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THE ACTIVITY OF MONIKA POLIANSKA – MOTHER SUPERIOR OF THE BASILIAN SISTERS IN 1917–1945

The paper is based on the available archival sources and deals with the activity of Monika Polianska – the Mother Superior of the Basilian sisters' convents, during 1917–1945. The cooperation of Monika Polianska with Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi, conducted in several directions (personal spiritual guidance for Mother Superior Monika as well as administrative and pastoral care of the then Basilian convents) has been reconstructed on the grounds of epistolary heritage. The multifaceted educational and charitable activities of Monika Polianska, which took place under difficult historical circumstances, have been described. Because of her faithfulness in God and the Church, Mother Monika Polianska was arrested in 1945 and died as martyr for the faith.

Keywords: the Basilian Sisters, Mother Superior, Metropolitan, convents, activity.

The relevance of the research Mother Monika Polianska, as well as Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi, Patriarch Josyf Slipyi, Blessed Mykolay Charnetsky and others, belongs to those figures whose importance grows in the course of time. Their world outlook, faith, courage, and self-sacrifice are a peculiar signpost for our contemporaries and future generations. During 1917-1945, Monika Polianska was a Mother Superior in Slovita, Zhuravno and Pidmykhaylivtsi convents. As a Prioress, she encouraged her sisters to wholly devote themselves to God and to serve the neighbours faithfully. During the German occupation of Western Ukraine, Mother Monika sheltered orphans, hid persecuted Jews in convents and bandaged wounded soldiers from the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. With the establishing of Soviet Power, in 1945, Monika Polianska was arrested for her faithfulness to God and the Church. At first she served her prison sentence in Stanislaviv (now Ivano-Frankivsk), suffering 25 interrogations in the first half year, and later – in Mordovia (Siberia), where on December 26, 1951 her heart stopped beating. Mother Monica sacrificed her life for the faith as a martyr, being an example of love for God and neighbours.

The objective of the paper is to reveal the activities of Mother Superior Monika Polianska in the Basilian convents during 1917–1945 and to reconstruct her cooperation with Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi through the following vectors: personal spiritual guidance for Mother Monica; the administrative and pastoral care of the Basilian convents of that time; educational and charitable activities in common with the Basilian Order.

Sources of the study: the activities of Mother Monika Polianska were largely reconstructed on the basis of archival sources stored in both convent and state institutions: the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine (hereinafter CSHAU) in Lviv, the Main Archive of the Sisters of the Holy Rite in Rome (Italy), Provincial Archive of Basilian Sisters in Fox-Chase (USA), Provincial Archive of Sisters of the Order of St. Basil the Great in Lviv, Archive of the Institute of Church History in Lviv (hereinafter AICH), Archive of the Postulation Centre for the Beatification and Canonization of Saints of the UGCC and Stanislaviv region Central Archive of the Committee of Ministry of State Security (CAMSS). Among them, the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Lviv is especially rich in such valuable documentary evidence (No. 201, 358, 684). The most voluminous and informative among the documents under research is Monika Polianska's correspondence with Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi and other Basilian sisters. According to the genre classification, these are, for the most part, formal letters, messages, requests, responses, congratulations to the Metropolitan on his birthday, Christmas and Easter Holidays. In addition, Mother Monica's informal letters can be found as well, where, she calls Metropolitan Andrey her confessor, opens her heart, tells about her state of mind, her struggle, temptations, declines, and also about the minutes of experience God's Love and Mercy. Mother Monica Polianska's correspondence represents little-known pages of her life, her faith formation, deep inner world, and life collisions which resonate with the socio-historical events of the era.

Novelty of the research: for the first time an attempt to analyse the activity of Mother Superior Monika Polianska has been made. So far, information about her has only been published as individual quotations or in non-fiction publications.

