was called "organic work" for the cultural improvement of the society. Father Pelczar was a conservatist only concerning religion and Polish national feelings. He did not support, however, the skepticism of the conservatists directed against the democratic idea. He did not negate the possibility of the influence of the lower classes upon the course of political events. He was far from liberalism in the economic field, tolerating only minimal social reforms.

In March of 1891 at the conservatists' meeting, discussing the project of the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the proclamation of the Polish Constitution of May the Third⁷, Father Pelczar suggested forming the Confraternity of Our Lady, Queen of the Polish Crown, which would work to realize the vows of King Jan Kazimierz.⁸ This idea met with the approval of the majority of the audience. The statute of the

⁷ Constitution of the Third of May 1791 gave basic rights and freedoms to the middle class and offered some protection to the peasants in Poland. Prior to this, only noble classes had political rights. The Constitution was the work of the Four Year SEYM (Parliament).

⁸ Vows made by King Jan Kazimierz in Lwów 1656 (in thanksgiving for the liberation of Poland from the Swedes,) that promised to improve the situation of Polish serfs.

Confraternity was prepared and its organization was started. It was founded on May 3, 1891. Among its other duties of religious and charitable character, it had as its aim the protection of young workers. In the first year of its existence the Confraternity created the first Society of Apprentices in Kraków and organized a shelter for the girls coming to Kraków in great numbers from the country seeking jobs in the city, where they often wandered about the streets frozen and hungry.

In the spring of 1893 Father Pelczar brought religious to work in the shelter, members of the Congregation of the Servants of Jesus, a clandestine order founded by Father Honorat Koźmiński in the Russian-occupied Partition in Poland, and who therefore wore secular garb. In agreement with their Founder, Father Pelczar intended to organize a province of this Congregation in Kraków with Sisters in habits adapted to the local conditions. Although Father Honorat shared Father Pelczar's opinion and supported his initiative, this work was not realized, because the General Superior of the Servants of Jesus, Leonia Matyloska, did not agree to an enlargement of the activities of the Congregation. Work for the sick in their homes - which Father Pelczar considered as very necessary and very useful - did not appeal to her.

Around these Sisters, devotedly working for poor girls, gathered a large group of candidates, who wanted to be religious, but who did not see the wisdom of the clandestine community's secular garb [in that place] or feel inclined to go to the region of Poland under Russian rule. Therefore, upon the departure of Mother

Motyłowska, Father Pelczar, with the approval of the then local Ordinary, Albin Cardinal Dunajewski, on April 15th 1894 founded an independent Congregation called the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. The rule of this new Congregation of contemplative-active character was based upon the Third Order Rule of Saint Francis of Assisi. Father Pelczar imbued his rule with a love for the mysteries of the Redeemer concentrated upon the cult of His Heart; with the spirit of evangelic simplicity, poverty, and humble submission to Holy Church; as well as with serenity of spirit in the service of the needy, particularly towards girls working as housemaids, those seeking a job, and the poor and sick.

And so to the numerous duties of the professor of the Jagiellonian University, the Canon of the Chapter in Kraków and the director of various religious and cultural societies was added yet another duty, and one of great importance – the spiritual formation of the members of the newly- founded Congregation. Father Pelczar had to work on the statutes, and arrange instructions for the Mother Superior, the Novice Mistress, the Director of the Girls' Home-Shelter, the Sisters working with the sick, etc. For his Congregation, its Founder composed the *Meditations On Religious Life*, which, when later published, served other Polish religious congregations in Poland and abroad.

Besides his great contribution of work [towards his Sisters] the Founder used to give money generously to the poor Congregation. It cost him also a great deal of trouble in another way. As he himself said, not all went

in such way as he had expected, and he was disappointed and reproached by people more than once. "I do not spare either trouble or sacrifice" – he wrote in his Autobiography – "in the conviction, that God demanded this work from me...On the other hand, the virtues and sacrifices of some sisters were a consolation for me".

An effective method for the formation of the spirit of the newly-founded Congregation was Father Pelczar's sense of humor and wit. So when the sisters complained about the unpleasant smell in their new house, the Founder answered calmly: "There is only one remedy for the house smell: mortification. If this does not work I would suggest stopping the little noses of all the Sisters."

The Congregation the Sisters Servants of the Most Sacred Heart developed quickly and grew in other dioceses of Poland. In 1909 it received *Decretum Laudis*, the Decree of Praise, from the Holy See and, three years later, received final, definitive papal approbation. Today, the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus are in other countries. Besides their two Polish provinces they have posts in Vatican City State, Italy, France, the United States, Libya, Bolivia, the Ukraine and Jamaica.



**SERVANTS' SHELTER IN BISCHWEILER,
ALSACE-LORRAINE, GERMANY**



**NOVICES WITH THEIR DIRECTOR,
MOTHER JADWIGA WILKOWSKA**

"...the virtues and sacrifices of some Sisters ... were a consolation to me; from this Congregation much good came to the sick and to servants, whom I had always pitied in my heart."

(Autobiography p. 88)



PHOTOGRAPH OF BISHOP PELCZAR

"God Himself ...mercifully directed my steps... I can only ascribe this to myself insofar that I prayed and worked so as not to bury the talents given me by God but rather to use all of them in the service of God, the Church, and my native country."

