

Beyond Consulting



documentary film
concept



THERESIANS

OUR LITTLE WAY

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FILM OBJECTIVES

The main goal of the film is to present the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus to a wide audience and to familiarize with its spirituality and activities. The intermediate goal is to popularize Christian values and ethical attitudes. The choice of the documentary film form was dictated by the power of the information message of this medium and the ease of dissemination. The film will be presented on the Congregation's websites, social networks, closed and open screenings and on television stations. We hope that it will become a useful aid in the pastoral work of the Teresian nuns and a valuable archival resource of the Congregation.



SYNOPSIS

The film presents the history of the founding and activities of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus during the eighty years of its existence. It tells how the charism of Saint Teresa of Lisieux is materialized in the ministry of the Teresian nuns, and is also an expression of concern for the preservation of the spiritual heritage and achievements of this religious community. It is also a tribute to the memory of the creators of the Teresian religious family - mother Maria Kubasiewicz and the Servant of God, Bishop Adolf Piotr Szelażek. It also perpetuates the memory of many other clergy and secular people, thanks to whom the Congregation has survived and continues.

The documentary story consists of four main parts. The first introduces you to the world of religious life, explaining the essence of consecrated life and the religious vocation. The second tells of the "little way" of St. Teresa of Lisieux, Teresian spirituality, the history of the Congregation and its founders. The third is devoted to the contemporary activities of the Congregation in Poland, Ukraine, Italy and Bolivia. The last part, on the other hand, emphasizes the message addressed to the world, indicating the need for childlike entrustment to God by humanity lost in sin - surrendering to His fatherly love and mercy.

The film's story is led by a voice-over, whose narration combines the statements of the Teresian nuns from Polish and foreign religious houses. In addition to contemporary film shots, illustrative materials from the archival collections of the Congregation will be used. People from outside the religious environment - in Poland and abroad - will also be asked to comment on the Congregation.

The film will be made by a team of two authors, supported by the Teresian nuns who live and work in the convents covered by the script.





TECHNICAL PARAMETERS

video duration: 40-90 minutes

technique: digital, H264, 1920p

number of shooting days: around 11, in several locations

review: May 31, 2019

pre-show: June 15, 2019

premiere: the exact date to be determined





LEADER'S NARRATION

PART I: THE WORLD OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

The Teresian Sisters - this is how the nuns of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus are called in short. We see them ministering in churches, working at schools, or hurrying off to other places where they fulfill various duties related to the mission of their congregation. They are like angels - present right next to us, sensitive, vigilant, helpful, and at the same time unreal - living in their religious world, which, although it exists right next to the mainstream of life, is inaccessible and mysterious to secular people. Their presence fills the environment with joy and love, but also makes you reflect on the meaning of existence, vocation and lifestyle.

What is the Teresian monastic world like, where life goes in accordance to the words and example of life of St. Thérèse of Lisieux? Is the convent a harmonious living space filled with love, in opposition to the confused secular world? What are the motivations of young girls and mature women joining the Teresian religious family? Is life in a convent an escape into seclusion for them, or rather a chance to fulfill themselves in an ideal place intended for the above-average and the chosen ones? Is religious life a dedication to God, or rather a search for God in another man, who has devoted himself to another one?¹

¹by the CST nuns: *Lucyna Lubińska, Bogumiła Ptasińska and Judyta Jankowska about religious life and vocation.*





PART II: BIRTH OF THE COLLECTION

1. SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality is a word with many meanings. It has been analyzed in theological, philosophical and psychological terms for centuries, and yet it still eludes attempts at precise definition. Most often, it refers to philosophical considerations about the consciousness or the soul, i.e. that part of the human person that belongs to the immaterial world and connects the physicality of human nature with the supernatural - divine reality.

Any consideration of spirituality ultimately boils down to the search for answers to basic existential questions: Where do we come from? Who are we and what is the meaning of our existence? Spirituality is a sphere of thought that, rising above the limitations of human nature, seeks to understand the phenomenon of existence and to indicate ways leading to fulfillment as a conscious physical, spiritual and social being.

The source of the spirituality of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus is an example of the spiritual development of Teresa - a young Carmelite from Lisieux. In the doctrine of the Catholic Church, it is referred to as the "Little Way of Spiritual Childhood" or simply "the Little Way". The "way" means the pursuit of holiness through gradual spiritual development, while the adjective "small" refers to "childhood", i.e. childlike simplicity and ordinariness. "Spiritual childhood" is an attitude of complete, childlike trust in God and abandonment to Him in all matters. At the center of the Teresian spirituality is love based on deep faith and full trust in God, like a small child who implicitly trusts his parents.



