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COATS OF ARMS OF THE SERAPHIC SISTERS

Social groups, informal communities, and institutions that need to be distinguished often assume a distinctive trademark. This symbol (logo in contemporary parlance) identifies particular members of the group as well as their collective actions. The common mark conveys the sense of unity. This function was fulfilled by the old Christian symbols. The same function over the centuries was played by the identifying symbols of knights, ancestral coats of arms and crests, the arms of guilds and craftsmen's unions, and coats of arms of abbeys, chapters, and monastic congregations¹.

This work is composed of three main parts. The first part outlines the history of the Congregation of the Seraphic Sisters, the second presents general remarks about charges as elements of the coat of arms, and the last part shows coats of arms of the Seraphic Sisters and discusses their theological composition.

THE HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS

The Congregation of the Daughters of our Lady of Sorrows, commonly known as the Seraphic Sisters, was created in 1881 in Zakroczym by the initiative of Blessed Honorat Koźmiński and Mother Małgorzata Łucja Szewczyk². On the

¹ See: W. Kolałak, *Godło franciszkańskie*, [w:] *Zakon Braci Mniejszych Kapucynów na Dobrym Śląsku i we Wrocławiu. Materiały z seminarium krajoznawczego*, Wrocław 1996, p. 57.

² Florentyn Wacław Jan Stefan Koźmiński, known as Honorat, was born on 16 X 1829 in Białka Podlaska. In his youth, he studied in the Department of Architecture at the Warsaw School of Fine Arts. During his studies he was arrested for conspiring against the Russians and sent to X Pavilion of Warsaw Citadel (23 IV 1846-27 II 1847). In December 1848 he entered the Capuchin Order. He studied philosophy in Lublin and theology in Warsaw. He was ordained a priest in 27 XII 1852. In the following years he worked as a lecturer in theology (1853-1855), and preacher and warden of the monastery in Warsaw (1859-1862). After the liquidation of the Capuchin Monastery in Warsaw he lived in Zakroczym (since 1864) and Nowe Miasto (since 1892). On the basis of Third Order of St. Francis he founded over 25 non-habit monastic congregations. In 1895 he was nominated a superintendent of Capuchins in Polish province. He was a popular confessor and a spiritual leader. He died on 16 Dec. 1916 in Nowe Miasto. His beatification was on 16 Oct. 1988 by John Paul II. See J. L. Gadacz, *Słownik polskich kapucynów* 1, Wrocław 1985, p. 611-615 (bibliography).

basis of the Congregation of the Seraphic Sisters' rule from Paris, the Founder, in his first *Constitutions*, designated the following duties to the Seraphic Sisters, who initially were also called 'sisters of poverty':

improvement of their spiritual life next to their sacrifice to the elderly, poor and handicapped people. Their homes can not serve any other purpose. [...] The main principle of the Seraphic Sisters is that they serve the poor through the collection of goods, food or money, from which they satisfy the needs of the poor first and the rest they turn into their usage, regarding the poor for their masters and themselves for their slaves, serving them through the Christ³.

Initially the Congregation developed under the spiritual leadership of Father Honorat in Zakroczym, where the first sisters under the guidance of Mother Małgorzata took care of homeless elderly women; later the facilities in Częstochowa and Warsaw were created. In 1891 the Seraphic sisters moved from Russian-occupied territory to Galicia and lived in Halcnow. On 14 August 1891 the sisters received their habits from the hands of the Krakow cardinal Albin Dunajewski and from then on the Congregation wore habits as their official attire.

After World War I the personal and territorial development of the Congregation began. In 1932 the division into Poznan, Lvov and Oswiecim provisions took place. After World War II the headquarters in Lvov were moved to Przemyśl. Over time the activity of the Seraphic Sisters underwent expansion. They started work in Algeria, France, Sweden, the United States of America, Italy, Belarus and Ukraine. In accordance with their charism they work among the incurably ill, elderly and dependent people, and handicapped children. They run playschools and they also undertake roles such as catechists, nurses, office workers, organists and cooks. The present Congregation consists of about 700 sisters.

It is worth mentioning that on 17 August 2002 John Paul II beatified the Seraphic Sister Sancja Janina Szymkowiak⁴, whose grave is situated in the church of the Seraphic Sisters in Poznan⁵.

