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## A WOMAN UNITED WITH THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST – BLESSED KLEMENSA STASZEWSKA OSU (1890–1943)

**Summary:** The aim of this article is to examine the charism of Blessed Klemensa Staszewska, with which she was endowed by God, and its relevance to all believers. The sources of this study are her “spiritual notes”, written at the instruction of her spiritual director, and her letters. The first stage of the study examines how Blessed Klemensa, accepting her Ursuline vocation, experienced the desire for a spousal bond with Jesus and to give to Him alone all that she is and all that she possesses. In the second part of the article, a study is carried out on the spiritual desire expressed by Blessed Klemensa in her plan of life, written on the day of her perpetual vows to unite herself to the Sacrifice of Christ and to His intentions and the inner disposition with which He offered Himself on the Cross. Here it was important to examine how Blessed Klemensa experienced all the tribulations and difficulties of life in union with Jesus. This dimension of her spiritual life can be regarded as prophetic for both consecrated and lay persons, because it concerns the universal priesthood resulting from baptismal consecration, which seems to be underestimated in Christian spirituality today. In the fourth and final part of the article, it is shown how Blessed Klemensa combined a deep spiritual life with her ministry of caring for children and the formation of young people. She maintained this life amidst her duties and responsibility for the Ursuline community throughout the hardships of World War II and when, after helping with heroic courage those sought by the Gestapo, she endured the cruelty of the concentration camp.

**Keywords:** ursuline, spouse, mystic, contemplation, sacrifice, cross, love, World War II.

Many Christians today are asking how to find the meaning of life in various times of crisis. The saints and martyrs of the Church testify that it is always possible to find the way to perfection.

Blessed Klemensa Staszewska OSU is one of a group of 109 Polish martyrs of World War II beatified by John Paul II in 1999. Throughout her life she was a woman with a great heart, open to the needs of children, young people, the poor, those sought by the Gestapo and fellow prisoners of the concentration camp. So far, her life has been examined for the heroism of the Christian virtues

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associated with her martyrdom (Rzeszut, 2001, p. 75; Luberda, [mps, mgr KUL 2002] APUUR, M 610, p. 73). However, this paper will examine the source of her kindness, courage, and engaging witness.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the charism of Blessed Klemensa Staszewska OSU and its relevance to believers today. The source for this work is her “Spiritual Notes” written on the instructions of spiritual guide from 7 June 1940 to 1 January 1943, and her letters (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 179).

This study will consist of four stages. First, ‘Blessed Klemensa’s participation in the Ursuline charism, then her desire for union with the sacrifice of Christ, then the grace of living in the presence of God and finally the fruits of her cooperation with God.

## 1. Charism of the Spousal Relation with Jesus

As a child, Helena Staszewska (1890–1943) experienced that Jesus gave her a great desire for Holy Communion and for prayer before the Most Blessed Sacrament (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 57). After the death of her parents, she helped her younger brothers and sisters to become independent and worked as a teacher in Studzianna, where she often prayed at the Shrine of Our Lady.

In 1921, at the age of 31, Helena Staszewska entered the Polish Union of the Order of Saint Ursula (annexed to the Roman Union in 1936) in Krakow and received the name Maria Klemensa. When she made her perpetual vows (1926) she wrote her plan of life. In it she addressed Jesus with the title “My sweetest bridegroom” and expressed a request: *Inflame me with Your love, grip me, devour me, from my final profession make me New Person, your true spouse* (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 3). In this way, Blessed Klemensa took on the Ursuline charism. St. Angela Merici – the founder of the Ursulines – pointing to the essence of their vocation, emphasized that the sisters have been chosen to be true and virginal spouses of the Son of God (Merici, 1992, p. 53). Similarly, the theme of the spousal bond with Jesus is present in all her writings (Dryl, 2013, p. 107–140; Bascotti, 2014, p. 27–66; Stone, 2009, p. 70–72).

In Blessed Klemensa’s spiritual notes, even after many years of religious life, she frequently asked Jesus for the grace of living in His presence and for the grace of union with Him. This is attested, among other things, by the sentence *Please clothe me with yourself, O Christ. Let me walk in you* (cf. Colossians 2:6). To walk in Jesus Christ means to renounce oneself, to lose sight of oneself,

to abandon oneself in order to enter more and more into Him in every moment, so far as to take root in Him (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 46).

