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*WHO ARE THESE, ROBED IN WHITE,
AND WHERE HAVE THEY COME FROM? (REV 7: 13).*
THE ULMA FAMILY IN LIGHT OF JOHN OF PATMOS' VISIONS

Summary: The main purpose of this study is to present the history of the Ulma family from Markowa against the background of the biblical vision of redeemed in Rev 7:9-17. On 24 March 1944, Wiktoria and Józef Ulma and their seven children were murdered by German soldiers for giving shelter to eight Jews. The beatification process of the family from the Subcarpathia region began several years ago and has an unique character. It lies in that the beatification process concerns not only the parents, but all their children: Stanisława, Barbara, Władysław, Franciszek, Antoni and Maria aged from 8 to 1.5 years, and the Unborn child, still in Wiktoria's womb. This article consists of two parts: exegetical and biographical. The first part contains an exegetic and theological analysis of the text of Rev 7:9-17, which provides a biblical context for the second part of the paper, describing the heroic story of the family.

Keywords: Book of Revelation, vision of the redeemed, the Ulma Family, martyr's death, beatification process.

Every year, on 1 November, the Catholic Church celebrates All Saints' Day. Saints are those Christians who achieved the state of salvation and enjoy being in the presence of God. The church venerates saints of various nations, social groups and historical periods. Their life paths varied, but for all of them, Jesus Christ's Gospels were the source of moral standards and they were all blessed with His grace. (However, 2017, p. 351) The worship of martyrs flourished during the first centuries of Christianity, and believers started to be venerated later. (Burda, 2018/2019b, p. 40)

The liturgy of All Saints' Day is full of joy. The readings during the Mass focus on Christ and salvation as well as on those who benefit fully from its fruit. The lesson from the Book of Revelation (Rev 7:2-4.9-14) combines fragments of two visions illustrating the triumph of the redeemed in heaven. (Wojciechowski,

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2012, p. 209) The first scene reveals a solemn act of putting a seal of the living God on the foreheads of servants (7:2-4). The servants come from all generations of historic Israel and are counted exactly – one hundred and forty-four thousand with the seal put on their forehead. The second vision surpasses the first one (7:9-14). It does not show a group of a limited number of the chosen ones from Israel, but a huge crowd of people of all nations, generations and languages. Clad in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, they worship God and the Lamb with the song of salvation.

In this crowd of the redeemed, one can recognise the faces of the candidates for sainthood, Wiktoria and Józef Ulma and their seven children. The Ulmas are martyrs of World War II. On 24 March 1944, they were executed by German soldiers for giving shelter to eight Jews. (Szpytma – Szarek 2018, p. 72) The aim of this study is to show the story of the Ulma Family of Markowa in light of the heavenly vision of the author of the Book of Revelation (Rev 7:9-17).

1. The Saints in John of Patmos' vision

The text which illustrates the triumph of the redeemed in heaven (Rev 7:9-17) is part of a larger literary section, which includes Rev 6:1-8.5. It describes the act of opening the seven seals of the mysterious book of world history. The book lies in the hands of the Eternal and only the Lamb can open it. The seven seals 'are the focus of historical periods, events and present, past and future fates of people'¹. (Ravasi, 2002, p. 59) Opening the first four seals is accompanied by a vision of four riders on horses of various colours. In the opinion of many critics, a rider on a white horse symbolises Jesus Christ and the victory of His Gospel in the world, (Wojciechowski, 2012, p. 199–200) the author also proposes other meanings of the image.) The fire-coloured horse means war, the black one – famine and the deathly pale one – a plague. The fifth seal symbolises martyrs for the faith. These include both Christians and Old-Testament victims of persecutions instigated by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The sixth seal symbolises the Last Judgement, and the seventh seal opens a vision of trumpets and successive difficult experiences, through which God implements his redemptive plan.

Pope Pius XII pointed out in his address to young Italians delivered on 12 September 1948: 'There is no doubt that the journey of the Church through ages is the *via crucis*, but it is also a march of triumph. Christ's Church, people

¹ "[W siedmiu pieczęciach] koncentrują się epoki historyczne, zastygają wydarzenia oraz losy obecne, przeszłe i przyszłe".

professing Christian faith and charity will carry light, salvation and peace to the mankind deprived of hope'².

