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# Educational Efforts of Teachers at the Ursuline Sisters' Junior High School and Secondary School in Cracow from 1945 to 1953

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to spotlight the educational efforts undertaken by teachers at the Cracow grammar school administered by the Ursuline Sisters during its reactivation from 1945 to 1953. The research is based on an analysis of documents housed in the Cracow Provincial Archive of the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union, most of which were not previously utilized by the author in his doctoral thesis. The essay outlines the primary objectives of the school's educational mission of religious, moral, and social upbringing, with a focus on preparing female students for service to God, the Church, the Homeland, and their communities. This mission was primarily fulfilled through educational programs devised by the teaching staff, at first through official channels and later through the so-called "second circuit" in response to the ideological offensive in education. Additionally, the article discusses the contributions of extracurricular organizations, such as the School Circle of the Polish Red Cross and Cracow scout teams. It also shows the importance of instilling good manners in students and the pivotal role of teachers in alleviating the burdens of wartime experiences, setting directions for educational initiatives, overseeing their execution, and maintaining positive rapport with students.

## KEYWORDS

educational activity,  
education, teacher,  
secondary school,  
Catholic school, Ursuline  
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## Introduction

The origins of the female secondary school run by the Ursuline Sisters in Cracow date back to 1875. At that time, the Order established a school with a boarding house, which was later transformed into a post-primary school in 1898 and subsequently into a junior high school in 1909. On December 22, 1910, with the approval of the Ministry of Religion and Education (under the supervision of the Austrian government), the Ursuline Sisters also founded a secondary school. The development of the school contributed significantly to its growing prestige and importance. While graduation from a post-primary school opened up the opportunity to continue studies at a teachers' seminar at most, female graduates of the junior high school could attend university classes as free students. Secondary school graduates, on the other hand, were eligible to apply for university admission (Rogozińska 2013: 244–245).

In 1921, shortly after Poland regained independence, the general secondary school was transformed into an eight-class humanities secondary school. Two years later, however, the secondary school was closed. Further modifications in the structure and operation of the Ursuline secondary school resulted from the Act on the Educational System of March 11, 1932, introduced by the Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment, Janusz Jędrzejewicz. This legislation transformed the humanities secondary school into a four-year general junior high school and led to the establishment of a general secondary school with humanities and science classes (Rogozińska 2013: 245).

On November 13, 1939, after the defeat of the September Campaign and the German occupation of Cracow, local occupation authorities ordered the closure of the Ursuline secondary school. However, almost immediately after its shutdown, the sisters organized a center for secret education at the Private Secondary and Junior High School, later designated as Center No. 1. This center conducted clandestine classes throughout the German occupation until January 18, 1945 (Kotowska, Szarska 1998: 43–45; Chrobaczyński 2000: 130–131).

## Functioning of the school in 1945–1953 and its educational programs

Shortly after the Soviet army entered Cracow on February 10, 1945, the Ursuline nuns reactivated their schools without much difficulty (Klich 2017: 179). The Ministry of Education did not impede the reopening of Catholic schools. This tolerance was influenced by the fragility of the new government, which was not ready for open confrontation with the Church, as well as the state's financial constraints, which were alleviated by the presence of private schools. Furthermore, under interwar regulations, students were permitted—and even required—until the enactment of the Council of Ministers' Decree on Freedom of Conscience and Religion of August 5, 1949, to say prayers at the beginning and end of lessons, attend Sunday and holy mass together, participate in three-day retreats, and receive confession and Holy Communion three times a year (Grudziński 2013: 99, 200–203).

Initially, Sister Teresa Ledóchowska, a Polish language teacher, served as principal of the secondary school. In her post-visit report dated May 4, 1946, Dr. Maria Chrzanowska noted that at the Ursuline school, under Ledóchowska's leadership, "in educational work, besides religious influence, great emphasis is placed on the social education of the youth" (Klich 2017: 180). Subsequent reports from March 1947 and February 1948 emphasised the thorough preparation of teachers for lessons, positive teaching outcomes, and the exemplary behavior of female students (Klich 2017: 181–182).

