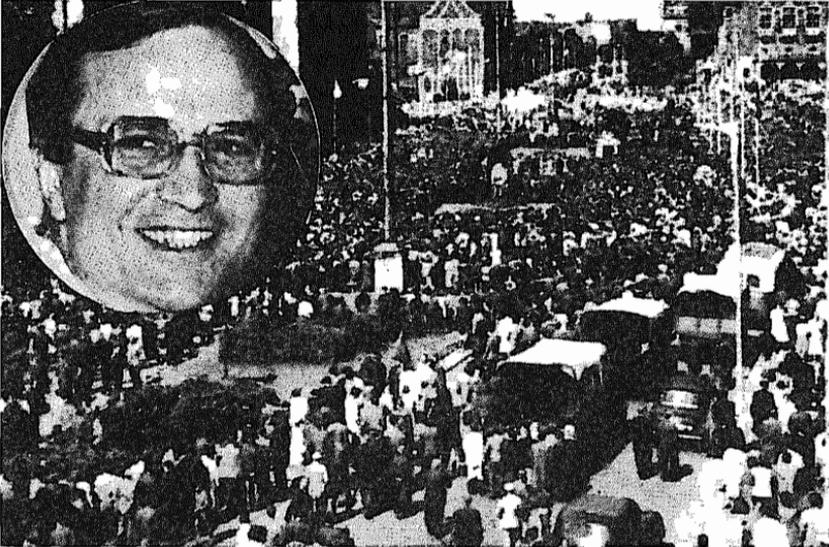
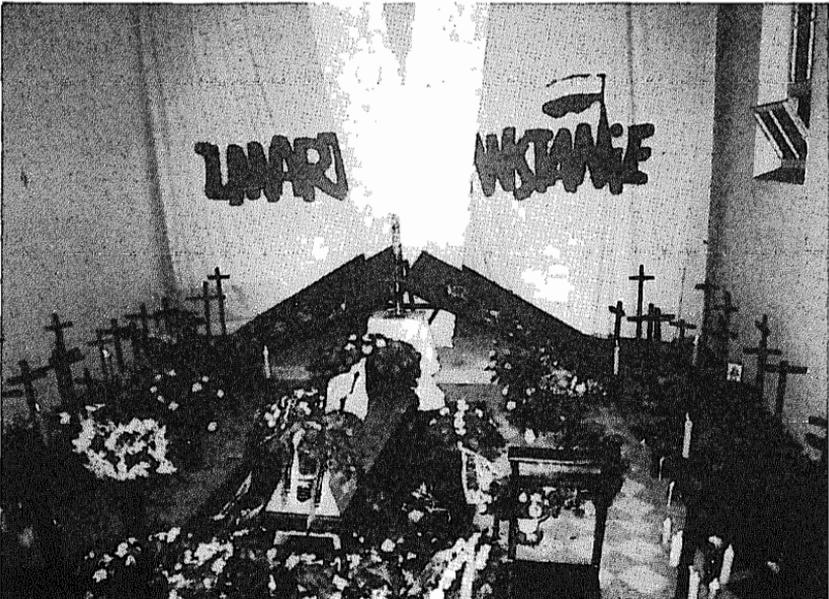


Funeral of a Priest in Poland

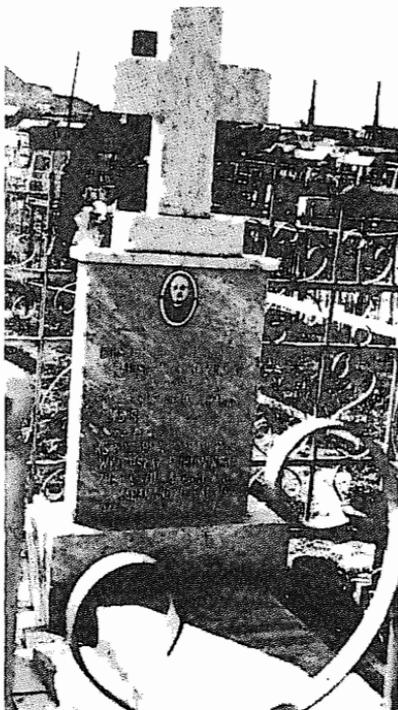
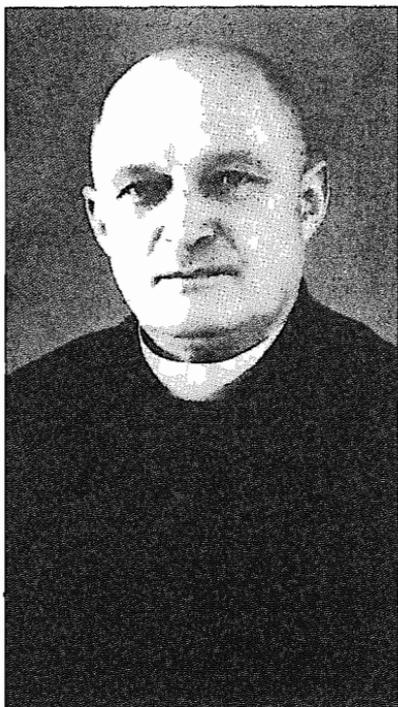


