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# THE EIGHT BEATITUDES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE SISTERS OF THE RESURRECTION

Reflections on the Eight Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount have been deliberated by Christian theologians from all times, starting with the Fathers of the Church and ending with authors of modern biblical commentaries. Each of them tried to find something new in the commonly known words. In this article, the significance of the Eight Beatitudes in the context of the spirituality of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection is explored. I explain how the sisters understand the Beatitudes and how they carry them out every day. The concept created by the authors of the Resurrectionist spirituality is original and interesting and, therefore, worthy of a separate scientific text that analyses it.

In order to understand the foundations of the spirituality of the Congregation of the Resurrection, one must understand the historical circumstances in which the spirituality was born and shaped. The 1830s was a time when Poland did not appear on the map of Europe and the Poles wanted to regain their independence,

which had been lost in 1795, as fast as possible. Living in France, Bogdan Jański<sup>1</sup> thought that a fight for the independence of Poland should start with spiritual and moral renewal. He claimed that no effort would bring the desired result if the Polish nation did not resurrect. He was an exemplar of how to live a truly pious life and as a result was called the pioneer of Polish religious rebirth during the Great Emigration. After his death, two of his disciples – Piotr Semenenko<sup>2</sup> and Hieronim Kajsiewicz<sup>3</sup> – together with five other men took their religious vows on Easter Sunday in 1842. This was the beginning of the Congregation of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Many years later, in 1874, Semenenko (who at that time was the general superior of this Congregation) met two Polish women, Celina Borzęcka<sup>4</sup> and her daughter Jadwiga<sup>5</sup> in the Eternal City. He decided that they were the right people to establish the female branch of the community of the Resurrection. After trying out living together, both of the women took their eternal vows on January 6, 1891. This is seen as the official beginning of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. However, although the sisters did adopt the Resurrectionist spirituality to a large extent, they did not take this heritage passively. They built their own distinct identity.

The most important sources I have used to explore this topic are the documents of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection, especially the Rule and the Constitutions. The Rule was written in 1878 by Fr. Piotr Semenenko, and a few years later handed to Celina and Jadwiga Borzęcka. It was modelled on the Rule of the Resurrectionists and the idea was that the members of the male and the female community were to live according to the same spirituality. Due to the requirements set out by the Church law of that time, the Rule could not be adopted by the sisters in its original form. However, as it did express the spirit of the Congregation accurately, the sisters used it to draft the Constitutions. This can be seen as a small treaty of spiritual life and some of its recommendations (even though some

1 Bogdan Teodor Jański (1807–1840) – Polish social, political, and religious activist, publicist and translator of the era of Romanticism, secular apostle of the Polish diaspora in France, Founder of the Congregation of the Resurrection, servant of God of the Catholic Church.

2 Piotr Adolf Semenenko (1814–1886) – Polish priest, philosopher, theologian, and religious writer, Co-Founder and general superior of the Congregation of the Resurrection, creator of the main ideas of the Resurrectionists' spirituality, first rector of the Pontifical Polish College in Rome.

3 Hieronim Kajsiewicz (1812–1873) – Polish priest, preacher, religious writer, and political thinker, Co-Founder and general superior of the Congregation of the Resurrection.

4 Celina Rozalia Leonarda nee Chludzińska Borzęcka (1833–1913) – wife of Józef Borzęcki, mother of two daughters, widow, Polish nun, Foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection, blessed of the Catholic Church.

5 Jadwiga Borzęcka (1863–1906) – daughter of Celina Chludzińska and Józef Borzęcki, Polish nun, Co-Foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection, servant of God of the Catholic Church.

time has now passed since it was written) are still valid today. The first chapter of the Rule, which describes the objectives of the Congregation and the main foundations of its spirituality, is based on the first requests of the Our Father prayer. Further chapters which talk about vows, prayer, living together, and the apostolic activity are based on the sequence of the Eight Beatitudes.

In addition, I have also used the writings of the Foundresses of the Congregation and works of the general superiors, which provide a vital source for descriptions of the spirituality of the Congregation. It is important to mention that the writings of the sisters lack a complex analysis of the Eight Beatitudes. Furthermore, as the spirituality of the Resurrectionists is at the basis of the spirituality of the Sisters of the Resurrection, in my analysis I have also referred to the documents written by Fr. Piotr Semenenko and Fr. Adolf Bakanowski.<sup>6</sup> In their sermons, they interpreted the evangelical Beatitudes in a holistic and original way. Therefore, by analysing the above-mentioned sources, I am able to present the topic of this work in a concise way.

