

HE LIKED
TUESDAYS
BEST

Archbishop Mieczysław Mokrzycki
Brygida Grysiak

HE LIKED TUESDAYS BEST

A Story About Everyday Life of the Blessed John Paul II



WYDAWNICTWO 
Krakow

Title of the original:

Najbardziej lubił wtorki

Opowieść o życiu codziennym Jana Pawła II

Editing and Corrections:

Ann-Marie Ryan

Fr. Tomasz Jegierski

Translation from the Polish language:

Peter Krasuski, p.s.s.

Layout:

Ewa Nowak

Cover design:

Piotr Suchodolski

Cover picture:

Servizio Fotografico de “L'Osservatore Romano”

© Copyright by Wydawnictwo M, Krakow 2011

(F&T) ISBN 978-83-62207-05-3

(M) ISBN 978-83-7595-279-7

Wydawnictwo M Publishing House

ul. Kanonicza 11,

31-002 Krakow, Poland

contact@mwydawnictwo.pl

www.jp2books.com

www@mwydawnictwo.pl

Fides et Traditio Press

al. Wyzwolenia 21/23

35-501 Rzeszow, Poland

office@ftvero.com

www.ftbookstore.com

www.fidestraditio.com

Printed in Poland

CONTENTS

The Beginnings of Ministry	9
The Papal Apartment	17
The Duties of the Second Secretary	21
The Everyday Life	33
Prayer	51
The Sacraments	67
The Feast Days	73
The Audiences	97
The Pilgrimages	127
The Last Days	157

His Grace Mieczysław Mokrzycki: *When I close my eyes, I see him putting on his cape and going out to the terrace. I see him concentrated while praying the Rosary, when he reads at his desk in the bedroom, when we walk in the gardens of Castel Gandolfo...*

Brygida Grysiak: Always in the background. From the first day to the last moment together. It's enough to exchange a few words with him in order to have an idea bordering with certainty why John Paul II chose precisely him. He is a beautiful man, because he is good and simple. Simple in the best sense of the word. When he mentions his everyday life at the side of the Holy Father, he smiles timidly. When I ask about the most difficult moments of that everyday life, he plays embarrassed with his Episcopal ring. When I ask if he cried after the Pope's death, he says: *Just do not write about it...* and he wipes his eyes. Father Mieczysław Mokrzycki, presently Archbishop of Lvov, spent nine years with John Paul II. As the second secretary after Stanisław Dziwisz, he lived the life of the Pope: from the morning Holy Mass to the last evening prayer. He says today that he lived in the shadow of holiness. And Holiness called him "*Mieciu*"¹...

¹ Polish diminutive form of the first name of Archbishop Mokrzycki [note of the translator].

Photo by Karolina Grysiak.



Archbishop Mieczysław Mokrzycki and Brygida Grysiak during their conversation, Lvov, July 2008.

The Beginnings of Ministry

Through Lvov to the Vatican,
which is the First Meeting at the Elevator

*I was not ready for this; I did not do any diplomatic studies. I only did a regular theological doctorate, he says with a disarming sincerity. He learned very soon that John Paul II was not looking for a diplomat. After an Irish, a Zairian and a Vietnamese, he wanted to have another Pole around him. “Stasiu” (as he called Father Stanisław Dziwisz) was with him from the beginning. “Mieciu” (as he called Mieczysław Mokrzycki) joined them on Ash Wednesday of 1996. The Papal apartments became yet more Polish, yet more familial. *Familiar and discrete among your own folks*, he adds. Discretion was desired more and more, since the Pope was increasingly aging and increasingly ill. He needed not only someone who could organize the work of the office, but also someone who would support him in moments of weakness, who would help to give a wash and to change clothes.*

– It was Providence. You could say, for I never thought about it and, humanly speaking, never asked for it. I was supposed to stay in Rome for some time after my studies were

finished. Archbishop Jaworski had asked me to work on the beatification process of the Servant of God Archbishop Józef Bilczewski. He wanted me to work in Rome after my studies and to work on the process at the same time. So he asked Cardinal Dziwisz, at that time still Monsignor Dziwisz, to find something for me to do at the Vatican. He did. I worked at the Congregation for Divine Worship for six months. It allowed Monsignor Dziwisz and the Holy Father to get to know me better.

– Did you come to like each other right away?

– *I think so. We collaborated very well. We understood each other. One can say that we were of a single mind.*

Photo by Servizio Fotografico de "L'Osservatore Romano".



Fr. Mieczysław Mokrzycki with John Paul II and Cardinal Marian Jaworski.

– What exactly united you?

– I think that it was a certain attachment of the Holy Father to the Archdiocese of Lvov. It was because of Archbishop Baziak, who was the last archbishop of Lvov before the war. Later on, he became the administrator in Kraków, chose Karol Wojtyła as his auxiliary bishop and ordained him. It was also the friendship with Cardinal Jaworski. So it was probably about some more trust: trust as to my person, as to me being a priest, and at the same time an attachment to the priests of Lvov.

– When I read your Episcopal motto, I thought to myself that I discovered what united you...

– Humility... It is difficult to say something about me here. I will say the following: this motto became even more solid through the service to the Holy Father.

