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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35774/gsip2024.01.115>**Sławomir BYLINA***John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland*

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## GREEK CATHOLIC MILITARY PASTORAL CARE IN THE FACE OF WORLD WAR II

**Annotation.** The military chaplaincy of the Greek Catholic denomination also played its role during the times of the Military Ordinariate of the Polish Army during World War II. Thanks to the presence of Greek Catholic soldiers in the Polish Army in the interwar period, the service of chaplains in the organizational structures of the Military Ordinariate of the Polish Army also provided pastoral service. Through subsequent entries in state and church legal acts, the tasks of Greek Catholic chaplains were created. The time of World War II also showed his pastoral fate, starting from the autumn campaign, through his fate in Soviet and German prisoner of war camps, to service in the Polish Armed Forces in the West and the structures of the Home Army.

**Keywords:** Military Ordinariate of the Polish Army, Field Bishop of the Polish Army, Military chaplain, Greek Catholic denomination, Polish Armed Forces in the West

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## GRECKOKATOLICKIE DUSZPASTERSTWO WOJSKOWE W OBLICZU II WOJNY ŚWIATOWEJ

**Streszczenie.** Duszpasterstwo wojskowe wyznania greckokatolickiego odegrało swoją rolę również za czasów Ordynariatu Polowego Wojska Polskiego w okresie II wojny światowej. Dzięki obecności żołnierzy wyznania greckokatolickiego w Wojsku Polskim w okresie międzywojennym, służba kapelanów w strukturach organizacyjnych Ordynariatu Polowego WP zapewniała także posługę

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duszpasterską. Poprzez kolejne zapisy w państwowych i kościelnych aktach prawnych, kreowały się zadania kapelanów greckokatolickich. Czas drugiej wojny światowej pokazał również losy duszpasterskie, począwszy od kampanii jesiennej, poprzez losy w sowieckich i niemieckich obozach jenieckich, aż po służbę w Polskich Siłach Zbrojnych na Zachodzie i strukturach Armii Krajowej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Ordynariat Polowy Wojska Polskiego, Biskup Polowy Wojska Polskiego, Kapelan wojskowy, wyznanie greckokatolickie, Polskie Siły Zbrojne na Zachodzie

**Purpose of publication** is to indicate the role and importance played by the Greek Catholic military chaplaincy in the interwar period and during World War II. By showing the historical background of the presence of soldiers and chaplains in the Polish Army, we can focus attention on important structural and organizational accents of the Greek Catholic pastoral service in the period preceding the war.

**Research methodology**, is based on the historiographic method through access to sources in such Archives as the Archive of Modern Records in Warsaw, the Central Military Archives in Warsaw, the Polish Institute and the General Sikorski Museum in London. The work also uses the analysis, induction and comparative methods.

**Scientific novelty** is to present numerous archival and legal documents, both state and church, which indicate the regulation of the normative quality of pastoral service. In turn, the fate of individual military chaplains indicates an attempt to outline the history of military chaplaincy in the migration fate of chaplains of various denominations, including the Greek Catholic denomination.

**Conclusions.** Thanks to the research process and analysis of the pastoral attitude of Greek Catholic military chaplains, it is possible to identify the right values that build morale amid current threats to national security.

**Presentation of the main material:**

The need to learn about the past in order to draw conclusions in the present indicates an attempt to answer the question of what patterns and behaviors to draw from the experiences of our predecessors. In the face of hostilities in Ukraine, we see the need to shape morale among the community fighting for its independence.

The history of the pastoral service of military chaplains, also of the Greek Catholic denomination, shows the memories and merits of those priests who, in difficult circumstances, were present among the fighting soldiers on the front line, as well as during captivity and subsequent stages of the fight for the independence of the Homeland.

It is worth noting that the subject has its literature mainly in the publications of Janusz Odziemkowski [J. Odziemkowski 1998.], ks. Bolesława Spychały [J. Odziemkowski, B. Spychała, 1987.], Tadeusza Kowalskiego [T. A. Kowalski, 1997], Zbigniewa Karpusa i Waldemara Rezmera [Zbigniew Karpus, Waldemar Rezmer, red. 2001], Wiesława J. Wysockiego [W. J. Wysocki, et al., 2001],

Piotra Siwickiego [P. Siwicki, 2004], ks. Roberta Rosy [Rosa R., 2023]. However, subsequent international archival research indicates further sources of information on the researched topic<sup>1</sup>.