In her spiritual notes Blessed Klemensa referred to biblical texts concerning the spousal bond of God with man. Quoting a passage from the Song of Songs: *Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and come with me* (Song of Songs 2:10), she wrote a reflection in quotation marks without giving the author: *I want you to arise from a state of imperfection. For my love is still shackled in you by your attachment to your own will. Unfortunately, you are still seeking yourself in my service. Rise, therefore, firmly, and surrender yourself to me. Forget about yourself, follow me wherever I lead you.* In a later part she wrote: *This is the only thing I want. You teach me, You be my guide I want to be yours entirely* (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 51). A similar desire was shared by Blessed Klemensa in her reflection after meditating on the passage of the Psalm: *Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father's house. The king is enthralled by your beauty; honour him. For he is your lord* (Psalms 45:10–11). She wrote that you have to listen, lend your ear, but in order to hear, you have to forget about everything that relates to natural life, and then you need to override your “I”, forget about it, abandon them (feelings, impressions, memories); because the Creator, seeing the silence reigning in the soul, seeing how the soul remains in inner solitude, admires its beauty and allows for intimate relationship with Himself (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 153).

Blessed Klemensa had a vivid desire for freedom in respect of creatures – already in her plan of life she asked for this grace, so that the Lord would separate her completely from people – from creatures, from herself – and empty her and accept her heart (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 4). This desire was present within her for many years of her life. In a note from her meditation of 25 July 1940, she wrote a prayer: *O Jesus, draw me near, bring me closer to You, separate me from everything that is not You, take my whole, entire heart... enough of wandering around, enough of a divided heart* (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 46).

Blessed Klemensa had a sincere desire to make space for God. She expressed it in many ways. In a note from her meditation of 29 October 1940, she wrote that she had been meditating for three days on a few words from the Epistle to Philippians (3:8) She expressed a desire to go further. Because of the supreme benefit of knowing Christ Jesus, she considered everything else as loss. For Him she left everything to gain Christ. The words of the Letter brought her into a state of recollection that lasted the whole day, almost without distraction, only constant communion with Jesus in her soul (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 81). She returned to this passage in Philippians 3:8 when she wrote that very often, through all meditations, a single desire comes from her soul,

to devote herself entirely to God (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 152).

Blessed Klemensa often referred to the need for inner freedom. In one of her notes, she wrote that with strange clarity she understood the great need for emptiness to be able to live continually with Jesus; that is to say to remove not only what binds to the earth, what revolves around herself, but every thought, feeling and imagination. Everything is supposed to be asleep, immersed in a dream. She felt this emptiness strongly, which God needs (to speak humanly) in order to act freely, and then the soul will be ready to receive any gentle breeze, the touch of God. In this way, man will decrease, and Jesus will increase (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 67).

Following this desire, Blessed Klemensa undertook inner mortification and wrote that she constantly controlled herself – unnecessary thoughts, feelings, imaginations, which were not in themselves bad, but were superfluous (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 62). She also undertook external mortification, which she agreed with her spiritual guide: 1) to pray with outstretched hands or lying prostrate; 2) to get up at night once a week for prayer; 3) to use the so-called “discipline”; once a week 4) to mortify herself in small things – at mealtimes she chose what she liked least (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 Inv. 240, p. 93); 5) to pray at night when she could not sleep (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 62).

Blessed Klemensa understood the desire for a spousal bond with Jesus as a grace that He Himself, the Divine Bridegroom, could fulfil. She knew that her sole responsibility was to prepare the space within herself. Her prayer was an ardent confident request to Jesus that she might belong entirely to Him.

## **2. The desire to be united with the sacrifice of Christ**

A special feature of Blessed Klemensa’s spousal bond with Jesus was love for the passion of Christ. In general, an important aspect of the Ursuline charism is to be seen here (Klich, 2016, p. 27).

However, what characterizes Blessed Klemensa is her predicate “of Jesus Crucified” which she received when she made her religious profession (1923). In her plan of life (1926) she expressed the desire to unite her burnt offering with the sacrifice of the Holy Mass, which the Church renews daily on the altars of the whole world, and which will not cease to be renewed until the end of time. She also wished to unite her sacrifice with all the pleas and inner disposition with which Jesus Christ offered Himself on the cross (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 3).

