

FR. ADAM RYBICKI

COLONEL ŁUKASZ CIEPLIŃSKI (1913–1951).
A ROLE MODEL IN THE CHRISTIAN FORMATION OF MEN.
A STUDY BASED ON HIS PRISON GRYPSES

Abstract. The article presents the personality and spirituality of a Polish soldier, Colonel Łukasz Ciepliński (1913–1951), as a personal role model for contemporary men. The main sources are his secret messages written from a prison cell, which are extremely valuable documents about this character. The article presents the personality and male characteristics of this Polish officer: internal unity, maturity, courage, and care for others. There are also signs of his profound respect for family values, since he was a husband and father. Another issue is his Christian spirituality: in suffering, like many prominent figures of the Church, he shows an extraordinary increase in theological virtues (faith, hope and love) as well as union with Christ and readiness for martyrdom.

Keywords: Łukasz Ciepliński, men's spirituality, personal role-model.

INTRODUCTION

In the face of contemporary questions about men's ethos and male spirituality, the question of proposing possible role models arises. Personal models are issues present in the theology of spirituality, homiletics and catechetics.¹ Many traditional patterns of masculinity have common features and differences. These issues are sometimes called: *Images-guides* (managerial images

Fr. ADAM RYBICKI is a priest of the Koszalin-Kołobrzeg diocese, habilitated Doctor of Theological Sciences, professor of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, employee of the Department of Systematic and Practical Spirituality of the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Lublin. Author of many publications on the theology of Catholic spirituality; correspondence address: Al. Raławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin; e-mail: adam.rybicki@kul.pl; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2417-6225>.

¹ Cf. Helena Słotwińska, "Biblijne wzory osobowe w katechezie," *Roczniki Liturgiczno-Homiletyczne* 1 (2010), 2(57): 241–256.

of personality), *Idéal de la personne* (French for an ideal personality), *Enviabile human figure* (a human figure is the subject of aspirations), *Human ideal-type of a given culture* (the ideal man in a given culture), *Admirable human figure* (a figure that arouses admiration), and *Vorbild* or *Ideal Typus der Gruppe* (German for the ideal type of group).² A role model, in addition to representing certain values, also has a social dimension, i.e., they are related both to the community where they grew up and to the one that they form even after their death.

Since the personal dimension is a personal role model's primary feature, they are usually people who actually live in a specific time and place. Contemporary reflection on this issue authorizes us to adopt the following definition of a personal role model: they are a real or fictitious person who, through their personal perfection, arouses in others, through interpersonal communication, a personal "drive" that imitates and identifies with the experiences and realizations of higher spiritual and moral values.³ In contemporary culture, not only European, role models have played a great role in education and upbringing, because they provoked imitation, even if they were not real characters (literature, film, etc.). The search for the "ideal man" was evident in the times of Homer, Hesiod, and the Spartans.⁴

Imitation, which is a strong human instinct, is present from infancy, therefore – despite today's distrust towards all personal models – it is worth returning to the meaning of these social phenomena, all the more so since, along with imitation, a discussion on values (moral, intellectual, spiritual, etc.) that these role models represent is possible. This is usually associated with an attitude of respect toward the people who become role models. Getting to know and imitate people who are considered role models belongs not only to the traditional ethos of masculinity, but also to the best tradition of Christian spirituality, in which the imitation of Christ (and the saints) has always found a special place. In European culture, one of the most important male role models emerged from the so-called ethos of chivalry: from the *Iliad*, through Aristotle's "rightly proud" man, the teachings of Hesiod and Aesop, to Sparta; all these elements somehow shaped the ethos of the medieval knight.⁵

² Maria Ossowska, *Etos rycerski i jego odmiany* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1986), 7–8.

³ Słotwińska, *Biblijne wzory osobowe w katechezie*, 243.

⁴ Arkadiusz Baron, ks., *Świętość a ideały człowieka* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2013), 121–174.

⁵ Ossowska, *Etos rycerski i jego odmiany*, s. 171–172.

In later centuries, the knightly ethos was eagerly applied, although not all of its elements can be reconciled with present-day challenges and our culture. The chivalric ethos cannot be uncritically applied to contemporary Christian spirituality, because it also contained elements that contradicted it. What is needed here is knowledge of both Christian spirituality and morality, as well as everything in the knightly ethos, which, due to a different origin (pagan and ancient), cannot be reconciled with the gospel message. Therefore, worth pointing out in contemporary personal models are the attitudes, features or properties that apply to contemporary life and refer to modern men who identify themselves with the faith of the Church.

This article presents Łukasz Ciepliński as a personal model for men (who define themselves as Christians – but not only for them), in whom human, masculine, Christian, soldier, fatherly, and other features are concentrated. These can be a reference point for modern men in their search for personal development and spirituality. The opinion of people who personally knew the hero presented here is unambiguous: he can be seen as a role model at almost every level of the masculine personality. Many witnesses of Ciepliński's life are also convinced of his martyrdom and personal sanctity,⁶ and materials about the colonel are still being collected for the needs of his beatification process.⁷ This study, however, is not a broad view of Ciepliński's personality, but only an attempt to show the most important aspects of his personality and spirituality as a men's role model.

ŁUKASZ CIEPLIŃSKI'S PROFILE

Łukasz Ciepliński – “Pług” [Plow], “Ostrowski,” “Ludwik,” “Apk,” “Grzmot” [Thunder], “Bogdan” – (1913–1947) is a figure who, along with Witold Pilecki and many others, is becoming a symbol of the Poles who struggled against the communist regime in the first years after the end of World War II. He first fought in the defensive war of 1939 from the start of the fighting until Warsaw's capitulation. During the war, he showed great courage, heroism and dedication to the Fatherland, as confirmed by witnesses of specific events. He was remarkably honored with the Order of Virtuti Militari. Ciepliński led the structures of the Home Army and later

⁶ Józef Roman Maj, *Polska zwycięży. Rzecz o Łukaszu Cieplińskim* (Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2015), 7.