The perception of the Ursulines' school changed after the Ministry of Education launched its ideological offensive (Lewandowski 1997; Jarosz 1998; Koźmian 2002; Szuba 2002; Mezglewski 2004: 275–317; Mauersberg, Walczak 2005) which coincided with personnel changes in the Cracow school superintendent's office. As a result, starting in the 1948/49 school year, Antoni Wolański took over as the school's inspector. In his report on his first visitation, conducted in October 1948, he stressed that the aim of the educational activities conducted in the institution was to instill in the pupils an attitude of love for God and the Homeland. However, he noted a simultaneous reluctance to "switch to a new track of upbringing" and a readiness to "serve the classes that had ended" (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/5.

*Sprawozdanie z wizytacji*). For Wolański, this was tantamount to the school's failure to fulfill the expected "social and state tasks," which consequently put its existence in serious jeopardy. Following Wolański's observations, acting superintendent Wincenty Danek suspended Sister Ledóchowska. Five days later, Stefan Kropaczek, PhD, a teacher from the 3rd State Secondary School, was appointed as the new school principal (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/5. *Sprawozdanie z wizytacji*).

The superintendent also ordered the establishment of a Circle of the Union of Polish Youth (Polish abbreviation: ZMP) on the school premises, whose main task was to shape the ideological orientation of the youth in alliance with the Polish Workers' Party (Polish abbreviation: PPR) and later the Polish United Workers' Party (Polish abbreviation: PZPR). Activities included collaboration with state farms (PGR), collecting scrap metal, celebrating national holidays, and promoting state reforms (Król 2013: 64–65). Despite the steps taken by Kropaczek, the ZMP Circle was quickly dissolved due to strong opposition from the Ursuline Sisters' Superior, and the girls who had joined it transferred to other institutions (Grudziński 2013: 236–237; Klich 2017: 226–227).

Faced with resistance from the Order's superiors, Kropaczek stepped down as principal at the end of the 1948/49 school year. His duties were assumed the following year by Sister Henryka Sosnowska and, from June 1950, by Sister Katarzyna Pol. It is worth noting that neither had the approval of the educational authorities. In the 1948/49 school year, the school was deprived of its state rights for the first time, a situation that recurred during its final two years of operation (1951/52 and 1952/53). In June 1953, the school was officially closed (Klich 2017: 227).

The inspectors' observations also influenced the school's educational programs. Immediately after the war, the educational authorities permitted the inclusion of religious content in the curriculum. However, starting in the 1947/48 school year, when the Ministry of Education began requiring approval of schools' educational plans, there was a growing emphasis on eliminating religious elements from the curriculum, a trend that became increasingly evident over time.

Despite this, even during the 1950/51 school year, the teaching staff of the Ursuline Secondary School declared in their framework

plan of ideological and educational action” that the main educational objective was to prepare female students for active participation in social and state life “based on the principles of Catholic faith and morality.” However, there was little content relating to Catholic pedagogy in the tasks outlined in the plan. While goals such as nurturing a deeper love for the homeland could be regarded as such, objectives like broadening knowledge about the Soviet Union as the implementer of the socialist system or “linking school work with the 6-year plan for Poland’s economic development” were clearly inconsistent with Catholic pedagogical principles (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/41. *Plany wychowawcze. Sprawozdania 1950/52, Ramowy plan pracy ideologiczno-wychowawczej*).

From the 1951/52 school year onward, official school programs made no references to religious education. Instead, the primary educational objectives for individual classes were to work on implementing the 6-year plan alongside an active struggle for peace, e.g. through adherence to student rules and regulations, scientific competitions, creating sea-related decorations, participating in the “I Look, I See, I Serve” competition, and encouraging peer self-help and the use of criticism and self-criticism. The Pedagogical Council was tasked with activities such as “regularly following press reports on the achievements of laborers and forefathers, showcasing them on a special bulletin board, using them as models of commitment in schoolwork, and linking education with real life while fostering the skills needed to live in a working society” (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/41. *Plany wychowawcze. Sprawozdania 1950/52, Roczny plan pracy pedagogicznej. Rok szkolny 1951/52*; sygn. Sz. III/42. *Plany pracy wychowawczej 1951/52, Ramowy plan wychowawczy. Rok szkolny 1951/52*).