The Greek Catholic Church has its origins in the Union of Brest in 1596, when bishops from the dioceses of Lutsk and Vladimir, in December 1595, made a Catholic profession of faith at the Vatican before Pope Clement VIII and were accepted into the Catholic Church. The act of union with Rome was solemnly accepted by Sigismund III in December 1598, issuing a universal [S. Bylina, 2010, p. 97-112]. The following years of uneasy relations with the east and the period of persecution of the Uniates led to a mass conversion of the Uniates from Orthodoxy after Nicholas II's toleration decree of 1905. The union survived only in Eastern Galicia. [H. Dylągowa, 1996, p. 201-203].

In the interwar period, the Greek Catholic Church included the province - the metropolis of Galicia-Lviv, which included the Archdiocese of Lviv and the dioceses of Przemyśl and Stanisławów. The territory included the following voivodeships: Lviv, Stanisławów, Tarnopol and part of the Kraków. [Archive of New Records in Warsaw, Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment, (hereinafter referred to as MWRiOP) Report of the voivode of Stanisławów of October 21, 1925 for MWRiOP, ref. 425, pp. 353-386].

According to the 1921 census, the number of people in the territory of the Second Polish Republic was 3 million. 31 thousand 37 Greek Catholics, which constituted 11.9% of the population [The First General Census of the Republic of Poland of September 30, 1921, Warsaw 1927, p. 72]. In the second census, the number of Greek Catholics increased to 3 million. 336 thousand 164 people, which constituted 10.5% of the community [Second General Population Census of December 9, 1931, Warsaw 1938, p. 15].

### **Quantitative and organizational structure of Greek Catholic military chaplaincy**

An important issue in the discussed topic of the work is the number of soldiers of the Polish Army of different religions. It is estimated that in the 1920s it was up to 40%. The number of Greek Catholic soldiers in 1923 was 18,735, which is 10.07%, and in 1926, 17,793, i.e. 7.75% of the soldiers in the Polish Army. [J. Odziemkowski, B. Spychała, 1987, p. 192].

Due to the structural organization of the Polish Army, by order of the Minister of Military Affairs, General Józef Leśniewski of June 28, 1919, the

- Religious and Denominational Section within the First Mobilization and Organizational Department of the Ministry of Military Affairs. The section consisted of 5 papers (denominations: Orthodox, Mosaic, Evangelical, Mariavite, Mohammedan) [Journal of Military Orders, No. 71 of June 28, 1919].

- Department of Non-Catholic Denominations, May 24, 1922 (Evangelical-Augsburg, Evangelical-Reformed, Orthodox, Mosaic).

- Office of Non-Catholic Denominations June 1, 1927 (plus Evangelical-Union).

<sup>1</sup>Research carried out as part of a scientific project financed by the Ministry of Education and Science, contract no. MEiN/2021/DPI/319.

In administrative and military terms, the chief chaplains of individual denominations were subordinated to the Minister of Military Affairs through the Office of Non-Catholic Denominations. In terms of religion and church, they were subject to spiritual authority [J. Odziemkowski, B. Sychała, 1987, p. 193].

The result of the work of the consistory, thanks to which the Military Ordinariate of the Polish Army was established, as J. Odziemkowski writes, was the announcement of the regulation of the Commander-in-Chief of September 18, 1919, establishing the hierarchical order of the clergy in the Polish Army. The organizational structure included chaplains of other denominations, including Greek Catholics, with functions, rights and salaries:

- Head of the Greek Catholic section at the Military Consistory (with the rank of lieutenant colonel)

- Greek Catholic chaplain at the General District Command (rank of major)

- Greek Catholic chaplain to the division (with the rank of captain) [J. Odziemkowski, 1998, p. 48].

The first Greek Catholic chaplains in the Polish Army are mentioned by P. Siwicki:

- Fr. Lt. Col. Antoni Łomnicki November 1918 from the Austrian army, on February 1, 1919, appointed chaplain at the POW (internee) camps in Dąbie, Wadowice, Modlin as part of the General Command of the Kraków District [CAW, Łomnicki Antoni ap 968].

- Fr. Major Jan Ozimkiewicz accepted on August 27, 1919, parish priest of the Polish Army, chaplain of hospitals at the Command of the General District of Lviv. From February 1, 1923, DOK VI and DOK V and X. retired on October 31, 1923 [CAW, Ozimkiewicz Jan ap 2098].

- Fr. Jan Martynik admitted 1919.

