

DECREE ON HEROIC VIRTUES

SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF THE SAINTS

Decree
in the Diocese of Poznań

The canonization cause of the Servant of God,
Stanislaus of Jesus Mary Papczyński
Founder of the Congregation of Marians
under the title of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
(1631-1701)

In answer to the question:

(Super dubio)

Is it a certain thing that the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity; the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, as well as other virtues associated with these, are present in a heroic degree in the one to whom this cause regards?

“I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul; for He has clothed me with a robe of salvation, and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, ... Like a bride bedecked with her jewels” (Is 61:10).

The above words, as if spoken by the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, for the glory of God who, by preserving her from “any stain of original fault,” has done “great things to her,” are used by the Church in the Holy Mass for the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Servant of God Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński always placed his great hope of attaining heavenly goods in this special privilege of the Blessed Mother. He often cried: *Immaculata Virginis Mariae Conceptio, sit nobis salus et protectio* [May the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary be our health and protection].

This was the reason why he founded “The Society of the Immaculate Conception,” which was supposed to promote “the cult of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Elect Virgin Mother of God.” For it is true that, as Pope John Paul II stated on the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1986, “All those

who have placed their hope in Christ, gather around the Immaculate Mother of Our Savior” and that “she — the rescuer of the people — continues to come to our aid” (*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, IX, 2, p. 1907). As he recalled her struggle with Satan, whom she fully defeated by her Immaculate Conception, the Holy Father addressed the following words to the Immaculate Virgin: “The hope of victory was given to us through your Immaculate Conception. We fly unto your protection ...” (*L'Osservatore Romano*, December 9-10, 1991, p. 5).

Mary Immaculate, “in the glory which she possesses in body and soul in heaven is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come” (LG, 68). And, “in the Most Blessed Virgin, the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle.” Faithful Christians are called to strive for perfection and holiness and, as they do so, they “turn their eyes to Mary who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues” (Ibid., 65). It is, therefore, no wonder that “Mary, the noble Daughter of Zion, helps all of her children, regardless of where and in what conditions they might live, *so that, in Christ, they might find the way leading to the house of the Father*” (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, no. 47). This truth is clearly manifested in the life of the Servant of God Stanislaus of Jesus Mary Papczyński.

The Servant of God Stanislaus was born in Poland in the village of Podegrodzie, formerly belonging to the Diocese of Cracow, on May 18, 1631, as the youngest of eight children. His parents were Thomas Papka or Papiec and Sophia nee Tacikowska. At baptism, which took place on the day of his birth, he was given the name John. He received his initial Christian upbringing from his parents who were both well formed in the Catholic faith. From his earthly mother, Sophia, he learned ardent veneration of the Most Holy Virgin Mary and, thanks to her intercession, managed to overcome his initial difficulties with studies at elementary school. After he had completed elementary school, he continued his studies mostly at Jesuit colleges. However, in the academic year 1649-1650, he was taught by the Fathers of the Order of Pious Schools, where, by God’s decree and with His help, the seed of his religious and priestly vocation was sown. According to the custom of those times, he changed his last name to Papczyński and remained in the secular world for four more years, continuing his studies and waiting until the Order of Pious Schools regained the right to accept religious vows from its members. This was not possible for a while because, in 1646, that order was turned into an association without the right to make religious vows. After completing a two-year course of philosophy, he entered the Piarist novitiate in Podoliniec on July 2, 1654, and received the religious name of Stanislaus of Jesus Mary.

During the first year of his novitiate, he made such progress in the religious life that, at the beginning of his second year of the novitiate, he was sent to study

theology in Warsaw. In 1656, he took three simple vows there, that of chastity, poverty, and obedience, and, after receiving four minor orders, he also received the sub-diaconate.

In 1661, the Servant of God Stanislaus was ordained to the diaconate and to the priesthood. Even before this, he began to teach rhetoric at the colleges of his religious institute. Using the textbook which he wrote himself, he tried to teach his students the art of “speaking well and living a good life.” During his stay in Warsaw, which began in 1663, he quickly became famous as a preacher and confessor. One of his penitents was the Apostolic Nuncio, Anthony Pignatelli, later Pope Innocent XII. The Servant of God Stanislaus was an untiring promoter of devotion to the Most Holy Virgin Mary and contributed to the growth of the confraternity dedicated to her name at the Piarist church in Warsaw.

In spite of his many responsibilities associated with teaching and pastoral ministry, Fr. Stanislaus was very dedicated to the religious life of his institute. Filled with the spirit of their Founder, he fiercely defended the original religious observance at the Order of Pious Schools. He also supported the introduction of the right of the members to choose the Superiors of the Province and defended this right. He and those confreres who shared his convictions met with sharp and stubborn opposition from some of their Superiors and all those who preferred a more relaxed style of religious observance. Motivated by true charity and the desire to restore peace in the Province, which had been divided because of the aforementioned controversy, he asked, in 1669, to be allowed to leave the Order of the Piarist Fathers, which took place on December 11, 1670, on the basis of a papal *breve*.