The desire to combine the gift of self with the sacrifice of Christ has a scriptural root (cf. Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10). By the salvation of Christ, the faithful receive royal dignity and become priests for God the Father and are consecrated solely to Him to serve Him. Christ gave them the opportunity to enter a close, direct relationship with God. Through this, He gave a new status to those who believe in Him. He made them kings and priests (Revelation 5:9; 1:6). This means that each one of the people of God are collectively a kingdom and priests— they belong to God and praise Him (Mielcarek, 2010, p. 37–45; Hałas, 2007, p. 162–164). The realization of this dignity is accomplished through union with Christ the Priest. The Church emphasizes that prayer, labour, labour endured with patience, become spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God through Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Peter 2:5) and must be offered to the Father with the sacrifice of the Lord's body (Czerwik, 2010, p. 49–59).

Noting the desire of Blessed Klemensa to be united with the sacrifice of Christ, which God aroused in her with her vocation to religious life, we can say that it is a prophetic sign for believers, both secular and consecrated. In her spiritual note (16 September 1940) she returned to this reality when she wrote that holiness is to be based on becoming like the host on the sacrificial altar, externally preserving the appearance while in fact becoming wholly divine, identified with Jesus, transformed into Him (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 59). She also asked Jesus to allow her to love the Cross and walk freely in the way of Calvary. To this request she added the explanation that the way of the Cross is the simplest, shortest way to holiness (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 3).

In her plan of life, she referred to the writings of the Servant of God Benigna Consolata Ferrero. She was inspired by her spiritual diary, especially in relation to the acceptance of suffering (26.09.1940) (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 63). Blessed Klemensa, while meditating (2 June, 1941) on the words of Jesus addressed to Benigna, stated that Jesus is hungry for love, while creatures are so indifferent towards Him that they flee as from a criminal, a thief, who wants to rob them, when He, on the contrary, wants to fill them with His blessings, but He cannot, because they do not want Him to do so (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 133).

An important expression of Blessed Klemensa's union with the Sacrifice of Jesus was the acceptance of the various sufferings experienced in everyday life. She herself stated that throughout her life she goes the dark, thorny way, the affliction of soul and body (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 57–58). Part of this suffering was related to her poor health (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. C.K.12; Staszewska, ADK, E 21 inw. 240, p. 32). Blessed Klemensa suffered

from migraines and gastrointestinal disorders. Generally, she tried not to take painkillers (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 92.94). She mentioned that for 20 years she had learnt to accept suffering by sacrificing herself to the Lord and uniting herself with the sufferings of Jesus. She called difficult times “flowers” that she laid at the feet of Jesus. When others brought her bits of gossip or criticism, she simply asked them not to repeat them to her, because she did not want to stain her soul by hearing or repeating them (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 91). She noticed that difficult experiences helped her on the path to inner freedom (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 84). Whenever she suffered any discomfort, she went almost immediately to the person who inflicted the injury and offered a pleasant service. She confessed that others and her superiors said that she had no nerves and did not care. When she was given difficult tasks, she said in her heart: *Jesus, you alone see me and read my soul, and that’s enough for me* (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 63). On 12 October 1940, she wrote about her way of experiencing suffering that when she suffers a lot, she walks around half-aware but pours out her heart to Jesus and accepts His cross (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 71).

She called the unjust rebuke “a flower” for which she thanked the Lord Jesus, and she united herself with His suffering (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 53). According to Blessed Klemensa one “flower” was the occasion when some thieves destroyed the hives in the garden of the Ursulines and stole the whole stock of honey, especially since the bees were newly acquired, and the hives came from the USA. She entrusted herself to God in this situation with the words of Job: *God gave, God took* (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 53). The story of the destroyed hives had its continuation. On 19 September 1940, Blessed Klemensa mentioned in her notes about the police investigation of one of the neighbours, who then came to the monastery and made a scene. Regardless, Blessed Klemensa sent a Sister to his home with medicines for his sick child and with the offer of continuing to help in their treatment (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 61).

Another “flower” laid at the feet of the Lord Jesus was the experience of healing a Sister whom the doctor had declared to be incurable. Blessed Klemensa began a novena to Our Lady of Lourdes to pray for the grace of health. After praying the novena with the community together with the sick sister herself, Blessed Klemensa heard the sick Sister in deep concentration in prayer joyfully saying: *Mary is here!* She also heard an inner voice: *I will arise.* Blessed Klemensa answered: Arise and did not help her to get up. The healed sister herself got up and began to walk. When the doctor examined her, he cried out, *Miracle!* Blessed Klemensa noted: *You must just bow your head, God is in it* (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 63).

