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**REFLECTIONS OF MOTHER TERESA KALKSTEIN
ON THE RELIGIOUS VOCATION IN THE CIRCULAR
LETTERS TO THE SISTERS OF THE RESURRECTION**

The year 2020 marks the fortieth anniversary of death of Teresa Kalkstein, the fourth Mother Superior of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection¹. It is an excellent opportunity to recall not only her person but also her teaching. She was indeed an extremely important and remarkable person who led the Congregation during a difficult time: the II World War and the renewal of the religious life started by the II Vatican Council. Her long and dedicated service to the

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1. The Congregation of the Sisters of Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ was founded on the 6th of January 1891 by two Polish women, a mother and daughter, Celina (Celine) Borzęcka and Jadwiga (Hedwig) Borzęcka. In 1905 the Congregation received its decree of approbation and in 1923 the Constitutions were confirmed. In 1891 the first convent was established in Kęty (Poland) and in 1900 the Resurrection Sisters went to the United States. In 1928 the Congregation was divided into the following provinces: the Polish Province, the Western and Eastern Province in the USA. In 1937 the Polish one was transformed into two provinces: the Poznań and Warsaw one. From the very beginning of the existence of the Congregation the sisters have undertaken tireless efforts towards a religious and moral rebirth of the world in the spirit of the Beatitudes. This mission has been fulfilled in particular through educational work, as well as spiritual retreats, charity work, nursing care and missionary work. Currently, the Resurrection Sisters carry their ministry in Poland, Italy, United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, Argentina, Belarus and Tanzania. M.L. Mistecka, *Zmartwychwstanki. Charyzmat i dzieje 1891-1991*, Lublin 1999.

Congregation as the General Mother Superior is documented in a three-volume collection of letters entitled *Na straży Miłości i Prawdy* [Guarding Love and Truth]. This work is of historical value (it reflects on the history of the Sisters of the Resurrection within the period of almost 30 years) but also – as the Author writes in the preface to the first volume – it is the *liber vitae* of the Congregation, showing its aspirations to the ideal of sainthood, framed in the Constitutions and the Rule².

In her extensive correspondence with the sisters, the Mother touched upon many topics connected with religious life, in particular the problems of religious vocation which will be discussed in this article. One of her letters dated 18th February 1959 is entirely devoted to the question of the religious vocation³. She defines religious life as a lifestyle based on following Jesus Christ and as a public profession of the evangelical counsels (chastity, poverty and obedience) as well as life in a community.

The Author shares suggestions with her readers how to discern a vocation to live in a convent and how to carry it out in daily life. She observes many problems which religious persons are faced with and she assesses the causes of these problems accurately, attempting also to solve them. She analyzes the topics discussed in her writings comprehensively. Some of her advice and opinions could be seen as slightly archaic but one must remember that they were a reflection of the teaching of the Church in that time. Nevertheless, many of her teachings have not lost their relevance.

The life and work of Teresa Kalkstein

Janina Maria Franciszka Kalkstein was born on the 18th of August 1888 in Radzic next to Lublin. She received a thorough education in the field of pedagogy, theology and psychology, first at the Swiss university in Freiburg and then at the Sorbonne University in Paris. In 1911 she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ at the age of 23. She adopted the name Teresa. In 1913 she made her first religious vows in the presence of the Foundress of the Congregation Mother Celine Borzęcka⁴. She spent her first years of the religious life in the convent in Kęty. During that time she gave private music and foreign

2. T. Kalkstein, *Na straży Miłości i Prawdy. Listy Okólne Matki Generalnej do Zgromadzenia 1938-1949*, v. I, Rome 1961, p. 5 (hereafter referred to as: NsMiP-I).
3. T. Kalkstein, *Na straży Miłości i Prawdy. Listy Okólne Matki Generalnej do Zgromadzenia 1950-1961*, v. II, Rome 1961, pp. 369-380 (hereafter referred to as: NsMiP-II).
4. Celina Rozalia Leonarda Borzęcka née Chłudzińska was born on the 29th of October 1833 in Antowil next to Orsza. In 1817 she married Józef Borzęcki. After the death of her husband in 1874, together with her two daughters she left for Rome where she met Fr. Piotr Semenenko and she set off to create a female community of the Congregation of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. On the 6th of January 1891 (together with her daughter Hedwig) she made her perpetual vows. She died on the 26th of October 1913 in Cracow, and on the 27th of October 2008 she was beautified. *Nekrologi zmarłych siostr Zmartwychwstania Pana Naszego Jezusa Chrystusa*, v. I, (place and date of publishing unknown), pp. 4-7.