- Fr. Dr. Mikołaj Nadgórzański, clerk of Greek Catholic affairs in the Episcopal Curia of the Austrian troops in Vienna (1912-1918). From November 1, 1918 to January 31, 1920, in the Bishop's Curia of the Austrian troops. In the Polish Army from May 15, 1920 as the head of the records section and matters of the Greek Catholic rite. From On June 1, 1919, appointed dean of the Polish Army. [CAW, Ozimkiewicz Jan ap 2098].

Organizational division of the Greek Catholic military chaplaincy in 1924

- Dean Fr. Dr. Mikołaj Nadgórzański - DOK Warsaw and Grodno.

- Senior chaplain, Fr. Bazyli Kuźma - DOK Kraków<sup>2</sup> i Przemyśl<sup>3</sup>.

- Senior chaplain, Fr. Mikołaj Stetkiewicz – DOK Lwów<sup>4</sup>, Lublin i Brześć on the Bug River.

- Senior chaplain, Fr. Antoni Kalata<sup>5</sup> – DOK Łódź<sup>6</sup>, Poznań, Toruń [Military Order 1924 No. 20 para 1].

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<sup>2</sup>He also served in Krakow ks. Bronisław Lutyński.

<sup>3</sup>He also served in Przemyśl ks. Onufry Orski.

<sup>4</sup>He also served in Lviv ks. Jan Ozimkiewicz and ks. M. Stetkiewicz.

<sup>5</sup>He replaced him ks. Bogdan Podoliński.

<sup>6</sup>He also served in Łódź ks. Grzegorz Kaczała and ks. L. Harkawy.

## Legal issues of the activities of the Greek Catholic chaplaincy in the Polish Army

The order of the Ministry of Military Affairs from 1924, transmitted by the Field Bishop, concerned the observance of the right to worship of soldiers of the Greek Catholic rite (Unites), who could not be forced to attend the Orthodox Church. At the same time, we find a provision that "In the absence of a chaplain of the Greek Catholic rite or of a Catholic church of the Greek Catholic rite, they are entitled to pastoral service from a chaplain of the Roman Catholic rite, and they must attend services in Catholic churches of the Roman Catholic rite." [J. Odziemkowski, B. Spychała, 1987, p. 102].

Legal issues in Church-state relations were regulated by the Fundamental Laws of 1921 and 1935, and the Concordat of 1925. [Concordat between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland, signed in Rome on February 10, 1925 (ratified in accordance with the Act of April 23, 1925). Journal of Laws 1925, No. 72, item 501-502], which also concerned Greek Catholics.

The basic document regulating the issues of pastoral service to the faithful of the Greek Catholic Church was the Statute of Military Chaplaincy in the Polish Army of February 27, 1926, where in Chapter III entitled «Clerical care towards people of the Greek Catholic rite», we find two articles showing the specificity of the military service of faithful of the Greek Catholic rite:

- Article 17 "The advisor of the Military Bishop in liturgical matters for the Greek Catholic rite is the Greek Catholic Dean at the Military Bishop's Curia",
- Article. 18 „Military men and their families of the Greek Catholic rite are subject to the clerical care of the appropriate Greek Catholic chaplain, who heads the Greek Catholic parish established by the Military Bishop" [STATUTE OF Military Chaplaincy in the Polish Army, approved by the Holy See by the decree of the Apostolic Nuncio in Poland on February 27, 1926. Dz. U. Poz. 714, No 124. Art. 17 i 18].

Based on the provisions of the statute of military chaplaincy, Bishop Stanisław Gal created 5 Greek Catholic military parishes:

- Parish of St. Josaphat in Warsaw (included District 1 and 3 of the Corps);
- Parish of St. Basil in Kraków (included District 5 and 10 of the Corps);<sup>7</sup>
- Parish of St. Nicholas in Lviv (included District 2, 6 and 9 Corps);
- Parish of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Łódź (included the 4th Corps District)
- Parish of St. Stefan in Poznań (included District 7 and 8 Corps)
- Parish in Jarosław (Przemyśl and Stanisławów) on May 1, 1931. [J. Odziemkowski, B. Spychała, 1987, p. 106].

Auxiliary chaplains were also appointed in Jarosław, Rzeszów and Tarnopol [P. Siwicki, 2004, p. 388].