Currently, there are no scientific works based on exploring the spirituality of the Sisters of the Resurrection within the framework of the Eight Beatitudes. This topic has only been addressed by Sr. Maria Gabriela Zięba in her book “Ewolucja duchowości Zgromadzenia Sióstr Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego” [Evolution of the Spirituality of the Sisters of the Resurrection]. She presented the spirituality of the sisters and compared it with the teaching of Fr. Piotr Semenenko on the Beatitudes in his sermons and the Rule. In addition, Zięba explained which elements of the religious life he connected with the evangelical Beatitudes and how he formed these links. Some references to the Eight Beatitudes can also be found in works on the history and the spirituality of the Congregation by Sr. Maria Lucyna Mistecka. This article aims to fill the gap that otherwise exists.

Firstly, I will present the main lines of the teaching of the Church and the last popes on the Eight Beatitudes. Then I will present the selected authors' thoughts on this topic. I will analyse the Beatitudes and explain what elements of the religious life they are associated with. Furthermore, I will describe how the Sisters of the Resurrection carry out the evangelical Beatitudes.

## **THE EIGHT BEATITUDES AS THE ESSENCE OF GOOD NEWS AND A PROGRAM OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

The Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Mathew (5:1–7:29) is seen as the most revolutionary teaching of Jesus. John Paul II said it was the “Magna Carta

6 Adolf Sykstus Bakanowski (1840–1916) – Polish priest from the Congregation of the Resurrection.

of the evangelical morality” (1993,15). Jesus proclaims a surprising pedagogy of the New Alliance and provides a distinct programme of the kingdom of God. The Eight Beatitudes (Mt 5:3–12) are at the heart of this sermon. This pericope is considered as one of the most important symbols of Christianity, being the essence of Good News. Jesus explains what the style of life of a person who wants to enter the kingdom of God should be. To the amazement of His listeners, He announces that the kingdom of God shall be inherited by the poor in spirit, by those who are pure of heart, gentle, merciful, and peacemakers. He emphasizes that the privileged place in the kingdom of God belongs to those suffering, and the Creator will not leave humans in need without help (Paciorek, 2004; Seweryniak, 2010).

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1718–1719), it was emphasized that evangelical Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence and remind that humans are called to be happy, and this happiness can be achieved by uniting with God. On the other hand, John Paul II (1993) and Benedict XVI (2007) turn our attention to the fact that the Eight Beatitudes are Christocentric. In them they see the self-portrait of the Saviour – the first Blessed one – and an encouragement to follow in His footsteps. As the Polish pope (2000) emphasizes, Jesus not only proclaims the Beatitudes and lives them, but at the same time he is also the Beatitudes Himself. These Beatitudes are an expression of the real disciples of the Saviour, they demonstrate the materialization of the Cross and the Resurrection in their existence. A person who is poor in spirit, mourning, meek, thirsting righteousness, merciful, pure of heart, and persecuted for righteousness recreates the Paschal Mystery of the Saviour (Bramorski, 2007). Pope Francis has also referred to the Eight Beatitudes in his teaching. They are discussed in detail in the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate*. He also refers to them in his messages given on World Youth Days. For the current bishop of Rome, the Beatitudes are “proof of a Christian identity” (2018, 63).

## **SPIRITUALITY OF THE SISTERS OF THE RESURRECTION AS SPIRITUALITY OF THE EIGHT BEATITUDES**

According to Piotr Semenenko (1913) and Adolf Bakanowski (2002), in the Eight Beatitudes Jesus encapsulated a complex teaching on human spiritual life and gave guidelines as to how to achieve the highest form of Christian perfection. Teresa Kalkstein<sup>7</sup> (1950, 1961, 1962, 1967) emphasizes that the Beatitudes are an important essence of the Gospel and a summary of the Rule of the Congregation of the Sisters

7 Teresa (Janina Maria Franciszka) Kalkstein (1888–1980) – Polish nun, in the years 1938–1967 general superior of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection.

of the Resurrection. They pave the way toward sainthood and so each sister should faithfully carry them out, treating them as directed especially toward her. “To live in the spirit of the Beatitudes”, claims the fourth superior general of the Congregation, “is to live according to our Rule, to be good, faithful and a real Sister of the Resurrection” (Kalkstein, 1961, p. 208).

