

MILITARY MINISTRY DURING THE TURN OF 1989 TO 1992

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Polonia

Rezumat: *Articolul prezintă foarte succint primii ani de pastorație militară din Polonia, după căderea comunismului. În perioada de după 1947 autoritățile comuniste au tolerat existența a ceea ce a mai rămas din pastorația militară, însă preoții militari erau obligați să colaboreze cu Secția Politico-Educațională. Așa numitul Decanat General al Armatei Poloneze, instituit de către autoritățile comuniste era constituit din 31 de biserici de garnizoană și dispunea de 45 de preoți. Deși ofițerii politici au depus un efort substanțial pentru a ateiza Armata Poloneză, efectul nu a fost deloc cel scontat, ci dimpotrivă a fost doar unul superficial. Odată cu numirea de către papa Ioan Paul al II-lea, la 31 ianuarie 1991, a pr. Slawoj Leszek Glódz ca Episcop al Ordinariatului militar în Polonia, s-au încheiat practic cei 50 de ani de inexistență a Ordinariatului și a Episcopului militar în structura Bisericii Catolice și a forțelor armate poloneze. Primele decizii luate de episcopul Glódz au fost acte de legislație, numiri personale și constituirea structurii pastorale militare în Polonia. Experiența aceasta a fost utilă și Bisericii ortodoxe și evanghelice care, ulterior, au creat structuri asemănătoare. De asemenea, articolul prezintă rolul papei Ioan Paul al II-lea în reconstituirea pastorației militare din Polonia.*

NB: Ordinariatul militar este o structură bisericească, asemănătoare unei episcopii, care se îngrijește de cadrele armatei. În Biserica catolică există peste 30 de Ordinariate militare.

Résumé : *L'article ci-joint présente d'une manière très succincte les premières années de pastorat militaire de la Pologne après la chute du communisme. Dans la période d'après 1947, les autorités communistes ont toléré l'existence de ce qui est resté du pastorat militaire, mais les prêtres militaires étaient obligés à collaborer avec la Section Politique – Educationnelle. L'ainsi nommée Doyenneté Générale de l'Armée Polonaise instituée par les autorités communistes était constitué de 31 églises de garnison et disposait de 45 prêtres. Quoique les officiers politiques ont déposé un effort substantiel pour athéiser l'Armée Polonaise, l'effet n'a pas été celui espéré, mais, au contraire, un superficiel. Une fois avec la nomination par le pape Jean Paul II le 31 janvier 1991 du prêtre Slawoj Leszek Glódz comme Evêque de l'Ordinariat militaire en Pologne, ont fini les 50 années d'existence de l'Ordinariat et de l'Evêque militaire dans la structure de l'Eglise Catholique et des forces armées polonaises. Les premières décisions prises par l'évêque Glódz ont été des actes de législation, des dénominations personnelles et la constitution de la structure pastorale militaire en Pologne. Cette expérience é été utile, aussi, à l'Eglise orthodoxe et évangélique qui, ultérieurement, ont créé des structures semblables. L'article présente, aussi, le rôle du pape Jean Paul II dans la reconstitution du pastorat militaire en Pologne.*

NB : l'Ordinariat militaire est une structure ecclésiastique semblable à un évêché qui se préoccupe des cadres de l'armée. Dans l'Eglise catholique, il y a plus 30 Ordinariats militaires.

Keywords: *Polish Army, General Deanery, garrison churches, military chaplains, the Pope John Paul II, Field Ordinariate, Field Bishop*

Following 1946 and after the end of the so-called ideological purges the Polish army as a social group was especially indoctrinated atheistically for almost 50 years. The political and educational authority, whose structure was significantly based on the Soviet patterns, dominated among educational institutions. The main educational institutions were: the commander and the political-educational authority. The role of ideological-educational character was also played by teams and groups and then by party circles¹. Communist authorities allowed the existence of the residual military pastoral and the military chaplains had a duty to participate in Political-Educational Department's activities and communicate pastoral statistics to the ministry superiors².

The General Deanery of the Polish Army had 31 garrison churches (the used ones) i.a. in: Kraków, Kielce, Radom, Przemyśl, Siedlce, Komorów near Ostrowia Mazowiecka, Skierniewice, Lublin, Puławy, Olsztyn, Gdańsk Wrzeszcz, Sopot, Szczecin, Inowrocław, Chełmno, Toruń Bydgoszcz, Katowice, Gliwice, Łódź, Wrocław, Jelenia Góra, Żary, Międzyrzecze, Skwierzyna and also a few churches and chapels that were not used. In the years 1946-1989, 177 priests worked and helped in garrison churches of the General Deanery³.