Father Honoriusz Kowalczyk (*above left*), who was killed on 8 May 1983. He had received official warnings to cease his close links with Solidarity, and it is widely believed that his death in a car accident was caused by deliberate tampering with his car. Over ten thousand people attended his funeral in Poznań on 12 May (*above*), many carrying Solidarity banners. Inside the church (*below*), the message "Resurrection" was written in the distinctive Solidarity style and in the Solidarity colours of red and white, and the famous "V for victory" sign dominated the church. The crosses around the coffin represent those killed during the period of martial law in Poland. The funeral vividly demonstrated the extent to which Solidarity remains alive in the hearts of the faithful in Poland. (*All photos © Keston College.*)



Professor Leonard Schapiro (*right*), a member of the Council of Management of Keston College from its beginning, who died on 2 November 1983. He is pictured here addressing the Keston College Open Day on 15 October. See obituary on pp. 118-19. (*Photo courtesy of Ralph Cropper.*)

Fr Władysław Bukowiński (*below*), the Polish priest who spent a lifetime ministering to Catholics in Soviet Central Asia. See document on pp. 97-106. (*Below right*) Fr Bukowiński's grave in Karaganda. (*Photos* © *Spotkania.*)



tial confession is the first that the person has ever made, but even if it is not the first, it ought to be — and usually is — a general one. In our situation it is not nearly enough to teach the bride and bridegroom only about the sacrament of marriage itself. Some brief instruction also has to be given in the principal truths of the faith, touching in particular on the confession and Holy Communion to which the newlyweds will come. Many couples, especially the younger ones, do not draw any distinction between a church wedding and a civil wedding — to them it is all one and the same thing, the only difference being that for a church wedding they have to find a priest, whereas for a civil wedding they simply have to present themselves at the registry office.

Now let us consider the sacrament of marriage.

It is comparatively rare for us to bless the matrimonial union of a couple immediately after their marriage has been contracted, as is usual elsewhere in the world. More often we have to bless the union of a married couple who are already living together, but without the blessing of a priest. I have, on occasion, blessed the marriages of a father and his son, or of a mother and her daughter at the same time.

I specified that these married couples live together without the blessing of a priest, since not all of them do so without having had a church wedding.

Quite common among the Germans is something they call *Nottrauung*. In places where there is no priest, the engaged couple make their marriage vows in the presence of two Catholic witnesses. This in itself is a truly sacramental marriage, but when at a later date the married couple come across a priest, they both make their confession, take communion and renew their marriage vows before the priest, who then blesses their matrimonial union with the authority of the Catholic Church.

Unfortunately, *Nottrauung* is neither known nor practised among the Poles. The parents often bless the couple with religious pictures before the civil wedding, but no vows are taken.

It is very common for a priest to come across married couples whose weddings were quite devoid of religious elements. Sometimes these poor people live together for many years without ever having been to confession or having taken Holy

Communion.

Leading such couples to God, often together with their children and entire families, is one of the greatest and most rewarding tasks of a priest in the USSR. However, there are cases in which it is impossible to perform a religious marriage ceremony, for example when one partner has previously been married in church to someone else. There are also cases where it is possible to have a religious ceremony, but where this would be extremely unwise, because the couple have a very unhappy relationship, usually on account of the husband's inveterate drinking.

In our situation we have to be very careful not to push anyone too hard, but always to encourage people to live according to their faith and to attend services.

I shall not write much about mixed marriages, since the problems here are the same the world over. Unfortunately, mixed marriages between Poles and Russians or Ukrainians are very common. The German Catholics often intermarry with German Lutherans and Baptists, but much more rarely with Russians.

