

Venerable Servants of God

Sister M. Paschalis Jahn and IX Companions from the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth

Sacrifice time

If the world hates you, know that it first hated me

J 15,18

The period of World War II brought a lot of material and spiritual damage. Innocent people who stood in the way of the Nazi occupiers suffered. Many clergy, religious and lay Catholics have given the highest blood sacrifice because of their faith in God and their membership in the Church. The situation did not change much in the lands occupied by the Red Army at the end of the war and immediately after its end. The list of Christ's witnesses from this period is long: priests, religious, religious and lay people have been killed, mistreated and humiliated. Many girls, women and sisters were raped despite their heroic resistance, by force and beatings, bringing them to such a state that further defense was impossible. Often a shot from a gun was supposed to "silence" the victim forever.

For years it was forbidden to even talk about their Christian heroism, today their names are extracted from history to show modern man the steadfast witnesses of faith.

This group also includes the Elizabethan Sisters who, with their death, confirmed their faithfulness to their vocation, God and love for others. From among them, ten sisters were selected who represent all the Elizabethan women martyred in 1945 in Silesia.

Death in defence of own purity

Be thou faithful unto death,

and I will give thee a crown of life.

Rev 2:10

Soviet soldiers destroyed everyone and everything that was connected with God and the Church,

they mistreated religious sisters in a special way. The Elizabethan sisters experienced brutal and bestial behavior, mental and physical torment.

At the head of the group of Elizabethan martyrs is the youngest of them, 29-year-old sister **Maria Paschalis (Maria Magdalena Jahn)**. She was born on April 7, 1916 in Górna Wieś (today Nysa) as the eldest of four siblings.

Three days after her birth, she was baptized in the parish church of st. John the Baptist in Nysa.

For eight years she studied at a primary school, then continued her education and started working in a private fruit processing plant. At the turn of 1934/35 she worked in Herne / Westfaila, where she joined the Marian Sodality. A year later she returned to Nysa. She looked after Anna Langfeld and her blind sister. In 1938, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth.

After her first religious profession in 1939, she worked at the post in Kluczbork and Głubczyce. From 1942, she lived in the House of St. Elizabeth, where she worked as a cook and served the elderly and sick sisters. When in March 1945 the Red Army was approaching Nysa, Sr. M. Paschalis, at the behest of her superior, left the city with another sister. They reached Sobotin (the Czech Republic), where they found refuge in a school. On May 11, 1945, one of the soldiers saw her descending the stairs. Sister M. Paschalis, seeing the threat, ran to the first floor to the room where the sisters and their charges were. The soldier caught

up with her and demanded that she go with him, forced her to submit to him and threatened her with death. Then the sister, seeing that she would not be able to defend herself, knelt down, took the cross from the rosary in her hand and firmly said: "I am wearing a holy dress and I will never go with you." At these words, the attacker threatened her with death again. The sister replied, "I belong to Christ, He is my Bridegroom, you can shoot me," she knelt and prayed, "My Jesus, give me strength when dying," and asked those around her for forgiveness. After a moment of silence, a gunshot with weapons put an end to her earthly life. She was buried in the cemetery on Saturday with the participation of the clergy, Elizabethan nuns and numerous faithful. From the time of her death, she was considered a model of cleanliness for young people. She was called by the locals "the white rose from Bohemia". On February 20, sister **Maria Edelburgis (Juliana Kubitzki)** gave her life in defence against rape. She was born in 1905 in Dąbrówka Dolna, she joined the team of Elizabethan sisters in 1929. The entry of the Soviet army found her in the factory in Żary, where she worked as an outpatient nurse.

The sisters found shelter in the presbytery, where they arranged a chapel in one room. At one point, the soldiers burst into the room where the sisters were hiding. In view of the resistance, the attacker shot several times Sr. M. Edelburgis, who soon died. Her body was left in the room for three days to prevent further violence by the soldiers. She was buried in front of the main portal of the parish church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Żary.

Sister Maria Rosaria (Elfrieda Schilling) was the victim of a brutal rape. She was born in Wrocław in 1908 in an Evangelical family. After converting to Catholicism, as a twenty-year-old girl, she joined the ranks of the Elizabethan sisters.

