

The Josaphat Sisters' Activities in Biała and Parczew in the Late 18th and Early 19th Centuries

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Summary. The article discusses the activities of the Josaphat Sisters, a female tertiary community who operated in Biała and later in Parczew at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. The congregation was founded by Fr. Tymothei Shchurovsky, a well-known missionary and canonist who was hegumen of the Basilian monastery in Biała. The monastery had preserved the relics of Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych since 1705. The formation of the community was greatly influenced by the events of the first half of the 1790s; specifically, the Russian-Polish war of 1792 and the uprising led by Tadeusz Kościuszko in 1794 had significant impacts. During this time, many individuals sought refuge in Biała, a fortified stronghold of the Radziwiłł family, where the relics of Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych were kept and revered by the local population. The prevailing uncertainty and the fear for their lives fostered a growth in piety among these people. A small group of devout women, mostly composed of local nobility and burghers, gradually formed at the local Basilian monastery. Due to Fr. Shchurovsky's organizational skills, this group transformed into a tertiary community. A former sister of Charity, Kateryna (Pelahiya) Brylivna, was the first to take simple vows, and she led the community of the Josaphat Sisters from 1793 to 1802.

The Josaphat Sisters' community, consisting of up to ten nuns, resided in Biała in a dwelling they constructed on the grounds of the Basilian monastery. Following the eviction of the sisters and the removal of Fr. Shchurovsky from his position as hegumen, the community relocated to Parczew. The primary activities of the Josaphat Sisters were needlework and education. The Austrian authorities' recognition of the sisters' educational activities in Parczew at the end of the 18th century was a critically important event. The community also received significant support from Porfyrrii Vazhynsky, the Uniate Bishop of Chełm. The activities of the Josaphat Sisters were closely linked to Fr. Shchurovsky, their founder and chaplain. It seems that, shortly after his death in 1812, the community ceased to exist.

Keywords: the Josaphat Sisters; tertiary community (Third Order); Basilians; Biała; Parczew; Tymothei Shchurovsky.

1. Introduction

The cult surrounding Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych, the Uniate Archbishop of Polatsk (1618–1623), included, and still does, the veneration of his relics. From 1705 until they were moved at the beginning 20th century, these sacred relics were preserved in the town of Biała under the stewardship of the Radziwiłł family.¹ In the 1790s, Fr. Tymothei Shchurovsky (Tymoteusz Szczurowski), the hegumen of the local Basilian monastery and a well-known theologian and canonist, spearheaded the establishment of the first female tertiary community within the Uniate Church. This community was named the Josaphat Sisters.²

Despite the historical significance of this event, there is a notable deficiency in academic literature addressing the Josaphat Sisters. In 1848–1849, a Polish Capuchin, Beniamin Szymański, undertook the pioneering endeavour of chronicling the history of the Josaphat Sisters, publishing his trilogy *Rys historyczny zgromadzeń zakonnych obojey płci* (*Historical Sketch of Monastic Congregations of Both Sexes*). This work primarily consists of a translation of Johann Karl Wetz's extensive study *Abbildungen sämmtlicher geistlichen Orden männlich- und weiblichen Geschlechts in der katholischen Kirche* (*Pictures of All Monastic Orders of Men and Women in the Catholic Church*), which was first published in Prague in 1821. The Prague edition includes essays on the historical trajectories of Latin orders and congregations. However, the most significant contribution in Wetz's work was Peter Bohmann's precise copperplate illustrations, which depicted the habits of monastic communities. Szymański not only translated this monograph into Polish but also added a discussion on orders and congregations which were not included in Wetz's original publication, including the Josaphat Sisters. The publication includes a lithograph from the Warsaw atelier of Juliusz Folkmar Fleck, depicting the clothing worn by the community's sisters.³ In 1853, Adam Bartoszewicz, a former educator at the district school in Biała (1816–1833), published a biography of Fr. Shchurovsky.⁴ The founder of the community has been the subject of numerous studies about his life,

1 B. Пануцэвіч, 2000, с. 178–179. Read more about the commemoration of Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych in Podlachia in D. Wereda, 2009; D. Wereda, 2014; P. Sęczyk, 2016. See also the chapter by Dorota Wereda in this volume.

2 This should not be confused with the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Josaphat, which was founded in the early 20th century in Galicia by Frs. Oleksandr Dykyi and Ivan Zhyhal.

3 B. Szymański, 1848, s. 15–17, tab. V.

4 A. Bartoszewicz, 1853.

where the Josaphat Sisters are often discussed in the margins.⁵ Information about the Josaphat Sisters, who existed on the territories which would, in 1815, become part of the Kingdom of Poland, were frequently mentioned in local publications of the time.⁶

The study of female monasticism has always included the community under discussion. In 1934, Sister Salomiya Tsiorokh OSBM (Order of St. Basil the Great) erroneously categorized the convents located in Biała and Parczew⁷ as being Basilian in her study titled *Погляд на історію та виховну діяльність монахинь василіянок* (*A Look at the History and Educational Activities of Basilian Nuns*).⁸ This misclassification was also echoed by Sister Sophia Senyk OSBM, in her comprehensive catalogue of Basilian convents.⁹ Lublin historians Ludomir Bieńkowski and Andrzej Gil have both recognized the importance of the congregation in their works;¹⁰ while Dorota Wereda's scholarly research has shed light on crucial phases in the Josaphat Sisters' history and aspects of their internal lives.¹¹

However, there is still a significant gap in the comprehensive coverage of academic discourse on this community's history, especially its foundational period and its tenure in Parczew. The need to integrate new sources into the academic narrative is urgent. One of these new sources is the seminal text *Wzór życia według rad ewangelicznych i pomnożenia nauki Pańskiej w towarzystwie sprzymierzonym wilebnych sióstr jozafatek od przykłądu Józefa ś[więtego] i pod opieką Jozafata Męczennika, jedności obrońcy, zaczęty w roku 1795 d[nia] 26 sierpnia, z opisaniem ich nabożeństwa według Kościoła Wschodniego, od zwierzchności duchowey przez Jaśnie Wielmożnego Porfirego Ważyńskiego, biskupa chełm[skiego] i bełzkiego, i przez Najwyższe Gubernium Krakowskie rozważany w roku 1797 i miesiącu styczniu* (*A model of life according to the Evangelical counsels and [a model] of the spread of the Lord's teaching in the community of the Josaphat Sisters, following the example of Saint Joseph and under the protection of Josaphat the Martyr, the defender of unity, begun on 26 August 1795, with a description of their Divine Service according to*

5 Ł. Janczak, 1904; A. Fajęcki, 1913; H. E. Wyczawski, 1984; A. Derdziuk, 1996, s. 85–89. For the by far the most complete biography of the congregation's founder, see D. Wereda, 2011.

6 [Н. Петров], 1887, с. 145; С. Семеновичъ, 1878; А. Петрушевичъ, 1874, с. 48–52. The last publication in the *Холмскій греко-униатскій мѣсяцесловъ* is a reprint of his monograph А. Петрушевичъ, 1867, с. 183–186.

7 The researcher mistakenly calls this area Paryziv.

8 С. Цьорох, 1964, с. 58, 60, 64.