³ *Lucja Szewczyk*, called Mother Małgorzata, was born probably in 1825 in Wołyń. In her youth she travelled to Italy and the Holy Land, where she was looking after sick people. After returning to Poland she got in touch with Father Honorat, who was her confessor and a spiritual leader. Under his influence and together with him she founded the Congregation of the Seraphic Sisters (1881). She was first Mother Superior of the Congregation (till 1904). She spent the last years of her life in Nieszawa, where she died on 5 June 1905. In 1951 her body was relocated to the Congregation's church in Oswiecim. The process for her beatification started in Cracow on 9 Nov. 1993 and three years later the files from the process were sent to Rome. See: M. B. Dobosz, *Charyzmat zgromadzenia nakreślony przez bł. o. Honorata Koźmińskiego i Sł. B. M. Małgorzatę Szewczyk*, [in:] *Wszystko dla Jezusa przez bolejące serce Maryi. Stulecie Sióstr Serafitek w Przemyślu. 1896–1996*, ed. S. Zygarowicz, Przemyśl 1996, p. 86–93.

³ See: M. B. Dobosz, *Charyzmat zgromadzenia...*, p. 87.

⁴ Janina Szymkowiak, called Sister Sancja, was born in 1910 in Mozdżan next to Ostrów Wlk. After graduating her Romanistic Studies, she joined the Congregation of Seraphic Sisters in 1938. She worked as a doorwoman, office worker, teacher, formmaster and a translator. She was known for her holy way of life. She died in 29 VIII 1942 in Poznan. The process for her beatification started in 1970. She was beatified by John Paul II in 2002. See: S. Wrona, *Siostra Sancja*, Kraków 1987, *passim*.

⁵ See: H. Łuczyńska, *Historia Zgromadzenia Córek NMP od Siedmiu Boleści zwanych serafitkami, Oświęcim* 1931, *passim*; J. Bar, *Zgromadzenie Sióstr Serafitek. 1881–1961*, „Prawo Kanoniczne”. R. 6:1963,

GENERAL REMARKS ABOUT CHARGES AS ELEMENTS OF
A COAT OF ARMS

The Polish word *herb* (coat of arms) stands for a compositional sign of recognition. The term came to the Polish language from the Czech, where its initial sound 'erb' had been adopted from the German language. The etymology of Polish and Czech word *herb* derives from the term *dziedzictwo* (inheritance), but in Western Europe it derives from the word 'weapon' or 'armament'. The beginnings and the development of coats of arms in the Western Europe should be located between the eleventh and twelfth centuries. On Polish territory the process started about 100 years later⁶. The study of coats of arms, both about their composition and their historical development, is called heraldry.

The earliest coats of arms were characterized by the simplicity and naivety of the picture. Initially there were no rules or regulations in the design of coats of arms. As the years passed the first heraldic rules were created. One of the most famous of Polish heraldry experts, Professor Józef Szymański is of the opinion that the oldest Polish coat of arms is a charge placed on the shield⁷. It seems that this opinion refers to heraldry in general, including church and monastic heraldry. I would like to draw attention to this problem as it concerns monastic heraldry as well.

*The coat of arms had been created on the basis of identification and individual signs; its development in the fourteenth century flourished thanks to the tournaments*⁸. Some heraldic experts believe that the coat of arms is derived from the chivalric tradition⁹, which is probably the reason why the Church was opposed to it for such a long time. In time the Church accepted it and for its usage created separate regulations generally called 'church heraldry'¹⁰. The coats of arms used by the knights were later adopted by the nobility. The coats of arms were also used by peasants (in Pomerania); craftsmen used their own emblems called 'gmerki'.

The charges of coats of arms are: shield, emblem (a heraldic figure, heraldic images), helmet, crown, jewel, labrets, coats, foreign currency, orders and symbols of dignity. The colour of a shield and charge should also be considered. In church heraldry there are slightly different rules of designing coats of arms¹¹.

Monastic heraldry, which is a part of church heraldry, has its own premises and rights that are often in opposition to the rules accepted by heraldry in general –

nr 1–4, 75–211; B. Łoziński, *Leksykon zakonów w Polsce. Instytuty życia konsekrowanego i stowarzyszenia życia apostołskiego*, Warszawa 2002, p. 329–330.

⁶ J. Szymański, *Herbarz średniowiecznego rycerstwa polskiego*, Warszawa 1993, p. 8.

⁷ J. Szymański, *Herbarz...*, p. 9.