1.1. Rev 7: 9-17 in context

Opening the sixth seal (Rev 6:12-7.17) is accompanied by three visions: a vision of a space disaster (6:12-17), a vision of putting seals on the foreheads of servants of God (7:1-8), a vision of crowds of the redeemed (7:9-17). The first scene takes place on the earth, the second and the third one – in heaven. The first image (6:12-17) shows God against the background of disasters in space, heralding the final times. Yahweh's appearance causes panic and fear. Many become aware of how much they have distanced themselves from the Creator. The Day of the Lord's Great Wrath (Rev 6:17a) is symbolised by cataclysms: earthquake, solar eclipse, falling stars, mountains and islands ripped out of their foundations. It seems that it is a vain effort to look for help, so the vision ends with a rhetorical question: *Who is able to stand?* (Rev 6: 17b; cf. Ravasi, 2002, p. 64–65)

Unexpectedly, the action stops. John answers who can withstand it. He sees an angel with a seal of the living God, who starts putting seals on the foreheads of servants represented by twelve generations of Israel – one hundred and forty-four thousands of them (7:1-8). The seal is put on those who withstood all adversities and belong to the Lord. The third vision starts (7:9-17). The author of the Book of Revelation sees a huge crowd worshipping God, who sits on the throne, and the Lamb equal to Him in glory. Commentators disagree regarding the identification of this endless crowd of saints. Some believe them to be Christian martyrs, others – Christians who are converted pagans, some scholars think they are all Christians, and the others – Jews in diaspora. (Karczewski, 2010, p. 159) Regardless of the point of view, the Book of Revelation shows the participation of the Church in salvation for the first time. (Ehrlich, 1996, p. 82) The promise, heard ages before by patriarch Abraham, is fulfilled in the image of the endless crowd: *And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* (Gen 12:3c). However, before God and the Lamb score a triumph over evil, Christians are called to be faithful to Christ, despite being persecuted. (Rev 2-3; cf. Witczyk, 2020, p. 303)

² The original language quote: "Nie ma najmniejszej wątpliwości, że wędrówka Kościoła przez wieki to *via crucis*, ale jest ona również marszem tryumfalnym. Kościół Chrystusowy, ludzie o chrześcijańskiej wierze i miłości zawsze będą nieść światło, odkupienie i pokój ludzkości pozbawionej nadziei". The quotation is taken from: *Biblia Nawarska. Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu z komentarzem duchowym* [*The Navarre Bible. The New Testament with a spiritual comment*], ed. by a team of biblical scholars of the Faculty of Theology, University of Navarre, Ząbki 2020, p. 1298–1299.

1.2. Rev 7: 9-17 – the literary structure and the meaning of the text

There are two elements that can be identified in the structure of the text of Rev 7:9-17: the vision proper (lines 9–12) and its explanation (lines 13–17; cf. Wojciechowski 2012, p. 216). Those who stand before God and the Lamb are wearing white robes (7:13-14), and they have palm branches in their hands. The standing position symbolises resurrection and victory. White denotes cleanliness, but also light and Paschal glory (Rev 3:4; 6:11).

Palm branches symbolise the Jewish holiday of Sukkot. In the biblical tradition, it had a dual dimension: thanksgiving to God for the fertility of the land and for the crop, and commemoration of Israel's exodus from Egypt and living in tents during their journey through the desert (Lev 23:40.43; Neh 8:15; 2 Macc 10:7). Yahweh protected His people when they were leaving captivity, then stayed with them to give them a sense of security and continuity of generations. (Beale, 1999, p. 428; also Jędrzejewski, 2008, p. 205–215) After Maccabees' victory over Seleucids in the 2nd century BC, Jews strode in a solemn procession, shaking palm branches (1 Macc 13:51; 2 Macc 10:7). According to the Fourth Gospel, crowds of pilgrims welcomed Christ in the streets of Jerusalem on the Sunday inaugurating the Passion week and threw green branches under his feet. (Jn 12:13; cf. Ostański, 2005, p. 173)

In John's apocalyptic vision, the crowd of the redeemed intones the doxology of praise to God and the Lamb. It starts with the Greek phrase *hē sōtēria*, translated as "salvation". Its Hebrew equivalent is the word *hosanna*, which literally means: "Save us!" Originally, *hosanna* was the call to God for help (Ps 118). With time, it became a joyous acclamation to praise His glory. God and the Lamb, in John's description, are the object of liturgical worship by the saints. (Tronina, 1996, p. 179–180) The chant sung by the choir of angels is a response to the doxology. The heavenly creatures praise God and His seven attributes: blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, adoration, power and might.