Presentation of the main research material: Monika Polianska was a gifted person with various talents and organizational abilities, but considered herself to be not good enough, imperfect, unworthy of God and people. Monika's letters to Andrey Sheptytskyi reveals her fiery temper, strong will, wisdom and determination in decision-making, courage and patience in trials, and at the same time great humility before the Metropolitan regarding his decisions and acceptance of everything as God's will. Unlike other sisters, in her letters of requests or messages, Mother Monika not only told about the problems, but also participated in their solutions. She expressed her suggestions, but at the same time accepted every direction of the Metropolitan:

"This will of God is a lonely ray of happiness in my present life and nothing do I wish so honestly as that it be done. The desire for everlasting patience was fulfilled; the good Jesus fulfilled it fully. I have no other choice but to embrace the Holy Cross, that biggest gift of love, and follow Christ¹.

These letters show great sacrifice, respect and sincerity towards Andrey Sheptytskyi and at the same time testify her obedience, humble acceptance the will of God, as well as openness to the Metropolitan's advice, and directions. Mother Monika's each letter reflects a certain period of her life, revealing her struggle on the monastic path, her spiritual growth on the road to perfection. Thus, a letter dated April 5, 1917, tells about the first years of Monika Polianska in the convent, about her spiritual work on herself, and a great desire to live in unity with Christ. *"I am lively and cheerful by temperament; my whole young heart had strong ties with the world, and loved everything except God. Now, Christ has begun to tear apart all those relationships I was involved in².*" Later on, being Mother Superior of Slovita, Zhuravno and Pidmykhaylivtsi convents, she wrote more about monastic affairs (buying a house, current work etc), and continued to describe her spiritual experience.

Mother Monika always diminished herself, thought that she was unworthy to be Mother Superior; she never blamed other sisters for anything, claiming that only she was guilty: *"I always say if I am good, then all the sisters will be good³.*" It should be noted that Mother Monika's correspondence show a great appreciation to God for His mercy, as well as to Metropolitan Sheptytskyi for his paternal care, spiritual guidance, and assistance in difficult moments in her personal life and monastic affairs. Stored correspondence made it possible to reconstruct a multifaceted cooperation and deep spiritual personal relations of Mother Superior Monika Polianska and Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi, her confessor.

Being a novice sister and feeling a deeper unity with Christ, Monica strove for a strict monastic life and wanted to become not a 'home' sister, but a sister of the so-called 'first choir' (a division existed in the Basilian convents at that time). As many did not support such a decision, she turned to Andrey Sheptytskyi for advice and received his approval. Her final monastic vows, Monika made as a 'home' sister in 1914 along with other four sisters⁴. She described that event: *"What a wonderful day it was in my life! Christ seemed to let my soul feel His presence to do it and thus filled me with happiness⁵.*

In 1917, Metropolitan Andrey appointed Monica Prioress of Slovita convent, where she became a good spiritual mother for the sisters. As a prioress, she encouraged her sisters to live in a community of mutual support and love, and wholly devote themselves to God and serve the neighbours faithfully. *"Harmony and sisterhood love reigned in the convent⁶,* remembers nun Maria Dyka. At the same time, Mother Monika did not abandon her spiritual self-improvement, sincerely acknowledging her own infirmity and sinfulness. The number of letters to her confessor is the testimony of her humble submission to God's will⁷.

It is worth mentioning that Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi took care of both: the spiritual and material development of Ukrainian monasticism. He assumed guardianship and wardship over the Basilian convents; at the end of the first decade of the XX century (1911) in Galicia there were six of them: in Yavoriv, Slovita, Lviv, Stanislaviv, Peremyshl and Kudryntsi (present-day Ternopil region). 74 nuns

¹ Центральний державний історичний Архів України в м. Львові, ф. 358, он. 1, снр. 307, арк. 186-187.

² Центральний державний історичний архів України в м. Львові, ф. 358, он. 1, снр. 307, арк. 9-10.

³ Центральний державний історичний архів України в м. Львові, ф. 358, он. 1, Снр. 307, арк. 92-95.

⁴ Центральний державний історичний архів України в м. Львові, ф. 684, он.1, Снр.2965, арк. 23.

