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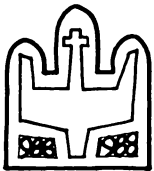
A black and white portrait of a man, likely a priest or bishop, wearing dark clerical robes over a white shirt and dark tie. A large white cross is pinned to his chest. He has a serious expression and is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

MEMORIES OF A MOTHER

UKRAINIAN MILLENNIUM

Biographical Series #1

This Millennium booklet has been sponsored by the Sheptytsky Council of the Knights of Columbus, #4938, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, in honour of the patron of their council, the Servant of God Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky.



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АТТА**

**ХРЕЩЕННА РУСИ-УКРАЇНИ
CHRISTIANITY IN UKRAINE**

АРХІЄПАРХІАЛЬНИЙ ЮБІЛЕЙНИЙ КОМІТЕТ—ARCHIEPARCHIAL JUBILEE COMMITTEE

"ЗА ХРИСТИАНСЬКУ УКРАЇНУ"

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*Memories
of a
Mother*

*A digest of The Memoirs of Countess Sheptycka, on the early life of
Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, with reflections and comments by
Brother Vincent Tomaskiewicz.*

First printed as a series of articles in *The Redeemer's Voice*, from May, 1981 through
the July-August issue, 1982.

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of the Ukrainian Catholic Church
1982

The publication of this booklet is a fulfillment of a wish expressed by our Bishops in their 1979 Millennium pastoral: "Finally, our third mission is for the present day; our prayers and efforts are needed to press forward the cause for the beatification and canonization of the Servant of God Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky. Let us pray with our families, with our children, using the occasion of religious services and meetings of religious organizations, and in all our communities, so that, as we prepare for our Jubilee, God would grant us a Great Intercessor in heaven and raise him to great honour here on earth."



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Dear Reader:

The celebration of the Millennium of Ukrainian Christianity is a time for evaluation and assessment. Instinctively, the question is asked: what have the Ukrainians accomplished during this first Millennium of their Christianity? What are its achievements? What fruits did the Christian faith bear among the Ukrainian people?

The Christian faith had an indelible impact on the history and culture of the Ukrainian people. The Gospel, its values and spirit, had a profound influence on the lifestyle of the people. It transformed the people, its way of living, and of doing things. Belief in the one true God gave the Ukrainian people a new culture.

All of the arts produced their masterpieces. In Kiev, the capital city, we have the thirteen-domed St. Sophia temple, as well as many other specimens of fine architecture. God becoming man and being born as a child in the stable of Bethlehem, has inspired the imagination of the Ukrainian people to express this overwhelming truth in hundreds of exquisite Christmas carols. Religious ikons, symbols of the faith, are priceless treasures of our Christian heritage. Without the belief in God we would not have Shevchenko's "Kobzar," since much of his poetry draws its inspiration from the Word of God.

Ukrainians have developed a truly Christian culture—a culture that is unique and distinctive. It can boast of many fine achievements. "The grace that he gave me has not been fruitless" (1 Cor. 15:10).

These cultural achievements of the Christian faith in the heart of the Ukrainian people are not without merit and are certainly deserving of admiration. Yet, by far the greatest achievements are the living masterpieces—the saints. They do not age or grow old. They are always attractive and inspiring.

Jesus said that we recognize a tree by its fruits. The fruits of Ukrainian Christianity are its saints and martyrs. Pope John Paul II makes reference to this contribution of the Christian faith in the hearts of Ukrainian people to the patrimony of the church: "I cannot forget the countless Ukrainian martyrs, in ancient and more recent times, most of whose names are unknown, who gave up their lives rather than abandon their faith" (John Paul II, message at Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Philadelphia, October 4, 1979).

Like other Christian nations of long standing, the Ukrainian people have given God many saints: St. Olga, St. Volodymyr the Great, SS. Boris and Hlib, Ss. Anthony and Theodosius, St. Josaphat the martyr and many others. Nevertheless, the Servant of God Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, having lived and died in this present century, appears as a summing up, and indeed, as a personification of the Millennium of Ukrainian Christianity.

As Moses stands out in the history of the Israelite nation, so the figure of Metropolitan Andrew rises above others in the Ukrainian Millennium. He represents the finest achievements of Ukrainian Christianity. In a sense, he personifies the Gospel values of his people.

As in the case of Moses, God had a special plan for the birth, childhood and early manhood of Metropolitan Sheptytsky. He blessed him with outstanding parents. The mother—Sophia Fredro—was particularly gifted. Sensing that God had blessed her with an unusual child, the mother wrote his life for future generations of the Sheptytsky family. The story begins with the birth of Roman Sheptytsky and ends with the celebration of his first mass in Prylbice, their native village.

With keen and deeply perceptive motherly insights she helps us see what went on in the heart of this special child, how he grew stronger through trials and suffering, how the grace of God took hold of and ennobled this beautiful soul. The book provides many precious and interesting details—the things that only a mother would perceive.

From the mother's lengthy biography Brother Vincent Tomaskiewicz has made a selection of some of the most enlightening episodes of the early years of the future Metropolitan. These were serialized in the *Redeemer's Voice*. Now they are being reprinted in booklet form as part of our Millennium publication series. It is hoped that this booklet will serve as an inspiration for the present generation of Ukrainian youth.

**Michael Hrynchyshyn, CSSR.,
Secretary General**

Memories of a Mother



A digest of The Memoirs of Countess Sheptycka, on the early life of Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, with reflections and comments by Brother Vincent Tomaskiewicz.

The Redeemer's Voice magazine published this edited version of the Memoirs in a series of thirteen issues, presenting the vocation and early life of the Servant of God, Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, as seen through the eyes of his mother. The excerpts from her Memoirs used in this series were taken from a prepared English translation of the French version of her book.

Part 1—Roman's Birth

The mother of Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, a candidate for the sainthood, wrote a beautiful biography of her son covering the years that she was with him before he pursued his priestly vocation. Sophia Fredro Szeptycka herself was a very intelligent and cultured woman, writing in a delightful literary style apparently inherited from her father, who was a renowned Polish literary figure of the last century. She could peer into the innermost recesses of her son's soul, for she loved him most dearly and he loved her, the two souls always being intimately close with each other till he became a priest (a not-so-rare relationship in the lives of saints). She was therefore superbly prepared to write a most revealing biography of her son. The articles to follow will contain many excerpts from the lovely Memoirs, with digests and comments added.

For whatever holiness Andrew Sheptytsky attained, the mother must be given some credit. In her maternal wisdom she took special care to bring up the boy religiously, to give him daily catechism lessons, to teach him to pray and to love God and to love him especially by always keeping pure and holy, and to hate sin and evil. The mother nourished the boy with her own overflowing love. Noticing that the boy was gifted with a natural religious piety, the mother prayed for him all the more. The father, also a good Catholic, though a more worldly-minded man, must be given some credit for awakening a religious vocation in his son by telling him stories of his ancestral families, which included a number of bishops. From his father the boy also inherited many traits of leadership. The Count's contribution, however, was marred by his prolonged and passionate opposition to his son's religious vocation later on, for which he repented profoundly.

It has been said that Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky may be the greatest religious leader of Ukraine since St. Vladimir the Great of a thousand years ago. He providentially came in what may be regarded as the most crucial period in the history of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Atheistic Communism was born and took root in Russia in his lifetime.

“My life has been neither easy nor worldly. God has given me to taste and also to understand the cross. He allowed me to see his kingdom grow within my own children.”

And immediately after his death, as we all know, the heinous crime of the liquidation of the church in Ukraine was perpetrated through the cruelest persecutions of the clergy and the faithful. Not knowing the greater role he was to play in history, but being led by the Holy Spirit, the Metropolitan prepared his pastors and flock for the onslaught to come. His basic guide was always the teachings and admonitions of the Lord Jesus Christ and himself setting the example of love, faith, and sacrifice. He constantly exhorted the faithful to lead holy Christian lives, to deny themselves as faithful followers of Christ, to bear crosses patiently, and never to waiver in their faith. How well he succeeded can be appreciated by the religious conduct of the faithful, priesthood, and hierarchy under Communist persecution. Because of their steadfast faith about 1700 Ukrainian

Editor's note: *The spellings of the “Sheptytsky” name are various; this one is preferred here, and is the common version used on this continent. The Polish spelling of the name is “Szeptycki.” The name is also spelled Sheptycky, Szeptykyj, or Szepticky, depending on the source and the language it is adapted to.*

Catholic priests were arrested and deported to concentration camps or shot. Not a single bishop passed over to Orthodoxy as the Communists conditionally demanded of them. How true and applicable is the saying: "A saint will beget saints!"

The process of beatification of Andrew Sheptytsky has already begun and only awaits the enthusiastic response of the faithful: to pray for his cause, to pray to him for favours, and, what would please the holy Metropolitan most of all, that we become holy Christians ourselves, believing in him as our great heroic saint of the day.

Being aristocratic, the Sheptyskys possessed much materially, and were privileged with worldly advantages and comforts. Yet, they chose to be devout Catholics and true followers of Christ, denying themselves and patiently bearing their crosses. This is reflected simply and beautifully in the Memoirs of Countess Szeptycka:

I was fascinated by the difference, so striking and so great, which prevailed between the world I had left almost regretfully behind me, and this other world now before my very eyes: the world of the poor, the helpless whom Our Lord preferred. I hugged my life, and pressed it to my bosom together with all its deficiencies and sorrows, fervently and ardently murmuring: "O God, grant me always not what I wish, but what will be precious in your eyes and what you choose to send me." And today I believe that my sincere prayer was favorably heard. My life has been neither easy nor worldly. God has given me to taste and also to understand the cross. He allowed me to see his kingdom grow within my own children. He has deigned to call one of them to the service of his altar. I intend now to tell the story of the most precious of heavenly blessings bestowed upon us, that of our son Roman's calling as a priest and bishop of the Catholic Church.

Help me, O Lord, to do just that in all simplicity, humility and sincerity, ever under the banner of the Holy Cross and solely for your own glory. Amen!

Our third son, Roman Alexander Maria Szeptycki, today Father Andrew (his given religious name) Szeptycki, first saw the light of day at Prylbice (in the Yavoriv district near the Polish border), on the twenty-sixth day of July, 1865, A.D., eight months after the untimely death of our eldest boy, Stephen.

(As a point of clarification, the father was of Ukrainian descent, while the mother was Polish. They both were reared in a strong Polish culture, worshipping in the Roman Catholic Rite, prejudiced somewhat against the Ukrainian clergy. Roman Sheptytsky, however, contrary to the wishes of his parents, embraced the Ukrainian Catholic Rite and religious

culture when he entered religious life and devoted himself totally to the Ukrainian Church and people.)

The birth of Roman was a rather unusual one. Note the inordinate emotional nature of the mother, yet blessed by her pure faith.

I have experienced many a loss in my time. However, even now I feel that no other sorrow during my life ever equaled the agony I experienced at the death of my first-born. Perhaps it was so because it was my first real grief. I loved that child passionately and my sorrow was quite unreasonable. For weeks on end the very sight or voice of my second son, George, then but a year old, seemed a torture.

I was not happy over this child we were expecting, nor did I control my disappointment regarding him. Alone I roamed the rooms or the hidden garden-paths until exhausted, moaning aloud my inordinate grief. As a mare neighing for her lost colt, I groaned and would have readily forsaken my family to join my little departed angel. I remember having walked the length of the furthest garden-path leading to the pond until I could move no longer. I recall wailing aloud especially on the eve of Roman's birth. The following day he was born—unconscious.

I was very weak. I was not allowed to fall asleep lest a fainting spell might prove fatal. When I could finally doze, I dreamingly, yet quite distinctly, felt the presence of Stephen. Without seeing him I nevertheless felt him approach my bed and lay the new-born babe beside me. I understood his gesture and intent quite well. I grasped also that, having thus given me his baby brother, "he could at last leave in peace."

Wide awake, and without fighting any longer, I asked for my new baby; I felt that I was free of that other torment. I understood that I loved the children God left me and that my departed son could rest in peace.

Perhaps all this was only natural. To my mind, however, it seemed to come through the intervention of two angels directly from heaven. I have never forgotten this experience following Roman's birth. Besides, in the story I am about to tell, I only wish to describe the events as I saw them. I'll never try to reason them out, nor shall I judge them. I intend to act only as a mother wishing to tell the story of her child.

Borne in tears and grief which offended God perhaps, (for though I had never felt tempted to rebel, I nevertheless allowed sorrow to crush me) the new child appeared in our home like a ray of sunshine and lit up all that the cross was beginning to build up in me. Nobody heard him cry; he was ever rosy, always gay, chattering in his own way. Roman called himself "Ama" (love—in Latin), thus unwittingly hinting at the principal trait of his future life.



Part II—
*Remembering
the Boy*

*Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky
as a young bishop*

As a young boy Roman Sheptytsky displayed a remarkable precocious religiousness.

When he was five years old, following one of the catechism lessons I was then giving to both my sons, I began to talk about Jesus Christ. I had not even mentioned the Passion, the Crucifixion, when I noticed in Roman such emotion, such noble efforts to control the huge tears welling up in his eyes, that I hastened to change the subject. I did not wish to take advantage of what could have been merely a nervous reaction. But no, thanks be to God!—those tears were not due to nervousness!

Later on when he began to write, I used to find here, there and everywhere little notes and samples of prayer written by him. They were the result of his own spontaneous discoveries about the mysteries of the rosary.

His environment was not exceptionally pious. As for me, I did not even know how or when he had secured a rosary. He asked questions, jotted down notes, studied until he was familiar with every mystery. He always carried the rosary on his person and recited it while riding with his brother and his tutor. He would even fall asleep with it entwined in his little hand. The rosary was his first apostolate in the family milieu. Whether he advised and instructed his brothers, or whether they followed his example of their own accord, is something I never found out. But soon, without any suggestions on my part, I saw that each and

every one of them always carried a rosary, recited it and fell asleep with it in his hand.

I'm describing things as I saw and understood them. Though Roman loved things pertaining to God, he never thought, as so many little boys, of playing at being a priest, or pretending to say the Mass. He approached sacred things and persons with awe and instinctively understood their sublime nature. When serving at Mass his attitude and posture were edifying. He would hold his hands piously together, his eyes lowered. There was no need to teach him such things, for he could not imagine behaving otherwise during such sacred moments. The sight of him so impressed me that I simply had to force myself to remember that I also was there to pray.

In 1873 when he was eight, I noticed that for quite a while he had been avoiding sweets. Fearing that it was a whim, I asked him to explain, knowing that he would tell me the whole truth. Without hesitating but blushing profusely he replied: "I do that only because I wish to atone for my sins." Today, when I recall his conduct in every circumstance, I am sure that just as he then disliked lies—not only instinctively but also from conviction—so did he already have a presentiment (without understanding it as yet, of course) of the value of making sacrifices, of struggling against evil, of sacrificing one's self for the love of others."

"He always carried the rosary on his person and recited it while riding with his brother and his tutor. He would even fall asleep with it entwined in his little hand."

At this time, when he was just nine, my child told me that he wanted to be a priest. We were out riding together. He was on his pony, his cap barely reaching up to the pommel of my saddle. I was so surprised to hear such words from him that I merely advised him not to take it seriously. It might just be a childish dream. Later on Roman was to say: "When I confided in mother she went so far as to tell me that if I ever became a priest I would never again be able to ride my pony."

The mother probably showed a slight displeasure when she learned of Roman's wish to become a priest.

At this point it may be interesting to go back to a conversation between the Count and his wife in the early years of their marriage.

It was during the winter of 1862. It was sundown and we were returning from a sleigh ride. We were talking about the first-born we were then expecting. I recall the lights of Prylbice glimmering far away, as we were crossing the plains of Czolhynske. I remember my husband

saying: "If I had many sons, I'd like one of them to become a priest of the Byzantine Rite." I let out a shriek as though a precipice had suddenly loomed before me. But my husband went on: 'I'd like it because he could become bishop and reform the Ukrainian clergy.' I did not think that, nor did I understand at that time just how sublime, difficult and full of merit a bishop's position could be. In those days I did not think of such things very often. To my mind, the episcopate was simply a title and an honour. My whole being was upset at the idea of a child of mine becoming a priest in order to be a bishop. In a voice choked with tears I managed to retort: "And I . . . I'd forbid him to become a priest unless I knew he was ready to be a monk, just to be sure that he was not influenced by the hope of some day attaining to such honour."

"As the boy was growing up, the mother and other friends observing the boy became keenly impressed at the extraordinary traits and virtues which the young lad displayed."

It seems the mother apparently was much annoyed at the suggestion of her husband. Later in her Memoirs she will explain the extreme prejudices against the Ukrainian Rite clergy. The mother, however, being of good heart and conscience, will subdue her fears of the change of rite of her son and will display no opposition to his chosen vocation. The father, on the other hand, though expressing his good wish now, later on will offer the most vehement opposition to his son's desires. This act contrary to the will of God will cause untold suffering for the boy when he matures, which in turn, will create a painful atmosphere within the entire household.

Returning to the narrative—as the boy was growing up, the mother and other friends observing the boy became keenly impressed at the extraordinary traits and virtues which the young lad displayed and in which he progressed amazingly.

Each passing day I could see his growing passion for souls. I must point out here a charming contrast in my son, which no doubt later on aroused affection for him and explains the influence he wielded on young people. Simultaneously and without mutual hindrance, there developed in him from year to year an angelic piety, a goodness, a gentleness on one hand, and a chivalry on the other, manifesting itself at first in a courage verging on timidity, a compassion and protection of the weak and lowly, the oppressed, and finally in a perfect courtesy.