### Pastoral decisions and actions in the face of war

It should be noted that in the face of World War II, Greek Catholic priests who became chaplains in the Polish Army were checked by the military authorities,

<sup>7</sup>In 1937, the parish priest's office was moved from Krakow to Bielsko, Military Orders Journal No. 2/1937, item 21, a P. Siwicki, dz. cyt., s. 388.

both politically and morally. They were required to have an impeccable reputation and complete loyalty to the Polish state. It is also worth mentioning that servicing two or three Corps Districts required organizational skills and often created many problems [M. Krotofil, 2001, p. 142; R. Rosa, 2024, p. 90].

On the part of the Military Ordinariate of the Polish Army, preparations for the next war continued after the end of the first one and the fighting related to the Polish-Bolshevik war, when the "Temporary Instruction for Field Pastors of the Polish Army" was issued in 1920. [Temporary instruction for field chaplains of the Polish Army, Warsaw 1920].

In this part of the work, I will list the basic legal documents that relate to the entire functioning of chaplains, including chaplains of the Greek Catholic denomination:

- Act of March 23, 1922 on the basic duties and rights of officers of the Polish Army [Official Journal 1922, No. 32, item 256].

- Organization of pastoral service on a war basis from March 3, 1923. [• Organization of pastoral service on a war basis from March 3, 1923., CAW, Branch IV SG, t. 92].

- Regulation of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Military Affairs, and the Ministers of Internal Affairs, Justice, Religious Affairs and Public Enlightenment of November 25, 1926. [Statute of Military Chaplaincy in the Polish Army of February 27, 1927, Regulation of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Military Affairs and the Ministers of Internal Affairs, Justice, Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment of November 25, 1926 on the church organization of the military clergy. Official Journal 1926, No. 124, item 714].

- Memorial of the Field Bishop of the Polish Army Józef Gawlina of March 2, 1936 [Memorial of the Field Bishop of the Polish Army Józef Gawlina of March 2, 1936, CAW, Chief Inspectorate of the Armed Forces, 302.4.235 (113)].

- Appeal of the Field Bishop of the Polish Army, Józef Gawlina, on the topic „Pastoral service. Army. Great Unit. Country” [Pastoral service. Army. Great Unit. Country. CAW, Department IV of the Main Staff I.303.7.97].

- Decree of the President of the Republic of Poland of March 12, 1937 on the military service of officers [Decree of the President of the Republic of Poland of March 12, 1937 on the military service of officers, Official Journal of the Republic of Poland 1937, No. 20, item 138; September chaplains. Pastoral service in the Polish Army in 1939, op. cit., pp. 187-188].

- Remarks of the Field Bishop on the organization of the Pastoral Care of the Polish Army during the war, April 1937 [Remarks of the Field Bishop on the organization of the Pastoral Care of the Polish Army during the war, April 1937. September chaplains. Pastoral service in the Polish Army in 1939, op. cit., pp. 209-220].

- Regulation of the Minister of Military Affairs of September 9 on the implementation of the decree of the President of the Republic of Poland of March 12, 1937 on the military service of officers [Regulation of the Minister of Military Affairs of September 9 on the implementation of the decree of the President of the



Republic of Poland of March 12, 1937 on service military officers, Official Journal of the Republic of Poland No. 68, item 514].

- Regulation of the Ministers of Military Affairs, Internal Affairs and Social Welfare of February 7, 1939 on general military obligation [Regulation of the Ministers of Military Affairs, Internal Affairs and Social Welfare of February 7, 1939 on general military obligation, Journal of Laws . 1939 No. 20 item 131; September chaplains. Pastoral service in the Polish Army in 1939, op. cit., pp. 203-207].

During the ongoing war, the Field Bishop of the Polish Army, Józef Gawlina, addressed numerous words to chaplains and soldiers fighting to defend their homeland.

- Appeal of the Bishops of Poland to the faithful of April 26, 1939 [Appeal of the Bishops of Poland to the faithful of April 26, 1939 in: Internal Order to the Catholic military clergy in Poland of May 1, 1939, no. 5, 136-139; September chaplains. Pastoral service in the Polish Army in 1939, op. cit., p. 248-251];

- Orders of the Military Ordinary of the Polish Army. Prayers for the Homeland - instructions for reciting [Orders of the Military Ordinary of the Polish Army Appeal of the Bishops of Poland to the faithful - orders, in: Internal Order to the Catholic military clergy in Poland of May 1, 1939, no. 5, p. 153; Orders of the Military Ordinary of the Polish Army Prayers for the Homeland - instructions for reciting, in: Internal Order to the Catholic military clergy in Poland of June 5, 1939, no. 6, p. 179];