⁸ S. Górczyński, J. Kochanowski, *Herby szlachty polskiej*, Warszawa 1990, p. 9.

⁹ The coat of arm was an armorial sign, situated on banners or flags; it was carried in front of the military unit; placed on shields or armour it served as a sign of recognition during the battle.

¹⁰ See: D. F. Kol, *Traktat krotki o heraldyce, to jest o herbach rodowych...*, Warszawa 1747, p. 9–13.

¹¹ See: A. Dimier, *Araldica monastica*, [in:] *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione*, t. 1, Roma 1974, p. 776–788; 6A. Weiss, *Heraldyka kościelna*, [in:] *Encyklopedia katolicka*, 6, Lublin 1993, 729–736 (bibliography).

indeed it would be more appropriate to say that it has no rules at all¹². The very act of developing signs called symbols, charges or coats of arms is still current and vivid. We still experience the phenomenon of creation of new consecrated congregations, which adopt or create new signs¹³.

In secular heraldry a charge is an image located on the shield. Heraldists differentiate between three different types of charges. The first group consists of geometrical figures and their derivatives, figures placed loosely on the shield. If they touch the edge of a shield they are called honourable figures. The second category comprises different types of crosses; some heraldists differentiate between 350 crosses. The third group includes ordinary figures and stylization of images of objects and creatures¹⁴.

Most often monastic heraldry amounts only to the charge. Thus, in the case of many monastic congregations, including the Seraphic Sisters, we should speak of a charge of congregation rather than a coat of arms. Often a charge exists without a shield. More emphasis should be put on the issue of the causes, means, and reasons of creating the symbols differentiating monastic congregations. For a proper estimation and check whether an adopted charge is merely a coincidence, the prototype should be referred to and the genesis and intentions of the originator of the monastic symbol examined¹⁵.

In church heraldry the monastic coat of arms is treated as a sign of recognition and the symbol of a given community, in which spirituality, purpose and charism are hidden. The recognition of a coat of arms gives us the answer about the name, activity, and the essence of monastery or congregation.

It should also be noted that the blessed Honorat prescribed two meanings to the monastic coat of arms, the literal and the spiritual meaning. Firstly, he himself designed a project of a chalice cover¹⁶, in which he placed 26 charges; secondly, he understood a coat of arms as a word imperative that should direct the Sisters' lives. In *Materialy do Zgromadzenia Sióstr Służek Najświętszej Maryi Panny Niepokalanej* the following note can be found:

coat of arms: saintly simplicity, modesty and piety, work, silent apostolate of a good example, restoration of zeal in the parishes¹⁷.

¹² See: M. Daniluk, K. Kłauza, *Podręczna encyklopedia instytucji życia konsekrowanego*, Lublin 1994, p. 134.

¹³ W. Kolak, J. Marecki, *Leksykon godel zakonnych*, Łódź 1994, p. 13.

¹⁴ See: A. Znamierowski, *Herbarz rodowy*, Warszawa 2004, p. 55.

¹⁵ See: C. Zieliński, *Sztuka sakralna*, Poznań-Warszawa-Lublin 1960, p. 767.

¹⁶ Square (around 20×20) cover of a chalice made out of cardboard or other stiff material hemmed with decorative linen supporting veil and protecting the inner side of the chalice.

¹⁷ Evidence regarding the history and the coat of arms of the Seraphic Sisters is in the possession of the author.

THE COATS OF ARMS OF THE CONGREGATION OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS. THE EXPLANATION OF MEANING OF PARTICULAR CHARGES OF COAT OF ARMS¹⁸.

During 125 years of existence of the Congregation of Our Lady of Sorrows, the sisters used two different coats of arms:

1) The coat of arms (Print 1) designed by blessed Honorat Kozminski and placed by him on the chalice cover¹⁹ created in 1903 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the election of Leon XIII for the pope. According to this design Little Sisters (Congregation of Little Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary) from Czestochowa embroidered the cover of a chalice and handed it to the Pope. The coat of arms represents the heart of Mary surmounted with the *fleur de lis* and pierced with seven swords, symbolizing the sufferings of the Mother of God. Below a Franciscan coat of arms, featuring the crossed hands of Christ and St. Francis of Assisi, can be seen²⁰.

2) The contemporary coat of arms of the Seraphic Sisters (Print 2) presents the enflamed heart of Mary pierced with seven swords, symbolizing the sufferings of the Mother of God. This version is also used on stamp pistons and it is used as congregation's 'logo'.

