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# Professor Elżbieta Szczot at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (1965–2024) – In Pursuit of Truth: a Scholarly Life Guided by Faith and Reason

**Abstract:** This article is a tribute to and a concise presentation of the scholarly, didactic, and social-organizational activity of Professor Elżbieta Szczot (1965–2024), a long-time staff member of the Faculty of Law, Canon Law and Administration at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. She was an outstanding expert in the field of law, especially canon law, as well as a respected teacher and mentor to many generations of students. The text highlights the key areas of her research interests – from the law of the holy sacraments and the protection of marriage and the family, to issues related to European integration and the specific policies of the European Union. In her pursuit of academic truth, Professor Szczot harmonized faith and reason, remaining until the end a hardworking and humble person. Despite her illness, she did not cease her scientific activity. She passed away on March 10, 2024, in Warsaw, after a long and serious illness.

**Keywords:** Elżbieta Szczot, canon law, political science, family protection, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

# Introduction

Among Polish canon law scholars, one can point to many outstanding individuals – experts in their field, both theorists and practitioners, mentors and educators of generations of university students. However, women remain few in this group, largely due to the fact that, for many years, the study of canon law was reserved for members of the clergy. Over time, this began to change, and canon law gradually became an area of scholarly interest for laypeople – both men and women. Against this backdrop, Elżbieta Szczot stands out as a distinguished figure. She was a student, a doctoral candidate, and later a long-time faculty member of the Faculty of Law, Canon Law, and Administration at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. As a woman, wife, mother, and distinguished scholar, she demonstrated through her life and work that “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth”<sup>1</sup> and that the Catholic Church actively participates in this pursuit. Professor Elżbieta Szczot passed away prematurely. She left behind a significant legacy in the fields of scholarship, teaching, community service, and academic organization – one that places her among the most respected canon law experts, alongside her own mentors. The aim of this article is to present the academic profile of Dr Elżbieta Szczot, Associate Professor at the Catholic University of Lublin, with particular emphasis on her contributions across various areas of academic life.<sup>2</sup>

## Academic Biography

Elżbieta Szczot was born on July 23, 1965, in Brzeg Dolny, near Wrocław, as the daughter of Józef Fojt and Władysława (née Wdowiarz). In 1972, after relocating with her family, she began her education at the primary school in Ropczyce-Witkowice (Sub-Carpathia), which she completed in 1980. She continued her

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio* (14 August 1998), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 91 (1999): 5–88.

<sup>2</sup> This paper does not claim to provide an exhaustive account of the subject presented. For a more comprehensive analysis, the reader is referred to the article by Lidia Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot (1965–2024): W służbie rodzinie, nauce, Kościołowi,” *Studia Prawnicze KUL*, no. 2 (2024): 7–40.

education at the Tadeusz Kościuszko High School in Ropczyce, where she completed her Matura examination on May 31, 1984.<sup>3</sup>

Starting in October 1985, she studied at the Catholic University of Lublin. Between 1985 and 1990, she pursued law studies in the Section of Legal Sciences at the Faculty of Canon and Secular Law of the Catholic University of Lublin, graduating with honours. Her master's thesis, titled *Kredytowanie działalności przedsiębiorstw na przykładzie Banku Depozytowo-Kredytowego w Lublinie i Banku Przemysłowo-Handlowego w Krakowie* [Financing of Business Activities on the Example of the Deposit and Credit Bank in Lublin and the Industrial and Commercial Bank in Kraków], was written at the Department of Financial Law under the supervision of Professor Wanda Wójtowicz.<sup>4</sup>

Already during her law studies, she showed an interest in canon law, particularly the law of the holy sacraments, which was taught by Fr. Prof. Bronisław W. Zubert OFM.<sup>5</sup> It is hard to argue when “faith asks that its object be understood with the help of reason,”<sup>6</sup> which is why Elżbieta Szczot began her studies in canon law in 1990, completing them in 1993. She earned a professional degree of Master of Canon Law and an academic degree of Licentiate in Canon Law based on her thesis titled *Udział wiernych świeckich w uświęcającym zadaniu Kościoła w świetle adhortacji apostoelskiej Jana Pawła II Christifideles laici* [The Participation of Lay Faithful in the Sanctifying Mission of the Church in the Light of the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II “Christifideles laici,”] written under the supervision of Fr. Prof. Bronisław W. Zubert OFM.<sup>7</sup>

She began doctoral studies in canon law and was employed at the Department of Sacramental Law as an assistant after completing her master's degree.<sup>8</sup> In 1998, the public defense of the doctoral dissertation titled *Prawo wiernego do Eucharystii według Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego z 1983 roku* [The Right of the Faithful to the Eucharist According to the Code of Canon Law of 1983], was conducted under the supervision of Father Prof. Bronisław W. Zubert OFM.<sup>9</sup> On October 1, 2001, she was appointed assistant professor at the Department of Sacramental Law.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Lech Buczek and Lidia Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot 1965–2024,” in *Profesorowie Prawa Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego Jana Pawła II*, ed. A. Dębiński, J. Misztal-Konecka, W. Sz. Staszewski, and K. Adamczewski, 3rd ed. (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2024), 643.