Along with Cardinal Marian Jaworski, the chaplain of Baziak and later his successor, Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak ordained Karol Wojtyła a bishop, and Karol Wojtyła would be friends with them both for a long time. In 1967, when Father Jaworski lost his left hand in a railway accident, Wojtyła – at the time Archbishop of Kraków – visited him in the hospital. When he became Pope, he frequently invited Jaworski. Cardinal Jaworski was one of few visitors to spend a night in the Papal apartments. It was him who on September 17, 1987 ordained the young Mieczysław Mokrzycki as a priest. Afterwards Mokrzycki left for Ukraine to do his pastoral ministry. He was a

secretary for Marian Jaworski, Archbishop of Lvov. Today he succeeds Jaworski and lives in Lvov. Yet, before he went back to Lvov, he lived in the Vatican.

– How was your first meeting? The one with which all this began?

– *The Holy Father asked me come to his study and said, “I would like you to work together with me here, to help Father Stanisław. And I think that we will get together well.” These were very simple words. I was glad and thanked him.*

– Were you a bit afraid?

– *Yes, I was. I had the opportunity to meet with the Holy Father previously, but in quite different circumstances. It was not in his private home, but in the apartments of the Holy Father.*

– What did you most fear?

– *That I will not be able to go through, that I will not be able to fulfill his expectations. I was not prepared for this. But those fears soon disappeared, because I soon realized that the Holy Father was not looking for an educated diplomat. He accepted everyone as he was and how much he could give of himself to another person. This was very mobilizing: to do my best to respond to the call, to the needs of the Holy Father. I would go to every meeting with him serene, with no stress, no anxiety.*

The Beginnings of Ministry

Photo by Servizio Fotografico de “L'Osservatore Romano”.



John Paul II imposes ashes on the head of his secretary.

– Let’s go back to that Ash Wednesday. You already know that you will serve the Pope. You must now pack up your life and take it to the Vatican...

– *I remember very well. It was February 21. I worked at the Congregation. Father Dziwisz told me, “It’s the best occasion for you to calmly move in. The Holy Father leaves this afternoon to celebrate a Mass at Saint Sabina.” He left, as he does every year, to celebrate the liturgy and to impose ashes. It was about 4:00 p.m. I did not have time to have a lunch. I borrowed a car from my friend, Father Marian Babula, who also worked at the Congregation, and I quickly moved in. I packed the most necessary things and I came to the Vatican.*

– How many things were there?

– *Not many. Some clothing, a few books. At Father Marian's where I had lived before, I also had a very small room. I was a priest who just completed his studies and I still lived like a student. The sisters from the apartments of the Holy Father came to welcome me in the courtyard of the Vatican. We took an elevator to the fifth floor to my new apartment.*

To a new apartment and to a new life. He left his things in the room and went one floor down. The Pope lived there. It was 6:30 p.m. When John Paul II appeared in the hallway, he came out of the elevator and said with a smile, “Welcome, Father! I wish you that all may go well.” And, “We will see each other at supper.” Archbishop Mokrzycki remembers today how nervous he was then: a meeting with the Holy Father for the first time in his own apartments, supper that will be the beginning of a new everyday life, and the awareness that a room above the Papal apartment is a great privilege and a great challenge.

– Your Grace arrived at John Paul II's in the 18th year of his pontificate and after his 70 pilgrimages. He was ill. What kind of man have you encountered?

– *The Holy Father was not yet so ill. He used a cane, but not in public. When he was going to the Paul VI Hall, he would walk to the car with a cane, but he did not use it to walk up to his chair on the scene. It was only a beginning, the*

first symptoms of Parkinson. The Holy Father was accepting it with great humility and with confidence.

– In the Philippines he was swinging his cane...

– *That’s him. He was always able to do or to say something that would win your heart.*

– Also at home?

– *He had an exceptional sense of humor. I remember when I became a monsignor. I was 36 years old. It was one year after I moved in to the Holy Father’s. He considered me a youth. When he was looking at me, he would always smile. When I was not putting on my monsignor’s cassock for the audiences, he would ask me with a gesture where was that cassock with the red hem... Those who knew laughed. I laughed, too.*

– When would you laugh the most?

– *Once the Holy Father asked me, “Mieciu, prąta-cię mama?”²*

– And what did you say? Did she?

– *I was surprised. At first, I did not understand. Afterwards I laughed sincerely. The Holy Father also laughed.*

² The Holy Father is playing with words here and makes a joke difficult to translate into English. His question “*prąta-cię mama?*” literally means “Was your mother smacking your bottom?” and the word “*Pralacie*” means “monsignor” [note of the translator].

– Were there many moments like this?

– *Many. Once I brought to the Holy Father a letter from a certain bishop. I think he was French. The Holy Father was working. I entered his study and said there was a letter. I then mispronounced the name. The Holy Father could not resist and he burst out laughing. He laughed for about five minutes. His laughter also spread to me, to the point that Father Stanisław had to intervene because he did not know what it was all about.*

– So he treated you almost like a son?

– *You could say so. He was like a father to us. Father Stanisław used to say that the Holy Father didn't trust everyone right away. For some time he was reserved. After the first meeting he said to me, "Mieciu, you don't have to worry. The Holy Father accepted you right away. He trusts you completely." And one could see that. By a word or a gesture, the Holy Father was always giving me a sign that he is well in my company and that he accepts my ministry.*