Priest chaplains of the General Deanery were placed in a difficult pastoral position. On one hand, they lacked full access to the soldiers in military units; on the other hand, the Church expected the increased pastoral activity. It was not easy for priest chaplains to get respect and confidence from diocesan clergy and especially from the soldiers. However, the Church is theological reality and as "the community of faith, hope and love" (Lumen Gentium) is united with a triple knot ties: the community of faith, common worship and sacraments, unity and successive continuity of the social government of the Church.⁴ These community elements somehow forced the military ministry to perform pastoral activities in accordance with the teachings of Vatican II. However, the situation of the military ministry started to change considerably for the better only after 1980. Then the chaplains were much more often seen in military units. The example can be Fr. Lieutenant Colonel Józef Pałęga, for many years the parish-priest in Rzeszów garrison, who already in December 1981 during the Marshal Law arranged the Holy Confession and collective Holy Masses for the soldiers and Fr. Major Janusz Bąk, the parish-priest in Żary garrison, who during Advent of the same year gave the sacrament of reconciliation to about 350 basic service soldiers in military units in Żagań, Żary and Krosno Odrzańskie. He was not allowed in to say the Holy Mass and hear Holy Confession in military units in Gubin⁵.

Military chaplains also provided ministrations in prisons, at death sentences and in military hospitals responding to phone calls in most cases. There were some individual cases when the chaplains functioned on a permanent basis in military hospitals. One of the elements of their activity were lectures for the soldiers and presentations: "What is homeland?" "Soldier's duties", "The Polish Army and a brief look at its development emphasizing that existence, prosperity and safety of the country goes hand in hand with the prosperity of the army and its moral condition", "Serve the country and the entire Nation everywhere", "The importance of fighting with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army troops", "Kindness, courage, chivalry – should characterize a soldier"⁶. "Combating social scourges – alcoholism, wastage, defective production, laziness etc. Patriotic traditions in the Polish Army ministry"⁷.

After the waiting period for their first officer's rank (captain), auxiliary chaplains were appointed to the defined positions under the decision of General Dean and the command of the National Defence Minister. A determined military unit (economic department – pays, supplying the church) supplied the General Deanery. Priest chaplains arrived at the General Deanery for briefings, conferences and other occasional meetings. At least some of the chaplains from the General Deanery of the eighties should be mentioned here:

Fr. Maj Kazimierz ANTONIEWICZ
Fr. Maj Marian KMIECIKOWSKI
Fr. Lt Col Janusz BAŁK
Fr. Col Stanisław OBSZYŃSKI
Fr. Col Józef PAŁĘGA
Fr. Comm Marian PRÓCHNIAK
Fr. Col Marian STERNIK
Fr. Leszek KOŁONIECKI

In 1990, the General Deanery employed about 45 priest chaplains (regular and auxiliary ones). The Head of the ministry was General Dean of the Polish Army – Fr. Col Florian KLEWIADO and Deputy Dean – Fr. Col Jan WOLNY. General Dean had his residence in Warsaw at 13/15 Długa Street next to the Blessed Virgin Mary's Queen of Poland parish. The General Deanery also employed civilians: clerks, sextons, organists. The General Deanery office employed a financial and economic officer (Col Bogusław Krukowski), the office manager (WO Marian Wereszczyński), nuns (secular sisters), a typist (Wanda Krześniak) and a driver (Antoni Bęza).

At the end of its office, which is at the end of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s, the General Deanery chaplains' job differed, to a significant degree, from that in the preceding years. It was also because at last, military ministry received its legal position in the Act about the state's attitude to the Catholic Church of May 17, 1989⁸. The Church had more freedom. A sort of thaw set in also in religious practice in the army. Eg.:

- on April 5, 1989 the soil from sanctified with blood Katyń was solemnly accepted in the Blessed Virgin Mary's the Queen of Poland Church in Warsaw⁹.

- on April 1, 1990 at 6 p.m., at Plac Zwycięstwa in Warsaw, the Ministry of National Defense and the General Deanery of the Polish Army arranged a Holy Mass and the Reading of the roll of the dead in memory of the victims of crimes committed on the Polish nation during the World War II¹⁰.