<sup>4</sup> Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II. “Dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot, prof. KUL.” Accessed May 31, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot,” 10.

<sup>6</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 42.

<sup>7</sup> KUL, “Dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot.”

<sup>8</sup> Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot,” 11.

<sup>9</sup> KUL, “Dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot.”

<sup>10</sup> Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot,” 13.

On 1 October 2011, to ensure the continuity of teaching and staffing activities at the Institute of European Studies of the Catholic University of Lublin, Prof. Elżbieta Szczot was appointed Head of the Department of Political Science. In this role, her research interests primarily concentrated on the integration processes of Central and Eastern European countries, with a specific emphasis on Ukraine's relations with the European Union. In collaboration with the National University of Ostroh Academy in Volhynia and various scientific centers in Ukraine, a series of Polish-Ukrainian conferences was organized.<sup>11</sup>

In 2011, Elżbieta Szczot was awarded the academic degree of Doctor of Letters in legal sciences, with a specialization in canon law and ecclesiastical family law, based on her scientific achievements and her dissertation titled *Prawo wiernego do Eucharystii według Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego z 1983 roku* [Protection of the Family in the Law of the Latin Church]. Two years later, on April 11, 2013, the Congregatio de Institutione Catholica granted her the *nihil obstat* for the position of Associate Professor at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, where she began her tenure in the academic year 2014/2015. On October 1, 2017, Prof. Elżbieta Szczot resumed her duties at the Institute of Canon Law, taking a position at the Department of Canonization Law and the Holy Sacraments. On October 1, 2019, she started her service at the Department of History, General Norms, the Law of the Sacraments, and Institutes of Consecrated Life.<sup>12</sup>

In her scholarly work, Prof. Elżbieta Szczot addressed a broad spectrum of topics, including issues related to the law of the holy sacraments, the subjective rights of the faithful within the structures of the Church, as well as the canonical consequences of the situation of Catholics living in non-sacramental unions. Her research also focused on matters concerning the legal protection of marriage and the family, the functioning of social policy, the issue of poverty in the light of the law and the teachings of the Catholic Church, as well as the regional policy of the European Union.<sup>13</sup> She eagerly shared the results of her research during public appearances. She delivered around 40 lectures at national and international conferences, both in Poland and abroad, including the ones in Germany, Rome, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Ukraine.<sup>14</sup> Professor Szczot was deeply inspired by the message of *Fides et Ratio*, which states that "It must not be forgotten that reason too needs to be sustained in all its searching by trusting dialogue and sincere friendship."<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, she maintained extensive and cordial academic

<sup>11</sup> Fiejdasz-Buczek, "Elżbieta Szczot," 15.

<sup>12</sup> KUL, "Dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot."

<sup>13</sup> KUL, "Dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot."

<sup>14</sup> Fiejdasz-Buczek, "Elżbieta Szczot," 17.

<sup>15</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 33.

relations with scientific centers, both in Poland and abroad. Between 2012 and 2016, she collaborated with the Academy of Canon Law in Brno, and in July 2018 she completed a research internship at the Academy of Orthodox Theology in Lutsk, Ukraine.<sup>16</sup>

Elżbieta Szczot had been honing her language skills since her student years. In 1995, she completed a Level II German language course organized by the Faculty of Theology at the Catholic University of Linz. Her advanced knowledge of the language enabled her to take part in scholarships in Germany and Austria. In August 1998, she participated in the 9th Europäische Sommerakademie in Bonn (Gustav-Stresemann Institut e.V.).<sup>17</sup>

