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A Work Built to Last... About the Fate of the Patron of the Sister Wanda Garczyńska Educational Foundation

Dzieło, które trwa... O losach patronki Fundacji Edukacyjnej im. siostry Wandy Garczyńskiej

Abstract: Sister Wanda Garczyńska of God's Will (1891–1954) was born in Lviv. She grew up in a home with patriotic traditions. She attended the educational institutions in Nizniów and Jazłowiec and the Wanda Niedziałkowska Women's High School in Lviv. During World War I, as a volunteer nurse, she worked in military hospitals in Kiev and Lviv; she also helped in orphanages for children, and organized scouting activities. Her passion and life mission was teaching. In 1919, she graduated from the Teachers' College in Krakow, and in 1925—from the Higher Courses for Teachers in Lviv. In 1926, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. After that, she taught in the schools of the Immaculate Conception in Jazłowiec and Jarosław.

In 1934, she became the head of the private primary school of the Congregation at 59 Kazimierzowska Street in Warsaw's [Warszawa] Mokotów district. From 1940, when the facility was closed by the German authorities, until she left before it was burnt down in mid-August 1944, the school held secret classes covering the secondary school curriculum for girls and boys, and secret university lectures. At Kazimierzowska, help was provided to Jewish children from the Warsaw ghetto, displaced persons from the nearby bombed houses and refugees. In March 1983, the Yad Vashem Institute of National

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Remembrance awarded Sister Wanda Garczyńska posthumously with the Righteous Among the Nations Medal.

After the end of World War II, Sister Wanda Garczyńska organized a female gymnasium and a boarding school in Wałbrzych-Sobięcin. In June 2012, the Educational Foundation named after sister Wanda Garczyńska was established there. Its task is to support the unemployed, the poor, single mothers with children and to implement programs for the promotion of professional activation and health, as well as to support educational activities.

Keywords: sisters of the Order of Immaculate Conception, Sister Wanda Garczyńska of God's Will, Sister Wanda Garczyńska Educational Foundation.

Streszczenie: Siostra Wanda Garczyńska od Woli Bożej (1891–1954) przyszła na świat we Lwowie. W domu rodzinnym kultywowano tradycje patriotyczne. Uczęszczała do niepokalańskich zakładów wychowawczych w Niżniowie i Jazłowcu oraz Liceum Żeńskiego Wandy Niedziałkowskiej we Lwowie. W latach I wojny światowej, jako sanitariuszka-ochotniczka, pracowała w szpitalach wojskowych w Kijowie i Lwowie, pomagała również w ochronkach dla dzieci, organizowała działalność skautingową. Jej pasją i życiowym zadaniem była praca pedagogiczna. W 1919 r. ukończyła Seminarium Nauczycielskie w Krakowie, w 1925 r. Wyższe Kursy Nauczycielskie we Lwowie. W 1926 r. wstąpiła do Zgromadzenia Sióstr Niepokalanego Poczęcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny. Nauczała następnie w szkołach niepokalańskich w Jazłowcu i Jarosławiu.

W 1934 r. objęła funkcję kierowniczkę prywatnej szkoły powszechnej Zgromadzenia przy ulicy Kazimierzowskiej 59, na warszawskim Mokotowie. Od 1940 r., kiedy placówka została zamknięta przez władze niemieckie, do momentu jej opuszczenia przed spaleniem w połowie sierpnia 1944 r., w szkole prowadzono tajne komplety w zakresie programu szkoły średniej dla dziewcząt i chłopców oraz tajne wykłady uniwersyteckie. Przy Kazimierzowskiej udzielano pomocy dzieciom żydowskim z warszawskiego getta, wysiedleńcom z pobliskich, zbombardowanych domów oraz uchodźcom. W marcu 1983 r. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej Yad Vashem przyznał siostrze Wandzie Garczyńskiej pośmiertnie Medal Sprawiedliwy Wśród Narodów Świata.

Po zakończeniu drugiej wojny światowej siostra Wanda Garczyńska organizowała gimnazjum żeński i internat w Wałbrzychu-Sobięcinie. W czerwcu 2012 r. powołano tam do życia Fundację Edukacyjną im. siostry Wandy Garczyńskiej. Jej zadaniem jest udzielanie wsparcia bezrobotnym, ubogim, matkom samotnie wychowującym dzieci oraz realizowanie programów na rzecz promocji aktywizacji zawodowej i zdrowia, a także wspieranie działań o charakterze oświatowym i wychowawczym.

Słowa kluczowe: niepokalanki, siostra Wanda Garczyńska od Woli Bożej, Fundacja Edukacyjna im. siostry Wandy Garczyńskiej.

‘**D**zidzia! I light a candle and look all around the world for another person like her and I do not find one, or I find one very, very rarely: an idealist so pure that reality sometimes caused her physical pain’¹ Stanisława Domaszewska née Garczyńska, sister of Wanda Garczyńska noted down in her diary, in October 1918. Wanda was a simple and cordial person who put her heart into everything she did because—as she used to say—there are no small things in life. For her, all tasks were always so important that she put all good will and love for God into them. She worked calmly, but always with great enthusiasm and dedication, both in her educational and social work. Sister Germana Wesołowska from the Order of Immaculate Conception wrote about Sister Wanda of God’s Will: ‘At work, she amazed us with the spontaneity and accuracy of her methods. She had a special gift of winning over people, adapting to reality, and the ability to see everything from the supernatural point of view.’²