9 S. Senyk, 1983, p. 13, 48, 52.

10 L. Bieńkowski, 1969, s. 1030–1031; A. Gil, 2007, с. 351–352.

11 D. Wereda, 2002; D. Wereda, 2003.

the Eastern Rite, which was approved by the spiritual authority in the person of His Eminence Porfyriy Vazhynsky, Bishop of Chełm and Belz, and was considered by the Supreme Kraków Provincial Government in January 1797),¹² which was discovered in 1877 in Chełm by Stefan Semenovych, a librarian of the local Orthodox seminary.¹³ Currently, the manuscript resides in the Vasyl Stefanyk Lviv National Scientific Library of Ukraine; it has been studied by Dorota Wereda.¹⁴ The first part of the manuscript, authored by the community's founder, Fr. Shchurovsky, comprises two documents. The first document, dated 26 August 1795, provides responses to inquiries made by "the Josaphat Sisters ..., tertiary sisters according to their profession of the Order of St. Basil the Great", and was authenticated by the founder's apostolic, prothonotary seal.¹⁵ The second document, dated 20 February 1796, was written by Fr. Shchurovsky in the Buchowiecki family's manor house in Przegaliny after returning from Zhyrovichy Monastery. It serves as a report which was commissioned by the Biała Commissariat, concerning the community.¹⁶ The manuscript also includes "Uwiedomienie ogulne o zgromadzeniu wielebnych siostr jozafatek w róznych stanach" ("General notice about the Congregation of the Venerable Josaphat Sisters from various strata"), which outlines the community's rules in verse along with a commentary.¹⁷ The document concludes with a comprehensive compilation of the Eastern Church's canonical services, translated into Polish in order to meet the community's needs. This task was undertaken by Fr. Shchurovsky.¹⁸

An exceptionally valuable document concerning the history of the Josaphat Sisters is Fr. Shchurovsky's memoirs (hereafter referred to as *Memoirs*),¹⁹ which were discovered by Marek Bunia in 2010 in the archive of the Roman Catholic parish of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Ostrów Lubelski (Republic of Poland).²⁰ Shchurovsky began writing his memoirs in 1800 in Parczew, while his last entries date to 1811, a year before his death. The entries from 1800

12 Львівська національна наукова бібліотека України ім. В. Стефаніка, Відділ рукописів (hereinafter referred to as *ЛННБУ*), ф. 3, спр. 125.

13 *ЛННБУ*, ф. 3, спр. 125, арк. 2.

14 D. Wereda, 2002.

15 *ЛННБУ*, ф. 3, спр. 125, арк. 4–93в.

16 *Ibid.*, арк. 93в.–123в.

17 *Ibid.*, арк. 13–453в.

18 *Ibid.*, арк. 453в.–843в.

19 Archiwum parafii Niepokalanego Poczęcia NMP w Ostrowie Lubelskim, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego] (hereinafter referred to as *APOL*, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego]).

20 M. Bunia, 2012. I am very grateful to the researcher for the opportunity to use this source.

onwards take the form of a diary, whereas his writings about the period up until the end of the 18th century are presented in the form of memoirs, albeit, organized by year. Given that, from the mid-1790s, the guardianship of the Josaphat Sisters congregation became Fr. Shchurovsky's life mission, the *Memoirs* primarily focus on the congregation's operation.

This publication also introduced a series of documents discovered in the Manuscript and Old Print Department of the Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum in Lviv. Of greatest value is the archive case РкЛ-750, which contains several dozen documents related to the history of the Josaphat Sisters for the years 1795–1807.²¹ An important source which sheds light on the community's relations with ecclesiastical authority is the three-volume *Diary* of the Bishop of Chełm, Porfyriy Vazhynsky (РкЛ-120, РкЛ-121, РкЛ-122).²² Attention should also be drawn to the visitation conducted at the Basilian monastery in Biała on 5 September 1795 by Fr. Sylvestr Antonovych, in which significant attention was dedicated to the Josaphat Sisters.²³ Lastly, a number of documents pertaining to the activities of the community were discovered in the Chełm Greek Catholic Consistory collection of the State Archive in Lublin.²⁴

Before delving into the history of the Josaphat Sisters, it is pertinent to consider the key life stages of their founder, Fr. Shchurovsky.²⁵ His monastic life, especially his time in various Basilian monasteries within the territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, may have inspired subsequent events related to the founding of the community in Biała. He was born in 1740 in the village of Lishnia near Lytovezh (Volhynian Palatinate) to the noble family of Andrzej Szczurowski and his second wife, Franciszka née Dołgieńo.²⁶ He was educated at the Basilian school in Volodymyr, where one of his teachers was Fr. Porfyriy Vazhynsky, a future Bishop of Chełm. He converted to the Eastern Rite, and, in 1759, joined the Basilian Order and began his novitiate in Bycien. In 1760, he took his solemn vows, and, in 1763,

21 Національний музей у Львові імені Андрея Шептицького, Відділ рукописів і стародруків (hereinafter referred to as *НМЛ*), РкЛ-750.

22 НМЛ, РкЛ-120, РкЛ-121, РкЛ-122.

23 Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien, Sammlung von Handschriften und alten Drucken, Manuskript (hereinafter referred to as *ÖNB*), Cod. Ser. n. 2798

24 For more about this archive collection, see *Chełmski Konsystorz Greckokatolicki*, 2003.

25 The biography of Fr. Tymothei Shchurovsky is based primarily on APOL, [Pamiętnik o Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 1–12; see also D. Wereda, 2011; A. Bartoszewicz, 1853.

26 НМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 65. His parents' marriage dates to 22 January 1737; they lived in the village of Lishnia, which belonged to the Roman Catholic parish of St. Michael the Archangel in Lytovezh (Державний архів Волинської області, ф. 297, оп. 1, спр. 81, арк. 23).

he was ordained a priest by the Archbishop of Smolensk, Irakliy Lisovsky. He received his theological education at Polatsk and Vilnius Holy Trinity monasteries. In 1768, he was assigned to Volodymyr as a teacher of rhetoric at the local Basilian school; by 1770, he had become its prefect. He also served as the chaplain of the local community of Basilian Sisters. Later, Fr. Shchurovsky was sent to Rome for further studies, where he earned a doctorate in theology and canon law as well as the dignity of an apostolic prothonotary. Upon returning to his homeland, he held, from 1777 to 1785, the position of master of novices in Bycien, where he had a student named Ferdynand Tsekhanovsky, another future Bishop of Chełm.

When observing the trajectory of Fr. Shchurovsky's career, it is evident that many of the places in which he was present were associated with the life of the Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych (Volodymyr, Bycien, Polatsk, Vilnius), which were thus, during the second half of the 18th century, centres of the saint's veneration. Clearly, this might have had a certain influence on Shchurovsky's particular devotion to the figure of Josaphat. Finally, at the Tarakan Provincial Chapter (1784), he was appointed hegumen of the monastery in Biała, where, at that time, the relics of the Blessed Josaphat were being kept.

2. Biała: The Complex Beginnings of the Community

A pivotal achievement during Fr. Shchurovsky's tenure in Biała was the founding of the Josaphat Sisters community. It is challenging to pinpoint the precise impetus for the creation of this community of devout women, which subsequently evolved into a tertiary congregation. In response to an inquiry made by the Josaphat Sisters in August 1795 about the motivation for their vows, Fr. Shchurovsky emphatically stated that the reason was "out of gratitude for the mercy [of God] experienced during the war, under the miraculous guardianship of Josaphat".²⁷ He provided a similar response to the Austrian authorities at the beginning of the following year, making a declaration about the congregation in Przegaliny.²⁸

Indeed, the events of the first half of the 1790s significantly influenced the formation of the community: initially, the Russian-Polish war in 1792, and then, the Kościuszko Uprising, which followed in 1794. Following the proclamation of

27 ЛННБУ, ф. 3, спр. 125, арк. 43В.-5.

28 Ibid., арк. 10-103В.

the Targowica Confederation, the Russian Empire commenced military aggression against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on 18 May 1792, with battles in June and July ensuing near the Western Bug River, in the vicinity of Biała.²⁹ In particular, on 23 July 1792, in a battle near Brest, Russian forces achieved victory over Lithuanian units led by the Lieutenant General Szymon Zabiełło, thereby opening their path to Biała.³⁰ The Russian units were subsequently disbanded temporarily, and they began to ravage the surrounding areas. Notably, the damage inflicted on Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski's Terespol estates were later estimated to be nearly 120,000 złoty.³¹

Uncertainty, and the fear for their lives, fostered an increased piety among the people. Concurrently, after the destruction of their homes, many sought refuge in Biała, which was a fortified fortress belonging to the Radziwiłłs, where the relics of the revered Blessed Josaphat were kept. Gradually, a small group of devotees formed around the local Basilian monastery. As the historian Jan Stanisław Bystroń points out, this type of piety was characteristic of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Devotees were often single women, sometimes even wealthy ones, residing near churches or monasteries, who wished to serve God. They formed a certain community, living together in devotion.³² It can be surmised that, in its initial stages, the community in Biała was of a similar nature.