The result of her scholarly inquiries, preserved in a written form, includes two monographs, 17 books, and over 60 peer-reviewed articles, all of which demonstrate a substantive value.<sup>18</sup> The most important monographs are the publications of her doctoral and habilitation theses: *Prawo wiernego do Eucharystii według Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego z 1983 roku* [The Right of the Faithful to the Eucharist According to the Code of Canon Law of 1983]<sup>19</sup> and *Ochrona rodziny w prawie Kościoła łacińskiego* [The Protection of the Family in the Law of the Latin Church].<sup>20</sup> The first of the aforementioned publications is currently one of the most frequently cited works in studies on the sacramental life of Catholics, particularly in the context of *Amoris laetitia*. This attests to the timeless relevance of the subject matter she addressed. As for the second one, Fr. Prof. Henryk Stawniak (the editorial reviewer) wrote: “I believe that Ms Szczot has successfully achieved her research objectives, making a valuable and original contribution to the study of the protection of the family in the law of the Latin Church, thereby enriching canon law with a noteworthy scholarly work. The book is a pleasure to read and can be recommended to families, married couples, canon lawyers, and all those who, through the good of the family, wish to contribute to the sanctification of the world.”<sup>21</sup> It is worth noting here that Elżbieta Szczot, together with her doctoral students — Fr. Damian Kwiatkowski and Fr. Wojciech Lech — published a scholarly monograph titled *Prawo sakramentów. Wybór źródeł Kościoła łacińskiego* [The Law of the Sacraments:

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<sup>16</sup> KUL, “Dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot.”

<sup>17</sup> Buczek and Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot 1965–2024,” 644.

<sup>18</sup> Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot,” 24.

<sup>19</sup> Elżbieta Szczot, *Prawo wiernego do Eucharystii według Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego z 1983 roku* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Elżbieta Szczot, *Ochrona rodziny w prawie Kościoła łacińskiego* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Henryk Stawniak, “Ochrona rodziny w prawie Kościoła łacińskiego, Elżbieta Szczot, Lublin 2010: [recenzja],” *Seminare. Poszukiwania naukowe* 31 (2012): 329.

a Selection of Sources of the Latin Church],<sup>22</sup> which clearly indicates her openness to collaboration with young researchers. Professor Szczot also reviewed — often *pro publico bono* — articles and other texts for academic journals and publishers, which constituted active participation in the scholarly process and contributed to elevating her profile as an expert in her field. Additionally, she was a member of the scientific committee of the journal *Волинський благовісник* and part of the editorial team of *Vergentis*, a biannual journal published by the Catholic University of Saint Anthony in Murcia, Spain.<sup>23</sup>

Elżbieta Szczot was an active member of numerous prestigious scholarly associations, including the Consociatio Internationalis Studio Iuris Canonici Promovendo based in Rome, the Society for Scientific Initiatives of the Catholic University of Lublin, the Association of Polish Canonists, and the Alumni Association of the Faculty of Canon Law at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. She also served as Chairwoman of the Board of Founders of the *Pro Bono Futuro* Foundation. She was a co-founder and senior member of the Academic Corporation *Custodia*. From 2016 to 2024, she served on the Main Board of the Polish Association for European Studies (Polskie Towarzystwo Studiów Europejskich), where she held the position of Vice President from 2019 to 2024 and, since 2018, served as Coordinator of the Section for European Law and Institutions. At the same time, she headed the Lublin Branch of the Polish Association for European Studies as its President and represented it at the association's national conventions.<sup>24</sup>

In 2019, Prof. Elżbieta Szczot was appointed by the Minister of Science and Higher Education to the advisory team establishing the list of scientific journals and peer-reviewed materials from international conferences in the discipline of canon law. In 2022, she served as an expert for the evaluation of scientific activity within the Science Evaluation Commission operating under the Minister of Education and Science. As of January 1, 2024, she was a member of the Council for Scientific Excellence for the 2024–2027 term, representing the discipline of canon law.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Elżbieta Szczot et al. (eds.), *Prawo sakramentów. Wybór źródeł Kościoła łacińskiego* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot,” 17.

<sup>24</sup> Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot,” 15.

<sup>25</sup> Buczek and Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot 1965–2024,” 645.

## Teaching Activity

As an academic teacher, Elżbieta Szczot had been continuously affiliated with the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin since 1993. Over the course of more than 31 years of work, she taught dozens of different subjects. In the canon law program, she conducted courses in *The Law of the Holy Sacraments* (lectures and classes), *The Law of the Sacraments of the Eastern Catholic Churches* (lecture), *Non-Sacramental Acts of Divine Worship and Sacred Times and Places* (lecture), *Sacramental and Non-Sacramental Acts of Worship* (discussion classes), a *Canon Law Proseminar*, as well as *Sacramental Law Seminars* for students and doctoral candidates. For one academic year, she also taught *Law of Religious Institutes*. In the administration and European studies programs, she conducted lectures on *Social and Employment Policy in the EU*, *Social Policy and the Social Insurance System*, *EU Regional Policy*, *Financing and Control of EU Project Expenditures*, *Social Rights in Europe* (discussion classes), as well as *Master's Seminars on Political Science*, *Bachelor's Seminars on Political Science*, and *Doctoral Seminars on Legal Aspects of Regional and Social Policy*. Professor Szczot also included general faculty electives in her teaching portfolio – *Marriage and Family in the Religions of Europe* and *Sacraments of Christian Initiation*. In postgraduate studies, she lectured on *Social Security*, *Labor Law*, and *Civil Service Law*.<sup>26</sup>