⁵ Центральний державний історичний архів України в м. Львові, ф. 358, он. 1, Снр. 307, арк. 4.

⁶ АПЦ. Інтерв'ю Марії Ірини Дикої від 4.08.1993р. Спр. № 154, 2.

⁷ Центральний державний історичний архів України в м. Львові, ф. 358, он. 2, снр. 307.

lived there at that time¹. In 1909, new monastic rules (the Constitution), composed and issued by Andrey Sheptytskyi, were adopted. Being drafted on the basis of the “Extract from the Rules of St. Basil the Great”², the document was used in the process of organization and development of the Basilian sisters’ convents until the mid-twentieth century. According to the Constitution, each convent formed a separate unit including noviciates for young sisters. Those convents were managed by the community elected Mother Superior and under the authority of a local bishop³.

Monika Polianska had performed her duties in the Slovita convent until 1924⁴. On May 26, 1927, by the decision of the Home Council of the Slovita convent, she was appointed Prioress of a subsidiary convent of the Basilian sisters in Zhuravno – the village where orphanage functioned⁵. The sisters had been living and working in Zhuravno until the spring of 1929⁶.

A year later, in 1930, Mother Monika made a contract with Father Ivan Turkevych to acquire abandoned and in-debt estate of about 95 morgens of lands with a park, a house and other buildings in the village of Pidmykhaylivtsi (Stanislaviv region)⁷. Mother Monika was engaged in establishing the Pidmykhaylivtsi convent. However, she faced financial difficulties. In this regard, Mother Monika addressed to Metropolitan Andrey: “*I do not wish anything, except the Holy Trinity will be wholly glorified in that convent and lots of saints will be born there. And if that is not the case, then I pray that the convent should not be there*”⁸. Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi and Father Joseph Schrevers helped Mother Monica to pay for the house, by lending funds which she paid off after returning from a one-and-a-half-year ‘quest’ (*donation to the monastery – author’s note*) to the United States of America.⁹ Although, Monica confessed, “*quests and America are two streams opposite to my nature,*” but at the same time she “*was eager to fill the house financially so that the sisters could later work quietly on the expansion of the Kingdom of God on earth and in their souls*”¹⁰.

On June 6, 1930, the sisters of the Slovita Convent elected Monika Polianska their Mother Superior (during her stay in the US)¹¹. Metropolitan Andrey in the letter of July 9, 1931 informed her of this appointment, outlining the amount of new work. “*Reverend Mother, you cannot have the slightest doubt that the will of God is for you to be a hegumeness in Slovita, and not elsewhere. Therefore, you have to work on the monastery to blossom again with the monastic holiness and new holy vocations. Pray hard enough while thinking on the plan of renovation, and decide nothing without long and enduring prayer and sisters’ advice. Also, if it comes to changes in liturgical or in your monastic life – decide nothing without the approval of the Metropolitan Ordinary. Think of a contemplative life. Being a Mother Superior, lead the convent for the sisters can rejoice and enjoy the peace of contemplative life, and benefit the Church in fulfilling the responsibilities that the Church has imposed on them in the education of orphans or at school.*

Be very careful of anything that might hurt or annoy the sisters, and then undoubtedly by the grace of God, in the all sisters’ and your intense prayers, the monastic life will blossom and sisters will gladly carry the cross following the Saviour on the way to the sanctity of souls”¹².

Mother Monika humbly accepted these tasks, although she preferred hermitage with all her heart. In her letters she continuously asked the Metropolitan to fulfil her dream of hermitage. “*I was the reason for disappointment and suffering for those around me so often*”, and in retreat I wished to expiate for all these shortcomings”¹³.

¹ Encyklopedia Katolicka (1995) *Bazylianki*. Lublin: KUL, II, 146.

² Конституції женьских монастирів ЧСВВ Галицкої провінції (1909). «*Витягъ зъ правилъ св. Отца нашего Василія Великого уложенный для инокинь Иосифомъ Веляминомъ Рутскимъ Митрополитомъ всеи Руси*». Жовква, 108.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Центральний Державний історичний архів України м. Львів. ф. 684, оп. 1, снр. 2964, арк. 26.