language lessons and conducted lectures at the local teachers' seminary. She was also responsible for female parish organizations in the village Kozy. After that she was appointed the assistant to the novice mistress. In 1999 she pronounced her perpetual vows. Next, she went to Warsaw where she was the head of the teaching seminary (at 5b, Sewerynów street), the superior of the house and the juniorate mistress until 1926. After the Congregation was divided into provinces, she was elected the first superior of the Polish Province. After the Polish Province was divided into two administrative units, she was appointed the head of the Warsaw Province. During her term of mandate in the Warsaw Province 13 new houses of the Congregation were established. What is more, a crypt was erected under the convent's chapel in Kęty, where in 1937 the earthly remains of the Foundresses were transferred.

In 1938, during the 5th General Chapter, she was appointed General Superior of the Congregation. This highest office was held by her until the year 1967. It was a long, almost 30-year old term of mandate, renewed three times. During that time Mother Teresa Kalkstein prepared and led four general chapters. She created 63 houses of the Congregation (she closed down 25), in particular missionary posts in England, Canada, Australia and Argentina. She opened four novitiates, including the international novitiate in Grottaferrata. Furthermore, Mother Kalkstein organized a general archive in Rome, and in 1944 she published the Constitutions of the Congregation. Two years later, she established the Mother Celine House of Studies affiliated to the Fordham University in New York. It is there that the junior sisters would undergo their religious formation and prepare for pedagogical and educational work. As it was an innovative venture, it became a model for other religious institutes. In 1958 Mother Kalkstein inaugurated the Centre for Asceticism, Mysticism, and the Pedagogy of the Resurrection, which was later called the Centre for Resurrection Studies [Polish: Ośrodek Studiów Zmartwychstańskich]. Selected nuns started to compile and disseminate the history and spirituality of the Congregation and its pedagogy. Teresa Kalkstein herself wrote a few works on the Foundresses⁵, on Sister Zofia Czarnecka⁶, who died in the odour of sanctity, as well as a publication devoted to the pedagogy⁷ and history of the Congregation⁸.

During the Second World War Mother Teresa engaged in various charity causes, for instance helping Polish soldiers, preparing food supplies for prisoners and deportees, providing financial aid to refugees, organizing secret studies, looking

5. T. Kalkstein, *Życie wewnętrzne Matki Celiны Borzęckiej*, Poznań 1936; T. Kalkstein, *Matka Celiны Borzęcka*, Rome 1951; T. Kalkstein, *Jadwiga Borzęcka. Współfundatorka Zgromadzenia Sióstr Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego*, Warsaw 1965.
6. T. Kalkstein, *Zmartwychwstanka. Wewnętrzne dzieje P. Zofii Czarneckiej CR*, Katowice 1933.
7. T. Kalkstein, *System wychowawczy Zgromadzenia Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego i jego zadanie w dobie obecnej*, Poznań 1931.
8. T. Kalkstein, A. Kossowska, *Rys dziejów Zgromadzenia Sióstr Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego*, Warsaw 1930.

after orphans, offering free shelter and food to people in need. After the end of the war, Mother Kalkstein established a dormitory for over 25 children of Polish-Italian couples and hosted women deprived of their property in Poland and left without financial means.

The last years of office of Mother Teresa were the times of the II Vatican Council. Mother Kalkstein followed the works of the Council attentively and made sure that the sisters were acquainted with the Council documents and started the work of renewal of the religious life adapted to the present times. After leaving the office in 1967, she stayed in the Eternal City and was involved in the beatification processes of the Foundresses. Due to the broad spectrum of activity in various fields, it is impossible to name all of her endeavours. She died on the 25th of December 1980 in Rome at the age of 92⁹.

