

Blessed priest Jerzy Popiełuszko as a personal model in upbringing towards the virtue of courage¹

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Abstract: The paper focused on personal models in upbringing towards the virtues. The aim of the research was to answer the following question: "How can we use the example of blessed Jerzy Popiełuszko in upbringing towards the virtue of courage?". The author used the history-pedagogy biographical method. The life and activity of the martyr cruelly murdered by the communist Secret Service were analysed. During his whole life, Jerzy Popiełuszko demonstrated the will to follow Jesus Christ in everything, including accepting a cruel death in the spirit of loving his enemies. The author concentrated particularly on the period of his life when he stationed in a military unit in Bartoszyce known for its strict discipline (1965-1967). It was then, at the age of 19, that he had already perfectly completed the courage criteria. The applied criteria for the virtue of such courage have been proposed by Jacek Woroniecki – a Dominican monk, philosopher, pedagogue, and one of the most outstanding Thomists. The results of the research are the guidelines for upbringing in the virtue of courage. The process should concentrate on the will to overcome fear in the face of danger, patience and perseverance in suffering without expecting admiration or praise, courage with prudence, sensitivity to the harm of others and conscious distance from cowardice and insolence. The study showed that Popiełuszko fulfilled the Woroniecki's criteria for courage from the Christian perspective. The author analysed the 'scapegoat mechanism' used by the communist Secret Service to torture selected people. The examples from the life of Jerzy Popiełuszko that are the inspiration on how to shape the virtue of courage are useful in upbringing. The concept proposed by Jacek Woroniecki can be used in the next analyses of potential candidates for being the model of a courageous person.

Keywords: priest Jerzy Popiełuszko, virtue of courage, personal model, Jacek Woroniecki, Christian upbringing

Introduction

In upbringing towards values, an important role is played by people who have perfectly demonstrated in their lives how to defend the highest ideals. Their biographies, perceived in terms of uniqueness, provide the environment with valuable forms of action even in extremely difficult conditions (Juroszek, 2023a, 2023b, 2022; Okoń, 2007). These people, referred to in the literature as personal models, encourage other people to follow them by affecting the emotional and motivational spheres of their followers (Okoń, 2007).

This paper analyses the figure of blessed priest Jerzy Popiełuszko. So far in the literature, his activity has been subjected to many inquiries, mainly from historical (Daszkiewicz, 1990; Gromadzki, Witkowski, 2022; Kindziuk, 2014; Litka, 2009), theological (Bartoszewski, 2009; Brien, 2016; Skoczylas,

2012; Sochoń, 2010) and pedagogical (Skoczylas, 2012) perspectives. Due to the psycho-pedagogical focus of the content of this article, the paper by Kazimierz Skoczylas (2012) deserves special attention. Priest Jerzy Popiełuszko was presented there as a personal role model in Christian upbringing. Using the example of Jerzy Popiełuszko's life and activities, Skoczylas demonstrated how one could follow Christ by following him in preaching the Gospel and serving the neighbour. Skoczylas paid particular attention to Popiełuszko's constant readiness to accept death for the faith in the spirit of love of enemies.

The aim of this paper was to analyse the life and activities of priest Popiełuszko from the perspective of the model of a courageous person. This analysis

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was conducted by referring to the book by Jacek Woroniecki (2000) on the issue of Catholic upbringing ethics and the Christian ideal of upbringing. The concept proposed by Woroniecki was chosen for several reasons.

Firstly, Woroniecki defined upbringing as the process of consciously shaping both skills and virtues in the student from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood. Secondly, he attached great importance to the consciously constantly renewed effort put into work on oneself (self-upbringing), which should continue until death. In other words, Woroniecki was of the opinion that a person's work related to self-upbringing should never cease. Thirdly, Woroniecki postulated that the process of forming particular virtues in the student should be guided by the lives of saints. Fourthly, he stressed the great importance of martyrdom as the pinnacle manifestation of courage. The homage that Christianity pays to martyrs poses tremendously difficult requirements related to the acceptance of death (Woroniecki, 2000, p. 428). Jesus Christ, who prayed for his tormentors with no rebellion or complaint and suffered death for the salvation of mankind, can serve as an example.

In the life of priest Popiełuszko, one can find a constantly renewed will to follow Christ in everything, including accepting a cruel martyr death that took place on October 19, 1984. On that day, while driving a car from Warsaw to Toruń, Popiełuszko was abducted by agents of the Security Service. He was tortured and finally thrown into the Vistula River in a sack with stones.