⁵ Центральний Державний історичний архів України в м. Львові, ф. 358, оп. 3, снр. 95, арк. 1-2.

⁶ Центральний Державний історичний архів України в м. Львові, ф. 684, оп. 1, снр. 2953, арк. 7.

⁷ Івано-Франківськ, Центральний архів Управління Міністерства Державної Безпеки. Ф. Р-388, Оп. 2, Снр. 31, арк. 10-11.

⁸ Центральний державний історичний архів України в м. Львові, ф. 358, оп. 1, снр. 307, арк. 54-57.

⁹ Архів Сестер Василян у Фокс Чейсі (США). *Спогади сестри Марії Должинської, ЧСВВ*.

¹⁰ Центральний державний історичний архів України в м. Львові, ф. 358, оп. 1, снр. 307, арк. 123-124.

¹¹ Центральний державний історичний архів України в м. Львові, ф. 358, оп. 3, снр. 95, арк. 1-2.

¹² Центральний державний історичний архів України в м. Львові, ф. 684, оп. 1, снр. 2798, арк. 5.

¹³ Центральний державний історичний архів України у м. Львові, ф. 358, оп. 1, снр. 307, арк. 167.

She was deeply concerned if she did not offend the sisters by her excessive strictness. Moreover, she was respected by the sisters; however, sometimes, they even were afraid of her strictness¹. Therefore, Mother Superior asked the Metropolitan to pray for her to be a good, loving mother for the sisters, confessing her guilt: *“When it comes to showing love to my sisters, I know, it’s a hard point. As for the sisters, I also know that lack of my love hurt them. They are deprived of their mother’s heart. I beg Jesus to reward them with His Heart of God and His love. Jesus sees that I am ready to endure the infernal torments for them, so that my sisters could only be happy. I know that my sisters need the mother’s heart and they are right. In the meantime, in my breast, a stone is beating: you will not pour from an empty vessel. Therefore, I entrust everything to Jesus, He knows me, I confess Jesus in everything, and there is no secrets between us. I strongly believe that in all things Christ wants good for me and no other way. I wish to serve Him, not myself! Although I do it very imperfectly”*².

But despite the strictness, Mother Monica treated the sisters with care and prudence; she loved prayer and order in the convent, which she required of herself and others³. She took hard work herself to set the example for others. Mother Monica always took the sisters’ side, not only in the community, but also before Andrey Sheptytskyi himself. When one of the sisters was to be dismissed from the convent and Mother Monica wrote to the Metropolitan: *“I am asking as her mother to pardon her. Their Excellencies do not know how poor she is, how many times she regrets her fall. I am ready to accept all the endurance that only Jesus wants for her, I just pray and ask Him to remove those temptations, to let her know what happiness is to serve Him. Father, please pray for her”*⁴.

Mother Monica’s hospitality and openness was known among the Basilian sisters. *“Mother Monica welcomed for two, three or more years everyone: from other monasteries, those who needed rest or had health problems. The doors of the convent were open for everyone”,* – says Sister Maria Turkalo, – *“even the senior priests had their vacations in our monastery (in separate buildings)”*⁵.

In the autumn of 1931 Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi convened the Chapter, that is, the General Council of the Monasteries of the Order of St. Basil the Great, which took place in the Yavoriv Monastery on December 25–27, 1931 (Monika Polianska was also present there as the Mother Superior of the Slovita convent)⁶. The task of the Chapter was to think about necessary changes in the statutes of the Basilian sisters. A series of far-sighted ordinances designed to strengthen the inner life of the convents and promote the activity of nuns among the Ukrainian people were adopted there. The most urgent question was how to equate the ‘home’ nuns with the choral ones. Later Mother Superior Monica Polianska embodied that decision in the life of Slovita and Pidmykhaylivtsi convents⁷.

