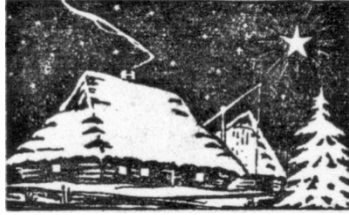


## Chapter 6 – Religious Poems

Before having them translated, I assumed that most or all of Bernice's poems were religious in nature. Perhaps that is what my father told me when he gave me his mother's scrapbook, or maybe I just thought that based on some of the titles that looked religious to me. So, it was surprising to learn that just 13 of the nearly 80 poems were strictly religious in theme! These poems are written exactly like I always presumed my grandmother would write, with traditional Roman Catholic themes. Her ultimate message is clear; suffering on earth will ultimately be rewarded in the afterlife.



original newspaper artwork published in 1933 with “Divine Child”

## Creed <sup>88</sup>

A certain so-called wise man said: there is no God!  
Everything that ever was, is, or is to come,  
Is due to laws of nature – that's the only way...  
And the work of human hands – always – everywhere!  
But I, considering this with great attention,  
Will reply curtly: you are lying, you fool!

For whenever I see the rising sun,  
When it brightens the orb of the earth,  
And then the whole day it shines,  
And nourishes all the plants with the earth...  
Or when I inhale the fragrance of the flowers,  
Or see the little bird that chirps...  
Everything is directed by Him above all worlds!  
He Who created this world – and protects it!

Whenever I raise my eyes to the azure sky,  
And see the little stars that sparkle bright,  
When in the soft radiance of the moonlight,  
The earth is resting... late at night...  
The entire nature of the world is silent,  
But the Divine Omnipotence keeps watch over it,  
Even when all around is empty silence,  
God sees everything. – Listens to everything...

*By Bronislawa Wolnik*

## **To the Sacred Heart Oo Jesus**

We seek recourse in Your Sacred Heart  
Oh, Jesus Christ, our God – our King!  
And humbly on Your mercy we call,  
Because You know our earthly cares full well!

From everywhere we lift our hands to You in despair;  
The deep black waters of evil surround mankind –  
Your heart is alight with the fire of love...  
Oh, listen to our prayers and protect us from harm!

When, like the scent of incense, all mankind  
In its faith rises up to Your throne...  
You never push away the sinners;  
Oh, extend to us the hand of Your divine mercy!

Oh, Savior of the world, when from the valley of tears  
The groans of mankind float up to Your throne...  
May Your Divine Heart forget our faults,  
We beg, oh hear the sound of our humble prayers!...

Oh, King of our hearts, Christ our Lord!  
Take pity on us when You behold our world,  
Where we are exiled from Eden on our pilgrimage  
Among the hawthorns of daily life... Be a brother to mankind!

Even though we are ungrateful, so full of vanity  
Of worldly delights; You can change us, Lord!  
May our hearts burn with the love of God...  
And may Your Sacred Heart not be wounded by a thorn.

When all the earthly thrones and powers  
Fall into ruin and the bloodiest wars...  
You are our King! We are assured of Your defense,  
Because the fount of Your Divine Heart is our life's source!

When you pour out on us the spring waters of holy grace...  
We will find sweet Paradise in Your Divine Heart –

For all the pain and toil and suffering in our life's race,  
Grant us, oh Lord, eternal happiness!

*By Bronisława Wolnik, 1937*

## **The Word “Mother”**

There is one word in the whole world,  
Which is the very first word pronounced by a baby,  
Which is a lucky talisman<sup>89</sup> throughout life,  
It is greatly beloved everywhere,  
Already from the cradle – to the very end  
Of your life: That word is – “Mother!”

Beloved Mother! The dearest angel,  
Who gave you life – that greatest treasure,  
She guided you on the brightest path...  
The one that leads to the Lord God:  
Under her protection, you grew up happily,  
So love Her dearly! Respect Her truly.