The dialogue of one of the elders with John (Rev 7:13-17) is another element of the text. It is about identifying the crowd surrounding the Throne. The old man asks a question assuming an answer: *Who are they and where did they come from?* He explains that they are those who experienced "great ordeal". The phrase *thlipsis megalē* can be found in Matt 24:21. It can mean both defeats, prosecution, martyrdom, as well as all kinds of suffering and torment associated with Christian existence (Col 1:24; Eph 3:13; Rom 8:35). John's vision is about those who already experienced "great distress" (Dan 12:1; Matt 24:21). They are the army of the Lamb, redeemed with Its blood (Heb 12:24; 1 Jn 1:7). The phrase: *They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb* is a paradox because blood does not purify, it stains. (Wojciechowski,

2012, p. 220) This statement refers to Old Testament texts. When blessing Jude, the patriarch Jacob talks about the Messiah washing His robes in the blood of grapes (Gen 49:11). Isaiah recalls the judgement of the One who arrives in robes red from blood (Isa 63:1-3). It will not be blood of His enemies, but His own, shed for the salvation of the world: ‘The sacrifice of Christ is one and unique, and His testimony on the cross is enough to purify all people’³. (Tronina, 1996, p. 181–182)

The procession of the chosen ones before the throne of God celebrates the liturgy of worship. These are not only Christian martyrs. They are all those who followed in Christ’s footsteps and were blessed with absolution. Now they are standing before the Lord and He will put up his tent above them, which means that he will stay with them forever. This truth was preached by prophets with reference to the messianic times. The promise was fulfilled when the Son of God assumed human nature and put up his tent among us, among our tents. (Jn 1:14, cf. Ostański, 2005, p. 177) God’s tent is not only spread over the “house of David” (2 Sam 7), but over all of mankind. It is a house made of live stones and all the innocent victims in human history. In the earlier heavenly vision in Rev 5:5 John saw: *the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David*. Unexpectedly, the Lion assumed the form of the Lamb. Now the Lamb becomes the Shepherd, who leads his sheep to the “spring of life”. There is no sorrow, tears or troubles, but eternal joy and victory in God. (Tronina, 1996, p. 182–183, also Kiejza 2000, p. 171–186)

2. The Ulma family against the background of John’s heavenly vision

2.1. *Who are they and where did they come from? (Rev 7:13)*

Józef and Wiktoria Ulma came from the Subcarpathian village of Markowa, situated near from Łańcut. It was part of the Lviv voivodship before the war. With a population of just under five thousand, including about a hundred and twenty Jews, it was one of the largest Polish villages.

Józef Ulma was born on 2 March 1900. His parents, Marcin and Franciszka nee Kluz, owned a three-hectare farm. Józef had younger siblings, sister Maria and brothers: Antoni and Władysław. Józef completed four classes of the primary school in Markowa and continued his education in the State School¹ of Agriculture in Pilzno. He gladly shared his knowledge and experience with his relatives and neighbours. He was a man of many skills and passions: growing

³ The original language quote: “Ofiara Chrystusa jest jedyna i niepowtarzalna, a Jego świadectwo złożone na krzyżu wystarcza, by obmyć wszystkich ludzi”.

fruit trees and vegetables, beekeeping, breeding silk moths, photography, bookbinding and skin tanning. (Szulikowska, 2017, p. 39) He loved constructing things. He assembled a photo camera and made the first windmill in the village, which provided electricity for his house. (Szulikowska, 2018/2019, p. 101, also Burda 2018/2019a, p.50–51)

He set up the first fruit tree nursery in the village in his one-hectare farm. A similar nursery was created at the local primary school, and Ulma had practical training in gardening with the pupils. Each child learned to graft trees under his supervision. The headmaster gave out seedlings to pupils every three years so that they could plant them in their family farms. Józef was a precursor in setting up orchards, first in his village and then in the neighbouring villages, Gacia and Albigowa. Beekeeping and breeding silk moth breeding were his other passions. He also learned the technology of working in an apiary, he used his own designs to construct beehives and shelves for silk moth hatching. These activities won him distinction at the County Agricultural Exhibition in Przeworsk in 1933. (Szpytma – Szarek, 2018, p. 10.13)