Despite her active work, Mother Monika Polianska still strove for a strict monastic life. She could fulfil her dream of hermitage only in 1933. She applied for abdication as Mother Superior to the newly appointed Visitor for Basilian convents father Joseph Schrevers who blessed her to live a hermit lifestyle at the cloister⁸. She spent there almost a year. However, upon the request of father Klymentiy Sheptytskyi, Mother Monika came out of solitude on December 1st 1933. However, she did not return to Slovita convent, but stayed in Pidmykhaylivtsi where together with thirty sisters she launched amazingly fruitful activity. At that time the Pidmykhaylivtsi convent was self-dependent building comparing with the Slovita one⁹. About her leaving hermit lifestyle Monica correspond to Metropolitan Andrey: *“I was so afraid to leave the cloister, I thought that earthly paradise would change again into a frosty winter when I just crossed the threshold of the cloister. But it did not happen; everything in the convent is still filled with God. And what else should I do but love Christ who has done so much for me. Jesus has taken the outer loneliness, but has left the inner one, and there I find Him. My dearest Father, how happy I am!”*¹⁰.

¹ Львів, Архів Місії Постуляційний центр УГКЦ. Свідчення Грабовецької Ванди, Львів, 5.08.2004.

² Центральний державний історичний архів України у м. Львові, ф. 358, оп. 1, спр. 307, арк. 26.

³ Львів, Архів Місії Постуляційний центр УГКЦ. Свідчення сестри Сенюк Констанція ЧСВВ. Львів, 25.03.2005.

⁴ Центральний державний історичний архів України у м. Львові, ф. 358, оп. 1, спр. 307, арк. 92-93.

⁵ Головний архів Сестер Чину Святого Василя Великого у Римі, Спогади сестри Марії Галина Туркало, с. 2.

⁶ Львів, Провінційний Архів Сестер Чину Святого Василя Великого, Хроніка монастиря сестер Василянок в Яворові від 1882 до 1935, 84-95.

⁷ Центральний державний історичний архів України у м. Львові, ф. 358, оп. 1, спр. 307, арк. 84-85.

⁸ Центральний державний історичний архів України у м. Львові, ф. 684, оп. 1, спр. 2972, арк. 5.

⁹ Центральний державний історичний архів України у м. Львові, ф. 684, оп. 1, спр. 2798, арк. 7.

¹⁰ Центральний державний історичний архів України у м. Львові, ф. 358, оп. 1, спр. 307, арк. 139.

The activities of Mother Monica in the Pidmykhaylivtsi convent were extremely fruitful. Unlike other Basilian sisters' convents, the prioress of the Pidmykhaylivtsi convent introduced equality between the sisters of the first and second choir. There was no difference between the nuns, neither in treating them, nor in their clothing or in labour. Sister Maria Turkalo recalled later, "*It was a community of love, the community, which glorified God through common labour, common prayer, shared joy and sorrow*"¹.

In Pidmykhaylivtsi convent, the Sisters of St. Basil the Great took care of the orphans. Twelve to fifteen children aged three to twelve, as well as the children of priests from nearby villages, those who were preparing for the exams in Lviv schools stayed in the convent.² The Mother Superior was especially interested in education of children and upbringing of young generation of Ukrainians. On different occasions and holidays, Mother Monica did not forget about gifts for children: sweets, crackers, cakes and holy pictures³. Deriving her strength from relentless prayer, Mother Monica worked diligently for the good of the convent and the whole village. Merciful and sympathetic, she gave many peasants well-paid jobs in the convent, and never denied poor or disabled people food or clothing. She repeatedly asked Metropolitan Sheptytskyi for assistance in finding someone a job⁴, or to help financially or in studies⁵.

At the same time, understanding the difficult circumstances for the Metropolitan, how much hardships and patience had fallen upon him, she found words of gratitude and support for him. In one of the letters on the Andrey Sheptytskyi's 70th birthday anniversary, Mother Monica wrote sincere and deeply prophetic words: "*Only great men have great enemies and adherents. But the time comes, and all will worship You, all will bless the years of Your reign, for this is a time of grace and blessings. The fruit of Your sacrifice and of Your, my Father, sufferings and pain of Your heart, will feed humanity for many, many years*"⁶.