Mother Dolores Stępień<sup>8</sup> (2014), the seventh general superior of the Congregation, remarks that through the Beatitudes Jesus showed his disciples a path of suffering and persecution and at the same time He promised joy to those who would walk it consistently. This is what Fr. Piotr Semenenko (1923) discusses when in one of the sermons he shows that a person who follows Christ needs to be prepared for various difficulties and to undertake a thorough transformation of oneself. At the same time, one can be sure that their effort will be rewarded – they will possess the heavenly kingdom and be in communion with Jesus.

Father Semenenko (1913) explains the specific Beatitudes in his sermons. These deliberations are preceded by a reflection on God’s kingdom. He emphasizes that it already begins in earthly life and remarks that this is the real kingdom because there is no evil, no wars, no pain, no death. To enter it, one must reject all the desires and sins which are the basis of the development of false kingdoms. This happens by regularizing the three orders corrupted by cardinal sin: the mind, the heart, and the will. In Semenenko’s interpretation, the first three Beatitudes are related to this issue. In the fourth one, there is a shift from negative work (rejecting evil) to positive action (being filled with good). The subsequent Beatitudes show with what one should fill their thoughts, feelings, and will so that God’s kingdom prevails in them. The Eighth Beatitude is a coronation of this process.

**“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3).**

According to Semenenko (1913), the main Beatitude should be treated as the first step toward the kingdom of God. He reasons that false wealth is the main obstacle toward uniting with God. However, he means not material riches, but the attitude toward them. This is why even a very rich person can be poor when they are unattached, and a poor person, one who keeps on dreaming of getting rich, having resentment toward God and people because of his or her poverty, is not truly poor. It is, therefore, the person’s relationship toward earthly goods that determines their richness or poverty.

In addition, Semenenko (1896, 1903, 1913, 1931) also considers the idea of wealth in relation to erroneous human attitudes. He warns against vanity, arro-

8 Dolores Stępień (born in 1933) – Polish nun, in the years 1992–2010 general superior of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection

gance, pride, conceit, and conviction about one's infallibility. It is easy then to judge others harshly, reject the principle of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church. You might metaphorically say that they create their own kingdom and claim to be the authority. In reference to the above, Fr. Semenenko connects the call to spiritual poverty foremost with the virtue of humility. He understands it as a truth about oneself, therefore the awareness of one's nothingness, of one's propensity to evil and sinning, as well as recognizing God's grace as the source of all good. Thus, in the Rule (1967), he instructs the sisters to work hard on eradicating all spiritual greediness, i.e., egoistic self-love and the desire to be something on one's own without the help of God.

According to the Constitutions (1926, 1982, 1995, 2010) and the Rule (1967), every Sister of the Resurrection strives to be poor, i.e., gives up material goods and attempts to free herself from an excessive desire for earthly matters. As Teresa Kalkstein explains (1962), one is to get rid of created things completely and love poverty, enduring a lack of material goods calmly and joyously. However, it is written in the documents of the Congregation that the Sisters of the Resurrection should, first of all, aspire to a poverty of spirit (*Reguła*, 1967; *Konstytucje*, 1926, 1944, 1982, 1995, 2010; Smolikowski, 1932). As Sr. Maria Hanna Hlebowicka explains (2005), the vow of poverty is not limited to minimalism in possessions and dependency on those in charge of earthly things. A modest lifestyle should result in acknowledging one's nothingness and a total dependency on God. To be poor in spirit, she continues, is to be modest, give up self-dependence, and not strive for position, success, and appreciation. It also means accepting those extreme situations where you can only count on God and trust Him even in the darkness of faith.

It was written in the Rule (1967) and in the Constitutions (1926, 1944) that a Sister of the Resurrection becomes fully poor when she can say she owns nothing and is nothing. "To doubt oneself and one's strength [...] Not to want anything for yourself, is one thing", explains Piotr Semenenko to Celina Borzęcka on this issue, "yet the other is to trust the Lord, to lean on Him with all faith and hope, to know and trust that with Him, but only with Him one can do everything" (*Korespondencja*, 2019, p. 183). Bakanowski (2002) writes that to be poor in spirit is to reject earthly things, to become bare in every way, and to deny oneself. According to him, Jesus proclaims in the Beatitudes on the Mount, as he wants to emphasize that it is necessary to rise above the earthly and the ordinary.