He learned all the time. He subscribed to the “Wiedza i życie” periodical. Photography was his great passion. He took pictures of his relatives and also photographed important events in the local community: harvest festival, performances by the choir, wedding ceremonies, theatre performances and church celebrations. His ability to take photographs made him popular in the area. (Szpytma – Szarek, 2018, p. 19)

He met his future wife, Wiktoria Niemczak, at a meeting of the local branch of the “Wici” Rural Youth Association. Born on 10 December 1912, Wiktoria was the seventh and the youngest of the living children of Jan Niemczak and Franciszek nee Homa. She had three brothers: Wojciech, Franciszek and Józef, and three sisters: Maria, Aniela and Katarzyna. (Szulikowska, 2017, p. 24) She attended courses at the Rural Orkan University. She was involved in the works of the amateur theatrical group and acted in nativity plays. On 7 July 1935, Józef and Wiktoria were married at the St. Dorothy parish church. Soon, the young married couple welcomed their first daughter Stanisława (18.07.1936), and later: Barbara (6.10.1937), Władysław (5.12.1938), Franciszek (3.04.1940), Antoni (6.06.1941) and Maria (16.09.1942; cf. Szpytma – Szarek, 2018, p. 19). In spring 1944, the Ulmas were expecting their seventh child.

2.2. These are they who have come out of the great ordeal (Rev 7:14b)

Józef earned extra money by taking photographs to provide for his growing family. In 1939, he used his savings to purchase several hectares of land close to the eastern border of Poland, in Wojsławice near Sokal. He was preparing to move there with his family, but the outbreak of the war thwarted his plans.

The Germans entered Markowa on 9 September 1939. There was a German military police station in Łańcut, commanded by Lieutenant Eilert Dieken. After conquering Poland, the Nazis started extermination of the local population, beginning with Jews. Ghettos were established in towns in October 1939. In the following month, General Governor Hans Frank issued an ordinance ordering Jews to wear a band with the Star of David on the right sleeve. On 15 October 1941, in a document entitled 'On restrictions of staying in the General Governorate'⁴, (Szpytma – Szarek, 2018, p. 26) he banned Jews from leaving the ghetto on penalty of death. Poles who helped Jews to hide were threatened with the death penalty. According to the ordinance: 'An act attempted will be punished in the same way as an act committed'⁵. (Szpytma – Szarek, 2018, p. 19.25-27)

The turn of 1941 and 1942 was the last moment when Jews could still escape and look for shelter. The Jews of Markowa tried to survive the war in their village. At the beginning of 1942, their countrymen appeared, escaping from the nearby towns from the Nazi terror. The Germans caught them in regular round-ups.

Residents of Markowa were not indifferent to the reality of the occupation. They formed underground structures of the Union of Armed Struggle and the Peasants' Battalions. The underground press was distributed in the village throughout the war, and a secret print shop was operated from 1944. Markowa differed from the neighbouring villages in that it had solid buildings and a well-organised cooperative movement. For these reasons, and because the residents' had German-sounding surnames, the village became an object of interest of the Institute of German Labour in the East based in Kraków. The personnel of the Institute carried out anthropological studies among the residents of Markowa in 1940-1942 to reach the ultimate conclusion that they had features allowing for them to be Germanised. A study entitled 'Examination of old villages of the German-Ukrainian border near Łańcut'⁶ (Szpytma – Szarek, 2018, p. 26) was prepared by Gisele Hildebrandt. However, residents of Markowa resisted the agitators and did not agree to sign the Volksliste. (Szpytma – Szarek, 2018, p. 25-26.30)

In summer 1942, the Nazis began the systematic liquidation of the Jewish quarters. Their residents were taken away to extermination camps. Those who were hiding outside the ghettos were captured and shot on the spot. This also happened in Markowa. Wiktoria and Józef Ulma often heard shots and witnessed

⁴ The original language quote: "O ograniczeniach pobytu w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie".

⁵ The original language quote: "An act attempted will be punished in the same way as an act committed".

⁶ The original language quote: "Przebadanie dawnych wsi niemiecko-ukraińskiego pogranicza Łańcuta".

executions. From the windows of their house, situated at a certain distance from the village centre, they saw “the trench” – the place where German soldiers murdered the captured Jews, after they tortured them and made them dig their graves. Some of the Jews of Markowa survived the round-ups in a field in temporary shelters. Józef Ulma helped one of the families to build such a bunker-dugout. Although those helping the Jews were shot, many residents of Markowa supported their neighbours. At night, they left food for them at fixed places and some hid them in their houses or farmsteads.