It is essential, however, to highlight the key role played by both Fr. Shchurovsky, as hegumen, and the former Charity Sister Katarzyna Bryłówna (Pelahiya Brylivna), who led the Josaphat Sisters from 1793 until her death in 1802, in the formation of the community. In her testament, drafted in Parczew on 25 February of that same year, she briefly described her life journey.³³ Katarzyna Bryłówna, daughter of Zygmunt Bryl and Elżbieta née Kucharzewska, was born in the village of Vovchyn (Brest Palatinate), where she was baptized into the Latin Rite on 12 May 1761. During her childhood, her parents entrusted her to the care of St. Casimir Convent of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in Warsaw. There, in 1781, she took monastic vows and served as a teacher within the community over subsequent years. In her will, Sister Bryłówna/Brylivna notes that she left the convent of the Charity Sisters to

29 W. Konopczyński, 1986, s. 240–241.

30 A. Wolański, 1922, s. 315–338.

31 *Ibid.*, s. 338–339.

32 J. S. Bystroń, 1976, s. 315.

33 The main stages of the life of the first member of the Josaphat Sisters community can be reconstructed from both the presently mentioned testament (HМЛ, РКЛ-750, арк. 55–563в.) and the *Memoirs* of Fr. Shchurovsky (APOL, [Pamiętnik o Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 20).

rescue her mother, by then, already a widow, due to the dangerous situation in the capital. This might partly correspond to reality, as Russian troops under General Mikhail Kakhovsky were stationed in Warsaw from August 1792 until the beginning of 1793. However, in his *Memoirs*, Fr. Shchurovsky mentions that the Charity sister came from Warsaw to Biała, which also housed a convent for the Sisters of Charity, primarily because of her mother's health condition. Katarzyna's mother was suffering from mental disorders and would frequently run away from home. Katarzyna Bryłówna obtained permission for the move from both the Auxiliary Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Kraków for the Lublin Archdeaconry, Jan Kanty Lenczowski, and the *visitatrix* (i.e., provincial superioress) of the Sisters of Charity, Henrietta Thierry.³⁴ The latter's permission is dated 8 July 1793.

At this time, Fr. Shchurovsky was contemplating the establishment of a girls' school in Biała. In his *Memoirs*, he notes that a situation in his family served as a pretext for this initiative: in 1791, Antoni Szczurowski, who styled himself as the judge of Belz and the Burgrave of Zakroczym, entrusted his brother, Fr. Shchurovsky, with the education of his two young children (Józef Cyriak and Justyna, from his second marriage to Marianna née Rzeszowska), providing appropriate funds for this purpose.³⁵ This arrangement between the brothers was later recalled by Antoni's eldest child, Lew Szczurowski, although he did not specify the year in which it occurred.³⁶ However, it should be noted that Józef Cyriak Szczurowski was only born on 16 March 1793,³⁷ as confirmed by an excerpt from the metric book of the Roman Catholic parish in Horodło, suggesting that this agreement likely occurred somewhat later.

Nevertheless, Fr. Shchurovsky dates the beginning of the construction of the girls' school and chapel to the year 1793. In his *Memoirs*, he writes that, on 1 April 1793, the cornerstone of the building was laid;³⁸ the school was located on the Brest roadway on the territory of the monastic cemetery, between the church of the Basilians and the Jewish cemetery.³⁹ The funds for its construction were

34 Henriette Thierry (1729–1804) held the office of the *visitatrix* (i.e., provincial superioress) of the Polish Province of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul from 1777 until her death (M. Borkowska, 2006, s. 126).

35 APOL, [Pamiętnik o Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 15–16.

36 HMLI, РкЛ-750, арк. 443в.

37 Ibid., арк. 27.

38 APOL, [Pamiętnik o Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 19.

39 ЛННБУ, ф. 3, спр. 125, арк. 9; ÖNB, Cod. Ser. n. 2798, p. 282v. Adam Bartoszewicz mentioned the existence of this building in the second quarter of the 19th century (K. Bartoszewicz, 1928, s. 11).

provided primarily by the local nobility, who were connected in various ways with both the Basilians of Biała and personally with Fr. Shchurovsky. In his *Memoirs*, he lists their contributions: the married couple Józef and Marianna Buchowieckis, 3600 złoty; Katarzyna Bryłówna, 2200 złoty; Marianna Węglowska, 1000 złoty; Tekla Kłodnicka, 700 złoty; and Karolina Turska, 700 złoty. According to him, the total amount raised was 8,200 złoty.⁴⁰

Simultaneously, Fr. Shchurovsky was laying the groundwork for a tertiary community. Its institutional foundation was to be the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, founded in 1769 with the blessing of the Coadjutor for Volodymyr Eparchy, Antoniy Mlodovsky, at Biała Monastery. Shchurovsky, a proficient expert in canon law, planned to re-establish it in the form of the Society of Christian Education (*Sodalitas Doctrinae Christianae*). It was to include three categories of individuals: teachers or catechist brothers (*professores seu fratres catechistae*), female teachers for girls (*magistrae puellorum*), and the rest of the faithful. The first two groups were to undertake a form of tertiary vow.⁴¹ Among the first category of tertiaries, Fr. Shchurovsky counted the late Ignacy Korowicki, who had styled himself as the *stolnik* (i.e., pantler) of Gostynin, and who, according to the *Memoirs*, had passed away in 1791, having, before his death, taken the tertiary habit and adopted the name Josaphat.⁴² He also included Tarasiy Trokhymovych vel Teofilevych, Metody Malakhovych, and Teofil (Garashkovsky) in this group.⁴³ The first of these took the habit on 7 March 1792, while the other two, along with Ilarion Lyudvynets, did so on 10 July 1795.⁴⁴ Interestingly, all of them are mentioned in the protocol of the visitation for Biała Monastery in September of the latter year, not as novices or monks but as follows: “alumni who are tertiaries of our Order”⁴⁵ Other sources indicate that, during the period of 1794–1795, Tarasiy Trokhymovych vel Teofilevych assisted Fr. Shchurovsky in his missions as a catechist,⁴⁶ which aligned with the latter’s plans for establishing the Society of Christian Education, where the brothers were to serve specifically as catechists.

40 APOL, [Pamiętnik o Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 18–19. The listed persons appear in another document issued by Fr. Shchurovsky on 26 August 1795. The only differences are the amounts of each person’s contribution and the total amount of 8,100 złoty (ЛІННВУ, ф. 3, спп. 125, арк. 9).

41 APOL, [Pamiętnik o Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 19.

42 Ibid., s. 13.

43 Ibid., s. 20.

44 ÖNB, Cod. Ser. n. 2798, p. 286.