The essence of religious vocation

One should start analyzing this topic from the concepts through which Teresa Kalkstein describes the religious vocation. She calls it “the masterpiece of God’s love”¹⁰, “the seal of God’s choice”¹¹, “the highest grace after baptism and Saint Communion”¹². “the shortest and the surest path to perfection”¹³, “the evangelical pearl of which Jesus spoke in his parable”¹⁴ and in reference to the words of Psalm 104 “a fertile land of milk and honey”¹⁵. She echoes Fr. Peter Semenenko¹⁶ in saying that vocation is a kind of second look of Jesus at the person, an expression of how well pleased He is with them¹⁷. The terminology that the Author used shows her conviction about the uniqueness and extraordinary nature of the religious vocation which she identifies with a privileged state of life to which only some people are called. The one who has been called to imitate Jesus in such a unique way, has been granted an exceptional gift by God and should show their gratitude to the Creator¹⁸.

9. *Nekrolog Matki Teresy Kalkstein CR*, (place and date of publishing unknown), pp. 1-4.

10. NsMiP-II, p. 370

11. NsMiP-II, p. 369.

12. T. Kalkstein, *Na straży Miłości i Prawdy. Listy Okólne Matki Generalnej do Zgromadzenia 1962-1967*, v. III, Rome 1967, p. 260 (hereafter referred to as: NsMiP-III); NsMiP-II, p. 369.

13. NsMiP-II, p. 372.

14. NsMiP-II, p. 372.

15. NsMiP-II, p. 273.

16. Piotr (Peter) Semenenko was born on the 29th of June 1814 in Dzieciółowo. He was the co-creator and the general superior of the Congregation of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, a valued chaplain and confessor, as well as a spiritual director of many outstanding nuns. He died in Paris on the 18th of November 1886 r. S. Urbański, *Duchowość zmartwychwstańcza*, Warsaw 2003, pp. 13-14.

17. NsMiP-II, p. 370; NsMiP-III, p. 143; P. Semenenko, *Listy duchowne*, Cracow 1924, p. 57.

18. NsMiP-II, p. 51, 86, 272.

In her reflections Mother Teresa explains how to discern one's own life path adequately. She emphasizes that God usually does not use special means to show His will to a person. Typically, He uses specific people and a series of events, which though seem to be incidental, are in fact a hidden action of the Creator, to show the person their life mission. Mother Kalkstein also enumerates the signs of authenticity of a religious vocation: the desire to devote oneself completely to God and serve only Him, the spirit of sacrifice and a desire to follow Jesus through poverty, humility and self-renunciation¹⁹.

According to the fourth General Superior of the Congregation, it is important that the person who has chosen a religious life believes in the authenticity of their calling and that God has truly called them to join the convent, that this was indeed His will. This belief reinforces the nun's calling and is a "foundation stone" which will crush any temptation to deviate from the chosen path. One needs to ask God for this grace in prayer. If the nun starts to doubt her vocation, this means that she did not believe in it with her whole being in the first place²⁰.

According to Mother Teresa, a religious person must not only believe her calling but also love it. Without such love she will not be able to give herself to God unconditionally and fulfil His will²¹. Loving one's vocation makes the nun ready to sacrifice a lot and to be faithful to God. In one of her letters, the Mother Superior gives the sisters the following advice: "The love for one's calling should be so strong and resolute that you will rather die than betray it [...] There is no sacrifice one would not make for the love for the holy vocation. If we must, we will go through fire and water, walk on hot coals, if only that allows us to stay faithful to our calling till the last breath of life"²².

Mother Kalkstein reminds the readers that the essence of the religious vocation is the profession of the evangelical counsels: chastity, poverty and obedience. Just like Fr. Semenenko, she compares it to a baptism, a beginning of a new life. It is as if through grace a new creation of a human being took place²³. She reminds the sisters that it is through it that a religious person is separated from the world and sacrificed to God in a special way. She encourages the sisters to renew their vows privately as often as possible so as to confirm their devotion to the Lord²⁴. Wanting to highlight the immense value of the vows, in one of her letters she recalls St Theresa of Ávila. She writes that when the reformer of the Carmelite Order was

19. NsMiP-II, p. 371.

20. NsMiP-II, pp. 371-372.

21. NsMiP-II, p. 372.

22. NsMiP-II, p. 373.

23. NsMiP-II, p. 373; P. Semenenko, *Listy*, p. 67.

24. NsMiP-II, p. 373-374; NsMiP-III, p. 281.

wondering how to best serve God and the Church, she came to a conclusion that she would do it by a perfect embodiment of the evangelical counsels²⁵.

