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Blessed Fr Józef Czempiel: Teacher, Educator and Social Activist

**Błogosławiony ks. Józef Czempiel – pedagog,
wychowawca, społecznik**

Abstract: Anyone can assume the roles of teacher, educator or social activist, regardless of their profession. These roles are often embodied by the same individual. In this case, Blessed Father (Fr) Józef Czempiel, an exceptional person who served as a teacher, educator and social activist. Through his pastoral work, he pioneered the abstinence movement in Upper Silesia. Fr Czempiel placed significant emphasis on the educational and cultural enrichment of and actively provided social support to families affected by addiction and unemployment. He was deeply involved in the struggle for Polish identity in Upper Silesia and faced persecution during World War II. Tragically, he was martyred in the Dachau concentration camp in May 1942. On 13 June 1999, Pope John Paul II canonized 108 martyrs, including Fr Józef Czempiel, in Warsaw.

Keywords: Józef Czempiel, Upper Silesia, educator, social activist, abstinence movement.

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Financed by the WSB University.

Introduction

The life and work of Father (Fr) Józef Czempiel can/should be considered on several levels: pastoral, educational and social. This article presents his life story, thus illustrating the direction of pedagogical research on pastoral, educational and social activities conducted in the interwar period, in a culturally diverse environment. It should be emphasized that Fr Czempiel worked in a complex international situation, during the partitions, the reconstruction of the Polish State and the economic crisis. He functioned in a social space where the most painful actions related to the deprivation of Polishness and Polish national identity were carried out. The author's considerations result from his educational experiences, social activity and personal reflections on the activities of Fr Czempiel from a pedagogical and social perspective. The research draws attention to the priest's multi-dimensional organizational, educational, social, publishing and preventive activities. The article portrays him as a man with a strong identity, carrying out the mission of a priest, educator and social activist with passion, vocation and dedication. The scope of his educational, cultural, social and organizational activities, their forms and work methods are admirable and can serve as a model for contemporary educators, tutors and priests. The main part of the research was conducted based on very well-preserved and catalogued successive issues of *Wiadomości parafialne* [Parish News] published in the parish of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wielkie Hajduki from 1929 to 1939.

Józef Czempiel: his family, childhood and school

Józef Czempiel was born on 21 September 1883, the first child of an Upper Silesian family in the Józefka colony, currently included in the Centrum district in Piekary Śląskie. At that time, the town of Józefka was located within the parish of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Bartholomew in Piekary Niemieckie.¹ The family on his father's (Piotr Czempiel) side came from Józefka. Piotr was a miner, work-

1 It is currently the Basilica of St Mary and St Bartholomew. It is part of the Sanctuary of the Mother of Justice and Social Love.

ing in the 'Cecylia' Zinc Ore Mine,² and at the same time running a small grocery store.³ He was a very hard-working and responsible man, reserved in judging others, trying to provide appropriate conditions for raising children and exercising parental care over them. On 23 September 1883, the parents baptized their first-born in the parish church. The registry entry no. 290 from 1983 contains the information 'Józef, Mateusz son of Piotr Czempiel and Gabriela Opar, godparents: Jan Wanot and Wiktoria Czempiel.'⁴ In the following years, the Czempiel family had more children: Maria (1884), Franciszek (1886), twins Marta and Rozalia (1891, Rozalia died at birth), August (1894) and the youngest brother Edward (1902).⁵ Józef's mother came from the Opar family who lived in Orzech, which borders Piekary.⁶ She was responsible for raising the children and running the household, cultivating family traditions. Józef and his siblings were raised in a traditional mining family, based on the Catholic faith, the Marian cult, the traditions of the family home and strong family ties. The Silesian dialect (a dialect of Polish) was spoken at home.⁷ Józef was particularly close to his sister Marta. He exchanged letters with her during his stay in the concentration camp⁸ and she had previously been his housekeeper in the parish in Hajduki.

- 2 The Cecylia Plant and the Helena Plant were part of the Szarlej Mine (German: *Scharley, Scharle*)—a liquidated zinc ore (calamine) mine in Piekary Śląskie-Szarlej which operated from 1811 to 1896. Until the mid-19th century, it was the largest and richest zinc ore mine in Upper Silesia and one of the largest calamine mines in Europe. (K. Żydek, *Od Pecare do Piekar Śląskich. Opowieść o dziejach Piekar Śląskich*, Piekary Śląskie 1972, pp. 120–130).
- 3 The store offered foreign, hard-to-find products. It had exquisite food products, usually imported from the colonies, such as canned cocoa, coffee and tea.
- 4 Archdiocesan Archives in Katowice (Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Katowicach, AAKat), Baptismal Book 1883, Jan Wanot—a relative of his mother's, Wiktoria Czempiel—a relative of his father's.
- 5 AAKat, sign. 50/963, Piekary Śląskie, Chrzty (1879–1894).
- 6 Orzech (German: *Orzech*)—a village currently located in the Silesian Province, Tarnowskie Góry district, Świerklaniec commune, in the past it was an old mining settlement and a centre of medieval ore mining (lead, silver and zinc).
- 7 Z. Hojka, J. Kurek, A. Piontek, „Powiedz im, że o nich nie zapomniałem...” *Błogosławiony Józef Czempiel (1883–1942). Wybór źródeł*, Katowice 2017, p. 11.
- 8 J. Myszor, *Listy ks. Józefa Czempieła z obozów koncentracyjnych Mauthausen–Gusen i Dachau (1940–1942). Edycja tekstów i komentarz*, „Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne”, 25/26 (1992–1993) pp. 355–376.