Even in the final year of the Secondary and Junior High School’s operation (1952/53), teachers were expected to combine didactic and educational activities with efforts to “fight for peace,” achieve the best possible teaching outcomes, and ensure rigorous adherence to student regulations. Other objectives included familiarizing students with the ongoing successes of the 6-year plan and integrating topics related to the Constitution, the directives of the 7<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting of the Party, and the speeches of President Bierut into teaching and educational practices (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/41. *Plany*

wychowawcze. Sprawozdania 1950/52, *Roczny plan pracy pedagogicznej. Rok szkolny 1952/53*).

Despite the consistent exclusion of religious elements from schools, teachers at Ursuline institutions continued to impart religious knowledge to their students and shape them according to the principles of a Christian worldview (Klich, Kotowska, Rogozińska 2015: 147–151). These schools implemented “dual” educational plans: official plans designed to meet the requirements of the educational authorities and alternative, unofficial plans that reflected the true educational activities occurring within the schools. Based on the draft educational work plan from 1952, the educational influences in Ursuline secondary schools were intended to encompass the following areas:

- Religious education: Teachers, particularly religion instructors, were tasked with deepening students’ understanding of Christian dignity and the grace of baptism.
- Moral education: The goal was to guide students toward God, instill a deep faith in the Catholic Church, and teach them to follow Christian morality by living with honesty, approaching schoolwork conscientiously, recognizing personal faults and mistakes, and seeking God’s will.
- Practical education (manners): Students were expected to maintain order in classrooms and public spaces at school, take care of personal hygiene, and ensure their clothing was clean.
- School-related education: This required students to adopt a responsible approach to their academic duties, while teachers were expected to implement the curriculum as much as possible in accordance with religious and Catholic moral principles (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/44. Materiały do pracy wychowawczej, *Przykładowe opracowanie Planu Pracy Wychowawczej dla Liceum Urszulańskiego*, Poznań, wrzesień 1952 r.).

Expectations of teachers in light of children’s wartime experiences and post-war educational realities

In the post-war reality, it was very important for teachers to take into account the impact of wartime experiences on the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of their students. The teaching staff took this issue very seriously, taking measures to mitigate these effects and making them the focus of their educational efforts and initiatives.

Anonymous surveys, prepared by Polish language teacher Sister Konstantyna Baranowska, asked students about their wartime experiences and how these affected their material circumstances, mental health, relationships with parents and teachers, religiousness and school education. Based on the survey findings, pedagogical and didactic objectives were outlined in May 1946 during a Pedagogical Council meeting and Parents' Committee gatherings. Teachers were required to implement these recommendations. Additionally, the results of the survey were discussed during homeroom sessions in senior classes.

The surveys revealed significant changes in the lives of students due to the war (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/46. *Nasza młodzież powojenna. Wpływ przeżyć wojennych na uczennice zakładów urszulańskich – w półroczu szkolnym 1945 i roku szkolnym 1945/46*). Negative consequences included: deterioration of material conditions and health, increased nervousness and pessimism about the world, emotional detachment and lack of trust in the older generation, reduced physical fitness and ethical standards. However, positive effects were also noted: broader and deeper intellectual interests, an increased sense of social solidarity, a heightened desire for knowledge, deepened religious faith, strengthened patriotism (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/46. *Nasza młodzież powojenna. Wpływ przeżyć wojennych na uczennice zakładów urszulańskich – w półroczu szkolnym 1945 i roku szkolnym 1945/46*; Grudziński 2013: 264).

Out of 221 female students surveyed, an overwhelming majority—193 (88%)—reported that they liked their school. They expressed a desire for their teachers to help restore their “carefree adolescent years” as a form of reparation for the hardships endured during the war. They also sought a “free and nurturing friendly atmosphere,” the opportunity to receive a quality education, and the chance to either study at university or gain professional qualifications. It was also important for the students to be educated within the framework of a Christian worldview. The teachers' efforts to create an appropriate and supportive educational environment are evidenced by the students' statements: “The school gives us everything—it educates us, nurtures us, and even provides pleasure and entertainment. I have never enjoyed any school as much as this one, and I've attended two others ... Also, nowhere have I encountered such kind and wonderful