During the entry of the Soviet troops to Nowogrodziec on Kwisa, she stayed at an outpost there. Together

with other sisters, she hid in an air-raid shelter for safety. Late in the evening of February 22, 1945, three attackers forcibly led Sister M. Rosaria outside, where she was raped by about 30 Red Army soldiers for several hours. Around midnight she returned to the shelter covered in blood, in a torn habit, with internal hemorrhage, and she had to endure the mockery of one from soldiers. Everyone thought he was going to die soon, yet God meant it otherwise. She managed to tell the sisters about everything that happened. The next day, the military commissioner ordered the sisters to go to the commandant's office, but he categorically ordered M. Rosaria to stay. However, despite her weakness and against the prohibition, she left with everyone, leaning on the shoulder of her sister. On the road, she was hit by a bullet fired by an enraged police officer. She managed to whisper: "Jesus, Maria!" The second shot was fatal. The body of the heroic Elizabethan was laid to rest in the parish cemetery in Nowogrodziec.

Sister **Maria Sabina (Anna Thienel)**, escaping from Wrocław with her charges, found shelter in Lubań. This 36-year-old sister from Rudziczka repeatedly asked the Mother of God to protect her purity so that she could die a virgin. The soldiers were accommodated in the sisters' house. When one of them tried to force her sister out of the room, she clung to the cross

and sisters, invoking the help of the Mother of God. Through the resistance, Sister M. Sabina protected her virginity. On March 1, 1945, when the sisters were praying on their knees, and sister M. Sabina repeated her request to Mary, a bullet fell through the door and struck her in the chest, causing her death. German soldiers buried her at the Catholic cemetery in Lubań.

... In defence of the virginity of others

Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends

Despite fear for their own lives and virginity, the sisters defended the dignity of other women. **Sister Maria Melusja (Marta Rybka)**, born in Pawłów in 1905, was shot when she stood up for a girl who was attacked by a soldier. She herself paid for this defense with death, heroically defending it your purity vowed to God. It happened in Nysa on March 24, 1945. The fire started by the soldiers stopped near the room where her dead body was lying. She was buried in the sisters' collective grave at ul. Słowiańska 16 in Nysa.

Sister Maria Sapientia (Łucja Heymann) was born in 1875 in Lubiesz near Wałcz. To the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth joined in 1894. On March 24, 1945, the sisters were gathered in the refectory. One of the soldiers wanted to take his young sister out of there by force. Sister M. Sapientia asked him not to do so. In response, she was shot immediately. Her body rested with the other slain sisters in a common grave in the monastery garden at the House of St. Elizabeth in Nysa.

Sister Maria Acutina (Helena Goldberg) was born in 1882 in Dłużek. At the age of 23, she joined the Elizabethan community. She stayed at the post in Lubiąż. She worked as a tutor among orphans who lost their parents during the war. After the Red Army entered the city, out of concern for the safety of the girls entrusted to her, she escaped with them from Lubiąż to Krzydłina Wielka. She came across a group of drunken soldiers who noticed the girls. Defending them against disgrace, she herself lost her life. Her body was buried in the parish cemetery in Krzydłina Mała.

... because of Mercy

*As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers you did it to me
(Mt 25,40)*

More sisters died when, faithful to the charism of the Congregation, they performed acts of love towards their neighbours.

Sister **Maria Adela (Klara Schramm)** was born in Łączna 1885. At the age of 26 she entered into the ranks of the Elizabethan Sisters. She was sent to an institution in Godzieszów, where she was the superior of the community. After the village was occupied by Soviet soldiers, she found shelter with the charges at the farm owners: Maria and Paweł Baum. On February 25, 1945, soldiers burst into the house. The sister, defending the charges and the chastity vowed to God, was shot and together with her, the hosts and other people staying there. They were all buried on the landlord's property, in a bomb crater.

Sister **Maria Felicitas (Anna Ellmerer)** was shot in Nysa on March 25, 1945. She was born in Grafing, Bavaria in 1889. To the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth joined in 1911. Stationed in the House of St. Elizabeth, Soviet soldiers constantly made life difficult for the sisters. The superior of the house, interceding with them that they should leave the sisters alone, was hit with a rifle butt and lost consciousness. Sister M. Felicitas rushed to help her. The soldier took advantage of it and tried to lead her outside. As his sister resisted and resisted, he fired a warning shot. In response, Sister M. Felicitas stood against the wall, stretched out her hands in the shape of a cross and exclaimed loudly: "Long live Christ Kr ...!" A deadly bullet broke the last word. The angry attacker trampled his victim's head and chest with heavy boots. Her mortal remains are in the monastery garden in Nysa at ul. Słowiańska 16.

Another victim of the brutality of Soviet soldiers was sister **Maria Adelheidis (Jadwiga Töpfer)**, who died on March 24, 1945 at the hands of a Soviet soldier. She was born in Nysa, in 1887 to the Congregation of the Sisters of St. She entered Elizabeth in 1907.