CHARGES OF THE SERAPHIC SISTERS' COAT OF ARMS²¹

Heart

Both in Judaism and in Christianity the heart is regarded as an abode of emotional powers, especially of love, intuition and wisdom. It symbolizes love and friendship. The heart is an abode of physical strength, the symbol of inner man and in biblical language means also the conscience. In man's heart the word and the belief meet, both God's grace and the ability to listen. The heart symbolizes courage, fortitude, determination and the inner belief, plans and moral decisions of absolute man²². The New Testament regards the heart as the centre of spirituality. To illustrate the above-mentioned remark, it is accurate to cite the text of Saint Peter directed to women:

¹⁸ More about the monastic coat of arms of the Seraphic Sisters and its charges in J. Marecki, *Godła i symbole Zgromadzenia Córek Matki Bożej Bolesnej (Serafitek). Próba interpretacji*, [in:] *Dziedzictwo duchowe Córek Matki Bożej Bolesnej. 100-lecie konsekracji kościoła Sióstr Serafitek w Oświęcimiu pod wezwaniem Matki Bożej Bolesnej*, ed. D. Lechowicz, Z. J. Kijas, Oświęcim-Kraków 2000, p. 103-130.

¹⁹ The original (print done with a pencil on a paper) is situated in the archives of Deputy-postulator of the Canonic Issues in Warsaw (Monastery of Capucinth).

²⁰ It is worth mentioning that on the occasion of the beatification of Father Honorat on 16th of October 1988 Holy Father, John Paul II received STULA with emblems of all Honorat's congregations.

²¹ The discussed above elements of Seraphic emblems occur in heraldic emblems of other monastic congregations. See: W. Kolałak, J. Marecki, *Leksykon...*, p. 38, 81, 85, 86, 98, 155, 194, 214, 298, 155, 194, 214, 221.

²² See D. Forstner, *Świat symboliki chrześcijańskiej*, Warszawa 1990, p. 359; M. Oesterreicher-Mollowo, *Leksykon symboli*, Warszawa 1992, p. 141.

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight (1 Peter 3, 3–4).

The image of heart in replacement of the word soul is often used in Catholic liturgy (for example: *sursum corda*, lift up your hearts). Different interpretations are attributed to the Heart of Jesus²³ and to the Heart of Mary.

The cult of the Immaculate Heart of Mary has spread since the seventeenth century. None of the hearts was inflamed with such love towards God and maternal love towards Jesus and people as Mary's heart. Sister Dorota Foster writes that *the Heart of Mary stayed in the deepest harmony with God's will; it was similar to the treasury hiding all secrets of Saviour's life*²⁴. It is accepted that the symbol of heart began to be attributed to Mary only in modern times. Saint Luke pictures Mary as the one who led a deep inner life contemplating in her heart God's affairs: *But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.* (Lukas 2: 19).

Apart from Jesus and Mary's attributes, the heart is a distinguishing feature of many saints in iconography (Saint Augustine, Saint Francis de Sales, Saint Theresa the Great, Mary Magdalena de Pazzis)²⁵; it has been also included in Jacobus Boschius' work called *Symbolography*²⁶.

Flowers

Flower is a symbol of crowning, finishing something... It is a symbol of beauty especially female beauty...²⁷ Due to the fact that flowers quickly fade away, they are regarded as the symbol of fickleness and passing away. The flower is a 'child of light', the symbol of a unique beauty as no two flowers are the same, each has its own colour and its symbolism of numbers hidden in its petals and leaves. Since antiquity victors were covered in flower petals. They are a decoration for weddings and celebrations. Christ is a flower himself that grew from the stump of Jesse. (See: Isaiah 11:1)²⁸.

In Christian symbolism flowers are images of heavenly peace. On earth flowers are the symbol of love. They symbolize virginity and innocence. The Fathers of the Church compared the ecclesial community to the blooming garden or paradise. The picture images of flowers as symbols and decorations can already be found in ancient catacombs. They were popular in modern times as well²⁹. Decorat-

²³ D. Forstner, *Świat...*, p. 359–360.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 359–360.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 361.

²⁶ See J. Boschius, *Symbolographia sive de arte symbolica sermones septem*, Graz 1972, 3, 8; 6XX.

²⁷ M. Oesterreicher-Mollowo, *Leksykon...*, p. 81.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 185.