(List of Episcopal Activities, p. 22)

**10. "IF SUCH IS THE DIVINE WILL, I SHALL GIVE
THE REST OF MY DAYS AND THE REST OF MY
STRENGTH TO THE DIOCESE IN WHICH MY
CRADLE STOOD"**

Father Pelczar's twenty-two years of activity in the area of Kraków came to a close by a decree of the Holy See, February 27, 1899, appointing him as Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Przemyśl. On the 2nd of March, Father Pelczar took leave of Kraków and received episcopal consecration at the hands of the Bishop of Przemyśl, Łukasz Solecki, on March 19, 1899, the feast of his Patron, St. Joseph, Spouse of Mary. Father Pelczar considered his elevation to the episcopal dignity to be an undeserved, special grace he received from God, and for which Divine Providence had prepared him through the different ups and downs of his life.

Valuing the confidence of his local Ordinary, the auxiliary bishop was in return ready to carry out every order. He was not only his lawful substitute and first counselor, he was also his most obedient priest of the diocese, and most devoted son. In this spirit of filial love, he performed for the old arch-pastor the many functions of episcopal service such as solemn religious ceremonies, canonical visitations, occasional orations, conferral of the sacraments of confirmation and priesthood. Besides this, he worked much on administration, keeping himself completely in the background of the local Ordinary. Nearly all more important writings of this

period were prepared by Bishop Pelczar and signed by Bishop Solecki.

Bishop Pelczar devoted much time to Catholic societies. He presided at their meetings and their charitable activities in the diocese were under his general supervision. In accord with the local Ordinary, Bishop Pelczar founded the Society of Catholic Workers in Przemyśl under the name "Friendship," an organization that in the following years would found a Bank for Financial Assistance and would erect agricultural society libraries and Catholic reading rooms.

In March of 1900, upon the death of Bishop Solecki, the Chapter of Przemyśl unanimously chose Bishop Pelczar as diocesan administrator. On the 17th of December of the same year he received the papal appointment to the post of Bishop of the Diocese of Przemyśl and on the 13th of January, 1901 his inauguration took place.



**THE ALTAR WITH THE MIRACULOUS PICTURE OF
OR LADY OF CZ STOCHOWA**

"The Mother of God, Mary, Queen of the Polish Crown ... did not cease to reign over our [Polish] nation, and she always prays for us before the Throne of God... In her help and in the mercy of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is our hope."

*(Sermons for the Festivities and for the Feast days
of the Virgin Mary, part 2, Krak.:w, 1891, p. 150)*

11. "I EMBRACE ALL PEOPLE WITH A FATHERLY HEART"

Bishop Pelczar's administration took place at the critical time in European history⁹, a time of disturbances, riots and wars as well as radical political and social changes connected with the people's outlook. To direct a large diocese during such a stormy epoch was not an easy thing. It demanded an open attitude of mind towards those healthy tendencies of the new times, while at the same time requiring uncommon energy in the firm resistance against all that endangers the purity of faith and morals. The difficult situation of the bishop was still aggravated by the spiritual decadence predominant at that time in the Polish nation, as also by moral inaction among the clergy, among whom the influences of josephinism¹⁰ still lingered. The Bishop, aware of the threatening danger, not only mobilized all the forces of mind, will and heart in the struggle for the victory of truth and goodness, but tried to engage in it priests, consecrated persons and laymen.

⁹ Especially during the First World War (1914-1918), much of which took place in the Polish territories which had been divided among Germany (Prussia), Austria and Russia.

¹⁰ A system of absolute enlightened rule introduced in Austria by Emperor Joseph II (1741-1790), which sought secular control over ecclesiastical affairs.

From the moment he assumed administration of his diocese, Bishop Pelczar had an explicit aim and plan of work. His pastoral letter and the address he delivered in the Cathedral at Przemyśl on that day expressed his paternal care for the fold entrusted to him: "I embrace all classes and all souls with a paternal heart, I resolve to sacrifice everything for the salvation of all people and I wish that no soul of those God has entrusted to me will be lost, but that all of them would find true happiness in God."¹¹

Bishop Pelczar wanted to have a holy diocese. Therefore he put in first place the cure of souls; and as far as pertained to all else, he was occupied only so far as it served pastoral work. He himself directly influenced the faithful by means of pastoral letters, occasional sermons, retreats and canonical visitations. In order to increase the degree of piety in the diocese, he supported and propagated such religious services as best corresponded to the Polish mind, attracted by the concrete. And so he pointed to the immensity of God's love for people, symbolized by the pierced Heart of the Savior - love expressed in the mysteries of the Incarnation, Redemption, and Eucharist. In the parishes, he introduced Eucharistic devotions and monthly adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. He encouraged the honor of the Mother of God, Queen of the Polish

¹¹ *Chronicle of the Diocese of Przemyśl, Poland (KDP)* yearbook: (1901) pp. 6-7.

Crown, who never ceases to reign over us and to pray for us before God's throne.