As for courage, I can say that I never noticed in him from his birth any sign of fear. His tutor, a veteran Pontifical guard, under whose orders he remained from the age of five until sixteen, noticed the same thing

and would often say: "Oh! As for Roman, well, he'll have the courage of a lion. I've yet to see him frightened in a situation where any other child would be in tears."

My brother Alexander, a soldier by tradition to the very marrow of his bones, used to advise repeatedly, while Roman was growing up, that we should direct him towards a military career, for he had never seen in so young a lad so much bold resolve and cool intrepidity.

"I remember my husband saying: 'If I had many sons, I'd like one of them to become a priest of the Byzantine Rite.'"

Once it almost cost him his life. He was just a small boy when for the first time, instead of his pony, he was given a badly broken horse to ride. The animal, feeling neither weight nor a strong hand, reared and began to kick, whirling and pawing. At the second whirl Roman fell to the ground, but he would not let go of the bridle. The untrained horse dragged him for a while, but the lad succeeded in getting back on his feet and stopping the mount. "He got right back into the saddle as though astride a chair," our French coachman reported with amazement.

A much-decorated old soldier who became acquainted with Roman remarked admiringly once, "Madam, you have here a son who will go far in whatever career he happens to choose. He has such lucidity and precision in his way of thinking and judging things, as well as much strength in his calmness, that he should make the army his life's goal. He would make a good general."

Part III—
His Early
and
High School
Years



Roman Sheptytsky received his first Holy Communion, at the age of eleven years, in a rather unexpected manner. The family went to confession at one time with young Roman, but only the older ones received the Holy Eucharist the next day, since the boy was considered too young yet.

Back home from church, our consciences at peace with the Lord, we sat down to breakfast. My brother, joking as usual with the children, teased: "All the saints take coffee. Only that one," and he pointed at Roman, "is still a heretic, right?" The lad blushed, trying hard to hid his hurt feelings, then burst into tears and ran out of the room. I had not heard my brother's words. I followed my child without knowing exactly what had happened. Tearfully my little boy admitted that he was very much saddened that he was not yet allowed to receive the Holy Eucharist, and that he desired to receive the sacrament above all things. My whole uncertainty had been due to his littleness, but it vanished instantly.

I consulted my confessor, a Franciscan priest. We fixed the date of Roman's first Holy Communion for about the middle of May, when we would be back in Lviv for my mother's, and my own, birthday. Of course, I could not fathom what was going on in the very depths of my child's soul during those few weeks of preparation for receiving our Lord. I only

knew that his face would light up as soon as someone mentioned the trip to Lviv and the great day awaiting him there. But I do remember, word for word, the letter he wrote on the eve of that day to his tutor, who had remained behind in the country. I can visualize the room I was sitting in when 'Ama' (Roman) brought me his letter saying: "It's to Mr. Arnette. I'd like you to see if there are any mistakes." I can see the childish script running somewhat crookedly across the unlined sheet of paper and I can read it as though it were still before my eyes. "Dear Sir: It's tomorrow, May 17th, that I'll be making my first Holy Communion. Oh, pray, sir, pray, pray that there be many such days during my life!—that I may stand as a guide for my brothers. . . . that I may one day open for them the door of Heaven. I embrace you with all my heart, dear sir." After my return to the country when I mentioned the missive to the tutor, a cold introvert, he said: "Yes, Madam, I assure you that Roman's letter surprised me so much that I burst into tears." So my child angelically received his Lord, as he so ardently desired.

From that day on 'Ama' by his conduct became more and more the representative of divine thinking in our peaceful monotonous existence. He was always cheerful, playful, but also always the first to remind us of God. I have never met with such delicacy as his when expressing his gratitude for the slightest proof of recognition. Often, when one of the servants (every one of whom loved him) had pleased him, for instance, when he brought him something or other from town or the village, he knew how to express his thanks. And the smaller the gift, the greater his care to show just how much it pleased him, how much he needed it, how his joy knew no bounds. And thus every heart went out to him, and the affection of one and all bowed before that blessed child somewhat like the ears of wheat before the breeze. As for me, as a substitute for Stephen, he was so dear, so precious, so indispensable to my life and happiness that I began to fear that I might cherish him more than the others, whom I nevertheless loved so much. So, from then on, and during his whole childhood and his youth as well, whenever I had to divide something amongst the children, I always gave him the poorest part, just to mortify myself.

Loved so tenderly, he could easily have found indulgence with any tutor. However, he never permitted himself any laxity. One hot day, as I entered his room without warning, I found him on his knees before his desk on which lay an open book. He jumped up. An hour later I returned and once again found him kneeling. I asked him almost impatiently: "What is the matter?" "It's nothing," he replied with a smile, "only it's so hot that when I try to sit down, I fall asleep right on my book. That's why I'm studying on my knees."

In the fall of 1879, when he was 14, we took him to Cracow for his schooling. He entered the fifth grade at St. Ann's College. By then he was tall enough, but with an almost childish face. He would not have been handsome without that tender smile of his, nor without that ineffable something radiating from his eyes and features when he spoke. His outward appearance did not lead anyone to suspect that one day he would wield such an influence within his family and surroundings. His future eloquence, which was to be so compelling, was then concealed by an incorrect and imperfect manner of expression. His stern principles and convictions lay hidden beneath an apparent indifference towards the problems discussed in his presence. Never in his childhood or his youth, never even when he began to frequent society (despite the fact that God had strewn his path with universal and loyal affection) never did I detect in him anything akin to vanity. He was, everywhere and at all times, the same with everyone, for he was always "himself" and never over-rated himself. . . .

“Tearfully, my little boy admitted that he was very much saddened that he was not yet allowed to receive the Holy Eucharist, and that he desired to receive the sacrament above all things.”

In everything the child in him still veiled the youth except, however, in matters pertaining to God. In such matters he always was beyond his actual years. His soul was developing, ripening day by day, much more rapidly than his mind. His views on spiritual things were always so simple, so lucid and so lofty that it never entered my mind to ask myself: Will he understand? One day, having a very difficult letter to write, since it was a matter of persuading an unbelieving old man to be reconciled with his master, I consulted him, a child of 14. He found fault with some of my arguments and corrected them, and he must have prayed for him as well, for we did obtain from God another happy death.

The mother also recalled how she was reproved once by her spiritually inspired son:

One day as I was speaking indignantly of a man who was neglecting his most sacred duties, Roman calmly replied: “Mother, if you'd only think how much Jesus Christ loves him, you wouldn't say such a thing!”

Sometimes the son sought his mother's wise advice and help.

Roman, who was then 15 years old, came to me one day, and as soon as he was on the threshold, I noticed that he wanted to ask me something—some favour. He came forward then. His childish face was

red. He kissed my hand. "Mother," he said, "I'd like to ask you something. You told me once that I didn't have enough strength to conquer myself. Today I understand quite well how right you were. Well, I'd like to learn how to conquer myself. I'd like to learn to be obedient, but all I do is forget myself. You know me well, Mother. You know what I like and what I don't like. Anytime you notice that something would displease me, make me do it. . . ."

During that first part of his life, spent away from home, his letters are but a constant expression of love for home and especially for me. Even today I believe that after God and his order, I hold the first place in his heart.

His spiritual progress was great. He always sought to follow the straight and narrow path in which he could love God and serve him faithfully:

He would perform his duties as well as possible, not to be first, but to work according to his conscience. He loved people profoundly, helped them as much as he could, condemned evil perhaps too severely, not because he wished to promote his own judgment and gain admiration for his deeds, but only because he loved goodness and detested evil with his whole soul. Seeing the gigantic progress made by his soul on the path of righteousness, I was convinced quickly that God was favouring him with his grace and that the lad should one day give himself to him entirely, and take him into Heaven. . . .

Only a few were aware of the strength hidden within his soul. For me alone, it was more and more obvious. Amongst my letters to his brother, George, during that autumn of 1879, there must be one in which I urge him not to look upon Roman as a mere child. I ended by writing: ". . . That lad, through his soul, will some day be great in the sight of God and men. . . ."

At school in Cracow he was at the top of his class in academics. Sometimes, if opportunity afforded, he could be seen bent over his books from morning till night, seemingly without getting fatigued. He was a born leader. He followed his principles and voiced them with an unflinching courage. Succumbing to peer pressure on all things was his last intention. A priest once recalled that he was approached one day by Roman and his buddy, to request a mass. "For what intention?" the priest asked. "Father, we'd like you to say a mass to put an end to the awful expressions and bad conversations in our class."

His prudence and charity towards fellow students were exemplified by the rule he followed never to give out loans. "He gave whenever he could quickly, as generously and as happily as he could. And he used to say:

'Never will I give them a loan, for I don't want to expose them to the temptation of not reimbursing me—to the danger of forgetting it. If I behaved otherwise I'd be helping a confrere to steal.' "

He was always humble and charitable towards the lowly and poor. People did not welcome a ruling prince as he would a poor classmate with open arms. He confessed to his mother once: "You've no idea how much all that is poor, old, and little is dear to me."

Never did he entertain vain and self-centered desires to be superior over others; yet he was in fact over the others. In sports, recreation, and plain fun, he was as normal as others. His hearty laughs could be heard in rooms and hallways frequently during free time.

When time came to be serious, he was. He was assiduous in prayer, loving it above most other activities. A friend of the family asked him one day (in 1881—when he was 16) in the presence of a whole gathering: "Which one of you will become a bishop?" Roman replied: "If I do become a priest, it'll be in the Byzantine Rite." The J. Gorskis who happened to be there were simply amazed. And Fr. Jackowski, S.J. teased: "Why Roman! And get married, too?" "God forbid!" was Roman's protest, cloaked in a smile. A few days later, going back to that conversation with his chum Edward Jeroszunski, he added in a decided tone: "I'll end up becoming a Basilian monk." Nobody thought of the Basilians, then. No one spoke of them or the possible reform of their Rules. One barely recalled here and there, that there still existed in dilapidated monasteries some remnants, also disintegrating, of that order which once had been so glorious.

As I'm writing this diary six years after his entry into a religious order (without his knowledge), I wonder why his vocation had been so unexpected by our family as a future possibility. I anticipated it, yet I never spoke of it. On the contrary, I recall that one day, while talking to Dunia (the maid) I mentioned what a fine married couple he and Manka Michalowska would make. Others, however, saw more quickly that God wanted him for his own.

The time finally arrived (at age 18) when his exams and graduation from St. Ann's College were at hand. He studied hard. He wished to pass with distinction, but two days prior to the test he locked away his books, notes, etc., in a cupboard saying: "I've learned all I have been able to. Now I won't touch a single book for I have to rest my mind and my nerves." And so he spent two whole days taking long walks around Cracow. He passed his B.A. exams brilliantly (nineteenth century version) "as if they were a game," said his confreres. But he was so exhausted that during supper he dozed off in his chair. Hardly a few months of vacation and liberty, and he chose the royal road of the Cross.



Part IV—

The

Calling

**VOCATION STRENGTHENED AT MATURITY—AGE 18
FIRST REAL AND PASSIONATE OPPOSITION BY THE FATHER—THE COUNT
SHEPTYTSKY**

He was a young man now, since he had his B.A., was wearing a white suit and tie, had the right to mix with the younger set. He was also mature in intellect, in manner of speech, and in his noble bearing, but still a child with his radiant face, his laugh, his carefree gaiety—so lovable that he could not help conquering every heart. Whoever saw him felt that he was smiling at the whole world, just as the world was smiling at him. I loved looking at him, at his gaiety, his mind, the affection he roused in everyone.

As usual when we happened to be together the topics of conversation were many and varied. We talked about the future. Roman divulged: "As for becoming a priest, it would have to be of the Byzantine Rite. But of course, Dad will never allow that." He said it in such a sad tone and with such a somber facial expression that, in spite of my first exclamation at the mention of the Byzantine Rite, I replied: "You need not consider yourself a slave on earth. You're free as a bird in the choosing of a career." A violent storm interrupted the conversation as though God chose to give a sigh that the struggle had begun.

After his baccalaureate he asked his father for permission to make a retreat at the Jesuit house in Starawies, and had received it. Later, he revealed to me how he received his very special calling from God: "I was making my retreat and following a meditation, an inner voice whispered to me quite distinctly: 'You must become a Basilian.'"

Roman left Starawies with that voice in his soul. He reached Bratkowka in the evening. His greeting was joyous. Cornering him, I asked: "Well? How was the retreat? Are you satisfied?" He replied, "Yes, Mother," smiling somewhat mysteriously. "Well, Mother, I've finally decided! I'm going to become a Basilian." The words struck me like a thunder-bolt. . . I became dazed. . . From the time I'd heard those words (my heart forces me today to call them blessed), all of Bratkowka, my family, my guests, became engulfed in gossip and fears which raged on: "Roman to be of another rite than I?" At that time, that meant to be of another faith! I was depressed and later was advised by our beloved maid, Dunia, to open my heart to Father Skrzynski. The latter was loved and trusted by our whole family. Since my childhood, I regarded him like a brother. I knew he loved my children, as he loved my parents and me. So I went to see him because of his good judgment, his large heart and his pious and holy soul, in the hope that he would with a word dissipate the nightmare which had suddenly loomed before me—that he would reassure me that Roman did not have to become a Basilian.

I found him on his balcony. I sat down beside him and opened my soul to him as though in the confessional. He listened without showing surprise. Finally, he gave his answer quietly: "Knowing Roman, I'm not amazed at all. It was to be expected that he would not follow the ordinary path, but one that is more exalted. The calling is certainly more sublime than if he simply wished to become a priest. It's no surprise," he kept repeating seriously.

That same night, when everyone was asleep, I lay stretched out in my bed. I was not sobbing, but torrents of tears were streaming down my face. Dunia was sitting beside me and was ceaselessly wiping away those tears. I mourned: "You were there at George's (second son's) death. It is fitting that you should assist at Roman's." O God, how I feel the blasphemy of those words today! But, Lord, you did not turn away from me, nor from my children! At long last Dunia stood up, put her hand on my head and, as though blessing me, solemnly said: "If God really demands this of you, it's not possible that, in his goodness, he'll not grant you the grace to understand such a sacrifice!" And God, as always, did grant it to me according to his mercy and not his justice.

To the reader it may seem strange that the mother displayed a negative emotion on Roman's announcement of his plan to become a priest in the Basilian monastic order, and that the father apparently refused to hear of such a thing. Roman, since the age of eight, had disclosed on a number of occasions his desire to become a priest. The parents regarded the boy's statements as dreams of fancy not worthy to fret about. But now he was

mature enough to make serious decisions. Furthermore, the mother had become very attached to her son, and was more than ever afraid of losing him to God. The mother confessed: "I could see but one thing; a kind of huge but vague cross stretching its arms over me."

The next day the mother poured out her sorrow and torn heart to Roman, but spoke more from personal feeling than with objectivity.

I must have been merciless, for he finally bent his head backward on the arm-chair. He was wan. I felt the tears welling under his closed eyelids and his voice trembled for the first time as he answered: "Yes, I know that such a step would be breaking with the past."—O God! And I failed to press his head to my bosom. I did not understand that by my suffering I was causing him his first real sorrow, perhaps. And I neither hugged him, nor told him—I who had taught him about God—that He comes first, that He is the only One, that in Him we would be united always and for evermore."

It may be interesting to observe that in spite of the mother's occasional emotionalism, faultiness, and irrational thinking, yet through her simple faith and through her many noble virtues, she produced a son who became one of the greatest and saintliest of bishops.

Yes! But my heart was so oppressed! Since his childhood I had awaited peacefully, even with joy, the moment when he'd come to tell me that he was entering God's service. I was excruciatingly tearing apart the most sacred recesses of my heart . . . a sacrifice accepted in reality . . . but how painful! "Roman to be of another rite than I?" Since early youth, I had always heard people speak of the Ukrainian (Ruthenian) clergy with contempt. Dirty and revolting stories, contemptuous expressions and jokes were heard even in high places.

We can better understand the mother's remarks in the light of the extreme prejudice that existed between the Poles and the Ukrainians (as among other European peoples for ages). The Poles regarded themselves as true Catholics while the Ukrainians were looked down upon as half-schismatics. The Poles were also inclined to be domineering over their eastern neighbors, as will be seen later in the life of Metropolitan Andrew (his adopted religious name.) "The ugly head of prejudice was all around me, hissing like a nest of vipers, bent on tearing my child away from me and engulfing him in an abyss of impurities."

Many years later, Father Andrew, as bishop and metropolitan, dedicated his apostolic life: first, to aim for the highest sanctity for his Ukrainian priests in a thorough reform and renewal program; and secondly: to work for the religious unity of the Slavic Peoples under one

head but emphatically retaining the traditions of the two distinct rites—Byzantine and Roman.

The mother, in her distress over her son's religious plans, appealed to a priest-friend and confessor of hers and Roman's—Fr. Jackowski, a renowned Jesuit:

“O Father, we were so close and now it's all over!” “That's childishness,” he said, almost with indignation. “You were and will continue to be united in God, and not in rite.” Wringing my hands, I persisted: “Father, he'll become like a peasant among them.” “Never,” replied the priest. “At the most he might become a martyr, and what more could I ever wish for you and him?” He asked me if I had received Holy Communion since I'd learned of Roman's decision. “No,” I answered, “I just couldn't.” “That's it,” he said, as though talking to himself. The following day I went to confession and I requested a Mass to once again offer Roman to Jesus Christ on my behalf, as the father had once done when I thought my child about to die. And so my present sorrow due to his vocation was taken away from me once and for all.