Mother Celina Borzęcka (2002) warns against various unhealthy attachments. She gives the example of religious people who are overly focused on material trivialities or accustomed to a comfortable life, which makes them afraid of difficulties and obstacles. She stresses that this is contrary to the spirit of poverty.

An attitude of poverty makes a Christian internally free; in other words, they are capable of accepting the kingdom of God (Semenenko, 1913). When a religious person gives up what has been created, one's desires, and their own will and calls on God and eternity, then as Bakanowski (2002) says, it is God and His kingdom that becomes closer to them.

**“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth” (Mt 5:5).** The previous Beatitude, according to Fr. Piotr (1913), referred to human reason, but the latter is connected with willpower. Humans will surrender the nature that has been disintegrated by the original sin to the authority of God's kingdom. This requires carrying out arduous work on oneself and, in particular, eliminating egoism, freeing oneself from passions, and giving up the desire to impose one's will on others.

Semenenko (1913) and Bakanowski (2002) explain that when Jesus talks about the earth in the second Beatitude, this should be understood as a symbol of human nature: the body and soul and their qualities, which is a reference to the views of St. Chrysostom. Fr. Semenko (1913) states that to be meek is to be patient, humble, and obedient, to be one who has given up on their own will and has given in to the will of God completely. Through suffering and obedience to death, the meek kill what is bad in their nature, and are therefore in control of their nature. Thus, according to the Rule (1967), should the sisters want to be worthy of the second Beatitude, they must renounce their own will and substitute it with God's will, especially by carrying out the vow of obedience.

Fr. Adolf (2002) thinks that in this second Beatitude, the Savior emphasizes the silence and serenity in the soul of a Christian. This matters greatly as it is easier for a peaceful and calm person to follow Jesus, who was a model for gentleness, tranquillity, and peace. In order to reach the aforementioned inner balance, religious people should work relentlessly on themselves and develop an understanding of the source of their faults. They should make sure that they do not become impatient, rushed, petty, and discouraged as these attitudes lead to confusion in the soul.

Mothers Celina (1990, 2000, 2002, 2008) and Jadwiga (2000, 2009) notice a call to sacred indifference in the second Beatitude. This is about distancing oneself from the affairs of the everyday and controlling emotional impulses, which are a reaction to strong stimuli from the outside. Being offended, impulsive, reacting with anger, harsh in judging the actions of others, and incapable of forgiveness are, according to them, both a negation of the sacred indifference and a symptom of egoism. The Foundresses want the sisters to believe in the love of God and remember that He watches over them, so that they will feel inner peace regardless of the circumstances they find themselves in. They also emphasized that sacred indifference should not be associated with apathy and discouragement as these are purely natural states.

**“Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Mt 5:4).** Semenenko (1913) connects this Beatitude with the necessity to purify the human heart. He thinks that this process is the hardest. This is because the human heart, which desires pleasure, is one of the greatest obstacles that God’s kingdom faces. Father Piotr explains that when a religious person works intensely on themselves and begins to work with the wrong emotions, their heart is deprived of delight and so they feel like they are lacking something. They are touched by sadness which brings tears. Those who mourn are those who deny earthly pleasures, including those which are allowed. Through self-denial and mortification, they are able to tame their nature that has been spoiled by sin. As a consequence, they already stand on the threshold of the kingdom of God, and they can be certain that they will be consoled by God.

Bakanowski (2002) cautions his audience that not every kind of tear should be treated equally. Tears are a natural human emotional reaction to different forms of suffering. Often, they are a symptom of egoism, so not all who cry will be consoled by God. The hope of consolation is guaranteed by tears that are shed in penance and sanctification. He reminds us how valuable the tears of Saints, such as St. Peter or St. Mary Magdalene, were. The tears of Jesus gave value to human tears. Ever since Christ cried, men and women can unite in crying with Him. If a Christian is to weep, as Fr. Adolf advises, let them despair because of supernatural causes.

The Sisters of the Resurrection are called on to embody a perfect purity, which is understood as a deprivation of the heart and senses. They are to strive for a state when they will no longer draw pleasure from anything but God (*Reguła*, 1967). Celina Borzęcka (1990) reminds the sisters that someone who truly loves God will not look for pleasure or satisfaction for themselves. Their intentions are pure, and they do not want to please others. They undertake various mortifications willingly. Nevertheless, Semenenko (1896, 1931) as well as Celina (1952, 2002) and Jadwiga (2000) Borzęcka remind the sisters that they should not look for special kind of mortifications but accept all everyday difficulties in the spirit of mortification.