So all of you who have mothers,  
Love them always! In their old age –  
Respect them greatly, honor their gray hair,  
So that life here may be a real paradise for them:  
For all their troubles undertaken on your behalf,  
May the word “Mother” be sacred to you.

Because God commanded us to honor our Mother,  
And He said that He would bestow happiness  
On those who fulfill that commandment,  
And worthily admit them to heaven:  
Let “The Name of Mother” be sacred to us,  
Because It was given to us by Divine Dogma.

*By Bronislawa Wolnik*

## **When I Awaken**

When I open my eyes at dawn  
And direct my thoughts to the rising sun,  
When the sun's radiance pours out all around...  
A feeling of joy, in my heart is born.

I rise with confidence<sup>90</sup> in God – with hope  
That this day will bring me great joy,  
That this rising sun will blow away  
The usual worries that disturb my happiness.

Happiness on this earth – for whom, and where  
Does God bless us, and the Mother of God?...  
For some, there is joy and happiness at home;  
For others, why do they not experience that radiant dawn?

Oh, come here today! Thou golden ray,  
To those who have not found their happiness;  
Give them a chance to feel the warmth of the sun,  
That they may experience the joy of living.

Hear us, oh Lord! – we are Your children,  
To You, our Father, we call in prayer –  
Let the ray of God's grace shine on us  
Among the thorns of life; this we implore!...

*By Bronislawa Wolnik*

## **In the Spring of Life**

Who does not remember the charm of youth?  
Those years of freedom – happy, without care,  
When in the spring of life, in exhilarating love,  
We loved and dreamed – how tender were our dreams...

Love is a gift from heaven – so it is not a sin  
When two young people are ablaze with love,  
But they should not hurry too much into love,  
Because crazy love often breaks our life,

But with God's grace, they should weave their love's wreath...  
They should unite their hearts so that always – permanently,  
They would be able to love each other, not only in springtime,  
But also when they reach the autumn of life.

So when the young couple stand at the altar,  
So as to go through life – together, on the same road –  
And they both repeat mutually, I will not forsake You,  
Not until death: let them not forget.

For when in springtime the flowers start to bloom,  
And the month of June plays matchmaker to marriage,  
Then love starts to burn in young people's hearts,  
And the young couples go to the altar...

For us, matrimony is a holy custom,  
While love and faithfulness are matrimonial virtues,  
So following this beautiful tradition,  
We need to love steadfastly, until life's end.

*By Bronislawa Wolnik*

## Christmas

In the silence of the night<sup>91</sup> – above the land of Judea,  
Around midnight, near the town of Bethlehem,  
A heavenly angel with glad tidings...  
Comes to the people on earth with rejoicing.

That today is born the Messiah of the world,  
A choir of angels sings to Him in triumph...  
Even though in the stable He is a brother to poor people,<sup>92</sup>  
Above the stable, they are singing to Him in glory!

The songs of the angels proclaim great joy...  
Because the human Redeemer is born,  
They bring the news first to the shepherds,  
That the Child in the manger, is the Savior of the world!

There, centuries ago, the greatest miracle happened!  
You came down, oh Jesus, from the heavenly brightness,  
So that all the nations of the world may know You,  
To teach us humility and love.

Oh Jesus, on the day of Your Birth,  
May joy come to everyone amid their toil,  
May brotherly love be radiant in our hearts,  
And may the star of better fortune dawn for us!

Oh bright star! The star of Bethlehem,  
Which guided the three Wise Men through the desert trail –  
Lead us! – Today our earthly ways are full of darkness,  
And we are not “wise men” – but sinful wretches.

Following Your star, we come to You...  
To seek grace at Your manger,  
Oh, count those hearts that are in need,  
And bless them! Comfort the tears of Your people, we are poor<sup>92</sup>  
indeed!

*By Bronislawa Wolnik*

## **Divine Child**

Dear Divine Child, lying on the hay,  
Please bless this land,  
May our earthly life flow  
In work and prosperity...

Oh beloved Child Jesus,  
Bless people in all walks of life,  
Bless the good rulers,  
And the working people, and the poor...