The social and financial status of most mining families did not favour the education of children. Despite the hardships of everyday life, Józef's parents took care of their children's education. His brother Franciszek graduated from primary school and then ran a grocery store like his father, August obtained a technical education and Edward became an accountant.⁹ Piotr and Gabriela's daughter Marta graduated from a home economics school (Women's School of Housework) in Zakopane,¹⁰ founded on 24 June 1882 by Countess Jadwiga Zamoyska, née Działyńska.¹¹ The Czempiel family home was filled with an atmosphere of great kindness. Strong bonds between the siblings remained and were nurtured well into adulthood. As Bishop Ignacy Jeż writes, it is the suffering of war and concentration camps that deprive people of a family home, ties, culture and tradition.¹² The Czempiel family was distinguished by exceptional piety. It was probably influenced by contacts with relatives who were priests: Fr Jan Banaś—a parish priest in Lubeck and Fr Stanisław Lebek—a parish priest in Wiśnicze (a relative on his mother's side). It is worth mentioning that these contacts survived into the next generation. They are mentioned by Fr Konrad Lubos, Maria's son, for whom his uncle—Fr Józef Czempiel—was a model priest, educator and social activist. At the age of six, Józef began attending a four-grade German-language elementary school. Having graduated in 1895, he began his education at the Royal Gymnasium in Bytom. As one of the oldest schools

- 9 J. Kurek, *Machabeusze. Bł. ks. Józef Czempiel wśród chorzowskich „towarzyszy”*, Chorzów 2012, p. 10.
- 10 The Women's School of Housework was founded in 1882 by Jadwiga Zamoyska, née Działyńska, as an economic school for girls, with the education based on Christian values. It existed until 1950.
- 11 Z. Nowak, *Finansowanie Szkoły Domowej Pracy Kobiet w Kuźnicach przez Fundację „Zakłady Kórnickie” w latach 1925–1939*, „Pamiętnik Biblioteki Kórnickiej”, 30 (2013) pp. 173–174; J. Ziółek, *Zakład Kórnicki Szkoła Domowej Pracy Kobiet w Kuźnicach do 1923 r.*, „Roczniki Humanistyczne”, 43 (1995) issue. 2, pp. 103–153; 3 x K, czyli krzyż, kądziel i książka. *O początkach Szkoły Domowej Pracy Kobiet*, Portal edukacyjny, https://historiaposzukaj.pl/wiedza,wydarzenia,14873_x_k_czyli_krzyz_kadziel_i_ksiadzka_o_poczatkach_szkoly_domowej_pracy_kobiet.html, accessed: 20.04.2023.
- 12 I. Jeż, *Wspomnienie byłego wikarego w parafii Najświętszej Marii Panny w Wielkich Hajdukach z lat 1937–1942*, in: *Z dziejów tradycji, historii i kultury Wielkich Hajduk. Materiały z sesji popularnonaukowej 4–5 października 1995 r.*, eds. J. Kurek, A. Kurek, Chorzów Batory 1996, p. 134.

in Upper Silesia, it attached great importance to the education and upbringing of students. Józef settled in the Bytom bishop boarding school for secondary school students—applicants for the theological seminary. On 12 March 1904, he passed his matriculation examinations and graduated from the school. Immediately afterwards, he began his studies at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Wrocław. He was entered into the registration book of the university (Faculty of Catholic Theology) on 26 April 1904. His studies were an intellectual challenge for Józef and an even greater burden for the Czempiel family. In this case, the help of the whole family, particularly Fr Lebek was invaluable.

The period of studies, preparation for the ministry of a priest, the roles of educator and social activist

His studies at the University of Wrocław were a very important period in Fr Czempiel's life, when he developed his identity and prepared for the ministry of a priest, the roles of educator, social activist and organizer of social life in the local community. Wrocław, a city of almost half a million, vibrant with social and cultural life, made a huge impression on Józef. It was during this period that his mother played a special role. When, after several months of silence, he wrote her his first letter in German, she drew his attention to the 'language of the heart,' Polish, because she did not know German herself. As an alumnus living in the archbishop boarding house, he became involved in the activities of student organizations, including the Polish Student Club,¹³ which was established in 1895. Members learned the Polish language, the literature and history of Poland and the history of the Church in Poland. They did this through lectures, declamations, reports and by studying literature. Józef participated in a Slavic studies seminar led by Professor Władysław Nehring. The student club had a library, founded by its members, with about 300 items, constituting a source of literature and texts for reflection and discussion. In this environment, Czempiel prepared for his first public speeches. In the club, he held the positions of secretary and vice-president and was the last chairman. The club operated until 1910, when it was dissolved by a decree of Cardinal Georg

13 F. Szymiczek, *Stowarzyszenia akademickie polskiej młodzieży górnośląskiej we Wrocławiu 1863–1918*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1963, pp. 75–93.

von Kopp.¹⁴ The pretext was an article in the German daily newspaper *Berliner Tageblatt* [Berlin Daily Newspaper], in which the author warned against the expanding influence of the national movement in Silesia.¹⁵ The Catholic clergy was said to have played a significant role in this, including the consent of Cardinal von Kopp to the club's activities in the Wrocław boarding school. In addition, conflicts arose in the Polish Student Club over the programme. The German members only wanted to learn Polish but did not want to subscribe to Polish-language magazines and participate in Polish artistic and cultural activities.

After the club had been dissolved, some members joined the illegal Association of Polish Youth 'Zet'.¹⁶ On the orders of this organization, Czempiel held meetings of fellow theologians in his room. They were transformed into a new organization of Polish theology students called 'Swoi' [Our Own]. The participants were mainly engaged in self-education. 'Fidułki'—meetings with Polish singing in restaurants in Wrocław—enjoyed a much wider reach. They influenced young people and adults with weak national awareness. The multitude and variety of activities undertaken by Czempiel in the Polish Student Club, as well as after its dissolution, worried his superiors.¹⁷ This was a period when his identity was shaped and when he prepared for pastoral service and educational, upbringing and social activities. Interested in literature, he studied the classics of Polish Romanticism and collected Polish literature.¹⁸

The sacrament of priesthood was administered to him by Cardinal Georg von Kopp on 22 June 1908 in the Holy Spirit Church in Wrocław. On 25 June, Fr Czempiel celebrated his first mass in Piekary, attended by his family and parishioners. He was then sent to his first parish of St Joseph in Ruda.¹⁹ This

14 T. Błaszczuk, *Działalność kardynała Jerzego Koppa jako biskupa wrocławskiego (1887–1914)*, „Saeculum Christianum”, 9 (2002) issue 2, pp. 227–238.