teachers as here” (student, 14 years old); “The school is my whole world—it provides relief and helps me forget the difficult experiences of the war. The school gives me everything I need” (student, 16 years old); “The school probably offers us the greatest opportunities for self-improvement ... I would describe it as a bottomless well filled to the brim with chances to do good” (student, 16 years old); “The school teaches us how to live alongside others, shows us the right path, and connects us with faith” (student, 16 years old); “I love this school and look with admiration at the hard work of all the Sisters in our education. I never imagined that one could feel so attached to a school and love it so deeply” (student, 19 years old) (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/46. *Nasza młodzież powojenna. Wpływ przeżyć wojennych na uczennice zakładów urszulańskich – w półroczu szkolnym 1945 i roku szkolnym 1945/46*). The students overwhelmingly (90%) expressed appreciation for their teachers’ dedication, knowledge, and personalities. They emphasized their gratitude for the teachers’ courage in risking their lives while conducting secret classes, as well as their commitment, patience, perseverance, and religious education. However, there were also critical remarks. Some students mentioned instances of favoritism, unfair grading, lack of kindness and understanding, mood-dependent behavior during lessons, and derogatory remarks such as calling students “calves, donkeys, and dumplings.” One student provided an insightful summary of the teachers’ differing approaches, saying: “I would divide them into teacher-pedagogues who are profoundly good, who understand young people and engage with them, and another group of teachers who are cold clerks, rigidly and impersonally performing their duties without regard for what the child thinks or feels. Living with young people—that’s what makes an ideal teacher, in my opinion! It is easy to give someone a grade of 4, but it’s necessary to know whether that grade is fair. Classification shouldn’t just rely on dry assessments of knowledge; the teacher should also consider whether the student is dealing with difficulties that tire her out and hinder her learning” (APUUR, Sz. III/46. *Nasza młodzież powojenna. Wpływ przeżyć wojennych na uczennice zakładów urszulańskich – w półroczu szkolnym 1945 i roku szkolnym 1945/46*). This statement shows appreciation for teachers who do not focus solely on didactics and enforcing knowledge, who show empathy, take an interest in their students’ family circumstances, and try to understand



the causes of learning difficulties or misbehaviour. The pedagogical insights derived from the analysis of the survey pointed to the need for self-development among teachers, educators, and parents. Based on the principles of the Catholic faith, they were encouraged to work on shaping their own character to eliminate any discrepancy between the ideals they preached and their own behavior in order to influence students most effectively by example. Teachers were also expected to enhance their subject knowledge to become models of reliability and conscientiousness in fulfilling their duties. In their interactions with students, teachers were encouraged to:

1. Nourish a deep interest in and love for their students by paying attention to their inner experiences and environmental contexts.
2. Be calm, firm, yet gentle and patient in all educational interactions, without causing fear. e.g., by raising their voice or displaying irritability.
3. Build students' self-esteem, offer encouragement and hope, show them the positive aspects of difficult situations, demonstrate the value of making an effort, and help alleviate difficulties.
4. To be kind, to win the trust of young people through skill and tact, to defuse inner tensions, and to overcome reticence. To be the moral support that students often seek from their teachers, even if this need is not always outwardly expressed (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/46. *Nasza młodzież powojenna. Wpływ przeżyć wojennych na uczennice zakładów urszulańskich – w półroczu szkolnym 1945 i roku szkolnym 1945/46*).

In addition, teachers were expected to address, as far as possible, the material and health needs of children and young people while striving to ensure that curricula, textbooks, and the entire pedagogical system were grounded in the values of truth, goodness, love, and creative work. These were to be “based on the foundations and traditions of Polish culture and history,” with the Catholic religion serving as the central guarantor of these values. Consequently, religious upbringing constituted the most important, although not exclusive, component of the school's educational activities (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/46. *Nasza młodzież powojenna. Wpływ przeżyć wojennych na uczennice zakładów urszulańskich – w półroczu szkolnym 1945 i roku*

*szkolnym 1945/46*). This emphasis was also evident in the activities of the school's PCK (Polish Red Cross) Circle and the school's scout team.

## Education within school organisations

The School PCK (Polish Red Cross) Circle was established shortly after the school's reactivation in March 1945. The organization was supervised by teacher Iza Pelc, with students divided into two groups, each led by female teachers from the local school. The younger group was overseen by Janina Oszastówna, while the older group was managed by Zofia Rymarówna. Maria Ornatowska was appointed as the circle's chairperson. The members organized themselves into two groups, sanitary and sightseeing, which met every week. They were mainly involved in social and charitable efforts, such as organizing winter aid, collecting clothes and food for repatriates, and distributing gifts from PCK parcels to students from economically disadvantaged families. Hygiene standards on the school premises were also a significant focus of their efforts (APUUR, sygn. Sz. Org. PCK 63. *Plany pracy, sprawozdania roczne i miesięczne, protokoły z zebrań 1949–1953, Sprawozdanie z działalności Koła za rok 1945/46*).