Please dry our tears, comfort the unfortunate,  
Oh Jesus, heavenly boy,  
Wrapped in poor swaddling clothes  
When you were greeted by the shepherds.

Oh raise Your hand, Divine Child<sup>93</sup>,  
Bless all those living in happiness,  
And gather everyone close to You,  
Also the crying paupers...

May once again, the star of Bethlehem  
Shine for us in the heavens,  
On the path of our earthly life,  
May we ever direct our steps to You.

May on the day of Your birth,  
Everything change on this earth,  
And with your redeeming<sup>94</sup> grace,  
Divine Child, bring us happiness.

*By Bronisława Wolnik, 1933*

## **God is Born** <sup>95</sup>

God is born, to save the world.  
The choir of angels, proclaim glad tidings,  
He has come to repair the world –  
He brings us redemption.

God is born, oh what great joy,  
Today the whole world rejoices,  
The night is peaceful, everywhere is silent,  
In the heavens, the Angels sing...

They proclaim peace be brought today  
Among people of good will,  
Happiness in life – and better fortune –  
Let the star of peace shine out.

Praise be to God, in the highest,  
And through Thy birth, oh Jesus,  
May redemption dawn once again  
On our lowly earthly plain...

As it was once in Bethlehem,  
May the star appear to us,  
May it send us comfort  
And show us the path to happiness.

*By Bronislawa Wolnik*

## **Baby Jesus**

Oh dear Divine Child, laid down on the hay.  
Once upon a time in Bethlehem in a poor manger,  
There, centuries ago – Your Birth  
Brought peace and salvation to this earth.

Today, oh Jesus! Messiah of the world,  
The whole world hurries to Your little manger,  
On the day of Your Birth, a new star is dawning  
Amid the darkness that prevails in our earthly life.

Oh bright star! Shine out from the sky,  
That you may brighten the paths of our lives,  
Where errant humanity wanders – leading a sinful life;  
Oh, how poor is our world today!

Today, Child Jesus, please come down to this earth,  
So that the poor people may come to You,  
For the whole human race is poor,  
Both the paupers and the world's rulers.

Today we stand at Your little manger,  
As the poor shepherds did once in Bethlehem,  
In the simplicity of spirit amid life's toil,  
Oh Divine Child! Come to us with joy!

Oh Child Jesus, Savior of the world!  
Raise your little hand<sup>93</sup> and bless this land,  
Let us love each other as true brothers,  
And let this vale of tears change into paradise.

Let heavenly angels to us on earth descend,  
Let joyful singing to the heavens ascend,  
Let this vale of tears<sup>96</sup> rejoice in God today,  
Gloria! Gloria! in excelsis Deo!<sup>97</sup>

*By Bronisława Wolnik*

## **Golgotha** <sup>98</sup>

Eli! Eli! Lamma sabathani!<sup>99</sup>

Thus the Savior of the world cried from the cross,  
On Golgotha, when he hung there between thieves,  
Nailed to the cross by the executioner.

He, who is God! The Messiah was beaten, spat upon –  
With His arms outstretched towards us,  
Crowned with the crown of thorns,  
He, the King! Reviled, dies on the cross in agony...

He became the victim – he was without blame –  
But this was what God the Father demanded – ordained<sup>100</sup>,  
So that His Son would fulfill His will,  
And deign to redeem mankind from sin.

I thirst! His parched lips called out...  
I desire that humankind will not perish,  
I am your brother – His lips whispered...  
On the tree of the cross, He hung for your sins.

And when the Savior was dying on the cross in agony,  
At His feet, His Mother shared His pain –  
She, the Most Holy among all women,  
She remained here, as Mother to us.

Oh, let us hasten today! To the foot of the cross,  
Let us hasten to the top of this Golgotha hill,  
Because there we will find the wellspring of graces for our life,  
And so needed by us, the virtue of humility.