On day 23 of the trial in the Provincial Court in Toruń, lawyer Andrzej Grabinski stated that "the victim was chosen in cold blood. There was cold determination in choosing the victim. Such a victim was chosen in cold blood so that the case could be high-profile with the highest impact" (Daszkiewicz, 1990, p. 251).

To this day, the case of the death of Popiełuszko has not been solved. During the so-called "Toruń trial", three people, who were the employees of the Ministry of Interior, were found guilty of murder.

However, prosecutor Andrzej Witkowski (one of the most dedicated lawyers to the case) claims that probably different people murdered Popiełuszko. According to Witkowski, the torture Popiełuszko experienced was only the beginning to the final torture. As Witkowski states, after Popiełuszko was abducted by the Polish Security Service, he was taken over by the Russian Special Service. Using the most gruesome torture, the agents of the Service tortured him for several more days.²

According to Woroniecki, the examples of immense courage, fortitude, and heroism in the face of cruel death are also encountered in non-Christian cultures, which proves that human strength alone can overcome much, including the pain and horror that accompany cruel and sophisticated death penalties. However, Christian martyrdom is imbued with the values not found elsewhere. These values stem from a tremendous belief in the role of suffering combined with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the salvation of others. Woroniecki related to the heroic suffering of the martyrs accepted in the Christian spirit in the following way: "Instead of mere stoic fortitude, it is permeated by a profound love for one's neighbour, manifested even towards the oppressors, and next to it there are calmness, placidity, and sometimes even joy that one has the opportunity to give Christ this highest proof of love" (Woroniecki, 2000, p. 429).

Of note, Jerzy Popiełuszko manifested such extraordinary faith as early as at the age of under twenty. Tormented by his superiors in a military unit in Bartoszyce, Popiełuszko uttered the significant words: "God, how lightly one suffers when one is aware that one is suffering for Christ" (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 22-23).

The fragment of the biography of Popiełuszko related to his time in a military unit is exceptionally eye-catching. By following the excerpts of letters from that period written by clerical student Popiełuszko, we can learn how to become an authentically courageous person.

2 Those interested in this topic are encouraged to read the publication by Ryszard Gromadzki and Andrzej Witkowski (2022)

1. Research problem, aim and method

The subject of the paper was focused on the role of personal role models in upbringing towards virtues. The aim of the paper was to answer the research question: “How can we use the example of blessed Jerzy Popiełuszko in upbringing towards the virtue of courage?”

The history-pedagogy biographical method was applied (Szulakiewicz, 2015a, 2015b).

In pedagogical research, the popularity of analyses of a biographical nature has increased tremendously over the past several years. There has been a steady increase in the number of researchers interested in the upbringing dimension of the experiences present in a person’s life cycle. These researchers explore the extent to which a person is shaped by certain factors—from the socio-economic situation to the immediate (primarily family) environment. In the case of history-pedagogy analyses, the objective, historical context of the activities of a given figure is considered crucial (Skrzyniarz, 2016, p. 14).

The life of Jerzy Popiełuszko fell into the period of the Polish People’s Republic and the associated socio-political domination of the USSR. The Security Service was responsible for the control and surveillance of society. It consisted of an elaborate network of functionaries and subordinate agents known as secret collaborators.

The history-pedagogy biographical method makes it possible to show clerical student Popiełuszko as a model of a courageous person against the background of historical events related to the activities of the Security Service. The task of the functionaries of the Security Service was to select from the crowd outstanding individuals who were capable of opposing the communist system and force them to switch to the side of the Security Service (Szwagrzyk, 2005). It is well known that the priest was not afraid of threats or intimidation. Ultimately, even in the face of bestial torture, he remained faithful to the highest values.

His biographers emphasize that the period in which Popiełuszko first came face-to-face with the representatives of the communist system was his stay in Bartoszyce, a military unit of strict discipline created specifically for clerical students. The task of military

functionaries was to invigilate and indoctrinate clerical students, with the ultimate goal of discouraging them from the priesthood (Juroszek, 2023c).

In this paper, the criteria for courage were cited after Jacek Woroniecki (2000). Biographical studies were used (Gromadzki, Witkowski, 2022; Kindziuk, 2014; Skoczylas, 2012; Sochoń, 2010; Litka, 2009) as well as letters written by Jerzy Popiełuszko during his stay in Bartoszyce to his parents and priest Czesław Miętek who was his clerical father. These letters were collected and compiled by Gabriel Bartoszewski (2009).