Education and vocation

Wanda Leonia Antonina Garczyńska was born on 19 August 1891 in Lviv. She was baptized in the parish of St. Mary Magdalene, on 14 October 1891.³ The Garczyński family came from Garczyn, in the Kashubian Lake District. Wanda, affectionately called Dzidzia (Little Baby), was the oldest of six siblings. She had three brothers: Tadeusz, Zygmunt and Leon, and two sisters: Stanisława and Ewa. She came from a family with vivid patriotic traditions;

- 1 *W oczach rodzeństwa* [In the eyes of siblings] *Stania*, in: *Gdy miłość dojrzeje do bohaterstwa. Wspomnienia o Siostrze Wandzie Garczyńskiej, niepokalance* [When love matures to heroism: Memories about Sister Wanda Garczyńska from the Order of Immaculate Conception], collected and ed. S. M. E. Paciorek from the Order of the Blessed Sacrament, Szymanów 1999, p. 23.
- 2 S. G. Wesołowska, *Siostra Wanda od Woli Bożej (Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954)* [Sister Wanda of God’s Will (Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954)], <http://fundacja.niepokalanki.pl/index.php/patronka>, accessed: 7 May 2019.
- 3 Archives of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Szymanów (hereinafter: AZSNP NMP), Birth and baptism certificate, Sister Wanda of the Will of God Wanda Garczyńska’s documents 1891–1954, file 1, reference number CI, March 23, 1910, sheet no. 1.

her grandparents took part in the uprisings: Antoni Rajmund Garczyński⁴ in the November and January Uprisings, while Leon Syroczyński⁵ in the Jan-

- 4 Antoni Rajmund Garczyński (1812–1888) was born in Duranów near Sochaczew, into a landed gentry family. His father belonged to the Bar Confederation. Together with his brother Józef, he left high school to take part in the November Uprising. He was wounded near Ostrołęka and assigned to a regiment in Siberia. He fled. In 1833 he joined the Portuguese Legion organized by General Józef Bem, then he fought in Spain in the Carlist army against the army of Queen Maria Christina of the Two Sicilies, in 1848 he took part in the Spring of Nations in Greater Poland, then he emigrated to Bologna, where he joined the Polish Legion on the Roman Legionnaire payroll. He also participated in the Crimean War. As a captain, in 1853 he joined the 1st Sultan Cossack Regiment and became the commander of the sotnya. As a major, he distinguished himself in the Battle of Tulcza in 1856 and seriously wounded, he was taken captive by the Russians. Initially sentenced to be shot, then to be sent to Tobolsk, he was finally released in 1857 under an amnesty. He briefly settled in the Duchy of Poznań. In March 1863, the military division that he commanded lost a battle at Dobrosłów. Garczyński was awarded the Golden Cross of Virtuti Militari; see K. Jadczyk, 'Z armii sułtana pod sztandar narodowy. Polscy oficerowie wojsk tureckich jako dowódcy partii partyzanckich w powstaniu styczniowym 1863–1864' [From the sultan's army to the national military forces: Polish officers of the Turkish army as commanders of partisan parties in the January Uprising of 1863–1864], *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy*, 15 (2014) No. 2 pp. 7–28.
- 5 Leon Syroczyński (1844–1925) – geologist, oil extraction technologist. He came from Sitkowiec, now the Vinnytsia Oblast in Ukraine. In 1861, he graduated from a men's gymnasium in Kiev and began medical studies. He was active in the underground, in the Triple Society. In 1863, with the outbreak of the January Uprising, he interrupted his studies. Then he fought under the command of Edmund Różycki in Wołyń and Franciszek Rochebrune in the Lublin region. Then he managed to get to Warszawa, where he became a member of the war department of the National Government. Afterwards he left for Liège. He studied in the *École des mines* at the mining department, and in 1869 he defended his diploma. At the end of the 1870s, he took the position of a mining engineer at the National Department in Lviv, and from 1890 he lectured at the Polytechnic School, of which he became rector in 1904. He was also the curator of the National School of Mining and Drilling in Borysław. He was a member of many scientific societies and published a lot. He was awarded the Commander's and Knight's Crosses of the Order of Polonia Restituta, the Commander's Cross of the Romanian Crown and the Order of Leopold; *Polskie Towarzystwo Politechniczne we Lwowie 1877–1927* [Polish Polytechnic Society in Lviv 1877–1927], Lwów 1927, p. 72.

uary Uprising. After the confiscation of his property and after he was exiled, Garczyński settled in Brzeżany, while Syroczyński graduated from the Belgian Liège and finally settled in Lviv. He lectured at the Polytechnic School and, in the following years, he conducted a search for oil in Galicia. Wanda Garczyńska's parents met in Belgium or France. Her father Franciszek grew up in Paris, attended a Polish school in the Battignolles district, and her mother Helena was born in Liège. She married when she was only 17 years old. The young couple moved to the family estate in Brzeżany. Franciszek Garczyński got a job in one of Lviv banks, and after the end of World War I—a similar position in one of the banks in Warsaw. During this period, he rarely saw his family who stayed in Lviv.⁶