⁷ Maj, *Polska zwycięży. Rzecz o Łukaszu Cieplińskim*, 7.

joined the anti-communist conspiracy (WiN), becoming one of its most important leaders. After a cruel, three-year investigation and imprisonment, he was murdered on the sentence of a communist court. His secret grypses or messages, the main source of this study, come from the last three months of his life.

Ciepliński was erased from posterity's memory for a long time after his death, and his person was desecrated by, among other things, hateful and lying publications, the last of which appeared as late as 1986 in the weekly "Perspektywy." The place of Łukasz Ciepliński's burial is not known to this day. However, his memory is being revived: new publications about him are being written, he is the patron of streets and schools, was posthumously awarded the Order of the White Eagle and the date of his death is celebrated as the Cursed Soldiers National Day of Remembrance.⁸ On November 17, 2013, a monument dedicated to him was erected in Rzeszów. In recent years, there are more and more such expressions of commemoration for Łukasz Ciepliński. One of the latest is a coin minted by the National Bank of Poland with a face value of PLN 10, minted in 2019 as part of the numismatic series "Wyklęci przez komunistów żołnierze niezłomni" [Unbroken Soldiers Cursed by the Communists].⁹ On March 1, 2021, the Polish Post Office commemorated him on a commemorative postage stamp.¹⁰

The foundation of his character and attitude evident in his grypses was, of course, his family home and, at an age when a man's character is forged, the years spent in Cadet Corps No. 3 in Rawicz. His parents raised their children in the spirit of patriotism and the Catholic faith; they were well off, with Łukasz's father running a bakery and colonial store in Kwilcz.¹¹ As a child, he was a diligent student, but also an athletic and curious boy, and witnesses speak of his childish behavior and character in superlatives. He was also known for his healthy piety and participation in religious practices. When he was 16, he entered the Cadet Corps, which left him with a lasting and profound world of core personality traits, masculine, patriotic and religious-spiritual values. The Cadet Corps was an elite school based on the rights of

⁸ Collective work (no editor), *W hołdzie Pułkownikowi Łukaszowi Cieplińskiemu, Członkom IV Zarządu Głównego Zrzeszenia Wolność i Niezawisłość, Żołnierzom Wyklętym* (Rzeszów: Stowarzyszenie Komitet Społeczny Budowy Pomnika płk. Łukasza Cieplińskiego 2013), 2–20.

⁹ Elżbieta Jakimek-Zapart, *Sny wstają... Grypsy Łukasza Cieplińskiego z celi śmierci* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IPN, 2020), 39 (henceforth: SW).

¹⁰ <https://media.poczta-polska.pl/pr/649886/znaczek-honorujacy-zolnierzy-wykletych>, accessed 26 April, 2021.

¹¹ SW, 9.

a general high school, but since it educated future officers, it also had military training and moral-patriotic and spiritual formation in its program: “using youthful enthusiasm, efforts were made to shape elements that were considered masculine, such as ambition, strong will, readiness for action, courage, perseverance, firmness and a sense of responsibility.”¹²

The Cadet formation was also based on the old knightly tradition, but the modernity of these schools consisted, among other things, in the fact that the general educational and military program was enriched with such elements as visiting the historical monuments in Warsaw and Cracow, exhibitions, museums, places of national culture, factories, power plants, manufactories, etc. Cadets also participated in uprising anniversaries and other patriotic events, as well as celebrations and cultural events dedicated to such figures as Chopin, Mickiewicz, Reymont, Żeromski, Staszic, Słowacki, Sienkiewicz, Kościuszko, Kasprowicz, Skłodowska, etc.¹³ A trace of this broad education and formation will also be found in Łukasz Ciepliński’s secret messages. However, from the time of the Cadet Corps, the most memorable event for young Łukasz will be meeting a participant of the January Uprising, who spoke of his battles, including war and prison sufferings endured for God and the Fatherland. In his memories of this event remains “an irrational, almost mystical conviction that what is Polish is shielded in friendship by what is divine.”¹⁴

This was the integral idea that this insurgent served and suffered for. Their meeting must have been an extremely deep experience in the mind of young Łukasz, because his grypses reveal a similar spirituality combined with the spirit of patriotism and moral values that the veteran of the January Uprising presented during his meeting with the Cadets in Rawicz.¹⁵ In the organizational document entitled *The duties and rights of the students of the Corps of Cadets*, one can read the following words:

The profession for which you are preparing requires, above all, qualities of character: calmness, self-confidence and courage. These three qualities combined with dutifulness and knowledge only create a good officer. (...) Our homeland requires from you such virtues as a sense of personal honor and dignity. Whoever

¹² Witold Lisowski, “Polskie Korpusy Kadetów w latach 1981–1939,” *Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty* 22 (1979): 84.

¹³ Lisowski, *Polskie Korpusy Kadetów w latach 1981–1939*, 93.

¹⁴ Maj, *Polska zwycięży. Rzecz o Łukaszu Cieplińskim*, 74.

¹⁵ Maj, *Polska zwycięży. Rzecz o Łukaszu Cieplińskim*, 74.

has this sense will never fail, because he knows that wounds, death and captivity are insignificantly small things compared to dishonor.¹⁶

These words will be written years later almost verbatim from death row by Łukasz Ciepliński as his own.