In 1942, eight Jews found shelter in the attic of Wiktoria and Józef Ulma’s small house. They were: Saul Goldman, a cattle breeder from Łañcut, and his four sons of unknown names (known in Markowa by the name of Szalls), as well as Lea Didner with a little daughter of an unknown name and her sister Golda Grünfeld. (Szulikowska, 2017, p. 84) The decision to take Jews into one’s home entailed high risk. The Ulmas were aware of this.

2.3. ... they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14c)

The tragedy played itself out just before dawn on 24 March 1944. Several hours before, German soldiers from Łañcut summoned four carters from nearby villages to come with their carts. They gave no reason. At night, five soldiers and four or six blue policemen got on the carts. (Domański, 2018/2019, p. 75–97)⁷ The team was led by Lieutenant Eilert Dieken. He was accompanied by Gustaw Unbehend, Josef Kokott, Michael Dziejwski and Erich Wilde. The blue policemen included Włodzimierz Leś and Eustachy Kolman. (Szpytma – Szarek, 2018, p. 50)⁸ The carters were told to drive their carts to Markowa.

After arriving at the village, the Germans and the blue policemen surrounded the Ulmas’ house. Shots were heard soon. The Germans murdered the Jews first. Then, they took Wiktoria and Józef out of the house. They were both killed on the spot. A witness, Edward Nawojwski, who was 18 years old at the time and lived in the nearby village of Kraczkowa, remembers terrible screams and cries of the Ulmas’ children, whose sleep was brutally interrupted. They called their parents, who were already dead. After a brief discussion with his team, Dieken decided that the children should also be killed. And so it was done. (Szulikowska, 2017, p. 106–107)

⁷ The paper authors presents attempts to include Polish police, called “blue” from the colour of its uniforms, in implementation of the occupation policy.

⁸ The Germans were probably told by Włodzimierz Leś that the Ulmas were giving shelter to Jews. He had known Saul Goldman before the war and helped his family after the war had broken out. When the war was coming to an end, he may have become frightened that he would have to return the goods that Goldman had given him as a deposit and turned the family in.

After the execution, the Germans summoned the community head – Teofila Kielara – and ordered him to organise the burial of the victims. Asked why the Germans had killed the children, they answered: ‘To spare the community the trouble with them’⁹. (Szpytma – Szarek, 2018, p. 56) Franciszek Szylar, one of the men ordered to dig the grave, begged the Germans to let the Jews be buried separately from the Catholics. Meanwhile, the criminals started looting. First, they frisked the victims, then they entered the Ulmas’ house and took the tanned skins, coffers, mattresses and beds. The stolen goods were loaded onto carts. When the space on them ran out, another two were brought from the village. After the bodies were buried, the military policeman Josef Kokott warned the Poles present at the scene not to tell anyone how many people had been killed. The murder finished with a celebration at the scene. The drunk murderers went back with their loot to Łańcut.

Although expressly forbidden to do so, the relatives and neighbours dug up the Ulmas’ bodies at night several days later and put them into coffins made by Wiktoria’s brother-in-law. The family were buried near their house. One of the witnesses of the exhumation testified that there was the head and chest of a child sticking out of the womb of Wiktoria, who started giving birth during the execution. (Darmoros, 2021) On 17 January 1945, the Ulmas’ bodies were moved to the local cemetery. The Jews were exhumed in 1947 and buried at the war victim cemetery in Jagiełła-Niechciałka.

2.4. *For this reason they are before the throne of God (Rev 7:15a)*

The Ulmas’ living relatives and acquaintances remember Wiktoria and Józef as righteous, kind and helpful people – authentic followers of Christ. In their life, they submitted to God’s will. By contracting a sacramental marriage, they assumed an obligation to give birth to and to bring up the offspring given to them by the Creator. During the nearly nine years of marriage, God came to the Ulma’s humble house seven times as a little child. They gave their parental love and care to each of them. (Szulikowska, 2017, p. 73–74)