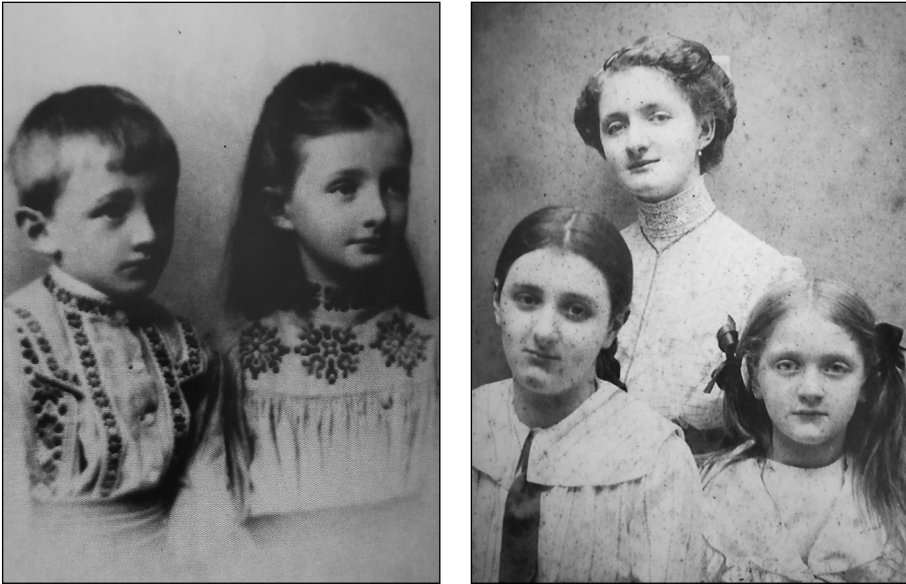
At the age of eight, on the initiative of Sister Antonia from the Order of Immaculate Conception (Honorata Syroczyńska, born sister Helena, Wanda's mother), Wanda was sent to the schools of the Immaculate Conception, first in Niżniów, then in Jazłowiec. She attended these schools between 1899 and 1910.⁷ In 1908, she joined the Marian Sodality. In the following years, her spiritual guide and mentor was Fr. Karol Czesznak.⁸

6 *Zamiast biografii* [Instead of a biography], in: *Gdy miłość dojrzewa do bohaterstwa* [When love matures to heroism], p. 15.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.

8 Karol Czesznak (1882–1944) – a clergyman of the Catholic Church. He came from Lviv, graduated from high school there, and in 1900 he entered the seminary. He studied theology first in Lviv, then at the Canisianum in Innsbruck. He was ordained a priest in 1905. For the next two years, he served in Jagielnica near Czortków, after which he was transferred to Lviv, to the parish of St. Nicholas. He worked as a catechist in primary schools and gymnasiums in Lviv, and was also a tutor of academic chaplaincy for female youth. From 1913, he moderated the meetings of the Marian Sodality of female students. He taught theology at the Jan Kazimierz University and at the Theological Seminary in Lviv. He initiated many charity campaigns, mainly with the poorest in mind. He was one of the founders of the Student Self-Help organization in Lviv. The outstanding preacher, worshiper of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary was buried at the Łyczakowski Cemetery. See F. Żurawski, 'Ks. Karol Czesznak – twórczy praktyk posługiwania duszpasterskiego (w 100-lecie urodzin i 40-tą rocznicę śmierci)' [Fr. Karol Czesznak – a creative practitioner of pastoral ministry (on the 100th anniversary of his birth and the 40th anniversary of his death)], *Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny* 37 (1984) pp. 242–246.

Photographs 1–2. Tadeusz and Wanda Garczyński as children, no date; Wanda with her sisters, Stanisława and Ewa, no date. The reproduction comes from the publication *Gdy miłość dojrzewa do bohaterstwa. Wspomnienia o Siostrze Wandzie Garczyńskiej, niepokalance* [When love matures to heroism: Memories of Sister Wanda Garczyńska, from the Order of Immaculate Conception], collected and edited S. Maria Ena Paciorek from the Order of the Blessed Sacrament, Szymanów 1999, pp. 37 and 38.



Shortly after returning to Lviv in 1910, Wanda Garczyńska passed the secondary school-leaving examination at Wanda Niedziałkowska's Secondary School.⁹ She assisted her mother in raising her younger siblings, and was also involved in educating children in Brzeżany.¹⁰ In order to obtain knowledge about

9 Wiktoria Niedziałkowska (1851–1914) came from Lviv. She was a teacher, an owner of educational institutions for girls. In 1876 she founded a boarding house, which was then transformed into a gymnasium and a girls' high school; *W 25 rocznicę istnienia Zakładu Wychowawczego Wiktorii Niedziałkowskiej we Lwowie* [On the 25th anniversary of the Wiktoria Niedziałkowska Educational Institution in Lviv], Lwów 1910; K. Cybulska, *Wiktoria Niedziałkowska i jej zakłady wychowawcze we Lwowie* [Wiktoria Niedziałkowska and her educational institutions in Lviv], in: *Znani i nieznanani dziewiętnastowiecznego Lwowa. Studia i materiały* [The known and unknown in nineteenth-century Lviv: Studies and materials], Vol. 4, (ed.) L. Michalska-Bracha, M. Przeniosło, Kielce 2014, pp. 65–86.

10 *Zamiast biografii* [Instead of a biography], p. 19.

housekeeping and the manners proper to a young woman, in 1913 she was sent to home management courses in Szynwałd near Tarnów, which were conducted by the Society of Landowners and the Sodality of the Ladies of Sanok.¹¹

When World War I broke out, the Garczyński family were living near Kiev. From October 1914 to February 1915, Wanda worked as a volunteer nurse at the Military Hospital No. 3 in Kiev, and in 1920 at the Regional Military Hospital in Lviv. From September 1916 to June 1917, she helped in an orphanage for children and the so-called child protection 'harbours' run by the Child Protection Society in Lviv. After returning to Lviv in 1910, she became engaged in the scouting movement that was rapidly gaining momentum in the city. Then she performed the function of the Scout Master. Together with her team members, she took part in the defence of Lviv in 1918 and 1919.¹²

Working, mainly for charity, in the years to follow, she took particular care of lost girls from poor families. She initiated many charity and apostolic activities. She was passionate about teaching. In February 1918, she took a three-month pedagogical course organized by the Board of Protection Courses and the Society of People's Schools. After completing a year's internship in the children's kindergarten run by the Mary Magdalen primary school in Lviv, led by Aleksandra Gustowicz, she passed the state exam in 1919 and became a master of Fröbel's pedagogy. Later, she got a job as an assistant in the Fröbelian kindergarten at the elementary school for girls.¹³ In 1919, in order to obtain teacher qualifications, she passed the secondary school-leaving examination at the Teachers' College in Krakow, and a year later another exam before the State Examination Board for Primary School Teachers—for a teacher of elementary schools. At that time, she became qualified to teach Polish, French and German and religion. She also perfected her skills of singing and playing the piano, and studied harmony and history of music at the Helena Ottawowa Music School in Lviv.