²⁹ See: J. Boschius, *Symbolographia...*, 1, II–IV, X, XIV, XIX, XXX–XXI, XXIII, XXXVII; 2, I–III, XXI–XXII, XXV, XXIX, XXXI, XXXIII, XLI, XLVI, LII, LVIII.

ing the temples with flowers is traditionally regarded as a particular kind of worship³⁰.

Flame

The flame has its particular place in the Bible. Flame and fire have purifying and renewing force. The flame is a source of warmth and light, its power is both destructive and purifying, and it is directed upwards. In antiquity it was a symbol of distinction : for example, it was burnt in front of the altars of gods, Roman emperors, and Belisarius in Constantinople. It is one of the divine symbols. In Christianity fire is associated with Hell. The Bible often mentions fire and flame in association with God's wrath, God's Glory, fire from hell, purifying fire, arrows of fire arrows, and flames of fire. Fire is a symbol of love, zeal and ardour. It also is a symbol of Christ, for example the paschal feast, means a complete sacrifice leading to destruction³¹. The flame is an image of God's love³².

Sword

The sword symbolizes strength, manhood, courage and power. It is a symbol of suffering, an instrument of death, injury and pain, an attribute of martyrs, and a symbol of justice and occult strength. In antiquity and in the Middle Ages the sword was associated with power; additionally it was used to dub someone a knight³³.

In a figurative sense the sword means verbal perspicacity. This is biblical image of the sword. The prophet writes: *He made my mouth like a sharpened sword*, (Isaiah 49:2) and Saint Paul says: *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword [...]* (Hbr4: 12).

The enflamed heart

The enflamed heart symbolizes fervent love, sacrifice to others in the name of love. This interpretation applies equally to the enflamed hearts of Jesus and Mary. The enflamed heart of Mary burns with fire of love towards God and people. *Mary-ancilla Domini* – serves God and people. The purifying flame expresses sacrifice, devotion and religious zeal.

Mary's heart pierced with sword

For a better understanding of the image of Mary's heart pierced with a sword, the prophecy of Simeon should be cited: *And a sword will pierce your own soul*

³⁰ M. Oesterreicher-Mollowo, *Leksykon...*, p. 186; M. Lurker, *Stownik...*, p. 106-107.

³¹ See: J. Boschius, *Symbolographia...*, 1, IX, XIV, XVII-XVIII, XXVI, XXIX, XXXI, XXXVII, XL; 2, I-IV, XIV, XIX.

³² See: M. Oesterreicher-Mollowo, *Leksykon...*, p. 107; D. Forstner, *Świat...*, p. 72-75; M. Lurker, *Stownik...*, p. 149-151.

³³ D. Forstner, *Świat...*, p. 467-469; M. Lurker, *Stownik...*, p. 120-122.

too (Lukas 2:35). Our Lady of Sorrows is often depicted with one or seven swords stuck in her heart³⁴. These are known images of Lady of Sorrows, known as 'gracious', with one or seven swords (for example, the Church of the Franciscan Conventuals in Krakow and the church of the Benedictines in Staniatki).

The symbol of the sword inflicting pain conveys the parallels between the image of the Angel driving Eve out from paradise and an image of Mary carrying the sword of suffering in her heart (Simeon's prophecy).

The sufferings of Mother of God (seven swords)

The number seven represents completeness, integrity and perfection. Mary is filled with the suffering. Seven, according to the Fathers of Church, represents a final fulfilment, the sacred number (as God rested in the seventh day of the world creation). Seven means the earthly life of man: four represents man's life on earth (the four seasons or the four cardinal virtues: wisdom, justice, fortitude and temperance) and three represents spiritual life (to love God with the whole soul, heart, and love) or the theological virtues (faith, hope, charity)³⁵. Christian tradition mentions the sufferings of Mary in a chronological order. These sufferings have their roots in direct biblical scriptures: the prophecy of Simeon, the Flight to Egypt, the loss of twelve year old Jesus in Jerusalem, Mary's meeting of Jesus on His way of the cross and laying Christ's body in the arms of Mary, laying Christ in grave). These sufferings are portrayed in *The Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary*.

The heart surmounted with *fleur de lis* and pierced with seven swords

The interpretation of the heart surmounted with *fleur de lis* brings some difficulties as this topic has never before been dealt with in literature.