In my soul there remained but one question: “How will my husband receive the news? Then began a series of struggles and suffering which is very hard to describe. When I recall those moments, they seem like a raging storm with the Lord asleep in the boat. Very soon after an indifferent conversation, as though in passing, I mentioned that from what I had gathered it seemed that Roman really wanted to become a priest. My husband replied quietly: “What can we do? If he really has the calling, nobody can stop him.” Some time later in the presence of Fr. Jackowski, I brought up the subject again without thinking: “Well, Father, what do you think of our Roman becoming a Basilian?” Was I so ill that I did not know what I was saying? No sooner had I spoken than I understood what I had just done. My husband shook all over and Fr. Jackowski, eyeing me with surprise, answered quietly: “I believe it to be a real vocation. Roman need serve but one year in the army, since he's about to be called up.” My husband jumped as though stung by a viper. “Never!” he cried out. The terrible and unforeseen resolve of Roman's to become a Basilian now was clear in his mind. I, bathed in cold sweat, panted as though in agony.

As the event for which we were all prepared since his infancy was about to materialize, all of a sudden in the father's eyes, it became a peril for his son and his future. My husband, who was often irritated with my “fanatical devotions,” suspected an elaborate plan by the Jesuits aimed at robbing him of his son. He thought he was unmasking it.

The struggle that ensued was really tragic—a swamp of tears, hardships and torments for mother, son, and father. The mother, as the faithful spouse, continued to rationalize for the sake of her husband, the count. The exceptionally endowed character and outstanding qualities of his child, who was beginning to become his pride and joy, were to be buried in the Basilian order, which was only beginning to awaken after a long period of lethargy.

While my husband was going through such fears, I was immobilized by illness. I was not prepared for this turn of events. My husband's accusations, anger, threats, and despair were driving me almost crazy. I kept silent, lest he should take my fear for an avowal of guilt. Now what wrong had I committed? I believed Roman's vocation was a holy thing ever since he had mentioned it to me while still a child of eight. I knew that I would have to accept a great sacrifice by the will of God.

Father Jackowski, having become aware of the passionate reaction of the father, decided to write him a long letter to clear the air. Among other things, he wrote:

Dear Count, you forbid me to encourage Roman in his decision to enter the monastery, and even suggest that I should dissuade him if my conscience approved it. I promised to do so at a time when I did not as yet have a set opinion regarding the reality of his vocation. But now, I could not very well fulfill this promise in conscience. . . .

. . . I am more and more convinced that his decision to become a monk really comes from God. I never intended to lure him into that vocation—(for a vocation so sublime and so difficult must originate from God and not from men. . . .)

. . . However, I would not, for the life of me, wish to use my influence to weaken your own. In fact, your children can easily find another confessor, not so devoted perhaps, at any rate just as conscientious, but they can have only one father. Still I cannot refuse to hear the confession of anybody who asks me. But, to avoid such an occasion, I see no way out for me but to stay away from your household, not at heart or in prayer, but only in person. . . .

. . . I will not cease praying for you and the Countess, that you put Roman's calling to the test faithfully and conscientiously without wishing to break it within him just to avoid the sacrifice God demands of you—as I believe is the case. . . .

H. Jackowski, S.J.

Roman became aware of the torture his father and I were going through on his account. He knew that his father did not wish to chat with him. So to soothe matters he said to me: "Mother, please tell Dad that I will not enter the monastery so long as he does not consent willingly." And then he added for my ears only: "I'm sure that God will allow that to happen soon." But it was in vain that I kept repeating this pledge of Roman's to my husband. He would not listen; he was unreasonable and unbelieving. He wished only one thing: the impossible. . . . That which was, should not be.

Part V—

*Trial*s

and

*Sorrow*s



**MILITARY SERVICE FOR ROMAN
HIS DEATHLY ILLNESS
THE MOTHER'S MIRACULOUS EXPERIENCE**

Roman was eighteen years old now (1882) and had earned his B.A. degree. It was then that his physical appearance, ordinary and even awkward, became quite striking and imposing. In no time at all, and as if carved in stone, the features of his round childish face stood out. Beneath a high, classic forehead and under straight and tufty brows, his eyes gazed—deep and undisturbed—changing their expression with thought or feeling. His hair was blond, bushy and wavy; his smile was ever sweet and bright despite his incipient moustache. And when I would entrust him with Leo his youngest brother, and behold him in the sunlight carrying the young boy on his shoulders into the green sea, I would often hear cabin attendants whispering in Italian: “What a handsome youth! What a fine looking child!” And I would think what a fine work of God, body and soul, this young man really is! Jesus had looked upon him and loved him, and he in turn wanted to follow his Master.

I recall that time in Murzzuschlag when the poor father, who had taken us there, bade us farewell on the wharf, as we embarked for Venice on a

vacation. His eyes were brimming with tears in his last look and blown kiss. All that deep love between us, yet hurting each other so much!

The sky was as radiant and sunny as our hearts, despite their hidden grief. We spent three weeks in Venice with Roman, and then eight in Merano with Dunia. Before I got up each morning, Roman would go to Mass and frequently receive Holy Communion. Then he would take me to St. Mark's Church for Mass. Later on during the day he would amuse me and encourage me to visit some place to view the many masterpieces of art. A much deeper understanding of, and a more earnest love for beauty was awakening within him, his soul absorbing each form of beauty it met.

In October Roman began his one year's military service in Cracow, as required by law. Our Lord wished to test us with fire in order that our child's calling might contain no element of uncertainty when finally he followed it. His incoming letters were at times depressed, as was his soul, on the one hand by the whole atmosphere which he loathed but in which he was forced to live, and on the other by his desire to hide the fact from me and present his life in a favourable light. He told me later on that he tried every day to leave his living quarters at five o'clock in the morning and go to Mass. "There were days when I would remain on my knees through the whole Mass." At one time an old postman revealed to me: "Dear Countess, may God reward you for having so brought up your son! Every morning I see him at the five o'clock Mass. It does an old man's heart good to see a young man, and a soldier if you please, pray like that." However, in spite of his faithful piety, occasionally he would give himself away: "My life is monotonous and replete with spiritual dryness."

On visits home I could see that his dear face was serious, sad and tired. But he kept up his faith and hope: "I have so completely surrendered to God that it really does not matter what he intends to do with me now. Should he direct me to become a cook, then that is what I will be. . ."

On January 8th (1884), Roman went to confession at eleven o'clock in the morning. He was brought back from the barracks so ill that I hardly recognized him, his face pale and his eyes sunken. An hour later he was unconscious. Besides a very severe case of scarlet fever, he had a blood infection and an inflammation of the joints. I immediately wired to my husband. The poor father came the very next day at five o'clock in the morning, but before even coming to the house to find out what was happening he drove straight to church for Mass. After two days the physicians did not conceal from us that it was already a question of life and death, and that there was only an even chance of his pulling through. At times Roman was unconscious, and as though in a nightmare,

believed that the ceiling was falling down on him. Then conscious again he would say: "Sit down, Mother. You see how God has fixed everything! . . . At a single stroke He has set aside the world and the army into which Dad wished me to go."

He would ask me to recite some prayers and I could see, after awhile, that he was already absorbed in a prayer of his own. His face would become most radiant with a flood of tears running down his cheeks.

Father Jackowski usually came for a visit every day. He would pray beside Roman's bed, but whenever he tried to bolster my courage, his tears would render him speechless. Roman's friends, acquaintances, students, soldiers, his superiors, all came to inquire about his health. It was like an unending procession. Complete strangers would stop the physicians in the street just to inquire about the boy's life, which was hanging by a mere thread.

Those were terrible days. One morning just a half-hour before the physician was to come, I noticed the patient's fingers were nervously gripping the coverlet. I well knew what it could mean. When I heard the physician in the hall I went to meet him and told him what I had noticed. "What—already?" he exclaimed. Later on, my husband and I visited the child. I was standing near the bed, while his father so unhappy, was in the next room. Roman was mumbling incoherently at times, then dozing a little. It was dark. The falling snow was forming a white carpet before the windows. All of a sudden, a funeral dirge came wafting from the street. I became frightened and ceased to breathe. I went over to the bed. His father's face appeared in the doorway. It was deathly white. I was caressing our son's hair hoping it would prevent him from hearing, and, as the funeral procession approached, I began to recite, louder and louder, the ninetieth Psalm:

He who lives in the shelter of the Most High, shall abide in the protection of the God of Jacob. . . Because he hoped in me I will deliver him: I will protect him because he hath known my name. He shall cry to me, and I will hear him: I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him and glorify him. I will fill him with length of days; and I will show him my salvation.

The trembling voice of his father followed mine. Roman relaxed, falling asleep—a most encouraging sign, the good Lord had spared him.

However, Roman was far from recovered. The infectious disease with its serious complications had weakened him so totally that he had to remain bedridden for about six more weeks, and convalescence required several more months. St. Paul promised: ". . . if we suffer with him in this life we will also be glorified with him."

In his recovery Roman seemed to be born anew. His future, his calling appeared to him to be solved. He remembered neither obstacles nor

earthly trials. He believed that, having been cured by God, all he had to do was rise and enter into His service. This thought filled him with a total happiness overflowing from his heart. He sparkled with wit and with childish merriment. He would joke with the doctors, servants, and everyone else. In spite of his paleness, he was so handsome with his seemingly large eyes and his long wavy hair. Those who came to see the patient could not help being impressed. There was a renewal of spring with love, strength, and light filling the room.

Life within the household soon returned to the same previous abnormality. The father's grudges, suspicions, and irritations revived as before as though nothing had happened. Tempestuous periods in Roman's life seemed to be the norm. When I was alone with Roman, he would speak of the unfathomable sadness filling his soul. He did not perceive in this a trial of desolation. He was convinced that his vacation was already strained, that God was going to deprive him of it because he had failed to prove his worthiness. "I should have left home by now, for my own sake as well as for yours, Mother. Here I'm just a source of sadness and worry. Mother, you just don't know, you simply can't understand, how everything is breaking apart, torn up within my being."

Jesus again wanted to teach his chosen servant some most important lessons: "Carry My Cross if you want to be worthy of Me. You need more discipline for perfection's sake. I love you as a son. Remember, even I had to face desolation while on the Cross."

A beautiful miraculous incident took place during this most gloomy period, which gave the mother renewed confidence that all will be well for Roman. It occurred while the family participated in the annual pilgrimage at Bruchnal on the feastday of the Holy Trinity.

During High Mass we sat in the pew reserved for the benefactors. I was closest to the main altar, my husband was beside me, then came Roman, Alexander and Leo. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed. In our Lord's presence I felt as though my heart were melting as in the sun. With faith and exceptional ardour, and with pain sacrificially offered before Jesus Christ, I kept imploring Him to loosen the shackles strangling us, as only He can, as the King of all hearts, and temper the passion tearing the father's heart apart in opposing the son's religious aspirations.

Thus passed the first part of the Mass. After the reading of the Gospel, the priest screened off the monstrance and began his sermon. From my seat, I could perceive the monstrance and the Sacred Host behind the screen, which seemed ablaze with a heavenly fire. Thus, though sitting, I

bent my head very low, feeling the very nearness of our Lord. I grasped my husband's hand as though to lead him to Jesus Christ to beg for a cure for his soul and heart. Squeezing that hand in a powerful grip of which I became aware only after my cramped fingers had released it, I fell on my knees and with my whole soul I felt everything—my conscience, my whole being, the sermon disappear in my adoration of the presence and power of God and of His love for us. Yes, everything disappeared in the infinite meaning of the words He Himself put in my heart and on my lips during that moment of grace: "Because of what you are, O Lord, my hope is in You!" I repeated that sentence a thousand times. I felt that I could remain on my knees in that attitude of adoration and prayer till the end of the world. The sermon and Mass were over and I was still kneeling, repeating those same words and holding my husband's unmoving hand. And then, during Benediction, while we were all on our knees, the pew suddenly trembled as though a powerful man was shaking it with both arms. Now that pew was made of oak, brand new and immobile until then. I looked at those who were seated, or rather kneeling with me, but I did not notice in them the astonishment that had overcome me.

A year and a half or two years later I read for the first time, in the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola, that when some prayer was heard or a devil cast out, such tremors occasionally occurred. I immediately recalled my experience and I understood, and still believe today, that the Lord gave me a tangible sign that my trust in him had broken through to Heaven for the sake of Roman.

Four years later in 1888, in a rare coincidence seemingly willed by divine providence, we left Prylbice to take Roman to the Basilian noviciate at Dobromil where he began his long-aspired religious life. His father, both sad and happy, prostrated himself before the Blessed Sacrament in the monastery's chapel where he gave up to God, willingly and even with thanksgiving, his most precious possession.

Such was the fuller meaning of the charismatic incident at Bruchnal for Countess Sophia. The Lord was with the mother and with Roman. They were special instruments of God. Roman, as future Metropolitan Andrew, had a divine purpose to fulfill.

In spite of the mother's consolations from the Holy Spirit, Roman continued to face his despondency and trials without letup. He was indeed in a predicament. He had no spiritual guide in whom he could confide and was on his own. He did not know enough yet to come out of himself and accept with grace the will of God which was temporarily delaying his entry into his service. He was judging in too earthly a manner the

obstacles created by his father's will, as though hindering God's plans, unaware meanwhile that they were allowed by God himself, that it was not a matter of overcoming them, but of tolerating them and remaining faithful as much as possible, and being hopeful. He could not understand that his father was an instrument in God's hands for greater self-improvement and perfection. The struggle was going on within the deepest, most sacred recesses of his soul. Jesus sought to impress upon him: "And the seed sown on rocky ground is he who hears the word and receives it immediately with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but continues only for a time, and when trouble and persecution come because of the word, he falls away."

No longer able to bear the miserable situation, Roman finally decided to write his father a long letter to humbly and meekly state his case and make peace if possible. Here are excerpts of his letter:

Dearest Dad,

"The idea of joining the Basilian order was founded on our family's zeal on behalf of the union with Rome. . . I've never discussed the Ruthenian problem with anyone but you. You were the only one to influence me with your stories about our ancestors. . ." (two eminent metropolitans and some bishops). *I spoke with a classmate of mine while we were still in the sixth grade, of the possibility of joining the Basilian order. . . My zeal has ripened gradually since my childhood days. . . I've now reached the age when one begins his life. Boldly and seriously I say today that my calling is to be a Basilian. . . I am very much convinced that if I don't follow God's voice, which is calling me more and more distinctly to the monastery, I'll just waste my life and mar yours. I know I'll never find any happiness elsewhere. . .*

I'm aware that you don't approve of my idea, but I also know that you're opposed to it not because you don't love God and his cause in the land of the Ruthenians, but because you suspect that it's the voice of mere men and not His which is calling me to the monastery. I know that your only aim is to ascertain whether my vocation comes from God. Seeing, dear Dad, how much that thought bothers you and makes you suffer, I'm writing what I feel. . . God is demanding a painful sacrifice, but will it be useless for you, our family and our country? Will you not be proud of such a sacrifice some day? . . . I don't want to ask you to allow me to enter the monastery this year, although such is my desire. Perhaps you'll send me to Rome to study Theology or something else. Consider the matter yourself and, if you wish other tests or trials, feel me out. . . I promise you submission in the future, only don't leave me any longer in this uncertainty and please promise me that, if you let yourself be convinced of the genuineness of my vocation, you'll give me your permission in a year or two. . .

My will is in your hands, Dad, for two reasons—because you're my father and because you love me and are suffering on my account. . . Dad, I'd like to throw myself at your feet, to beg your forgiveness for making you suffer so much. For all your kindness, for your love, your tears, your suffering I repay you with affliction and sadness. . . Have pity on me, Dad; consider the matter in your prayers and give me your answer. I'll await the verdict impatiently, but I'll accept it with submission. Whatever you decide, Dad, I'll consider as coming

from God. . . I'll keep on expecting a favourable reply from your lips; that's how much I'm convinced of God's will. Even if my mind should rebel against your verdict, my heart will overwhelm my mind and I'll submit. . . Dad, I swear to you on all that I hold sacred: nothing shall ever take away my love for you.

*Your obedient son,
Roman*

It was not easy for the father to give his son up to a monastery which did not seem to show any promise. Furthermore, how could he realize his life's aims in the face of the age-old schism, an army of countless enemies, the antipathy of the Ruthenians, and the constant distrust of the Poles?

No reply for three whole weeks. Instead the father yielded more than ever to regrets, anger and rebellion against all that God was thrusting upon him. He would write one letter after another, only to tear them up.

“I understood, and still believe today, that the Lord gave me a tangible sign that my trust in him had broken through to Heaven for the sake of Roman.”

Seeing him one day, I was surprised at the calm and happy expression on his face. It seemed as though his heart had been unburdened of a huge weight. And when I asked him if he had received Roman's letter, he replied calmly that he did and wished to have a chat with him in person. He then took the boy's arm and led him to the woods. Alexander and I fell on our knees and began to pray. Father and son came back two hours later. They were both peaceful, happy and altogether different from what they had been. The tenor of the conversation was this: The father did not forbid Roman to follow his calling, but, he insisted on a test for Roman. He would have to finish his studies at the university, obtain a doctorate in law, mix with more people and examine himself for another four years.