The Bishop realized that to lead a religious and moral life at that time called for new methods and the extension of activities in the fields of charity and social culture. Therefore he cared much for the development and successful work of such Catholic associations as Marian Sodalties, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Confraternity Boni Pastoris, the Third Order of Saint Francis of Assisi, the Rosary Association and a number of others. When the enthusiasm of some of these associations began wane, he reorganized them and delivered suitable incentives for the animation of their original zeal. And when one of them ceased to be useful because of its stagnation – he founded a new one. In spite of these efforts and endeavors the bishop did not achieve his expected results in this area, since he did not find the support of the majority of the priests, accustomed as they were, to minimalism.



BISHOP PELCZAR DELIVERING AN ADDRESS

"Dearest sons in Christ our Lord...be men of prayer...of virtue...of learning...May your ideal and your ambition be to do the most good during your lives...and then to die 'in the Lord' without money and debts, but with a great sheaf of merits in hand."

[*Chronicle of the Diocese of Przemyśl, Poland (KDP)*,
yearbook: 1 (1901) 1, pp. 9-11]

12. "BE MEN OF PRAYER, VIRTUE, KNOWLEDGE AND WORK..."

Bishop Pelczar demanded highly of his priests. He demanded from them a spirit of prayer, fundamental virtue, the knowledge proper to them and apostolic fervor. He was convinced that ignorance and the bad life of priests – are two murderers of souls. The formation of good priests cost him much effort and many sacrifices. He lavished special attention upon the Seminary and the Minor Seminary for boys that he founded in 1902. He dedicated to his priests several of his works: *Study of Asceticism for the Priest*, *Jesus Christ Model and Master of the Priest*, *Pastoral Medicine*, *The Pastor According to the Heart of Jesus*. In his suggested personal prayers at the end of every meditation for priests, his tendency to reach the heights is continually repeated, as expressed by the words: "May I live in You and work only for You, my God!"¹², or "May my life be an incessant adoration"¹³, "May I bring fame to Your name on the earth!"¹⁴, "May my whole life burn for Your glory!"¹⁵, "May I give You, my God, every

¹² Cf. *Jesus Christ, Model and Master of the Priest*, Przemyśl 1911, vol. 3, p. 196.

¹³ *ibid.* p. 53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* vol. 1, p. 108.

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 118.

moment of my life!"¹⁶, "My hidden God, may You receive adoration and glory from all of us!"¹⁷

In accordance with these expectations, the Bishop gave his priests the necessary assistance. He took care of the priests' retreats; he gave them opportunities to increase their knowledge and to supplement their theology; he founded for them the Diocesan Library, the Diocesan Museum and the Publishing House of religious works; he edited a periodical under the title *Chronicle of the Diocese of Przemyśl*. He would serve by his word, his pen and, principally, by his example of an authentic sacerdotal attitude and apostolic fervor for the salvation and sanctification of souls.

In making demands, the Bishop was gentle but decisive. He was not indulgent of evil, nor did he tolerate mediocrity of life, still he never condemned the man. Possessing much understanding of those mistakes rooted not in bad will but in the weakness of human nature, Bishop Pelczar was always ready to forgive.

In caring for the spiritual good of the priests, Bishop Pelczar added jokes to his reprimands. Thus in a letter to one of his fellow-students from the Seminary he mentioned some of his weaknesses and then said: "May the Lord Jesus give you more sense and better discerning. You are losing your right to the honorable name of 'faithful medieval knight'. Some more cases like that and you will lose it altogether and be proclaimed *urbi et orbi*"¹⁸ to be a light-minded person."

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 171.

¹⁷ *ibid.* vol 3, p. 60.

¹⁸ "For the city and the world"

Observing the need of a more fundamental spiritual formation for the priests, during the last years of his life, the bishop developed a project for the reorganization of Ecclesiastical Seminaries in Poland and a program of five-year studies. Although not all members of the [Polish] Episcopate declared themselves supportive of this project, it became fully realized shortly after the death of Bishop Pelczar.



PHOTOGRAPH OF BISHOP PELCZAR

"You especially, servants of God and my assistants in the apostolic work, redouble your fervor today – not only in the pulpit, in the confessional and in the school – but also in all the fields of religious and social life. Be yourselves holy and inflamed with divine fire, true fathers of the people."

[*Chronicle of the Diocese of Przemyśl, Poland (KDP)*
yearbook: 1 (1901), pp. 4-5

13. "IT IS NECESSARY TO GO OUT UPON THE COUNTRY LANES..."¹⁹

From the very beginning of his priestly life, Bishop Pelczar gave himself to social work, since he believed that one cannot solve pastoral problems before resolving urgent social questions. Never, however, was he for solving social problems by use of force that might cause immediate change of social structures. He was convinced that the most proper solution of this question should follow the way of evolution through an organic work in the development of a national and Catholic consciousness of the people, through education and the increase of culture. The people had to be raised to a certain intellectual level so they could be admitted to cooperation with the intellectuals in the fields of social economy, culture and education. Such convictions explained the Bishop's fervor for founding in the country and in towns, the reading rooms, cooperatives, Raffeisen,²⁰ funds, various artisans' associations and, foremost, the Catholic Social Association which was a many sided organization. It was later united with the Confraternity of Our Lady, Queen of the Polish Crown and adopted a typically religious character.