In conclusion, we can say that Blessed Klemensa's desire to take up the cross and to be united with Jesus and His Sacrifice related to an attentiveness to God's guidance. Her intimacy with Jesus and the willingness to endure affliction and tribulation gave her inner freedom and prepared her further for the graces of God.

### 3. The mystical grace of living in the presence of God

Amid daily ministries and responsibilities, especially the hardships of World War II, Blessed Klemensa was focused on prayer and on her relationship with Jesus. She mentioned in her spiritual notes that for many years she had begged God for the grace of peace of heart, which she had lacked since childhood. Jesus responded to this request and made her experience that peace of the heart is heaven on earth (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 58).

The grace of mystical prayer was given to Blessed Klemensa on 13 July 1940, when, reading a passage from the Gospel of St. Luke, she heard that as to Zacchaeus, so also to her, the Master said: *Come down quickly into the deepest depths of your being, having first abandoned yourself* (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 43). When she returned in meditation to this experience, after more than a year (1 November 1941), she wrote: *Come down immediately. I must stay at your house today* (Luke 19:5). These words struck me strongly, and at the same time brought so much joy to my soul, because it has been a year since Jesus entered my soul in a special way and dwelt in it (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 154).

At the request of her spiritual director, she tried to describe the spiritual experiences that she had. She often described them as "close attentiveness" and later tried to define them more accurately.

She first noticed that her soul remained in a loving desire to devote itself entirely to God. Some strange force propelled her in this direction without words or special consideration. She stated that something is somehow broken in her (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 52). Then she wrote (5.09.1940) that usually all her powers were focused, centred on praising God, rejoicing, fulfilling (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 150).

She also noted that the experience of strong attentiveness was accompanied by sweetness and love (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 83). The essence of focus was to live in God's presence without any effort on her part. On 12 November 1940, writing about the grace of concentration, she explained that it is living in the unceasing presence of God (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 88).

She noted that she was asking Jesus for this grace, and when she received it, she noticed that the focus covered her whole being (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 71). In her spiritual diary she wrote that during prayer before the Most Blessed Sacrament she experienced something taking her away, lifting her up to be immersed in God, to rejoice in God (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 72). Her spiritual director confirmed to Blessed Klemensa that this focus was a grace given freely; a person can do nothing here, except prepare for this grace by removing barriers and obstacles (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 70–71). It is grace, it is His love (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 76).

On 13 November 1940, she wrote that after Holy Communion, Jesus filled her with His light – she was uncontrollably filled with tears. She begged Him to submerge her in Himself, consume her, so that she could live only with Him and in Him and touch the earth, creatures, in so far as He wished and only for Him and with Him, to bring Him joy. Again, light filled her soul, and her tears flowed like grain (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 89). On November 17, 1940, she wrote that during her meditation and Mass, God flooded her with a stream of strong feelings that caused tears to flow, although in her everyday life she did not find it easy to show emotion (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 91).

Another experience which Blessed Klemensa points out as she tried to describe the grace of this inner attentiveness, was the feeling that her mind seemed to have been partially suspended, her will partially abducted, her imagination very often calmed down. Strong focus, anointing, encompassed her whole person, despite various distracting activities. She lived in the continual presence of God, sometimes felt Him tangibly, and so worshipped Him in her soul. She felt His action within her almost constantly (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 106).

Blessed Klemensa was filled with spiritual joy and peace during her activities relating to business arrangement and the reception of guests. She continually felt the action of grace, through the quiet and the anointing of her whole person (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 107). Blessed Klemensa also noted that the work of God knows no obstacles. During her illness she wrote that she was lying like Lazarus, suffering very much, but joy, supernatural joy sprang up strongly from within and poured out into her (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 152).

