



THE BLACK BOX TREASURES (#21)

There is an interesting term called the “black box theory”. It speaks about an object which can be analyzed in terms of its input and output, but there is no knowledge of its internal workings. Many of us probably don’t know that in our Archives here in Rome we have more than 200 black boxes. Some of those treasures have seen the light of day in many publications, but there are still others waiting to be seen...

(Please, send me to Kentucky! #21)

On October 28, 1893, Carter Harrison, the Mayor of Chicago, was killed in his residence. The assassin, using a large-sized revolver, shot him three times. The bullets penetrated the mayor’s body. The entire city was shocked by this brutal murder in cold blood. This tragic event happened three years after Br. Casimir Zeglen had arrived in Chicago...

According to one of the newsletters, the terrible news about Harrison’s assassination moved Br. Casimir Zeglen so strongly that he decided to do something to prevent such terrible tragedies from happening in the future (*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Catholic Priest invents a Bullet Proof Cloth*, 09.10.1902).

Even though *the Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported that Harrison’s murder was a turning point in Zeglen’s life, this fact is not reflected in Casimir’s letters written at that time. There is still no sign of the “invention” in the letters. Instead he writes to General Przewlocki about spiritual and personal struggles which he was facing at St. Stanislaus’ Church. One of them, was the lack of free time. “Dear Father, Life here is really miserable in Chicago. There is neither peace, nor time for prayer. At times when I just want to kneel, immediately somebody comes to say: you have to go here or there, because you are a servant etc.. So there is no prayer or peace. They interrupt all the time...” (ACRR 38762, May 10, 1892)

Today I would like to share with you one of Casimir’s letters of December, 1893 (ACRR 38753). When writing about his spiritual and personal struggles, Zeglen is asking the General to do him a favour...

Chicago. d 12-IX-1893r

†.
ARCHIVUM C. R.
No. 38703

Przewielebny Ojciec Generale!

Juz trzy lata upłynęło, jak przybyłem
z Przewielebnym Ojcem, do Ameryki;
umieścić mnie; Prz. Ojciec w domu
Chicagowskim.

Lece duszę sobie, że mogę skreslić,
w słowach, miłości Synowskiej;

Ku najukochańszemu Ojcu;

Moje czynności tu w Chicago.

- 1) że z pomocą Boga, nie mam, znajomości
tu pomiędzy Polakami, i ewangelizatem,
jak mogłem cisnoncą się znajomość;
- 2) że nigdzie jeszcze nie byłem w gościnie,
to sobie wiele cenię teraz; bo jeżeli
mi ktoś prosi, azebym szedł do niego.
zaraz odpowiadam! że poprzedni by
się gniewali zato, że im odmówiłem,
pujszcia do nich w odwiedzinę.
J. jednym słowem odpowiadam, że
nigdzie nie chodzę;
- 3) Palenie cygar, z powiętku mnie tem
pokusy do tego. (bo i jest skaryja
tu do tego) lece z pomocą Boga
zwycięzyłem i to: tak że mi teraz
wydaje się obrzydłem gdy spojrzę na to;

Lece nie chęć się tego, bo jeszcze
mogę i wpaść w to; lecz jak
dotąd żyłem, wyrażałem, Pr. Ojca;

Lecz co do duchownej sprawy,
nie bardzo świetna, wymaga jeszcze
Najukoch. Ojca. Rekolekcyj, w trzech
latach raz oprawiłem, w drugim
roku pobyciu tu.

Korysta wielkich mi odniosłem
z tych Rekolekcyj, bo przy zwykłych
zajęciach, jakie mam odpozątku
w zakrystyi, gdzie słudze już
treba obowiązać, od godz 5. do 10 wiecz.

Lecz w tym jest i moja wina
bo nie starałem się odpowiednią łaskę
do osiągnięcia Korysty;

Więc skreśliłem, Przew. O. i wymurylem
swą radość i cierpienie, z jakimi
muszę walczyć, na drodze duchowej.
Osmielałem się prosić, Przewilebnego
Ojca, słowami Jerusa Chr. jakie
nam ostatek!

To jest, prosić a otrzymać!

Lecz ja mam prośbę do Najukoch.
Chanszego Ojca, a to prośba,
zmienić mię w inne miejsce,
proszę jeżeli wola Ojca.

Pisawszy, prawd prośbę:
wątły stan zdrowia, ...;
Wtury, Stan duchowy, ...;

J jeżeli mi wolno wyrazić,
swe życzenie, to prosiłbym
do Kientucków; *)

Lecz przeproszam, najukochanego
Ojca, że odważyłem się wyrazić, swą
Chęć. Łdaje się całkowicie, zawsze
na wolę Ojca.

Pozdrawiam serdecznie Przewilebnego
Ojca, i ostaje zawsze uwieronym
sługą Br. Karimierz Łęgleń. K. W. D.

*) Dla tego wymieniam Kientucki gdyż tam jest miejsce
odludny, i powiatowy sądy
Do w Chicago te sądy i obcowanie słudze mi
w Kencie

Zatęczam powitanie dla Koch. Wł.
Pawła Smolikowskiego. Br Kar Liepfen

(Casimir Zeglen., C.R., Letter to Valerian Przewlocki, C.R., dated December 12, 1893, ACRR 38763)

Chicago, December 12, 1893

Very Reverend Father General,

Three years have passed since I arrived in America with you, Reverend Father. You placed me, Rev. Father, in a house in Chicago. So I'd like to describe to you in filial words my activities in Chicago.

1. Thanks to God's grace, I have not formed any friendships here with the Poles. I resisted with all my strength, the people who wished to get closer to me.

2. I have never gone to visit anyone. I'm grateful now for not doing so because when people invite me to visit them I tell them right away that the others would be upset because I have refused their invitations. I answer all of them the same: "I don't visit anyone".

3. As for smoking cigars, at the beginning I was tempted (here there are many occasions to smoke) but with God's help I resisted. Now when I look at it, cigars seem to be disgusting. I'm not gloating over that fact because I know that I could give into smoking in the future.

This is the description of how I have lived here so far Right Reverend Father. When it comes to spiritual matters, to be honest, things are not so good. My dearest Father, I have attended a retreat just once in the three years here. That was in the second year after my arrival. I didn't feel that I derived any great benefits from that retreat. The reason for that was probably because I had to continue to fulfill my ordinary duties in the sacristy during retreat. There one has to interact with many people from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. I am at fault also because I wasn't so diligent in asking for the necessary grace needed to gain some benefits from the retreat.

I've described to you, Reverend Father, my joys and struggles which I have faced on my spiritual journey.

I dare to ask you, Reverend Father, and using the words of Jesus Christ; ... "ask and it will be given to you!". My Dearest Father, I request please move me to another place but only if it is your will, Father.

The first reason:

My frail health...

Then my spiritual state...;

If I may express my desire, I would like to go to Kentucky*

I apologize, my Dearest Father, that I dared to express my desire. I always fall back on your will, Father.

All the best,

Your humble servant Br. Casimir Zeglen

Please say hello to Dearest Fr. Paul Smolikowski.

* The reasons I request to be sent to Kentucky? First because there are not so many people there and secondly the air is clean there. In Chicago there is considerable smog and constant interaction with people here doesn't help me.