The heart of Mary surmounted with *fleur de lis* symbolizes her virginal love. From the pure soil of Mary's heart flowers grow. This is a representation of beauty, uniqueness and innocence. Flowers mean that Mary sacrificed her heart, which personifies her life. The sacrifice is of a double character as Mary sacrificed herself to God through her virgin life and through the martyrdom of her pierced heart. Seven swords confirm that her martyrdom is complete, perfect. Her sacrifice refers to the constitution of man, his soul and body.

Franciscan coat of arms

In accordance with constitutions of the congregation instructing the Seraphic Sisters to "follow The Third Order of St. Francis that was reformed by Leon X for Sisters living in the Family(...)they will renew their simple vows every three years and after nine years they will be in solemn vows"³⁶. From the beginning the Ser-

³⁴ See: D. Forstner, *Świat...*, p. 468-469.

³⁵ See: *ibide*, p. 46-49; M. Lurker, *Słownik...*, p. 212-213.

³⁶ *Ustawa...*, p. 3.

aphic Sisters were strongly attached to Franciscan spirituality. They adopted many elements from the Franciscan way of life. As the expression of their strong connections to the Third Order, the Blessed Honorat designed a composition in which he placed the Franciscan coat of arms below the coat of arms of the Seraphic Sisters.

The Franciscan coat of arms (Print3) features the crossed arms of Christ and St. Francis (in habit) covered with stigmata surmounted by a cross. Such a featuring of the coat of arms symbolizes St. Francis' imitation of Christ. The stigmata that St. Francis received in 1224 on Mount Verna confirm his unity with Crucifixion. The cross is the symbol of Christ's passion, which propagation is one of the forms of Franciscan piety. It is also a symbol of penance that points to the Franciscan spirituality. In some versions the cross is surrounded by clouds to indicate the unity of Earth and Heaven or it is surrounded by radiant light – the symbol of glory and victory.

Similar, to some extent, to the first version of the coat of arms of the Congregation of Daughters of Our Lady of Sorrows designed by the blessed Honorat Kozminski are coats of arms of other monastic congregations currently used in Poland. Special attention should be drawn to the coats of arms of Franciscan congregations³⁷.

Interpretation of coats of arms

The original version of the Seraphic Sisters (Print 1) refers to the name of their congregation. Mary's heart surmounted with *fleur de lis* is, as has been mentioned before, the symbol of her virgin love directed towards God and people. From the Immaculate Heart grow flowers that emphasise her beauty and innocence and her sacrifice. Mary offered her heart to God by living in virginity. Dedication to God always requires sacrifice. Mary's heart, which is of large importance, was pierced with seven swords, symbolizing her sufferings. This is a complete, perfect and saint sacrifice that embraces the sphere of Mary's 'body and spirit'. The monastic *Constitutions* instruct that

Mary teaches us in the light of faith to look at the mystery of suffering. She is a model of fervent love for God, disinterested sacrifice, patience and big-hearted readiness to serve Jesus through people in need³⁸.

Beneath is placed the Franciscan coat of arms, featuring the crossed arms of Christ and St. Francis, signifying that the congregation belongs to the Franciscanian family.

³⁷ K. Dębowska, *Zgromadzenie Sióstr Franciszkanek od Cierpiących*, [in:] *Dziedzictwo...*, p. 193; M. Ziótkowska, *Zgromadzenie Sióstr Wspomożycielek Dusz Czystcowych*, [in:] *Dziedzictwo...*, s. 515; W. Kolak, J. Marecki, *Leksykon...*, p. 43, 51–54, 80, 82, 85, 111, 114, 117, 122, 123, 125, 129, 135–136, 145, 147, 151–152, 155, 170–172, 177, 203, 205–206, 216, 221, 231, 234.

³⁸ *Konstytucje Zgromadzenia Córek Matki Bożej „Serafitek”*, Montreuil 1988, p. 9.

A currently used coat of arms (Print2) established by the Congregation's *Constitutions* ("The coat of arms of the Congregation is the Heart of Mother of God pierced with seven swords")³⁹ features Mary's enflamed heart and pierced with seven swords, symbolizing the sufferings of Mother of God. This version can be also found on stamp tampons.

The coat of arms finds its reflection in the lives of sisters eager and devoted to work with sick and suffering people. "Sisters sent to the impoverished, sick and suffering, following the example of Mary are united in Jesus in the mystery of his life and especially in his poverty and suffering"⁴⁰. The Lady of Sorrows patronises their activity : she is the patroness of the Congregation and her cult is spread by the sisters⁴¹.