The motto of the Congregation of the Teresian nuns are the words:

"Spread love for the Supreme Love!"

It is a call to constantly bear witness to God's love through daily prayers, ministries and spiritual reflection. He refers to the words full of joy and exultation that Little Tereska uttered at the moment when she understood her vocation:

"My vocation is love! (...)

In the Heart of the Church, my Mother, I will be Love...

In this way I will be everything...

In this way my dream will be fulfilled!"

The spiritual doctrine of the Little Saint reveals the soul and meaning of her life, but it is also the key to understanding the mission of the Teresian nuns.²

The Teresian nuns live each of their days as unique and unrepeatable, keeping in mind the words of St. Teresa that *"tomorrow may be an eternity"*. Their attitude inspires faith in the goodness and love of God. They live in evangelical simplicity, trying to imitate the spiritual path of St. Teresa and the ideal of the life of Mary – Mother of the Church.



2. HISTORY

The General House of the Congregation of the Teresian Sisters is located in Podkowa Leśna near Warsaw. It is here that the Holy Spirit blows among the trees, giving the nuns his inspirations and gifts that support them in the daily hardships of apostolic

²Statement by Sr. Lucyna Lubińska CST explaining the meaning of Teresian spirituality.



service. It is here that the most important meetings take place, the most important decisions are made, and the formation activities of the Teresian religious community are carried out. The General House in Podkowa Leśna was founded in 1967, but the history of the Congregation began thirty years earlier in the eastern borderlands of pre-war Poland.

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus was established by the foundation act issued on August 1, 1936 by Fr. Bishop Adolf Piotr Szelażek in Łuck in Volhynia. It was born from the activities of two religious associations dealing with educational and missionary work: the Teresian Union and the Association of Christ the King.

The first seat of the Congregation was a house in Maszów in Volhynia. During the first three years of their existence (until the outbreak of World War II), the Teresian nuns rapidly developed their activities in the eastern borderlands of what was then Poland. More religious houses were established: five in the Diocese of Łuck³, one in the Archdiocese of Warsaw⁴ and one in the Archdiocese of Vilnius⁵. Just before the outbreak of the World War II, the Congregation had eight religious houses.

From the beginning of their existence, the Teresian nuns were focused on apostolic work among children and youth in Catholic and Orthodox communities. They taught religion, ran a school in Świder, a boarding school in Łuck, Catholic Women's Youth Associations, and organized cutting and sewing courses for young people, retreats for girls, and took care of children. In addition to preparing children for the sacraments, they moderated various religious groups, such as Saint Tereska's Circles or the youth Catholic Action.⁶

The outbreak of World War II prevented the Congregation from continuing its activities. After the Lutsk Diocese was seized by the Red Army, the Teresian nuns left their religious houses and went to their families. Despite their dispersion, they continued to minister wherever they were needed. They helped the poor and imprisoned, persecuted priests and Jews, and secretly studying seminarians. They worked in parishes, prepared meals for the poor and homeless, and took care of the sick, elderly and orphaned children.⁷

In the years 1943-1945, the Teresian nuns were resettled from Volhynia to the Polish Recovered Territories and began anew to organize religious life within the new borders of Poland.

³ Łuck , Maszów , Luboml, Włodzimierz , Jagodzin, Maniewiczze

⁴ Świder _

⁵ Central Volkovysk _

⁶ Sr. Albina Wysocka's CST statement on the pre-war activity of the Congregation

⁷ Sr. Albina Wysocka's CST statement about the life and activities of the Teresian sisters during the war



They settled in Lower Silesia⁸ and in Warmia and Mazury⁹. They worked in schools, orphanages, in parishes, in homes for the elderly, and also participated in organizing summer camps for children from poor families. Despite the many difficulties, they encountered in the new political conditions, they persistently continued the work entrusted to them by the Founder.¹⁰

From May 9, 1991, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus was incorporated into the Carmelite Family, and on March 19, 1993, it received the status of a religious habit institute under papal law. Today it has fifteen religious houses: ten in Poland¹¹, two in Ukraine¹², two in Italy¹³ and a missionary outpost in Bolivia.