11 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1, ref. C 1, sheet no. 46; *W oczach rodzeństwa. Wspomnienia Ewy* [In the eyes of siblings: Ewa's memories], in: *Gdy miłość dojrzewa do bohaterstwa* [When love matures to heroism], p. 24.

12 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1, ref. C 1, sheet no. 41, 42, 44; *Zamiast biografii* [Instead of a biography], p. 20.

13 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1 ref. C 1, sheet No. 8 and 43, 47.

Further on, she worked as a private teacher in landowners' houses, and from 1918 in the Stanisław Żółkiewski primary school for girls in Lviv, where she taught until 1926. In 1921, she completed a six-month physical education course for primary school teachers. In 1922, she also passed an exam that entitled her to teach French in secondary schools. In the next few years, she participated in training courses of the Polish Society of Modern Languages on the methodology of teaching foreign languages. In 1925, she passed an extramural exam at the Higher Courses for Teachers in Lviv, which gave her the qualifications to teach in junior high schools. Then she received a job at the Jan III Sobieski primary school for boys in Lviv.¹⁴ In December 1923, she completed a guide course organized by the Association of Lviv Lovers.¹⁵ Stanisława Domaszewska née Garczyńska wrote about her sister in the following words:

I remember Dziazia always teaching someone: girls would come to us and she would give them lessons, or she would go to some people with children and teach them. She also had groups of poor children whom she was teaching religion. Everyone trusted Dziazia, appreciated her opinion and advice.¹⁶

On 4 November 1926, Wanda Garczyńska entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Jazłowiec; she was then 35 years old. She began her novitiate on 15 July 1927, took the first vows on 16 August 1928, and the perpetual vows on 2 July 1934.¹⁷ The monastic predicate that she received on the day of vesture, along with the name of Sister Wanda of God's Will, was a compass for her, a kind of signpost, which she herself confirmed by writing less than a month before her death: 'I try to listen to God's will so as not to mishear it and follow it whatever happens.'¹⁸ Sister Wanda of God's

14 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1, ref. C I, sheet no. 2, 4d, 5–18, 51; ref. C I, sheet no. 9; *Zamiast biografii* [Instead of a biography], pp. 19, 21, 30.

15 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1, ref. C I, sheet No. 48.

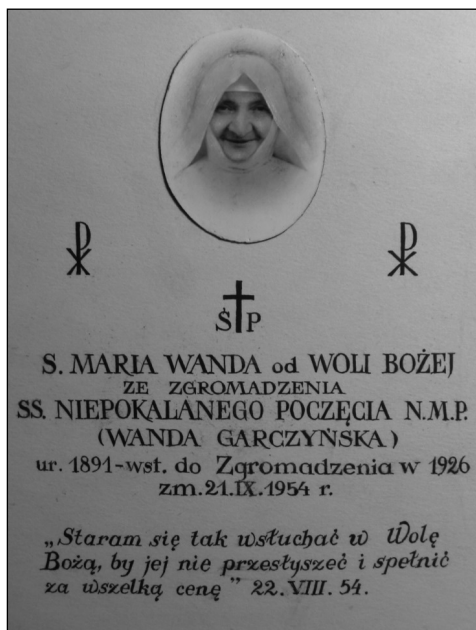
16 *W oczach rodzeństwa. Wspomnienia Ewy* [In the eyes of siblings: Ewa's memories], p. 27.

17 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1, ref. C I, sheet no. 9.

18 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Szymanów, Letters, the Letter of Sister Wanda of God's Will to Mother Immaculata, 22 July 1954.

Will offered the congregation her excellent teaching skills combined with extensive experience. In the schools and dormitories of the Immaculate Conception in Jazłowiec (in the girls' gymnasium and housekeeping school, where she worked between 1926 and 1930), in Jarosław (in the girls' gymnasium, where she worked between 1930 and 1933) and in Warsaw, she devoted herself to teaching and educating with great passion. In 1934, as a headmaster, she took over a private elementary school at 59 Kazimierzowska Street in Warsaw. In 1936, she became the superior of the house of the Congregation in Warsaw there.¹⁹ The school at Kazimierzowska was inextricably linked to her difficult, wartime experiences.

Photographs 3–4. Obituary with a photograph of sister Wanda of God's Will and an excerpt of a letter from 22 August 1954; photograph of sister Wanda of God's Will from her teacher's ID, issued on 22 December 1948, AZSNP NMP, reference number C II, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, File 1, sheet 11.



19 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1, ref. C I, sheet no. 5; s. G. Wesołowska, *Garczyńska Wanda*, in: *Siostry zakonne w Polsce. Słownik biograficzny* [Nuns in Poland: Biographical Dictionary], Vol. 1, (ed.) K. Dębowska et al., Niepokalanów 1994, pp. 82–85.