**“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be satisfied” (Mt 5:6).** Semenenko (1913) treats the next Beatitude as a link with the first three Beatitudes, as these require mainly negative asceticism and the latter ones depict positive work. In order to create the kingdom of God in one’s interior, it is not enough to deny false wealth, which is the root of all evil, but one must also become bare internally. You need to fill yourself with real riches, and secure what is good. The more someone desires good, justice, and sainthood, the more one seeks it and will be showered with them.

A slightly different interpretation of the fourth Beatitude is presented by Bakanowski (2002). First, he remarks that a human being created in the image and

semblance of God thirsts for righteousness, i.e., order and harmony, which they lost because of the original sin. Therefore, if they wish to live righteously, they must note three important things. They are to be honest, give to everyone what they are entitled to, and not harm others – Bakanowski enumerates, referring to a classic understanding of the virtue of justice. They should love their neighbours generously and always be able to serve them; this demands a total denial of oneself.

This Beatitude is linked to the apostolic mission of the Congregation. The task of the Sisters of the Resurrection is to spread the kingdom of God in all possible ways. In the beginning, the service of the sisters focused on teaching and explaining catechism, education, and, in particular, the teaching of girls and parish work. With time it became more and more diverse and reached more people. In later years, nuns went on missions to faraway countries, also following migrating Poles. Today, the sisters focus on the education of children and youths, catechization, parish ministry, organizing spiritual retreats, charity, and publishing. They serve in Poland, Italy, the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Argentina, Belarus, and Tanzania. For the last 130 years, they have undertaken comprehensive efforts to remake the world in the spirit of the evangelical Beatitudes (*Konstytucje*, 1982, 1995, 2010).

**“Blessed are the merciful as they will obtain mercy” (Mt 5:7).** Father Semenکو (1913) explains that only a rich person can do merciful deeds. He does not mean a person who is rich in financial wealth though. Only charitable acts which are a basic deed of mercy toward others are allowed. However, real mercy is not about care for the body but focuses primarily on the spiritual needs of other people.

This Beatitude discussed here is included in the Rule (1967) together with the call to a broadly understood service toward others. As spiritual mercy is privileged among other forms of help, the sisters are called to intercession prayer on behalf of the world, the Church, the motherland, sinners, the deceased, and the benefactors of the Congregation. The task of the Sisters of the Resurrection is to support their sisters and brothers in all ways. The nuns should care especially for the poor, the suffering, the disabled, morally neglected, orphans, and the elderly. They will be rewarded for good deeds toward others, as this is promised in the fifth Beatitude.

According to Semenکو (1913), authentic mercy can only be accomplished by a person who, by poverty of spirit, purity of the heart, and denying one’s own will, has made a place in their own nature for God’s grace and accepted the gifts of God. They can then pass on the gifts received from the Creator to the sisters and brothers – selflessly and without publicity. Paradoxically, the more one gives to others, the more lavishly one is awarded by God. In addition, by acts of mercy one will obtain God’s mercy.

The authors show that if love of the religious person toward God is not expressed through love toward others, then it is incomplete and does not produce the desired fruit. Mother Jadwiga (2000) firmly claims that a nun who cannot love people from her surroundings is not capable of loving God (cf. 1Jn 4:20). Mother Teresa Kalkstein (1950) emphasizes the fact that the nuns should show mercy in action, and offer words in prayer, especially toward their co-sisters. They should be understanding, gracious, patient, and forgiving. The sixth superior general Mother Teresa Maria Jasińska<sup>9</sup> (2001) urges the sisters to be patient and respectful, ready to serve diligently, care about each other, and avoid jealousy or reactions dictated by mood. The fifth Beatitude is connected with authentic love toward the other, in the context of which Fr. Semenenko (1913) encourages his listeners to love in a pure way, free of self-love.

**“Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8).** For Fr. Semenenko (1913), the sixth Beatitude complements the previous Beatitudes because in order to carry it out one needs to incorporate the recommendations of the Saviour. Apart from just looking at purity in a negative sense, i.e., purifying the heart from the sensory pleasures which the third Beatitude referred to, you also need to go to a level higher, as you should have pure intentions and do everything out of love for God (Zięba, 2000).