According to the teaching of the Author, worshipping God is the sense of a religious vocation. The nun will be glorifying the Creator through whole eternity, but the adoration must already start in the earthly life²⁶. Unfortunately, some religious persons forget this, therefore they become proud and arrogant and they offend God with their sins²⁷. Kalkstein reminds the readers about the negative effects of venial sins which impede the growth of the spiritual life, push the nun to commit more serious offence, weaken the zeal and cause coldness and indifference. This at times will lead to the loss of vocation. Each Sister of the Resurrection should proclaim a war to sins and self-love, as well as avoid any kind of infidelity²⁸. The Mother reinforces this statement by saying: "The true bride of Lord Jesus transforms her life to be one *Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto*. Glory of the Holy Trinity is her only goal of the earthly pilgrimage, the destiny of the earthly life, a safe port to which she is sailing courageously and with determination. It is for the glory of God she lives, suffers, sacrifices herself and dies. It is all out of love and for love"²⁹.

The Sisters of the Resurrection are called to a perfect love for God, writes Teresa Kalkstein³⁰. Love is the most important virtue, as it is thanks to it the human unites with God and accesses divinization. The sisters should constantly develop the love towards Jesus in themselves. No nun, as long as she is living on this earth, can say that she loves the Lord enough³¹. The Mother also refers to the view of St Thomas Aquinas, who distinguished two ways of loving God perfectly – *perfectio patriae* and *perfectio viae* – described the way of evangelical counsels as a path in between³².

The sisters are called to a spiritual resurrection and a life with God, reminds the readers Kalkstein. They are not able to develop spiritually without the help of Jesus, as they experience the effects of the original sin just like all the other humans. Christ is the Intermediary and lifts them up from the natural level to the supernatural level and through grace shapes them to His likeness. By working with Him closely, the nuns gradually experience an internal change of their heart, mind and will, as well as their own personality³³.

25. NsMiP-II, p. 87.

26. NsMiP-II, p. 352, 413.

27. NsMiP-II, p. 353.

28. NsMiP-II, p. 352-354, 413.

29. NsMiP-II, p. 412.

30. NsMiP-I, p. 16.

31. NsMiP-I, p. 16. T. Kalkstein, *List okólny o miłości*, Rome 1950, p. 17, 21 (hereafter referred to as: LM); NsMiP-II, p. 283.

32. NsMiP-III, p. 430.

33. "This is the principal ideal of our internal life, our religious life. To resurrect here on earth, immersed in the beloved will of God and in the love to our neighbors. This is the true beginning of the eternal life [...] Our souls are longing for this moment. Nothing else can attract us or make us

Mother Teresa emphasizes that love transforms the loving person into what they love, that is why in the peak moment the Sister of Resurrection may say: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20)³⁴. Transforming into Christ is the goal of her life and the height of sainthood³⁵. Perfect love makes the nun give herself to God completely and fully identify with Jesus. In this way, not only does she participate in the life of the Holy Trinity, but by submitting to the Holy Spirit she becomes the *alter Christus*. Even though this change happens on the level of the person, it does not mean that the human undergoes an ontic transformation, but rather a moral one, i.e. a total submission of oneself to the Person of Christ. In effect, their whole life becomes transformed³⁶.

The new life with God blossoms on the rubbles of death of our own "self" – points out Mother Teresa³⁷. There is no more place for private thoughts, feelings. The will of the Sister of Resurrection, as all her powers must be transformed through God's grace and submitted to the influence of Jesus. The nun must free herself from egoism and renounce herself completely. Not only there is no place for sin in her life but neither for any kind of voluntary imperfection³⁸.

Religious vocation is also about following Mary, teaches the long-standing General Superior³⁹. This means recreating in one's interior what happened in Her on the physical as well as spiritual level. The Virgin Mary is a model of the monastic perfection and virtues which should characterize every person consecrated to God⁴⁰. According to the Author, the earthly life of Mary was simple and ordinary, common, but Her love to God and other virtues were extraordinary⁴¹. Mary participated in the paschal mystery of Jesus through His passion and death until the resurrection. Together with the Saviour she has earned us the reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins, necessary graces and eternal salvation⁴². That is why she has the title of the Co-Redemptrix⁴³ and the Mother of Mercy⁴⁴.

happy, only that kind of fullness of life, which has been designated for us centuries ago by God." NsMiP-II, p. 274.