She had great pedagogical predispositions, for many years she was a teacher and headmaster of a school for household and handicrafts. When the Soviet soldiers seized the city of Nysa, the sick and the old sought shelter with the sisters. Sister M. Adelheidis, despite the extremely difficult living conditions, has always found a place and help for those in need. She was the soul of this house. When the Soviet soldiers were dominating the house, at one point a Red Army soldier entered the room where the sister and her charges were staying. He provocatively showed his bloody hand and asked who was shooting from this room. Although they had all truthfully denied it, he shot M. Adelheidis's sister. Her body was laid to rest in the Jerusalem Cemetery in Nysa.

A certificate for us

*Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies (...),
it bears much fruit
J 12,24*

The sisters prepared for the decisive moment in their lives by daily fidelity to religious and professional duties. In the plans of God's providence, they were chosen to make a sacrifice of the most beautiful gift which is life. Fear, insecurity, suffering, and anguish put their faith, trust, and love to the test. Although they have lost their earthly life, we believe that Christ has already blessed his bride with eternal glory.

Despite the passage of years and unfavorable political circumstances, the Church remembers their extraordinary testimony. From the moment of their death, all sisters were considered martyrs. This is evidenced by the words of the Superior General, M. Mathildis Küttner, who in a circular letter in 1946 wrote to the sisters: "Certainly the year 1945 accelerated our maturity by many years, gave us many special favors, us and the whole congregation. (...) It was the greatest period of suffering since its inception. God's grace was so strongly connected with our sisters in this many-sided suffering that they became the heroines of the sacrifice of neighborly love and martyrdom. The first group of martyrs can be handed over by our congregation to the throne of God. They are sisters who gave their lives in a heroic struggle for their purity. They suffered with such courage, with such strength and endurance that I can only think of them and speak of them with the deepest respect ". This opinion was supported and spread by various Polish and foreign-language publications. Elizabethan sisters, priests and lay faithful asked them for intercession and received various favors - this private cult continues to this day.

For the modern world, Sister M. Paschalis and her companions are, above all, an eloquent sign of opposition to the civilization of lack of love, they are like biblical "brave women", firmly rooted in God, thus fulfilling the Christian role of women in the world. They bring the Church hope for the victory of good and love for the Kingdom of God.

For the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth remains a new breath of spirit, a new inspiration for a deeper and more expressive realization of the charism of Mothers Founders. The start of the beatification process planned at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s did not take place due to the political situation in Poland at that time. The next efforts of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Elżbieta was taken in 2009 in the Archdiocese of Wrocław, the authority of which was in Silesia in the year when the Elizabethan Sisters gave their lives out of love for God.

You are praised by the martyrs of the light
from " Te Deum" hymn

The beatification process of the Venerable Servants of God: Sisters M. Paschalis Jahn and IX Companions began at the diocesan level on November 25, 2011. It was opened in the Wrocław Cathedral by the then Metropolitan of Wrocław, Archbishop Marian Gołębiewski. After four years of very intensive work of the Postulator of Sister Miriam Zając and people supporting her activities, the current Metropolitan of Wrocław, Archbishop Józef Kupny solemnly closed the trial **on September 26, 2015**. Then, the Trial Files were transferred to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome, where the beatification process took place. at the Roman level.

The culmination of the beatification process was the signing by Pope Francis of the Decree on the Martyrdom of Sister M. Paschalis Jahn and the IX Companions, which took place on June 19, 2021. The signing of the Decree allows them to be proclaimed Blessed. The General Board of our Congregation, after approval of the date by the Secretariat of the Holy See, announced that the beatification will take place in Wrocław on **June 11, 2022**.

We invite everyone to pray for a dignified experience and spiritual fruits of the beatification of the martyrs of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth. We trust that this event will become a source of God's blessing for the whole Church.

Prayer
for obtaining the necessary favours and for the beatification of the Servants of God

Lord Jesus Christ, Crucified and Risen,
You strengthened Sister Maria Paschalis and her companions
to sacrifice your life.

For the price of shed blood, they kept you virginal loyalty,
they defended women's dignity and performed acts of mercy.

May your Church raise them to the glory of the altars
and showed their testimony to the faithful today.

May the example of their lives encourage us to be generous
service to others and zealously carry out your commandments.

If it is in accordance with Your will, grant me the grace through their intercession,
for which I am asking you with confidence,
who live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.

Our father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

Information about favours received through the intercession of Sr. M. Paschalis Jahn and IX Companions should be sent to the following address:

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