In the Cadet Corps, Łukasz Ciepliński was a peculiar combination of many emerging masculine virtues combined with a deep spirituality manifested in daily prayer and spiritual practices. However, a certain fact shows the magnitude of the importance of this spirituality in his life: at the end of his education, he was nominated *primus* of the school and, being able to choose the award himself, he asked for a gorget of the Mother of God, because he had promised Mary as a child that he would be her “knight.” One of the first accurate biographers of Ciepliński comments on this event as follows:

It was so significant in the life of Polish military schools that the photo of Łukasz being awarded a gorget of the Mother of God circulated throughout Poland. (...) Łukasz’s decision came at a time of consciously spreading skepticism – both in relation to faith as a vital fact of life, and in relation to the whole range of beliefs arising from the faith. At a time dominated by multiple trends of atheistic thought, rejecting Christianity in a hostile way, including leftist directions for solutions to social problems, denying the value of the Christian tradition for modernism, various forms of materialism and relativism, this decision of a young officer of the Polish army was difficult to understand.¹⁷

The young graduate of the Cadet Corps A.D. 1934 also had to make a speech on this occasion. He set it on the motifs of shield and sword: he said that the essence of every Polish soldier’s undertaking is the ability to protect what is near and dear to Poles (*shield*) and to fight against anyone who violates these rights (*sword*).¹⁸ These ideas will be strongly present in the secret messages later written on death row.

The events cited here only foreshadow the development of his masculine, civic and Christian virtues and qualities, evident during the years of war and then conspiracy, as described by eyewitnesses. In the first publication about him, which could only be published abroad, Jesuit Fr. Stanisław Kluz, who personally knew Ciepliński, wrote:

¹⁶ Jacyna, *O powinnościach i prawach uczniów Korpusu Kadetów*, 3–6.

¹⁷ Maj, *Polska zwycięży. Rzecz o Łukaszu Cieplińskim*, 93.

¹⁸ Maj, *Polska zwycięży. Rzecz o Łukaszu Cieplińskim*, 94.

A capable organizer, cautious conspirator, patriot, idealist, and at the same time an extraordinarily practical man. Above all, he has a great ability to approach people and win them over and reach out to people new to him. These are also the kind of people he has around him. Almost half of them had higher education. (...) Ciepliński brings WiN to the highest level in the history of its existence, both organizationally and ideologically.¹⁹

The qualities mentioned here, contributing to the fact that this figure can be called a “personal role model” for men, are clearly visible, as if reading the secret messages, the grypses, written in the last months of his life in prison, through a lens.

2. THE PRISON GRYPSES AS A SOURCE

Łukasz Ciepliński’s grypses are a specific and unique source for many reasons. They were written in his death cell from December 1950 to February 3, 1951 (during the last weeks of his life) as a kind of synthetic message addressed to his wife Jadwiga Cieplińska, son Andrzej and other members of his immediate family and other soldiers. They are not only a symbol of a farewell and ideological (including spiritual) testament by a specific man, but represent an entire generation, revealing not only his last wishes, but they also contain a moral-spiritual message.²⁰ The latest, revised and most complete edition of the source material for this study was published in 2020.

Apart from the earliest text, dated October 1950, written on a cigarette packet, the other secret messages are written in chemical pencil on cigarette papers measuring 6.5x4.4 cm. The storage locations of the original cigarette papers (38 in number) are known, while several other grypses are known only from publications, but the fate of their originals is unknown. “That they can be seen and read today seems to border on the miraculous,” wrote the publishers of the latest version.²¹ From the fact of being able to write in a cell saturated with informers, to how they got out of the cell, their history after the war, miraculous rescue and the explosion of interest in them in modern

¹⁹ Stanisław Kluz, *W potrzasku dziejowym. Win na szlaku AK. Rozważania i dokumentacja* (Londyn: Wydawnictwo “Veritas”, 1976), 75.

²⁰ Janusz Kurtyka, *Słowo wstępne*, in Elżbieta Jakimek-Zapart, *Nie mogłem inaczej żyć... Grypsy Łukasza Cieplińskiego z celi śmierci* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego “Societas Vistulana,” 2008), 4–5.

²¹ SW, 43.

times is a whole string of unbelievable events. To the best of modern knowledge, this is the only collection of unofficial letters from a person convicted during the years of the Communist regime that is so extensive and has such a remarkable content.

Although the bulk of the text from the *grypses* is a record of strictly internal experiences, there are also fragments whose purpose was simply to record events and thoughts, providing other important information. In terms of literary form, they are neither a typical correspondence (there was never a reply), nor a diary, nor a memoir, nor a chronicle. The basis of the diary as a literary genre is, first of all, the dates and the series of traces contained under these dates, which the person of the diarist (the author of the diary) leaves behind over time, and not only in the facts described, but even in the character of the writing, the type of writing utensils or the frequency of the entries.²² In the background is the purpose, content and form of a diary.²³

These *grypses* as a source do not exhaust the characteristics of an autobiographical literature genre such as letters or diaries, and when speaking of them as a genre, a certain problem arises as to how to finally classify them. Without a doubt, they have the character of a spiritual testament. This is supported by the number of messages, requests and recommendations addressed to various people. They are also, even without the author's intentions, a picture of his moral and patriotic attitudes, spirituality, his attitude towards his family, and an expression of his aspirations and desires. Thus, it is an extremely compact picture of a particular 20th-century man, but also – at least at the level of his deepest values – a picture of the environment that shaped him.