15 Kółko Polskie–Wrocław, https://silesia.edu.pl/index.php/k%C3%B3%C5%82ko_Polskie_-_Wroc%C5%82aw, accessed: 28.06.201.

16 The Youth Union 'Zet' was established on Polish soil in 1887 on the initiative of Zygmunt Balicki.

17 J. Kurek, *Machabeusze*, p. 21.

18 Ibidem, p. 19.

19 Today, Ruda Śląska; on 30 April 2010, the St Joseph Church was raised to the rank of the St Joseph Archdiocesan Sanctuary.

ended an important stage in the formation of Fr Czempiel's identity and preparation for his professional and social roles.

The pastoral ministry as a vicar, parish priest and dean

Fr Czempiel became the first vicar of the newly established parish of St Joseph in Ruda,²⁰ where he served in this capacity from 1908 to 1916. He spent the first seven years of parish work gaining experience in pastoral ministry, understanding the needs of parishioners and responding to social problems. He celebrated masses in both Polish and German. He promoted frequent reception of Holy Communion. In Ruda, he encountered the problem of alcoholism among families. As it later turned out, activities aimed at helping addicts and their families, counteracting alcoholism and educating became the main areas of Fr Czempiel's work. He was inspired by the traditions of his home parish, the memory of Fr Alojzy Fick²¹—the forerunner of the sobriety movement in Upper Silesia, and the work of Fr Jan Kapica,²² a parish priest at the St Mary Magdalene Church in Tychy from 1898 to 1930.²³ They motivated him to create initiatives for sobriety and helping families. Despite his determination in action, which gave the impression of roughness, he won over young people and adults.

In May 1915, Fr Czempiel began his service in the parish²⁴ in Turze²⁵ near Kuźnia Raciborska. He first served as an administrator, supporting the sick

20 The parish began its pastoral activities on 1 November 1906.

21 Fr Jan Nepomucen Alojzy Fick was a Polish Catholic priest and an active national and temperance activist in Upper Silesia. A teacher by decree, having completed theology in Krakow, he became a Catholic priest. He became involved in charitable Samaritan activities during the cholera epidemic that broke out in Silesia. He founded a publishing centre supporting the dissemination of culture and education in Upper Silesia.

22 J. Wycisło, *Ksiądz infułat Jan Kapica—przywódca ludu górnośląskiego*, Pszczyna 1995.

23 E. Szramek, *Ks. Jan Kapica, życiorys a zarazem fragment historii Górnego Śl.*, „Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk na Śląsku”, 3 (1931) pp. 1–85.

24 The parish church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, consecrated on 19 October 1901.

25 Turze (German: *Wellendorf*) is a village in the Silesian province, Racibórz powiat, Kuźnia Raciborska commune. In 1911, the name Turze was replaced with Wellendorf. Since 12 November 1946, the Polish name Turze has been used again.

parish priest, Fr Rajmund Kentny, and then became a parish priest himself. The cooperation with the parishioners and their involvement in the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus inspired him to implement hard pastoral work. After many years, when he took the initiative to build a new church in Wielkie Hajduki, he decided to name it after the Most Sacred Heart of the Lord Jesus. The next parish²⁶ of Fr Józef was Miedźna²⁷ near Pszczyna. After a short period of pastoral work, he was transferred to the Holy Trinity parish in the village of Wiśnicze²⁸ near Toszek. This was where his uncle, Fr Lebek, was the parish priest from 1869 to 1917 and Józef was happy to visit him. Fr Lebek was an advocate of Polishness, but very open to the diversity of parishioners in matters of nationality. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his service as a parish priest (he performed this function in Wiśnicze for 48 years), Fr Lebek erected 25 marble and stone crosses with inscriptions in Polish. It was he who was the master for Fr Czempiel in his activities to maintain and promote Polish identity. In 1917, Józef stayed in the parish in Wiśnicze due to his uncle's illness. He administered the parish from 18 July 1917 and then was transferred to the St Michael the Archangel parish²⁹ in the village of Dziećmirów.³⁰ While preparing children for First Holy Communion, he introduced the Polish language into the preparatory classes. As a complaint was submitted to the authorities and allegations were made that he attempted to Polonize the local community, he left Dziećmirów in early 1919 and—with the support of Fr Józef Wajda³¹—became

26 The first mention of the Miedźna parish dates to 1326. Thus, the church and parish in Miedźna have existed for at least 700 years. The current church is the largest wooden temple in the Pszczyna region.

27 Miedźna (German: *Miedzna*) is a village in the Silesian province, Pszczyna powiat, Miedźna commune.

28 Wiśnicze (German: *Wischnitz*, 1936–1945: *Kirschen*) is a village in the Silesian province, Gliwice powiat, Wielowieś commune.

29 K. Maler, *Zarys dziejów kościoła katolickiego na ziemi głubczyckiej od średniowiecza do 1945 roku*, „Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny”, 23 (2015) p. 192.

30 Dziećmarów (formerly Dziećmarowy, Czech: *Dětmárov*, German: *Dittmerau*) is a village in the Opole province, Głubczyce powiat, Baborów commune. M. Kowalski, *Morawianie (Morawcy) w Polsce*, „Studia z Geografii Politycznej i Historycznej”, 5 (2016) pp. 115–131.

31 Fr Józef Wajda was a Polish Roman Catholic priest, a social and national activist in Upper Silesia, a member of the Reich Parliament (1908–1912) and the Prus-

a localist³² in Kielcza,³³ intended for pastoral service in Żędowice.³⁴ In the same year, the Żędowice parish was separated from the parish in Kielcza and Fr Czempiel was appointed its first parish priest. In 1920, he led the establishment of the parish cemetery and the renovation and repainting of the church. As a parish priest, he also became the chairman of the local Polish Plebiscite Committee. Even though Poles won the plebiscite on 20 March 1921, these lands were given to the Germans by the decision of the Council of Ambassadors of the League of Nations. In 1922, based on the decision of the church authorities, Fr Czempiel was sent to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish in Bismarckhütte (Wielkie Hajduki).³⁵ In 1926, he was appointed spiritual counsellor, simultaneously acting as vice-dean, and in 1931, after the deanery boundaries were changed, dean of the Królewskohucki (Chorzów) deanery. In September 1939, he left the parish for a short while but returned after a few days. It was in Hajduki, during the difficult period on the eve of World War II (1938), that he undertook the construction of a church. During the war, on 24 December 1939, he consecrated the newly built church of the Sacred Heart of the Lord Jesus, fearing the Germans would adapt it to the needs of the professional fire brigade. On 13 April 1940, he was led out of the confessional, taken to the Gestapo

sian Landtag (1922–1923), an activist for the Polishness of Silesia. In March 1911, he delivered a famous speech in the parliament in Berlin in defence of the right of Upper Silesians to the Polish language. During the plebiscite, he became involved in the activities of the Polish Committee for Upper Silesia in Bytom.