Such conditions were not easy to comply with. They were, at any rate, more painful than Roman had anticipated. But at least the goal was in sight, present misery mitigated, and the way laid out with charity and understanding.

Part VI—

The Young Man's Vocation



THE YEARS 1884-85—WHEN ROMAN WAS 18-19
ROMAN ENTERS UNIVERSITY FOR STUDY OF LAW
FINALLY, PEACE WITH HIS FATHER

An incident took place prior to Roman's entry into the university which demonstrated his remarkable gifts, capabilities and potentialities as a preacher.

The mother recalls:

While on a trip to a monastery, Roman and I happened to be alone, for Alexander (his brother) had somehow gone ahead in the cart or tarried behind. We were standing on a hill. The valley of Poprad lay before us emerging from the shade of a ravine, then, partly bathed in sunshine, concealing itself in the shadow of the mountains. Not far from us stood a small cemetery, its old crosses askew. I sat down for a while on a steep slope and gazed upon this corner of the world so marvelously beautiful. Roman doffed his cap and crossed the cemetery. Standing before me, he said: "Mother, have you ever fathomed the dogma of the Communion of Saints? One can't feel isolated when one thinks of it. Can you understand the meaning of a prayer cast right here on these graves?" I certainly cannot repeat everything he said at the time. His inspired words flowed ardently; a sermon as it were, a poem of love recited before me. With prayer's thread he was uniting those souls whose bodies were resting before us in their sunken graves. He was joining them together with the rich treasures of the church, heavenly glory, the mystery of redemption, the procession of saints, etc. . . . He was really revealing himself as their

young brother, afire with the same love which they had in the conquest of Heaven. His height stood out conspicuously against the cemetery, an unforgettable tableau. And the sun, that dear sun, the smile of God, was caressing, or rather blessing, his flaxen hair and making his eyes as radiant as shining gold. Whenever I recall that day, that valley and cemetery, I cannot help contemplate the resplendence of the dogma of the Communion of Saints.

In the fall of 1884 Roman entered the University of Breslau (S.W. Poland) for the study of law as his father required of him as a test of his vocation, and as an additional preparation for a possible religious career. Roman was not at all eager to pursue such secular studies but rather preferred to begin his religious life. However, he obediently submitted to his father's will. At the university he immediately resolved to lead a pious, virtuous, and even an apostolic life, but in a prudent and practical manner in a secular student environment. Roman quickly learned that the students were generally alien and indifferent to matters religious. He immediately and unashamedly made himself known as an ardent Catholic in principle and practice. A proper prayer life was basic. He saw the need of showing solicitude for the souls of students around him threatened with perversion and loss of faith. Weak ones needed to be fortified.

“Roman quickly learned that the students were generally alien and indifferent to matters religious. He immediately and unashamedly made himself known as an ardent Catholic in principle and practice.”

University life had its meetings, social clubs, political parties, and bull sessions. Roman made sure he participated, if it were advantageous for him in his life resolves. He believed in choosing the right company—good Catholics, and those who hopefully could be influenced to follow the right path. The influence of his personality and giftedness was tremendous. People's hearts were won over and their heads bowed before his power. He even made friends with eminent professors. He practiced prudence in trying to save irreligious students. In his own words in a letter to his mother, he revealed: “It stands to reason I don't join bad company to wrest someone away from it. There is a risk of dirtying myself if I try to draw others from the mire. If I try to save someone, it's only by not letting him get into bad company.”

Generally he put off worldly visits and parties (so common now during university weekends). His studies assumed top priority next to prayer.

He made sure, however, that he always left sufficient time for relaxation and recreation. "It's the only thing after hours of hard work," he insisted. The maid on visiting would exclaim: "If you could only hear their laughter. It's wonderful."

He showed special charity and sympathy towards the lowly and poor. He requested his parents for extra provisions "because then one can invite some poor young fellow who'd otherwise have no evening meal," he would say.

In one letter he requested: "I've already written to you, Mom, about Stephen Kucharkowski. He's a poor lad who's studying medicine. You know to what perils he's exposed and he has no parents now. Continually in bad company, he keeps swallowing the poison of our century's pseudo-scientific theories. I'm thinking of bringing him home for the holidays, that is, if you've no objection. He could always earn something by tutoring Leo, for he's talented and well-mannered. But above all, it would be a matter of home life warming him, awakening him and buttressing him in the good principles left by his mother, who died recently.

"If he can't give me his permission and even if he makes me study law for two or three years, then he won't weary me, for I've faith in God, in His help, and shall readily suffer more."

As a reward for his saintly life, the Lord blessed Roman with graces. He wrote: "It's with a heart filled with gratitude towards Jesus Christ that I write this letter. I thank the Lord for a grace which is the greatest of all—an enlightenment from above. I'm not going to tell you what it is. It penetrates too deeply into the inner life. All I wish is that you share my joy and give thanks to God for me and with me. I had not asked for this grace; it came from above as a sign that God thinks of me and leads me forward. For the fruit of these graces I'll thank God throughout my whole life! As for my second thanks, they pertain to the problem of a young man whom I begged the Lord to preserve from all evil during the first stage of this academic life."

Roman's university days were not altogether blissful and carefree in spite of his life in God. The study of civil law was not exactly exciting to him. In fact he felt out of place in that endeavor. He experienced much boredom, and even suffered periods of depression. Occasionally his letters disclosed the whole truth:

Dear Mom: I've never yet described my situation to you, not wishing father to learn how much I suffer by submitting to his will. He would not be able to understand my restlessness and my sorrow, since he doesn't believe in my vocation and is opposed to my plans. How can I have peace? How many years of martyrdom are in store for me before I can enter the monastery. It's precisely because they are years of torment that I fear them as I never did before. While in the garden of Gethsemani, Christ was afraid of what was awaiting him and said: 'My soul is sad unto death!' So how I be calm? I believe in God and have faith in him, otherwise I could never have borne the heavy cross of my submission to Dad's will. You write: 'So many persons are agreed that it's better for you to finish your law studies and that the more qualified you'll be, the better it'll be for you and God's service.' But there are so many who have finished such studies and still know so very little. . . I seek God's will. I knock so that the door may open. Therefore, I'm throwing myself at Dad's feet and imploring his pity. Dad, if you only knew how I'm suffering you wouldn't say: 'Finish your law studies.' If you could only enter my heart for a split second, you'd allow me to enter the monastery and not let me squirm at your feet in torment, suffering, unending pleading and useless weeping. For God's sake, grant me your consent, so that I may kiss your feet.

His lack of peace and restlessness worried me, for I took it for a spiritual struggle, for some imperfection in his submission to God. So in reply to this letter I wrote a very long one, which blamed him for being impatient, encouraged him to accept more submissively the way God was leading him and explained to him his father's point of view and his intentions concerning his son.

Roman repented with meekness, humility, and willingness to joyfully bear the yoke and cross of Christ.

Hardly had we had time to ponder over a reply, then a second letter arrived:

Dearest Mom: I wrote a letter to Dad. I don't know if I did the right thing. It might have been better not to be so out-spoken about my suffering, but to keep things to myself and speak to God alone. It looks like I've put Dad in a predicament. If he can't give me his permission and even if he makes me study Law for two or three years, then he won't weary me, for I've faith in God, in His help, and shall readily suffer more. Let him not back down before an order which, according to my letter, may seem too harsh. I'll bear everything joyously. Do you remember having told me once that you were worried on my account because I had no cross to bear? If the time to bear one is here, if such is God's grace, then I accept it joyfully and want to carry it with courage and submission. So console Dad. Tell him not to allow himself to be swayed by my letter. Let him act according to what he thinks is God's will. And you, too, don't worry about me. If I'm suffering, then "Deo gratias". My restlessness works havoc with my body and my nerves, but my soul remains unaltered. The latter is quiet and sustained by God's grace. With you do I repeat: May God do with us whatever He wishes, as He wishes and because He wishes it. I've faith in Him. He is leading us all. We'll be seeing each other soon and we'll talk about this more at length.

It was not easy for Roman to fulfill such perfect resolves. Receiving no answer from his father, he again sank into a depression: So he came from Breslau during the summer of 1885—tired and emaciated, so

emaciated that we consulted our family doctor. When I asked him if some kind of grief could cause a change in a young man, he replied: "Obviously. No use looking further, if that's the case."

As one can well imagine, Roman's letter had already put his father in a bad mood. Nor did it help matters any when a few days after his return he submitted to his father a long-cherished plan to finish his studies and obtain his doctorate at a German University. He thought he could gain a year this way. Now, that's exactly what my husband did not want. He did not understand Roman's suffering, taking it for an unhealthy emotional impatience. He did not understand his haste and saw therein only selfishness. He did not realize that in either case the impatience of a young and fiery nature might be blended with the ardour of his calling. He could not stand being haggled with, "teased" and asked for more, when he almost regretted having granted so much. His refusal was harsh, passionate, for Roman's new request had once again awakened the same old doubts and distrusts: Was his son begging for an alleviation and shortening of the test-period, on his own or under the influence of someone else?

I was present during their conversation. The father was pale, his voice trembling with anger. I saw that Roman was also growing pale, his eyes darkening. His replies were quiet, but seemed hard and cold. Finally, he got up and, with a terrifying calmness bordering on despair, said: "Dad, you haven't the right to refuse me this request. You haven't the right to torment me like this." Then calmly and slowly he left. I followed him into his room. He fell on his knees, at the foot of his bed. I was standing in the middle of the room neither knowing whether he was aware of my presence nor daring to move; the sobs coming from his manly chest were shaking the bed. My gaze fell on the prayer book Fr. Jackowski had given him and which he himself had held against St. Anthony's tomb, so that God might enlighten him in prayer. The book was on his desk. I don't know whether I was aware of what I was doing, but invoking God's help, I managed to open it at random and put it before him. "Read this," I said. Then I left the room, hardly conscious of my actions. I rejoined the father, but with what, what was the use? I was at a loss. Hardly had I had time to say a word, than Roman walked in behind me. He was pale and almost radiant. He fell on both his knees before his father, bent over to the floor and, kissing his feet, said: "Forgive me, Dad, please forgive me! I'll do anything you say." His father, the tears streaming down his cheeks, picked him up and held him against his heart. Both were begging mutual forgiveness.

We must credit the mother for her inspired act for the sake of her bewailing son in the bedroom, which brought about a warm and final peace between father and son. The mother indeed was favored of God with special gifts and powers through the simplicity and fervor of her prayers, and her holiness.

It was decided that Roman would finish his law-studies and obtain his doctorate in Cracow. But it was Roman who had triumphed, for his father admitted that he now believed in a vocation manifesting itself in such a manner.

A few days later Roman left with Cazimir (his brother) for Piszczany for a cure of the after-effects of scarlet fever. He was happy, at ease, and the household was also happier for him. However, soon after, I became ill and paralyzed in both my legs. I was an invalid for ten months.

The most painful chapter of Roman's calling ended with those times in 1885 which I have described. Once he came to believe in his childhood vocation, the father accepted it without reservation, just as absolutely as people, once convinced, know how to accept God's will.

“His father, the tears streaming down his cheeks, picked him up and held him against his heart. Both were begging mutual forgiveness.”

His love for his son took on a touch of that tenderness which is always felt for those about to leave us for good. To his love was added a feeling of respect for his own child. Moreover, he not only believed in the latter's sublime vocation, but understood that he belonged completely to God who had only lent him, for a time, to us his parents. Thereafter, whatever Roman said, whatever seemed good or bad to him, whatever he wished or was pleasing to him—everything became of paramount importance to his father and had its weight in gold in all his decisions. He remained adamant, no doubt, in what he believed to be useful for Roman's future, even though it might displease his son, but at least the studies and the worldly life were no longer a test. Roman's father wanted to equip him, enrich him both through studies and acquaintances that might, in later years, be useful to him. Roman, on the other hand, managed very loyally and with will-power to conquer his dislikes and vain arguments. He applied himself with interest to his studies and soon they became less painful to him.



Part VII—

Carrying

the Cross

of Christ

**Both Graces and Trials received by the Family
Roman's fruitful trip to Rome
His respected leadership at the University**

With a measure of peace restored within the family, Roman enjoyed a period of happiness and lightness of heart. In letters to his mother he referred to the sorrowful past and the joyful present with spiritual insight:

God is watching; we are praying; evil can befall us. It's precisely after such desolation that God grants us his choicest graces, blesses us and raises us up to himself. "Christians are people consoled," I remember reading. We are Christians and we wish to be good ones. No despair with us; if on the one hand God sends a cross, though it seems overwhelming, still he grants us, on the other hand, such great consolations that are worth all our suffering.

This morning, in the Jesuits' chapel, I received Holy Communion from Fr. Jackowski's hand. I offered the Mass for us. That Mass and Holy Communion made me feel wonderful. Dear Mom, we're one in Jesus Christ, as He is one with his Father . . ."

But his exuberance did not last for long. Sickness and death struck various members of the household. Two of the younger brothers also were seized with various different infections.

It was the first time that I saw Roman in his role of Sister of Charity. I can still see him before me: without his vest, sleeves turned up, taking Stanislaus in his arms just like a nurse bathing him, rolling him in covers, dressing him up and even getting up during the night to take care of the patient. Yet he always smiled, ready to joke.

Then the mother herself became seriously ill with malaria and pneumonia. After a slow recovery, the physicians suggested a trip and recuperative rest in the south, at Abbazia, Italy.

Roman came to join us at the beginning of his vacation and his arrival brightened up everything. He became a tutor to Leo, and, as always, my companion, solace and support. Our stay at Abbazia became a radiant oasis with his presence. Here a tragedy occurred with the death of Mazdunia, the beloved maid, who had been accepted as a second mother to the children. Roman expressed the sentiments of the rest of the family when he referred to her death as a huge cross for the family. He consoled everyone when he stated further: "When we think of her, she thinks of us in heaven and her thoughts are real prayers. . ."

"This monk-to-be, with his radiantly youthful features, . . . this youth of total self-confidence, all this was something new to Rome. It disarmed everyone."

Following a year at the university, Roman was graciously offered a trip to Rome by his penitent father, who now believed totally in the religious vocation of his son. He wanted to make amends for having opposed Roman for so long, causing grievous unhappiness. He wanted to enrich him with everything possible to brighten the new path before him. New doors could be opened in Rome for his future career, the father believed. He would truly enjoy such a trip, being so religious-minded and being well prepared through church and religious readings. At first Roman refused while sickness gripped his mother, but finally agreed after her recovery.

The manly Roman, now 21, arrived in the eternal city in the spring of 1886. His stay there was very busy and exciting—visiting places and meeting people. Having received recommendations, he was able to have audiences with important churchmen.

This monk-to-be, with his radiantly youthful features, who was seeking the paths of the Lord as others seek pleasure, this tall Hercules always at home everywhere with his childish simplicity, this youth of total self-confidence, all this was something new to Rome. It disarmed everyone.

Cardinal Czacki became a favorite of his. The Polish cardinal welcomed him with the following words: "Without being a real relative,

I feel that somehow you are related to me.” “He took me for a walk outside the city,” Roman wrote. “He began by reciting his breviary, then we chatted for two whole hours. He was very nice to me. I’m to have dinner with him on Sunday.” From that time on, Roman loved, admired and revered the Cardinal more ardently, more cordially perhaps than any other of the many he esteemed. He understood the profound piety of the Cardinal’s soul; he saw the wealth of his heart; he loved the strength of his great intelligence and the art and finesse with which it penetrated and guided people and events.

One can, therefore, easily imagine that it was a tough test for his vocation when the Cardinal began to oppose it. The churchman did not say anything openly, but in their lengthy talks he insisted that Roman scrutinize his soul further; that he consider the needs of the church and the fatherland. Then, gradually and no doubt subtly, that Roman could not define his thought, he urged him to ponder whether another monastic order, a Polish one, might not be the answer to his soul’s craving.

Half a year later, the Cardinal wrote Roman, “I shall not forget to pray to God to bless your parents, who with the celebration of their golden wedding anniversary, can be proud of having a son so perfect, so full of promise for the church and our fatherland. I don’t doubt that you are still faithful to the fine and saintly plans which you spoke about last spring, and which were such a consolation to my priestly and Polish heart. Rest assured that I recommend you also to God, so that He may Himself give you the strength to persevere in the path wherein He has visibly directed you. Begging you to pray for me, I bless you with all my heart.”

On May 9th, 1886, he assisted at the Mass of Pope Leo XIII, received Holy Communion and was admitted, according to custom, to the throne of the Sovereign Pontiff with the other visitors. I do not know if he had the opportunity, as he had often dreamt, to ask the Holy Father to pray that he might join the Basilians, but he must have divulged his wish somehow, for the Holy Father put his hand on his head and said: “You’ve chosen the best part, which will not be taken away from you.” Before his departure from Rome, the young tourist was supplied with two more reminiscences which he always considered, so he told me later on, as being part of the brotherhood of souls in Christ, which, in Heaven, becomes the Communion of Saints.