Bishop Pelczar's primary concern was to see to it that work to improve the lot of the people was inspired by the Church. He therefore encouraged the priests to redouble their fervor, working not only "in the pulpit, in

¹⁹ A reference to Matthew 22:9

²⁰ A form of saving banks in Germany introduced by Fredrich W. Raffeisen (1818-1888), became popular also in Poland.

the confessional, and in the school, but also in all the fields of religious and social life."

Preaching to priests on different occasions the Bishop firmly stated the principle: "It is not enough today to confine one's work only to the church or the school, but it is necessary to approach society with great faith and great love, especially towards the weakest, the afflicted and abandoned. You should, according to the words of the Gospel, go out into the streets and country lanes to encourage nonbelievers, those who are indifferent towards God and the Church, to enter the marriage banquet."²¹

In order to make pastoral work easier for the priests their local Ordinary organized for them two social courses. He himself devoted much place in his sermons and pastoral letters to the problems of social justice and Christian mercy, underlining the supportive role of those who stand in the foreground of society.

²¹ List of episcopal activities p. 92. Rkp in ASK.



**THE MARIAN CONGRESS IN PRZEMYŚL, POLAND
DURING WHICH A CATHOLIC SOCIAL COURSE
WAS ALSO TAKING PLACE**

" At this Congress, we shall deliberate how to develop a Catholic social action in accordance with papal encyclicals and to not only animate Catholic associations but concentrate and unify them; how to form professional organizations – so necessary today; how to their general organization – whether under the designation of Catholic-social union, or under some other title that would attract Catholics despite differences of state and party, so that such would include every parish, all dioceses and the entire country."

(*The Memorial Register*, Przemyśl, Poland, 1912, p. 18)

14. "THERE ARE DANGERS FOR FAITH AND PIETY IN THE DIOCESE"

The majority of members of Bishop Pelczar's diocese were simple people characterized by a sincere piety inherited from their forefathers. This piety, however, devoid of intellectual foundations, was exposed to danger from radical popular activists attempting to shake the confidence of the people in the Church and in Catholic priests. Therefore an object of the Bishop's special care was to deepen this piety, directly, by means of propagation of the Gospel and by a systematic teaching of religion at schools; indirectly, by improving the organization of ecclesiastical life and by the foundation of new parishes. To discuss the important pastoral questions, each year Bishop Pelczar convened the Congregation of Deans, and took care of decanate²² Congregations outside Przemyśl that had to convene quarterly.

The diocesan synods that Bishop Pelczar revived after an interim of 179 years contributed in great part to the renewal of the Christian life and the growth of morality. He was the first of all Bishops in the partitioned Poland to have the courage to convoke a synod during a time of foreign occupation of Poland. Thus, his synod, convoked in 1902 was an important event not only for the Diocese of Przemyśl, but also for entire Church in Poland. The synodal directives published in 1903 governing the entire religious life of the diocese,

²² Decanate – a church administrative district of 10 churches

served also as a pastoral blueprint for other Polish bishops to follow.

During his 25 years in office, Bishop Pelczar convoked three synods and prepared a fourth one, the realization of which was prevented by his death.

The apostolic fervor of Bishop Pelczar was confined not only to his own diocese and country. With his apostolic heart he embraced the whole Church and all of mankind. Supporting Catholic schools and missionary activities, treating people of other religions with kindness, love and understanding, Bishop Pelczar wanted all people in the entire world to know and accept "the divine message of salvation."



BISHOP PELCZAR AT HIS DESK

"It was my ardent desire to also serve God with my pen, and to divide with my brother—priests what I had perceived as a priest and bishop, and what I had taught as a professor in Przemyśl and Kraków, so that all the gifts received from God would be utilized, and that I might be useful to the people even after my death."

*(The Pastor According to the Heart of Jesus,
Lwów, 1913, Preface)*

15. "I WANTED TO SERVE GOD ALSO WITH THE PEN."

The written work of Bishop Pelczar was done at the time of inertia in the domain of Polish religious literature. As he said in the preface to *The Spiritual Life* there were few sowers and few harvesters, few writers and not many readers. Aware of his God-given talent for writing, the bishop wanted to use this gift for the glory of God, and for the salvation and sanctification of souls. He began his written work immediately upon completion of his university studies of theology and canon law in Rome, and carried it on till the end of his life. This work he did not consider as the first aim of his life. He performed it rather in the background of the occupations directly resulting from his priestly vocation. As he had an innate ability for immediate concentration of thought, he could do much in this area in short periods of time. He wrote irregularly, generally standing at his desk because he did not always have the time to sit quietly at his writing table. In this way he created his prolific work comprised of over 40 larger works (not counting pastoral letters, instructions, articles published in different periodicals, office forms, correspondence and personal notes, besides the works which remained in manuscripts.)