34. NsMiP-II, p. 413.

35. NsMiP-II, p. 273; LM, p. 6.

36. NsMiP-I, p. 209-210; NsMiP-II, p. 14, 230, 447; P. Semenenko, *Credo*, Cracow 1907, pp. 175-176; P. Semenenko, *Życie wewnętrzne*, Lwów 1931, p. 12-14; S. Urbański, *Duchowość zmartwychwstająca*, p. 25, 177.

37. NsMiP-II, p. 230.

38. NsMiP-I, p. 210; NsMiP-II, p. 14, 230, 447.

39. NsMiP-II, p. 102, 140, 299, 372, 458; NsMiP-III, p. 209, 215, 289, 472.

40. NsMiP-III, p. 115.

41. NsMiP-II, pp. 154, 299.

42. NsMiP-II, p. 201.

43. P. Semenenko, *Reguła Zgromadzenia Sióstr Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego*, Rome 1967, p. 106; NsMiP-III, p. 146.

44. NsMiP-II, p. 242, 398.

The love of a religious person for God is fully expressed in the fulfilment of His will, underlines Kalkstein⁴⁵. In her opinion this is an infallible sign of the true love to Jesus and at the same time an indispensable means of sanctifying oneself⁴⁶. Understanding the will of God happens in the conscience of the religious person. She draws upon her personal inspirations but, as there was a vow of obedience, it can be also recognized in the orders of the superiors. What is more, what God wants from the Sisters of the Resurrection can be found in the Constitutions and the Rule of the Congregation. These documents show a certain way to sainthood in the spirit of resurrection and thus it is important that the sisters observe the recommendations which are inscribed there⁴⁷.

The criterion of authenticity of the love of the religious person to God is the love towards one's neighbour, especially sisterly love, concludes Mother Teresa. She reminds us that for the Sister of the Resurrection it is the second resurrection (cf. Jn 15:12)⁴⁸. Love towards other people cannot be limited to verbal declarations but must also be reflected in deeds and the attitude of understanding and kindness towards those around us⁴⁹. What is more, the practice of sisterly love makes nuns become more united and, in this way, they carry out the will of the Venerable Celine who, when asked before her death for a message for the sisters, said: "May they be one!"⁵⁰.

Fidelity to the grace of the religious vocation

Teresa Kalkstein devotes a lot of attention to the problems of faithfulness to the grace of the religious vocation. Invoking St Thérèse of the Child of Jesus, she states that fidelity to the vocation is a moral obligation of the Sister of the Resurrection and, in fact, the condition of her salvation⁵¹. She makes a distinction between the grace of vocation and the grace to persevere in the vocation. The latter one is gained through prayer and the fidelity to the responsibilities of her status⁵². This grace is a gift of God, and at the same time requires "an irrevocable, firm and strong decision to belong to Lord Jesus forever and the Congregation *usque ad mortem*"⁵³.

45. LM, p. 24; NsMiP-II, p. 413; NsMiP-III, p. 26.

46. NsMiP-I, p. 15, 96; NsMiP-II, p. 307.

47. NsMiP-I, pp. 213–214.

48. LM, p. 43; NsMiP-I, p. 168; NsMiP-II, p. 14; NsMiP-III, p. 46; *Konstytucje Zgromadzenia Sióstr Zmarłychwstania Pana Naszego Jezusa Chrystusa*, Rome 1944, §10, §11; P. Semenenko, *Reguła*, p. 22, 91.

49. LM, p. 52, 62, 64; NsMiP-I, p. 144, 168; NsMiP-II, pp. 277–278.

50. LM, p. 3; NsMiP-I, p. 352; NsMiP-III, p. 159.

51. NsMiP-II, p. 271.

52. NsMiP-II, p. 266, 377.

53. NsMiP-II, p. 375.

Those, who decide to follow the voice of calling, states Mother Teresa, have the obligation to persevere in their decision until death⁵⁴. She speaks very sternly about a situation in which a perpetually professed sister leaves the congregation. She uses very strong words to describe this fact: perfidiousness, perjury, a religious apostasy, breaking up the sacred covenant of the soul with the Lord or crushing the ring of mystical marriage to Jesus⁵⁵. According to her, other losses are nothing compared to the loss of vocation which she calls the “death of the soul”⁵⁶.