- on September 9, 1990 at 11 a.m. the Polish Army pilgrimage arrived at Jasna Góra. Fr. Henryk Jankowski and General Dean of the Polish Army Col Florian Klewiado arranged it¹¹.

The atheisation process in the Polish Army in communist times was done superficially and ineffectively in spite of great effort made by political officers.

Superficiality of atheistic indoctrination of the Polish society during communism in Poland appeared when, for example, the reviving military pastoral did not have to build new structures, new religious foundations but it could appeal to what the military took out of their family homes and to the fact that in the military families, although of different quality but still, the reference to religion and the Church existed¹².

When on January 31, 1991 the Pope, John Paul II, nominated the prelate Sławoj Leszek Głódź Field Bishop, 50 years of absence of the Field Ordinariate and Field Episcopate in the Polish Church and Polish Armed Forces structure in Poland practically ended¹³.

On February 23, 1991 Sławoj Leszek Głódź in the sermon delivered during his bishop consecration said: "Military ministry wishes to contribute to the restoration of what was ruined by bad time and wants to build new values. It desires to lead soldiers' souls to God, to fill the military service with the presence of God, mark soldiers' effort with it"¹⁴. Whereas, on June 8, 1991, less than 4 months after taking up the Field Diocese, during John Paul's II visit to the Field Cathedral bishop Głódź emphasized: "Great change of Polish conscience and significant events in the nation's life were necessary to be able to meet here, people in uniforms, the Polish Army soldiers with the successor of Saint Peter"¹⁵.

The Pope's meetings with the Polish Army in the period of system changes strengthened the position of the Church in the army, and thus they increased the importance of Field Bishop not only among ordinary soldiers, but first, among generals as well. The organization of those great enterprises itself led to closer contacts with the command staff and the Ministry of National Defense.

Necessary preparations, briefings, meetings and reconnaissance proceeded the first official meeting of the Pope with the army on the airfield in Zegrze Pomorskie. Field Bishop Sławoj Leszek Głódź published a special decree calling up "A Honorary Committee for the Arrangements of the Fourth Pilgrimage of the Pope John Paul II". To the committee he invited people representing the Ministry of National Defense, various districts and formations of the Polish Armed Forces, military families and veterans. The aim of forming the committee was clearly defined. Bishop believed that those people would do their best to make the meeting with the Pope the credo, religious and patriotic experience, the sign of ties with the Church and Peter of our times¹⁶.

The organization of the meeting was a great challenge for the army¹⁷. The location was prepared accurately and a huge altar was built. A white spread eagle with the image of Black Madonna towered over the rows of the gathered soldiers. The inscription on the altar "Bless free homeland" reminded of difficult years in the Polish Army and at the same time referred to normality that had started to enter gradually the barracks life.

Actually, freedom so much valued in the Polish nation was emphasized in the Pope's homily. The Pope referred to the homeland's history, to the most beautiful cards of the Polish arms. He talked about the necessity of the service of military chaplains in the army and finally about the responsibility for the country, which rests with the army¹⁸.

The meeting itself had a rich prayer cover. Already on June 1 the Polish Army soldiers started to gather in the airfield. At 10 p.m., keeping watch started with *Apel Jasnogorski* and singing religious and patriotic songs. Although the day and night were cold (the temperature dropped below 0° C), the soldiers did not complain. Singing of the song *Bogurodzica* turned out to be particularly emotional. When thousands of soldiers led by 'Granica' ensemble sang that anthem, some had an impression that it must have been like that at the Battle of Grunwald in 1410¹⁹. Soldiers' spontaneity and enthusiasm during the ride of the Pope between sectors were great. A living pulsing organism was pulsing most strongly at places where the Pope was²⁰. That meeting with forty thousand Polish Army soldiers greatly impressed the Pope.

On June 8, during the meeting with the representatives of the culture and art in the Grand Theatre in Warsaw the Pope said: When I was among the Polish Army singing *Bogurodzica*, not only: *Let us unfurl light blue flags*, praying before the Pope arrived at all-night watching, I did not believe my eyes. [...] Then I understood the record of Resurrection in gospels. [...] I wanted to tell them about it at once but there was not enough time, there was not even a context. However, it walked behind me and finally I have found the place. I would rather not leave Poland with it but leave it here, if not anywhere else, at least here in the Grand Theatre. [...] So it is also great astonishment. Resurrection and astonishment. It is difficult not to be surprised. I have been making this kind of discoveries for the whole week, moving from place to place in quite rapid pace but the greatest, the most resurrectional was the discovery in Koszalin".