2. Upbringing to the virtue of courage as the formation in the student of the will to overcome fear in the face of danger

Referring to the works of Aristotle, Woroniecki detailed two factors in the virtue of courage. The first factor is related to the attitude of not retreating in a threatening situation, which requires overcoming fear. The second factor is associated with the readiness to fight courageously (Woroniecki, 2000, p. 426). Such positive attitudes can be contrasted with cowardice (understood as a lack of courage) and audacity treated as an abuse of courage with false excess of courage (Woroniecki, 2000, p. 430).

According to Woroniecki, cowardice is worse because it directly opposes courage. Cowardice shows its worst form when fear takes control of a person’s will to such an extent that the individual opposes the highest values (Woroniecki, 2000, p. 430-431). Then, the person withdraws, flees from danger and does not defend what should be defended. For Woroniecki, cowardice often manifests in a lack of civil courage i.e. a concession of opinions in a situation of any pressure, not to endanger anyone.

True courage is not the same as the absence of fear, but it is the ability to overcome it. As Woroniecki stresses, many truly courageous commanders went into battle with great trembling of the body (which was visible even to outsiders) and (at the same time) fought heroically (Woroniecki, 2000, p. 431). A constantly activated will to fight life’s adversities without giving up is crucial for courage.

Such an attitude captures attention throughout Popiełuszko's life. Careful tracking of his biography confirms that he constantly aroused in himself the will to overcome fear in a situation of increasing threat from the Security Service since the attacks from the Service (manifested e.g. by constant summoning for interrogation) increased. The priest's courage was thus shaped in a process of permanent and steadfast resistance to evil.

The Service's aggressive actions were in line with the precepts described in social psychology, according to which each successive act of aggression increases the likelihood of further attacks. Social psychologists proved that if a person commits aggressive actions, their attitude towards the victim changes at the cognitive level (Aronson, Wilson, Akert, 1997). A dehumanization process involves giving the victim animal characteristics (e.g., of a reptile, worm, pig, barking dog, etc.). The torturer also begins to use more and more violence against the victim.

Such a situation occurred in the case of Popiełuszko. Hatred towards him from the Security Service increased. The Service organized many ambushes against him, the peak being the famous cruel words of Wojciech Jaruzelski, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, calling for the execution of the priest. At the end of the summer of 1984, Jaruzelski sent a final urging to his close associate General Czesław Kiszczak (who at that time served as Interior Minister) to "do something to make Popiełuszko stop barking" (Gromadzki, Witkowski, 2022, p. 16).

The employees of the Security Service constituted an apparatus of violence whose purpose was to catch and invigilate outstanding people who were charismatic, had a strong moral backbone and were courageous and unyielding to finally give them an ultimatum: switching to the side of the Service or bestial death. Popiełuszko's biographers emphasize that he was subjected to constant tests, including threats (by letter or telephone), foreshadowing terrifying visions of death, torture, and sometimes even torture details (Daszkiewicz, 1990, p. 470). At the peak of his activity, Priest Popiełuszko received so many threats that they were collected in several volumes (Daszkiewicz, 1990, p. 470). Popiełuszko

constantly made an effort to overcome the feelings of fear. He did so from the perspective of closeness to Christ, to whom he gave all his fear in the face of growing danger. Krystyna Daszkiewicz, a professor of law and psychologist who followed the backstage of the so-called Toruń trial for many years, stressed that Popiełuszko often asked for prayers for him. According to Daszkiewicz, "he did not stay indifferent to any summons he received ... Popiełuszko asked the faithful in the Church to pray for him in these difficult moments. He addressed them in the following way: 'This Tuesday, I ask you to pray. At 9:30 a.m., I received my sixteenth consecutive summons for interrogation at the Mostowski Palace ... It is very helpful to know that someone remembers [me] in the prayer at this time'" (Daszkiewicz, 1990, p. 385).

In conclusion, courage is not the same as the absence of fear but consists in not giving in to it. Of note, not giving in is not a one-time act but a constantly repeated action. Popiełuszko was summoned to interrogations several dozens of times, and in each case, he had to renew his will to be faithful to the highest values.

3. Priest Popiełuszko as a personal role model in enduring suffering

Woroniecki stressed the great importance of forming courage in the student in everyday life, contrasting such an approach with single-only acts of courage undertaken in exceptional situations. Courage is shaped in silence, away from publicity and the spotlight. Woroniecki understood it perfectly when he clearly emphasized that true heroes are born in families that shape fortitude in every situation and not for a show-off, blowing the cult of pseudo-heroism in the student (Woroniecki, 2000, p. 470).