It should be added that many monastic congregations have coats of arms similar to that used by the Seraphic Sisters as a result of their propagation of the cult of Mary and similar spirituality. The Spiritans use a heart surmounted with the *fleur de lis* similar to the Claretins, who use the heart surmounted with *fleur de lis* and pierced with a sword⁴².

Mary's cult, as propagated by the discussed Congregation, is best described by the Congregation's motto: **EVERYTHING FOR JESUS THROUGH MARY'S SORROWFUL HEART**. These words summarise the vocation and mission of the Seraphic Sisters. This motto has been valid for 125 years⁴³.

Mary's cult in the Congregation clearly features in *The Constitution of the Daughters of the Lady of Sorrows* that has been preserved in the manuscript⁴⁴. The introductory chapter discussing

the aim and Constitution of the spiritual family explains that the Daughters of Lady of Sorrows sacrifice themselves to honour and meditate about her sufferings, the ones that she experienced by offering Baby Jesus, escaping with him to Egypt and looking for him after losing him at the Temple, and also the sufferings that she experienced at the sight of Jesus' wounded body, laid on Her pure womb. They will follow her in her suffering with Jesus, as well as in receiving in His name and protecting children together with taking care of elderly and crippled⁴⁵.

³⁹ *Konstytucja*.... p. 5.

⁴⁰ *Konstytucja*.... p. 8.

⁴¹ *Konstytucja*...., p. 6.

⁴² The present version differs from the version designed by the Blessed Honorat W. Kolak, J. Marecki, *Leksykon*...., p. 81, 85–86, 98, 155, 194, 221; G. Bartoszewski, H. Szumił, *Zgromadzenie Synów Matki Bożej Bolesnej*, [in:] *Dziedzictwo*...., 599; K. Bojko, *Zgromadzenie Małych Sióstr Niepokalanego Serca Maryi*, [in:] *Dziedzictwo*...., s. 423 (the version of the Blessed Honorat is without the Franciscan coat of arms).

⁴³ About the cult of Lady of Sorrows in the Congregation of the Daughters of Lady of Sorrows, see: S. Hareźga, *Matka Boża Bolesna wzorem serafitki*, [in:] *Wszystko dla Jezusa*...., p. 37–62 (bibliography).

⁴⁴ General Archives of the Seraphic Sisters in Cracow.

⁴⁵ *Ustawa*...., p. 1–2.

Further the above-cited Constitution decides that

they will regard the Lady of Sorrows as their Mother and Lady, her earthly Protector, St. Francis, as their saint Protector, Father and Patriarch, and St. Elisabeth as their main Patroness⁴⁶.

It must be noted that Mary's piety is deeply connected with the Congregation's charism from the beginning of their foundation, which is the work with children and the elderly⁴⁷.

The first *Constitutions* ordered the sisters to recite the *Ancient Prayer to the Virgin*. They recited similar prayers after the morning meditation before the antiphon *To Our Blessed Mother* or they recited *Monstra te esse Matrem*. A few times a day they repeated the *Hail Mary*. The first vows of sisters took place on the Feast of Lady of Sorrows. Then the solemn vows were taken as well⁴⁸.

Every day sisters recited the Office to the Mother of God. Having finished this, they recited the *Aspiration to Mary*⁴⁹ with their raised arms while lights were burned at the altar. The words of the above-mentioned prayer show that originally in the Congregation, often called the 'Family', Mary was called the Mother. The sisters recited the Rosary individually. In the evening they recited the *Hail Mary* for the intention of the sister who will die first. They also added *Monstra te esse Matrem*, which they recited with the raised hands. During celebrations and Mary's Feasts sisters took Holy Communion and on the Eve of the Mother of God's Passion they fasted⁵⁰. On Fridays during the Feast of the Mother of God they did not practice discipline. The signs of Mary's cult were the Crown and medal of Lady of Sorrows⁵¹. During Epiphany sisters renewed the act of offering their whole Congregation to the Heart of Jesus and they renewed their profession. They acted through *the hands of Mother and Guardian, our Lady of Sorrows*⁵².

The prayer book of the Congregation of the Daughters of our Lady of Sorrows comprises many prayers to worship through the Mother of God: *the Angelus, Regina coeli laetare, Affectuate Salutations to Mary, Prayer to the Queen of the Congregation of Seraphic Sisters, Aspiration to Mary, Prayer to the Mother of God, In honour of the Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, The Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Marian evening prayers and Marian summons: In honour of the Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary,*

⁴⁶ *Ustawa...*, p. 5.