- 32 A localist is a manager of a locality, a vicar subordinate to the parish priest of a given parish.
- 33 Kielcza (German: *Keilerswalde*, until 1936 *Keltsch*) is a village in the Opole province, Strzelce powiat, Zawadzkie commune. The town is located on the left bank of the river Mała Panew. It has had the St Bartholomew the Apostle parish church since 1799.
- 34 Żędowice (German: *Sandowitz*, Silesian: *Żandowice*) is a village, Opole province, Strzelce powiat, Zawadzkie commune.
- 35 In 1903, the Hajduki Dolne (German: *Nieder-Heiduk*) and Hajduki Górne (German: *Ober-Heiduk*) communes were merged by decree of Emperor Wilhelm II into the Bismarckhütte commune. This was a consequence of the opening of the Bismarck Ironworks in 1873 (German: *Bismarckhütte*, since 1933 the Batory Steelworks) and the establishment of a tar distillery (1888), which was the nucleus of the future 'Hajduki' Chemical Plant. J. Kurek, *Historia Wielkich Hajduk*, Chorzów Batory-Wielkie Hajduki 2001.

headquarters and then to the concentration camp in Dachau,³⁶ where he was given number 22043. From Dachau, he was sent to the camp³⁷ in Mauthausen-Gusen.³⁸ On 4 May 1942, he was assigned to a prisoners' transport. He was probably gassed during the transport in a specially prepared vehicle.³⁹ The administration passed on the news of his death to his family by telegram.⁴⁰

Fr Józef Czempiel as an educator, teacher and social activist

Fr Czempiel attached great importance to contacting residents and parishioners through the written word. It was on his initiative that *Wiadomości Parafialne* [Parish News] was issued in Wielkie Hajduki from 3 March 1929 to 3 September 1939.⁴¹ The newspaper was published as an insert in the weekly *Gość Niedzielnny* [Sunday Guest], thus increasing its readership among parishioners. From 16 February 1930, they were published, as announced in the advertisements, in 'an enlarged form, having two pages instead of one... from March this year, the price of a single issue will be 5 groszy and together with *Gość Niedzielnny*—25 groszy.'⁴² *Wiadomości...* included information about the village and the region, elections to the Sejm and the Senate [Polish parliament—trans-

36 Konzentrationslager Dachau was the first German concentration camp, established in an abandoned ammunition factory on the outskirts of the city in the spring of 1933. From December 1940, it became the central prison for arrested priests in the Third Reich. Of 2,720 imprisoned clergymen, 95% were Roman Catholic priests.

37 S. Dobosiewicz, *Mauthausen-Gusen. W obronie życia i ludzkiej godności*, Warszawa 2000.

38 Konzentrationslager Gusen (Gusen I and II and, from 1944, also in Lungitz Gusen III) was a German concentration camp, located near the town of Gusen, about 14 km from the centre of Linz in Austria. It was one of the hardest camps of the Third Reich.

39 J. Myszor, *Listy ks. Józefa Czempieła z obozów koncentracyjnych Mauthausen-Gusen i Dachau*, pp. 255–276.

40 The telegram of June 19 gave the date: June 1, 1942, and the death certificate issued on July 17 gave the date of death as June 19, 1942. Both dates are probably fictitious.

41 J. Kurek, „*Wiadomości Parafialne z Wielkich Hajduk*” (1929–1939) jako źródło historyczne, „*Wieki Stare i Nowe*”, 4 (2005) pp. 168–189.

42 „*Wiadomości Parafialne z Wielkich Hajduk*”, issue 7, February 16, 1930.

lator's note] and reminded about the obligation to vote, noting that voting for enemies of the Church—'for socialists or communists'—is a grave sin.⁴³

Undoubtedly, an important aspect of Fr Czempiel's work was his intense commitment to helping people addicted to alcohol and their families. This was a significant contribution to the anti-alcohol movement in Silesia. He noticed the negative impact of alcohol on various areas of life (religious, cultural, social, national and economic) and the deceptive tradition of drinking alcohol with family on various holidays, which is why he saw the need to continue modern educational, social, medical and aid activities on a wider scale. As a newly ordained priest in Ruda, in 1908, he had already encountered the problem of alcoholism in families, which is why he resumed the activities of the temperance movement and founded the Catholic Abstinence Club.⁴⁴ The number of club branches varied. At that time, the branch in Ruda had 800 members and the one in Miechowice had 1,800.⁴⁵ It was then that he made the decision to become abstinent and remained faithful to this throughout his life. He was among the first priests to draw attention to the need to establish counselling centres for alcoholics and their families.

The anti-alcohol movement in Silesia was weakened and stopped after the outbreak of World War I but was significantly revived after its end. Some clubs ceased to exist, some survived and others reactivated their activity. After the war, Fr Czempiel took over the leadership of the sobriety movement in Silesia from Fr Kapica. The ideas and activities of the anti-alcohol movement in Silesia were discussed during the 2nd Catholic Congress⁴⁶ in Królewska Huta in 1923. Moreover, in agreement with Fr Kapica, Fr Czempiel convened a congress of teetotal priests in Wielkie Hajduki on 20 March 1923. During

43 „Wiadomości Parafialne z Wielkich Hajduk”, issue 45, November 9, 1930.

44 „Gość Niedzielny”, issue 5, February 2, 1930.