Though the convent of the Sisters of St. Basil the Great was "like in a desert far from the world," but it became the centre of the cultural and religious life of the village⁷. Besides the care of the orphanage, which was the main work of the Pidmykhaylivtsi nuns, the sisters, including the Mother Superior, collaborated with such communities as "Prosvita" and "The Ukrainian Women's Union", helping to organize various celebrations on the occasion of Ukrainian national holidays.⁸ "The sisters of the Pidmykhaylivtsi convent conducted catechism classes in nearby villages; and they had kindergartens there. At the same time, they taught the youth and elders of church singing, organized the Marian groups, taught the "bon tone" and cultural housekeeping. Mother Monica had wonderful plans to make a cultural centre – a place for studying art, music, painting, even icon painting in the monastery premises. Mother Monica's special wish was to educate people from around there, to teach them successfully how to run their household, agriculture, and home cultural life in women's work: sewing, cooking, decorating their homes, etc"⁹.

In order to establish an agricultural school, in 1937 Mother Monica sent two nuns to Belgium to get education there¹⁰. "*She had the idea to set up an economic school,*" explains one of the nuns, "*to help nearby villages better and more culturally run their farms, their homes, and raise their children in a better educational spirit*"¹¹.

However, spiritual life in the convent always stood at the forefront for Mother Monika, although much work was done to provide them with material support. She had many ideas for improving the life of the Basilian convents, which in particular were based on centralizing the government of the whole Order.¹²

¹ Головний архів Сестер Чину Святого Василя Великого у Римі, *Спогади сестри Марії Галина Туркало*, 6.

² Головний архів Сестер ЧСВВу Римі, *Спогади сестри Марії Галина Туркало* ЧСВВ, 6.

³ Львів, Архів Місії Постуляційний центр УГКЦ, *Свідчення Левицької Євгенії*, с. Підмихайлівці, Рогатинський р-н, Івано-Франківська обл., 15.12.2005.

⁴ Центральний державний історичний архів України у м. Львові, ф. 358, оп. 1, спр. 307, арк. 179-180.

⁵ Центральний державний історичний архів України у м. Львові, ф. 201, оп. 1т, спр. 224, арк. 55.

⁶ Центральний державний історичний архів України у м. Львові, ф. 358, оп. 1, спр. 307, арк. 68-68 зв.

⁷ Архів сестер Василянук у Факс Чейсі (США), *Листи сестри Софронії Ерделлі ЧСВВ до сестри Йосафати Теодорович, ЧСВВ, 2.03.1937.*

⁸ Стеців-Тимчук У. *Свічка в руках Христових. Життя матері Моніки (Марії) Полянської, ЧСВВ.* Львів: Сполом, 2013, 62.

⁹ Головний архів Сестер Чину Святого Василя Великого у Римі, *Спогади сестри Марії Галина Туркало*, 6.

¹⁰ Центральний архів УМГБ Станіславівської обл., спр. № 2086-а від 1946р., арк. 22–23; *Василь Всеволод Величковський, ЧНІ, єпископ-ісповідник.* Уклад Бахталовський о. С. Й. Друкарня Голосу Спасителя, Йорктон, Саск., Канада, 1975р, 66.

¹¹ Головний архів Сестер Чину Святого Василя Великого у Римі, *Спогади сестри Марії Галина Туркало*, 3.

¹² Центральний державний історичний архів України у м. Львові, ф. 201, оп. 46, спр. 2535, арк. 70.

In her view, the nomination and the novitiate should last two years; the profession of solemn monastic vows should be at the age of thirty, to which sisters should prepare themselves for a renewed annual novitiate¹. However Soviet occupation prevented Mother Monika from realizing her plans.

