

beatified together in the history of the Church in the 21st century. The family tomb is now located at their home parish of St. Dorothy.

After some news reports suggested that the beatification would represent the first beatification of an unborn or pre-born child, the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints released an official clarification, stating that “this [unnamed] child was delivered at the time of his mother’s martyrdom” (based on the evidence that his remains were found emerged from his mother’s womb in the original grave), and he was therefore included with the other martyred Ulma children, under the Catholic doctrine of baptism of blood.

“The Church has always held the firm conviction that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received Baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ. This *Baptism of blood*...brings about the fruits of Baptism without being a sacrament” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1258).

Pope Leo XIV has already pointed to the Ulma family as an example of Christian family life. During his homily for the Jubilee of Families, Children, Grandparents, and the Elderly (June 1), he said; “Dear friends, if we love one another in this way, grounded in Christ, who is ‘the Alpha and the Omega,’ ‘the beginning and the end’, we will be a sign of peace for everyone, in society and the world. Let us not forget: families are the cradle of the future of humanity.

In recent decades, we have received a sign that fills us with joy but also makes us think. It is the fact that several spouses have been beatified and canonized, not separately, but as married couples. [...] Let us not forget the Ulma family from Poland: parents and children, united in love and martyrdom. I said that this is a sign that makes us think. By pointing to them as exemplary witnesses of married life, the Church tells us that today’s world needs the marriage covenant in order to know and accept God’s love and to defeat, thanks to its unifying and reconciling power, the forces that break down relationships and societies.”

### Socials with the Saints

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Sources include: “Merciful Samaritans from Markowa” by Fr. Maciej Flader (UlmaFamily.com), *Vatican News*, *Wikipedia*



### *Blessed Ulma Family*

**Born:** 2 Mar 1900 (Józef), 10 Dec 1912 (Wiktoria), 18 July 1936 (Stanisława), 6 Oct 1937 (Basia), 5 Dec 1938 (Władzio), 3 Apr 1940 (Franuś), 6 June 1941 (Antoś), 16 Sep 1942 (Marysia), and a child prematurely born 24 Mar 1944, Markowa, Congress Poland, Russian Empire. **Died:** 24 March 1944 **Beatified** 10 Sep 2023 **Feast Day:** 7 July – Wedding anniversary

Józef Ulma was born to well-off farmers in rural Poland at the turn of the twentieth century. After a bit of schooling, he worked as amateur

photographer and librarian. He also enjoyed working with his hands at gardening, beekeeping, and bookbinding. He became involved in various Catholic youth organizations, including one which helped collect funds to build and maintain churches and chapels.

He completed mandatory military service from 1921 to 1922, and later studied at the National Agricultural School. Following his graduation, Józef made award-winning business for himself by gardening and raising fruit trees, bees, and silkworms. He was the first to introduce electricity into his village. He photographed local cultural events and family celebrations, writing articles for the community newspaper.

Wiktoria Niemczak was also born in Markowa village. After losing her mother at six years old, she was raised by her grandmother, who said no one who came to the house asking for help could leave without receiving something. Wiktoria took courses at the People’s University in Gać, and participated in Markowa’s community theater troupe.

Both Wiktoria and Józef were active members of their parish Church of St. Dorothy, and were married on July 7, 1935. Just over a year later, they welcomed their first child, Stanisława, and began to grow their family with each child afterward about a year apart. Józef worked

in the fields while Wiktoría managed their two-room home. Scenes of their daily life are captured in numerous photographs taken by Józef.

In addition to their parish activities, the Ulmas were members of the Association of the Living Rosary, a movement promoting prayer that had begun in France during the early 1800s. In their family Bible, a word was underlined: “Samaritan,” and written next to it, “Yes.” They maintained family prayer times, grew in education about their faith, and extended their warmth to vulnerable people in need.

The family purchased a larger, twelve-acre farm near present-day Ukraine. They began planning a relocation when World War II began. Józef was called to service as the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939.

Before the War, about 120 Jewish people lived in Markowa. During the summer of 1942, Jews were ordered to report for ‘resettlement.’ Less than 10 people did so, while the others hid as fugitives. Those who were discovered were killed. That December, the village leader of Markowa called for a manhunt in the area. Local villagers joined the fire brigade and village watch, and captured between twelve and twenty-five Jewish persons including children. After a torturous and abusive night in jail, they were all executed in a trench.

Eight Jews who were hidden in the Ulma family’s attic, comprising two Jewish families, were not discovered. They lived on the Ulma farm, retreating to the attic at night and in times of danger.

One of the families was the Goldmans. They had previously been hidden by a member of the Blue Police who was a Greek Catholic. In exchange for this help, the Goldmans had allowed him the use of some of their property. However, as the German persecution of Jews intensified, he changed his tune, and refused to continue sheltering them. Then, he had seized the property himself.

During the time that the Goldmans lived on the Ulma family farm, they pressed the man, who was named Włodzimierz Leś, to return their property. Leś, who suspected the Goldmans were taking refuge with the Ulmas, one day visited the farm under the pretense of asking for a photograph. While there, his suspicions were confirmed.

On March 24, 1944 just before dawn, four horsedrawn coaches filled with German soldiers and Polish Blue Police arrived in Markowa. The Germans disembarked and marched to the Ulma home, surrounding it. Local eyewitnesses were ordered to stand by as the Nazis shot each of the hidden Jews in the back of the head. Józef and Wiktoría were executed in front of their children, with Wiktoría being seven months pregnant, as an example to the villagers of what would happen to those who harbored Jews. Even the children, screaming in horror, were not spared. The eyewitnesses were ordered to bury the bodies, which they did, although they asked the Germans why even the children had to be killed. The answers were: “So that you would not have any problems with them,” and “I am the commander, and I know what I’m doing.”

The Germans plundered the house so thoroughly that two additional wagons were brought to transport the loot. Then, they drank three liters of vodka, which the village leader was made to supply. The house was set ablaze. The event so traumatized locals that, later, two dozen Jews were found dead around the village, killed by their former caretakers out of fear. At least twenty-one survived the War.

On January 11, 1945, Ulma relatives exhumed their loved ones’ bodies, held a Mass at the parish, and gave them a proper burial in Markowa cemetery.

In 1995, Józef and Wiktoría Ulma were given the title Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Center. Their medals of honor were presented to Józef’s surviving brother, Władysław. Exactly 60 years after their sacrifice, a stone memorial was erected in Markowa, with a solemn Mass. The inscription reads, “Saving the lives of others they laid down their own lives. Hiding eight elder brothers in faith, they were killed with them. May their sacrifice be a call for respect and love to every human being! They were the sons and daughters of this land; they will remain in our hearts.” A museum was opened in 2016 to tell their story.

On September 17, 2003, the Diocese of Pelplin initiated the beatification process of 122 Polish martyrs who died during World War II, including the Ulmas. The beatification of the Ulma family is unique within the Catholic Church, as they are the first family to be