To date, Ciepliński's *grypses* have been studied only to a limited extent, while academically they represent a fundamental potential for inspirations in men's spiritual formation, despite the increasing time distance, dynamically changing external realities, and so on. Every discipline of the theological sciences has its specific methodology: all records, diaries, memoirs, letters, prayers and reflections mostly belong to the methodology for sources of theology of spirituality. This branch of theological sciences studies the personal spiritual experiences described in the above sources. They belong to the so-called *informal direct sources*, meaning that they are not scientific in them-

²² Philippe Lejeune, „*Drogi zeszycie...*”, „*drogi ekranie...*”. *O dziennikach osobistych*, trans. Agnieszka Karpowicz, Magda Rodak, Paweł Rodak (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2010), 36–37.

²³ Lejeune, „*Drogi zeszycie...*”, „*drogi ekranie...*”. *O dziennikach osobistych*, 38.

selves and concern individual spiritual experience (in contrast, for example, to community experiences).²⁴

For a deeper understanding of the value of these secret messages, it is worth adding that they were written by a man who had been in prison for many months, where he was being cruelly tortured. He was sentenced to 5 times the death penalty and 30 years of imprisonment, and had to sign documents placed on him when, as he testified at the trial – “he was lying in a pool of his own blood.”²⁵ In order to sign involuntarily any falsified testimony, psychoactive drugs (presumably so-called *mescaline*, causing hallucinations, among other things) were added to his food.²⁶ He received no letters or packages from his family, and could not have any contact with his relatives. His torturers informed him deceitfully that his son was dead and his wife was in prison. In the midst of all this, he was still able to show support for other prisoners and gratitude to all who supported him. He was interrogated by UB torturers famous for the greatest cruelty: Col. A. Fejgin, Col. J. Różanski or Lt. Col. J. Światło.²⁷

He spent many months in a very small cell without windows, with a very powerful light bulb burning day and night. Ciepliński could not go out for a walk or wash himself for months. During interrogations, his head was slammed against the wall, his hair was pulled from his body, from his temples, his testicles were crushed, pencils were inserted between his fingers and squeezed. When he was already lying unconscious on the ground during interrogation, the interrogators would climb on top of him and trample him. When he fainted from pain, he was doused with ice-cold water. He became deaf due to head beatings. After interrogation, he was brought back to his cell unconscious on a blanket, soaking in blood and water.²⁸ In the last period between his death sentence and execution (that is, when he wrote the grypses) he was indeed no longer physically tortured, but the traces of brutal treatment were still fresh.²⁹ In such a state, how he could be the author of such deeply thought-out, logical, linguistically rich texts, and how he could

²⁴ Marek Chmielewski, *Metodologiczne problemy posoborowej teologii duchowości katolickiej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2001), 213–214.

²⁵ Gabriel Brzęk “Dewajtis”, *Wierny przysiędze. O Łukaszu Cieplińskim „Pługu” komendancie IV Komendy Głównej WiN* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo “Lubelskie,” 1991), 92.

²⁶ Brzęk, *Wierny przysiędze*, 85.

²⁷ Józef Zator-Przytocki, *Pamiętniki* (Wrocław: Inicjatywa Wydawnicza “Aspekt,” 1987), 142.

²⁸ Maj, *Polska zwycięży*, 164–165.

²⁹ Maj, *Polska zwycięży*, 170.

retain a mind that allowed him to formulate thoughts worthy of the term “pearls of Polish prison literature”³⁰ remains a mystery.

3. ŁUKASZ CIEPLIŃSKI'S PERSONALITY AND SPIRITUALITY

The features of Łukasz Ciepliński's personality and spirituality presented here not only serve to get to know this figure. These features are selected in terms of this article's topic based on a model for modern men to follow and setting the direction for men's formation in the modern Church.

A man with an integrated personality. The literature on men's spirituality and maturity notes that one of their most important characteristics is internal consistency. Martin Pable included among this coherence the integration of the masculine and “feminine” sides (i.e., being tender, and sensitive), including a sense of mission and service to the community (family).³¹ Łukasz Ciepliński, as indicated by sources describing his life, including eyewitnesses, enjoyed great trust and respect because of his peculiar integration of personality traits, soldierly and patriotic virtues, as well as deep spirituality. In his grypses, Ciepliński wrote that he commanded 20,000 soldiers,³² and all the information about the attitudes of his subordinates also shows many of his abilities as a commander. At the level of personality, he evidently combined mature emotionality, a brilliant intellect, athletic prowess, sensitivity to art, culture and deep spirituality, as well as the integration of soldierly deeds with artistic sensitivity and tenderness towards loved ones. These were performed at the level of professed values unifying his moral and religious life, with a serious approach to ethical issues and the noblest masculine ideals of the time.

The spiritual-religious rooting of moral norms, as A. Kołakowski wrote, entails profound consequences, namely, sensitivity to others and awareness of values that transcend personal aspirations. It justifies self-sacrifice for others, and, on the other hand, fighting and opposing state law if it goes against natural law. This rooting of moral attitudes in religion, the author states, protects the dignity of the human person and one's true inner free-

³⁰ Maj, *Polska zwycięży*, 172.

³¹ Martin Pable, *Tajemnice męskiej duszy*, tłum. J. Partyka (Kraków: Wydawnictwo eSPe, 2009), 79–97.

