

**Hermina Święch-Małysa, *The Bernardine sisters' convent of St Agnes in Cracow*  
1459-1788**

**SUMMARY**

The purpose of this work is to present the history of the first Bernardine nunnery on Polish soil, bearing the name of St Agnes, once located in Cracow, in the suburb of Stradom, near the so-called Royal Bridge. The fate of the nuns living there for more than three centuries was inextricably linked with the history of the city and the local Church. The year 1459 marks the beginning of the work, when, on the initiative of the generous founder and benefactor Jan Hińcza from Rogów, the erection of the temple and the first monastery buildings began. It should be noted, however, that the genesis of their community is somewhat earlier and is closely linked to the stay of St John of Capistrano in Cracow. It was under the influence of his fiery sermons and the power of his influence that groups of pious women had hitherto gathered from below to lead a community life near the monastery of the brothers. The end date of the dissertation is 1788, when, on the initiative of Primate Michał Poniatowski, who at the same time held the office of administrator of the Cracow bishopric, the convent of St Agnes was dissolved and the Bernardines were forced to move to the St Joseph's convent, located on present Poselska Street.

Structurally, the work consists of five chapters, arranged in a problematic order. The first chapter presents the origins of the community of Bernardine nuns, closely linked to the preaching activity of St John of Capistrano. The original seat of the Tertiaries, which was located in a house at Mikołajska Gate, is discussed. It is presumed that it was its inhabitants who, after moving to the suburb of Stradom, became the nucleus of the future community of the St Agnes Convent. The next part of the chapter discusses Jan Hińcza from Rogów, the founder of the monastery and church, and the stages of the temple's construction. The external appearance of the monastery's church is presented, based on preserved written and iconographic sources, with an emphasis on the caesura represented by the invasion of the Swedish army, which contributed to the total destruction of the original establishment, forcing the nuns to wander and seek temporary shelter. The reconstruction process and the contribution made in this field by the superiors of the Bernardine convent are then discussed. The furnishings of the monastery church and its sacristy are presented on the basis of the preserved inventories written as a result of the visitations carried out by the provincials of the Order of Friars Minor

Observant. The last part of the chapter is devoted to the subject of the suppression, carried out in 1788 at the inspiration of Primate Michał Poniatowski.

The second chapter discusses the legal provisions on which the functioning of the Stradomian convent of the Bernardine sisters was based. First, it presents the characteristics of the Rule of the Third Order of St Francis approved by Pope Nicholas IV and then adapted to the needs of monastic communities by Leo X. It then discusses the granting of papal laws to the monastery in 1461, by Fr Gabriel Rangoni, on the recommendation of Pius II, which provided an interpretation of the law applicable to the daily life of the monastery and, of crucial importance in shaping the fate of the community, introduced the obligation of enclosure. In the following section, the resolutions of the Council of Trent relating to female religious life are characterised, as well as later papal documents on the maintenance of the cloister. As an expression of these resolutions, the activity and profile of Fr Hannibal Rosselli, the Commissary General, who made the first attempts at implementing the post-Tridentine reform in both the friary of the Bernardines and the Bernardine sisters, is discussed. The activity of the provincial, Fr Benedict Gašiorek, who, in accordance with the new regulations adopted by the Council of Trent, obliged the nuns of St Agnes to take solemn vows and to observe the cloister order, is then shown. The final paragraph of the chapter discusses the jurisdictional dependence of the Bernardine convent on the authorities of the Bernardine Order.

The third chapter presents the issue, broadly defined, of life in the convent of St Agnes. First, the shape of the Stradom community is characterised by outlining the territorial and state origins of the nuns there and their family connections. Next, the various stages of monastic life are discussed: entering the novitiate, making profession, and the circumstances surrounding the nuns' deaths. The chapter then goes on to characterise events in the history of the convent that had a direct impact on its fate. It presents the natural disasters which the Bernardine nuns had to face, such as plagues, floods, connected with the location of their abode in the immediate vicinity of the Vistula River, and fires. The involvement of the Bernardine Sisters of St Agnes in the establishment of new monastery foundations (Tarnów, Vilnius, Lublin, Cracow - St Joseph) is shown. The last event presented is a description of an armed attack on the convent, organised in 1612 by Aleksander Koniecpolski and his companions.

The fourth chapter focuses on the internal organisation of the monastery. It discusses the structure of the offices held at the convent of the Bernardine sisters and the scope of duties falling within their scope. An attempt has also been made to reconstruct the list of nuns holding particular offices. The existence of the so-called monastic family, which included residents, i.e. lay women who settled in the convent on the basis of the so-called devotions, and servants, was

also pointed out. In addition, the issue of the spiritual care of the community of Bernardines was presented. The spiritual care was provided by Bernardine friars from the neighbouring St Bernardine of Siena convent, acting as confessors and preachers, and by priests belonging to the diocesan clergy, who were chaplains of the monastery temple of St Agnes. A separate paragraph presents the spiritual and religious life of the Stradomian Bernardines and their involvement in the local Church.

The final chapter of the work discusses the sources of support for the St Agnes Monastery, which consisted of regular and disposable income and how their financial affairs were managed and supervised. Regular incomes contributing to the budget of the Bernardine sisters included dowry sums, rents deposited on landed estates, Cracow and Kazimierz tenements and butcher's stalls, amounts coming from leases and fees paid by residents and families of girls in education. Among the irregular types of income, testamentary legacies, royal donations, alms from the faithful and benefactors are mentioned. Examples of types of expenditure are also discussed on the basis of existing sources.

The study is supplemented by a list of bibliographies, tables and illustrations and appendices. The first contains a list of the Bernardine nuns belonging to the convent of St Agnes, which is an extension of the third chapter, in which the state and territorial origins of the nuns there are presented. The next three tables in the appendix complement the fifth chapter, devoted to sources of livelihood. They consist of lists of rents belonging to the convent of St Agnes, located on landed estates, tenements in Cracow and Kazimierz, and butcher's shops.

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