The following Pope's meetings with the Polish Army did not ever have such great organizational dash although the soldiers participated in all Pope's travels to Poland: in Legnica field, in Krosno, Cracow, Kalisz, Gorzów, Gniezno (eg. only the Warsaw garrison enabled 900 soldiers to meet the Pope in Gniezno), Zakopane and many other places.

John Paul II knew that the first steps of the new Polish Army Field bishop were not easy, that is why, on the nearest occasion, he gave a clear signal again how much he cared about the military pastoral. On June 8 during his visit to Warsaw he visited the Polish Army Field Cathedral and blessed the Field Bishop, the military ministry and the Polish army²¹.

On September 6, 1991 the Secretary's office of the State, sent official acknowledgements to Field Bishop Sławoj Leszek Głódź in the name of John Paul II for, among others, "the gift of soldiers' hearts" expressed by night watching and a solemn, telling meeting at the prayer appeal in Koszalin²².

Reconstruction of religious foundations in army's life was not easy. Bishop Głódź faced a lot of challenges and expectations from both the army and the Polish society. The new Bishop had to manage efficiently the ranks of the army and first of all priest-chaplains who he had "inherited" from the General Deanery. In his words directed to the congregation during the ingress to the Field Cathedral, he duly appreciated pastoral services saying: "There were also priest-chaplains in the Folk Polish Army ranks. Pushed on to the side, limited in their pastoral activities, deprived of a real contact with the army. In the period of Poland's revival in 1989 volunteers who felt the necessity of giving help joined them... We offer our prayer to all of them, the military chaplains in times of war and peace"²³.

Ms. Wanda Krześniak, the clerk in the secretary's office of Field Ordinariate, recalls: "It was a great revolution, dozens of priests and the military visited Field Bishop every day"²⁴.

The first decrees of nomination were most probably written by Field Bishop Sławoj Leszek Głódź himself, who on May 15 1991 nominated Fr. Mirosław DENISIUK, the priest of Łomża diocese to be his private secretary. However, on June 1 he appointed Fr. prof. dr hab. Jerzy SYRYJCZYK a friend of his, with whom he served at the Clerical Military Unit, the Vicar General. Fr. Tadeusz DŁUBACZ was appointed the parish priest of the Polish Army Field Cathedral.

There were also dismissing decrees issued eg: on June 1 Fr. Col Marian Kubera was dismissed from the position of the military chaplain and the parish priest of the military parish in Katowice and on June 18, on account of poor health condition, Fr. Lieut Col Józef DEC was called off the position of the parish priest in the parish under the invocation of St. Stanisław Biskup in Radom.

It appeared later that the Field Ordinariate, being formed, required working out the right position in the church structure and some legal regulations. Thus, for example, bishop Głódź on September 18 wrote a letter to Fr. Primate of Poland Józef Glemp: "...I would like to mention that staffing the parish with the so-called dualism requires a special legal regulation in relation to all the parishes of this sort on the territory of Poland to avoid undesirable conflicts"²⁵.

At the start of the Polish Ordinariate office, enormously tough problem was staffing of the military chaplains in particular garrisons. The great burden of creating new legal documents, writing decrees, organizing celebrations, often difficult talks with the chaplains fell to Vicar General Fr. prof. Jerzy Syryjczyk. His professionalism, invaluable contribution, his work are part of the history in creation of the Ordinariate"²⁶.

The lack of chaplains forced Field Bishop Sławoj Leszek Głódź to address a written request to Diocesan Ordinaries to delegate young priests to work with the army because as he said "the attribute of each army is youth..."²⁷. Diocesan Ordinaries accede to Field Bishop's request and already on December 10, 1991

bishop Głódź asks the Ministry of National Defense Admiral Piotr Kołodziejczyk to appoint 22 priests to the rank of reserves captain. In this group were priests: Bokiej, Stefaniak, Trzeciak, Karpiński, Kubalewski, Wydra, Niedbała, Bożejewicz, Korpeta, Gromek, Irek, Jackowiak, Pietrusiak, Krużel, Bugzel, Krajza, Bochnak, Gut, Romankiewicz, Ślabek, Gorzandt and Homa²⁸. Also in the following years a lot of new priests report to work at the Field Ordinariate.