Throughout his life, Popiełuszko tried to patiently endure life's difficulties and the accompanying suffering. As already mentioned, such an attitude was regarded by Woroniecki as the most valuable and difficult form of courage accompanied by patience and perseverance. Patience sustains a person's will not to give in to obstacles and to permanently fulfil one's obligations (Pasterniak-Kobyłecka, 2021; Horowski,

2020, 2017; Woroniecki, 2020, 2000; Kornas-Biela, 2019; Mazur, Skrzyaniarz, Kiereś, Płazińska, 2018; Popiełuszko, 1985).

The task of patience as a virtue typical of courage is to resist discouragement, complaints and self-pity (Woroniecki, 2000, p. 438). Priest Popiełuszko included the following words in his letter written to his parents from the unit in Bartoszyce:

“In the world, in this vale of tears, everyone suffers. There are no people free from worries. We have worries in the army. You have *[them]* at home. Do not worry, do not be discouraged when suffering comes many times and when unpleasant moments occur” (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 14).

The content of his letter indicates the precept according to which the attitude of courageous suffering in everyday life is easier for those who genuinely believe in God. Popiełuszko stated further:

“In every nuisance, one must seek God’s will. Therefore, one must seek peace in God. It is best to do so in silent prayer, in trusting everything to God” (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 26).

Popiełuszko shaped courage in himself by being close to Christ. Such an attitude is in line with the concept proposed by Woroniecki, according to which a Christian can derive a specific spiritual joy when suffering, which is the result of elevating the human race to the supernatural order and making it accessible to participate in the suffering of Jesus Christ through theological virtues (Woroniecki, 2000, p. 429).

True courage is often related to suffering in silence, without expecting admiration or praise from the environment. Since courage is strongly admired by people, it has a special power to cause self-love and vanity (Woroniecki, 2000, p. 433). In a person, especially a young individual, craving for the recognition of others, there may be a tendency to seek opportunities to boast about one’s courage. According to Woroniecki, such an approach cannot

be understood in terms of virtue. This is because it offers no guarantee that it will be activated under conditions imperceptible to the environment, i.e. hidden from the human eye.

Popiełuszko faced such a challenge related to experiencing his courage in secrecy in Bartoszyce. This event was described below in more detail as an illustration and, at the same time, an inspiration for the students on how to shape one’s courage in silence.

The superiors in Bartoszyce immediately paid close attention to clerical student Popiełuszko because of his steadfastness and some leadership over the other clerical students (Juroszek, in print, 2023). Jan Sochoń, one of Popiełuszko’s biographers, listed the following means by which the superiors in Bartoszyce tormented Popiełuszko: constant summonses for interrogation (due to obsequiousness and denunciatory activity of agents), being forced to crawl on the ground for hours (fully dressed in the uniforms), being forced to clean military toilets while wearing a gas mask, etc. (Sochoń, 2010, p. 26).

One day, one of his superiors noticed the Rosary on Popiełuszko’s finger. He ordered him to take it off, which met with a firm refusal from Popiełuszko. Below are the words of Popiełuszko in a letter to his clerical father:

“He took his anger out and used various methods ... I stood barefoot for an hour (60 minutes). My feet got cold and bruised, and so at 9:20 p.m., he told me to put my shoes on ... I was rather silent, saying prayers in thought and giving my suffering to God caused by the crushing weight of the backpack, mask, gun and helmet as propitiation for sins. “God, how lightly one suffers when one is aware that one is suffering for Christ” (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 22-23).

It is worth noting Popiełuszko’s words: “I was rather silent,” which proves the willingness to consciously experience his difficulties in silence. Popiełuszko did not expect admiration for his courage from his fellow clerical students and gave his suffering to Christ.

4. Upbringing to the virtue of courage as the formation of courage along with prudence

Due to the virtue of courage, a person becomes fearless and able to endure even the most difficult experiences. Woroniecki uses the words ‘courage’ and ‘boldness’ for such a form of courage. These virtues involve the will to activate an attitude of moving forward, action and attack. As Woroniecki emphasizes, this attitude is accompanied by the activation of a strong current of vital forces that allow a person to resist danger (Woroniecki, 2000, p. 426). The description of this attitude of Popiełuszko related to the situation with the Rosary was as follows:

“At 10:20 p.m., a political commissar came and ordered me to take off the Rosary in his presence. Why was I supposed to do so? I did not do it since it did not bother anyone, and I will not take it off just because someone cannot stand it” (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 23).