45 „Poślaniec Niedzielny” 21 (1914) issue 14, p. 120. The weekly „Poślaniec Niedzielny” was published in Polish in the Archdiocese of Wrocław.

46 From 1922 to 1924, three Catholic congresses were held in Upper Silesia: the 1st Silesian Congress—by Fr Jan Kapica on 10 September 1922 in Katowice; the 2nd Catholic Congress was convened by Fr August Hlond on 8–10 September 1923 in Królewska Huta; and the 3rd Catholic Congress took place on 6–8 September 1924 in Katowice.

the congress, the decision was made to establish the Silesian Branch of the Association of Teetotal Priests.⁴⁷

In his activities, Fr Czempiel implemented the approach of complete abstinence, but without prejudice towards addicts. He began large-scale education of families of alcoholics. Educating on the issue of alcohol addiction was a pioneering activity at that time. Thanks to raising the problem of alcoholism and undertaking various forms of work with addicts and their families, the established Catholic Abstinence Club became very active. Its members met once a month and organized a general meeting once a year at which, having read the minutes, the board members submitted an annual report. One or two speeches on alcohol addiction were given.⁴⁸ Fr Czempiel also gave speeches and lectures during the meetings and social gatherings. He also organized non-alcoholic entertainment, as well as amateur theatre performances and screenings of films, such as *The Crusades* (1935) by Cecil B. DeMille.⁴⁹

A 'Sobriety Promotion Week'⁵⁰ was celebrated annually. The event began on the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday. On the Sunday ending the week, ceremonial events and evening parties were held in the Great Hall of the Catholic Union House. It became a tradition that the amateur theatre group 'Zorza' [Dawn], which operated in the parish, would give a performance. After the board's term of office had expired, a general meeting of the Association of Teetotal Catholics was held. An example is the meeting that was held in January 1930. Information about the group's activities can be found in *Wiadomości Parafialne*:

The Association of Teetotal Catholics held its general meeting on Sunday, 26 January. The report of 1929 states that it currently has 227 members; in 1928–224; 27 joined and 24 left... It was unanimously resolved to celebrate the holiday of sobriety promotion falling on the feast of Our Lady of Candlemas as solemnly as possible. Members will accept Holy Communion together on this day in the intention of saving alcoholics. At 4.30 p.m.,

47 J. Myszor, Ks. Jan Kapica (1866–1930). *Karta z dziejów ruchu abstynenckiego na Górnym Śląsku*, „Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne”, 22 (1989) pp. 129–138.

48 „Wiadomości Parafialne z Wielkich Hajduk”, issue 5, February 2, 1936.

49 Ibidem.

50 Ibidem, issue 6, February 7, 1937.

there will be an evening party in the great Catholic Hall of the Association House with the performance of the play *Mąka na Placek weselny* [Flour for a Wedding Cake] and a ceremonial reception of ten tried candidates.⁵¹

On 2 February 1936, the play *Majster i podróżnik* [Master and Traveler] was performed together with a humorous two-act play⁵² and after they ended, a non-alcoholic party took place. In 1937, a play was staged on Sunday 7 February. The drama *Walkowe Kochanie* [Walek's Love] in four acts was performed.⁵³ Films were screened in the Rialto cinema run by the association.⁵⁴

The activities conducted by Fr Czempiel were very important for the abstinence movement, not only in the parish but also for the Silesian movement and Poland. It positively affected the fight against alcoholism in the re-born state and made it possible to exchange experiences, consolidate activities and enrich the forms of cooperation and assistance. On 25–27 September 1925, as a member of the Main Board of the Catholic Abstinence Union, Fr Czempiel co-organized the 6th Polish Anti-Alcohol Congress in Katowice, combined with a special anti-alcohol exhibition. The programme consisted of an introductory lecture and meetings with groups of specialists (doctors, lawyers, railway workers and drivers, students and the Polish Anti-Alcohol League). As part of the congress, 'special male, female and youth meetings were organized to combat alcoholism, Zenon Parvi's drama *Knajpa* [Pub] was performed in the theatre every day and an anti-alcohol film was screened every day.'⁵⁵

Fr Czempiel also personally ran a parish anti-alcohol clinic for addicts and their families. In his aid activities, he spared no expense in providing in-patient treatment for addicts. For this work, as well as for promoting the abstinence movement and social welfare activities, he received the Golden Cross of Merit 'for his services in the field of social welfare' on 9 November 1932.

51 Ibidem, issue 5, February 2, 1930.

52 Ibidem.

53 Ibidem, issue 6, February 7, 1937.

54 Ibidem, issue 13, March 31, 1935.

55 „Bluszcz. Tygodnik Ilustrowany dla Kobiet”, issue 33, August 15, 1925.

All of the activities undertaken by Fr Czempiel for the benefit of people and families with addictions were educational, upbringing and assistance-related. He organized lectures, readings, conventions, plays by amateur theatre groups and screenings of films in his parish cinema.⁵⁶ Undoubtedly, from the beginning of his pastoral ministry, Fr Józef was very open to educational activities and cooperation with parishioners. He took care of young people and altar boys. Working with young people, both individually to prepare young people to become altar boys,⁵⁷ and as a team, gave him great joy. Very often, he opened the church early in the morning to allow the faithful, especially those who went to work early, to take the sacrament of penance and the Eucharist. While serving parishioners, he got involved in the consolidation of Polish social organizations, within the framework of the Polish Trade Union.⁵⁸ He also contributed to the initiation/revival of the activities of the Union of Polish Women's Associations⁵⁹ and the 'Falcon' Polish Gymnastic Society 'nests' (branches).⁶⁰

As part of his pedagogical activity, he conducted courses preparing applicants for pedagogical work. He organized Polish-language courses⁶¹ for those

56 The estate was built in 1887. Ignatz Malerz was the owner. At first, it was an inn, a 'Meletz's entertainment venue.' In 1919, it was purchased by the Blessed Virgin Mary parish for the needs of the Catholic Union House, where most educational, cultural and social activities organized by Fr Czempiel took place.