In 1939, when Soviet power was established in Galicia, a part of the convent premises in Pidmykhaylivtsi was transferred to the village council, and the sisters were banned from wearing monastic clothes². The Pidmykhaylivtsi cloister shared the bitter fate of dozens of monasteries in Western Ukraine. The Mother Superior and the sisters accepted the reforms of the Soviet government with humble prayer and strong hope for God's help, which was encouraged by Metropolitan A. Sheptytskyi.³

The life and activities of the Pidmykhaylivtsi Convent were restored during the German occupation in 1941–1944. Although the educational activity of the Basilian sisters in Pidmykhaylivtsi stopped during the war, the convent helped everyone as well as it could⁴. The villagers later recalled that during the Soviet-German war, the Mother Superior of the Pidmykhaylivtsi Convent was doing a lot of good to the people⁵. Once the Ukrainian Insurgent warriors disarmed a German soldier, and the Germans decided to burn the village. In order to avoid punishment for the village, Mother Monika stood up for the protection of the villagers in front of the Nazis. After a brief conversation, since the Mother Superior was fluent in German, the Germans departed without causing any harm to the village and its inhabitants.

During the Second World War, the Basilian sisters hid a Jewish girl in the convent of Pidmykhaylivtsi. Varvara Velychkovska-Petryshyn recalled it later this way: “*When Mother Monika, at the request of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi, was hiding a young Jewish girl, the Germans came to the convent for verification. At that time a peasant woman from Ternopil region was also in the convent. She was wearing a national embroidered blouse – vyshyvanka. In order to save the Jewish girl from death, the Prioress dressed her in that woman's clothes. It worked out well*”⁶.

During the difficult war years, the Mother Superior and the sisters helped people from the village, providing many of them with job at the convent, and the poor, orphans and needy – with food⁷. However, with the second coming of Soviet power, the situation changed dramatically, as the Bolsheviks aimed to destroy the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. The Pidmykhaylivtsi Convent of the Basilian sisters was not only a religious centre of the spiritual life of the Galician village, it also nurtured and supported the national consciousness of the Ukrainians, which became the main reason for its liquidation. The Soviet authorities accused the Mother Superior and the sisters of the Convent of training “staff for the Ukrainian Insurgent Army”⁸, in medical, food and material service of the UIA⁹ warriors and in the pro-fascist and anti-Soviet activity¹⁰.

Mother Monika Polianska and many other Basilian nuns were arrested on November 27th, 1945 for their loyalty to God and the Church. She first served her sentence in a prison in Stanislaviv (now Ivano-Frankivsk), having survived 25 interrogations in the first six months. According to the data from the Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine Monika Polianska was arrested on 10.12.1945¹¹ under Article

¹ Центральний державний історичний архів України у м. Львові, ф. 201, оп. 46, Спр. 2535, арк. 51.

² Львів, Архів Місії Постуляційний центр УГКЦ, Свідчення Федорківа Богдана, с.

Підмихайлівці, Рогатинський р-н, Івано-Франківська обл., 15.12.2005.

³ Пастирський лист Митрополита Андрея Шептицького. «Львівські Архиепархіяльні Відомості» (1/1939), вересень-жовтень, 1.

⁴ Головний архів Сестер Чину Святого Василя Великого у Римі, Спогади сестри Марії Галина Туркало ЧСВВ.

⁵ Львів, Архів Місії Постуляційний центр УГКЦ, Свідчення Білобрівки Анни, с. Підмихайлівці, Рогатинський р-н, Івано-Франківська обл. 15.12.2005.

⁶ Величковська-Петришин Барбара Джемма, Спомини про ігуменю Сестер Василіянок мати Моніку Полянську (з дому Марія Теодорович) і про родину Теодоровичів, 26.05.1981, арк. 4.

⁷ Львів, Архів Місії Постуляційний центр УГКЦ, Свідчення Заболоцької Віри, с. Підмихайлівці, Рогатинський р-н, Івано-Франківська обл., 15.12.2005.

⁸ Львів, Архів Місії Постуляційний центр УГКЦ, Свідчення Федоркова Богдана, с. Підмихайлівці, Рогатинський р-н, Івано-Франківська обл., 15.12.2005.