45 Ibid.

46 B. Pietnoczko, 2017, s. 78.

The institutional formation of the women's community began with Katarzyna Bryłówna/Brylivna taking her tertiary vows. In the presence of believers of both rites in the Basilian church in Biała, she assumed the habit, changing her name to Pelahiya.⁴⁷ Antoni Bartoszewicz asserted that this event took place on 21 July 1793. The act of a Roman Catholic, and, what is more, a former Charity Sister, taking tertiary vows in the Eastern Rite sparked a conflict between Fr. Shchurovsky (who initiated this step) and Biała's Latin clergy, notably, the influential Rector of Biała school, Fr. Mikołaj Dziejicki, and the parish priest of the local St. Anna's parish, the Canon of Lutsk, Fr. Kazimierz Moykowski.⁴⁸

Despite this dispute related to Pelahiya Brylivna's vows, the community of tertiaries gradually expanded. In a document dated 26 August 1795, after the difficult period of the early 1790s, Fr. Shchurovsky writes: "at that time, wandering through the wealthy city houses, when their [the devotees – Auth.] residences were burned down, [which had been] founded by Princess [Anna] Katarzyna Radziwiłł, the venerable devotees Dowmontowa, wife of the Letychiv cupbearer,⁴⁹ and Marianna Węglowska, daughter of the Kyiv standard-bearer,⁵⁰ seeing their peril, had to resort to the protection of Blessed Josaphat and decided to take tertiary vows".⁵¹ Clearly, this referred not to the Sisters of Charity of Biała, as some historians have written, but to the devotees they cared for. The Sisters of Charity were invited to Biała in 1716 by Prince Karol Stanisław Radziwiłł, and, after his death, his widow Anna Katarzyna Radziwiłł née Sanguszko founded a hospice for widows at their convent.⁵² Sources indicate that a major fire occurred in the town on 24 July 1794.⁵³ It is likely that the buildings of the Sisters of Charity Convent, where the presently mentioned devotees resided, were damaged at that time. Later, in his *Memoirs*, Fr. Shchurovsky noted that, in early 1795, the 70-year-old Marianna Dowmontowa, being very ill, asked him if she could take "the tertiary vows of St. Basil the Great" before she died, which he agreed to.⁵⁴

47 APOL, [Pamiętnik o Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 20–21.

48 A. Bartoszewicz, 1853, s. 451.

49 No person with this surname appears in the list of Letychiv cup-bearers (*Urzędnicy*, 1998, s. 158–164).

50 No person with this surname appears in the list of Kyiv standard-bearers (*Urzędnicy*, 2002, s. 19–22).

51 ЛННБУ, ф. 3, спр. 125, арк. 53в.

52 L. Królik, 1983, s. 400; S. Jadczyk, 1993, s. 137.

53 J. Bartoszewicz, 1881, s. 147.

54 APOL, [Pamiętnik o Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 23.

In the early autumn of 1794, Russian troops appeared near Biała for the second time in recent years. Units led by Alexander Suvorov defeated Polish forces under Karol Sierakowski near Krupchytse, close to Kobryn; on 17 September and on 19 September, they decimated the Poles in a battle near Terespol (sometimes called the Battle of Brest).⁵⁵ As mentioned in Fr. Shchurovsky's *Memoirs*, the noblewoman Karolina Turska née Buchowiecka, "terrified by the Muscovite troops", on 27 September joined the community in Biała, which was under the care of Pelahiya Brylivna.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, in a document dated 26 August 1795, Shchurovsky indicates that a 60-year-old widow was forced to move to Biała due to the looting and burning of her native village Husynka (located between Biała and Brest) by the Russian troops.⁵⁷ The Roman Catholic parish priest in Horbów, Fr. Ksawery Małachowicz, also narrated the brutality of enemy troops in these areas, stating that "during the revolution of Poles against the Muscovites", he, like many others, was forced to hide, as the latter "not only beat ..., but also killed". According to Małachowicz, several individuals died at their hands in the neighbouring village of Kijowiec. The Russians also plundered grain harvested from the fields at the end of summer and slaughtered domestic poultry.⁵⁸

The above-mentioned Karolina Turska née Buchowiecka was the daughter of Paweł Buchowiecki and Rozalia née Chrzanowska, the owners of Husynka, which belonged to the aforementioned parish of Horbów.⁵⁹ Her first husband was Jean Pierre Descours,⁶⁰ a native of Picardy (France) and an *oberleutnant* in the infantry guard of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. After his death in 1762, she married Łukasz Turski.⁶¹ Interestingly, in 1769, their son Felicjan Karol Jozafat was baptized in the castle chapel at Biała by Vilnius Canon Fr. Antoni Radziwiłł, with Prince Karol Stanisław Radziwiłł and his wife Teresa Karolina née Rzewuska serving as godparents.⁶² Karolina Turska became the first benefactress of the Josaphat Sisters, bequeathing 137 bushels (*korzec*) of wheat for the construction of their residence, and making the donation to the teachers: who at that time were Sister Pelahiya

55 B. Twardowski, 1894, s. 60.

56 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 22.

57 ЛННБУ, ф. 3, спр. 125, арк. 53в.

58 R. E. Krzeska.

59 Ibid.

60 A. Boniecki, 1901, s. 265.

61 Łukasz Turski: pantler (1769), minor tribune (1775–1777), sword-bearer (1777–1781), master of the hunt (1781) of Mielnik (*Urzędnicy*, 1994, s. 107, 109, 131).

62 Archiwum parafii św. Anny w Białej Podlaskiej (hereinafter referred to as *APBP*), [Księga chrztów od 1755 do 1773 r.], s. 95.

Brylivna and the secular individuals Marianna Węglowska and Tekla Kłodnicka.⁶³ Before her death, following the example of her relative Ignacy (Jozafat) Korowicki, she also took the tertiary habit in the presence of the previously mentioned Fr. Małachowicz and her two sons, Antoni and Adam, and was later buried in the cemetery of the Basilian monastery as “the foundress of the Josaphat Sisters.”⁶⁴

Following an attack by one of the Russian army units on the village of Prze-galiny, the commander of a regiment from Brest Palatinate, Józef Buchowiecki,⁶⁵ also moved to Biała along with his wife Marianna née Paszkowska and their five children: Dominik, Jozafat, Jacek, Franciszka, and Karolina.⁶⁶ The presently mentioned noblewoman was the daughter of Jacek Paszkowski-Lanckoroński (who served as equerry (1773–1781), vice-captain (1778–1792), *podstoli* (i.e., deputy pantler) (1781–1787), and *stolnik* (1787–1795) of Brest) and his wife Franciszka née Mieczynska, daughter of the Zakroczym Chamberlain;⁶⁷ Marianna’s parents lived in Zbirogi near Brest, where her brothers and sisters had been born between 1755–1762.⁶⁸ In early 1795, shortly after her husband’s death from wounds received during the aforementioned attack, the widow Marianna Buchowiecka/Bukhovetska, now over 30 years old, also took the tertiary habit, adopting the name Makryna. She bequeathed the community 200 ducats, borrowed during her husband’s lifetime, for the repair of the Basilian church in Biała, and added her own 200 ducats ‘*u leguminach*’.⁶⁹ According to Fr. Shchurovsky, this decision was the cause of dissatisfaction both for Sister Makryna’s parents, who had found a profitable match for the young widow in the person of ‘Mr. Niemcewicz’ (presumably Stanisław Ursyn-Niemcewicz (1753–1817), the castle court judge of Brest),⁷⁰ and for the local Latin clergy.⁷¹ Bishop Vazhynsky noted in his *Diary* that, on 22 May 1797, he met with Jacek Paszkowski-Lanckoroński, Makryna’s father, in the town of Hanna, near

63 ЛННБУ, ф. 3, спр. 125, арк. 53в.; APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczerowskiego], s. 22.

64 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczerowskiego], s. 22.

65 The list of officials of Brest Palatinate mentions Józef Buchowiecki, the custodian of bridges of Brest, who was one in February 1794. However, sources record that his wife was an unknown person with the surname Ludwika, not Marianna (*Urzędnicy*, 2020, s. 120). See: S. Uruski, 1905, s. 50; Boniecki, 1900, s. 213.

66 ЛННБУ, ф. 3, спр. 125, арк. 53в.–6.

67 *Urzędnicy*, 2020, s. 104, 149, 155, 194; APBP, [Księga chrztów od 1774 do 1785 r.], s. 82.

68 Нацыянальны гістарычны архіў Беларусі ў г. Гродна ф. 898, воп. 1, спр. 1, с. 144, 146зв.–147зв., 149зв., 152.

69 ЛННБУ, ф. 3, спр. 125, арк. 53в.–6; APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczerowskiego], s. 23.

70 *Urzędnicy*, 2020, s. 162.

71 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczerowskiego], s. 23–24.