She also noticed that she had barely knelt before she felt the presence of God within her and rejoiced praising Him in her heart. She was no longer drawn to the Tabernacle, as she had been usually, because she felt that Jesus was within her, so she had the vision of her soul there. She prayed: *What good fortune, what a pleasure! My Jesus, dear Jesus, I beg you, make me give you everything*



(Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 117). She also wrote that she feels the presence of Jesus strongly, wakes up with it and falls asleep, so hugs and clings to Jesus in her heart, embraces Him and kisses His feet in the spirit (Staszewska, ADK, syn. E 21 inv. 240, p. 121), then, a constant flame of love and sweetness floods her heart and happiness fills her soul, the whole world becomes ugly to her (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 121). Love – as a spiritual sweetness – was the pleasure of being with God (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 126). Blessed Klemensa wrote that she felt very tangibly, physically that someone was inside her, entering her. She often felt this for whole days, most often after Holy Communion. Her spiritual director said that this was the action of Jesus, who was living in her soul (Staszewska, ADK, sign. E 21 inv. 240, p. 132).

At the same time, Blessed Klemensa was accompanied by a sense of her own weakness and fragility. In her diary she noted that she was wicked, a little rough, a little tough, that she reacted irritably to her surroundings instead of being an apostle of love carrying Jesus in goodness. She accused herself of forgetting God for hours and devoting herself to home affairs. Her spiritual father recommended that she seek the grace of being with the Lord not only in prayer, but also in work. He told her to ask for help from the Most Holy Mother and St. Joseph, because they are masters in this regard (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 129). On 20 January 1942, she noted that she felt completely immersed in God, close to Him, so that she suffered great pain on seeing her own worthlessness (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 159).

On 2 July 1941, Blessed Klemensa wrote that, while celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours in the garden, she was suddenly caught by a great action of God. She stood in the middle of the path and immersed herself in God for a moment, then she reached a bench and completely collapsed. This lasted about 20 minutes (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 137). She also explained that she experienced a blissful rest in prayer, something like being in the company of a loved one. Nothing troubled her, she was calm, filled with joy because of what she felt. She was careful not to let an unconscious cry of joy escape. She wanted Jesus and her spiritual director alone to know everything (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 143). Blessed Klemensa sought comparisons to describe the grace of inner attentiveness. She wrote that she felt a magnet in her soul that catches everything and attracts it to Himself (Staszewska, ADK, sign. E 21 inv. 240, p. 145). She entered that rest in a loving way, basking directly in the love of God (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 152). Another time, she compares the grace of focus to a jumping electric spark, which often takes the form of something big – it fills the whole interior and then a strong focus follows (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 170).

This grace of mystical prayer was accompanied by physical sensations, most often numbness in the face. On 3 December 1940, she noted that during Mass she suffered greatly as she felt freezing and blurring of her entire face (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 103.106). On December 19, 1940, she described how she felt during meditation in the following days. For several hours she was very focussed. She felt as if she was not herself, as if “Someone” was inside her, as if they had taken control of her. She was numb to the point that her mouth, face and jaw were almost as if dead. She nearly always had similar symptoms during concentration: reason, senses, imagination seemed to partially disappear. She thought that this feeling was caused by the presence of Jesus (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 113.117). Her spiritual director explained that sometimes limited human nature must feel the Infinite approaching it in this way (Staszewska, ADK, sign. E 21 inv. 240, p. 173).

The grace of mystical prayer, given to Blessed Klemensa, was related to the indwelling of God. It was accompanied by tears, sweetness, love and focus on the presence of the Lord who dwelt within her. Blessed Klemensa experienced that it was a grace given freely by God, regardless of her occupations and state of health.

#### **4. Contemplation of God amidst the service of the needy**

This study of Blessed Klemensa has shown that her spousal relationship with Jesus had a special feature – union with the Sacrifice of Christ through the experience of affliction and suffering. Next, it was shown that God gave her the grace of mystical prayer, which was related to the indwelling of Jesus within her. Another characteristic of Blessed Klemensa’s spirituality was the grace of combining a deep spiritual life with an active and responsible service to children, young people, sisters, the villagers sought by the Gestapo and fellow prisoners of the concentration camp.

In the first years of her monastic life, Blessed Klemensa was engaged in educational care work in a residential school, as a teacher in the Ursuline school in Krakow, as the caregiver for children in the nursery of St. Angela in Siercza (Naglik I., 2011, p. 281), as a formator of the young women belonging to the Marian Sodality (Naglik I, 2011, p., 282) and the Association of Women’s Youth. (KDK, sygn. C.K.9, notatki z 20.12.1925, 30.01.1926, 21.03.1926, 30.06.1926, 11.07.1926). The monthly protocols that have been preserved show a rich formation program which included forming devotion, respect for the sacraments, self-knowledge and preparation for various tasks in society (Rzeszut, 2001, p. 17). In addition, Blessed Klemensa served in various Ursuline communities (in Siercza, Zakopane, in Stanisławów, in Rokiciny Podhalańskie).