These mixed marriages, especially those with Russians, are rarely successful, and there is a great danger that such a marriage, even if it is sealed by a religious ceremony, will break up after a short time.

Of course, there are exceptions. Some mixed marriages work perfectly, especially if the non-Catholic partner embraces Catholicism. The best mixed marriages in my experience, however, are those with German Lutherans and, strangely enough, Muslims.

I once baptised a Turkmen, after suitable preparation, and married him to a German woman with whom he had, after all, been living. At his baptism he took the name Alexander and is known in the neighbourhood by the Russian short form of that name, Sashka. Now Sashka has become a very zealous Catholic and has learnt various German prayers. He often attends services and willingly goes to confession and takes Holy Communion. When a lazy young German does not want to go to confession, especially at Easter, his mother and grandmother point to Sashka and say, "Look, Sashka only recently became a Christian and see how willingly he goes to confession. You ought to be ashamed, coming from a long-established Catholic family".

Holy Communion is dispensed here in

the same way as it is everywhere else. I try to arrange it so that the faithful receive Communion during the Mass, but I often have to dispense it outside the context of the Mass.

I conduct a sung Mass more often than a low Mass, since people prefer it that way. Unless it is a requiem Mass, I give the blessing of the Most Holy Sacrament after the Mass is ended. If I conduct two Masses in the same house, one in the evening and one the following morning, as I very often do, then the Most Holy Sacrament is displayed from the evening Mass until after the distribution of Communion during the morning Mass.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Second Vatican Council we try to ensure that the faithful of Karaganda understand the Mass and take an active part in it. Even in Karaganda there are many devout people who often go to confession and take Communion.

When distributing Holy Communion one has to bear in mind that many people do not know that when they take communion they receive the Lord Jesus. People simply forget this. While those who live in Karaganda itself are slightly better in this respect, the ignorance of those who come from the surrounding area or from a distance is appalling. There are even quite a number of people who do not know that Jesus Christ died on a cross, still less that He rose from the dead. They cross themselves in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, but they have no idea who the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are. One therefore needs to be continually and tirelessly reminding people just whom it is that we receive during Communion.

Receiving Communion at the hands of laymen in the absence of a priest is a serious problem in our area. The Germans call this *Selbstkommunion*. The priests who work in this area are divided on this issue, some supporting the practice and others opposing it. There have been deplorable abuses. Some priests on short visits to places where there is no resident priest have been too ready to leave the Most Holy Sacrament behind in those places. So-called "mothers of the Church" have emerged, who have distributed Holy Communion to the people as a priest would, provoking indignation and

sneering, especially among the young. I heard of one case where the militia seized the Most Holy Sacrament and moreover did not return it, despite the pleas and insistent demands of the faithful . . .

I myself have left the Most Holy Sacrament behind with the people, but whenever I did so I specified exactly who should receive Communion and I left it only for a short, strictly defined period. We have forbidden the distribution of the Holy Communion by any one person — we do not have deacons. What happens is that each communicant goes up to the altar and, with the aid of a spoon, helps himself to the Host from the ciborium or from the dish used in place of a consecrated vessel.

My neighbour, Fr Chira, has given permission for quite a large group of faithful to receive Communion frequently in the absence of a priest, since there is no other way in which they could communicate regularly. All this, however, takes place under the strict control of Fr Chira and cannot give rise to any objections. But what happens when the priest is very far away? Unfortunately, terrible things can and do happen.

Shortly after my return to Karaganda on completion of my third prison sentence — this was in 1952 — a Polish woman came to see me bringing with her nothing less than the Most Holy Sacrament. "A priest visited me, left me this and went away." And how long ago had this been? "This was four years ago." I questioned her in more detail. There was no doubt that the priest had celebrated Mass, consecrated the Host and then departed. The woman and her neighbours had prayed before the Most Holy Sacrament, but had been afraid to take Communion without making their confession. In the end that priest's carelessness resulted in the Most Holy Sacrament being brought to Karaganda, but in an appalling state. Evidently the woman's house had been damp, for the Hosts had stuck together, and there were a large number of them. Naturally, I ate them myself without giving any to our faithful, since I did not know whether Christ's Body could be preserved in such a form.

(The remainder of Fr Bukowiński's manuscript is addressed chiefly to his fellow-priests.)

Translated from Polish by Janet Curtis