Biała, who complained about Fr. Shchurovsky, who, in the nobleman's opinion, had caused financial harm to the family through his actions.⁷²

During the first half of 1795, other individuals joined the Josaphat Sisters community. Specifically, 'simple vows', as Fr. Shchurovsky described them – in order to distinguish them from solemn monastic vows – were taken by the previously mentioned two teachers: 22-year-old Tekla Kłodnicka/Klodnitska (who did so during the feast of the Annunciation of the Mother of God, taking the name Benedykta)⁷³ and the devotee Marianna Węglowska/Venglovskia (who changed her name to Mahdalyna).⁷⁴ In his *Memoirs*, Shchurovsky mentions that following the latter's example, two women, an unknown widow named Mężyńska/Menzhynska and Regina Szczygielska/Shchygelska, also took the habit, but later left the community having received permission to do so.⁷⁵ The metric books of the Roman Catholic parish of St. Anna in Biała cautiously suggest that the presently mentioned widow could have been Katarzyna Semińska. In 1794, Katarzyna married Tadeusz Mężyński, who died soon after, and, in 1797, presumably after receiving dispensation, she remarried as a widow to Jan Szczepański.⁷⁶

By the summer of 1795, a small community of women engaged in educational activities had formed in Biała, operating under the auspices of Fr. Shchurovsky at the Basilian monastery. During a visitation at the local Basilian monastery in September of the same year, the following individuals who had already taken the habit were mentioned: Pelahiya Brylivna (superioress), Makryna Bukhovetska, Mahdalyna Venglovskia, Benedykta Klodnitska, Rozaliya Shchygelska, and Tsetsyliya Menzhynska, who we know from the *Memoirs*, and the previously unmentioned Teodosiya Klodnitska and Porfyriya Alexandrovychivna.⁷⁷ By that time, the construction of the girls' school with living quarters for the sisters and a chapel had been completed. On 30 July 1795 (19 July Old Style), the feast of St. Macrina the Younger, the building was consecrated,⁷⁸ and on 26 August (15 August Old Style), the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God,⁷⁹ a solemn procession

72 HМЛ, РкЛ-121, арк. 19.

73 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 23.

74 Ibid., s. 25.

75 Ibid., s. 25.

76 APBB, [Księga zaślubionych od 1794 do 1797 r.], s. 2, 20.

77 ÖNB, Cod. Ser. n. 2798, p. 282v.–283.

78 Ibid., p. 284–285v.

79 According to the protocol of the visitation of the Basilian monastery in Biała, this event occurred on the eve of the feast. It is possible that the ceremony took place in the evening after the festive Vespers, which, according to Church tradition, marked the beginning of a new day.

with the Holy Sacrament took place, introducing the Josaphat Sisters to their new residence.⁸⁰ As previously mentioned, the devotees had invested significant amounts for the construction of this school, which had been added to the general funds of the Basilian monastery in Biała, whose hegumen, Fr. Shchurovsky, was simultaneously the founder and chaplain of the Josaphat Sisters. After the building was completed, the leadership of the Basilian Order affirmed that it belonged to Biała Monastery, as it was located on its land. This issue of the building's ownership became apparent by the end of the summer of 1795. Not coincidentally, it was at this time that the Josaphat Sisters approached their spiritual guide with a request to answer a series of questions, among which, one of the most important was about the ownership of the building under discussion.⁸¹

Fr. Shchurovsky's activities in Biała aroused dissatisfaction among some representatives of the local nobility and clergy, as well as among the leadership of the Lithuanian Province of the Basilian Order. As previously mentioned, in July 1795, without the necessary permission from the Proto-Archimandrite, he conferred 'simple habits' upon several candidates, whom he treated, however, not as novices but as tertiaries. The status of the women's community, which had emerged without the proper permission of the Church authorities, also remained unresolved. Moreover, some accused Fr. Shchurovsky, being a monk, of having inappropriate relations with the Josaphat Sisters. In response to these issues, a visitation at the Basilian monastery in Biała took place on 5 September 1795, conducted by Fr. Sylvestr Antonovych.⁸² Following its results, the Josaphat Sisters were ordered to leave the recently completed building, and Fr. Shchurovsky was removed from his position as hegumen. Fr. Yeyuniy Hrehorovych, a former professor of theology from Zhyrovichy, was appointed as the new hegumen of the Basilian monastery.⁸³

Subsequent events in the history of the women's congregation were closely intertwined with political changes and reorganizations within the structure of the Uniate Church following the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It should be noted that, during the times of the Polish-Lithuanian State, Biała, located within Brest Palatinate, fell under the jurisdiction of Volodymyr Eparchy, which consisted of two officialates (*kryloses*): Volodymyr and Brest, which,

80 ÖNB, Cod. Ser. n. 2798, p. 283; APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczerowskiego], s. 25.

81 ЛННБУ, ф. 3, спр. 125, арк. 43в.-93в.

82 ÖNB, Cod. Ser. n. 2798, p. 281v.-287v.

83 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczerowskiego], s. 25-26.

however, were separated by the territory of Chełm Eparchy.⁸⁴ As a result of the second partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1793), the Volodymyr part of the eparchy was annexed to the Russian Empire. Within Russia, this bishopric soon ceased to exist, and its Bishop, Symeon Mlotsky, was removed from his position, receiving an annual lifelong pension of 3,000 roubles in return.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, on the territories of Brest Officialate, which briefly remained part of the Polish-Lithuanian State, and in which Biała was located, the administrative functions were performed by Arseniy Hlovnevsky. He was ordained in 1791 and took up the position of coadjutor to the Bishop of Volodymyr, Symeon Mlotsky.⁸⁶ Hierarch Hlovnevsky also took an interest in the affairs of the Josaphat Sisters, whom he referred to as “tertiaries of the Order of St. Basil the Great”. A letter he wrote as the Titular Bishop of Brest, dispatched on 12 October 1795, indicates his awareness of the community’s eviction from their house. The hierarch notes that he had not given permission for this and allowed the Josaphat Sisters, as tertiaryaries, to reside in private accommodation. He promised to come to Biała in the coming winter to carry out a visitation to clarify the situation.⁸⁷ It remains uncertain whether such a visit ultimately took place, but the mentioned letter indicates that the situation in Biała had escalated.

Fr. Shchurovsky is not mentioned in this letter. As previously stated, following the visitation conducted by Fr. Antonovych, he was removed from his position and then summoned to the Protohegumen’s residence at Zhyrovichy Monastery, where he arrived on 12 October 1795.⁸⁸ By the end of that year, following the third partition, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ceased to exist, and Zhyrovichy now fell within the borders of the Russian Empire. During his stay at the monastery, Fr. Shchurovsky refused to dissolve the Josaphat Sisters’ community, or to swear allegiance to Empress Catherine II.⁸⁹ Considering this latter circumstance, he was compelled to leave Russia at the beginning of 1796 and returned to the vicinity of Biała, which, in his absence, had come under Habsburg rule. By 20 February, Fr. Shchurovsky was at the manor house of the Buchowiecki family in Przegaliny, where he prepared a report on the Josaphat Sisters for the Biała Commissariat, touching upon the previously mentioned funds. He declared his readiness to

84 A. Гіль et al., 2013, с. 23–24, 29–30, табл. 1–2.

85 M. Radwan, 2001, s. 33.

86 D. Wereda, 2001, s. 70.

87 НМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 41.

88 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 25–26.

89 ЛІННБУ, ф. 3, спр. 125, арк. 11 зв.; APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 26.

return 8,100 zloty to the sisters, provided that the Basilians from Biała gave him back his own 17,000 zloty, which had accumulated from his publishing activities, and which he had invested in the development of the monastery.⁹⁰ In early March 1796, Fr. Shchurovsky arrived in Chełm, where he was not particularly warmly received by the local Basilians. By that time, he was seeking secularization from the Order to take care of two young children belonging to his brother Antoni, who had died at the end of the previous year in Volodymyr.⁹¹ As someone who had recently arrived from the Russian Empire and, moreover, who did not have a passport, the local Austrian authorities also regarded him with suspicion.⁹² However, Fr. Shchurovsky received support from Bishop Vazhynsky, who initially prepared, through Pelahiya Brylivna, a recommendation letter allowing the Basilian to return to the country,⁹³ later appointing him as a visitor of the brotherhoods of Christian education in Chełm Eparchy.⁹⁴

Following the third partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Austrian authorities also took notice of the Josaphat Sisters' activities, posing a certain threat to the community. It is worth remembering that, during the 1770s–1790s, a number of convents, including those of Greek Catholics (Basilian Sisters),⁹⁵ were abolished in Galicia, which, according to the era's enlightened absolutist notions, did not fulfil a socially useful function, that is, they did not engage in educational or charitable activities.⁹⁶ On 9 March 1796, the Lublin Commissariat requested Bishop Vazhynsky provide more details about the community.⁹⁷ In response, on 24 March 1796, the bishop informed the Austrian officials that the Josaphat Sisters

90 ЛННБУ, ф. 3, спр. 125, арк. 12.