Thanks to the research conducted by Prof. Lidia Fiejdasz-Buczek, it is known that the wide range of teaching activities undertaken by Prof. Szczot was positively evaluated during her habilitation proceedings. Reviewer Fr. Prof. Henryk Stawniak pointed out that her teaching activities demonstrate her active involvement “in educating academic youth, her love for this work, and her ability to convey knowledge acquired through many years of scholarly research.”<sup>27</sup> In a similar tone, many years earlier, Fr. Prof. Zubert spoke about the then young lecturer, writing: “Ms Elżbieta Szczot, M.A. [...] conducts her teaching duties with great diligence. [...] The classes she leads are an essential condition for students to grasp the difficult issues of sacramental law. The range of sources she analyzes – primarily documents of the Holy See – is very broad and does not constitute a mere repetition of lectures. She is able to interpret relevant legal norms insightfully, make use of both Polish and foreign canon law literature, and convey her knowledge to students in an accessible manner.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> KUL, “Dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot.”

<sup>27</sup> Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot,” 15.

<sup>28</sup> Buczek and Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot 1965–2024,” 644.

It can be inferred From the aforementioned opinions that Professor Szczot's teaching methodology aligned with the appeal of John Paul II, who wrote in *Fides et Ratio*: "It is therefore necessary that the believer's reason acquire a natural, true, and ordered knowledge of created reality, of the world and of man, which is also the subject of Divine Revelation; all the more so should reason be able to express this knowledge through concepts and arguments."<sup>29</sup> Not every scholar is a good teacher, and not every teacher is able to excel in scientific research. Professor Szczot's activity in both areas allows us to conclude that she was able to skillfully pass on the knowledge she had acquired to academic youth.

Elżbieta Szczot served as the supervisor of eight doctoral dissertations in the field of legal sciences – five in canon law and three in law. She participated in numerous doctoral and habilitation proceedings, acting as a reviewer or member of the committees. She also supervised master's theses of sixty students, including many from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Belarus — thirty-four in canon law and twenty-six in European studies. Additionally, she prepared sixteen reviews of master's theses and thirteen reviews of bachelor's theses.<sup>30</sup> From 1998 to 2008, she also lectured at the Higher School of Social Service of Fr. Franciszek Blachnicki in Suwałki.<sup>31</sup>

In her interactions with students, she was open to dialogue. She inquired about their academic interests and suggested interesting and feasible topics for master's theses. She also recommended appropriate literature, which reflected her broad reading and familiarity with recent publications. As an examiner – including examinations qualifying for the ecclesiastical licentiate in canon law – she was demanding. During exams, she evaluated according to the Latin maxim *suum cuique tribuere* ("to give to each their due"). She willingly asked questions to doctoral candidates presenting their research plans at the Institute of Canon Law. In doing so, she demonstrated knowledge that extended far beyond her area of scholarly specialization. Students "remember her as a reliable and conscientious lecturer who was demanding, but above all had a gift for teaching and encouraging young people to deepen their knowledge."<sup>32</sup> She was also "an exceptionally warm and kind person – a true 'Mother' to students and to all who drew from her knowledge and wisdom."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 66.

<sup>30</sup> Buczek and Fiejdasz-Buczek, "Elżbieta Szczot 1965–2024," 648.

<sup>31</sup> KUL, "Dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot."

<sup>32</sup> Radio Plus, "KUL: Zmarła śp. prof. Elżbieta Szczot – przyczyniła się do wykształcenia pokoleń prawników i kanonistów." Accessed May 31, 2025.

<sup>33</sup> Marcin Dunaj, "Śp. dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot, prof. KUL (1965–2024)," *Biuletyn Stowarzyszenia Kanonistów Polskich* 34, no. 37 (2024): 347.