57 One of his altar boys, Henryk Grządziel (1897–1968), later became the bishop of Opole.

58 The Polish Trade Union (German: *Polnische Berufsvereinigung*) was a trade union organization established as the central office of Polish trade unions in 1902 in Bochum, Westphalia. The Mutual Aid Union of Upper Silesian Christian Workers from Bytom joined in 1909.

59 The Union of Polish Women's Associations (Polish: *Związek Towarzystw Polek*, ZTP) was a Polish patriotic-national, Upper Silesian women's organization founded in March 1914.

60 The 'Falcon' Polish Gymnastic Society (Polish: *Polskie Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne 'Sokół'*) was an all-age gymnastics organization based upon the principle of 'a strong mind in a sound body.' Through lectures, discussions and group outings, it provided physical, moral and intellectual training for the nation. This training extended to men of all ages and classes and eventually to women [translator's note]. Its first Silesian branch was established in Wrocław on 21 July 1894. The second branch was established in Bytom in Upper Silesia on 25 September 1895.

61 J. Dziadek-Wilk, J. Wilk, *Śladami Błogosławionego Księdza Józefa Czempieła*, Chorzów 2014, p. 67.

taking the entrance examination for teacher seminaries. He took care of young people, preparing them for the role/profession of a teacher. Giving sermons and lectures was Fr Józef's regular work, as was his publishing. In Opole, in 1919, together with Fr Emil Szramek, he published under the pseudonym Makkabaeus a book entitled *Das Recht auf die Muttersprache im Lichte des Christentums. Eine zeitgemässe Erörterung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Verhältnisse in Oberschlesien: von Makkabaeus* [The Right to the Mother Tongue in the Light of Christian Teaching: Contemporary Discussion with Particular Consideration of Conditions in Upper Silesia].⁶² In the publication, he reminded readers that using one's native language is a human right. In his text entitled *Utrzeźwienie Śląska w latach 1940 cudem Piekarskim*⁶³ [The Sobering Up of Silesia in the 1940s through the Piekary Miracle], published in the commemorative book dedicated to the coronation of the Miraculous Image of Our Lady of Piekary in 1925, he referred to the subject of sobriety from the period of Fr Alojzy Jan Fick's activities.⁶⁴ The work *Zbiór pieśni przeciwalkoholowych, religijnych, narodowych i towarzyskich* [The Collection of Anti-Alcohol, Religious, National and Social Songs]⁶⁵ prepared by him and published by the Catholic Abstinence Association in Poland, enjoyed great interest. It was a very useful guide during services, celebrations, meetings, retreats, trainings on how to organize events and parties without alcohol. It was divided into the following parts: Religious Songs; For Christmas; For Easter; For Pentecost; About St John the Baptist; Casual Songs; National Songs; Social Songs; and Miners' Songs. The first supplement included the following: Holy Mass, Prayers

62 It was published by the St Jacek Education Society in Silesia. The work is available: *Das Recht auf die Muttersprache im Lichte des Christentums. Eine zeitgemässe Erörterung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Verhältnisse in Oberschlesien*, <https://sbc.org.pl/dlibra/publication/162948/edition/161273/content>, accessed:10.05.2023.

63 Ks. J. Czempiel, *Utrzeźwienie Śląska w latach czterdziestych cudem Piekarskim*, in: *Piekary. Pamiątka Koronacji Cudownego Obrazu Matki Boskiej Piekarskiej*, Piekary 1925, pp. 88–93, https://www.sbc.org.pl/dlibra/publication/963/edition/970/content?format_id=2, accessed:10.04.2023.

64 Ibidem.

65 *Zbiór pieśni przeciwalkoholowych religijnych narodowych i towarzyskich*, Hajduki Wielkie [1929].

during Holy Mass, Litany to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Litany to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Vespers for Sundays and holidays, Vespers on the Blessed Virgin Mary and Songs for blessing. The second supplement contained abstinence and national songs.

From 1928 to 1929, Fr Czempiel edited a supplement entitled *Apostoł Trzeźwości*⁶⁶ [Apostle of Sobriety] for the weekly *Gość Niedzielny*.⁶⁷ From 1 May 1927, the supplement was published as a monthly devoted to the sobriety movement in Silesia.

He attached great importance to catechesis in school. In 1928, he became a catechetical inspector of elementary schools in the Hajduki deanery. He regularly inspected catechists in schools. He supported them during training, retreats and catechetical visits.

Educational and upbringing activities were reinforced by days of social thought and weeks of good books.⁶⁸ The latter was organized by the Catholic League and Catholic Action, began on the Feast of Christ the King and lasted until All Saints' Day. During this, it was possible to buy books, brochures and magazines with Catholic content at the stand in front of the church. The prices of books were then reduced by 20–50%.⁶⁹ The Catholic literature kiosk at the church allowed for systematic purchases of books, papal encyclicals and Catholic press. Young people and scouts took an active part in youth gatherings, such as in Zaolzie.⁷⁰

Activities for the unemployed, the poor and the sick were a special area of Fr Czempiel's pastoral care. He understood how important employment, sources of income in family life and the scope of unemployment in Hajduki Wielkie were. Being a member of the District Committee for Unemployment, as well

66 The Catholic weekly *Gość Niedzielny*, as an organ of the Diocesan Curia in Katowice, has been published since 9 September 1923, at the initiative of Bishop Hlond.

67 The monthly was published by the Diocesan Board of Abstinence Associations, whose the editorial office was located in Katowice at 3 Damrota Street. E. Lubojańska, „*Gość Niedzielny*” – charakterystyka dodatków do czasopisma w latach 1923–1939, „*Fides: Biuletyn Bibliotek Kościelnych*”, 1–2 (2009) pp. 150.

68 „*Wiadomości Parafialne z Wielkich Hajduk*”, issue 42, October 20, 1935.