91 APOL, [Pamiętnik o Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 26.

92 НМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 29.

93 On 15 January 1796, Pelahiya Brylivna and Benedykta Klodnitska requested Bishop Vazhynsky to release Fr. Shchurovsky from Zhyrovichy. The hierarch's letter of recommendation for Shchurovsky is dated 16 January 1796. On the same day, the Josaphat Sisters departed from Chełm (НМЛ, РкЛ-120, арк. 177зв.; РкЛ-750, арк. 97–98зв.; APOL, [Pamiętnik o Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 26–27).

94 D. Wereda, 2011, s. 510.

95 O. Duch, 2014; O. Дух, 2017, с. 79–91.

96 E. Winter, 1943.

97 А. Петрушевичъ, 1867, с. 183. Bishop Vazhynsky received this letter on 17 March 1796, and, a week later, he sent a reply (НМЛ, РкЛ-120, арк. 184–185 зв.). It is possible that the bishop received information about the Josaphat Sisters from Fr. Shchurovsky, who was in Chełm at the time, or that he himself was preparing a response at the request of the hierarch. This is precisely what occurred on 16 March 1796, when a messenger from Pelahiya Brylivna arrived at the bishop's office and, the bishop instructed the messenger to provide a response to the foundress of the Josaphat Sisters (НМЛ, РкЛ-120, арк. 184).

were not a monastic order but merely a tertiary community which had arisen in Biała without the explicit permission of Church authorities. However, he noted that they had the right to exist and spoke positively of their educational activities. The bishop suggested the possibility of relocating the sisters and transferring the building constructed at the devotees' expense to the Basilians.⁹⁸ On 12 November 1796, Fr. Shchurovsky, by order of the Court Commission for the Regulation of Western Galicia in Kraków, provided the Biała District Administration with clarifications regarding the nature of the congregation and the financial dispute with the Basilians.⁹⁹ Ultimately, according to a decree from the Court Commission dated 18 March 1797, the Josaphat Sisters received temporary permission to conduct educational activities in German and Polish.¹⁰⁰ However, this decision caused concern among the sisters. On 26 March 1797, Pelahiya Brylivna arrived in Chełm from Biała, informing Bishop Vazhynsky about this resolution, which, despite allowing them to teach children, ordered that the Josaphat Sisters remove their monastic habits and wear secular clothes. The following day, at the request of Pelahiya Brylivna, the hierarch prepared a corresponding note to the Court Commission,¹⁰¹ which he sent on 28 March 1797.¹⁰²

Due to his good relations with Fr. Shchurovsky, Bishop Porfyriy Vazhynsky was also favourably disposed toward the community of the Josaphat Sisters.¹⁰³ After the third partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the territories of the former Brest Officialate of Volodymyr Eparchy became part of the Habsburg Monarchy, specifically, the crown land of New Galicia (Western Galicia). The function of the administrator of the so-called Brest Eparchy in Western Galicia was entrusted to the bishop of Chełm.¹⁰⁴ This was of great importance in the fate of the Josaphat Sisters. During a visitation of the relics of Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych in Biała on 27 May 1797, the bishop issued a decree allowing the sisters, under the leadership of Pelahiya Brylivna, to move to any place within the Chełm or Brest

98 А. Петрушевичъ, 1867, с. 183–184.

99 ЛННБУ, ф. 3, спр. 125, арк. 123в.

100 А. Петрушевичъ, 1867, с. 185.

101 НМЛ, Ркл-121, арк. 123в.

102 See the note: Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, Chełmski Konsystorz Greckokatolicki, (hereinafter referred to as *APL, ChKGK*) sygn. 9, s. 53–54.

103 Bishop Vazhynsky's *Diary* contains frequent references to visits from the Josaphat Sisters, particularly from the superioress Pelahiya Brylivna, who often crafted liturgical vestments for the bishop (НМЛ, Ркл-120, арк. 187–1873в., 1953в., 1973в.).

104 A. Gil, 2003, s. 494.

eparchies.¹⁰⁵ The Josaphat Sisters were also given the opportunity to engage in educational activities: “to provide Christian education to young and adolescent ladies”.¹⁰⁶ Thus the community was informally recognized by the ecclesiastical authorities, although, in the document, the bishop did not refer to the sisters as nuns or tertiaries, yet, he clearly emphasized their educational activities.

3. Parczew: The Fate and Misfortune of the Tertiary Community

However, the key issue remained the common residence of the Josaphat Sisters, having been evicted from their house in Biała. Their founder and spiritual guide, Fr. Shchurovsky, also did not reside with them; as mentioned above, he spent some time in Chełm. In the autumn of 1796, we find him at the Buchowiecki estate in Przegaliny.¹⁰⁷ Later, he lived in the Dobromyśl manor house, near Siedliszcze, which he received from the Węgliński brothers, Antoni, the captain of Chełm, and Onufry, the standard-bearer of Chełm, on 15 April 1797.¹⁰⁸ However, by the end of the previous year, the Basilian had been actively engaged in acquiring new property for the Josaphat Sisters. Following Fr. Shchurovsky's instructions, and using the funds allocated by his deceased brother Antoni for the education of his young children, in 1796, Mahdalyna Venglovska purchased a house with a garden and a small plot of land from the Trunczyński family, in the town of Parczew, within the district of Lublin, and later acquired additional land from the local burgher, Siedlecki. Subsequently, she publicly acknowledged before a magistrate that this property belonged not to the Josaphat Sisters but to Józef Cyriak and Justyna Szczurowskis.¹⁰⁹ On 16 March 1797, Bishop Vazhynsky blessed the construction of a private chapel in Parczew for Pelahiya Brylivna and other devotees, informing the local Uniate parish priest, Fr. Ivan Kurmanovych.¹¹⁰ On 22 August 1797, the Court Commission authorized the opening of a girls' school in Parczew under the direction of the above-mentioned sister; and, on 4 September 1797, this decision

105 The evening before, Makryna Bukhovetska and Pelahiya Brylivna had visited Bishop Vazhynsky in Biała. The conversation likely included the future of the Josaphat Sisters, among other topics (HМЛ, РкЛ-12, арк. 193в.).

106 HМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 39; APL, ChKGK, sygn. 9, s. 87–88.

107 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 28.

108 HМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 32–323в.

109 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 28, 30; HМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 44 3в.

110 HМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 38–38 3в.

was communicated to the Josaphat Sisters by the Lublin District Administration.¹¹¹ The educational activities performed by the Josaphat Sisters received the blessing of Chełm bishops of both rites: the Uniate Bishop, Porfyriy Vazhynsky, and the Roman Catholic Bishop, Wojciech Skarszewski.¹¹²

In the autumn of 1797, the community finally settled in Parczew. In October of that year, the Josaphat Sisters began constructing temporary wooden buildings, including residences for the sisters, a chapel, and a school.¹¹³ On 13 December 1798, after the unexpected death of the six-year-old Józef Cyriak and the return of Justyna to her mother in Volodymyr, Józef's elder brother Lew Szczurowski registered these lands for life with his uncle, Fr. Shchurovsky, and the tertiary sisters, on condition that they continued their educational activities.¹¹⁴

The following decade in the history of the Josaphat Sisters in Parczew was one of almost continuous construction work, at least according to the more detailed information provided by available sources. In May 1800, Pelahiya Brylivna, who held the title of head teacher (*obermagistra*), appealed to Bishop Vazhynsky, who had been passing through Parczew,¹¹⁵ requesting permission to construct a new chapel as the old wooden one could no longer accommodate the growing number of students. In a note to this letter, dated 1 June 1800,¹¹⁶ Fr. Shchurovsky also committed to seeking funds for the chapel's construction, as the case against the Basilians from Biała regarding the return of the devotees' funds had by that time been lost.¹¹⁷ The next day, the bishop granted this permission.¹¹⁸ On 22 July 1800, the feast of St. Mary Magdalene in the Latin calendar, workers laid the cornerstone for the school and chapel, which received a dedication to St. Nicholas of Myra. By August, the first two premises for the girls' educational institution had

111 A. Петрушевичъ, 1867, с. 185; НМЛ, Ркл-750, арк. 43.

112 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 30; НМЛ, Ркл-750, арк. 45.