Stanisława Kuźniar, who is their relative, testifies that she used to see Józef kneeling and praying before going to bed. Władysław Ulma remembers his hardworking brother, who once, quoting Mickiewicz, said that it was sometimes more difficult to live a day well than to write a book. There is a copy of the New Testament which survived in the Ulma’s home library. It is a tatty book, which indicates that it was read frequently. As M.E. Szulikowska (2021) points out: ‘The Holy Scripture from the Ulma’s house survived and is a silent witness to

⁹ The original language quote: “Żeby gromada nie miała z nimi kłopotu”.

their spiritual life'¹⁰. (Szulikowska, 2021) Luke's Parable of the Good Samaritan is underlined in red and there is a handwritten note: 'YES!' Probably, Wiktoria and Józef 'needed a strong argument as a defence, which would not undermine their reason for receiving and giving shelter to eight Jews'¹¹. (Szulikowska, 2021) That evangelical Samaritan could be a patron of their risky decision to jeopardise their and their children's lives by helping those who needed such help.

For decades, the living relatives of the Ulmas, called the Samaritans of Markowa, did not mention the tragic events of March, 1944. They were too painful and bloody. Half a century later, Stanisław Niemczak, Wiktoria's nephew, read a note in a newspaper about individuals honoured posthumously by Yad Vashem – the Shoah Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Institute in Jerusalem, Israel. The man described the family tragedy and sent a letter to Yad Vashem. Soon, he testified as one of the witnesses before the District Committee for Investigating Crimes Against the Polish Nation in Rzeszów.

The investigation resulted in Józef and Wiktoria Ulma being honoured with the *Righteous Among the Nations* title. It is the highest civil Israeli honour given to non-Jews. The ceremony took place on 13 September 1995. The medal was received by Władysław, Józef's brother, as the closest living relative of the Family. (Szulikowska, 2017, p. 129–130) In 2010, the Ulmas were honoured posthumously by Lech Kaczyński, the Polish president, with the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta. In 2017, on the initiative of President Andrzej Duda, the National Day of Remembrance of Poles Saving Jews under the German Occupation was established. It is a national holiday celebrated on 24 March – an anniversary of the Ulmas murder. The Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews – the first of this kind in Poland – was opened in Markowa a year earlier. In recent years, the Ulmas have been chosen as patrons of schools, foundations, streets have been named after them, exhibitions to commemorate them and scientific conferences have been held.

On 17 September 2003, the Ulma Family beatification process started on the diocese level on the initiative of the Markowa parish priest, Stanisław Lej. After five years, their completed files were sent to Pelplin. The Pelplin diocese conducted a joint review of over a hundred martyrs from the time of World War II. This group included priests, friars, nuns and laypersons, who died for the faith in occupied Poland and outside it, often in German extermination camps.

¹⁰ The original language quote: "Pismo Święte z domu Ulmów pozostało i funkcjonuje jako niemy świadek ich duchowego życia".

¹¹ The original language quote: "[Prawdopodobnie, Wiktoria i Józef] potrzebowali na swoją obronę mocnego argumentu, który nie podważyłby ich racji, gdy idzie o przyjęcie i przechowywanie ośmiu osób żydowskiego pochodzenia".

The Subcarpathian Family was then included to the group. (Szulikowska, 2017, p. 143–144) The dossiers of all the alleged martyrs were sent to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in the Vatican in 2011. Two years later, the Congregation issued a decree on the process validity, which means that the dossier was completed in accordance with the rules applicable in beatification processes. From then on, work could start on the evaluation of evidence of martyrdom of the Servants of God. (Szpytma – Szarek, 2018, p. 85)

In 2017, at the request of the metropolitan bishop of Przemyśl, Adam Szal, the Vatican Congregation separated the Ulma case from the joint process and agreed for it to be conducted separately. In an interview with the Rzeczpospolita newspaper, the bishop justified his decision: ‘Nowadays, with so much talk of the crisis of the family, families in Poland and worldwide should be given an example to follow. The Ulmas are such an example, and if they were beatified in a large group, in a sense, they would be anonymous’¹². (Krzyżak, 2017) The diocesan postulator, Rev. Dr. Witold Burda, points out the unique nature of the Ulma process. It lies in that the beatification process concerns not only the parents, but all their children: Stanisława, Barbara, Władysław, Franciszek, Antoni and Maria aged from 8 to 1.5 years, and the Unborn child, still in Wiktoria’s womb. According to the beatification and canonisation procedures, the candidate in the process has to be known by name and surname. This is not possible in the case of the Ulmas’ seventh child. For this reason, the decision of the Vatican Congregation to include the Unborn in the beatification process should be particularly appreciated.