During World War II, Blessed Klemensa was responsible for the Ursuline community in Rokiciny Podhalańskie, where the Sisters assisted those Poles who, after the September '39 tragedy, tried to go abroad to join the Polish army (Kotowska, Szarska, 1998, p. 80). The Ursulines gave shelter in the monastery to homeless fire victims from the surrounding villages and to a dozen war orphans sent from Krakow (Kotowska, Szarska, 1998, p. 112).

The Gestapo first arrived at the Ursuline monastery on 17 July 1940.

The testimony of one of the captured boys revealed to the Germans the attitude of Blessed Klemensa, which in the judgment of the occupier was a crime requiring imprisonment. Blessed Klemensa wrote in her diary that three Gestapo men were looking for her. They ordered her to remain alone, without any companions. At that time, she called for Jesus's help and had the desire to make a general confession, to be ready for the coming of the Lord (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 44). Two days later (19 July 1940) she wrote that she prayed earnestly, uniting her anxiety with the pain of Jesus, and frequently declared her readiness to do His Holy will, even if she were to end her life in torment (Staszewska, ADK, sygn. E 21 inw. 240, p. 45). Blessed Klemensa foresaw her arrest by the Gestapo and but despite her provincial superior's suggestion, she did not want to leave the community.

Another important field of activity of the Ursuline Sisters in Rokiciny Podhalańskie during the occupation was the running of a medical facility for children from Warsaw who were at risk of tuberculosis (from January 1941 until July 1942). Among them were also Jewish children, hidden by the Ursulines (Kotowska, Szarska, 1998, p. 112). Blessed Klemensa was involved in organizing the provision of the means needed for the children. Efforts to improve the health of the children were combined with concern for their religious development and for their preparation for receiving the holy sacraments.

One of the signs of God's blessing for this work for the glory of God was the conversion of the mother of a boy receiving his First Holy Communion. This person – intelligent but a non-believer – had several conversations with Blessed Klemensa during her stay in Rokiciny, which seemed to have had little effect. However, after a few years, Rokiciny received a card from the same lady, who had found her faith and returned to the Church. She attributed the change of her beliefs to the conversations she had with Blessed Klemensa (Dzieniakowska, APUUR, msp, c. 1, sygn. 203/C. III.16a, p. 124). In total, about 400 children benefitted from the Ursuline facility.

Blessed Klemensa Staszewska expected to be arrested. On 26 January 1943, on the eve of the Feast of St. Angela – foundress of the Ursulines – a car drew up to the monastery and the three Gestapo men, who had come previously, emerged. They arrested the superior – Blessed Klemensa. She was allowed only to kneel

in the chapel and pray *Sub tuum praesidium*. She gave a blessing to the community, repeating several times: "Everything is in God's hands" (Dzieniakowska, APUUR, msp, c. 1, sign. 203/C. III.16a, p. 128). She kept great calm and dignity. She was detained for a month in Zakopane and then was transferred to the Montelupich Prison in Krakow. After a few days, she was transported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, where she was given the camp number 38102.

On 26 April 1943, a letter from Auschwitz-Birkenau arrived addressed to Sister Jadwiga Glemma, the superior of the community in Krakow. Blessed Klemensa greeted everyone the food packages she had received. In the next two months, a few more letters arrived. In one of them, she wrote that she was close to God and that God was very good to her.

In August came the official statement of the death of Blessed Klemensa Staszewska, who died of typhus on 27 July 1943 in Auschwitz-Birkenau with the words of the prayer: "Magnificat" on her lips (Kaczmarek, 1999, poz. 103).

After the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, at the request of the camp commanders, Majors Milov and Witkov, handed over by the RGO (Rada Główna Opiekuńcza – Principal Protective Council) three Ursulines began to help former prisoners, about two thousands of whom remained. These were: Mother Aniela Skrzyńska, Sister Tacjana Pożarowszczyk and Sister Felicja Pilecka. They served there from 14.02. to 14.03.1945. The condition of the former prisoners was very serious and many of them died (Kotowska, Szarska, 1998, p. 87). Mother Aniela met a person there who wanted to speak about Blessed Klemensa. According to this person, she worked in the sewing room and in the camp was a true apostle of love, serenity and of agreement with the will of God. She lifted those who were broken, she cheered the sad with her composure, she distributed to everyone the food packages she had received.