113 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 31.

114 НМЛ, Ркл-750, арк. 45, 47–48.

115 On 24 May 1800, Porfyriy Vazhynsky reminisced about his stay in Parczew, where he was greeted with welcoming speeches and songs by his students. During his visit, the bishop had the opportunity to examine the omophorion for the relics of Blessed Josaphat, which the sisters had already begun to make (НМЛ, Ркл-122, с. 26).

116 On that day, the bishop revisited Parczew, where he met with Pelahiya Brylivna and visited the Josaphat Sisters. The following day, she visited Bishop Vazhynsky in Sosnowice, where the document was prepared (НМЛ, Ркл-122, арк. 29).

117 НМЛ, Ркл-750, арк. 52

118 Ibid., арк. 53зв.; APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 33.

been added.¹¹⁹ According to the Roman Catholic Dean Fr. Wilczyński's report of October 1803, the chapel was nearly complete under a temporary cover. However, a financial shortfall compelled the devotees to write to Parczew Magistrate on 3 April 1804, seeking financial help to finish the construction, which the town agreed to, conditional on overseeing their educational activities.¹²⁰ That year saw the completion of the chapel,¹²¹ and Bishop Skarszewski blessed it on 16 May 1805 during his visit to the school and its dwellings.¹²²

Nevertheless, the building's precarious condition prompted the construction of an annex to be used as Fr. Shchurovsky's residence within the same year. This effort proved insufficient, and the chapel collapsed in March 1806.¹²³ To further complicate the matters, a major fire ravaged Parczew on 29 September of that year, destroying the wooden monastic constructions (four residential houses, the old chapel, and utility buildings).¹²⁴ Long-time benefactors of the community, Onufry and Antoni Węgliński, suggested that the Josaphat Sisters and their chaplain should relocate to Dobromyśl, but they refused.¹²⁵ By the spring and summer of 1807, Fr. Shchurovsky had managed to restore the utility buildings so that they could store harvested crops, and, by autumn, he had erected new structures for the school and for the chaplain.¹²⁶ In the following spring, Fr. Tymothei initiated his plan to rebuild the brick chapel and orphanage. Confronted with financial constraints, he resolved on 6 May 1808, to request support from Prince Dominik Hieronim Radziwiłł (1786–1813),¹²⁷ whom he had honoured in 1787 with the poem "Oto nowy Gość miły" ("Here is a new nice Guest") in the publication *Głos wzbudzający serca chrześcijańskie* (*A voice which awakens Christian hearts*).¹²⁸ The magnate swiftly contributed 4,000 złoty to the community, and, in June of that year, the Josaphat Sisters secured the town's permission to reconstruct the chapel in brick.¹²⁹ By the

119 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 34.

120 НМЛ, Ркп-750, арк. 57-58 зб.

121 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 48.

122 Ibid., s. 49.

123 Ibid., s. 49.

124 Ibid., s. 55.

125 Ibid., s. 56.

126 Ibid., s. 57.

127 Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Archiwum Radziwiłłów, dz. V, sygn. 15662, s. 8–10.

128 Tymoteusz Szczurowski, *Głos wzbudzający serca chrześcijańskie do społeczney modlitwy i do słuchania Słowa Bożego dla otrzymania posłanego błogosławieństwa i odpustu zupełnego na misjach bazylianskich*, Lublin, 1787.

129 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 58.

feast of Blessed Josaphat in autumn 1810, the new chapel hosted a solemn service, and, on 2 December of that year, the community celebrated their introduction into the rebuilt convent.¹³⁰

At the time when the community moved to Parczew, it consisted of three individuals. In December 1798, superioress Pelahiya Brylivna, along with Benedykta Klodnitska and Mahdalyna Venglovska, who had arrived from Biała, signed an agreement with Lew Szczurowski on behalf of the Josaphat Sisters.¹³¹ However, Makryna Bukhovetska had left the congregation. Bishop Vazhynsky wrote a letter to her dated 26 July 1797. In response to the noblewoman's questions, the bishop asserted the need to adhere to the vows she had made to God, whether marital or monastic, reminding her: "If the Noble Lady benefactress has dedicated and promised lifelong chastity to God in widowhood, she must adhere to it". Yet, in a note to this letter, Fr. Shchurovsky referred to her as a "former Josaphat Sister".¹³² At that time, the noblewoman was living in her manor house in Przegaliny. It was here that Bishop Vazhynsky, returning from a visitation of Blessed Josaphat's relics in Biała on 28 May 1797, stayed overnight and then temporarily took her son to Chełm.¹³³ A month later, Makryna Bukhovetska, along with her two sons and daughter, visited the bishop in his episcopal see.¹³⁴

As the congregation's position in the town stabilized, new individuals began to join. In 1803, Dean Fr. Wilczyński noted that Parczew's Josaphat Sisters had gained three more members.¹³⁵ Fr. Shchurovsky mentions these initiations in his *Memoirs*. On 16 May 1800, widow Franciszka Łobodzińska/Lobodzinska joined the community, adopting the name Tsetsyliya¹³⁶ (she appears under the surname Chomicka/Khomitska in the testament of the superioress from 1802).¹³⁷ On 5 May 1802, Porfyriya Wolska/Volska became a tertiary member,¹³⁸ and, on 8 September

130 Ibid., s. 59.

131 HМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 47–48.

132 Ibid., арк. 30–313в.

133 Ibid., РкЛ-121, арк. 20, 24.

134 Ibid., арк. 25, 31.

135 Ibid., РкЛ-750, арк. 70.

136 APOL, [Pamiętnik o Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 33.

137 HМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 56–563в. The document mentions that she had been a member of the Josaphat Sisters for two years. Additionally, Fr. Shchurovsky made edits to his *Memoirs*, crossing out the name Chomicka (Khomitska) and writing Łobodzińska (Lobodzinska) over the top. These details suggest that Tsetsyliya Lobodzinska and Tsetsyliya Khomitska may be the same person.

138 APOL, [Pamiętnik o Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 36. On 3 April 1804, she, along with other members of the Josaphat Sisters, signed an appeal to the Magistrate in Parczew (HМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 57).

of the same year, a noblewoman from Stępków, Franciszka Przesmycka (Frantsyska Pshesmyska), took the name Melaniya.¹³⁹ On 29 May 1803, Elżbieta Dziurdziewicz (Evmeliya Dzyurdzyewich), a 19-year-old daughter of local burghers, took the habit but had to leave the sisters under pressure from her parents.¹⁴⁰ Finally, on 2 February 1804, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Latin calendar, two widows joined the community: 60-year-old Rozalia Pawłowska née Andrzejewska (Teotyniya Pavlovska née Andzheyevska),¹⁴¹ a benefactress of the Parczew Josaphat Sisters; and Elżbieta Bryłowa (Evmeliya Brylova), mother of the first superioress.¹⁴² Fr. Shchurovsky does not mention the initiation of any other Josaphat Sisters in his *Memoirs*.