*By Bronisława Wolnik*

## **Mater Dolorosa** <sup>101</sup>

On Golgotha<sup>98</sup> hill – when the Mother of Jesus  
Stood under the cross,  
While on the cross, Her Son was dying...  
The bleeding victim offered for our salvation.<sup>102</sup>

On the shameful tree of the cross,  
Our salvation was completed, –  
And for the Most Holy Mother,  
Oh! What great pain and suffering.

He, the King of Heaven and Lord of the earth,  
With a crown of thorns on His head,  
And His most holy hands and feet  
Were pierced with nails by the executioners.

His lips, now parched with blood,  
Had once sucked the sweetness of His Mother's breast<sup>103</sup> –  
But how much pain and thirst  
Did they now experience in this agony for the salvation of the  
world.

His Mother is standing very close to the cross,  
While Jesus cries from the cross – “I thirst”...<sup>104</sup>  
All around, the mob is standing –  
Throwing their blasphemous words at Him.

On Golgotha hill – when under the cross  
His Mother stood suffering, fainting alongside with Him,  
She had seven swords in her heart<sup>105</sup> –  
His seven last words.<sup>106</sup>

When Jesus finally bowed His head,  
Saying farewell to Her with fading eyes...  
In the last will of His last words,  
He entrusted the entire world to Her.

Such was the farewell,

When He gave up His Spirit into His Father's hands,  
That fear struck all the elements of the world –  
The sun and the earth were overcome with fear.

The mob were greatly afraid,  
The world was terrified – covered with darkness<sup>107</sup> –  
On Golgotha hill – the cross of salvation –  
Under the cross, the Grieving Mother of God.

*By Bronislawa Wolnik*

## **Alleluia!**

Today Alleluia! Resounds in praise,  
And flows in a wave – to the roof of heaven,  
On the day of Thy Resurrection, oh Lord,  
Conqueror of death! Through Thy Resurrection!

Alleluia resounds! Bells proclaim the joy –  
Their bronze hearts play wondrous tones...  
The grace of salvation flows down to Thy people, oh Lord,  
Through Thy act of redemption – through Thy Resurrection.

When Alleluia resounds all around –  
The great good news – joyful, rejoicing,  
Death has been conquered – the sins of the world washed away,  
Through Thy Resurrection, oh Jesus Christ.

Today Alleluia! Glory to Thee, oh Christ!  
Let the whole world, forever and ever,  
Give eternal homage and singing unto Thee,  
That Thou hast opened for us the gates of the glory of heaven.

Resound then, oh Alleluia!<sup>108</sup> The song of resurrection,  
Of God-man – the defeat of hell,  
Christ defeated the evil spirit of the devil,  
He saved mankind from eternal hell.

Let the Polish nation sing Alleluia today!...  
When the ringing of bells resounds far and wide...  
Let the hymn of adoration reach the throne of Thy heavens,  
Oh Lord! For Thy Resurrection.

*By Bronisława Wolnik, 1935*

## **To the Queen of Heaven and Earth <sup>109</sup>**

Salve Regina!<sup>110</sup> Queen of heaven and earth,  
Immaculate lily!<sup>111</sup> –  
We, your subjects, raise hymns to You in May<sup>112</sup>,  
Oh Mother of God, Mary.

You are more lovely than the dawns of May,  
Oh, fragrant lily of Eden,  
Today in humility we pay homage to You,  
Oh, Lady whom everyone holds dearest.

The Dawn of heaven, You radiate graces,  
When people call unto You in humility,  
You are the star of life, amid the waves,  
When the troubles of life are stormy like the sea.

Oh, show us the way, our Lady,  
Queen of the heavens, in Your crown of bright stars!<sup>113</sup>  
When in our earthly life, toil wears out our brow,  
When your subjects call unto You.

And then, when we finally reach our life's end,  
Be our guide to paradise,  
Let the gates of heaven open to us,  
This we ask You, this May.

And then, when we finally stand at Your feet in humility,  
Having experienced Your protection,  
When the earthly dawns of the sun are extinguished for us,  
We will adore You forever!

*By Bronisława Wolnik, 1935*