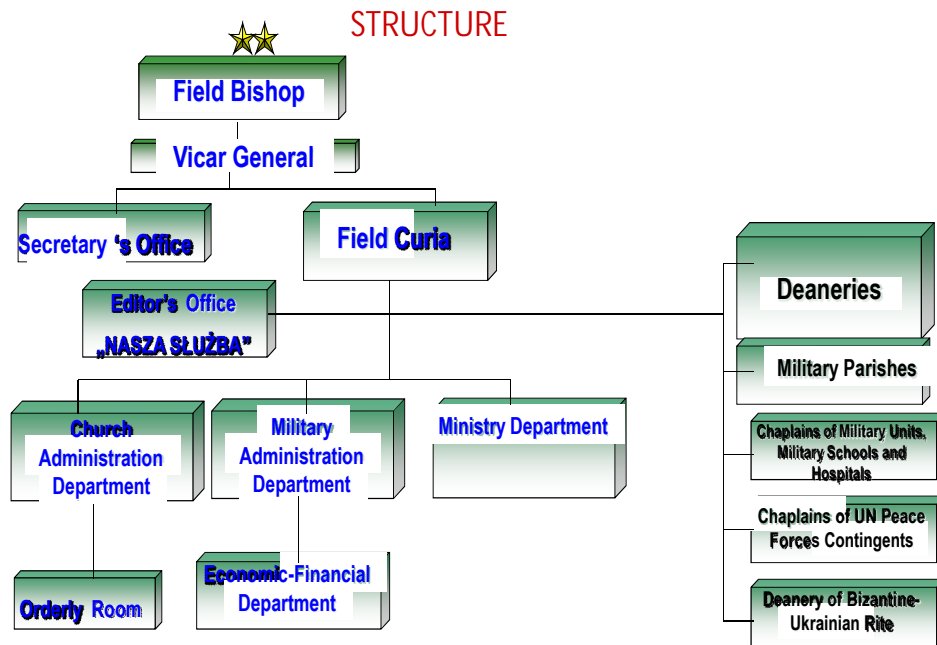
All bishop's decisions (changes appointing and dismissing priests) bear two legal documents, along the canonical line – Field Bishop's decree and the military – the command of National Defense Ministry. On September 1, 1991 Fr. Zbigniew Jaworski is appointed the Chancellor of the Field Curia. Then, further appointments follow.

With the consent of the Superior General of Little Sisters' Congregation in Dębica, two nuns reported to work in the arising Field Ordinariate. Sister Zachariasza ZYCH was in charge of secretarial matters and Sister Natanaela ADAMCZYK worked as an sacristan. Field Bishop also appointed the deans in the Field Ordinariate. Among the deans are: Fr. Comm Marian Próchniak the Dean of the Navy (appointed on September 16, 1991, Fr. Tadeusz Dłubacz the Dean of Warsaw Military District (appointed on November 1, 1991), Fr. Waldemar Irek the Dean of Silesian Military District (appointed on November 1, 1991 and Fr. Col Leszek Kołoniecki the Dean of Pomeranian Military District. Subsequent dean appointments occurred in later years: on July 1, 1992 Fr. Zdzisław Krajza the Dean of the Air Force and Air Defense, on September 1, 1993 Fr. Stanisław Obszyński the Dean of the 2nd Mechanized Corps, on July 1, 1994 Fr. Kazimierz Tuszyński the Dean of the Border Guard. On May 15, 1995 the dean's office of the Government Protection Agency is formed (Fr. Tadeusz Płoski) and on August 15, 1995 Fr. Tadeusz Płoski is appointed the Dean of the Vistula Military Units (Ministry of Home Affairs and Administration) and Fr. Tadeusz Dłubacz becomes the Dean of Warsaw Garrison. On March 1, 1997 Fr. Sławomir Żarski becomes the Dean of the command of the Ground Forces and on November 1, 1996 Fr. Piotr Kryk becomes Dean of Bizantine-Ukrainian Rite.

Discovering new areas in the Polish Army, in January 1992, the first issue of the Field Ordinariate fortnightly magazine "Nasza Służba" appeared. The first Editor in Chief Fr. Cpt Waldemar Irek, on the third anniversary of the magazine wrote: "We were aware of the fact that although we do not bring new content to the army – because most of the military community has their roots connected with Christianity and the Church, after years of planned atheisation whose special laboratory was the army, there was a necessity of systematic catechesis and brightening of social and political problems with contents of the Gospel".