The turmoil of war. The refuge at Kazimierzowska Street

The Primary School of the Immaculate Conception Congregation in Warsaw, in Mokotów, at 59 Kazimierzowska Street, was created from a post-factory building, in a two-story gatehouse adapted for this purpose. In 1937, about 70 students studied there, and during the war even 300 students. Ultimately, before the war, plans were made to expand the facility. For this purpose, two more building plots were acquired. The former landfill sites were transformed into a playground and a vegetable garden with a flowerbed, while the workshops housed a gunsmith's workshop, operated by soldiers of the Home Army during the war. In accordance with the decision of the Chapter of the Congregation, starting from the academic year 1932/1933, a boarding house, the so-called house of students, was set up for sisters studying at Warsaw universities and for lay students.²⁰ This extraordinary work, almost in the centre of the capital, required someone with extraordinary educational, organizational and economic skills. Wanda Fijałkowska-Nowacka, a student of pedagogy at the Free Polish University, and a teacher at the school at Kazimierzowska gave a wonderful testimony about Sister Wanda of God's Will. She wrote:

Our headmistress, Sister Wanda Garczyńska, was the soul of this joyful school. It is difficult to find the right words to describe this extraordinary person. She carried out the mission of education wisely and cordially, embracing every child and every young teacher with her respect and influence. She taught and helped to solve more difficult problems, not only in education but also in life. I experienced this personally working under her leadership for over six years before the war and during the difficult time of the war. In our school, the problem of educational cooperation between home and school was perfectly solved. The young children had young parents who were in constant communication with Sister Wanda and with us, the teachers. ... Wanda, constantly beleaguered by the mothers of the students, consulted with them about the problems associated with children's upbringing and education. ...they took advantage of her knowledge of people's characters, wisdom and goodness.²¹

20 *Kazimierzowska street. House in the 1930s. Memory of Sr. Maria Ena*, in: *Gdy miłość dojrzeła do bohaterstwa* [When love matures to heroism], pp. 45–46.

21 *Kazimierzowska street. House in the 1930s. Wanda Fijałkowska-Nowacka's Memories*, in: *Gdy miłość dojrzeła do bohaterstwa* [When love matures to heroism], p. 50.

Photograph 5. View of Kazimierzowska Street from the side of the gate, 1939. A reproduction from the publication *Gdy miłość dojrzewa do bohaterstwa* [When love matures to heroism]. *Memories of Sister Wanda Garczyńska*, from the *Congregation of Immaculate Conception*, collected and ed. S. Maria Ena Paciorek from the Order of the Blessed Sacrament, Szymanów 1999, p. 78.



During the occupation, Sister Wanda of God's Will was in charge of educational, charity and underground activities at the school in Kazimierzowska Street in Warsaw. Shortly after the outbreak of World War II, she established the Committee for the Saving the Youth, which was involved in feeding not only children and adolescents, but all those in need. Until December 1941, she headed a private elementary school as headmistress, and then the school premises were converted into a boarding school. From 1940 until she left Kazimierzowska before the building was burnt down, she organized secret classes in the secondary school for girls and boys (co-educational), which ended in a secondary school-leaving examination. Kazimierzowska was then a secret branch of the Szymanów high school. In the 1940/1941 school year, about 200 children attended the primary school, and a year later about 300 children attended the secret school. Between 1940 and 1944, 117 students of both sexes passed the matriculation examination at Kazimierzowska. In March 1943, the kitchen of the Central Welfare Council was opened at the boarding house (hereinafter: RGO), which served food to about 100 children. At that time, special care was taken of Jewish children who were sneaking out from the ghetto to get food. Kazimierzowska was a shelter for those in hiding: the convent was used for temporary displaced persons from Poznań or the inhabitants of the neighbouring, bombed houses. Sister Wanda of God's Will also took care of prisoners jailed in Szucha and Pawiak. She provided rooms for meetings of underground-secret organizations and for lectures at the secret Warsaw University, for students of Polish literature and history. Such professor as among others Prof. Witold Doroszewski and Prof. Tadeusz Manteuffel lectured there. At Kazimierzowska, meetings of members of the underground Department of Foreign Affairs of the Government Delegation for Poland were also held; the archives of the Department were kept in the house. The house in Kazimierzowska also participated in the circulation of leaflets, edited and printed by the Polish underground. Sister Ancilla Rytel of God's Will distributed the leaflets.²² Sister Wanda of God's Will mentioned in the report that:

22 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1, ref. C 1, sheet no. 16; J. Olczak-Ronikier, 'Ogrody pamięci' [Gardens of Remembrance], *Głos Żbikowa*, 6 (2004), p. 2. The accounts quoted in the publication *Gdy miłość dojrzewa do bohaterstwa* [When love matures to heroism] are valuable testimonies to the more specific activities of sister Wanda of God's Will.

The Tailor School²³ occupied by SS men had guards in a booth opposite the monastery gate. This did not prevent children from moving—under the cover of RGO—from ‘official’ kindergartens and ‘official’ primary schools to ‘underground’ gymnasiums and ‘underground’ general secondary schools, or even to ‘underground’ university lectures throughout the day. This continued throughout the war occupation. The primary school was closed in 1942, but was still operating ‘secretly.’ The services in the chapel were held, except in winter, always with the windows open so that the chants could be heard. One time the guard asked: why do so many people come here? He was told: because this is a chapel. He didn’t worry about it anymore.²⁴

The turn of 1943 was especially difficult in the history of the institution and the city itself. Sister Wanda of God’s Will, out of concern for children, tried to find a new place for educational and charity work. In February 1944, on her initiative, a branch of the Warsaw house in Skolimów was opened. However, in April, the nuns had to leave the house. In return, they received rooms in Górki Mironowskie. Sister Krzysztofa of the Holy Spirit (Katarzyna Maślanka) recalled:

Sister Wanda had her secret intelligence. She knew what would happen, so she searched in all ways possible, asked to find a house outside of Warsaw so that the children could finish the 1943/1944 school year. The Germans occupied a large villa in Skolimów. They left. Sister Wanda was informed that he could take her over. The sister made up her mind quickly and rented the building. From then on, she was the Sister Superior of Warsaw and Skolim. ... Sister Wanda took great care of our souls. We came to congregation conferences that were held every two weeks. She did not want to leave us ‘at the mercy of fate.’... One day, without notifying us, the Germans burst into our villa in Skolimów. We were just getting ready for dinner. They told us to get out. They started packing everything

23 I am referring to the Municipal Vocational School for Girls named after Maria Bratkowska, located at the intersection of Kazimierzowska and Narbutta Streets. Between 1939 and 1944, the school building was the headquarters of the SS.