³² SW, 68.

dom. For example, the author cites three people: T. More, W. Pilecki and precisely L. Ciepliński. Kołakowski assesses that at the root of these men's attitudes and heroic behavior were not political views or any personal benefits, but deep faith and internalized moral principles present in their daily lives.³³

However, the clearest integration visible in the grypses can be called identity-based: as a man, a Pole and a Catholic, he gave his life for "truth and justice, for the holy faith and for the Fatherland." It can be said that this was, on his part, a single sacrifice made on three different yet connected altars. He wrote about this in his grypses in one breath, in one sentence, without separating these values.³⁴ His spirituality, too, points to a unification thanks to the divine virtues of faith, hope and charity, which to a heroic degree testify, in the Church's tradition, to the heights of achieved sanctity: "I believe more than ever that Christ will prevail, Poland will regain her independence, and that dishonored human dignity will be restored."³⁵

Unification at the level of his identity can also be read in the grypses when Ciepliński addresses his son, Andrzej:

Be a Pole, that is, use all your talents for the good of Poland and all Poles [illegible fragment]... Be a Catholic, that is, desir[e] to know God's will, accept it as your own and carry it out in life. A Catholi[c] is not an underdog, but capable, enterprising, serving good and fighting evil. By edu[c]ating your mind and character, you must attain a suitable social position to be able to achieve these goals.³⁶

Ciepliński, placing moral and spiritual ideals so high, wanted his son to occupy a social position, and this is present several times in the grypses, perhaps demanding it on the basis that he treat any social "career" clearly and exclusively as a means to serve others.³⁷ In a similar vein, elsewhere he draws his son's attention to the issue of money: "Remember, material means, mon[ey], play a big role, but they can never be your goal."³⁸

A mature man, meaning interior freedom. A man is all the more mature the more he is independent and autonomous, for example, in his thinking, plans, and decisions, and whose entire conduct is guided by his beliefs,

³³ Andrzej Kołakowski, "Koncepcja wychowania obywatelskiego Fryderyka Wilhelma Foerstera w kontekście katolickiej etyki społecznej," *Pedagogika* 27 (2018), 2: 78.

³⁴ SW, 56.

³⁵ SW, 56.

³⁶ SW, 63.

³⁷ SW, 66, 68, 78, 82.

³⁸ SW, 68.

views and value system. This allows him to make forward-looking, distant plans, temporarily predict and evaluate future events, and resist being influenced by one's needs (cravings), including emotions (such as fear). Finally, this autonomy allows someone to resist being influenced by their environment, which in turn allows a man to shape their motives driving thoughts and actions. This kind of freedom gives him the ability to remain free and independent even under conditions of external deprivation. Such inner freedom fosters a man's formation of a more adequate (i.e., true) self-image and, consequently, a personal lifestyle.³⁹ Autonomy, giving one the strength to overcome life's difficulties, is expressed in the fact that one can set their goals and achieve them, as well as bear responsibility for the decisions they make.

Ciepliński was an internally free man. This freedom, however, must be looked at evangelically: Jesus in the gospels appears as a totally free man; he follows his path voluntarily, and even the scenes of his arrest indicate that he was the one who decided everything. He advanced to Golgotha like a true King. He is free, even when He sacrifices His life on the cross, because no one takes His life from Him, but He gives it up Himself (cf. John 10:17f). The word *eleutheros* comes from the word *erchomai* and means *one who can go where he wishes, one who is his own master, independent of others*.

For the ancient Greeks, over time, *eleutheros* took on an increasingly spiritual meaning: if initially it meant free movement in the *polis* (city), in Socrates it is associated with the inner *psyche*, which is man's spiritual center, in which he "is at home" and "governs himself." For Plato, man is a being in whom he distinguishes three spheres: lust, emotion and spirit. A truly free man subordinates lusts and emotions to the guidance of the spirit. Such a person enjoys his virtues and becomes independent of other people's support and opinions. Stoic philosophy emphasized inner freedom from passions and movements: freedom understood in this way is expressed in *ataraxia*, or steadfastness (perseverance in the good), and *apatheia* (freedom from thrashing desires and passions).

In the Gospels, Jesus himself chooses where he wants to go and what he wants to do. For Him, however, freedom means first and foremost being free not "from men" but "for men," and so he offers Himself to them out of love. A man's true freedom, therefore, will be the inner freedom of freeing self from oneself, voluntarily sacrificing oneself for others, voluntarily giving oneself to the work entrusted to them and denying oneself in service to other

³⁹ Zdzisław Chlewiński, *Dojrzałość: osobowość, sumienie, religijność* (Poznań: wydawnictwo "W drodze", 1991), 16–19.

people. Inner freedom, therefore, is complete *self-possession*, but in *giving oneself*.⁴⁰ Ciepliński shines with this kind of freedom in all the testimonies about him, but the grypses are a special expression of it. Despite his deep religiosity and devotion to ethical and patriotic values, he does not identify himself with an idea, he serves it.⁴¹ This gives him inner peace.

This automatically brings to mind Jesus' inner peace during his arrest, unjust trial, scourging, etc. (while Pilate and others do not preserve it). According to the testimony of one of the co-prisoners, Dr. Kazimierz Pajara, a fellow inmate in this misery, of whom there were thirty in the room, when the "Płow" was led out to his death, they lined up in two rows in an "at attention" position and bade farewell to the colonel (and his seven colleagues) being escorted on their final journey. Called to leave the room, Ciepliński asked only that they remember him, his wife and his son. He did not despair, but said goodbye to his comrades with a smile and a handshake.⁴²

Ciepliński, as a free man, treats his entire life as a resolute sacrifice, as a sacrifice that he willingly, in full freedom, makes on the altar of God, his Homeland and family.⁴³ After his arrest, Ciepliński had the opportunity to cooperate with the communists and save himself, but he did not take advantage of this situation. His inner freedom during his imprisonment and torture is the result of deep reconciliation with the will of God,⁴⁴ and it gives birth to a kind of (martyr's) joy that he will be murdered.⁴⁵ Łukasz Ciepliński's son Andrzej died at the age of 26 in 1972. A kind of reverence for his father spontaneously arose at Andrzej's grave in Rzeszów. Due to the lack of knowledge of the Colonel's burial place, a symbolic grave was created at his son's grave, where the local community comes to pray and worship the "Płow," and Mass is also celebrated at Andrzej's grave. This fact was commented on by one of Ciepliński's biographers that, after many centuries – thanks to Łukasz Ciepliński – the old Christian custom (dating back to the second century)⁴⁶ of celebrating the Eucharist on the (in this case, symbolic) grave of the martyrs was revived in Rzeszów.