He had learned that Cardinal Massaia, an erstwhile Capuchin, had laboured for 35 years for the conversion of the Orientals and had studied their religion, customs and traditions. He went to see the old gentleman, introduced himself, spoke of his desire and hope of being able also to

dedicate himself to the Near East, once so glorious in its holiness. . . . They talked at length and understood each other like brothers. "Finally (quoting Roman) when I got up to leave, the old cardinal rose to his feet also and detaining me, said: 'Wait lad, wait. I'd like to give you a souvenir, so that you may think of me and pray for me, as I'll pray for you from now on, and also after I'm dead, for we shan't be seeing each other on earth, but up there in heaven we'll recognize each other.' He led me into his room, almost a cell, sat on his desk and began to look in a drawer filled with little knick-knacks. 'It seems I've nothing to give you. . . . Ah, here's something! Here, that's all I've got. It's an Ethiopian grammar. Here, take it, lad. I wrote it. I'll write a few words on it. Think of me and pray for me, as I'll always pray for you.' "

The cardinal was absolutely right, for they never saw each other again. But we can believe with Roman that their brotherhood endures eternally in heaven through the union of their prayers.

The other reminiscence was his sincere and filial affection for Cardinal Ledochowski. The evening before he left Rome he was invited to dine with the cardinal. When it was almost over, one of the older priests, who knew of Roman's wishes, drank to his health as to that of the future metropolitan of the Ruthenians. "Then," as Roman told me, "the cardinal, as though reading right into my soul, very paternally and sweetly put his hand on my shoulder and countered; 'May he at least become a good novice!'" "

"When the discussion got too lively. . . . a single word from Roman was enough to calm everyone. When it was his turn to speak, one could hear the buzz of a fly."

In the fall of 1886, upon his return to the university, Roman began to assemble students in his room every Wednesday. His young colleagues (as well as many older ones) came gladly, and such serious men as Fr. Marian Morawsky and Fr. Eustace Skrochowski joined them without deterring them in their discussions. When the discussion got too lively, I could observe from my room that a single word from Roman was enough to calm everyone. When it was his turn to speak, one could hear the buzz of a fly. He would always prepare a topic of discussion, which (so he hoped at least) might make those young minds ponder the problems concerning the church and their fatherland. One of them would read aloud some outstanding newspaper or magazine article; then they would discuss it until the windows shook. Two hours later, the visitors would leave in laughter and mirth. The following letter will prove better than my words the faith Roman inspired in young people.

"I've been elected president of the Filareci (a club). At first, I didn't want to accept, but seeing that I might be able to push through the reforms we've been unsuccessfully trying to promote for the last three years, I gave in, and just to have me as their leader, even those the least favourable to reforms voted for me, and my plans were unanimously adopted. The affection I'm shown is well worth the little time it cost me, and I'm happy at the thought that, after all those lectures and all that studying at home with my colleagues, I'm so tired I can't do anything else but handle our organization's affairs which, owing to the youthful membership, relaxes me more easily than anything else."

At the university Roman's lifestyle was kept simple. An apartment was leased by Roman and several other fellow students; it was modest but comfortable, and had guest accommodations (which Roman's mother made use of). It was loved just as it was—the students had no need of regular receptions and parties. When the mother, Countess Sheptycka visited, carpets were laid in her room, gold and silk draperies were hung and the place became a real home for all. The mother greatly appreciated Roman's thoughtfulness:

My rooms were always well heated and lit up; the knick-knacks I loved were everywhere. There were flowers on my table, and supper took on a festive air. That is how my sons used to welcome me every time. Each little thing, each flower, each piece of cake used to proclaim their love,



Metropolitan Sheptytsky with the Redemptorist community in Yorkton, 1910. In first row, from left: a brother, Fr. N. Decamps, Fr. A. Delaere, Metropolitan Sheptytsky, Fr. H. Boels, Brother Idesbald.

their desire to pamper me and express their joy at my arrival. I feel the tears in my eyes as I mention such unimportant reminiscences.

In university life Roman retained his sense of religiousness, and even grew in spirituality beyond expectations, as his letters indicated:

“ ‘Seek above all the Kingdom of Heaven.’ It’s true; the whole meaning of life is in these words. To understand them and live accordingly is Christian perfection.”

As his patron saint Roman chose Catherine of Sienna, a saint known for her ardent devotion to the Sacred Heart. He revealed: “The very first time I heard about the saint . . . I don’t know what happened within me at that exact moment. It was, as it were, a thunder-bolt. I knew nothing as yet about her, and already she was as dear to me as a beloved sister I’d never parted with. It seemed to me that I was rediscovering her and had always loved her with an almost human love born of a continuous and intimate relationship.” It may be said that this saint, given him as a patron by heaven, became indeed like his guardian angel—always visible, always ready to help.

For her part, St. Catherine did not delay long before giving him a proof of her protection. It was in the summer at Prylbice one evening, while we were discussing the Jewish problem, that Roman’s old rigorism re-appeared. He handled each question dictatorially. When I tried to condemn such an attitude, another argument ensued. It was only when we said “Good night” that we dropped our quarrelsome disposition. When we met the following day, I saw a far-away look in his eyes as he said, “Now everything is clear. I understand what’s to be done.”

Later, Roman confessed: “That same evening, scarcely had I reached my room than I heard the word, ‘humility,’ strike me like a thunder-bolt; I knew it was St. Catherine’s voice. It was her reply to everything I had said during that evening.”

Part VIII—

A Life For Unity



Roman's Special Vocation His unique ideas on UNITY in the Eastern Church

In 1887, at age 22, Roman had finally finished formally attending law classes at the University of Cracow, though he still had to study for a year for his exams to obtain his doctorate degree. His eager desire to seek the religious life had already become well known among friends of the family and others.

Not a single voice was raised in criticism of Roman, despite his exceptional character and diametrical opposition to the world's way of thinking, as well as the general trend of opinion. The only trial in that respect happened in 1884. His plans, though little known at the time, were once vehemently criticized in his very presence by the MP of Cracow, who called such a vocation "a betrayal of the fatherland." But kind and comforting words were also showered on him. A princess confided to his mother: "I congratulate you, I bless you and I pray for your son."

Roman found in everyone the same spontaneous faith. And now that everyone knew that in a few months he would follow the path God had traced for him, the charm of his exceptional calling, the difficulties it had

to overcome, of his youth and his strength and fine manners, made him the object of more affection and respect.

To finally prepare his son for his religious vocation, if it truly was his life vocation, his father urged him to go to Chyrow and Dobromil (the Basilian novitiate) for a few weeks, where he would have fresh air and more quiet, saying, "Let him see the Basilians and their rule at close range, for it is high time." Now his fatherly love was becoming braver and wiser than my own.

The mother quotes the letters and postcards sent by Roman during those three weeks spent for the first time in the atmosphere of monastic life.

They contain nothing extraordinary, and yet, through their simplicity, one sees his soul glittering as the silvery waters of a mountain torrent in bright sunshine; we see it in its swift flight towards the river, the sea, infinity.

"Well, I'm at Dobromil now. I feel so peaceful and happy that I'm sure this place is for me. Fr. Jackowski accompanied me here. We came yesterday after dinner. After supper, I met the Basilians and they impressed me very much. I feel absolutely at home here. This morning, Communion at six a.m., then study period; at ten a.m. service by an old priest of Podlachie. I'm enchanted with Dobromil and the Basilians. I can only thank God. He's been so good to me. Last night and this morning I felt exactly like a child welcomed back home by his father. It seemed even as though the father were happy to have his child return. I haven't the time to write more, but I believe you understand what I mean. So long, Mom. God be with you!"

"I'm enjoying a rest here, such peace that I never imagined before. Everybody is so kind to me and God's drawing me to him more and more. All worldly difficulties have vanished for me. I now see only our Lord and the path leading up to him. Nothing disturbs me. Nothing worries me and though it's constantly rainy and windy, the heaven of my soul is most serene."

In October of 1887, a few months after Roman's retreat at the Basilian monastery, his father suggested a trip to Russia. This pleased Roman exceedingly. Roman's youthful dreams for many years, his fervent hopes and ambitions, his philosophy regarding religious unity in the Slavic countries, and the seemingly unsurmountable problems facing the union of the Catholic and Orthodox are well expressed in the MEMOIRS.

Roman's apostolic zeal was drawing him toward the Orthodox. He prayed so much for them and it was mainly in the hope of converting them from schism that he wanted to dedicate his life.

From that standpoint, his calling was very little understood in Galicia. This province was always in danger on its Eastern borders and harassed

by internal enemies, the Russophile Ruthenians, against whom it had to defend without respite, the Catholic Church. The problem of schism, as a whole, was not so obvious there as in the annexed provinces of the Polish kingdom and the Grand Duchy of Posen. Outside Galicia, the people understood this missionary aspect of the struggle against the schism in Roman's calling; but in Galicia itself, where the needs of the land were felt so poignantly, people considered that they should limit all their activities to their own boundaries. Many voices were crying out to Roman: "Help! Cut these branches reaching over the wall; they are depriving us of air and light. Any other labour is in vain." However, Roman's reply was that it was certainly necessary to cut the branches, but that they would grow right back until the tree was cut down.

He told me once: "I know very well what to expect. The Poles will take me for a Ruthenian, and the Ruthenians for a Pole. What can I do? God's calling me and I must go." He saw better, and deplored more than anyone else, the fratricidal struggle between these two nations, but most of all he deplored the incessant, daily suffering of Jesus, renewed millions of times in the lack of unity.

"... But most of all he deplored the incessant, daily suffering of Jesus, renewed millions of times in the lack of unity."

This misunderstanding reigning in the land between these two nations made him suffer, but his aim was not to reconcile them; he wished to win them for Christ.

Was there ever a man with an apostolic heart who, at the sight of millions of souls to be saved, tried to divide them into groups according to the boundaries of their different countries, saying to himself: "I'll limit myself to converting these few thousands. That should be enough for me." A man who thus would limit himself could not be a true disciple of Christ.

That was something which was not understood. Schism was raising such havoc in Eastern Galicia that the mere thought of anyone dreaming of healing the whole body made one fear that he might only spread the disease. Just as in times of real pestilence, fear gave counsel: "Let the others perish, so long as we avoid the contagion."

Once, during a discussion with a very fine and intelligent priest, Roman contended that, if the Basilians were to confine their efforts merely to combating the schism in Galicia, it would be like doing nothing for the church. Indignantly, the priest replied that to save even a single soul was already a great deal and that quantity and numbers did not

matter. Their views were diametrically opposed, but they were both right in their own way. They finally agreed that one soul won for heaven was obviously quite a feat, since paying for it with one's life did not exceed the price, but to uphold the Union in Galicia was not to do anything for the church. One was speaking as a priest, the other was considering the good of the church.

ROMAN'S PRINCIPLE WAS THIS: AS CHRIST LOVED AND SAVED US THROUGH LOVE, SO MUST HIS WORK BE CONTINUED THROUGH LOVE ONLY. ONE MUST THEREFORE LOVE HIS ENEMIES IN ORDER TO SAVE THEM—AND LOVE THEM DESPITE THE SCOURGINGS, PERSECUTIONS AND SUFFERING. ONE CANNOT CONVERT A PEOPLE BY APPROACHING IT WITH HATE.

Roman was not even a religious yet—still a student of law—yet note the maturity of his ideas concerning his vocation, and the lucid enlightenment he received concerning the religious basis for UNITY. They engendered within him a silent and deep desire which permeated his whole being—the ever-living desire to suffer martyrdom for the East.

While still a young lad, he cherished the hope of one day sacrificing his own blood to Jesus to atone for the lack of unity in the celebration of Masses and Holy Communions. And even today he still cherishes that same desire, for he has not ceased to believe in it.

By a strange coincidence, in his trip to Russia (initiated with sentiments easy to surmise) Roman met at the very start a man who had come to identical conclusions, not only by apostolic zeal but as a staunch and tried Christian, and by a long acquaintance with every sphere of Russian society. This man was Mr. Felix Sobanski. In 1887, while attending his cousin's marriage to Alexander, he confessed to me that he had found his own convictions duplicated in Roman, based on experience, convictions shared by no one and consequently kept to himself.

Part IX—
In Russia
and Rome



Further preparation for his religious career
Continued sufferings of his soul
Final, most joyful vacation with his mother and brothers

Roman embarked on his trip to Russia in the fall of 1887 (when he was 22), following his completion of law classes at the University of Cracow. This vacation was first suggested by his father to prepare him better for his future ecumenical work in the Eastern church. Arrangements were made for his sake to meet various priests, professors and other notables, which would consume much of his time. Concerning Moscow itself, he wrote:

“He was clinging with more energy, more tenderness, to the love of his family and home, and especially to the love of his mother. He had to make a superior sacrifice—that of denying himself that love.”

“Well, the city is so singular and bizarre that a person doesn’t regret having travelled thirty hours by coach. Here one finds all the Oriental styles possible—Arabian, Turkish, Chinese, even against a too severe Byzantine background; and the period of Ivan the Terrible is encrusted in the formidable buildings of the Kremlin. . . .

“The weather isn’t bad, and excellent for sledging. In the Rumiantzov Museum, I saw the picture depicting St. Josaphat’s death. There were also works of Siemiradski, Vereschaghin of the modern Russian school,

which I found very interesting. The Lavra Troicka, which is the centre of Northern and Eastern Orthodoxy and situated some forty miles from Moscow, is a conglomeration of red, green, blue, gold, silver and rose colours. The Russian Orthodoxy is a formalistic religion—still colder than in Kiev. The singing reminds one more of thunder during a storm than of the warbling of birds on a fine summer day.”

Comments about Roman arrived home from time to time:

“Your Roman is leaving a bright trail behind him everywhere. Everybody’s marvelling at the wisdom of his judgment and the clarity of his views. People are all talking about him. How could such a lad, all alone, have succeeded in so short a time in capturing everyone’s mind?”

After a month of vacationing, he returned home and to the university to write his final exams for the law doctorate. He passed them well, in spite of his dislike for civil law.

Roman still had half a year or so before he could enter the Basilian novitiate to commence the religious life he had dreamt about for so long. His father suggested a second trip to Rome, which delighted Roman. Again the young nobleman took Rome by storm with his charm and intelligence. He had chats and meetings with eminent churchmen as before, and visited various religious places which interested him. But in spite of the joys which the visit to Rome gave him, his soul was not always at peace. He still felt the wounds of not having been able to commence his religious life early in his youth. He confessed to his mother that he still suffered much, and that those last weeks prior to his mother’s arrival in Rome were among the worst his soul had ever lived through.

As he was getting closer to his goal, not unlike a final turn on the road, his heart was gazing for the last time on all that he was to leave behind. Maybe he was clinging, with more energy, more tenderness, to the love of his family and home, and especially to the love of his mother. He had to make a superior sacrifice—that of denying himself that love. His soul had to go through the torment of parting. He could not have gone through it during all those previous difficulties against which he had been struggling for five years; but once it was over, he saw all the better that the sacrifices he had to make now would constitute the greatest struggle, and be more painful than all the others. The rights of the human heart would naturally assert themselves.

During one of his visits in the vicinity of Rome, he faced the supreme test of his vocation—that of his visit to the Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino. He wrote his mother:

“Well, I’m in my cell, now. Through my window I can see at least nine miles of country bathed in moonlight. It seems that the whole world is

stretched out at my feet. I feel closer to God on this high mountain. I'll be here three days, for I like it very much.

“I'm so happy to be in a real monastery after the worldly life of Rome and Naples, that I just can't tell you about it. I dream of the day when I'll be at Dobromil (novitiate) away from everything and closer to God. . . Here, I feel more positively than ever that the bonds God has sanctified only grow stronger with one's leaving the world. Dearest Mom, when I'm before God, you are with me, and in the whole universe, there's only God for me. . . God in my affection for you. . . God everywhere and always. God is uniting us and God will bind us forever. Be seeing you in Rome. . .

“I feel that the order to which one belongs, as well as the nation or family to which one is born, will not be taken into account by God on Judgment Day.”

“The weather is superb. From my window I can see, on a map as it were, the plain stretching far beyond. There's a river running across it and the plain is cut by roads and highways, and strewn with hamlets and villages. Despite the clear atmosphere, one can barely see the people on their way to the churches; at the foot of our mountain they look like little black dots. The panorama is bathed in sunlight and the silence in the monastery is disturbed only by the sound of the bells of our church and those of the churches in the plain floating on the breeze. It's from this monastery—so isolated and far away from the world, though situated in the middle of one of the most populated regions, that I'm sending you this letter.

“I feel so at home here, better than in Rome or Naples, for I live like the monks. This rest enables me to pray and meditate at will. I'm studying the Rule of St. Benedict. I'm reading his biography and about his order. The latter's history is a great one. This order can command respect by the number of its saints, popes and cardinals alone. According to tradition, it has produced 5,000 saints, and given the church 24 popes, of which 20 are saints today—200 cardinals and 1,600 archbishops. But such a past which can surprise and impress any historian, could not lure me into this order; not because I don't revere or like it sincerely, but because I feel that the order to which one belongs, as well as the nation or family to which one is born, will not be taken into account by God on Judgment Day. One will have to answer before the Lord for what he or she was personally.

“One time, during prayer, I was suddenly overwhelmed by such an awareness, such a vision of the Latin Church’s grandeur, beauty, and spiritual wealth, that I found it impossible to tear myself away from its bosom—to serve God outside of it. Everything began to crumble within me. I then made an act of complete and perfect surrender to God, of a full submission of my will to His. Then, like three strokes of lightning, there flashed back within me the clear conviction that God wants me to become a Basilian, and with that, peace was restored in my soul.”

The jolt must have been violent, for no sooner had he returned to Rome than he went to speak of it with Cardinal Ledochowski, who answered unhesitatingly that according to him the event confirmed Roman’s calling. When telling me about it, Roman added: “But had it happened four years ago, who knows whether I would have been able to bear the trial, and I would be a Benedictine right now.”