As part of their social work, students, under the guidance of their teachers, assisted impoverished families by providing food and clothing, visiting them, and spending time with their children. They also volunteered in school daycare centers, organized “Santa Claus” and Christmas parties for children in daycare facilities and for soldiers in hospitals, collected donations for repatriates, and maintained the graves of those killed during the war (Grudziński 2013: 226).

In the 1946/47 school year and subsequent years, the PCK (Polish Red Cross) Circle was supervised by Zofia Rymarówna, under whose guidance the group continued its social, charitable, and sanitary-hygiene activities (APUUR, sygn. Sz. Org. PCK 63. *Plany pracy, sprawozdania roczne i miesięczne, protokoły z zebrań 1949–1953, Sprawozdanie z działalności Koła za rok 1945/46*). The Circle's activities were guided by the motto, “Love your neighbor, serve God and Poland!” Practical implementation of this motto included helping the sick and former prisoners (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III. 18. *Sprawozdanie*

*z pracy Koła PCK przy Gimnazjum i Liceum SS. Urszulanek w Krakowie za rok szkolny 1946/47).*

In the following years, the Circle remained engaged in social and charitable efforts. With Rymarówna's approval, students carried out weekly service at St. Lazarus Hospital, during which they handed out care packages to patients and provided them with assistance. They also worked daily (except on Saturdays and holidays) from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Caritas Day Care Centre on Krakowska Street, helping children with homework and teaching them. The circle also supported a day center for children of former political prisoners on Kanonicza Street, visited old people's homes, and assisted soldiers in military hospitals (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III. 18. *Sprawozdanie z pracy Kółka Polskiego Czerwonego Krzyża przy Gimnazjum i Liceum SS. Urszulanek w Krakowie w roku 1947/8; sygn. Sz. III. 18. Sprawozdanie z działalności młodzieżowego Koła PCK przy Liceum SS. Urszulanek w roku szkolnym 1948/49; Grudziński 2013: 227).*

Starting in 1947/48, political influence on PCK educational activities became increasingly apparent. Initially limited to peripheral initiatives, such as preparing a school exhibition as part of the "three-year plan," these efforts soon expanded. In subsequent years, students took part in collections for the Komsomol holiday—a communist Soviet youth organization—and organized a school day-care center on Kanonicza Street as part of pre-Congress activities (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III. 18. *Sprawozdanie z działalności młodzieżowego Koła PCK przy Liceum SS. Urszulanek w roku szkolnym 1948/49).*

The first scout team, 35 KDH "Czyn" [Deed], was established at the school in September 1945, followed by the 52 KDH "Wierchy" [*Mountain Summits*])—in December of the same year. Records from the Provincial Archives of the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union in Cracow also provide incomplete information about the activities of KDH 16. Initially, the scout teams were supervised by Wanda Malinowska, a junior high school teacher, and later by Sister Zygmunta Podgórska, a history teacher. During the school year, the Girl Scouts worked under the guidance of female teachers in their chosen areas of focus. The "Wierchy" team, as part of its "service to the child" initiative, cared for 61 KDH, a group composed of street children. Members of "Wierchy" provided food packages from the shelter on Radziwiłłowska Street, organized "Santa Claus" and

Christmas parties for these children, and assisted in day care centers (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III. 18. *Sprawozdanie z pracy 52 KDH „Wierchy” za rok 1946/47*; sygn. Sz. Org. H 61. *Harcerstwo 1945/46; 1946/47; 1947/48*. Plany pracy, sprawozdania, materiały dotyczące 35. Drużyny, *Plan pracy na rok 1946/47, 35 KDH „Czyn” im. Józefy Mikowej*; Grudziński 2013: 230–231).