69 Ibidem, issue 43, October 27, 1935.

70 Ibidem, issue 19, May 7, 1939.

as the president of the Committee for Aid to the Unemployed in Wielkie Hajduki, he undertook various aid activities. The district kitchen operating at that time gave out about 1,000 dinners and bread coupons every day. The priest wrote appeals and called on Hajdukans to pay taxes, 'let's contribute at least one percent of our monthly income to alleviate their poverty.'⁷¹ Additionally, he announced and implemented systematic collections for the unemployed,⁷² including food collections.⁷³ On many occasions, he undertook various aid activities for different groups in need. For example, he conducted collections for the purchase of clothes for first-communion children from poor families.⁷⁴ Free sewing courses for the unemployed organized by the Sisters of Mercy of St Borromeo enjoyed great interest.⁷⁵ Systematic catechesis and meetings were a support for the poor, unemployed and non-sacramental marriages. Meeting days were organized for various social groups. On 1 October, the Day of the Sick was held. At that time, the Volunteer Sanitary Column provided transport for the sick to get to church. The sick participated in the Holy Mass and then in a meeting and refreshments with the priests. The event was organized with the support of the Health Fund, the management of the Batory Steelworks, associations, fraternities and parishioners.⁷⁶ Systematically and according to need, on the occasion of holidays, collections of food parcels were organized, as well as free sewing courses for the unemployed⁷⁷ conducted by the Sisters of Mercy of St Borromeo.

Conclusions

Fr Czempiel's role as an educator, teacher and social activist suited the nature of the parish in which he performed his pastoral ministry. Hajduki Wielkie was a workers' parish at that time. Most families worked in the Bismarck

⁷¹ Ibidem, issue 16, April 20, 1930.

⁷² Ibidem, issue 17, April 27, 1930.

⁷³ Ibidem, issue 13, May 28, 1937.

⁷⁴ Ibidem, issue 20, May 18, 1930.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, issue 44, November 1, 1936.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, issue 40, October 6, 1935.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, issue 44, November 1, 1936.

steelworks⁷⁸ and the Hajduki Coke-Chemical Plant.⁷⁹ He brought from his family home a commitment to faith, the Catholic Church, family and social life. Therefore, in his ministry and his educational and social activities, he attached great importance to the family (while in a concentration camp, he exchanged letters with his sister Marta until the end), in which he saw the foundation of religious and social life. He thus fought hard for its sobriety, correct relations and participation in cultural and social life. Thanks to this, during his term as parish priest in Hajduki Wielkie, as many as 18 parishioners became priests and monks and 40 became nuns.⁸⁰ The participation of church societies and fraternities in the life of the parish was impressive. In 1936, there were 20⁸¹ of them and in 1939–30, including German ones: *Armenseelen-Bruderschaft*, *Kath. Jungmännerverein*, *Kath. Jungmänner-Verein u. Jugend-Verein*, *Kath. Männerverein*, *Männerverein*, *Maria–Trostbruderschaft* and *Marian. Jungfrauen-Kongregation*, *Tabernakelbund* and *Trostbruderschaft*. This diversity indicates that the priest was open to various forms of pastoral care and, above all, was willing to cooperate. The war period destroyed or severely limited the open activity of brotherhoods and associations in the Hajduki parish, as in the entire Church on Polish territory. As reported by *Wiadomości Parafialne z Wielkich Hajduk* [Parish News from Wielkie Hajduki] of 3 September 1939, ‘during the acute anti-aircraft defence emergency, all meetings and gatherings of brotherhoods and associations are suspended.’⁸²

Fr Czempiel was persecuted (summoned by the Gestapo, interrogated, arrested and detained on 13 April 1940)⁸³ for his activities in the defence of Pol-

78 Bismarck Steelworks (German: *Bismarckhütte*) was launched on 2 September 1873 in Dolne and Górne Hajduki; in 1933, it was turned into Batory Steelworks, which operated in Chorzów-Batory until 2013.

79 Founded in 1888, the Hajduki Chemical Plant (initially Rudolf Rütgers Chemische Fabrik für Theerprodukte, Hajduki Coke-Chemical Plants) in Chorzów-Batory was liquidated in 2012.

80 Z. Hojka, *Czempiel Józef*, in: *Leksykon Panteonu Górnośląskiego*, eds. A. Kłos-Skrzypczak, H. Olszar, *Studia i Materiały Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Śląskiego w Katowicach*, issue 94, Katowice 2020, p. 125.

81 „Wiadomości Parafialne z Wielkich Hajduk”, issue 4, January 26, 1936.

82 Ibidem, issue 36, September 3, 1939.

83 Z. Hojka, J. Kurek, A. Piontek, „Powiedz im, że o nich nie zapomniałem...”, p. 20.

ish identity and Christian values, yet was open to the needs of parishioners of German nationality in his daily activities. *Wiadomości Parafialne z Wielkich Hajduk* published in 1929 was bilingual.⁸⁴ The last bilingual issue was published on 25 June 1939.⁸⁵ Taking care of his German-speaking parishioners, he celebrated Holy Mass⁸⁶ and preached in German until the outbreak of the war. The priest was endowed with special features, thanks to which he became a model and person of authority for his parishioners and local residents. He fulfilled several social roles at the same time: of a priest, teacher, educator and social activist, gathering and uniting around himself representatives of various social groups and classes. This is evidenced by the fact that as many as 28 different groups (school youth, brotherhoods, associations, societies, teams, unions, authorities, clubs, orders, orchestras and a choir) participated in the Corpus Christi procession on 8 June 1939.⁸⁷

Although the effects of educational activity are not only evidenced by numbers, it is worth pointing out that on Sunday 28 May 1939, 534 children (274 boys and 260 girls) made their First Holy Communion in the parish.⁸⁸ This proves that Fr Józef's activity had a wide reach and that he was devoted to working and cooperating with the faithful. This cooperation was exemplary even though he was firm, did not accept joint public family bathing organized at open-air bathing areas in public spaces,⁸⁹ did not agree to merge schools and introduce co-education⁹⁰ and demanded that primary schools were Catholic, in both their names and the attitudes of the teaching staff and students.

Cooperation with young people was Fr Czempiel's passion. He organized Christmas meetings for them, preceded by Holy Mass. Later, they sang carols together, recited poems, broke the wafer and listened to speeches by guests.

