

A New Primate for Times of Upheaval in Poland

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The eventual appointment of Józef Glemp, the Bishop of Warmia, as the new Primate of Poland on 7 July 1981 came as a surprise in spite of the fact that he was known to be the nominee of the late Cardinal Wyszyński: the five weeks between the death of the Cardinal and Bishop Glemp's appointment had begun to give rise to speculation that other possible candidates might be under consideration. The fact that Wyszyński nominated Glemp is a clear sign that he intended his successor to continue his own prudent but firm policy of giving priority to the spiritual integrity of the Church, and therefore of the nation. No man can expect to wield the same authority as the late Cardinal, who had carried with him something of the ancient authority of *interrex* under a regime which lacked legitimacy, yet the new Archbishop of Gniezno and Warsaw, who worked closely with the Cardinal from 1967 as his personal secretary, has the most intimate experience of Wyszyński's handling of the formidable church-state problems which beset Poland. He also has the added advantage that having been consecrated a bishop only two years ago he is a newcomer within the Polish episcopate and not associated with any faction.

Born on 18 December 1928 in Inowrocław into the family of a miner, Glemp is one of the new generation of bishops who did not come to maturity in the social and political milieu of free Poland. Those like him, however, who have survived the onslaught of German and Soviet totalitarianism spiritually intact, have been amply compensated by a clear sense of the primacy of the spiritual in all spheres of life and the inner freedom that flows from such a faith. They know the glory of God which comes from a tragic sense of human life.

After the outbreak of the War, Glemp's home town was incorporated into the Third Reich and instead of going to school he was classified as a hard labourer and from the age of 13 had to work on a farm. "Even today I cannot help being deeply moved when I see people working on their knees out in the fields." It was a great joy to him to be able to go to a Polish grammar school after the War.

It was like Easter after Lent [. . .] it is hard to imagine our hunger for knowledge, our patriotic feelings in a school with priests among the teachers and with prayers and crosses [. . .] What great teachers we had: they had been through the refining fire of National Socialism,

and they introduced us to the great world of culture, tolerance and Christian humanism.

The 1950s were years of terror and fear. Glemp spent these years in the relative seclusion and safety of the seminary, but they left their tragic mark on his mind. "How I envy the young generation of today for being able to express what my generation dared only to think."

Ordained in 1956, at the start of a period of political thaw, this young priest was able to continue his studies abroad: in 1958 he went to Rome to study canon law at the Gregorian University. Quiet and unassuming, he returned to live for years in the shadow of Cardinal Wyszyński, sharing his keen historical interest in 19th-century Polish Catholicism and in that intricate link between faith and patriotism without which Poland would not have survived as a Christian country in the 20th century. Like Wyszyński, Glemp is a populist, and wants to use the energy of patriotism in the service of the Church.

Glemp is more at home in the post-Vatican Church than the great Cardinal was. He spent the years of the Second Vatican Council in Rome, and the reforms did not present him with any psychological difficulties. He finds it easy to combine strong orthodoxy with pastoral openness.

His priorities in the present political and patriotic upheaval are clear. The precarious survival of the nation is crucial but it must not be pursued at the price of moral capitulation. The defence of "Solidarity" and human rights is vital, but the Church must not become directly involved in the new trade union. The role of the priests is primarily spiritual, in an active sense: they must learn to grasp the new problems of the changing situation, and so they need a detachment which precludes loyalty to any political faction. A different danger facing the priests now is that they might fall prey to consumerism or get too involved with the material concerns of the Church now that the building of churches or parish halls is possible. The new Primate stresses that only detachment brings spiritual freedom.

A lover of learning, Bishop Glemp stands firmly behind the many Catholic Intellectuals' Clubs which are springing up all over Poland, but he is clearly aware of the dangers of futile intellectualism and would like them to concentrate their activities more on helping the workers, many of whom live out of the reach of the Church in "subhuman" conditions created by the system.

Archbishop Józef Glemp, a man of faith and patriotism, a political realist, may prove to be less of a flexible diplomat than his predecessor. His piety and experience perhaps make him appear more serene than he is. Underneath there is a burning zeal for Truth. In him the Polish Church has gained a strong leader for these times, which are full of hope but also fraught with so many difficulties.