⁴⁰ Adam Rybicki, *Wąż i gołębica. Męska osobowość a męska duchowość* (Lublin: "Gaudium," 2011), 155.

⁴¹ SW, 87.

⁴² Maj, *Polska zwycięży. Rzecz o Łukaszu Cieplińskim*, 99.

⁴³ SW, 53.

⁴⁴ SW, 57.

⁴⁵ SW, 70.

⁴⁶ Czesław Krakowiak, "Męczennicy. II. Kult od starożytności do Soboru Watykańskiego II," in ed. Eugeniusz Ziemann, *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. 12 (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2008), 680.

Most important points of spirituality: God, Christ, the cross⁴⁷ and resurrection, and Mary. Christ and the “Christ idea” were at the center of Łukasz Cieplinski’s spirituality. The prison gypsies contain several mentions of precisely this term – “Christ idea”: thus, it is not only about a relationship with the Person of Christ, but the entire Gospel message, about fidelity to His teaching, which is the mainstream of New Testament spirituality: “he who loves me will keep my teaching” (cf. John 14:23). Mentioned many times in the gypsies, the “Christ idea” is the foundation for patriotic ideals and soldierly virtues in his life. “The world has sunk [into] hatred, filth and bad will. There is a need for new ideas and proper solutions, the Christ Idea,”⁴⁸ Ciepliński wrote on January 20, 1950. This sentence from the gypsies, as well as several others, indicate that the “Christ Idea” was not only something presently worth giving his life for, but also a certain hope that would be fulfilled in the future, even after his death.

Father Józef Maj recorded that, while in prison, Ciepliński expressed gratitude to Chaplain Wardędze for the fact that, while still in Rzeszów and forced to travel frequently, unable to be present at the Eucharist, this priest taught him to make a so-called Holy Spiritual Communion. This allowed him to live, as Fr. Maj recorded, in constant communion with Jesus, which was helpful “even at this abyss of human hell.”⁴⁹ At Christmas, Ciepliński “offers his cross to the Newborn,”⁵⁰ and in another gypsies “grieves before Christ,”⁵¹ yet never uses the word “Jesus,” because he maintains great respect, reverence and devotion to the Person of the Son of God. Above all, however, he believes that Christ will overcome everything and reign throughout the world.⁵² Yet, now it is necessary to carry the cross, offer it to Christ, carry it “bravely.”⁵³ In one of his gypsies, he addresses his wife: “Carry the cross bravely, with dignity and serenity.”⁵⁴ This is how he approached his suffering and impending death.

Also, this officer and martyr’s Marian spirituality has a very important place in his gypsies. Throughout his life, before writing the gypsies, there are many significant facts indicating his great Marian zeal and a kind of

⁴⁷ SW, 88.

⁴⁸ SW, 65.

⁴⁹ Maj, *Polska zwycięży. Rzecz o Łukaszu Cieplińskim*, 166.

⁵⁰ SW, 54.

⁵¹ SW, 55.

⁵² SW, 84.

⁵³ SW, 72.

⁵⁴ SW, 90.

“chivalrous” devotion to Mary. The grypses indicate that Ciepliński prays the rosary⁵⁵ in prison (“every day”⁵⁶). He believes that it is Mary who will soothe his wife and son’s pain related to their husband and father’s fate.⁵⁷ He believes, or rather has great hope, that Mary will take him to heaven (“to the heavenly hosts so that I can continue to serve her”⁵⁸) and calls Mary “Queen of Poland.”⁵⁹ Witnesses confessed that when Ciepliński was already being led out of his cell to carry out his death sentence, at one point he stopped, took something out of his shoe and swallowed it. It was a Marian medal, which the “Płow” wore around his neck.⁶⁰ Yet, this gesture had another dimension: it was about the possibility of identifying his corpse after death, because Ciepliński knew that he would not be given a funeral, but his corpse would be dumped into a nameless grave.⁶¹ Taking this into account, he wanted to leave evidence in his body helping to identify his corpse when it was found in the future.

A man of fortitude. Starting from the now legendary wartime event, during which Ciepliński single-handedly destroyed several German tanks,⁶² through conspiratorial activities to his reaction to all the torture, accusations and death – all these facts reveal the “Płow’s” extraordinary fortitude. His courage aroused the admiration of his subordinates and fellow prisoners. Since spirituality is life according to the Spirit, it is worth looking at this feature of the character under discussion also in terms of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In Cieplinski’s life, the gift of fortitude is most clearly visible at first glance. In the face of torture and debilitation, Cieplinski’s fortitude could be incomprehensible if considered only in terms of a natural character trait.

On the other hand, a man who is grafted into the Church, who is united with Christ through prayer – and the sacraments – receives from Christ the gifts of the Spirit, which He possesses in full. He receives them when he needs them, and so, for example, the gift of fortitude was given to martyrs, who were not always persons of fortitude by nature. The role of the Holy Spirit is also seen by theologians in Mary’s situation under the cross of

⁵⁵ SW, 60.

⁵⁶ SW, 75.