In his written work Bishop Pelczar did not limit himself to one field. His works can be divided into:

ascetical works:

The Spiritual Life (8 editions²³), *Mediations on Priestly Life* (4 editions), *Jesus Christ Model and Master of the Priest* (2 editions), *Meditations on Religious Life for Religious* (3 editions), *Meditations on the Life of Our Lord Jesus for Religious*;

popular dogmatic works:

Apologetic Conferences (2 editions), *Catholic Religion, The Mysteries of the Catholic Religion, Defense of the Catholic Religion*; homiletic works: *Sermons for the Festivities and for the Feast days of the Virgin Mary* (3 editions), *Occasional Sermons and Speeches, The Sermons on the Polish Patron Saints*; and works in pastoral theology: *The Pastor According to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, The Pastoral Medicine* (3 editions);

works in canon law:

Catholic Matrimonial Law (4 editions), *Directives from the three diocesan synods, Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus*;

historical works:

Pius IX and His Pontificate (2 editions), *Pius IX and Poland, An Outline of the History of Homiletics in the Catholic Church; The History of Charity in the Catholic Church, Freemasonry* (4 editions) *The*

²³ Its ninth edition was published in Kraków in 2003.

French Revolution (2 editions); memoirs of pilgrimages: *The Holy Land and Islam, Memoirs of the Pilgrimage to Compostella, Memoirs of the Pilgrimage to Annecy and Paray-le-Monial.*

Evidence of the value of these works is seen in their reprint into several editions.

The ascetical works of Bishop Pelczar deserve special attention, especially his *Spiritual Life*. With the help of this book, Bishop Pelczar influenced Polish clergy, religious congregations and laymen living under three foreign occupations or under long decades of emigration. He contributed in great part to preserving unity of spirit of the Polish nation; hence, one may say without exaggeration that he was, at that time, the spiritual leader of the nation.

Although now the ascetical works of Bishop Pelczar demand adaptation as far as style is concerned, since they date from a past century, they are, however, ever contemporary since their content is based upon the unchanging foundations of Holy Scriptures. Moreover in them there are many such elements as were explained more precisely by the teachings of Vatican Council II and are realized in the Universal Church and in the internal life of the [Polish] nation. Bishop Pelczar's understanding of the fundamental role of Holy Scripture in asceticism deserves special attention (emphasizing adherence to the pedagogical influences of Christ (the Master in priestly formation,) while giving due attention

to the motherhood of the Mother of God.²⁴ In devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Polish character, he saw the necessary condition of the spiritual renewal of the nation.

²⁴ Cf. *Meditations about the Life of Jesus Christ for Nuns*, Kraków 1918, p.730.



**INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE
SISTER SERVANTS OF THE MOST
SACRED HEART OF JESUS, KRAKÓW**

"Sister Servant of Christ, if you desire to sanctify yourself, never neglect...meditation;...Nothing so enlightens the soul...as meditation on the Cross...nothing so affects the soul as the Mystery of the Altar, rightly called the mystery of love."

*Meditations on Religious Life for Religious, Kraków,
1915, Preface and pp. 128-129)*

16. THAT YOU MAY FIND TRUE HAPPINESS ALREADY HERE ON EARTH"

Although Bishop Pelczar himself did not experience the happiness of monastic life, he still appreciated the role of religious orders and congregations in the Church, and he took truly fatherly care of all the religious communities in his diocese. He himself was the founder of a religious congregation and was himself even a member of the Third Order of Saint Francis of Assisi. As a diocesan priest, and afterwards as a bishop, he practiced the evangelical counsels daily.

During his entire life the Saint²⁵ was distinguished by perfect purity. The grace of preserving this treasure in all its freshness he owed to the special care of the Mother of God, to whom in the dawn of his life he gave himself to be her exclusive possession.

Attracted by the charm of the poor man of Assisi, at the tomb of St. Francis he professed his vows as a member of the Franciscan Third Order, and like Saint Francis, he loved poverty. Although as a bishop he appeared in the magnificent ceremonial dress of the episcopate as was customary for the time, yet in his private life he was very modest and poor. He wore darned and mended clothes; he limited himself to poor food; he admitted his peasant origin, ordering that in his magnificent set of office rooms, there be placed the portrait of his parents dressed in their country clothes. His bedroom and his study, with their simple scrubbed

²⁵ The original edition called him Servant of God

floor and common pieces of furniture made of unpolished wood, were in contrast with the episcopal office, waiting room and guest-chambers.

His obedience was always perfect. On one hand he was full of initiative and apostolic zeal, yet on the other, he would not undertake anything on his own, instead being dependent in everything upon the Bishop's will; moreover, as a bishop he showed filial submissiveness to each Pope and strict obedience to the orders of the Church.

Living each day according to the spirit of the Gospel, the Saint²⁶ could freely and easily make the loftiest demands upon the clergy, and with a skillful hand lead them along the way of Christian perfection. In conferences to religious Sisters, he emphasized the indispensable role of mental prayer to the interior life, since it leads to a better knowledge and love of God and also gives strength for sacrifice and for the toils inseparable from life and apostolic work. He encouraged a life of penance and giving oneself to God - assuring that in Him a religious soul can find true happiness already here on earth.²⁷

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ Cf. Letter of Bishop Pelczar to nuns of all Orders and of all Congregations of July 17th 1914. Print in ASK.



**THE SISTER SERVANTS OF THE MOST SACRED
HEART AT NURSING;
WORKING WITH ORPHANS IN BOLIVIA**

"...charity towards the poor, the sick, the orphaned and the suffering in soul is... evident testimony of the divinity of the Catholic Religion, and the eloquent apology of the Church, speaking not with words, but with deeds."