24 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God’s Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1, ref. C I, sheet no. 15 (Report by Sister Wanda of God’s Will (Garczyńska), superior of the convent of the Sisters of Immaculate Conception in Warszawa, Kazimierzowska 59 for the period of the Warszawa Uprising 1944).

themselves in a hurry. ... There were around 18 children; Sister Wanda had not known anything about it. They threw us out somewhere outside Warsaw, on a square, where there was a tiny wooden house with two large brick houses. We were in Mironowskie Górkі.²⁵

On 1 August 1944, soldiers of the Home Army (hereinafter: AK) attacked German facilities located in different districts of occupied Warsaw. The divisions of District V of the Home Army 'Mokotów' suffered heavy losses during the storming of German resistance points at Rakowiecka and Puławska streets. The insurgents failed to capture the barracks in the schools at Kazimierzowska and Woronicza streets, Fort Mokotów or the horse racing track in Służewiec. They finally withdrew to the Kabacki Forest. It was then that the first murders of the civilian population of Mokotów by German soldiers took place.²⁶ In her report, Sister Wanda of God's Will commented on the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising and the possible consequences of this fact for the house at 59 Kazimierzowska Street and the people staying in it. She described this time of terror and uncertainty with fear.

We had known for a long time that an uprising was brewing. We were even dragged into this operation because we sewed white and red bands for insurgents and badges for officers. In our house, there were more and more retreats to prepare the souls of young soldiers, messengers and nurses for what awaited them: for collections, drills, etc. Some supplies were brought, some bandages and dressings, one of the ladies sent a few thousand zlotys, we bought bacon and I was informed that our house was to organize a food point and a kitchen for 200 soldiers. ... This news, these preparations were one of the reasons why we considered it necessary to move the boarding house outside Warsaw. So although we knew about the uprising, its outbreak, the first battle in our garden, the sight of the insurgents

25 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1, ref. C I, sheet no. 12 (Sister Krzysztofa of the Holy Spirit about Sister Wanda of God's Will).

26 A. Borkiewicz, *Powstanie warszawskie. Zarys działań natury wojskowej* [Warsaw Uprising. Outline of military activities], Warszawa 1969, pp. 70–71, 82; A. Przygoński, *Powstanie warszawskie w sierpniu 1944 r.* [Warsaw Uprising in August 1944], Vol. 1, Warszawa 1980, p. 239; L. M. Bartelski, *Mokotów 1944*, Warszawa 1986, pp. 177–181.

almost without weapons, jumping over vegetable beds, attacking the Tailoring School, which was roaring with shots, filled me with terror!

... I was aware of the horror of our situation. After all, the Germans saw where the shots were fired from, where the attack began. They must have seen the insurgents firing from the first floor. So what could we expect? Only death.... Finally, three armed, drunk Germans with hand grenades entered the house. I went out to meet them. 'Haben Sie keine Furcht,' [Please don't be afraid] they started the conversation, demanding further that we call them when 'die Banditen' [the bandits] come. I replied that we would not do that because we do not ever leave the house; we sit in the basement praying. So they just told us to scream and left. Later, these and others would often come, rummaging around the house, looking for something valuable, telling us to cook for them, ambushing the insurgents, and then they had all the passages leading to other streets bricked up.... I had moments of great fear for our girls.²⁷

In the first phase of the Warsaw Uprising, Mokotów was manned by the 3rd replacement battalion of SS armoured grenadiers in the barracks at Rakowiecka Street (SS-Stauferkaserne), near the house at Kazimierzowska, further by anti-aircraft batteries in Pole Mokotowskie, Luftwaffe troops in Fort Mokotów and in anti-aircraft artillery barracks at Puławska Street (Flakkaserne), and finally by a gendarmerie division stationed in the building of the district headquarters at Dworkowa Street. For a long time during the uprising, Mokotów was one of the so-called peripheral districts.²⁸ In many places, emergency health care points were established, including those run by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul.²⁹ The Immaculate Conception sisters left the house at 59 Kazimierzowska Street in the second half of August 1944, as Sister Wanda of God's Will mentioned in her report:

27 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1, ref. C I, sheet no. 1213 (Report by Sister Wanda of God's Will (Garczyńska), superior of the convent of the Sisters of Immaculate Conception in Warsaw, Kazimierzowska 59 for the period of the Warsaw Uprising 1944).

28 A. Borkiewicz, *Powstanie warszawskie* [The Warsaw Uprising], p. 330.

29 H. Odrowąż-Szukiewicz, 'Służba zdrowia na Mokotowie podczas Powstania Warszawskiego' [Healthcare in Mokotów during the Warsaw Uprising], *Archiwum Historii Medycyny*, 1970, No. 2.