⁵⁷ SW, 55.

⁵⁸ SW, 77.

⁵⁹ SW, 71.

⁶⁰ Brzęk, *Wierny przysiędze*, 99.

⁶¹ Mieczysław Chojnacki, “Zbrodnia,” *Polska zbrojna* 2021, special issue 2.

⁶² SW, 12.

Christ:⁶³ it was the Third Person of the Trinity who filled Mary with His gifts (among which fortitude deserves special attention) so that she could endure suffering beyond the ordinary measure of human endurance. Therefore, Mary's co-suffering at the foot of the cross and her communion with Jesus did not flow solely from her natural maternal relationship to her Son, but "from the breath of the Holy Spirit, impelling the soul to suffer as it should suffer."⁶⁴ The way Ciepliński saw his suffering, but also the suffering of others, betrays supernatural qualities, consistent with descriptions of the sufferings of the Church's greatest martyrs.

Reading the grypses revealing the character and spirituality of the "Plow," the words of St. Paul are imposing: "For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather a spirit of power and love and self-control" (2 Tim 1:7). Power, self-control and love are evident in almost every scrap of blotting paper on which the condemned wrote. It is worth adding that Ciepliński himself also mentioned "being courageous" when addressing his wife: "be courageous!"⁶⁵ This exhortation appears in the context of regret ("they made a bandit out of me and won't let me explain"⁶⁶) and encouragement to his wife to raise Andrzej "to be a good Pole and Catholic."⁶⁷ In one of the grypses, Ciepliński also appeals to his son Andrzej to be courageous.⁶⁸ It seems that, presently, Christian formation, keeping one's identity and bearing witness to it, and raising children in accordance with high values and principles are connected with a kind of fortitude. A man, as was the case with Łukasz Cieplinski, can add this fortitude to a woman and children, and together with her actively and energetically engage in the process of forming their characters. Ciepliński in his grypses expresses this on several occasions; unfortunately, it was done from behind the bars of a prison. This makes him a model for fathers facing difficulties in getting involved in raising their children.

⁶³ Józef Warzeszak, "Maryja a Duch Święty w ujęciu teologów średniowiecznych (VIII–XV w.)," in *Duch Święty a Maryja. Materiały z sympozjum zorganizowanego przez Katedrę Mariologii KUL oraz Oddział PTT w Częstochowie, Częstochowa, 22–23 maja 1998 roku*, ed. Stanisław Celestyn Napiórkowski OFMConv., rev. Teofil Siudy, Krzysztof Kowalik SDB (Częstochowa: Polskie Towarzystwo Mariologiczne, 1999), 95–98.

⁶⁴ Ubertino di Casale, *Drzewo życia Jezusa ukrzyżowanego*, 214. In *Antologia mistyków franciszkańskich*, ed. Salezy Kafel, t. 4 (Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Teologii Katolickiej, 1991).

⁶⁵ SW, 93.

⁶⁶ SW, 93.

⁶⁷ SW, 93.

⁶⁸ SW, 78.

Men and family values. A mature man understands the great value of family unity. Men's anthropology suggests that the so-called "tin age" (60-70 years of a man's life) gets its name from this very metal: tin is soft, and at the right temperature it forms easily, but when it cools down, it binds metal parts well. These qualities can appear, for example, in recognizing and appreciating the value of family, ethical and spiritual relationships, the desire to unite one's family, to maintain family traditions, or return to them.⁶⁹ Łukasz Ciepliński, during the years of his imprisonment and torture, matured tremendously; perhaps under normal, peaceful conditions, he would have needed much more time to understand certain things. In his grypses to various family members, he strenuously asks them to maintain unity and harmony, to remember and respect each other.⁷⁰

Besides, responsibility for his closest charges was evident in Ciepliński's attitude much earlier, already during the war and next during the underground and prison: witnesses everywhere assure of his concern for the soldiers he was in charge of. This kind of masculine concern – an expression of masculine maturity – can also be seen in a similar situation of danger, in the scene of Jesus in Gethsemane, when the Lord says to the soldiers, "if you are looking for me, let these men go" (John 18:8).

Here, Jesus, himself in a situation of mortal danger, takes care that nothing happens to his disciples. In the case of innocent suffering and harm, we can observe vastly different attitudes in people, from anger to apathy to self-destructive tendencies. In Gethsemane, Jesus' entire attitude shows remarkable maturity – the care of the Shepherd for the "sheep" entrusted to him. This "forgetting of self" in danger and caring for others is not just a masculine, personal maturity, but a form of love⁷¹ reaching into the supernatural.⁷² Ciepliński, himself suffering and in pain, consoles his wife in a way that resembles Jesus' concern for Mary or the weeping women on the way of the cross.⁷³

Ciepliński uses the term "saint" or "holiness" several times in his grypses about his love for his wife, his marriage and his family. He sees in his

⁶⁹ Andrzej Stogowski, "Filozofia życia w „trzecim wieku”. Poszukiwanie mądrości starzenia się," in *Pozytywna starość*, ed. Katarzyna Wieczorowska-Tobis, Dorota Talarska (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Medycznego im. Karola Marcinkowskiego w Poznaniu, 2010), 70–72.

⁷⁰ SW, 76.

⁷¹ Carlo Maria Martini, *Męka Jezusa Chrystusa według czterech Ewangelii: medytacje*, trans. Seweryn Wąsik, Fabian Błaszkiwicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2003), 135.

⁷² See Ignace de la Potterie SJ, *Męka Jezusa Chrystusa według Ewangelii Jana*, trans. Tadeusz Kukułka (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2006), 51.