Purity is expanded by Semenenko (1896, 1913, 1931) in relation to three spheres of human nature: sensory, spiritual, and voluntary. When humans turn away from God in any way and turn inward in any of these areas, then they become impure. If he or she wants to purify one’s heart, then they must reject everything which comes out of having a corrupt nature and orients one’s actions toward oneself. Fr. Semenenko considers that this is extremely important as only a person who stops focusing on themselves and rejects purely human motives of action has the privilege of communing with God.

Bakanowski (2002) explains that in this Beatitude, Jesus highlights the primary purity of the human soul. Created in the image and resemblance of God, humans carry a love of purity, beauty, and harmony. After the original sin, people looks for it in material things. He also adds that it is not only sin that introduces impurity into the human heart, but also even the smallest activity in doing something good. Everything which comes to the heart (aside from God’s will) is an impurity which takes away the spiritual beauty and makes a human more susceptible to yielding to sensual temptations.

9 Teresa Maria Jasińska (1934–1999) – Polish nun, in the years 1980–1992 general superior of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection.

Keeping focused and silent is helpful in acquiring and maintaining a pure heart. Due to the nature of their work, the Sisters of the Resurrection are prone to various distractions but they should try to be internally focused and, if possible, stay silent (*Reguła*, 1967). Mother Antonina Sołtan,<sup>10</sup> the second general superior of the Congregation, describes this skill as “the enclosure of the spirit”, and it is thanks to this that the nun can stay united with God and at the same time perform her duties and work with people (Pisarska, 1960, p. 275). Furthermore, as a consequence of prayer, she deepens her communion with Jesus and He lets her know what she should do in the given moment (C. Borzęcka, 1984, 2002; J. Borzęcka, 2000).

**“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God” (Mt 5:9).** Semenenko (1913) perceives the seventh Beatitude as the highest form of cooperation of a human with God in the process of transformation, which happens through the practice of the evangelical Beatitudes. Only once a religious person has purified their interior and surrendered to God can they then access deification. Their will becomes identical to the will of God and so everything that they do is a reflection of His action. Finally, the individual reaches a desired goal (unity with Christ), and owing to this, she or he then achieves peace and happiness. God lives in them to the fullest and acts freely through them, and so you can say that they are a daughter (or son) of God. Teresa Kalkstein (1961) attributes the key meaning in this Beatitude to the three theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as to His fruits in the process of this transformation.

According to Fr. Semenenko (1913), it is very difficult to explain what peace-making is. In this case, it is best to refer to the earthly life of Jesus Christ. Prophet Isaiah described Him as the Prince of Peace (cf. Is 9:5). He also emphasized his delicacy and gentleness towards the people around him (cf. Is 42:2–4). When He was born, angels announced peace to people of goodwill (Lk 2:14). Moreover, during His earthly existence He introduced peace, liberated people from evil, and absolved them of their sins. He endured torture without anger and hate toward his tormentors. After the Resurrection, He greeted His disciples with words of peace (cf. Jn 20:19–20). He carried out the act of Redemption and reconciled people with God. Therefore, if a religious person wants to be a peacemaker, they should imitate Jesus.

Bakanowski (2002) indicates that internal peace is a sign of perfection, i.e., the right and harmonious state of all human orders. He explains that because of the original sin, humans have lost the primary peace of their souls and have be-

<sup>10</sup> Antonina (Stefania) Sołtan (1857–1931) – Polish nun, in the years 1913–1920 general superior of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection.

come slaves of desires. Instead of God's love, there is self-love in their heart. People search for happiness in material things and as they cannot find it there, they feel anxious. This anxiety results in dryness during prayer, difficulty with raising thoughts to God, and an incapacity to apply the evangelical ideals in their daily life. On the outside, this can be manifested in hyperactivity, absent-mindedness, talking too much, and being unkind and harsh. Fr. Adolf states that in order to have internal peace, you need to deny yourself.

Semenenko discusses this Beatitude in relation to love towards the other and living together. In the Rule (1967), he discusses the recommendations on relationships as specified to the Sisters of the Resurrection. According to them, the sisters should be kind, polite, patient, and understanding toward each other. The relationships between the sisters towards the Beatitudes are also discussed in the Directorium (Smolikowski, 1932).

