



The Ulma family: a remarkable beatification of martyrdom

01.10.2023 | Francesca Merlo and Emanuela Campanile

August 31, 2023 - Killed for having hidden eight Jews in their home in 1944, the Ulma family is due to be beatified on 10 September 2023, making it the first time an entire family will be beatified together, including the child carried in the mother's womb at the time of her death.

The upcoming beatification of the Ulma family on 10 September 2023 marks an unprecedented event in the modern canonization process.

This family, made up of parents Josef and Wiktoria Ulma and their children, including the unborn child Wiktoria was carrying, will be collectively honored. This unusual beatification stands as a testament to their sacrifice during World War II, when they sheltered and protected eight Jews from persecution.

Who were the Ulmas?

The Ulma family led an ordinary life against the backdrop of the Second World War. Josef worked in the fields, while Wiktoria managed their home and cared for their six children and another on the way. Through their simple daily routines, they exemplified the teachings of the Gospel. Family prayers, shared faith education, and Bible readings turned their household into what Pope John Paul II termed a "domestic Church," extending their warmth and support even to the most vulnerable members of society, including Jews who faced immense danger.

Journalist Manuela Tulli, in collaboration with historian Father Paweł Rytel-Andrianik, uncovered the Ulma family's story, and together they published a book entitled "Martyred and Blessed Together: The Extraordinary Story of the Ulma Family".

During a trip to Ukraine, Tulli stumbled upon their tale, a discovery that resonated deeply. The Ulmas' images were scattered throughout Poland, portraying a young couple with numerous children. This poignant image prompted reflection on contemporary and historical wars, friendships, and the Ulmas' remarkable act of opening their humble abode – consisting of just two rooms – to eight Jews seeking refuge.

The journey towards beatification

The Ulma family's journey towards beatification began with the postulator of their cause, who introduced Tulli to their story. Tulli then embarked on a quest to better understand their history. Through her research, she delved into the life of this family that would soon be beatified.

Embedded within their family Bible, a word was underlined: "Samaritan," accompanied by a resounding "yes." This choice epitomized their commitment to aiding others, a commitment that persisted amidst a world fraught with violence and division. Captured in numerous photographs taken by Josef Ulma, an amateur photographer, their industrious and harmonious life stood in stark contrast to the chaos of the era.

The betrayal

Tragedy struck when the Ulmas were denounced and betrayed. Nazi forces stormed their home, and their attic, where they had concealed their Jewish friends, became a site of horror. Josef and Wiktorja were executed in front of their children, with Wiktorja being seven months pregnant. Even the children were not spared. The house was set ablaze, marking the tragic event on March 24, 1944.

A Jewish-Christian martyrdom

Father Paweł Rytel-Andrianik noted that the Ulmas' martyrdom extended beyond a Christian context; it was a Jewish-Christian martyrdom. This perspective emphasized the senseless killing of innocent lives – the Ulma family and eight Jews – including a chilling detail where the dripping blood of victims stained a photo of two Jewish women hidden beneath, preserved as a relic of their martyrdom. This heartrending story showcased the duality of horror and hope, with the Ulmas attempting to embody the Gospel's light within the challenges of daily existence.

Recognized as Righteous among the Nations by the State of Israel and soon to be Blessed by the Catholic Church, the Ulma family's light continues to shine. Their story defies the darkness of war, and their beatification – including the beatification of their unborn child – is a remarkable affirmation of their sacrifice. Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, likened this exceptional case to a "Baptism of Blood," echoing the tragic narrative of the Holy Innocents. In their entirety, the Ulma family's legacy underscores the power of love, compassion, and sacrifice amid the darkest of times.

Source: [Vatican News](#).