⁷³ SW, 87.

relationships not only longing and suffering, not only a man's sacrifice for his family, but points to the spiritual dimension of marriage with an element of holiness present in it, obviously connected with the presence of God. Robert Bly, who started the worldwide debate on modern masculinity, stated:

In our time – when the father appears as a laughingstock (on TV, for example), [...] as a grumpy fool (when he comes home after work with no teachings to offer his children) or as an indecisive weakling [...] – the son faces a problem. What should his own life as a man be like?⁷⁴

This lack of any teachings to offer one's son is a great wound later in a son's heart. In the case of Ciepliński, who addresses his still very young child in his grypses, one can see a deep understanding of the role of a father: he is supposed to pass on a certain spiritual heritage resulting from experience and knowledge that will become an endowment for future life. What teachings does Ciepliński impart to his son? First, addressing his mother, he asks her to "love, not spoil her son."⁷⁵ As a father, what does he have to say to his child in the last weeks of his life? All the instructions are given with love, interspersed with affectionate expressions, and assurances that little Andrew is in his thoughts and prayers; most of the words in the grypses are in the form of requests, guidance and encouragement that Andrew love God and be a "believing Catholic"⁷⁶ and that the guiding principles of his life be goodness, truth, justice and love. Yet, to live up to this, Andrzej must shape his character, meaning have a strong will, courage, diligence, initiative, and love of noble goals. Ciepliński encourages his son to go study in the West and there "try to familiarize himself with the current problems of scientific, economic, social, cultural and political life."⁷⁷ All this is done "to obtain a suitable position to be able to pursue the above goals."⁷⁸ Andrzej should also care of his health through physical fitness.⁷⁹

In another gryps, Ciepliński advises his wife to make their son "promising, enterprising, having great initiative, hardworking, truthful and coura-

⁷⁴ Robert Bly, *Żelazny Jan. Rzecz o mężczyznach*, trans. Jacek Tittenbrun (Poznań: Wydawnictwo "Rebis," 1993), 117.

⁷⁵ SW, 61–62.

⁷⁶ SW, 58.

⁷⁷ SW, 58.

⁷⁸ In several places, Cieplinski writes about Andrew's need to gain an appropriate (i.e., high) social position in order to fulfill his ideals rather than pay homage to his selfish ambitions: see SW, 66, 68, 78, 82.

⁷⁹ SW, 82.

geous.”⁸⁰ Later in the same letter, he points out to his wife that she should get her son to know music and art, since “these fields ennoble a man.”⁸¹ Andrzej should also learn English (in addition: French or German) and Latin – the latter “will be necessary for him.”⁸² There is a great deal of valuable content in this advice that a father is trying to pass on to his son, but he is aware – and writes about it often in his grypses – that, unfortunately, the current situation is a detriment to his plans to dedicate himself to his son and accompany him in growth. Ciepliński grieves greatly over this.⁸³

The most important secret letter, as it were, organizing all the desires of a father towards his son, is a scratch paper dated January 20, 1950, in which Ciepliński conveys to his son the points of a “program” of goals and principles to guide him through life.⁸⁴ Among his personal wishes to his son is also a request that he preserve the memory of the many thousands of heroes who are dying with him for the fatherland, so that, in the future, he contact the people who are alive and describe everything that happened at that time. In this gryps, whose date or whereabouts of the original is not known (it was published only in Gabriel Brzek’s book *Wierny przysiędze (Faithful to the Oath)*, there is a short, 3-sentence entry that captures Cieplinski’s last wish for his son in an extremely condensed way: “Andrzejek! Remember that there are only three sanctities: God, Fatherland and Mother. Be good to your Mother, become a doctor, engineer, scientist, or economist, whatever you prefer. Don’t forget your Father and his ideas.”⁸⁵ This entry, on the one hand, collects all of Ciepliński’s desires for his child, and on the other hand, gives him the necessary freedom of choice, a freedom that Ciepliński himself cherished and valued.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary theological reflection on the spirituality of any person most often leads to hagiography, to many saintly men who lived over the past twenty centuries, those who through their personality and holiness can inspire men of the 21st century. Reflections on male spirituality not only draw from the biographies of canonized people, but also those of men whose

⁸⁰ SW, 61.

⁸¹ SW, 61.

⁸² SW, 61, 66, 67.

⁸³ SW, 64.

⁸⁴ SW, 64–65.

⁸⁵ SW, 92.

personalities can impress us, including fictional characters like heroes of films that in their time created contemporary patterns (myths) of masculinity. These figures had a wide impact and aroused the desire to imitate them among millions of young men throughout the world. It also happens that contemporary events on a global scale evoke male attitudes that are then presented to other men as role models (e.g., after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in the USA, an apotheosis and great respect for the masculinity of the firefighters appeared in the literature). Poland's contemporary history – as exemplified by the figure of Łukasz Ciepliński presented here – is a treasure chest of universal models of masculinity.

Although only some masculine traits have been discussed in the above text, yet, it is worth adding many others visible in the grypses: a kind of “feminine” (i.e., sensitive, caring, affectionate) side, a clear awareness of the purpose of one's life and actions, or the awareness of the need to constantly work on one's character. His personality, relationships with other people and dedication to the highest values – all these place Ciepliński among the role models of masculinity, which are not only valuable, but also attractive to the young generation of men, something also important in the context of the impact of this type of a role model. Starting from courage, honesty, fitness of body and mind, through knowledge and good manners to moral and spiritual values – Łukasz Ciepliński can be used as an example for young men. Historical research, scientific consideration and our interpretation of these patterns is the first step. What remains is to popularize and promote them, because the strength of a personal role model is that they become known.

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