As Popiełuszko further reported:

“... Some corporal, who wanted to butter up to an officer, told me to take off my Rosary. He said it was not a ring to wear in the army. I said: ‘It depends for whom’. He began to fly at me and forcefully wanted to take me to the officer. The guys flew at him. I thought they would kill him. I wanted the officer to come to me because I would not go to him. Why should I do it? Just because he wants it?” (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 25). The formation of courage in a person is greater when a person has managed to control fear, especially in situations where danger will occur unexpectedly.

Courage is of the greatest importance when imbued with the element of sanity. Otherwise, impudence comes into play and makes a person rush blindly towards danger without realizing it and understanding what a person might lose (Woroniecki,

2000, p. 432). According to Woroniecki, this form of courage is not the courage itself, and additionally a student may never reach it if courage is not imbued with reason. It is the reason that ultimately gives moderation to courage (Woroniecki, 2000, p. 432). This approach corresponds with the description of the attitude of clerical student Popiełuszko in the military unit in Bartoszyce. While showing courage, Popiełuszko was also able to simultaneously reasonably control the conditions in which he found himself and draw logical conclusions from the processed data.

At this point, it is worth quoting the following words of Popiełuszko:

“The corporal complained that I was at loggerheads with him. I am to be punished by the order. But it has already been the second day and there has been no punishment yet. To be free from accusations, I have passed the exams with flying colours today. They will not accuse me of taking care of everything except for what is necessary” (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 25).

While showing courage in his actions, Popiełuszko also showed wisdom, stating that he did not want the authorities to accuse him of opposing the whole set of rules and regulations. He clearly stressed that he would be diligent and systematic as far as his academic progress was concerned.

Alicja Żywczok made an interesting analysis of the connection between courage and prudence. She found that courage could not be identified with bravado, or foolhardiness. To form courage in oneself, it is important to have self-discipline, inner consolidation, focus on the target, and the ability to transcend oneself (Żywczok, 2021).³

As Żywczok summarized in her analysis of the works of selected Polish historians, the connection between courage and caution was emphasized by the most prominent Polish scholars several hundred years ago, particularly Wincenty Kadłubek. In his famous “The Chronicle of Poles,” he included such words:

³ The relationships between courage and caution were also analyzed by Weronika Juroszek in her book on the life and activities of General Emil Fieldorf “Nil” (Juroszek, 2023b, p. 69-70).

“caution gives birth to confidence, and confidence gives life to courage, thanks to which a man transcends himself in boldness” (Kadłubek, 2009, p. 39).

In the analysis of the activities of clerical student Popiełuszko as a model of a courageous person, the Christian context must be given attention. Popiełuszko shaped his courage by entrusting himself to Christ in prayer. Of note, this prayer was systematic and planned.

“The matters of the prayer are arranged in my platoon best... We pray the Rosary together every day. At each tenth, someone else gives the intention, and one mystery of the Rosary is for oneself” (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 24).

This prayer made the clerical students spiritually strengthened, as evidenced by Popiełuszko’s words summarizing one of the typical days spent in Bartoszyce:

“We were satisfied from the whole day and everyone was spiritually strengthened” (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 25).

5. Upbringing towards the virtue of courage as the formation of sensitivity to the injustice of others in the student

In upbringing towards the virtue of courage, it is impossible to ignore the formation of sensitivity to the injustice of others in the student. In the unit in Bartoszyce, the attitude of the fellow clerical students of Jerzy Popiełuszko deserves special attention under the conditions of activation of manipulative techniques introduced by the superiors that were based on planned, dishonest control of the actions of group members. One of them was aimed at making Popiełuszko a scapegoat.

The scapegoat mechanism involves saving the cohesion and unity of the group in a difficult and crisis situation by choosing a victim who is the object of collective aggression (Aronson, Wilson, Akert, 1997). The person who is the most different from the group members (e.g., in terms of social background, views, or appearance) becomes a scapegoat. At a more or less conscious level, group members

keep telling themselves that the victim is the cause of their problems, while the harm done to the victim unites the group.

Superiors in the army wanted to make Popiełuszko a scapegoat and direct the aggression of his fellow clerical students against him. Popiełuszko wrote about the actions of his superiors in the following manner:

“I am to be assessed by the peer tribunal as a rebel. But fortunately, I have good colleagues who sit in this tribunal” (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 23).

The manipulative measures the superiors took failed due to the high mutual loyalty of the clerical students. Solidarity worked at the human level, which Popiełuszko confirmed by his words quoted above.