The mother, long and impatiently awaited by Roman, finally joined her son in the eternal city. Their stay together there was one of the happiest of their lives. It was to be their last vacation and get-together prior to Roman’s entry into the novitiate. The mother reminisces:

It seems that a marvellous dream began for me from the moment I heard the exclamation: “Roman,” and saw his tall and dear silhouette against the car’s curtain. The pure skies, the baskets of flowers in evidence everywhere, the churches permeated with incenses and sanctified by prayers said throughout the centuries, the tombs of saints, the martyrs to whom we talk and whom we think about as if they had lived and shed their blood for the Lord only yesterday, the old pagan world conquered by Christ, the marvels of art, the beautiful evenings after the impressions and emotions of the day, the improvised home, the merriment, the happy laughter—all this has left me not only the charm of a beautiful dream, but one of moments bought, blended with much suffering and likely to blossom but once in a lifetime.

I just can’t describe the love with which the house and my stay were prepared. There was no luxury, for we both had never gone in for any. And if I were to enumerate all the details, who but myself could understand them? Could anyone understand also the tears blinding me as I thanked him for my happiness, and his own over this welcome? “Mother’s coming is such a great joy for me. She’s been here three days already, and I haven’t thanked you yet, Dad. This happiness I owe to you,” he wrote.

Our Roman life was most enchanting; a life of pilgrims and artists with a family life background. Every morning at 6:30 we went to church and we set no time limit for these visits to our Lord. Sometimes we would assist at Mass in St. Peter’s and have breakfast at Rev. F.

Starowyeski's, but usually we would go to Santa Maria sopra Minerva to St. Catherine's tomb or to the Gesu, or to Sant' Andrea delle Fratte all Madonna Delle Grazie Church across the street from where we stayed.

It would be hard to find a better guide than Roman. He was familiar with the art galleries, churches, palaces, their inhabitants and their history. His enthusiasm over the masterpieces was contagious and instructive. When we viewed the sacred relics which are so numerous in Rome, we always did it in a spirit of prayer, and as pilgrims. In Rome one learns how to pray and venerate the saints. Roman was completely right in this. He knew by heart every tradition, and would tell about it with such zest, such richness of colour and love that one was apt to believe that he had lived with all those saints who had prayed, suffered, proclaimed the Lord and died for him. Visiting the churches, I would often find it hard to stop praying, and would be unaware of the tears falling to the floor. Like the Romans, we used to return home during the evening Angelus. Then we would spend the evening together by the fireside, united in the Lord and feeling his presence in our midst.

At the very outset, however, God darkened those days of happiness with a great sorrow for Roman. It was also a great sorrow for Poland, for on March 8th, Cardinal Czacki died suddenly. For the last two months, Roman's relations with the Cardinal had become even more friendly and intimate than during his first stay in Rome. He was a guest almost every day at Palazzo Palestra, always feeling welcomed and received with joy. The death of the prelate was a great shock to Rome, his countrymen, and to all his friends.

“All this has left me not only the charm of a beautiful dream, but one of moments bought, blended with much suffering and likely to blossom but once in a lifetime.”

The whole day was spent under the impact of this misfortune for the church of Poland. In the afternoon we went over to the Palazzo Palestra. The Cardinal was stretched out in bed with a bouquet of lilies of the valley on his chest, his hands clutching a cross. He was dressed in episcopal purple. His fine face, with its expressive features, which according to Roman seemed even more pleasant and livelier than at times during his suffering, had a singularly sweet and serene expression, without a single sign of death. We had the feeling that it was merely drowsiness; his lips were rosy, his eyes still sparkling under the half-closed lids. The Italian aristocrats were all there. I was surprised to see that Roman knew so many people and that so many greeted him. Everyone was moved and talked about this great loss, this tragic death.

Roman took the cardinal's death quite hard. He suffered in his own special way. "Had he been only a holy man, I'd console myself with the thought that he's better off in heaven than on earth," he said, but he could not understand the loss of such a man, with such rich talents so admirably developed and so fruitful. And he regretted the loss of each quality as he would have a shattered work of art, or a ruined masterpiece.



Part X—

Audience

with the

Pope

**Sheptytsky family has a privileged and most unusual private meeting
with Pope Leo XIII**

Roman's great spiritual gifts are perceived by the pope

His last vacation with his family

The mother reminisces:

The days were gliding by like a dream. Cardinals Ledochowski, Vanutelli and Mazella, who, thanks to Roman, had welcomed me so very cordially, advised me to request an audience with the Holy Father. But I did not do so in the belief that it was impossible to get one around the end of Lent, just before the pilgrimages were to begin. Roman and Rev. Starowyevski were of the same opinion. However, when I learned that the rector of the Resurrectionists had made my request known to Monsignor Della Volpe, who was in charge of scheduling, I felt obliged to go and see the latter.

He received me rather coldly and waived my request airily, saying that no more audiences were being granted, and that after Easter it would be still harder to get one. I was irked. So, as I got up to leave, I too replied in a cold manner, "My dear monsignor, it was neither out of simple curiosity nor the devotion of an old woman that I requested such an audience. I'm here with my son who wishes to become a Basilian, and with another young man who desires to be a priest in the Grand Duchy of

“I received from the Vatican the invitation to an audience with the Holy Father. It was to take place the next day at 11 o’clock, and I could take my family.”

Posen under the Prussian government. I presume you must know to what a future they are both exposing themselves. It was, therefore, for them that I wanted to get the Holy Father’s blessing. But if it’s impossible, then it’s all right with me.”

I bowed frigidly and was about to leave the room, when suddenly the Monsignor, affected, stuttered back: “But. . . Ma. . . Madam, forgive me! I. . . I did not know that. Allow me to tell the Holy Father. . . How many will there be? Four?”

Roman, upon seeing the two of us when the door opened, was surprised and amused; and he related to others: “I saw Mother strutting forward like an empress, and the monsignor trailing behind her, bowing and bustling.” That very evening I received from the Vatican the invitation to an audience with the Holy Father. It was to take place the next day at 11 o’clock, and I could take my family.

It was on March 24th, the Friday before Holy Week, that we were to see the Holy Father. We supposed that there would be at least thirty persons, so we did not worry about what we were going to say. We were so happy—Roman, Stefanski, Leo in his new suit, white tie, silk stockings and patent shoes, and I. At the door to the first salon we were welcomed by Monsignor Della Volpe, now so pleasant and obliging, and by tiny Monsignor Bisleti, who knew Roman and had to stand on his toes to whisper in his ear: “Don’t you know? This is a very special audience. It’s unheard of!” Roman, in repeating this to me, added, “Well, Mother, you’ve certainly wrought a miracle.”

Just before meeting us, the Holy Father received two of his friends from Peru and the ambassador from Chile and his wife. Finally, the signal was given; it was our turn. Monsignor Della Volpe opened a small door, went in first, announced us and bowed out. We were alone face to face with the Holy Father. The room was narrow and long. To our left there was a window with drawn curtains. Facing the window, at the far end of the room, sat the Holy Father on his throne, not unlike an alabaster statue.

Seeing us, he stretched out his arms and welcomed us joyously: “Ah, a fine Polish family!” I felt as though I were near Our Lord himself in the person of his vicar. I knelt down, but forgot to kiss his feet, so lost was I in the contemplation of his face, though I did kiss his hands. The Holy Father’s first words to me while pointing to Roman, Stefanski and Leo, were: “Are those your sons?”

I replied, "Yes, Your Holiness. These two are my natural sons and the other is a son through adoption."

We were kneeling in the following order; Roman was on the left side of the throne—on the side step and therefore nearest the Holy Father, I was at his feet with Leo on my right and Stefanski on my left. The Holy Father's face, illuminated by the intense ardor of his eyes at first, soon became merry, animated and very expressive. In the half light of the room, against a background of purple damask, in his all-white cassock, the Pope seemed in an inner brightness. As I introduced my little group, the Holy Father said to Roman: "So you're the one who wishes to become a monk, eh?"

"Yes, Your Holiness," answered my son, "a Basilian." His face was radiant.

"A Basilian, you say?" exclaimed the Pope, turning on his throne to gaze into Roman's eyes, putting his hand on his shoulder, then holding him around the neck: "And I was told a Benedictine...But a Basilian...that's fine. I am very pleased...How long is it since you felt called to be one?"

"Almost since my childhood," answered Roman promptly, smiling radiantly and looking the Pope in the eyes.

"Since your childhood? And how old are you now?" questioned the Pontiff.

"Going on twenty-three."

"And what did you study and where at?"

"Facing the window, at the far end of the room, sat the Holy Father on his throne, not unlike an alabaster statue. Seeing us, he stretched out his arms and welcomed us..."

Roman answered the Pope briefly. Then the latter with a gradually growing vivacity and inspiration, his eyes darting from me to Roman, said: "You see—the Basilians have a great future in the church, and their mission is sublime and important. People don't realize just how important their mission will be in the East. It was I who reformed them and opened the novitiate at Dobro...what's that place?...Dobromil—that's it. The Provincial of the Jesuits, Father Jacko...Jacko..."

"Jackowski," whispered Roman, (his own confessor for some years).

"That's it! Father Jackowski was here in Rome quite a while regarding the matter and we spoke of it at length. I esteem and love him very, very much..." He looked at Leo then, who was all eyes and ears. He took his

arm away from Roman's neck and, taking the child's face in both hands, asked me: "And this one? Yours also?"

I replied proudly; "Yes, Your Holiness. That's Leo."

"Ah! Leo! And what will we make of him? What will you be?"

"I don't know yet, Your Holiness," replied the lad with a wistful smile.

"He doesn't know... No wonder! He's so small," said the Pope, caressing the boy and putting the latter's head tenderly on his knees.

"He'll stay behind to console his mother, that's what he'll do."

"And you?" he asked, turning to Stefanski. "You want to be a priest also?"

"Yes, Your Holiness, a secular priest now and a Jesuit one day, I hope."

"A Jesuit," mused the Pope. "Religious vocation is the greatest grace God can grant a man in this life—not in heaven, but already here on earth." He put his hand on Stefanski's head. Then once again he held Roman around the neck with one arm, while his other kept caressing Leo's head. He asked me: "How many sons have you?"

"Five, Your Holiness," I replied.

"And are they all good, fine boys?"

"I hope they'll all be faithful servants of God and his church. Please bless them, Your Holiness."

He raised his hand—the one he had been holding on Leo's head—and put it on mine. But all along his eyes kept turning to Roman and even at this solemn moment I could not help admiring the beautiful group they formed: The Holy Father was contemplating this young face with love, almost fatherly; Roman could have served a painter as a model for a cherub in prayer, as his eyes, filled with deep tenderness and confidence, gazed upon the Pope. The two faces, which were so different and handsome, seemed to be absorbed in mutual contemplation. One might have imagined that beyond this world, these two souls had been familiar with each other for ages, loved each other, and had sworn mutual trust in each other. Following the look and the thought of the Holy Father, I expressed the lofty vocation and aspiration of my child: "As for him, Holy Father, he's ready to shed his blood as a martyr, if God so wishes, for His Holy Cause, and I consent here before you. I wish it just as much as he does."

"Ah!" answered the Pope solemnly, resting his hand on my head, "one perceives in your words that Polish faith—so fine, so solid. With such feelings you can be sure that your whole family, that is, the soul of your family, will be in heaven. You understand me, don't you?"

Roman asked the Holy Father for a blessing for the Basilians, about whom the Pope wished to know still more. Stefanski begged for a

blessing for his family and I, thinking of all those persons and troubles for which I always prayed, asked; “Your Holiness, bless all those for whom I pray.”

He looked at me as though he were trying to read into my soul and know the full meaning of my words. He remained silent for a while, then, caressing my forehead as one does a child and putting his hand in mine, said: “Fine . . . I bless all those you pray for.”

Then we all kissed the Holy Father’s feet as we got up. Once again he held Roman’s hand and, pressing it to his heart, while Roman knelt again at his feet, said in a deep and moved voice: “And to you once again and to your whole vocation, I give my special blessing.”

The words I have just quoted almost verbatim cannot record the tone of the conversation. They just flowed naturally, easily, and sincerely. The meeting lasted around fifteen minutes. It had been more like a happy family gathering or like the homecoming of children meeting with their parents, than like a formal papal audience. This is how the audience imprinted itself in my heart and memory and how it inspired my prayer for Leo XIII, who had become as dear to me as my own father.

“Once again he held Roman around the neck with one arm, while his other kept caressing Leo’s head. He asked me: ‘How many sons have you?’ ”

When I told Cardinal Ledochowski and Cardinal Mazzella about it, they immediately told me what others did later on: “It was really providential.” Such also is my belief and I thank God for it. In his infinite goodness, God wanted to grant us this Easter, the last one we were to spend together and so different from all the others prior to it; he wanted us to spend it in his own Capital.

During our pilgrimage to Rome, God granted us another favour. He was ever strewing our path with blessed signs, to remind us that it was leading to him, despite its many earthly rough spots. This time it was in the form of a conversation Roman had with his dad—perhaps the first one in which they understood each other thoroughly and perfectly. On the way home from a party, Roman lit a cigarette and smilingly said to his father; “I hope I’ve worn this suit for the last time.” It was the opening of a conversation that lasted well into the night right by the fire. In the morning my husband, his eyes brimming with tears, told me: “It’s the first time I was able to read within his soul—the very first time I understood his calling. I’ll never be able to thank God enough for our

chat—had we given him the whole world, it would not have been enough for him. He needs something else. . . .”

We had merry, happy and joyful times. For the rest of our stay in Rome we organized pleasant excursions here and there. But we all felt clearly and deeply that these were our final days with him as one of us. Roman’s farewells with his friends and acquaintances were more moving and longer than usual. I was present at Roman’s last interview with Cardinal Ledochowski. When we had all got on our feet, Roman knelt before him. The old man blessed him tearfully, then took him by the hand and thus we moved through a few of the rooms. The Cardinal tried to smile, unable to control his tears. He said: “You see, I’ve become so fond of this Roman of yours. . . .” Was it an excuse for his smile and tears?

On April 22nd we finally parted. In Vienna, where we stopped for a day, I noticed that I was not the only one to feel the beginning of the end and to count the days, or the hours perhaps. I read it in Roman’s face, in his voice, when he told me in the evening: “I’ll stay here for another day. I’d like to see Fr. Pawlicki to say good-bye.”

Part XI—

When
Roman
Entered
The
Novitiate



**The great sacrifice of Roman and his family
The emotional leave-taking**

Roman Sheptytsky had taken his last vacation before entering religious life. The trip to Rome was his last lengthy excursion with his family. It was most joyous. Yet at times thoughts of the sacrifice he would be making filled his soul with sorrow. Now he was home, preparing for his final leave-taking. In these last weeks and days his soul experienced much anguish. The mother remembered his emotions at this time with observant detail:

As he was taking books bought in Rome from his trunk, and setting them in a row on the table, I put my hand on his shoulder: "Come to supper." And, as he did not answer but continued setting up his books, I sighed, "Oh, dear Roman! How laden and heavy your heart is. . ."

He was bent over. Slowly he straightened himself, raised his pale and sorrowful face, his eyes veiled with tears, and replied, "I can't help you any more, Mom. . . I can hardly stand on my own two feet." The expression I saw then on his dear face, during what was perhaps the

roughest crisis his soul had ever experienced, was to reappear once again in its celestial beauty during his first Mass, when, about to give us Holy Communion, he beheld the Body of his Divine Redeemer in his hands for the very first time, and he repeated: "This is the Lamb of God..." While contemplating the sacrifice of his Master, his face radiated the same suffering I had noticed during his own sacrifice.

On the following day, he locked himself up with his books and notes in a cell at the Jesuits, giving me only St. Sophia's day. In three weeks he got his doctorate in law from Cracow University.

Roman and I had a farewell chat. We went back over his whole life and most of mine. His suffering was gone. He spoke of each cross in the light we will one day see and understand it. He was more eloquent and tender than usual. I remember the general impression of that chat rather than the words exchanged.

The atmosphere of these days was suffocating. After attending Mass at Bruchnal, Roman would spend hours in his room, classifying his correspondence, books and souvenirs. I was beside him without being able to collect my thoughts. His father would come in from time to time, say a few words and flee to his own room. Like an automaton, I would answer: "Yes...No...Well...", whenever he presented me with some item, saying: "Maybe you'll keep this, Mom...I'll give this to Oles... This might be useful to Kazio... One day this'll be for Leo. These relics are for Alexander's future wife, those for Stas (all brothers mentioned)... This book I'm leaving to Dad."

To me he gave his book, *The Christian Soul*. "Keep it, Mom. It has an inscription by Fr. Jackowski. Some day it'll be a relic."

"In these last weeks and days (before entering novitiate) his soul experienced much anguish. The mother remembered his emotions at this time with observant detail."

Our parting was a "point of no return"—but one filled with divine grace and love. Together we made up a reliquary (a plaque of religious relics), to hold the medallions with sacred relics which he had selected and presented to me in the Eternal City. I can see us working in silence. Roman would break it briefly. "Here's the relic of the Holy Cross... I've carried it for five years, since the time you gave it to me. But now it's better that it remain with you." Above the wood of the Holy Cross, which is the most sacred of all relics, he placed a particle from the Virgin's tomb; below it the relic of St. Josaphat on one side and those of St. Anthony of Padua and St. Bonaventure on the other, with St.