⁴⁷ *The main domain of the Daughters of Lady of Sorrows is their sacrifice for children and impoverished.* *Ustawa...*, p. 3.

⁴⁸ *Ustawa...*, p. 37, 39, 49-50, 53-54, 57, 66.

⁴⁹ *Ustawa...*, p. 57-59.

⁵⁰ It is worth noting that only 21 year old sisters and older, who were healthy and who did not work hard physically were obliged to do the fastening. *Ustawa.* 64-65.

⁵¹ *Ustawa...*, p. 59, 61, 62, 65, 81.81.

⁵² *Ustawa...*, p. 149.

Prayer to Our Lady of Lourdes, and Hail Mary and To Our Blessed Mother that were repetitively said during day⁵³.

Mary's cult is contained in the Congregation's original name, the 'Sisters of the Poor', which was then changed to 'The Daughters of Lady of Sorrows' and is now called 'The Congregation of the Daughters of Lady of Sorrows'. This cult is expressed through a deep reverence towards the Mother of God, for example, by reciting a morning prayer after midnight during the Eve of the Immaculate Conception of Mary; saying prayers in a standing posture during the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows (15 September) when they are obliged to renew their vows; a whole day adoration of Holy Sacrament during the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Saint Mary; morning prayers before the Feasts of the Immaculate Conception and Our Lady of Sorrows and the Triduum before the Feast of the Mother of Angels and Mother of God who was assumed to Heaven; and their everyday reciting of a part of the Holy Rosary that was substituted on Saturday with *The Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. Of particular importance to the sisters' lives, as recommended by *Directorium*, should be such days as the first Saturday of the month and the celebration of the patron's day of the Congregation celebrated on the day of the Feast of Lady of Sorrows⁵⁴.

A devoted worshipper of Mother of God was Blessed Honorat Kozminski, a co-founder of the Congregation⁵⁵.

CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of monastic coats of arms, the aim, charism, tasks, direction of activity and the spirituality of a given monastic congregation can be recognised. These general premises refer to the discussed coats of arms of the Congregation of the Daughters of the Lady of Sorrows and the signs and symbols used in the Congregation. Through heraldic studies the history of the Congregation is revealed, and its spirituality and charism indicated over the time of its existence.

RESEARCH POSTULATES

In Polish literature, apart from a single study⁵⁶ published in Lodz in 1994 and a few articles on monastic coats of arms that are rather descriptions or an attempt at interpretation, there is a lack of detailed works on the coats of arms and charges of particular monastic congregations. In publications concerning the spirituality and

⁵³ *Modlitewnik...*, p. 2-4, 7-10, 12-16, 18, 24, 27-34.

⁵⁴ *Dyrektorium Zgromadzenia Córek Matki Bożej Bolesnej „Serafitek”* [added to *Konstytucja Zgromadzenia...*], p. 61, 64, 67, 68, 70, 72.

⁵⁵ See: M. Werner, *O. Honorat Koźmiński, kapucyn. 1829-1916*, Poznań-Warszawa 1972, p. 581 n.; H. Koźmiński, *Notatnik duchowy*, ed. G. Bartoszewski, Warszawa 1991.

⁵⁶ See note 14.

history of particular monastic congregations the problems of monastic heraldry are treated only marginally. Also the *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione* treats the areas of monastic heraldry rather superficially. Attention is not drawn to the fact that the study of monastic coats of arms has its own research methods and uses its own language for heraldic descriptions. In future designers of contemporary versions of coats of arms as well as different, predominant types of the above -discussed coat of arms, need to be found⁵⁷. It should be also considered that some suggest a return to the coat of arms designed by the blessed Honorat Kozminski. The research should be expanded to include the meaning of the symbolism of monastic dress. The understanding of coats of arms, signs and symbols used in the Congregation of the Seraphic Sisters and their proper interpretation will contribute to the spreading of knowledge of the spirituality and charism of the Congregation⁵⁸.

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⁵⁷ Research works about the church heraldry are run by the team gathered around the priest professor Anzelm Weiss from the Lublin Catholic University and in Cracow by the Research Team of Church Heraldry at Polish Theological Society.

⁵⁸ See: J. Marecki, *Godło franciszkańskie...*, p. 270.