

SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF THE SAINTS

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF KRAKÓW BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD PAUL SMOLIKOWSKI A PRIEST FROM THE CONGREGATION OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (1849-1926)

DECREE ON HEROIC VIRTUES

“Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible... I have become all things to all, to save at least some” (1 Cor. 9:19.22).

These words of the Apostle of the Gentiles, which show his identification with the Lord as an example of life for the apostles of all times, summarize very well the deepest spiritual beliefs of the Servant of God Fr. Paul Smolikowski and the great style of his numerous apostolic and pastoral ministries. A constant and loving dialogue with the Lord Jesus and a daily relationship with Him through the heroic imitation of His life as a Saviour was the inner core of his interior life. This bond with Christ, who so loved people that He became their servant, was the strength that urged Fr. Paul to go beyond himself and to identify himself with others in order to serve better and to save all those whom he met, thanks to the Will of God.

The Servant of God was born on February 9, 1849 in Tver, Russia and was baptized on March 13. His father was a military engineer and his mother came from an aristocratic family. Being both Poles, after the fall of Poland Uprising against the Tsarist regime (1830-1831), they found themselves in Russia. Paul was raised in a deeply religious family, and it was also at home he received his first intellectual formation, and learned French, German, English and Russian. Ten years after his birth, the family moved back to Warsaw.

All the while Paul became more and more aware of his call to the vocation of priesthood and religious life. This led him to join the novitiate of the newly formed Congregation of the Resurrection. He professed first religious vows in 1868 and perpetual vows on March 5, 1873. On April 15, 1873 Fr. Paul was ordained in the Eastern rite with the intention of ministering among the Byzantine Slavs in Bulgaria and in the hope of contributing in this way to the reconciliation of Russia with the Church. However, he was asked first to replace the Novice Master in Mentorella near Rome. It also gave him the opportunity to complete his doctorate in theology.

In 1874 he went to Bulgaria to serve there as an educator and missionary. A few years later he moved to Lviv, in what today is Ukraine. After years of intensive ministry, especially among children and youth, he was appointed rector of the Polish College in Rome. As a fruit of this educational work, an original pedagogical system, was created. A system which today is still practised by his spiritual sons. While in Rome, he also held many responsibilities within his Congregation, including the General Leadership. Fr. Paul was elected to this office in 1895. His ten years in the Generalate were characterized by much tension within the Community. This tension was mainly as a result of the introduction of a new Constitution which was not well received by all the members. Fr. Paul was re-appointed as the rector of the Polish College.

In the meantime, the First World War began and the Servant of God, as a citizen of the Habsburg Empire, had to leave Italy which was in conflict with Austria. So he moved to Kety, Poland, to serve as a chaplain to the Sisters of the Resurrection and as Visitor of the Resurrectionists in the countries of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and in the Eastern Mission.

After the war, Fr. Paul moved to Krakow in 1921 and became the Master of Novices. He was also involved in preaching the Word of God and in providing spiritual direction. During this period, he organized, developed and promoted the spirituality of the Paschal Mystery inherited from the Founders of the Congregation of the Resurrection. This spirituality became a precious treasure for the Resurrectionists and for the whole Church, thanks to Fr. Paul's lived example and numerous publications about it. From 1924, his health began to deteriorate and some signs of progressive paralysis appeared.

In every stage of his life, the Servant of God responded to God's call with enthusiasm and consistency. This response is clearly a sign of his eagerness in seeking the path of perfection and his walking generously on this path. His great faith was nourished by daily prayers, Eucharistic and Marian devotion. He had this passionate love that guided his life to the service of God and neighbour. Putting all his trust in God's will, the fidelity in fulfilling priestly responsibilities, the dedication to souls, the spirit of mortification for reparation for people's insults against God, those were his main thoughts and the most important acts of his everyday life. From them came a deep pastoral care and charity, which as a model had the Sacred Heart of Jesus in whose merits he put all his trust.

Fr. Paul lived in the presence of the Lord and especially in times of trials and difficulties he showed gentle fortitude and prudent temperance. There are numerous testimonies of his steadfast faithfulness to the Church and to its Teaching. The “interior climate” of his spirituality was characterized by deep humility which led him to this understanding of being only an ordinary tool in God’s hands. He was very grateful to the Lord for his vocation to the priesthood and religious life which he fully acknowledged having received from Him.

The Servant of God ended his earthly pilgrimage on September 11, 1926. Many confreres, clergy and lay people came to the funeral. It was an outward sign of their respect and conviction about the holiness of his life and the sign of their gratitude to the legacy left by Fr. Paul.

The informative process on that reputation of Fr. Paul’s holiness took place at the Archdiocesan Curia in Cracow and two regulatory processes took place first in Cracow and then in Rome from May 24, 1966 to April 29, 1968. Their legal validity was recognized by this Congregation by a decree of May 17, 1991. After the preparation of *Positio*, a discussion was held, in accordance with necessary procedures, as to whether the Servant of God had demonstrated heroism in the practice of virtue. On September 14, 2010, the Peculiar Congress of Theologian Consultants took place, which ended with a positive conclusion. On December 5, 2017, Cardinals and Bishops at their Ordinary Session, over which Cardinal Angelo Amato presided, acknowledged that the Servant of God had exercised in a heroic degree the theological and cardinal virtues and other virtues associated with them.

The Cardinal Prefect presented the Holy Father Pope Francis with a detailed report of all the phases described above. His Holiness accepting and acknowledging the validity of the decision of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, declared today:

It has been made evident that the Servant of God, Paul Smolikowski, a priest of the Congregation of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, practiced in a heroic degree the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity towards God and towards his neighbors as well as the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude along with other virtues associated with them.

The Supreme Pontiff has ordered that this decree be published and placed in the acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given in Rome, on the 18th day of the month December, in the year of our Lord 2017.

ANGELUS Card. AMATO, S.D.B,
Prefect

+MARCELLUS BARTOLUCCI

Titular Archbishop of Bevagna
Secretary

**The official text of this Decree is in Latin original*