84 Od 1939 r. są to „Wiadomości Parafialne z Wielkich Hajduk”; Ibidem, issue 1, January 1, 1939.

85 Ibidem, issue 26, June 25, 1939.

86 It can be concluded that he celebrated his last Holy Mass in German at 7:30 a.m. on Wednesday, June 14, 1939. Ibidem, issue 24, June 11, 1939.

87 Ibidem, issue 23, June 14, 1939.

88 Ibidem, issue 22, May 28, 1939.

89 Ibidem, issue 25, June 22, 1930.

90 Ibidem, issue 8, February 21, 1937.

On 6 January 1937, scouts staged the play *Gwiazda wschodzi* [The Star Is Rising], followed by group photos and a party.⁹¹ The priest also systematically organized youth festivals,⁹² which were an excellent opportunity for meetings, catechesis and joint fun.

He saw in pilgrimages a huge potential for the development of spirituality, community, identity, patriotism and love of the homeland. It became a tradition to organize domestic pilgrimages to Częstochowa, Piekary, Pszów, Warsaw, Wilanów and Vilnius, as well as international pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Athens and Constantinople.⁹³ While pilgrimages were usually made by train, nearby sanctuaries were reached on foot.

Fr Czempiel showed great interest in literature. He began learning the Polish literary language while still a student in Wrocław, which prompted him to collect literature. The collections, supplemented by items from his uncle, Fr Lubos, over time transformed into a sizeable library. In the Hajduki parish, it served as a source for pastoral, educational and upbringing activities. The most popular books were the Bible in Latin and German, the Jakub Wujek Bible, *Słownik języka polskiego* [The Dictionary of the Polish Language] by Samuel Bogumił Linde, fiction and the history of Polish literature. The fact that he possessed such literature indicates that he strove for the beauty of the Polish language and the freedom to use it. The collection also included: Sermons and Sketches by *Kazania i szkice księży Towarzystwa Jezusowego* [Priests of the Society of Jesus, SJ] (Kraków 1989–1917); sermons by Fr Karol Antoniewicz, SJ (Kraków 1890); *Zbiór kazań wydanych z polecenia J. Em. Ks. Kardynała-Prymasa Hłonda, Przedruk łacińskich kazań* [Collection of Sermons Published on the Order of His Excellency Cardinal-Primate Hlond: Reprint of Latin Sermons] published in Vienna in 1917; and *Żywoty świętych starego i nowego zakonu na każdy dzień przez cały rok* [The Lives of Saints of the Old and New Order for Every Day for the Whole Year] by Fr Piotr Skarga (Kraków 1882). These publications show that Fr Czempiel paid great attention to the preached word and sermons and that he thoroughly prepared himself for meetings and speeches. His library did not lack

91 Ibidem, issue 3, January 17, 1937.

92 Ibidem, issue 46, November 15, 1936.

93 Ibidem, issue 47, November 24, 1935.

items on the subject of alcoholism and anti-alcohol activities. He was also interested in matters of Catholic social teaching and state-Church relations, which is why he collected items on the relations between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland, such as: *Konkordat zawarty dnia 10 lutego 1925 roku pomiędzy Stolicą Apostolską i Rzeczpospolitą Polską* [Concordat Concluded on 10 February 1925 between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland] by Fr Stanisław Łukomski (Łomża 1934); *Konkordat i jego wykonanie* [Concordat and Its Implementation] by Kazimierz Błaszczyński (Poznań 1927); *Zasady życia duchowego* [Principles of Spiritual Life] by Fr Józef Schryvers (Kraków 1926); and *Życie wewnętrzne a duch apostołstwa* [The Soul of the Apostolate] by Jean-Baptiste Chautard (Kraków 1928). He was interested in school matters and in particular those in Upper Silesia as evidenced by the following publications: by *Szkoła na Górnym Śląsku w oświetleniu historyczno-prawnym* [School in Upper Silesia in a Historical and Legal Light] by Fr Juliusz Bieńek (Katowice 1933) and *Nauka dla dzieci gotujących się do pierwszej spowiedzi i Komunii świętej oraz podręcznik dla rodziców tychże dzieci* [Education for Children Preparing for First Confession and Holy Communion and a Handbook for Their Parents] by Fr Augustyn Strzybny (Racibórz 1918). The parish library also contained items related to Fr Józef's personal interests, such as medicine, herbal medicine and unconventional methods of treatment, as well as numerous information guides.⁹⁴

Fr Czempiel's achievements, output and activities place him among those people significant to Polish pedagogy, social work, social care, primarily social pedagogy, care, education and social prevention. His pastoral care should be read and analysed not only in the spiritual but also social, educational, cultural and intercultural dimensions. It is universal for all: believers, seekers and non-believers.⁹⁵

Streszczenie: Każdy może pełnić rolę pedagoga, wychowawcy lub społecznika bez względu na wykonywaną pracę. Bardzo często te role wypełnia jedna i ta sama osoba. Przykładem jest błogosławiony ks. Józef Czempiel, niezwykle pedagog, wychowawca,

94 J. Kurek, *Machabeusze*, pp. 14–19.

95 M. Walancik, *Przez cierpienie do Dzieła. Matka Róża Czacka i siostra Faustyna Kowalska*, in: *Świat na trajektorii cierpienia. Społeczne i edukacyjne problemy wynikające z pandemii SARS-CoV-2*, eds. A. M. Kochanowicz, K. Walancik, M. Witkowski, Dąbrowa Górnicza 2021, pp. 249–250.

społecznik, który poprzez swą posługę duszpasterską rozwinął ruch abstynencki na Górnym Śląsku. Ogromną wagę przywiązywał do działalności edukacyjnej i kulturalnej rodzin, zabiegał o udzielanie pomocy społecznej rodzinom uzależnionych i bezrobotnych. Zaangażowany w walkę o polskość na Górnym Śląskim, prześladowany w okresie II wojny światowej, zginął śmiercią męczeńską w obozie koncentracyjnym w Dachau w maju 1942 roku. W dniu 13 czerwca 1999 roku Papież Jan Paweł II ogłosił go w Warszawie błogosławionym, spośród 108 męczenników z okresu II wojny światowej.

Słowa kluczowe: Józef Czempiel, Górny Śląsk, pedagog, społecznik, ruch abstynencki.

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