After moving to Parczew, Pelahiya Brylivna continued to lead the community and also served as the school's head. On 9 April 1802, at the age of 40, she passed away and was buried in the cemetery of the local Roman Catholic parish of the Holy Spirit, requesting, before her death, that her mortal remains be moved to the monastic chapel once it was built.¹⁴³ Following the death of the first superioress, as per her wish, Benedykta Klodnitska took over the leadership of the Josaphat Sisters; while Mahdalyna Venglovska¹⁴⁴ became the head of the school; she passed away on 17 January 1806 at the age of 41.¹⁴⁵

The Josaphat Sisters became an integral part of the urban environment of Parczew, primarily engaging in educational activities. As mentioned in a letter from the sisters to the Parczew Magistrate in 1804, they had been teaching children of both genders, including those from burghers, for nearly eight years, although the number of students had already begun to decrease by that time.¹⁴⁶ While we lack statistical data regarding the number of students, Fr. Shchurovsky notes in his *Memoirs* that, by the end of the 18th century, fifteen girls were receiving education from the sisters;¹⁴⁷ they were learning reading, writing, and handicrafts. Bishop Porfyriy Vazhynsky recorded the following in his *Diary*: “on the 24th [of May], after the Liturgy and coffee, I visited Fr. Shchurovsky and Miss Brylivna, where

139 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 36.

140 Ibid., s. 37.

141 Ibid., s. 48. On April 3, 1804, Rozalia Pawłowska, along with other members of the Josaphat Sisters, signed an appeal to the Magistrate in Parczew (HМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 57).

142 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 48.

143 Ibid., s. 35; HМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 55–56зв.

144 HМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 55 зв., 57.

145 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 49.

146 HМЛ, РкЛ-750, арк. 57.

147 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 31.

her girls greeted me with speeches and singing, and I inspected the work started on embroidering an omophorion for St. Josaphat on red satin”.¹⁴⁸ However, the educational activities of the Josaphat Sisters created competition for the schools operating in the Uniate and Roman Catholic parishes of Parczew, causing some friction among the local clergy. On 16 January 1805, based on a decree from the Government of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, a commission led by Mr. Swoboda and Roman Catholic Dean Fr. Szymon Górski visited the monastic school. One of the questions it aimed to answer was whether the Josaphat Sisters’ educational activities interfered with the schooling of local parishes.¹⁴⁹

In 1809, the Josaphat Sisters’ community found itself within the borders of a new state, notably, the Duchy of Warsaw, which marked the third jurisdictional change within a short period of time, after the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Habsburg Monarchy. Fr. Shchurovsky describes this in his *Memoirs*: “On May 8, a division of the Polish Army appeared in Parczew and expelled the Austrians from our entire Western Galicia”.¹⁵⁰ The following year, Ferdynand Tsekhanovsky, the former hegumen of the Basilian monastery in Chełm and once a pupil of Fr. Shchurovsky in Bycien, became the Uniate Bishop of Chełm. His election was facilitated by the protection of the Węgliński family, who were in good relations with the Josaphat Sisters’ chaplain, promising that the new bishop would support the Parczew community. The previous bishop, Porfyriy Vazhynsky, who passed away on 9 March 1804, and who had actively supported the Josaphat Sisters’ activities, was the dedicatee of the book *Pieśni pobożne naukę wiary i obyczajów chrześcijańskich w sobie zamykające dla użytku i zachęcenia Bractwa Nauki Chrześcijańskiej w całej diecezji Chełmskiej po wszystkich cerkwiach parafialnych ustanowionego... ułożone w polskim i ruskim języku* (*Pious songs, which contain the teaching of Christian faith and customs, for the use and encouragement of the Brotherhood of Christian Doctrine, established in all parish churches in the entire Chełm eparchy... [songs] composed in the Polish and Ruthenian languages*) published in 1801 in Lublin, which also contained the Josaphat Sisters’ rules.¹⁵¹ Following Bishop Vazhynsky’s death, the administrator of Chełm Eparchy was Antony Anhelovych, the Bishop

148 НМЛ, РкЛ-122, арк. 143в.

149 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 48.

150 Ibid., s. 58.

151 Tymoteusz Szczurowski, *Pieśni pobożne naukę wiary i obyczajów chrześcijańskich w sobie zamykające dla użytku i zachęcenia Bractwa Nauki Chrześcijańskiej w całej diecezji Chełmskiej po wszystkich cerkwiach parafialnych ustanowionego... ułożone w polskim i ruskim języku*, Lublin, 1801; APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 35.

of Przemyśl. Fr. Shchurovsky noted in his *Memoirs* that their relationship did not develop well,¹⁵² and therefore Tsekhanovsky's election gave cause for optimism. Indeed, at the beginning of 1810, Bishop-nominee Tsekhanovsky visited the community in Parczew promising his support.¹⁵³

However, the congregation's further development was halted by the death of its founder and chaplain, Fr. Tymothei Shchurovsky. He passed away on 15 April 1812, and was buried in the chapel he had built.¹⁵⁴ Unfortunately, at this stage of research, the further fate of the Josaphat Sisters remains unknown. By 1825, the monastery in Parczew was no longer operational. According to the Chełm Uniate consistory, for several years, the chapel had been under the care of the Roman Catholic parish priest of Parczew. Its condition was poor, leading the secular authorities to consider demolishing it and relocating Fr. Shchurovsky's remains to the town's cemetery.¹⁵⁵ However, this matter dragged on for several more years. Only on 1 April 1828, did the Uniate parish priest of Parczew, Fr. Josyf Kurmanovych, inform the consistory that, by the decision of the Commissioner of Radzyń District of Podlachia Palatinate, the city authorities were to dismantle the chapel within a month, exhume Fr. Shchurovsky's body and relocate it to the cemetery.¹⁵⁶ According to A. Bartoszewicz, shortly after the founder's death, some of the older Josaphat Sisters also passed away, while some sisters returned to the Latin Rite and left the community. In the metric book of the Roman Catholic parish of St. John the Baptist, it is noted that, on 27 August 1822, the 65-year-old 'Venerable' Frantsyska Pshesmytska, 'virgin of the Order of St. Josaphat', died.¹⁵⁷ The congregation's superioress, Benedykta Klodnitska, moved permanently to the Sisters of Charity in Biała, where she lived till at least 1848.¹⁵⁸

4. Conclusions

In summary, it is important to note that the sources introduced into the academic discourse – and especially the *Memoirs* by Fr. Tymothei Shchurovsky – for the first

152 APOL, [Pamiętnik o. Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego], s. 48.

153 Ibid., s. 59.

154 Archiwum parafii św. Jana Chrzciciela w Parczewie (hereinafter referred to as APP), [Księga zmarłych od 1810 do 1828 r.], k. 9v.

155 APL, ChKGK, sygn. 420, k. 57.

156 Ibid., k. 41.

157 APP, [Księga zmarłych od 1810 do 1828 r.], k. 64v.

158 A. Bartoszewicz, 1853, s. 452.

time allow for a detailed reconstruction of the activities of the Josaphat Sisters, a female tertiary community active at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, initially in Biała, and later in Parczew. The long-serving hegumen of the Basilian monastery in Biała, where the relics of the revered Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych were kept, and well-known missionary and canonist Fr. Shchurovsky, played a pivotal role in the foundation and institutional establishment of the congregation. The formation of the new community was also significantly influenced by the events of the first half of the 1790s: first, by the Russian-Polish war (1792), and later, by the Uprising led by Tadeusz Kościuszko (1794). By 1795, thanks to Fr. Shchurovsky's efforts, the Josaphat Sisters were already operating in Biała in the form of a tertiary congregation, as envisioned by their founder.

However, the disarray caused by some property and legal issues related to the existence of the new community did not facilitate its development. After being evicted from their residency in Biała by the Basilians, and Fr. Shchurovsky being stripped of his position as hegumen, the sisters moved to Parczew in 1797. With the support of the Uniate Chełm Bishop Porfiry Vazhynsky and through obtaining the permission of the Austrian authorities, who took over these territories after the dissolution of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Josaphat Sisters were able to develop certain educational activities in the town. However, given the congregation's close association with its founder and the lack of explicit approval from church authorities, the community ceased to exist shortly after the death of Fr. Shchurovsky in 1812.

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