- Orders of the Military Ordinary of the Polish Army. Blessing of weapons and war equipment [Orders of the Military Ordinary of the Polish Army Blessing of weapons and war equipment, in: Internal Order to the Catholic military clergy in Poland of July 24, 1939, no. 8, p. 211];

- Announcement of the Field Bishop „Chaplains - volunteers” [J. Gawlina, Announcement of the Field Bishop «Chaplains - volunteers» «Wieczór Warszawski», Warsaw, September 3, 1939, no. 249; September chaplains. Pastoral service in the Polish Army in 1939, op. cit., p. 68-69; 266];

- Pastoral letter of the Field Bishop to the Polish Army on September 1, 1939 [J. Gawlina, Pastoral Letter of the Field Bishop to the Polish Army, September 1, 1939, «Kurier Warszawski», Warsaw, September 3, 1939, No. 243; September chaplains. Pastoral service in the Polish Army in 1939, op. cit. p. 261-262];

- Speech of the Military Bishop at the end of the year delivered at the radio station in Paris on December 31, 1939, [Speech of the Military Bishop at the end of the year delivered at the radio station in Paris on December 31, 1939, in: September Chaplains. Pastoral service in the Polish Army in 1939, op. cit., p. 297-298].

In the next part of the publication, I will present the profiles of chaplains during World War II:

- Fr. Leon Harkawy, senior chaplain, Greek Catholic dean. Together with the Military Curia, through the retreat route from Warsaw in Romania, he was interned with four Roman Catholic chaplains in the camp for senior officers in Calimanesti until March 1941. Then he was handed over to the Germans and sent to the Dorsen Oflag.

• Priest Mikołaj Ilków, senior kpl. from Łódź, Greek Catholic parish priest OK IV. In September 1939, he took part in the Battle of Bzura and the defense of Lviv; After the city's capitulation on September 21, he found himself in Soviet captivity. Imprisoned in the Starobielsk camp, where he was murdered by the NKVD (probably in Kharkov).

• Priest Antoni Hodys, chaplain from Bielsko-Biała, Greek Catholic parish priest of OK V, suffered «light injuries» during the bombing of the Brody City Headquarters, and on September 17 he crossed the Romanian border and was interned in Targu Jiu. On April 7, 1940, he evacuated to the PSZ in France in the spring 1940 and May 1940, he became the chaplain of the «San Men Le Grande» center. After evacuation to Great Britain, he became the chaplain of the Polish Army Command in Scotland [IPMS, A XII.28/13, Political Department, Religious Department of the Ministry of National Defence, Note on religious matters in the Polish Armed Forces, page 5], where 56 soldiers were also evacuated Greek Catholic denomination [Ibidem, p. 4]. By 1944, there were approximately 80 Greek Catholic soldiers. In December 1942, he became a Greek Catholic clerk and clerk of the records department of the Bishop's Field Curia.

• Fr. Stefan Kolankowski, auxiliary chaplain of the Tarnopol garrison (1924-1934). Administrator of the Greek Catholic military parish in Stanisławów (from June 25, 1934). In Soviet captivity, then in German captivity in Liemestadt, on August 16, 1941, he escaped to Lviv. He found himself in the German camp again on August 22, 1944 in Strasshof and from in the Lamdeck camp (March 15, 1945-March 12, 1946). He joined the 2nd Corps of the Polish Armed Forces in the West.

• The chaplains of General Anders' Army include Father Piotr Sywak (Porfiry), Fr. Antoni Hołyński (died April 3, 1942 in Guzar); priest Antoni Szyszko; priest Leon Agenor Porendowski; priest Ignacy Wysoczański [P. Siwicki, 2004, p. 394-400].

Finally, it is worth noting that the number of Greek Catholic soldiers in the Polish Army in the East, according to the data of the Ministry of National Defense of February 9, 1944, was 850 privates, 1 officer [IPMS, A XII.28/12, Personnel unit of the Polish Army Command in the East of February 9, 1944, No. 2201/WPol/44, Report on the activities of the pastoral service of non-Catholic denominations, page 75]. Also important is the reference that "Soldiers of the Greek Catholic faith benefited from the pastoral care of the Roman Catholic clergy together and on an equal basis with soldiers of this faith, who currently constitute over 90% of the APW." [Ibid, p. 76]. However, the number of soldiers in the 2nd Polish Corps as of October 1, 1944 was 454. [IPMS, A XII.28/13 General list of soldiers of non-Catholic denominations in the 2nd Corps and the 2nd Corps Base as of 1/10/44, page 6].

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