An Outline of the History of Charity in the Catholic Church, Krakow, 1916, p. 1)

17. "ONE MUST KISS THE HAND OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN HAPPINESS AS IN SUFFERING"

The systematic realization of the pastoral plans of Bishop Pelczar was interrupted by the war of 1914. He would spend the war outside his residence although in quite a different manner from what he intended. Unforeseen circumstances influenced the course of events.

As a member of the House of Seniors in Vienna, Bishop Pelczar was well informed about Austria's preparations for war, about the strategic position of Przemyśl, Poland, and about the town's fortification continuing a number of years. The Przemyśl fortress was one of the largest in Europe. As to its size it took third place after Antwerp, Belgium and Verdun, France. According to Austrian calculations, it was a fortress unconquerable by the enemy. Nonetheless, in the event of war, the siege of Przemyśl was expected as well as its temporary isolation from the rest of the territory. It therefore seemed likely that the diocese would lose all contact with its Bishop.

To prevent this, the delegation of duties took place at the consistory in the middle of September. Auxiliary Bishop Fischer would remain in Przemyśl and it was decided that the local Ordinary would live in Gorlice and thus take care of the entire diocese. His was a much more difficult role; to retain contact with his clergy and his faithful, the Bishop was leaving a well-secured fortress during wartime, and this at the risk of his life.

While this prediction of the siege of Przemyśl proved to be accurate (since already on the 22nd of September the town was completely closed,) however the administration planned for the territory was not successful, since the war strategy was a surprise. The evacuation of the people because of approaching front, and the long fighting at the Potkarpacie cut Bishop Pelczar off from his diocese. This situation was the cause of great moral sufferings for him. He felt like a pastor severed from the fold entrusted to his care, like a man disowned through the criticism of people who explained his departure from Przemyśl as cowardice and a lack of a sense of duty. Still greater suffering was caused by the fear of the uncertain fate of the nation. The bloody conflagration of war taking place on the Polish territories, as well as the numerous Polish political parties with various political aims, did not promise a peaceful freedom and independence for the country. So when at that time news reached him about the death of a relative, he said, "We know, that all this comes from good God. One must kiss the hand of divine Providence in happiness as in suffering."²⁸

During the time of his separation from his diocese, Bishop Pelczar went to Rome to inform Pope Benedict XV about the situation of the Church in Galicia, and to incline the Holy See towards a pronouncement in the defense of Poland. Because of His intervention the Pope ordered, throughout the whole Christian world, the establishment of a "Day of Poland" with collections

²⁸ Memories of Bishop Pelczar p. 111 Mps in ASK.

gathered on this occasion destined for the poorest Polish people. The writings directed to Poles at Benedict XV's recommendation had no influence upon the course of general European politics, but they contributed very much to raising the spirits of the nation disheartened by defeats.

At the beginning of 1915 Bishop Pelczar wrote a booklet entitled: *Call to Work on the Spiritual Renewal of the Polish Nation*. Published some time later, this work had a good influence, encouraging all the people to work on the future structure of the State based on the principles of Christian democracy. In its second edition, this even reached the Polish territories under Russian rule, and reprinted later in the third and the fourth edition, was circulated throughout all of Poland.

The stay of Bishop Pelczar outside the diocese was prolonged to nine months. Only in May of 1915 did the armies of the allied states break the front at Gorlice and the offensive moved east. At the beginning of June, Przemyśl was liberated.

The war caused much devastation. After his return to Przemyśl, Bishop Pelczar tried to relieve the most painful consequences of war, taking care of orphans, widows, prisoners of war, wounded soldiers and people deprived of a roof over their head. Entrusting the reconstruction of ruined churches to the care of the auxiliary bishop, Bishop Pelczar occupied himself with charitable work, cooperating with the Episcopal Committee of Kraków founded by Bishop Sapieha.

From this period came his book *An Outline of the History of the Works of Mercy in the Catholic Church* in

which he reminds us of the truth that charity towards the poor, the sick and those suffering in their souls is an evident proof of the divinity of the Catholic religion.

18. "THROUGHOUT MY LIFE I HAVE LONGED FOR AN INDEPENDENT, STRONG AND HOLY POLAND"

The local Ordinary of Przemyśl at first declared himself for Austrian politics. He believed that only the support of the Catholic Habsburg dynasty would give the Poles a real guarantee of regaining independence. He also counted upon the November 5, 1916 manifesto of the Emperor promising the formation of a Polish State on both the territory formerly under "Russian rule" and on Galicia. Already in February, 1918, when Austria, in alliance with Germany, undersigned the treaty of Brześć which was unprofitable for Poland, regardless of the consequences, Bishop Pelczar pointed out to the representatives of the government the injury given to the Polish nation. Taking into consideration the laws of divine logic and divine justice, he foretold in public the quick decline of the Austro-Hungarian state. It soon came to pass. In July, General Foch defeated the German army at the Marne. At the beginning of November, the defeated Austrians signed the armistice in Villa Giusti near Padova. Some weeks later the Soviet government made a resolution pronouncing invalid the treaties that had partitioned Poland. In this way, after 123 years of bondage, Poland began to arrive upon the world stage.