The case of the Subcarpathian Family will be analysed by the subsequent colleges of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints: historical, theological and the bishops and cardinals. (Burda, 2018/2019b, p. 43) They will examine the *Positio*, i.e., the life, proofs of heroic virtues and the martyrdom of the Servants of God from Markowa. The process of the Ulma Family has to prove, ‘that they died a martyr’s death for the faith in Christ and their persecutors – German military policemen – killed them out of their hatred against the Ulmas’ faith or against the virtue arising from the faith, i.e. charity’¹³. (Darmoros, 2021) In spring 2021, the Vatican historians gave a favourable opinion on the *positio*

¹² The original language quote: “Dziś, gdy tak dużo mówi się o kryzysie rodziny, trzeba dać rodzinom w Polsce i na świecie przykład do naśladowania. Ulmowie są takim przykładem, a gdyby zostali beatyfikowani w dużej grupie, pozostaliby w jakimś sensie anonimowi”.

¹³ The original language quote: „że ponieśli śmierć męczeńską za wiarę w Chrystusa, a prześladowcy – żandarmi niemieccy – pozbawili ich życia ze względu na nienawiść do wiary rodziny Ulmów lub też do cnoty wynikającej z wiary, w tym wypadku chodzi o miłość bliźniego”. The process of the Ulma Family is conducted with respect to their martyrs’ death, so a miracle is not required. The Markowa parish has been receiving testimonies of individuals convinced that they received graces at the intercession of the Ulmas – God Servants.

and now the case will be examined by the peculiar congress of theologians. Finally, the case will be analysed in the meeting of the bishops and cardinals, members of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. If their opinion is positive, it will be communicated to the Pope and the Prefect of the Congregation will ask for a decree with a declaration of martyrdom. (Burda, 2018/2019b, p. 44)¹⁴ The Church is waiting with hope for the new blessed to be announced.

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The short, dramatic history of the Ulma family can be concluded with Jesus' words in the Gospel by John: *No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends* (J 15:13). The Married Couple of Subcarpathia with their Offspring bore witness to charity and remained faithful to Christ's teachings until their death. Their heroism deserves the highest praise and a permanent place in the memory of Poles. One should trust that the activities of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints supported by prayers of believers will end with the beatification of the Ulma family. They stand in a long line of those who have been washed their robes with martyr's blood.

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¹⁴ W. Burda points out: „Głos wszystkich wspomnianych wyżej komisji Kongregacji Spraw Kanonicznych, ma charakter doradczy. Prawo orzekania w sprawie uznania cudów oraz stwierdzenia heroicznego cnót, ofiary z życia lub męczeństwa należy wyłącznie do Ojca Świętego.” (Burda, 2018/2019b)

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Ci przyodziani w białe szaty kim są i skąd przybyli? (Ap 7, 13). Rodzina Ulmów w świetle wizji Jana z Patmos

Streszczenie: Głównym celem niniejszego studium jest prezentacja losów Rodziny Ulmów z Markowej na tle biblijnej wizji zbawionych w Ap 7, 9-17. 24 marca 1944 r. Wiktoria i Józef Ulmowie wraz z siedmiorgiem dzieci ponieśli śmierć męczeńską z rąk niemieckich żandarmów za udzielenie schronienia ośmiorgu Żydom. Od kilkunastu lat toczy się proces beatyfikacyjny Rodziny z Podkarpacia i ma on wyjątkowy charakter z tego względu, że kandydatami na ołtarze są nie tylko rodzice, ale także ich wszystkie dzieci: Stanisława, Barbara, Władysław, Franciszek, Antoni i Maria w wieku od 8 do 1,5 roku oraz Nienarodzone, które Wiktoria nosiła w łonie. Opracowanie składa się z dwóch części: egzegetycznej i biograficznej. Pierwsza część to egzegetyczno-teologiczna analiza tekstu zawartego w Ap 7, 9-17, który stanowi biblijny kontekst drugiej części artykułu, w której opisano dzieje bohaterkiej Rodziny.

Słowa kluczowe: Apokalipsa św. Jana, wizja zbawionych, Rodzina Ulmów, męczeńska śmierć, proces beatyfikacyjny.