Our situation improved greatly when the good Mr. Wierzbicki, a friend of Sister Bernarda's parents from Poznań, managed to get the Germans to open a Red Cross hospital for the injured civilian population. There were a dozen injured people, mostly women in hospital beds. Doctors came to us very rarely. ... And one more terrible experience: the second battle, this time at night. Again insurgents in the garden, us waiting for slaughter. The heavy footsteps of the Germans at dawn, coming with their rifles ready to shoot, wearing helmets on their heads. We ran home, through the gym, where we prayed without turning our heads and then into the garden. They walked around the entire ground floor and left, they didn't do anything to us.

And so the days passed Suddenly, we received a message from Mr. Wierzbicki that our house was 'disturbing' the Germans, that they would burn it down in three days, and we could take whatever we wanted and move to the Sisters of Charity on Rakowiecka Street. And so we did. On 23 August, at 2:00 am, we finally left the house, fetching whatever we could: personal belongings, linens and food supplies. At 4 am, clouds of smoke announced to us that our house was on fire. On Rakowiecka Street we helped the Sisters of Charity to look after the sick and, one by one, saving whomever we could, we went [with them] to Żbików and Szymanów. I left Warsaw with the last sisters on 1 September 1944.³⁰

In September the house was burned down. During the evacuation, all personnel and all the charges were transferred to Szymanów.

In the boarding houses at Kazimierzowska and Chocimska streets (opened in 1941) and behind enclosures (which were abolished due to harsh conditions), Jewish children were hidden by the nuns of the Immaculate Conception. It is not known exactly how many there were: for safety reasons, no lists of names and no reports were made. The so-called distribution point was located at Kazimierzowska Street. Sister Wanda, with the help of the other sisters from the Warsaw house and numerous friends, later placed them in safe locations outside of Warsaw, also in other buildings of the Immaculate Conception Order, i.e. in Szymanów, Żbików and Wrzosowo. Sister Wanda helped many people in hiding to obtain false documents and to find not only shelter but also work.³¹ Sister Germana Wesołowska wrote about Sister Wanda of God's Will:

30 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1, ref. C I, sheet no. 12–15 (Report).

31 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1, ref. C I, sheet no. 16; H. Kozyra-Cieślak,

The admirable composure to which people owed so much took its toll on her. She was well aware of the dangers of what sometimes seemed to be the hopelessness of the 'dark night of the occupation,' and then of the Warsaw Uprising. She did not betray fear; she took steps to save life, held out hope and faith in its meaning, and based her own strength on fervent prayer during the long hours of the night.³²

Certainly, we might recall many testimonies of salvation or rescue made by Sister Wanda of God's Will. One highly symbolic excerpt, one of the many dramatic, individual stories from the Second World War, seems particularly poignant. Janina Kon (Joasia Kaniewska, later Atkins) reported:

I was saved by Sister Wanda Garczyńska.... I left the Warsaw ghetto—a 9-year-old girl at the time—led by my aunt Dr. Zofia Rosenblum-Szymańska, with a group of Jews deployed to do forced labour on the Aryan side. At the agreed place, I was picked up by a friend of my parents, Mrs. L., who had a daughter my age. I stayed in their hospitable house for over a month, I couldn't stay longer In mid-September 1942,

R. Szymczak, *Poszłam siał ziarno... i weszło. 150 lat pracy Zgromadzenia Sióstr Niepokalanek* [I went to sow the seed ... and it sprouted: 150 years of work of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception], Vol. 3, Szymanów 2006, pp. 43–51, 333–364; 442–443; M. Machowska, *Virtuti na habitach. Warszawskie Thermopile 1944* [Virtuti on habits: The Warszawa Thermopylae 1944], Warszawa 2005, pp. 96–97; M. Dworzaczek-Machowska, *Siostry niepokalanek* [The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception], in: *Za to groziła śmierć. Polacy z pomocą Żydom w czasie okupacji* [There was a death sentence for this: Poles helping Jews during the occupation], (ed.) W. Smólski, Warszawa 1981, pp. 268–270; E. Kurek, 'Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach' [Jewish children in convents and monasteries], *Idziemy*, 16 December 2012, p. 39; L. Borawska-Szymborska, 'Kto ratuje jedno życie, jakby świat cały ratował. Opowieść o Wandzie Garczyńskiej' [Whoever saves one life saves the world entire: The story of Wanda Garczyńska], *Na poważnie. Miesięcznik o Polsce, kulturze i historii*, 2013, No. 7/8, pp. 65–68; Z. Rosenblum-Szymańska, *Byłam tylko lekarzem* [I was just a doctor], Warszawa 1979, pp. 149–156; Z. Rosenblum-Szymańska, 'Ze wspomnień lekarza' [The Memories of a Doctor], *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, 1971, No. 4 (80), p. 62; W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945* [This one is from my homeland: Poles Helping Jews 1939–1945], Warszawa 2007, pp. 69, 94, 270, 452, 513, 543, 671, 692, 807–809, 814–815.

32 S. G. Wesołowska, *Siostra Wanda od Woli Bożej (Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954)* [Sister Wanda of God's Will (Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954)], <http://fundacja.niepokalanek.pl/index.php/patronka>, accessed: 5 July 2019.