The “Czyn” team, in turn, focused on developing qualities such as punctuality, reliability, discipline, responsibility, fraternity, and a scouting attitude. They also organized Christmas and Easter parties for orphans of political prisoners, conducted donation collections for flood victims, cared for abandoned graves, purchased trash bins for Wolski Forest, compiled reading lists, and wrote book reviews (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III. 18. *Sprawozdanie z pracy 52 KDH „Wierchy” za rok 1946/47*; sygn. Sz. Org. H 61. *Harcerstwo 1945/46; 1946/47; 1947/48*. Plany pracy, sprawozdania, materiały dotyczące 35. Drużyny, *Plan pracy, 52 ŻDKH „Wierchy” na rok 1947/48*; Grudziński 2013: 230–231).

Meanwhile, members of the 16<sup>th</sup> team volunteered at the Emergency Care Centre for Girls in Cracow, where they also organized recreational activities for children. Over time, the activities of the scout teams in the 1940s and 1950s became increasingly politicized by the educational authorities (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III. 18. *Sprawozdanie z pracy drużyn harcerskich przy Gimnazjum i Liceum SS. Urszulanek w Krakowie*; Grudziński 2013: 230).

### The fulfilment of educational ideas according to the “Serviam” program

Throughout their years of activity in Poland, the Ursulines aimed to unify the educational work in the schools they operated, which became a reality in the early 1950s. The unified educational program developed at the Ursuline educational conventions was encapsulated in the Latin word *Serviam* meaning “I will serve.” In educational practice, *Serviam* symbolized serving God, the Church, the homeland, the family, and the local community. Service to God and the Church mainly involved fulfilling religious obligations; service to the homeland meant achieving good academic results, maintaining

discipline, and demonstrating dutifulness; and service to others encompassed selflessness and working on one's personal character (Klich 2017: 414–417).

In the 1950/51 school year, an Ursuline school in Poznań awarded the *Serviam* badge to female students who embodied these ideals in their lives, marking the first time such an honor was bestowed in Poland (Klich 2017: 417). This practice gradually spread to other Ursuline educational institutions, including the one in Cracow.

One example of the implementation of educational ideas at the Cracow school is the “attempted commentaries on the Gospels” written by high school students in Class X under the guidance of Sister Catherine Pol in March 1952. These commentaries were developed through discussions and largely referred to both individual experiences and broader human communities. In their reflections, the students pointed to the importance of living a life guided by Christ's teachings and proclaiming them with courage and conviction. They emphasized the value of maintaining evangelical optimism despite life's difficulties, coupled with the ability to endure setbacks. Other key themes included displaying an uncompromising attitude in matters of faith, showing love to parents, superiors, siblings, the poor, and even strangers encountered on a tram—whether friends or adversaries—practicing forgiveness, striving for harmony, adhering to steadfast moral principles despite shifting circumstances, and exercising silence to de-escalate conflicts. However, there was also a questionable glorification of suffering. As the authors of the commentaries stated, “Man should aim at the Lord, imitate Him, and since the Lord God loves all people and makes no difference between them, so we, imitating Him, must love our neighbors and make no difference between them” (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/39. Materiały wychowawcze powojenne, *Próba komentarzy do Ewangelii – kl. X-lic. pod kierunkiem m. Katarzyny Pol, Kraków – marzec 1952*).

The students and their teachers also stressed that a lack of love for others stems from a lack of knowledge of the Gospel and distance from God. In their view, this results in loneliness and inner sadness and generates hatred and discord in society, often culminating in civil wars. To counteract this, they proposed that Catholics dedicate 10 minutes daily to reading the Gospel, focus on self-improvement, and cultivate their character. They also believed it was important to

avoid criticism and practice greater forbearance. It is also noteworthy that the authors of the commentaries were aware of the difficulties in living out the commandment to love one's neighbor, particularly the injunction to repay evil with good. Interestingly, there was no consensus among the girls when responding to the question, "Which is more important: prayer or a deed arising from love of neighbor?" (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/39 *Materiały wychowawcze powojenne, Próba komentarzy do Ewangelii – kl. X-lic. pod kierunkiem m. Katarzyny Pol, Kraków – marzec 1952*).

In 1952, the students provided feedback in questionnaires on the Ursuline ideal of education implemented at the Cracow school, highlighting both its practical application and areas for improvement. They expressed the belief that the motto *Serviam*—calling for daily service to God, one's neighbor, and the homeland—should become a universal Catholic ideal. One respondent described the Ursuline ideal as a model of obedience. Another emphasized the need to "fight for the rights of God and truth," adopting an attitude of "tenacious struggle in defense of what is sacred to us and today is subject to blasphemy or mockery" (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/39, *Materiały wychowawcze powojenne, Zestawienie odpowiedzi na ankietę. 1952*). This statement reflects a suggestion to adapt the Ursuline ideal to claim a more prominent place for God in the socio-political reality.