In those decisive moments, when the disturbed Polish political parties deliberated among themselves the destiny of a new Poland, Bishop Pelczar directed an open letter to the representatives of the Republic, calling their attention to their duties to the nation and their

attitude in Parliament, from which would depend, in great part, the structure and the character of the newly organized state. On this occasion he pointed to the disproportion between his ideal vision of Poland and the present: "Throughout my entire life I have longed for an independent, strong and holy Poland. I prayed for such a Poland and I worked as I could for such a Poland...Today the reviving Poland represents a sad enough view. I feel very sorrowful about this... and as the senior of arch-pastors who is at any moment on the brink of the grave and fearful of divine punishment upon the nation... I desire with a great love, but also with a great openness to point out today's mistakes and to stress how we ought to show our gratitude to God and seek how to secure the successful future of our country."²⁹ Thus did the Bishop point out in turn all the national defects, those weaknesses tormenting society and the mistakes which the first Parliament of the Republic had made, pointing at the same time toward an efficacious defensive means, namely, the faithful observance of the Catholic principles in private and in public life, together with carrying out necessary social reforms.

The great contribution of Bishop Pelczar to the spiritual building of the State was appreciated not only by the contemporary Apostolic Nuncio, Achilles Ratti, but also by the representatives of the government who decorated him in 1923 with the medal "Polonia

²⁹ Open letter to the deputies of April 26th 1921. Print in ASK.

Restituta" (Poland Restored) with the rank Commander's Cross with Star.³⁰

³⁰ The Polish Parliament instituted the Order of *Polonia Restituta* on 4th February 1921, for the recognition of those who had rendered extraordinary service to Poland and the Polish people.

19. "COME MY LORD JESUS"

On the feast of Saint Joseph, March 19th 1924, Bishop Pelczar celebrated his 25th anniversary of episcopal consecration. The pontifical High Mass for the intentions of the eminent jubilarian was offered in the Cathedral by Bishop Fisher, who described, by long discourse, the activities of Bishop Pelczar and highlighted his merits. Responding in words full of simplicity and humility, Bishop Pelczar pointed out that whatever good he did in his life was not his accomplishment, but that all the works that came alive through him, are indebted to the love of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the care of the Mother of God, who he loved with a childlike love, as well as to the help of Saint Joseph, his Patron.

This jubilee would be the last feast on earth for the arch-pastor of Przemyśl. Immediately afterwards came the sufferings and the last struggle of the weak yet to the end, vital organism. Because of a cold caught in the unheated cathedral, the Bishop developed pneumonia (incurable at that time.) He looked quietly and confidently to the approaching reality of death with complete surrender to the will of the Creator, with joy and humor. When the physician diagnosed pneumonia, the Bishop even then quick to joke murmured to himself, "Joey, this is the end of you."

With great devotion, he accepted Viaticum and Extreme Unction at the hands of his auxiliary Bishop. Afterward he said to the assembled priests, "I occupied a high position, yet I was only a man. If ever I

offended anyone among the priests, I ask you to beg his pardon for me."³¹ He died on March 28th 1924. The last act of his love for God were his words, "Come my Lord Jesus, come my salvation."³²

³¹ Cf. *Memories* p.33.

³² *ibid.* p. 183 and 195.

20. "HE FULFILLED THE TASK OF HIS LIFE..."

The author of one of the obituaries of Bishop Pelczar gave him the following testimony, "The saintly priest, the great bishop and lover of his people, has fulfilled the duty of his life. For a long time as from a commander's tomb he will still be saying to us: 'Poland, be united in mutual love.' He did not harvest the ripe crops, yet the twenty-five years of the sowing of his words will yield great fruits in the future, in a free homeland."

This statement is not only a poetic metaphor of the chief editor of "The Province of Rzeszów and of Jarosław," but a statement based on facts. Bishop Pelczar fulfilled his task well on earth. Because of his work on himself and his opening of himself to grace, he incessantly developed the Christian ideal in the priestly and episcopal vocation. His fervent devotion to the Mother of God, to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to the Blessed Sacrament impressed a characteristic mark upon his spirituality. He was a man of prayer, a soul of the diocesan apostolate and a titan of work. His heroic faith, hope and love introduced him more and more deeply into the secrets of the spiritual life, raising his soul to the heights of mystical union. Fuller and fuller participation in divine life made him more and more human. His cordiality in manner, simplicity and direct contact opened for him the way to souls and facilitated his arch-pastoral work. Oriented toward God he drew the whole diocese after himself.

In performing the duties of his state Bishop Pelczar was distinguished by prudence, justice, goodness, mildness and extraordinary diligence. According to the witnesses of his life, he probably made a vow to make good use of every moment of time; All who daily encountered him unanimously affirm that he did everything in such a way that indicated he was bound to this vow. For his part, it was great sacrifice joined to a perfect life and great heroic love for Our Savior.