Mr. L. took me by taxi to the convent gate of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception at 59 Kazimierzowska Street and told me to knock and ask for Sister Wanda, and then he left. I was left alone in the street. It was 6:00 in the morning. I did not realize that the formidable building opposite was the Gestapo headquarters. I rang the bell at the convent gate. A nun opened the door. I said, 'I am Jasia, can I see Sister Wanda?' After a while, a tall, white-clad nun left. She must have thought that this was the worst unexpected gift that one could get received during the occupation, and that it came to her in the form of a Jewish child. I told her, 'Sister, I am Jasia and I don't have anyone, would you take me in?' Sister Wanda hugged me and said, 'You are not alone, you will stay with us and you will be under our care!'³³

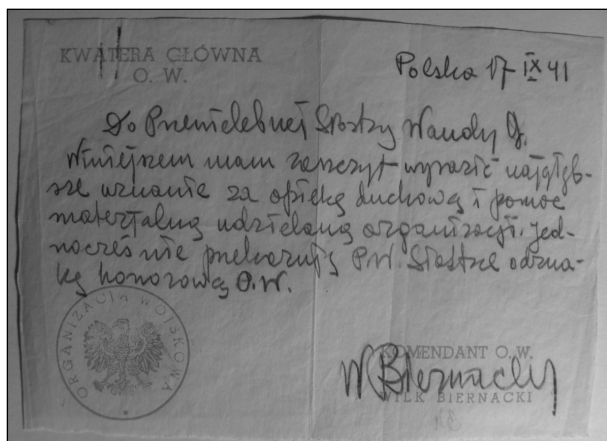
On 3 March 1983, the Yad Vashem Institute of National Remembrance, at the request of survivors, awarded Sister Wanda Garczyńska posthumously with the Medal of the Righteous Among the Nations. The decoration was presented to the Congregation in 1993. It was collected by Teresa, Helena and Ewa Domaszewska, representing the family of Sister Wanda of God's Will, and Mother Annunciata Strasburger of the Holy Trinity, representing the Congregation. Irena Sendler, requesting that sister Wanda of God's Will be awarded a medal, wrote in a statement of 4 January 1993:

I declare that during the Nazi occupation, while working in the City Council in Warsaw, I had frequent contact with the Convent and the Nursing Home of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Szymanów near Warsaw and I placed children from the ghetto there. ... I am asking you to award the medal to Sister Wanda Garczyńska. It was with her that we settled all these matters. Her attitude, full of courage, dedication and love for every person, is worthy of recognition as Righteous Among the Nations.³⁴

33 *Notaryzowane świadectwa ocalenia. Joasia Kaniewska* [Notarized certificates of survival: Joasia Kaniewska], in: *Gdy miłość dojrzewa do bohaterstwa* [When love matures to heroism], pp. 199–200.

34 J. Wyleżyńska, *Oddać życie za bliźniego* [To give one's life for one's neighbor], *Niedziela Ogólnopolska*, 2008, No. 25, p. 21.

Photographs 5–6. Document issued by Lt. Edward 'Wilk' Biernacki, commander of the Military Organization Headquarters, regarding the right to wear the honorary badge of the Military Organization No. 21, 17 September 1941 AZSNP NMP, reference number C I, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, File 1, sheet 34.



After the war. The work in Wałbrzych-Sobięcín

After the Second World War, Sister Wanda worked briefly as a religion teacher at the Primary School No. 85 in Warsaw. She was also elected the superior of the convent at Idzikowski Street in Warsaw. In the school year 1946/1947, she was entrusted with the function of the superior of the Congregation House in Wałbrzych-Sobięcín, the first house of the Congregation in the Western (Regained) Territories, where she carried out the task of organizing a girls' gymnasium with a boarding house. She returned to Warsaw after a year. She was elected general councillor of the Congregation, in 1950—master of novices in Wrzosowo, and in 1953—general assistant and superior of the house in Szymanów. Sister Wanda Garczyńska died on 21 September 1954 in a hospital in Warsaw. She was buried in the convent tomb in Szymanów. The plaque on her grave differs from the others in the inscription saying that she died in the Marian Year. The sisters remembered her joy at the announcement of the jubilee year when she said that 'everything this year will be a grace and a gift of the Immaculate Virgin... and being born and dying this year will also be

a grace.' The funeral of Sister Wanda Garczyńska took place on the day of Our Lady of the Redemption of Slaves and many of her closest friends interpreted it as a sign, testimony and seal of life that was offered to Mary.³⁵

The Sister Wanda Garczyńska Educational Foundation was established in June 2012 by the Congregation House in Wałbrzych. It is therefore a relatively young organization. Naming the foundation after Sister Wanda of God's Will is certainly dictated by her presence in the post-war Wałbrzych, but also by the acceptance of her system of values and the recognition of her unwavering determination in difficult times, as well as achievements in education and charity work. This obliges us to work intensively and to follow the path undertaken by sister Wanda of God's Will, although in a different reality, free from the uncertainty of the war and post-war time. The main goal of the Foundation is to help the inhabitants of Sobięcín (Wałbrzych district), who are at risk of social exclusion and social dysfunction. This mainly applies to people from the so-called risk groups: the unemployed, the poor and those who inherit poverty. The Foundation supports single mothers with children and promotes professional activation and health, as well as educational activities. The Foundation's efforts are primarily targeted at minors. The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception run a community club in Sobięcín called 'Forge of Talents,' in which children and adolescents engage in out-of-school education, learn how to cooperate and works in teams as well as spend their free time in a valuable way (taking part in didactic activities such as games, sightseeing trips, recreational trips, summer and winter camps). The intention of the Foundation, as stated in the statute, is to develop children's talents in order to give each child the opportunity to achieve success in the field of knowledge or skill that they have chosen and which they enjoy. The Foundation also provides material support to families in need by preparing food and holiday packages.³⁶

35 AZSNP of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Documents on Sister Wanda of God's Will, Wanda Garczyńska 1891–1954, vol. 1, ref. C I, sheet No. 16.

36 *Foundation*, <http://fundacja.niepokalanki.pl/index.php/fundacja/71-fundacja>, accessed: 5 July 2019; *O nas* [About us], <https://fundacja-garczyńskiej.wordpress.com/about/>, accessed: 5 July 2019.

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