As the General Superior explains, the renouncement of the religious vocation does not happen suddenly but is the effect of many acts of unfaithfulness, neglecting rules and a long time coldness. She describes this process in the following way: “The soul gets used to the state of indifference to God’s cause, does not react to it, does not fight and does not seek help. She does not love her calling. It starts with venial sins which are committed without scruples. Nor confession [...] nor, unfortunately, the Holy Communion bring the desired fruit, as in the Sacrament of Penance there is no honest regret and the Eucharistic Feast is taken without desire, without love and with only a flicker of faith. The conscience is warped, muted, does not make any sound. The soul experiences no pricks of conscience”⁵⁷.

From the statement above one can conclude that the development of the spiritual life demands cultivating the relationship with God. Once the nun has no close connection with Jesus, she can easily experience a spiritual breakdown. It is then as the Author foresees: “the religious ideal fades, is enveloped in a mist of naturalism and disappears from view. The natural life starts to dominate. This is when the saddest thing happens. Upon a first difficulty the nun stands before the dilemma: Jesus or me, His will or mine? Unfortunately, it is so often that the consecrated people withdraw from the religious life! Why is it so? [...] These are those virgins from the Gospel who did not pour the oil of love into their lamps and fell asleep”⁵⁸.

Drawing from her own experience of working with the sisters, the Mother enumerates the main reasons why the sisters might lose their religious zeal⁵⁹, and with time leave the congregation. Firstly, there is the regression of the spiritual

54. NsMiP-II, p. 374.

55. NsMiP-II, pp. 375-376.

56. NsMiP-II, p. 359.

57. NsMiP-II, p. 360-361.

58. NsMiP-II, p. 265.

59. Mother Teresa understands the religious spirit as “good disposition, readiness to make sacrifices for God, for the souls and the Congregation. A sister of a good spirit thinks only of God’s grace and the salvation of others. The religious spirit is love to one’s religious vocation. And a desire to be faithful to this calling till death. Every nun must be very alert as not to lose the religious spirit and make sure that it grows in her. Should the spirit fade away in a sister, and should she become less ready to make sacrifices, to love the vocation while her egoism grows, remediation action is needed. This means that the spirit drawn from Novitiate needs to be renewed”. NsMiP-III, pp. 112-113.

life caused by disregarding focus, silence and prayer⁶⁰. As the Author explains, the women, who had left the congregation, most often said that the reason of their departure was neglect of prayer practice, out of their own will or because of the superiors who did not provide them with enough time for prayer⁶¹. She reminds us that everyday prayer, personal as well as collective, is the basic duty of a nun, and so no sister can regularly miss everyday prayers⁶². In regards to the above, the superiors should schedule the working plan and delegate responsibilities in such a way, so as no one is deprived of the possibility of participating in collective prayers⁶³. “The one who prays”, concludes Mother Teresa, “will never lose their religious spirit. The one who prays well, will not lose their vocation and will cope with all the difficulties”⁶⁴. She wholeheartedly recommends nuns to pray though the intercession of the Virgin Mary whom she calls “the Guardian of the religious vocation”⁶⁵, “Guarantor of the faithfulness to the vocation”⁶⁶.

The Author of the Circular Letters is alarmed by the fact that some religious persons do not know the spirituality of their own congregation sufficiently. According to the Mother, answers to many problems bothering the nuns can be found in the writings of the Founders of the Congregation. Obviously, she refers in particular to the writings of the Sisters of the Resurrection. She recommends regular reading, conversations with the superior, as well as participating in her weekly conferences⁶⁷.

In reference to the teaching of Fr. Semenenko, the General Superior claims that losing one’s vocation is often linked to the ignorance of one’s own nothingness and misery, and even more often to misunderstanding of God’s love and lack of a living relationship with Jesus. Without the knowledge of one’s nothingness, without the awareness of the total dependence on God in existence and action, as well as without the awareness of one’s own misery (understood as a tendency to yield to temptation and committing sins), the religious person persists in a spiritual blindness, hubris and self love. They are not able to submit to the transformative action of God’s grace⁶⁸.