Another girl emphasized the need to work on regularity, punctuality, obedience, individual and collective responsibility, and honesty. At the same time, she pointed out negative behaviors, including thoughtlessness, indifference to religious instruction, lack of willingness to work on self-improvement, scepticism and indifference to the truth. She attributed these shortcomings to a "frenetic pace of life," excessive activities, a lack of introspection, insufficient personal development, weak willpower, and susceptibility to negative influences. Another student mentioned deficiencies such as neglecting religious practices, a lack of courtesy, failure to adhere to rules of good behavior, and insufficient responsibility and dutifulness (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/39, *Materiały wychowawcze powojenne, Zestawienie odpowiedzi na ankietę. 1952*).

When asked how to remedy these shortcomings in cultivating the ideal, the students suggested introducing the Ursuline ideal in an accessible manner from the earliest grades, in order to spark interest

in children and gradually develop a habit of working toward its realization. They also recommended collective activities such as reading together, discussing books in small groups, and helping each other. Most notably, they emphasized the importance of influencing one's community through personal example, cheerfulness, naturalness, and a sense of dignity. Another valuable proposal was maintaining contact after high school graduation, even through correspondence, to share experiences and sustain a sense of community. The students stressed that pursuing the ideal did not demand extraordinary sacrifices but rather involved performing everyday, mundane tasks with the intention of serving God, others, and the homeland (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/39, Materiały wychowawcze powojenne, *Zestawienie odpowiedzi na ankietę*. 1952).

The students also highlighted the role of the headmistress and class teachers in making the girls aware of the importance of self-improvement and striving toward the Ursuline ideal. To enhance the educational environment, teachers used various educational methods. One such approach was the "mood barometer," which symbolically displayed "good weather" when students' behavior was deemed appropriate. Another method involved individual work on personal shortcomings. Each student selected a specific weakness (e.g., laziness, rudeness, unpunctuality) to work on and documented her daily progress. Peer evaluations were also incorporated into classroom activities, along with an "individual run for better results" initiative (APUUR, sygn. Sz. III/39, Materiały wychowawcze powojenne, *Zestawienie odpowiedzi na ankietę*. 1952).

## Conclusion

From the moment of its reactivation, the Ursuline Sisters' Junior High and Secondary School in Cracow attached particular importance to fulfilling its educational mission. The overarching goal of education at the school was to serve God, the Church, the homeland, and others. Religious education, closely tied to moral and social upbringing, was a central focus. Assimilating principles of good manners was also regarded as a key component of education. This was reflected in the superintendent's reports on the work of teachers and in the preserved educational plans for classes and school

organizations. Religious education was carried out not only through religious practices and lessons, but also through informal discussions among students with active participation from teachers. These interactions often formed the basis for writing commentaries on the Gospels. On one hand, these writings conveyed a positive portrayal of faith and religiosity, depicting God as a loving Father and promoting evangelical optimism despite life's setbacks. On the other hand, they occasionally revealed an uncritical approach to religious issues or an excessive focus on the affirmation of suffering.

Moral education was closely linked to religious instruction and emphasized adherence to Christian moral principles. In practice, this consisted mainly of learning the principles of Christian morality and applying them to school life by being obedient, dutiful and achieving good academic results. A particularly important aspect of moral and social upbringing was the emphasis on the commandment to love one's neighbor. This principle was actualized through extensive efforts to support various individuals and social groups in the city. As part of their extracurricular activities, students and their teachers provided aid to impoverished families, children in daycare centers, orphans, street children, the sick, wounded soldiers, repatriates, former prisoners, residents of retirement homes, and flood victims.

The documents reviewed, particularly those relating to teacher expectations in light of students' wartime experiences, outline a vision of the ideal educator. This teacher was to embody qualities such as patience, fairness, kindness, empathy, the ability to nurture students' self-esteem, authenticity, dedication, and expertise in applying effective educational methods. This image of the teacher, shaped by the post-war context and the socio-political realities of the time despite some shortcomings and deficiencies, was largely realized by the teaching staff at the Ursuline secondary school in Cracow.

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