Teresa Kalkstein (1950, 1962) calls on the sisters to nourish tranquillity in their own interiors and share it with the outside. She remarks, though, that keeping the peace in the convent demands heroism, great love, a lot of understanding and, as a consequence, many sacrifices. Peace is supposed to be an element of the religious community atmosphere which the Mother describes as the "atmosphere of the Eight Beatitudes" (Kalkstein, 1967, p. 221–222).

**"Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5,10).** The Eighth Beatitude seals all the Beatitudes, according to Fr. Semenenko (1913). It is not enough for the kingdom of God to enter the human soul, but you also need it to remain there despite temptations and various experiences, even persecutions. God's gifts, which were given to a religious person through the previous Beatitudes, should be transformed into conscious and voluntary acts and permanent skills, i.e., virtues. One needs to endure temptations and persecution.

According to the Rule (1967), the biggest reward for the righteous is to be persecuted. That is why the sisters should rejoice if they are found to be worthy of suffering for Jesus (cf. Rev. 5:41). They participate in the cross of Jesus and so they participate in His victory and glory. However, you cannot interpret all obstacles in this way because some can be a consequence of the wrong type of behaviour. Furthermore, Bakanowski (2002) notices that most sufferings are caused by human nature, which is corrupt and non-mortified. These are not the persecutions that Christ talks about in this Beatitude. Examples of persecutions for justice are the sufferings that the martyrs and saints experienced. He adds that suffering experienced without a living relationship with God will not bring spiritual benefits, and can actually demoralize the person experiencing it.

Interpreting the seventh Beatitude, Fr. Adolf (2002) once again refers to the primary state when humans were in a very close relationship with God and enjoyed innocence and justice. Wanting to be a lord, a judge, and a lawmaker, man sinned, by rejecting God and His law. Despite the grace, a person obtains during baptism, and then through Christian education, they break God's commandments. In order for God's justice to be reborn, they need to embark on the path of constant self-denial.

Bakanowski (2002) advises consecrated persons to re-think their attitude toward suffering. It is worth asking oneself how one endures little nuisances and reacts to humiliation. Is love towards God present in them in such moments? Are they ready to forgive trespassers? In other words, are they following the example of Jesus when somebody is hurting them? He strongly emphasizes the fact that one who cannot endure small sufferings for God will not be capable of bigger sacrifices. According to Fr. Adolf, a Christian who is suffering for the justice of God does not complain to people and does not expect compassion. In actual fact, people try not to show on the outside that they are suffering. They treat all distress as something permitted by God and offer them to God as compensation for their sins. Despite experiencing these sufferings, they do not lose their peace of mind.

The Foundresses teach that suffering is the right way toward sanctification. They often remind troubled nuns who turn to them for support and advice of this. The Mothers also explain their personal difficulties through the need to become sanctified. They are both sure that God allows suffering as a way to perfect them (C. Borzęcka, 1984, 1990, 2002, 2008; J. Borzęcka, 1990, 2000). Due to the special value of suffering, the third superior general of the Congregation, Mother Małgorzata Dąbrowska,<sup>11</sup> describes it as the "eighth sacrament" (Żulińska, 1967, p. 172). She explains that it develops a love for God and leads to a spiritual resurrection. A religious person should not avoid suffering at all costs. Paradoxically, even if she manages to stay clear of difficulties, she can still feel an inner distress due to the fact that she did not accept what in the intention of God was designed to purify and form her. In difficulties arising from the growth of the Congregation, Mother Celina sees sufferings which result from fulfilling God's will. Mother Teresa (1961) perceives the tragic situation in which the Sisters of the Resurrection from Poland found themselves during World War II through the context of the eighth Beatitude.

11 Małgorzata (Maria Izabella) Dąbrowska (1880–1948) – Polish nun, in the years 1926–1938 general superior of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection.

## CONCLUSION

Looking for guidance on their spiritual path, Christians reach for the writings of authors linked to the Benedictine, Carmelite, Franciscan, Dominican or Ignatian schools. Nevertheless, it is worth exploring the wisdom behind other, less popular authors. The teaching of the male and female representatives of the Congregation of the Resurrection has been discussed in this article. This work refers to the reflections of Fr. Piotr Semenenko, Fr. Adolf Bakanowski, M. Celina Borzęcka, M. Jadwiga Borzęcka, M. Antonina Sołtan, M. Małgorzata Dąbrowska, M. Teresa Kalkstein, M. Teresa Maria Jasieńska, and M. Dolores Stępień. This is one of the Polish schools of spirituality. Although it is not commonly known and does not have a tradition going back many centuries, it is nevertheless a theologically mature doctrine of spiritual life.