According to teaching of Mother Teresa, another obstacle towards the religious fulfilment is an excessive attachment to the biological family. Too much concentration on family matters weakens the religious spirit and results in an internal

60. NsMiP-III, pp. 253-254.

61. NsMiP-III, p. 368.

62. NsMiP-II, p. 405.

63. NsMiP-II, p. 361-362.

64. NsMiP-III, p. 113.

65. NsMiP-II, p. 102.

66. NsMiP-III, p. 216.

67. NsMiP-II, p. 362, 459; NsMiP-III, p. 264.

68. NsMiP-II, p. 362.

dilemma⁶⁹. Another menace to the religious vocation is the wrong use of the mass media⁷⁰. She underlies that “sainthood has its requirements; nuns who have left the world in order to become a saint cannot adopt what is the worldly spirit and its vanity”⁷¹.

The Mother General asks the other superior mothers to signal cases of weakening of the religious spirit in the sisters to their supervisor, which will give them the possibility of creating the right conditions for a spiritual treatment⁷². She states that leaving the congregation by any of the sisters should be a shock for the conscience of the superiors and make them more alert. They are responsible for the people who have been entrusted to them and their task is to “keep their finger on the pulse of their spiritual life”⁷³. Nonetheless, she stresses the significance of an adequate religious formation, which though starts during the postulate, never ends and its final objective is the fullness of maturity of the religious person and her independence⁷⁴.

As Mother Kalkstein observes, a religious person will come across various obstacles and struggle with difficulties on the way of fulfilling her vocation⁷⁵. She needs adequate support so that she can grow and avoid deep discouragement. In the circular letter of 11th of October 1959, the Author explains that during a prayer she had an idea of organizing courses on the “spiritual renewal”⁷⁶. The aim of this course was described as follows: refreshing the religious vocation and love to God, awakening the sisters’ zeal, and even starting “a new era in the internal life of a nun”⁷⁷. The course involved conferences and lectures on the history and spirituality of the Congregation and common meetings during which the sisters spoke of the most important problems of the religious life⁷⁸. This initiative shows how important the development of the Congregation was for Mother Teresa and how she cared for the spiritual development of the Sisters of the Resurrection.

It is not known how many people benefited from the help and advice of the Mother. Undoubtedly, one of them was S. Zofia Czarnecka, a mystic, deceased in the odour of sanctity⁷⁹. The correspondence between the two nuns proves that they

69. NsMiP-II, p. 363.

70. NsMiP-II, p. 364, 365, 403.

71. NsMiP-III, p. 403.

72. NsMiP-II, p. 361, 365, 403.

73. NsMiP-II, p. 360.

74. NsMiP-II, p. 404; NsMiP-III, p. 112, 276.

75. NsMiP-II, p. 367.

76. NsMiP-III, p. 400.

77. NsMiP-II, p. 400.

78. NsMiP-II, p. 401, 458.

79. Zofia Karolina Czarnecka was born on the 4th of November of 1897 in Warsaw. She joined the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection on the 1st of November 1920. On the 15th of August of 1922 she took her first vows. She led a profound and intensive spiritual life and received

had very cordial and close relations. One might say that Kalkstein was Czarnecka's spiritual mentor. The young nun emphasized many times how much she was indebted to her superior. "Our Beloved Mother Superior means to me even more than St Mother Foundress, blessed be her memory, meant to our Dearest Sister Superior"⁸⁰. Further on in the letter she explained: "Our Lord Jesus hurries me to trust all the ailments of my miserable soul to my most Beloved Sister because her presence restores my peace and safety"⁸¹. Sister Zofia wanted Mother Kalkstein to help her to prepare for death – she asked for it directly in one of her letters⁸².

Mother Teresa impressed the sisters with her conduct and the way she experienced the religious life. Sister Deodata Kunderewicz recalls her in the following way: "I was profoundly impressed with what the Mother said about religious life, vows, suffering, her total devotion to God and the supernatural way of assessing events and people. She taught me to see the reflection of God's love in everything and the intrinsic good in people. I was amazed with her calmness and not taking matters personally. I knew that the Mother's soul had been deeply marked by suffering and survived many bitter disappointments"⁸³.

From the statements above one can see how much Teresa Kalkstein was valued for her life attitude, her extraordinary knowledge and experience. The good memories she left behind are a living proof of the appreciation people had for her. Many people came to her funeral and many telegrams with condolences were sent to the Sisters of Resurrection. One of them was personally signed by pope John Paul II.