Catherine's on the right and St. Teresa's on the left. In the middle, in a big medallion we put the founders of the great Orders—St. Basil, St. Benedict, St. Dominic, the seraphic St. Francis, St. Vincent-de-Paul, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis-de-Paul, St. Camille of Lellis and St. Paul of the Cross. At the very bottom, in one big medallion, we put the relics of our patrons and the patrons of our deceased sons—St. John of Kanty, St. Sophia, St. Stephen, and St. George. Around the wood, in a crown, we placed the relics of St. Roman, St. Alexander, St. Stanislaus, St. Cazimir and St. Leo. I had seen the plan of this reliquary, drawn by Roman himself while still in Rome.

On the day of his departure, he brought it to me early in the morning with the following prayer he had composed during the night framed on one side:

“Standing at the foot of your Cross, O Lord Jesus, together with your Mother who is also ours, with St. Josaphat, St. Catherine of Sienna, with all our patrons, I recommend my family to You. Dear Lord, allow it to grow, multiply and faithfully serve you in every generation. Grant it Christian mothers to teach their children how to serve you. Give it fathers who will loudly and openly proclaim their faith and live according to its commandments. May they die for it as did St. Josaphat and as St. Catherine did in the West; let them fight in the East to make known your vicar.

“O Lord, deign to select in our family priests, apostles, martyrs and saints. Do not grant us but to your name, the glory in us and through us, as you glorify it in and through the monasteries. Make an order out of our family by calling in each generation many of its members to the service of your altars. (*Most of the family was killed by the Bolsheviks, but one niece became a nun in Canada.*)

“Grant it the spirit of charity you recommend to the sons of St. Basil; the spirit of the confessors characteristic of the sons of St. Benedict; the spirit of poverty so pleasing to St. Francis; the spirit of apostolic zeal you gave St. Dominic; the spirit of obedience and discipline in your service of the sons of St. Ignatius; and the spirit of mercy exemplified in St. Vincent.

“O Lord, hear this prayer, heed it through the intercession of our patrons, Amen!”

Written at Prylbice, May 28th, 1888—Roman Szeptycki. *Note the religious maturity of Roman even before he began his religious life.*

At first we intended to leave on Saturday, but the pastor of Bruchnal—one of those persecuted for their faith in Podlashie—asked me and Roman to act as Godparents for his little girl on that day. So the agony of the party was extended twenty-four hours.

It was cloudy and raining. During the meals we tried to keep talking with the new tutor, but we could not for a moment forget the inevitable looming on the horizon. We remained gloomy and ill at ease.

God wished Roman to leave home the day the Gospel of the Mass repeats Christ's words: "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." God wanted him to leave home the very day, when four years before, He had in his goodness deigned to listen to our prayers and freed Roman of the obstacles created by his father's opposition to the accomplishment of his supreme will superceding any other.

It was therefore on May 28th, on the Feast of the Holy Trinity, that we—my husband, Roman, Leo and I—knelt before the reliquary hanging over the prie-Dieu. Kuiowska, our children's old nurse, and our steward Mulicki, who had really been raised by us, were on their knees right behind us.

As so many times in sad and joyous moments, as before each departure for college, or before each trip, I recited aloud, without a sob and in a steady voice "The Sub Tuum." Then we all kissed Roman silently. From then on, not a word was said until I invoked the sign of the cross aloud as we were going through the garden-gate. All the servants were standing in silence in the vestibule and in front of the house and around the carriage. To each of them Roman stretched out his hand without a word and they all kissed it silently. The "Angelus" was ringing at Bruchnal, the horses were prancing and the birds were warbling.

My husband and I, Roman, and Leo, who wished to accompany his brother as far as Sadowa Wisznia, went by the same road, at the same time and on the same train as five years earlier, when Roman, who was about to know God's will, confided to me that he could not even dream of becoming a priest of the Byzantine Rite, for his father would never allow it. Now, the latter showed not an iota of opposition anymore and was accompanying us completely submissive to God's will, though suffering as never before. Roman was very pale. The Lord permitted me to see all this, though my heart was in a haze. It seems to me, as far as I can remember, that I was not suffering, that I was not even thinking at the time. All these details, their faces, the bells and the people around the carriage and the horses must have imprinted themselves indelibly in my memory as so many vivid pictures.

We spent the night in Peremysl and went to early Mass. We left for Dobromil (the novitiate) by hack before 8 a.m.

The weather had suddenly cleared. The day was radiant and calm. It was neither hot nor cloudy. My husband wanted Roman to sit "beside Mom," he himself was on the top-seat. From time to time he would turn

towards us; “What wonderful weather for our Roman!” He smiled, but his smile was veiled in tears, and he would turn back right away. We did not speak either. But Roman’s face was becoming more radiant and seemingly handsomer. A light full of serenity seemed to emanate from him—much more luminous than the brightness around us.

When we were not far from Dobromil, I put my hand on Roman’s and said: “Wasn’t I faithful to you till the very end?” He bent over and kissed it. Then I asked him to exchange seats with his father.

We were taking the steep road which leads directly from the little town to the monastery of Dobromil. Now my hand was resting in my husband’s.

As the carriage was pulling into the courtyard, we saw two young Basilians walking along the steep garden path reciting their breviary. They halted and from afar hailed Roman by waving their hats. On seeing them, Roman leaped on the seat and began to wave his own hat, hailing them, hailing the port—his new life.

“Two young Basilians walking along. . . halted and from afar hailed Roman by waving their hats. On seeing them Roman leaped on the seat and began to wave his own hat, hailing them, hailing the port—his new life.”

I am convinced that if he did stifle a cry of joy at the triumph at this moment, it was only because of us. As for us, my husband and I just looked on and from both our hearts there must have risen the same prayer: “Deo gratias for his happiness!” Thus we passed under the vaulted gate-way under the belfry.

We left Roman and the monastery an hour later. If the separation left nothing memorable in my mind, I have before my eyes, nevertheless, the vivid and indelible silhouette of Roman bending over the monastery gate waving to us, vested in his dark blue suit, his face flushed and radiant with happiness.

As his silhouette disappeared, our carriage was passing under the belfry. My husband stopped the horses. “Here’s a chapel,” he said, “Let’s go inside.” We got out. Unable to think clearly, I sat in a pew. My husband went before the altar, knelt on the steps, bent over to the floor before the Blessed Sacrament to pray for quite a while. Then we continued our trip in silence. My husband spoke only once, when he said: “Just like after a funeral. But such is God’s will and Roman feels happy back there. . .”

That evening, when we were back at Prylbice (home) I also thought: "One would think it is like after a funeral—the inevitable." A wound is always a wound; it has to hurt, then heal little by little.

Our Lord, however, does give comforting words, especially for those making a life sacrifice for the Lord's sake. In the parable of the grain of wheat, Jesus teaches that a full religious and spiritual fruitfulness can be attained only through total sacrifice:

***I tell you, most solemnly,
unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies,
it remains only a single grain;
but if it dies,
it yields a rich harvest.
Anyone who loves his life loses it;
anyone who hates his life in this world
will keep it for the eternal life.
If a man serves me, he must follow me,
wherever I am, my servant will be there too.
If anyone serves me, my Father will honor him.***

Next day, I found my husband reading Roman's prayer. He was weeping. I tried to soothe him, but he stopped me short: "No, these are not tears of regret but of happiness, because God has given us Roman such as he is, and as such has taken him into his service. We certainly don't deserve such a grace, unless you merited it through your prayers."

Many years later, when the countess fully appreciated God's loving care for those who sacrifice their lives to the service of our Lord, she added in her Memoirs most inspiringly:

I envision my son, afar within the silent monastic walls, under the protective mantle of the miraculous Virgin, a witness of his purity during his childhood, as he accepts his spiritual director as the witness of the divine will for him, bowing before the Lord and asking, "What do you want me to do?" And God answering within his soul with that wordless voice no human ear can perceive but which the heart understands: "You shall leave behind your father, and mother, brothers and home. . . You shall leave the rite that has formed you for me and which you have learned to love since childhood. . . You shall rid yourself of all those habits rooted in your heart and you shall adopt a new way of life amidst strangers who will perhaps be malevolent. . . You shall bear my cross. . . You shall be suspected in every way because of what you hold to be sacred and have received from me. . . You shall be scorned by people. . . Your friends will shrug their shoulders and think you are a fool. . . And your mother will cry over you. . . You shall leave her in tears, but leave her you shall, for I am calling you and you shall serve me until you die. . . perhaps as a martyr. . ."



Part XII—
Roman's
Second
Grave Illness

Mother hopes against hope itself
Her prayers prevail

On entering novitiate Roman Sheptytsky was given a different name—Brother Andrew—after the custom of religious. He retained that name for the remainder of his religious life. As a monk he now was almost totally separated from his family; so except for a few short letters, the mother had to suspend her biography of her son. She simply did not have enough resources. The **MEMOIRS**, therefore, make a distinct break in time.

Three and a half years had gone by since Roman's entry into the monastery (1888, at age 23). He had finished his novitiate (1890) and was to spend the following year in Cracow at the Jesuits' College, studying philosophy. His adopted brother, Stefanski, also was there. The latter had finished his novitiate and had been wearing the Jesuit habit for two years. Roman's brother, Cazimir, was attending lectures at the University of Cracow, and the youngest, Leo, was going to college. Thus, when I came to Cracow for the winter of 1891, there was on the second flat in St. John Street a kind of renewal of those school years of old. Leo was following in the footsteps of his brothers, Roman and Alexander—chasing his colleagues around the rooms, scaring old

Vincent (a little deafer now), fencing, wrestling with the boys and slamming the doors.

Sunday dinners often were attended by Brother Andrew (Roman), Fr. Marian Morawski, Fr. Skrochowski and Stefanski. And as in the past, they would hold their discussions around the silver coffee-pot. Mr. Paul Popiel (life-long servant and friend), bent over his cane now, would also come up and sit with us.

“Thus, when I came to Cracow for the winter of 1891, there was on the second flat in St. John Street a kind of renewal of those school years of old.”

At times, on seeing Bro. Andrew in this same environment which had witnessed so many trials during his boyhood and youth, I could hardly believe my own eyes—that the trying periods were blown away by God like so many clouds, and that now the sun was shining again radiantly and peacefully—shining for each and every one of us.

A daily eating habit of Bro. Andrew nearly cost him his life. Fr. Charles Kaczorowski, S.J., notified me around mid-Lent that Bro. Andrew ate only once a day, being content with a glass of tea in the morning and evening. He added, “It’s a senseless mortification at his age, considering also his great stature and his hard work.” The rector of the college, not too familiar with the ardour of this ascetic, was allowing Roman to fast as he wished.

Roman admitted to me that he had been following this diet since New Year’s, hoping to stick to it his whole life through. Then he promised to end it with Lent.

Since his entry into the novitiate I had found him pale at times, but I did not worry about his health. Instinctively, I believed that God was watching over Roman and that while in his service, no harm could befall him. While others found him paler, I had noticed nothing. Today, however, I am convinced that his grave and prolonged illness which followed was due to the weakening of his bodily defenses during that very winter.

After a year at the philosophy school, Roman became seriously ill in July. He had two hemorrhages in the lungs, provoked by violent coughing due to a cold he had after a swim in the river. Though the monks became seriously concerned, they told me later on that he was the only one to remain serene. It was he who consoled the others, reminding them smilingly that a premature death is a grace for which one should thank God.

Without my knowledge, my husband requested and obtained permission to bring Roman home to Prylbice as soon as the doctor allowed him to get up, and to keep him until he was fully recovered.

I did not fear the heaviest crosses God sent me, for I did not foresee them. But now I did. Roman arrived home by carriage quite unexpectedly. My heart tightened up. I was sure that something had happened, that Roman must be sick. Unobserved, I ran to meet him. As he was getting off, his face smiling so radiantly, I cried out: "Are you ill? Was there blood?"

"A little, Mother, just a little. Don't worry. It's nothing."

That very evening I asked him: "So you want to go before your mother, eh?"

He replied: "Not at all. I hope to survive you, Mother, and that God will grant me such a death that I'll be happy you're not there to see it."

Since there had never been any cause to worry about our children's lungs, I did not realize the danger which was threatening us. And when Dr. Gluzinski, summoned from Cracow, arrived on a day when I myself was having trouble with my bile, and spoke reassuringly, I was convinced that Roman's illness was nothing serious. So come-what-may I began to enjoy his presence, for he was becoming dearer to me every day.

"He was the only one to remain serene. It was he who consoled the others, reminding them smilingly that a premature death is a grace for which one should thank God."

Meanwhile, God was warning me, preparing me, through a strange dream. The night following the doctor's visit, around dawn, I felt, though without the usual clarity and extravagance of dreams, that I was condemned to be crucified just like Our Lord. Those who had participated at the Passion were swarming around me, fully aware of my fate and getting ready for it. My soul was in the throes of fear and I asked myself: "How can I bear it and remain faithful?" Then came the thought: "Jesus went through all that and he'll help me." I could hope once more. "Perhaps in the final moment I may be reprieved." And I thought I could detect the same hope, the same message imprinted on the features of this silent mob around me. I opened my eyes with a deep sigh: "What an awful dream...No, it was not a dream...It was something more than that." Cazimir was standing by my bed, gazing at

me. Still trembling, I told him about my vision. Sadly, he commented: "It certainly was a very strange dream."

For three weeks we did not have to worry about Roman's condition. Then, without reason, he became quite feverish. Dr. Parenski told us that there was something the matter with his lungs. He assured us, of course, that it was nothing serious, but admitted that the slightest neglect might prove dangerous.

Only those who have gone through various torments, crucifying one's soul, when one is caring for and nursing a sick loved one, can understand my suffering at this time. Besides, there still was in Roman's heart a deep nostalgia for the religious life that he hardly had begun, the fear of scandalizing his brethren because of the care he was receiving at home, and the fear of endangering his soul by expecting to be coddled. Furthermore, his sick lungs might become a serious handicap to his calling.

All the physicians were agreed that he should be sent to Davos, in Switzerland, but Roman would not hear of travelling with me in his monastic garb. His superior shared his opinion. So it was decided that Roman would leave his religious habit behind and travel in civilian clothes. We feared that he might never again don his habit. Thus God pierced Roman's soul with a new trial. With all the power at his command, Roman submitted quietly, even joyously. Only God knew just how much Roman suffered then.

In vain did I insist to the doctors that he be told about his condition and the cure's duration.

On August 11th, at dawn, my husband returned from the funeral of Mrs. Popiel; nobody had dared speak to him of Roman's illness. Dr. Parenski advised us not to leave home. Roman understood the advice; he understood that it was to be a matter of spending the whole winter there and, to my surprise, he bore it rather restlessly.

He got up still pale and went into the garden, his breviary in his hand. Meanwhile, moved by the weight pressing my heart or perhaps by a new anxiety, I wrote letters to all the convents I knew of to beg them to pray for Roman's health. An hour later, Roman was in a cold sweat. His high fever was to last from Friday till Sunday morning. We were alone—Roman, his father, I and the Good Lord—during those terrible moments when the initial attacks of the illness were felt, prolonging our solitude in a strange way. The doctors could not be found. Alexander, who was in the Kingdom of Poland, could not be reached. Cazimir could not come, for he was then Leo's sole guardian in Cracow. When the anxiety became unbearable we would hold hands and walk in the garden reciting: "Who dwells in the shelter of the Most-High . . ." (Psalm 90)

My husband, stronger and better than I, would calmly repeat: "Have we not given him to God? He's his and not ours now. God's will be done!" And yet, I remember one evening, while we were going by the room where Roman was resting on his bed (which was always surrounded with fresh fir branches), we looked through the window. Through the foliage we noticed the light of a few tapers. Quickly, we turned our heads away moaning, as though it were already another kind of greenery and lights shining in its midst.

"As I kept repeating them (the words of trust) I resolved to repeat them just as often even if Roman were to die, and so I began to apply them to that higher supernatural hope."

At long last, the physicians came, i.e. Drs. Parenski from Cracow, Dr. Ziembicki and Dr. Lachowicz from Lviv. They were all as pale as death as they greeted me. An hour later, they joined Fr. Morawski and us. They had examined Roman thoroughly and diagnosed his illness as typhus (*a highly infectious disease, similar to epidemic flu, usually attacking weak and fatigued persons living in crude or crowded conditions, characterized by a very high fever. It is caused by the bites of fleas coming from rats. In the 19th century it was commonly fatal.*) Fr. Morawski was to tell me later on that, "no other moment in my life resembled more the reading of a death sentence."

When he heard of Roman's illness, Bishop Puzyna came almost at the same time as Fr. Morawski, and it was I who had to console the bishop. I shall never forget his expression as he said to me: "I'm suffering for you, for him and for the whole cause. This all hurts me so . . ."

Fr. Szczepkowski, Fr. Skrochowski and many Basilians came to visit. The Brother Infirmarian spent his nights tending Roman or kneeling beside his bed, in unending prayer. More than ever human charity was surrounding our cross, which seemed to be the cross of everyone. Rev. Henry Skrzynski moved into Prylbice, just as Dunia (our faithful maid) would have done. I felt fortified on hearing him say: "It's a matter of asking yourself, 'Is my faith strong enough to accept Roman's death?'"