⁹ Львів, Архів Інституту Історії Церкви, Свідчення сестри Свірської Дарії, ЧСВВ, 23.04.1993, ф. 1, оп. 1, спр. 55, арк. 8.

¹⁰ Львів, Архів Місії Постуляційний центр УГКЦ, Свідчення Зобківа Мирослава, с. Підмихайлівці, Рогатинський р-н, Івано-Франківська обл., 15.12.2005.

¹¹ Центральний архів УМГБ Станіславівської обл. Справа № 2086-а від 1946 р., арк. 11; Величковська-Петришин Барбара Джемма. Спомини від 26.05.1981 р., арк. 4-5.

54-1 “A” of the Criminal Code. She was sentenced on June 21, 1947 by a special session of the Security Council of the USSR under Article 54-1 “A” of the Criminal Code for eight years of imprisonment¹. The verdict came into force on 29.11.1945. On 23.09.1947 Polianska M. M. was sent to a transit prison of the correctional and labour colony of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Lviv region², and then to Mordovia (Siberia). Being in exile, Mother Monika did not give up spiritual work to save souls, prayed, supported the weaker, and helped the prisoners. The guards called her a righteous person, and the convicts called her ‘Mother’. She also continued to correspond with her sisters-in-God, keeping their spirit up. One of these letters from the Mother Superior was mentioned by the Basilian sister Vira Devosser: “She wrote a note from the camp that she would like to return to a convent very much, where we could re-live our monastic life together. But as she looks at the great need of her people, she does not know what else to ask God for: to return to our native land and live a happy life together with us, or to remain and continue to endure, only to ask the merciful God for alleviating the suffering for our people”³. This letter shows that she was ready to give her life for God, the Church and Ukraine. On December 26, 1951 her life as a martyr for faith was cut short.⁴ On June 1, 1993 Monika (Maria) Polianska was rehabilitated⁵. The beatification process of blessing her has been ongoing since 2003.

Conclusions. So, from the perspective of time, we see that the activity of Mother Monika Polianska was multifaceted and took place in difficult historical circumstances. There are many testimonies of the Basilian sisters and believers who were personally acquainted with the Servant of God, Mother Monika Polianska. In their memoirs, they say that, in carrying out the government of the Prioress, she took care of the spiritual and material development of the convents and at the same time carried out cultural and educational activities among the population. Courage, sacrifice, wisdom, patience, and most of all humility, are the defining traits of Mother Monika Polianska. Her willingness to follow the will of God, which she always sought to know through the prayer and spiritual guidance of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi, is impressive. Her constant appeal to God, “Yes, Jesus, I follow You”⁶ testifies to a genuine devotion to the Lord every minute and is an example to follow.

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3. Tsentralnyi Derzhavnyi Istorychnyi Arkhiv Ukrainy v m. Lvovi [Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv], *F. 358, Op. 1, Spr. 307*. [in Ukrainian].
4. Tsentralnyi Derzhavnyi Istorychnyi Arkhiv Ukrainy v m. Lvovi [Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv], *F. 358, Op. 3, Spr. 395*. [in Ukrainian].
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¹ Івано-Франківськ, Центральний Архів Управління Міністерства Державної Безпеки, *Ф. Р-388, Он. 2, Спр. 31*, арк. 2.

² Повідомлення надане Начальником УОІ УМВСУ у Львівській області Сподаренком В. б/д.

³ Львів, Архів Сестер Чину Святого Василя Великого, *Сногади сестри Девоссер Віри, ЧСВВ*.

⁴ Івано-Франківськ, Центральний архів Управління Міністерства Державної Безпеки, *Ф. Р-388, Он. 2, Спр. 31*.

⁵ Івано-Франківськ, Центральний архів Управління Міністерства Державної Безпеки, *Ф. Р-388, Он. 2, Спр. 31*.

⁶ Львів, Центральний Державний Історичний Архів України, *Ф. 358, Он.1, Спр. 307*, арк. 9-10.

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