Conclusion

To sum up, Teresa Kalkstein was a very well educated person and she had a lot of experience in formative work with the nuns. One can surely say she was an expert in the area of internal life and the spirituality of the Congregation of the Resurrection. The fact that she met the Venerable Celine Borzęcka was very significant. In her writings she referred to her own experiences as well as to the documents of the Church, the teaching of the Foundresses, the example of the saints and the opinions of the esteemed religious authors, in particular Fr. Peter Semenenko. She discussed many aspects of the life of religious persons, including the problems of the religious vocation which is the subject of this article.

many extraordinary graces which is reflected in her personal notes and correspondence with the Mother Superior Teresa Kalkstein. She died in the odour of holiness on the 8th of February 1926 in Zakopane. *Nekrologi zmarłych sióstr*, pp. 34-35.

80. Z. Czarnecka, *Letter to T. Kalkstein z 26 X 1925*, [in:] T. Kalkstein, *Zmartwychwstanka. Wewnętrzne dzieje S. Zofii Czarneckiej CR*, Katowice 1933, p. 352.

81. Z. Czarnecka, *Letter to T. Kalkstein z 29 VII 1925*, [in:] *ibidem*, p. 322.

82. *Ibidem*, p. 358.

83. D. Kunderewicz, *Szkic do wspomnień o Matce Teresie Kalkstein CR*, in: *W I rocznicę śmierci M. Teresy Kalkstein*, Rome 1891, p. 28.

As illustrated by the quoted excerpts of her Circular Letters, she sees the religious vocation as a special grace bestowed on few people. She emphasizes that this grace should be a subject of a special concern of the consecrated person and a reason to constantly give thanks to God. She reminded the nuns about the necessity of stay eternally faithful to the chosen way of life. She called them to follow Jesus and Mary faithfully, in accordance to the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience. She pointed out the key role of love in the development of the spiritual life. Not only did she mean the love towards God, but also towards our neighbours which should be visible in the way other people are treated. She was convinced that an internal transformation of a person happens mainly through the cooperation with God's grace, prayer and the practice of renouncing oneself. That is why she encouraged the sisters to be sensitive to God's work and persistently work on themselves. In her opinion, the spiritual resurrection and transformation into Jesus cannot be treated as an unreachable ideal but rather a program of spiritual life, designated by the Holy Spirit in the Rule of the Congregation⁸⁴.

Undoubtedly, the writings of Mother Teresa Kalkstein are an interesting and useful reading for all those interested in the topic of religious life, especially the consecrated people themselves. They contain precious suggestions concerning the fulfilment of the calling to this special kind of service. Even though the Author lived a few decades ago, many of her remarks are still valid today. It is difficult to summarize the rich life and teaching of Mother Teresa in one article.

84. NsMiP-I, p. 65-66; NsMiP-II, p. 436-437; NsMiP-III, p. 85.



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Summary

In the article the teaching of Mother Teresa Kalkstein on the calling to religious life is presented. The fourth General Superior of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ devoted a lot of attention to the religious vocation, including the theoretical questions and practical suggestions of carrying one's vocation in everyday life. Despite the passage of time, some of her thoughts

have remained relevant. That is why her writings can still be a useful and interesting reading for the consecrated persons.

Key words: consecrated life, religious life, evangelical counsels, religious vocation, The Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection, mother Theresa Kalkstein CR

REFLEKSJE MATKI TERESY KALKSTEIN NA TEMAT POWOŁANIA ZAKONNEGO W LISTACH OKÓLNYCH DO SIÓSTR ZMARTWYCHWSTANEK

W artykule przedstawiono nauczanie m. Teresy Kalkstein na temat powołania do życia zakonnego. Czwarta przełożona generalna Zgromadzenia Sióstr Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego wiele miejsca w swoich listach okólnych poświęca problematyce powołania zakonnego, począwszy od kwestii teoretycznych aż po praktyczne wskazówki dotyczące realizowania powołania w codzienności. Pomimo upływu czasu niektóre jej myśli nie tracą na aktualności, dlatego jej pisma wciąż mogą być pożyteczną i ciekawą lekturą dla osób konsekrowanych.

Słowa kluczowe: życie konsekrowane, życie zakonne, rady ewangeliczne, powołanie zakonne, Zgromadzenie Sióstr Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego, zmartwychwstanki, matka Teresa Kalkstein CR