The General House was moved from Rychnów to Podkowa Leśna in 1973 with the permission of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. After the expansion, it became the center of the spiritual life of the Congregation, and the Teresian nuns have become an important part of the local community. In the last period of his life, the prelate Stanisław Kobyłecki resided¹⁴ in the general house in Podkowa Leśna, who, on the recommendation of Bishop Szelażek, was the Congregation's guardian and friend from its beginning.¹⁵



⁸ Ścinawka Dolna

⁹ Ostroda

¹⁰ Statement by Sr. Albina Wysocka CST on the activities of the Congregation in the People's Republic of Poland (1945-1991)

¹¹ Podkowa Leśna, Mońki, Olsztyn, Ostróda, Ostrów Mazowiecka, Rychnowo, Suwałki - two houses, Ścinawka Dolna, Toruń, Wasilków

¹² Berdychiv, Lutsk

¹³ Gioia del Colle

¹⁴ born 1902 – d. 1987

¹⁵ Statement by Sr. Lucyna Lubińska CST on the formal status of the Congregation after 1991.



3. FOUNDER

Founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus is priest Bishop Adolf Piotr Szelażek¹⁶. He was born on July 30, 1865 in Stoczek Łukowski in Podlasie. He grew up in a climate of family warmth, love of the homeland and attachment to the Church.

Little Adolf first attended a primary school in Węgrów, and then continued his education at the Men's Classical Gymnasium in Siedlce¹⁷, after graduating from which he entered the Theological Seminary in Płock. He was a gifted and distinguished pupil and student. He was ordained a priest in 1888. After a year of parish work, he went to study at the Theological Academy in St. Petersburg, and after his return he held important positions in the Płock Theological Seminary and the Bishop's Curia. He was, among others, a professor and rector of the Seminary, a canon of the Płock Cathedral Chapter and the president of the Płock Charity Society.

On November 24, 1918, he was appointed by Pope Benedict XV as auxiliary bishop in Płock. In the following years - until 1924 - he worked as a counsellor, head of the Catholic Department and *ad personam director* at the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment. He was an expert on Church property matters, and in the years 1921-1925 he participated as a representative of the Polish Episcopate in the work on the concordat concluded by the Holy See with the reborn Polish Republic.¹⁸

On December 14, 1925, he was transferred to the episcopal see in Łuck. As the Ordinary of Łuck, he conducted intensive pastoral and organizational activities: he convened a diocesan synod, founded over seventy new parishes, invited male and female orders to work in Volhynia, and established a seminary in Dubno, and many religious and charitable organizations. Due to his experience, he was also called to act as a counselor of the Roman Congregation for the Oriental Churches.¹⁹

He served as a bishop in the Diocese of Łuck, as well as Kamieniec and Żytomierz until the end of 1944 - after the occupation of Volhynia by the Red Army. In January 1945, together with other priests of the Lutsk Chapter, he was arrested by the NKVD on charges of spying for the Vatican. Sentenced to death, he was imprisoned for many months in inhumane conditions in Lutsk and

¹⁶born July 30, 1865 – d. February 9, 1950

¹⁷1878-1883

¹⁸Statement by Sr. Hiacynta Augustynowicz CST on the activity of Bishop A. P. Szelażek in the period before his transfer to Lutsk.

¹⁹Statement by Sr. Hiacynta Augustynowicz CST on the activity of Bishop A. P. Szelażek in the Diocese of Luck before the World War II world . . .



Kiev. Efforts for his release were made by Polish bishops, the Holy See and American diplomacy. After the war, in 1946, he was deported to Poland, where he spent the last years of his life. He died on February 9, 1950 at the Bierzgłowski Castle, and was buried in Toruń, in the crypt of St. Jacob.²⁰

The interest in the "little way" of the Carmelite nun Teresa Martin was born in Bishop Szelażek in 1923, when he participated in the ceremony of her beatification. The result of this interest was a two-week stay in Lisieux, during which he began researching her life, spirituality and message for the Church and the world. In the Carmelite monastery in Lisieux, he met Mother Agnes of Jesus - the older sister of the Blessed, with whom he kept in touch for many years.