This line of thought is in line with the concept of courage proposed by Woroniecki who draws attention to the role of support provided by the educational environment. This support is particularly important in the case of a very young person whose personality is finally being established. Fellow clerical students from the military unit in Bartoszyce proved to be a source of tremendous support for Jerzy Popiełuszko. Not only did they manage to resist their military superiors and remain unprovoked to act against their fellow clerical student, but they also responded with great solidarity with him in each subsequent step. In this sense, the plans to implement the scapegoat mechanism by the superiors were ruined, which was due to the harmonious and systematic cooperation of the clerical students.

The following are examples illustrating the will of the superiors to set Popiełuszko at variance with the rest of the group. These examples can serve as a warning to students and educators on how not to succumb to the manipulative actions of selected members of the class group—the attitude of Popiełuszko against the group by suggesting that its members were burdened with enormous flaws (such as cowardice). Popiełuszko immediately realized that the superior wanted to set him at variance with his fellow clerical students:

“... yes, he kept saying all sorts of things... that I was respected in the room before, and now I am a tool in the hands of others who are cowards afraid to expose them-

selves. It is made up, of course – the will to quarrel with fellow clerical students. But we are familiar with such tricks” (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 23).

Humiliating and ridiculing Popiełuszko in the presence of his fellow clerical students is illustrated by the words of Popiełuszko that show such an attitude of one of his superiors:

“He tried to ridicule me. To humiliate me in front of my fellow clerical students, then again to surprise me with the possibility of leave and furloughs” (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 22).

Popiełuszko and his fellow clerical students reacted to such provocative actions with an increased sense of community combined with prayer, which gave them strength to maintain group unity. As Popiełuszko wrote in his letter referring to the situation in Bartoszyce:

“Matters related to prayers are going best in my platoon. But it is not our fault because they selected a group of rebels for this platoon. We pray the Rosary together every day” (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 24).

The clerical students reacted in solidarity to the propaganda speeches of their superiors. One of the descriptions of such meetings is included in a letter to Clerical Father Czesław Miętek:

“Today we had political [classes] with a Mr. Chorążewicz. He spoke for the whole seven hours about the attitude of the state to the Church and the prospects for the future. He presented the Primate in the most negative light. Cardinal Wyszyński is responsible for all the evil. It is his fault that the Pope did not arrive in Poland... He forbade the bishops to meet De Gaulle. I will not quote everything because I noted forty pages, but I think these few quotes will allow Father to imagine at least

a bit of the course of political lectures ... We chewed Chorążewicz out. When he was pushed to the wall, he agreed with us on many things because he could not defend our accusations. It turned out that he was a ‘poor person of letters’ and some sort of the master of arts man who had no knowledge of these matters except for the subject he had prepared” (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 28-29).

In conclusion, several issues are worth noting. First, as a person with a unique, steadfast, charismatic personality, priest Popiełuszko showed that it was possible to be steadfast under all circumstances. In the process of upbringing towards the virtues, such people play a very important role, as they gather other people around them by influencing them with their attitude. For this reason, one of the first steps of totalitarian systems is the elimination of outstanding and distinguished individuals. It is therefore crucial to protect such people as much as possible. The clerical students of the military unit in Bartoszyce were an excellent example of a supportive group that did not allow their most precious fellow clerical student to be made a scapegoat.

The role of joint prayer cannot be neglected. It is significant that the clerical students managed to recite this prayer every day in military conditions, which required great courage since finding a clerical student in a kneeling position with the Rosary in his hand was related to sanctions, especially in the case of community prayer (Bartoszewski, 2009, p. 20-21).

Conclusions

The aim of the paper was to answer the research question: “How can we use the example of blessed Jerzy Popiełuszko in upbringing towards the virtue of courage?”. Based on the analyses, guidelines for upbringing towards the virtue of courage were established. The educator should aim at forming in the student the will to overcome fear in the face of danger, patience and perseverance in suffering

without expecting admiration or praise, courage with prudence, sensitivity to the harm of others and conscious distance from cowardice and insolence.

For Poles, Jerzy Popiełuszko is a symbol of a person who remained faithful to the highest values despite bestial torture. At this point, it is worth

quoting the following words of Jacek Woroniecki: "Those who died believed that we would carry on their work ... The nation lives through upbringing. Educators instil the feelings, thoughts and aspirations of those who died into the hearts and minds of the younger generation" (Woroniecki, 2000, p. 321).

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