This presentation of the important activities of Blessed Klemensa allows us to state that she saw her concern for the needy from the perspective of God. Beginning from the service of a teacher and educator to the defence of the prisoners sought by the Gestapo and assisting her fellow inmates in the concentration camp, one can see Blessed Klemensa's heroic love going beyond her own weak powers. It is only knowledge of the charism of her spousal bond with Jesus, of her union with His Sacrifice, and of the mystical grace of Jesus dwelling in her, that allows us to discover the true source of her boundless love for God and man.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be said that the study of the charism of Blessed Klemensa Staszewska OSU and its relevance to believers today led to interesting conclusions.

First, it is worth stressing that Blessed Klemensa accepted the call to consecrated life in the Ursuline community and the charism of the spousal bond with Christ. In her daily discernment she saw the need to choose what helped her to give herself completely to God alone.

Her plan of life, which she wrote on the day of her final vows, indicates that God aroused within her the desire to be united with the Sacrifice of Jesus and with the inner intentions and disposition that accompanied Him. This desire of Blessed Klemensa marked her way to unity with Christ in every circumstance of life, especially in unpleasant, difficult and painful moments. It is worth noting that this essential feature of her spirituality fits strongly into the vocation to the universal priesthood and in this Blessed Klemensa is a prophetic sign both for lay faithful as well as for consecrated persons.

Fidelity to her vocation, the radicalism of life for God that she continually pursued, prepared Blessed Klemensa for the grace of mystical prayer and the experience of Jesus' dwelling within her.

Finally, it should be emphasized that Blessed Klemensa received the grace of combining contemplative prayer with active commitment to those in need. Living in deep attentiveness and loving dedication to Jesus, she surrounded with care and support children, young people, sisters, those sought by the Gestapo and fellow prisoners in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

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## Kobieta zjednoczona z Ofiarą Chrystusa – Błogosławiona Klemensa Staszewska OSU (1890–1943)

**Streszczenie:** Celem artykułu jest zbadanie charyzmatu bł. Klemensy Staszewskiej, jakim została obdarowana przez Boga oraz jego aktualność dla wszystkich wierzących. Źródłem niniejszego studium są jej „Notatki duchowe” pisane na polecenie kierownika duchowego oraz listy. Pierwszym etapem studium było zbadanie tego, jak bł. Klemensa, przyjmując powołanie urszulańskie, doświadczała pragnienia oblubieńczyj więzi z Jezusem oraz tego, by oddawać Mu na wyłączność wszystko, kim jest i co posiada. W drugiej części artykułu zostało przeprowadzone studium dotyczące pragnienia duchowego, jakie bł. Klemensa wyraziła w programie życia, napisanym w dniu ślubów wieczystych, aby łączyć się z Ofiarą Chrystusa oraz z Jego intencjami i wyposażeniem wewnętrznym, z jakim ofiarował się na Krzyżu. W tym miejscu istotne było to, by zbadać, jak bł. Klemensa, wszystkie przykrości i trudy życia, przeżywała w zjednoczeniu z Jezusem. Ten wymiar jej życia duchowego można uznać za profetyczny dla osób konsekrowanych i świeckich, gdyż

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dotyczy kapłaństwa powszechnego wynikającego z konsekracji chrzcielnej, który wydaje się być niedoceniany współcześnie w duchowości chrześcijańskiej. Trzecia część artykułu dotyczy łaski modlitwy mistycznej, jaką została obdarowana bł. Klemensa, związanej z doświadczeniem zamieszkania Jezusa w niej. W ostatniej, czwartej części artykułu zostało wykazane, że bł. Klemensa umiała łączyć głębokie życie duchowe z posługą związaną z opieką nad dziećmi, formacją młodzieży, pośród odpowiedzialności za wspólnotę urszulańską, w trudach II wojny światowej, w heroicznej odwadze pomocy poszukiwanym przez gestapo oraz pośród okrucieństw obozu koncentracyjnego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** urszulanka, oblubienica, mistyka, kontemplacja, ofiara, krzyż, miłość, II wojna światowa.