Fascination with the spirituality of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus found expression in entrusting her care to the Diocese of Łuck. At the request of Bishop Szelażek, Pope Pius XI, by decree of December 14, 1927, appointed her the primary patroness of this diocese. From this fascination and the need to ensure the service of women's congregations in the Diocese of Łuck, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus.²¹



²⁰Sr. Sabina Gumkowska's CST poem "The Thorny Way of the Lutsk Shepherd"

²¹Sr. Hiacynta Augustynowicz's CST statement on the beatification process of Bishop A. P. Szelażek





PART III: ACTIVITIES OF THE ASSEMBLY

The spiritual wealth of St. Therese of Lisieux finds its fulfillment in the activities of the Teresian nuns, who carry out their mission mainly among children and young people. Mission of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus was defined in the erection decree, which ordered the first Teresian sisters to make efforts *"to ensure the good upbringing and education of young people of both sexes in schools and educational institutions"*.

In today's morally relativized times, their mission takes on a special meaning, because shaping ethical attitudes in families and schools is the foundation and prerequisite for building a healthy society and state. The charism of the Congregation of the Teresian Sisters, i.e. a special gift of the Holy Spirit supporting their work, is reflected in four main areas of activity: catechizing children and youth, running educational and care facilities, Teresian pastoral care and missionary activity.

1. CATECHIZATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Catechesis and preparing children and youth to receive the sacraments is the widest scope of activity of the Teresian sisters. It is most often carried out during religion classes conducted in schools and educational institutions, while retreats, days of recollection and pastoral care in youth



communities²² are a supplementary form of Catholic spiritual formation.²³

2. EDUCATIONAL AND CARE FACILITIES

The work of the Teresian nuns in educational and care centers refers to the centuries-old tradition of religious congregations, bringing help and care to the poor, the sick and the elderly in the spirit of the Gospel. The charism of the Congregation in this area of activity is carried out primarily in the Children's Welfare Home and the Congregation's School Complex in Ścinawka Dolna, as well as in the Community Center in Suwałki and the "Opoka" Emergency Care Center in Wasilków.²⁴

3. TERESIAN PASTORAL CARE

The activity of the Teresian pastoral ministry is focused on providing young people with help in their personal development, building relationships with others and responsible planning for the future. An example of the apostolic activities of the Congregation undertaken in this charism is the Teresian Apostolate of Trust – a pastoral ministry associating children and youth developing their spirituality according to the "little way" of St. Thérèse of Lisieux.²⁵

4. THE MISSION IN ORURO

The evangelizing mission of the Church finds its fulfillment, among others, in the preaching of the Word of God by priests and active religious congregations wherever Jesus Christ is unknown. The desire to include the missionary apostolate in her spirituality was expressed by St. Teresa in these words:

*"I would like to preach the Gospel simultaneously
in five parts of the world,
as far as the most remote islands."*

This desire, formally confirmed by successive Chapters, is also an important part of the spirituality of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus.

The Teresian nuns considered several options for starting missionary work, considering proposals to join the missions in Venezuela, Cameroon and Albania. Finally, in December 2014, they decided to accept the invitation of Bishop Krzysztof Białasik to Oruro in Bolivia. Since September 1, 2015, nuns: Edyta Skała, Joanna Olszewska and Elżbieta Puchalska began the nine-month

²²Statements by the CST nuns Agnieszka Jaworska, Bogumiła Ptasirńska and Adriana Zawierca in the catechetical study

²³Teresian Apostolate of Trust _

²⁴Statements by the CST sisters Eстера Markowska, Bożena Oporska, Emilia Piotrowska, Natalia Ozga, Franciszka Cejrowska and Karolina Śliżewska about work in educational and care institutions

²⁵Statements by the CST nuns Nikodema Czerniecka, Aneta Wagner and Krystyna Nowakowska about Teresian pastoral ministry.



preparations at the Mission Formation Center in Warsaw, and began their missionary service in Oruro on August 22, 2016.²⁶



PART IV: THE MESSAGE

The most important message that flows to the Church and the world from the ministry of the Teresian sisters is children's trust in God and Love:

Love whose source is God...
 Love that gives meaning to human existence...
 Love that brings joy and relief in suffering...
 and Love that is able to make some sacrifices for the sake of others...

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus has been carrying out her mission continuously for over eighty years, drawing inspiration and strength from the spiritual legacy of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus and the example of the life and words of Bishop Adolf Piotr Szelażek:

*"So, when the love of God cools down in human souls,
 for which Christ the Lord came to Earth to kindle,
 its resumption is achieved in new ways..."*

The words of the Founder oblige the Teresian nuns to constantly read the signs of the times, and constantly search for new ways to kindle the flame of God's love, if it has already died out in human hearts.

²⁶Statements by the CST nuns Joanna Olszewska and Elżbieta Puchalska about the Teresian mission in Oruro.