Bishop Głódź built the whole structure of the Field Ordinariate in Poland. The crowning of this achievement was the Field Bishop's Instruction about the Polish Army Field Ordinariate ministry structure published on December 7, 1992 where the role and tasks of individual people and institutions of the Field Ordinariate were clearly determined. He placed special emphasis on surrounding soldiers and their families with pastoral care and implementation of the pastoral plan designated by The Conference of the Episcopate of Poland, Field Bishop and diocesan bishops²⁹.

POLISH ARMY FIELD ORDINARIATE



The basic fabric of military priesthood was made up of military chaplains who lead priesthood service in military units, on firing ground, in garrison parishes, hospitals, military universities, missions of peace and stabilization.

Their tasks were to build communities, create the natural space for manifesting attitudes and religious beliefs within the force, as well as to bring up the soldiers in a spirit of affection to God and their Homeland.

¹ See Paweł Piontek, Marek Wesółowski. *General deanery of the Polish Army In the years 1945-1989*. Warsaw pp. 37-38

² See ib. p. 77

³ See ib. pp.135 -139

⁴ See Janusz Mariański, *The Church In the industrial society*, Warsaw 1983 p.31

⁵ The author's interview with Fr. Lieutenant Commander Janusz Bąk from the Field Curia in Warsaw on November 4, 2009

⁶ See Paweł Piontek, Quot. pp.81-82

⁷ Field Ordinariate Archive (not catalogued collection). File: *General Deanery of the Polish Army*

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- ⁸ See The Act of May 17, 1989 about the State's attitude to the Catholic Church in the Republic of Poland. (Official Gazette of May 23, 1989)
- ⁹ See Field Ordinariate Archive (not catalogued collection). File: *Katyn – the Soil*.
- ¹⁰ See ib. File: Ceremony – Plac Zwycięstwa.
- ¹¹ See ib. File: Pilgrimage of the Polish Army.
- ¹² See Waldemar Irek, *Effectiveness of foretelling* p. 3, Field Ordinariate Archive. File I, *Documents of the Gone*.
- ¹³ Sławoj Leszek Głódź, *I fight for Christ. Warsaw 1995*, p. 7
- ¹⁴ *Ibid* p.13
- ¹⁵ Sławoj Leszek Głódź. Laudable and precious password: *God – Honour – Homeland* in *Nasza Służba*. The paper of the Field Ordinariate. Year I. No. 9. p. 4
- ¹⁶ See Sławoj Leszek Głódź Decree of May 3, 1991. Filed in the Field Curia.
- ¹⁷ See Piotr Lemanowicz, We were then In Zegrze, In *Nasza Służba*, Quot. Year XII No. 18 (258), p. 6
- ¹⁸ See John Paul II. The speech performer on June 2, 1991 at the meeting with the Polish Army
- ¹⁹ See Zygmunt Andrzej Kowalczyk. We were then at Zegrze, in *Nasza Służba*. Quot. Year XII No.18 (258) p. 6
- ²⁰ See Rafał Chromiński. Zegrze Pomorskie – the first meeting of the Pope with the soldiers, In *Nasza Służba*. Quot. Year VIII No. 10 (162) p. 5
- ²¹ See The Word of the Pope John Paul II Turing his visit to the Field Cathedral – June 8, 1991 in *Nasza Sluzba*. Quot. Year I No. 9 p. 5
- ²² See Secretary's Office. A formal letter N 288.700, Vatican, September 6, 1991
- ²³ Sławoj Leszek Głódź. I fight... Quot. p. 7
- ²⁴ The author's interview with Ms Wanda Krześniak at the Field Curia in Warsaw on May 22, 2009
- ²⁵ Polish Ordinariate Archive (not catalogued collection). Documents of the former. File OAK, K-4. Letter No. 98/C-P/91
- ²⁶ The author's interview with Ms Wanda Krześniak AT the Field Curia In Warsaw on May 24, 2009
- ²⁷ Archive... Quot. Documents of the former. File: "OAK, K-4" Letter No.98?C-P/91
- ²⁸ Archive... Quot. Letter No. 143/C-P/91
- ²⁹ Field Bishop's Instruction. Schematism of Polish Army Field Ordinariate 2000. pp.553-564