Everybody was sure Roman would die, except Fr. Jackowski, S.J. (Roman's former confessor). But the latter had begun a whole series of retreats in the Duchy of Posen and would not return before the end of October. His letters were the only ones to assure me that God had not yet spoken of death: "While on my way, I've prayed and continue to ask God to console you and our Roman because of the cause to which He has

called him. In fact, I just can't believe that Roman received this grace solely for his own sanctification, and I hope that God wishes to use him to assure the salvation of many souls. The very first person I met here used to be Roman's colleague at the university in Breslau. He remembers him well. No sooner had he greeted me than he asked about Roman, to whom he hopes to write very soon. I beg everyone I meet to pray that God may console you and preserve Roman for His glory. Embrace him for me. Let him submit to God's will, but let him fight against death and make a vow to his patron, St. Andrew. As for me, I've already made one."

I believe those were the only words of hope I heard. Many a time when I sought a ray of hope in others and would have been satisfied with perhaps a word I might not even have believed, the only answer I got was a gloomy silence. The matter seemed too important to everyone, too holy to be touched with a lie or any false hope. God granted other help, however. He was teaching us in another way to be strong and confident.

"Because of what you are, O Lord, my hope is in you. . . ." From the very beginning these words, which had already wrought a miracle form, had become as indispensable to me as the air we breathe. I could not do without them for a second. I repeated them while nursing Roman, conversing with the physicians, coming and going, almost in my sleep.

One day I went to my room; a picture of the Sacred Heart hangs over the bed—I prize it for it was given to us by Bishop Puzyna on the occasion of our silver wedding anniversary. Gazing at the picture, I repeated the words of trust just as I was always doing. As I kept repeating them I resolved to repeat them just as often even if Roman were to die, and so I began to apply them to that higher supernatural hope. A few minutes later, I was back beside Roman. I passed before the picture again. I wanted to repeat the same words in the same spirit. Having said, "Because of what you are, O Lord, my hope is in you," I heard something like a mother's voice correcting her child, adding, "the hope of seeing my child cured." Despite all the great trials that passed on at times, by the will of God which tested me almost super-humanly, these words became the life and strength of my soul for the rest of my life. I could clearly see that God expected from me a hope against all hope. Such was the condition of his divine mercy.

At times, I felt as though I were on a tempestuous sea, holding a treasure in my weakened arms and keeping it over my head. This treasure was Roman's life. It seemed that his very life was the trust God wanted me to bear intact through the torments of these trying days.

Of course, I had to make an effort to keep my heart atuned to the spirit of those blessed words when Roman used to faint, or when the doctors

tried to prepare me for a possible hemorrhage at any time, or when I knew and felt that my son was speaking of death with Fr. Morawski. At times I would be bathed in a cold sweat on hearing each night the same owl hoot under Roman's window, as I stood by the bed on which my child's dear life really seemed to be slipping into eternal rest. Or during Mass on hearing the good father, through grief, make a mistake and say, "Requiescat in pace" instead of, "Ite, Missa est." Even then I would return to my prayer of hope and trust in God.

During one of those Masses, which Roman kept begging for in his room, without being able to follow them fully—for he would immediately fall into a deep and feverish slumber—one of the flames suddenly detached itself from the taper and fell with the wick and burnt itself out. I remained kneeling, only bowing my head still lower, almost to the floor. . . "Because of what you are, O Lord, my hope is in you. . . but if you do wish his death, it is well. . . it will be holy. . . it is well. . ."

The Lord allowed me to defend my treasure against the huge waves with my trust intact. At long last, came the hour of mercy. On October 4th, the feast of the seraphic St. Francis, the doctors declared that Brother Andrew had passed the crisis and had conquered the grave illness. The condition of Roman's chest was so greatly improved that the doctors optimistically suggested that a winter spent in Zakopane would be sufficient to put him back on his feet and allow him to return to his monastery. But it would not be so. Brother Andrew had been emaciated and weakened too much. Total recovery would not take place for another seven months.



Part XIII—
Father Andrew's
First Mass

Recuperation from his deathly illness
A Mission prior to the first Mass
His ecstatic joy on becoming a Basilian priest

Brother Andrew (Roman) had just suffered through the gravest illness of his life, for weeks fighting for life itself. Finally, the sickness had passed its crisis, and now the young monk was on the way to total recovery. The mother was always with her son.

With Roman's convalescence, what ineffably exuberant moments I experienced! Every morning when after Holy Communion, as I brought in his breakfast, he would raise his head, until then immersed in prayer, now so radiant, so handsome, as though the Angel of the Resurrection had touched him with his wing. He did not think anymore that such care was superfluous, that it might scandalize his brethren. Weak as a child, he could be nursed, amused, even spoiled as a child. Father Henry would say: "Always the same old Roman, only now everything within him has become supernatural."

Doctors had recommended that Roman spend the recuperative period at a Swiss rest home in Zakopane since the lengthy illness had completely debilitated him.

On October 17th, after we left for Zakopane, he had a temporary relapse, but at the mountain retreat, surrounded by nature's marvels, which were wild and new to us, he recovered again before the first snow, and our life was restored anew, thanks be to God. Once again God's beautiful sun smiled on us.

We had planned a small chapel. The reliquary from Rome hung above the altar, with a light burning before it. Fr. Stolarczyk—the popular and beloved pastor of the mountaineers—came to say Mass there. Later on, as Roman regained his health and strength, we used to go to the church in a sled. And the sun rising over the Tatras Mountains would seem still more magnificent than that of Abbazia, which used to rise from the clear blue sea. Roman began to sculpt in wood, in the belief that this would some day be useful in the monastery. He studied Hebrew. We read Rohrbacher aloud, Shakespeare, Calderon, and in the evening, after prayers, since my poor head was unable to learn the game of chess, Roman would always suggest: “But it’s better to chat for a while. We don’t talk enough. Let’s talk, Mother.”

In a few weeks, Brother Andrew had become the favorite at Zakopane. An old mountaineer comforted me: “My dear lady, don’t forget to thank the Lord Jesus for having given you that child. He’s a real angel when he speaks to someone.” The unbelievers, the artists, loved him just as much. One of them once told me: “Haven’t talked religion with Bro. Andrew, for I believe I’ve forgotten the very meaning of things religious. But, believe me, Madam, it’s good just to be able to see, to know there are such people.”

It was at Zakopane that we received Mr. Paul Popiel’s last letter. Passing through Cracow, the last words he spoke concerned Roman: “When one has given God such a son, one must pay the price. . . But I?” he added, pretending to be both angry and happy, “What am I paying for? And what right has Roman to bother me with his illness? Frankly, I’m at a loss. . .” He died very soon thereafter.

“Autumn, winter and spring had sped by much too quickly. The bad roads and the snow did not deter the faithful and wise friends God had given us.”

Autumn, winter and spring had sped by much too quickly. The bad roads and the snow did not deter the faithful and wise friends God had given us. Fr. Jackowski, Fr. Skrochowski, Stefanski and the Basilians used to visit us regularly just as relatives would. Brother Albert, a reformer of the Third Order in Poland and whose name will probably be amongst those of the saints, Ladislas Zamoyski, the painter and the publicist Witkiewicz spent hours in our little house in the woods. Every heart went out to this Bro. Andrew, just like bees to honey.

Roman was now completely well. Nevertheless, a few friendly priests and even some Basilians advised us to remain in the mountains until

after April. As regards his superiors, they were willing to rely on the doctors' opinion and my own decision.

We left Zakopane on May 17th, 1892. We were hesitant to leave; these few months had united us to God perhaps more than the preceding years. But I forgot all about myself when Dr. Parenski told me: "Brother Andrew is completely cured. Looking at him now, it's quite hard to believe that his lungs were ever diseased. All he has to do now is return to his monastery." It was then that I took off my diamond-studded earrings—a gift from my father, and the only jewel I was really fond of—and hung them as an exvoto in the wound of the Sacred Heart at Bruchnal.

And since that time I have never kissed 'Ama.' Nor shall I ever have the opportunity to kiss him, unless God allows him to be present at the hour of my death. Despite such a long interruption in his studies (9 months), he made his profession on August 11th of the same year (1892) at Krystinopol, and on September 3rd he was ordained a priest at Prylbice. It was—so we calculated afterwards—the anniversary of the day God had sent him the scourge of typhus to cure him of another illness.

“For three days the people neither cooked nor worked in the fields, being content with partaking of only bread and water. There was a flood of confessions.”

This is the final chapter of my narrative. It is on that beautiful and solemn day of Fr. Andrew's first Mass (Divine Liturgy), which he celebrated at home in the old family nest which had seen his birth, childhood and youth, where the eye and voice of God had found and chosen him.

A mission by the Basilian Fathers was to precede the first Mass on September 8th at Prylbice. This was to be the very first mission ever in this village and its surroundings. At any other time it might have provoked opposition, but preceding Fr. Andrew's first Mass it was totally acceptable. It was to be a short mission.

The missionaries came to Prylbice in the morning. Upon their arrival huge, dark and laden clouds began to cover the skies ominously. A whole week of rains seemed in the offing. The sermons were to be preached in an old forsaken cemetery by the little wooden church. The first Mass of Fr. Andrew was to be celebrated on the same spot, but under a tent. Fr. Kozowski, a Basilian who was to direct the mission, remarked unhappily: "We're bound to have at least three days of rain. In such adverse

conditions the mission will be impossible. You'd better start praying, Madam." About an hour later the wind changed, the clouds began to disperse, a fine rain sprinkled the dry earth and the first sermon began on time. The weather was calm and fresh, remaining that way for the following six days.

The young priest-to-be had not been allowed to take part in the missionary labours owing to his recent illness. He was to arrive the day before his first Mass. Meanwhile there were four sermons per day; and there was catechism for the children. The faithful flocked in daily increasing numbers. In this region, known for its religious indifference and unfriendly attitude, for three days the people neither cooked nor worked in the fields, being content with partaking of only bread and water. There was a flood of confessions. People came as far away as Krechow, travelling twenty-five miles on foot to reach the Basilian monastery.

Around 7:00 a.m. every day, the faithful came in procession from the neighboring villages. During the first days there were three hundred, but on the final day there must have been around two thousand souls. Not a murmur could be heard during the sermon. The poor people crowded together; in their spiritual thirst they imbibed eagerly the Word of God.

A woman confided to me later: "It's the first time we were able to understand what was being preached." Farmers who had done damage in our fields long ago sorrowfully begged our forgiveness.

The mission was beautiful and appropriately timed. When we consider the holiness, fruitfulness, and greatness of Fr. Andrew's religious and episcopal life and works, the mission prior to the first Divine Liturgy was truly a fitting symbol of the future character of the saintly priest.

Roman arrived on Saturday, September 10th at noon. Everyone who had played a part in our son's vocation or had helped us with their advice, prayers and friendship, who had consoled us, suffered or rejoiced with us, was present—about sixty persons.

The great day began at 5:00 a.m. on Sunday. Masses were being celebrated in the church and in our private chapel. Confessions were being heard and people received Holy Communion. The mists of September were dispersing, covering the earth with dew, and the sun was rising bright in the skies.

The faithful and the clergy came in procession along a path, bordered with young fir trees, leading from the church to our garden. They halted at the gate to the garden; then the clergy went on to the house where we were waiting. Roman knelt down before us and asked for our blessing.

He was vested in the beautiful Basilian mantle; then he kissed the cowl, signifying death to this world. Two young Basilians, also in mantles, then flanked him on both sides. Then he followed the clergy.

We went down towards the gate to the garden, following the same path Roman had used so often as a child and patient. The sun seemed to hail him now, as though blessing him with its rays. The birds were chirping joyfully. We were nearing the gate, where the banners were flying high. The procession was waiting. Then it led us to the tent, which had been prepared for the ceremony, and which stood beyond the church itself, pitched on the graves of our ancestors. It was very high and all white, in the midst of ancient lime trees. The altar, raised on a few steps, was all lit up. Above it stood the Roman reliquary and still higher a picture of the Virgin many generations old. Rev. Stanislaus Lacki, the pastor of Bruchnal and a Uniate priest of Podlachie, who loved Roman like a father and was a faithful friend of our family, was to act as deacon with his successor Rev. Jaremkiwicz.

The priestly vestments were impressive. The Byzantine chasuble (phelon) and the dalmatics were of rich white damask with red silk lining and velvet, as well as gold borders. In the centre of the chasuble and surrounded with a radiant halo there shone the Greek monogram of Christ embroidered in gold. Following an old custom, the long stole bore at the bottom the coat-of-arms of those who had donated it, i.e. those of the Sheptytsky and Fredro families. I myself had sewn the alb.



The SHEPTYTSKY FAMILY (five brothers, a wife and child) prior to the Bolshevik invasion of Galicia during World War II.

Before the Mass, Roman gave us Holy Communion. The glimmers reflected by the tent and the white chasuble danced like so many flames around Roman's head. They sparkled around his youthful, serious and handsome face which seemed so humble and full of love and great strength in the Lord. He raised the Host very high, repeating over it: "Lord, I am not worthy. . ." It was at this moment that I saw in his face the expression I had seen only once before—the day he seemed to lack strength for his own sacrifice (Part XI: Roman's leave taking for the novitiate). And now, the same expression was transfigured in Jesus Christ. It was all radiant, as no doubt ours will be in heaven through our sufferings for Christ's sake. Perhaps this was only my personal impression. However, the tears of happiness which were shining in his eyes fixed on the Sacred Host made me think immediately of these tears of pain which I had witnessed once before.

Words are powerless to describe that first Mass of Roman's—his holy piety and the piety of all present; the rays of the sun coming through the tent and floating around so mystically; the silent and attentive crowd; his voice, so deep and calm with the little birds offering a sweet accompaniment as he was offering to God his prayers and the Divine Sacrifice, for "it is thine, it is thy gifts; we bring it to thee according to all and for all. . ."

The picture of those two old priests acting as deacons, serving at the young priest's Mass, their heads bowed deeply, and the double row of white mantles in the midst of which Roman passed, distributing the Body and the Blood of Our Redeemer, made a vivid everlasting impression on my memory, which I have but poorly and inadequately described.

“Roman knelt down before us and asked for our blessing. He was vested in the beautiful Basilian mantle; then he kissed the cowl, signifying death to this world.”

After Mass we knelt at the foot of the altar and Roman blessed us one after the other, placing his hands on our heads. We all kissed his hands which were sanctified by the Sacrifice he had just offered. He first imparted his blessing to his mother, his father, his brothers, the priest who had baptized him; then to Fr. Jackowski, who had taught his soul the truths of the Faith and guided him to the monastery. He blessed Fr. Szepekowski who had prepared him for the altar. He blessed all those who had helped him and whom he had helped. He blessed his friends, his colleagues, the old servants, the farmers who had known him as a child,

the people, the children in the arms of their mother, while the scintillating glimmers unendingly detached themselves from his immaculate chasuble to dance in the air like so many luminous souls to disappear and return again to surround our child's blessed head. He was now a priest forever.

In the evening of that memorable Sunday—September 11th, 1892—we had a cross put up near the little church of Prylbice in commemoration of the mission prior to Roman's first Mass. It was to remind the people forever of the message and graces God had given them during the holy mission and that unforgettable Divine Liturgy.

I bequeath these reminiscences to my family, and the cross to the village of Prylbice. They are offered only for the glory of God! Amen!

This concludes our series on the early life of Metropolitan Sheptytsky as seen through the eyes of his mother in the *Memoirs of Countess Szeptycka*, which was condensed and edited with commentary for *the Redeemer's Voice* by Brother Vincent Tomaskiewicz, whom we gratefully thank.

You can obtain a brief biography, in booklet form, of *Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky*, by Fr. G. Perejda, CSSR., by writing to:

**Ukrainian Catholic Mission
155 Catherine Street
Yorkton, Sask. Canada S3N 0B9**

The price of \$1.00 covers cost of the booklet, postage and handling.



The Servant of God Andrew Sheptytsky was born July 29, 1865, in Prylbychi, Western Ukraine. In 1888, having completed the study of law, he entered the Order of the Basilian Fathers. After his novitiate and philosophy-theology studies, he was ordained to the priesthood, in 1892. He was appointed bishop of Stanislaviv in 1899, and became Archbishop of Lviv and Metropolitan of Halych (Galicia) in 1901. As bishop, he unfolded an extensive apostolic endeavor. In particular, he labored towards uniting the separated Slavic East (Ukraine, White Russia, Russia) with Rome—the well-known Conventions of Velehrad.

The Great Metropolitan visited the Ukrainian communities in the U.S.A. and Canada in 1910 and again in 1921, and, as Apostolic Visitor, in Brazil and Argentina in 1922.

In the time of national calamity he strove to better the fate of his people and was persecuted for this loyalty; he was imprisoned in Russia in 1914-17. His laborious and saintly life ended on Nov. 1, 1944.

At present the proceedings for his glorification to sainthood are taking place in Rome. To procure this blessing of God for our church and people, the whole Ukrainian community must devote itself to fervent prayer and good works. The following prayer is meant to be added to your daily prayers:

Lord Jesus Christ, you always reward your faithful servants not only with the singular gifts of your love, but also with the eternal reward of sainthood in heaven—and many times with glorification among the people of your church here on earth. We humbly beseech you to so glorify your faithful servant Andrew Sheptytsky. Throughout his virtuous life, though full of trials and sufferings, he was a good shepherd to his flock and a great champion of church unity. Through his intercession and glorification send to our entire nation the great gift of unity and freedom. Amen.

Send acknowledgment of answered prayers through his intercession and offerings for expenses of his process to:

**Cardinal Joseph Slipyj
Palazzina dell'Arciprete
00120 Citta del Vaticano (Italia)**

