Merciful Samaritans from Markowa – the Ulma Family

**On March 24, 1944, Józef and Wiktoria Ulma, together with their seven children, were murdered by the German gendarmerie for hiding eight Jews. The Goldman, Didner and Grünfeld families, hidden by the Ulma family, also died. The Ulma family will be beatified on September 10,, 2023 in Markowa.**

Józef Ulma was born in 1900, in Markowa. He completed four grades of elementary school, but later he continued his education at various courses in the field of agriculture and fruit-growing. He was passionate about photography, bookbinding, horticulture and beekeeping. A special place in his home library was occupied by the Bible, which he often read and marked the passages. After his murder, in his Holy Bible, a marked passage of the parable of the Good Samaritan was found with the note: “Yes.”

Wiktoria was born in 1912. She lost her mother when she was 6 years old. For some time she was brought up by her grandmother. There was a rule in her family that no one could be let out of the house who came to ask for help. This sensitivity, brought from home, would accompany her until her death.

Józef and Wiktoria got married in 1935. The following year, their first child – Stasia was born, who was preparing for her first Holy Communion at the time of her death. Then Basia, Władzio, Franuś, Antoś and Marysia were born. The Ulma house was a place for family gatherings. Not only family members came there, but also anyone in need. The photos taken by Józef show that it was a house full of love, kindness and warmth.

Markowa came under German occupation and the persecution of Jews began. The executions of Jews carried out by the Germans could be clearly seen from the Ulma family house. Despite this, Józef did not hesitate to help them. When they knocked on the door of his house, he welcomed eight people. He put hid them in the attic. He was aware of the huge danger, yet his reply to all those who advised against such a decision was: “Jews are people too.”

On the morning of March 24, 1944, the Ulma house was surrounded by a German gendarmerie unit. First, they killed the hidden Jews, then Józef and Wiktoria, and finally, after a moment’s thought, also the children.

Roman Kluz, Wiktoria’s nephew, adds that his father, together with Józef Niemczak and Antoni Szpytma, made cases in the shape of coffins and at that time they found the seventh child born in the grave, which Wiktoria gave birth to after death.”

In 1995, Józef and Wiktoria Ulma were honoured with the Righteous Among the Nations medal, and in 2010, President Lech Kaczyński posthumously awarded them the Commander’s Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta.

The beatification process of the Ulma family began in 1994, as part of the group of martyrs of World War II. In 2017, at the request of Archbishop Adam Szal, they were excluded from the group of martyrs and a separate process was held. On September 17, 2022, Pope Francis confirmed the decree on the martyrdom of the Venerable Servants of God, enabling the beatification.

As Archbishop Adam Szal, Metropolitan of Przemyśl, said, “the beatification of the Ulma family is an unprecedented event; with one act of beatification, the whole family will be raised to the glory of the altars – parents Józef and Wiktoria Ulma with their seven children. An additional unprecedented fact is that in this act the unborn child will also be beatified who was in their mother’s womb at the time of death. The beatification event will take place on September 10, 2023, at 10 am in Markowa – the place where the martyred Józef and Wiktoria Ulma lived and where they were murdered. They were martyred because they dared to take eight people of Jewish nationality under their roof in difficult war times, having previously helped other Jews who were persecuted only because they were of such and no other nationality” – noted the Metropolitan of Przemyśl.

Fr. Witold Burda, the postulator of the beatification process, pointed out that love for one’s neighbour was the most important element of the Ulma family’s life. “The Ulma family accepted the Gospel in a very mature way, especially the aspect of the call to Christian love of one’s neighbour. In the Bible found after the execution, the title of the Parable of the Good Samaritan was underlined, showing how much their everyday life was based on the Gospel, on union with God and full obedience to what God invites, teaching about the dignity of every human being who carries His image and likeness” – said Fr. Burda.

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