At the same time, inspired by a “Divine vision” which made an imprint on his soul, he made it known that he intended to found a Society of Marian Clerics of the Immaculate Conception. He called this new religious family to life in 1673, in the Diocese of Poznań, especially for the purpose spreading the cult of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To this original goal of the Congregation, he added another one in 1676, that of coming to the aid of the souls suffering in Purgatory, especially the souls of soldiers who had fallen in battle and those who had died because of pestilence. These goals were clearly presented in *Norma Vitae*, which he wrote for his institute (erected canonically in 1679).

From the very beginning, the Servant of God and his Marian confreres were very eager to assist pastors in their parish ministry. Therefore, they sought to obtain permission to perform apostolic work, even though, due to circumstances at that time, their institute was founded on the law appropriate for eremitic orders. After the bishop relaxed the rigors of religious life at the second monastery, the Servant of God was able to dedicate himself to pastoral ministry, especially among the sim-

ple folk who lived in poverty and were deprived of any pastoral care. He also performed other works of mercy with regard to body and soul. God used him to free the people who came to him from various diseases and afflictions, and, as tradition maintains, often helped in a miraculous way those who were gravely ill. For those reasons, he was considered to be a saint even when he was still alive.

He distinguished himself by humility, poverty, a spirit of mortification, and other virtues. It was also his concern to lead his confreres by word and example to the heights of perfection. In his book *The Mystical Temple of God*, he presented a way of pursuing holiness for lay people.

Amidst various difficulties, he fulfilled the duties of Superior General and was the spiritual father of the Marian Institute, first at the Korabiew Forest (today Marian Forest, Puszcza Marianska), and then, from 1677 until his death, at a small monastery adjacent to the little Church of the Cenacle in Nowa Jerozolima (today Gora Kalwaria). In order to secure the legal status of his Congregation of the Immaculate Conception, he obtained papal approbation for it in 1699. He was the first Marian to make his profession of solemn vows on the Rule of the Ten Virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Soon after, due to physical exhaustion, caused by his zealous apostolic work and constant mortification, he died in the opinion of sanctity on September 17, 1701.

The beatification cause of the Servant of God Stanislaus was undertaken during the [information] process conducted in the years 1767-1769 at the Warsaw Curia. After the evidence collected during the process had been examined, a decree *super scriptis* of the Servant of God was issued in Rome in 1775. However, due to the lack of certain documents and sufficient information necessary to clarify some circumstances of his life, the *cause* was put on hold in the same year.

In subsequent years (even though the fame of Fr. Stanislaus's sanctity continued), due to constant wars and persecutions suffered by the Church and by the Polish and Lithuanian nations, there were no favorable conditions to resume efforts in the matter. In 1918, Poland and Lithuania regained their independence, but the documents were dispersed in various archives, and there was not enough time to make appropriate preparations. Thus, the Marians were not able to resume the beatification process before World War II, either. It was only in 1953, after many pleas from the Marians and the faithful, and after work on the publication of *Positio super Introductione Causae et super virtutibus* of the Servant of God Stanislaus had begun, that the resumption of the *cause* became possible.

In 1977, *Positio* was published and evaluated by historical consultants, and on March 6, 1981, the *cause* was introduced before the Apostolic See. In the years

1981-1982, a process *de non cultu* was conducted in Warsaw. The decree *super validitate Processus* (regarding the validity of the diocesan process) was promulgated in 1990. Further evaluations of *Positio super Virtutibus* were also conducted. Then, on January 22, 1991, during an Ordinary Session of the Congregation, chaired by Anthony Petti, General Promoter of the Faith, the theological consultants stated that the Servant of God practiced virtues to a heroic degree.

On March 17, 1992, after having listened to the report delivered by Paulino Limongi, Titular Archbishop of Nice in Hemimont, the Cardinals and Bishops gathered at an Ordinary Session stated that the Servant of God Stanislaus of Jesus Mary Papczyński practiced the theological virtues, the cardinal virtues, and other virtues associated with these, to a heroic degree. After the results of the research conducted by the Cardinal Prefect signed below had been presented to Pope John Paul II, the Holy Father gladly accepted the decision of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of the Saints and ordered that the decree on the Servant of God's heroic virtues be prepared.

On June 13, 1992, the Holy Father invited the Cardinal Prefect, the relators of the cause, the Secretary of the Congregation, and other people who are usually summoned in such circumstances and, in the presence of all gathered with regard to the cause and its result, solemnly announced that:

It is considered to be a certain thing that the Servant of God Stanislaus of Jesus Mary Papczyński practiced the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, and other virtues associated with these, to a heroic degree.

The Pope ordered that this decree be made public and kept in the acts of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of the Saints.

Given in Rome, on June 13, in the year of Our Lord 1992

† Angelus Cardinal Felici, *Prefect*
L.-S.

† Edward Nowak, Titular Archbishop of Lunen, *Secretary*