The first independent and coherent written document containing the principles, according to which the sisters were supposed to live, was the Rule of the Eight Beatitudes. Many of the recommendations were included in the official Constitutions. The Rule (which Fr. Semenenko based on the four requests of “Our Father” and the Eight Beatitudes) can be seen as an original and interesting work, regarding its content as well as its structure. The starting point is the spirit of evangelical, generous, and universal love. Then, the author emphasizes the personal and social responsibility of each sister for the destiny of God’s kingdom on earth. What is more, he calls the sisters to strive for religious perfection by fulfilling the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. Father Piotr shows that their task is to love God and fulfil His will. He calls them to nourish the spirit of prayer, be generous, and be ready to make sacrifices. The preacher explains that if they want to be born into a new life in Christ, they need to reject evil and sin. He remarks that to enter the communion of love with God is connected to the practice of heroic love to the other, especially toward the other sisters. In addition to caring for one’s own spiritual development, Semenenko invites the sisters to be attentive to the needs of the Church and respond to them with courage. In his thinking, the work of the nuns living according to the Rule of the Eight Beatitudes should focus on teaching and explaining catechism, Catholic education of girls, parish ministry, and works of mercy, but depending on the circumstances can also take other forms.

The Resurrectionist spirituality combines the Paschal Mystery and the ideal of the Eight Beatitudes. The correlation between the two elements is based on the need for a profound internal transformation required to fulfil each Beatitude as well as to participate in the Paschal Mystery. This transformation occurs through the power of love and is focused on resembling God. The sisters are immersed in the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ by practicing the guidelines pronounced

by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. The Sisters of the Resurrection follow Christ “through the cross and death to resurrection and glory”. This motto written in Latin – *Per crucem et mortem ad resurrectionem et gloriam* – is marked on the cross the sisters receive on the day of their perpetual vows. This is an important indication for them because, as the authors emphasize, life with God blooms on the rubble of their life and death of their own “self”. Formation in the spirit of the Eight Beatitudes requires that each sister courageously struggles with temptation and sins, fights egoism and is ready for sacrifice, is open to God’s actions, works together with the grace of God, willingly fulfils God’s will discerned in her conscience, and is full of love and mercy toward others. In this way, she contributes to spreading God’s kingdom on earth and lets Jesus reign in her interior.

According to the concept of the authors of the Resurrectionist school, the ideal goal of the religious person is to transform into Christ; this occurs in the process of Christformization, which is widely described by the authors. This process also includes the realization of the Eight Beatitudes. To become the *alter Christus* is the most important calling of the members of the male and female Congregations of the Resurrection. By fulfilling the Eight Beatitudes, a Sister of the Resurrection is introduced into the state of mystical unity with Christ. Once she fulfils the Beatitudes, “She reaches the forestate of heaven and sees the blessed. She is most happy when she lives in poverty, in separation from earthly possessions and herself, practices meekness, sacrifice, sweetness, purity of heart, spreading mercy and peace around, thirsts and hungers for righteousness, and finally comes to the point of loving the cross, suffering, and persecution for justice” (Kalkstein, 1961, p. 208).

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# THE EIGHT BEATITUDES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE SISTERS OF THE RESURRECTION

## SUMMARY

In this article, the meaning of the Eight Beatitudes (Mt 5:3–12) has been discussed in the context of the spirituality of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection. It has been demonstrated how the Resurrection Sisters understand the evangelical Beatitudes and how they carry them out every day. This analysis has been based on the documents of the Congregation (the Rule and the Constitutions), the writings of the Foundresses, Blessed Mother Celina Borzęcka, and the Venerable Servant of God Mother Jadwiga Borzęcka, as well as those of the general superiors. Because of the historical ties between the male and female branch of the community of the Resurrection, references have been made to Fr. Piotr Semenenko and Fr. Adolf Bakanowski. Based on a study of the sources, it has been shown that the Resurrectionist spirituality combines the Paschal Mystery and the ideals of the Eight Beatitudes. The correlation of these two elements is founded on the need for an in-depth internal change to take place, which is necessary to fulfill each Beatitude and participate in the Paschal Mystery.

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