The common conviction of the diocesan faithful regarding the sanctity of their Bishop, the numerous graces received through his intercession and repeated requests for the introduction of the cause of his beatification induced the Diocese of Przemyśl to begin the work towards the Church's official approbation of the holiness of Bishop Pelczar. The process of information for the beatification of the Servant of God was opened on March 28, 1954. Two years later, the acts of the diocesan process were transmitted to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, not the Congregation for the Saints. The examination of the numerous writings of the Servant of God took ten years. Four theological censors expressed their approbation for the contents of the writings especially for two of his works: *The Spiritual Life* and *Pius IX and His Pontificate in contrast with the Background of the Nineteenth Century Church*. (This last one was also published in Italian.) The Congregation issued a decree on the writings of the

Servant of God in 1971 and granted permission for the continuation of his cause.³³

In Rzeszow, Poland, on the 2nd of June, 1991, Pope John Paul II elevated him to the glory of the beatified, and, on May 18, 2003 in Rome, the Holy Father pronounced him a saint of the Universal Church.

During the homily at St. Joseph Sebastian's canonization, the Holy Father, John Paul II, said of the new saint: "He himself strove for holiness and he led others towards it. He was zealous in all things, but in such a way that in his service Christ himself was the Master. His motto in life was: "All for the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus through the immaculate hands of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary." This motto shaped his spiritual life, which consisted in the entrustment of himself, his life and his ministry to Christ through Mary. His gift to Christ was intended above all as a response to His love, contained and revealed in the sacrament of the Eucharist ... In raising Joseph Sebastian Pelczar to the glory of the altars, I ask that through his intercession, the splendor of his holiness may be an encouragement for the Sisters Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, for the Church of Przemyśl and for all believers in Poland and throughout the world, to nurture this love for Christ and for his Mother."

The relics of Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar presently rest in the Cathedral Church in Przemyśl. In

³³ The original edition concluded with an exhortation to pray to the Servant of God for the sake of his elevation to the glory of the altar. The concluding paragraph was added in 2005.

Krak.:w, Saint Joseph Sebastian is venerated in a special way in the church of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, where there is a chapel dedicated to him. His feast day is observed on January 19th.

**NOVENA TO OBTAIN GRACES THROUGH THE
INTERCESSION OF SAINT JOSEPH SEBASTIAN**

Almighty, Eternal God, One Holy Trinity, I adore you and give you thanks for the graces you have bestowed upon Saint Joseph Sebastian, whom you have inspired with fervent devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Virgin Mary.

Following his example, may I too love the Divine Heart, and may this Heart become a source of holiness and consolation for me.

Hear my prayer, through the intercession of Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, and grant me the grace of...which I ask of you. Amen.

*For graces received through the intercession of Saint
Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, please inform:*

**SISTER SERVANTS OF THE
MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS**

Sacred Heart Province
866 Cambria Street
Cresson, Pennsylvania 16630
USA

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Dream of Joseph Pelczar	p. 15
2. The Student's Prayer.....	p. 19
3. Internal Struggle of Young Pelczar.....	p. 22
4. View of Rome.....	p. 25
5. Photograph of the Book <i>The Spiritual Life</i>	p. 28
6. Fr. Pelczar in Academic Robe of Professor ...	p. 32
7. Fr. Pelczar in Academic Robe of Rector	p. 35
8. Ceiling of Sisters' Church, Krakow.....	p. 38
9. Servants' Shelter, Bischweiler.....	p. 43
10. M. Jadwiga Wilkowska with Novices	p. 43
11. Photograph, Bishop Pelczar	p. 44
12. Altar with Miraculous Picture, Czestochowa .	p. 47
13. Bishop Pelczar Delivering An Address.....	p. 51
14. Photograph of Bishop Pelczar.....	p. 55
15. Marian Congress, Przemyśl, Poland.....	p. 58
16. Bishop Pelczar at his Desk	p. 61
17. Interior of Sisters' Church, Krakow.....	p. 66
18. Sisters at Nursing; Work with Orphans.....	p. 69

CONTENTS BY CHAPTERS

Forward.....	p. 4.
Introduction.....	p. 10
1. "As a Torch Burning in the Fog."	p. 12
2. "My Heart ...Drawn to the Parental Home."	p. 16
3. " I Learned Easily."	p. 20
4. "Earthly Ideals are Fading Away."	p. 23
5. "I Thank God ...for Leading Me to Rome."	p. 26
6. "Fire That Does Not Give Rest to the Soul."	p. 29
7. "Sursum Corda."	p. 33
8. "Learning Alone is Not Enough."	p. 36
9. "May God Forgive My Boldness"	p. 39
10. "...To the Diocese in which My Cradle Stood." .	p. 45
11. "I Embrace All Men with a Fatherly Heart."	p. 48
12. "Be Men of Prayer, Virtue, Knowledge, Work." p.	52
13. "...Go Out Upon the Country Lanes."	p. 56
14. "There Are dangers for Faith and Piety..."	p. 59
15. "To Serve God Also with My Pen."	p. 62
16. "That You May Find True Happiness..."	p. 67
17. "One Must Kiss the Hand of ...Providence..." ...	p. 70
18. "An Independent, Strong, and Holy Poland." ...	p. 74
19. "Come, My Lord Jesus!"	p. 77
20. "He Fulfilled the Task of His Life."	p. 79
Prayer for His Intercession	p. 82
List of Illustrations.....	p. 83
Table of Contents by Chapter	p. 84