## Social and Organizational Activity

The social and organizational activity of Professor Elżbieta Szczot could, in fact, be the subject of a separate study. Here, only selected activities will be presented. First and foremost, it should be noted that Professor Elżbieta Szczot actively participated in the academic life of canon law students. Thanks to her efforts, in 2005, the first Canon Law Students' Academic Circle at the Faculty of Law at the John Paul II Catholic University was established, and she served as its first curator (academic advisor) from 2005 to 2008. In November 2005, together with the Canon Law Students' Circle, she organized a study trip to the headquarters of the Polish Episcopal Conference. The students were received by Bishop Piotr Libera (Secretary of the Polish Bishops' Conference), who delivered a lecture on the work of the Polish Bishops' Conference and discussed with the students the important issue of employment opportunities for canon lawyers in Poland.

A year later, from October 20 to 29, 2006, Elżbieta Szczot, together with the Canon Law Students' Circle, organized a study trip to Rome. The participants took part in a series of meetings and lectures titled *The Structure of the Roman Curia*. They visited, among others, the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, and met with Ambassador Hanna Suchocka.<sup>34</sup>

Professor Szczot also made efforts to cultivate among students a remembrance of the deceased Professors of the Faculty. To this end, she twice initiated group visits to the cemetery on Lipowa Street in Lublin (in November 2005 and May 2008). During these visits, students not only paid respects at the graves of the departed but also had the opportunity to tour the cemetery, learn about its history, and explore places of worship located there.

Between 1994 and 1997, Elżbieta Szczot was also actively engaged as a student mentor. For Group A, she organized a visit to the Editorial Office of Publications at our University, where students became familiar with the process of preparing and publishing scholarly works. For Group B (the students studying between 1999 and 2004), she organized a ceremonial graduation event. On June 1, 2004, diplomas were handed out to graduates during a special gathering that included a commemorative address. It was the first time in the history of the Faculty that graduates of the canon law program had been given such a formal send-off.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> KUL, "Dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot."

<sup>35</sup> KUL, "Dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot."

Elżbieta Szczot's social and organizational contributions also included work for the benefit of the Faculty and the University. At the beginning of 2005, thanks to funds she secured, the library of the Chair of the Law of the Holy Sacraments was enriched with new resources. One such acquisition was *Enchiridion familiae. Textos del Magisterio Pontificio y Conciliar sobre el matrimonio y la familia (siglos I–XX)*. Professor Szczot also prepared descriptions for the collection *Monumenta Iuris Canonici* (vol. I–XXVII), commemorating a donation made by The Antonian Association of the Friends of St. Anthony of Padua to the Institute of Canon Law at the John Paul II University of Lublin in 2005.<sup>36</sup>

An important event in the life of the Faculty and the University was the 25th anniversary of the reactivation of law studies and the associated alumni reunion. Professor Szczot actively participated in organizing this celebration, which took place on May 19–20, 2006.<sup>37</sup> Thanks to the research she conducted in various archives, the history of the Faculties of Law and Canon Law was reconstructed. This led to the initial preparation of 40-page brochures in both Polish and English, followed by the publication of a 330-page album-style edition of the *Faculty of Law, Canon Law and Administration Prospectus* (Lublin 2005), as well as its abridged English version (*John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. A Prospectus of the Faculty of Law, Canon Law and Administration*, Lublin 2006). In 2010, Professor Szczot, together with Lidia Fiejdasz and Piotr Stanisz, prepared an updated version of this prospectus.<sup>38</sup>

What was particularly endearing about Elżbieta Szczot was her rare ability to express gratitude – a virtue increasingly uncommon today. She expressed it in various ways, such as by preparing commemorative books. For Professor Bronisław Zubert, on the occasion of his 65th birthday, she dedicated the volume *Plenitudo legis dilectio* (Lublin 2000), and for his 70th birthday, the volume *Pro iure et vita* (Lublin 2005). Both books were presented during international academic conferences – the first focused on the legal regulation of the sacrament of penance and the second on the *forum externum* and *forum internum* in canon law.<sup>39</sup>

Professor Elżbieta Szczot played a key role in organizing and completing the collection of portraits of the deans of the Faculties of Law at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin from 1918 to 2011. She undertook the effort of searching for photographs of the deans both in Poland and abroad, producing prints and enlargements, preparing captions, arranging framing, and transporting the framed

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<sup>36</sup> KUL, “Dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot.”

<sup>37</sup> KUL, “Dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot.”

<sup>38</sup> Buczek and Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot 1965–2024,” 649.

<sup>39</sup> Buczek and Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot 1965–2024,” 650.

portraits. In total, 31 portraits were prepared, which can now be viewed in the Faculty Council Hall.<sup>40</sup> On May 28, 2025, a nationwide scientific conference dedicated to the memory of Prof. Bronisław W. Zubert and Prof. Elżbieta Szczot took place in this very hall. The participants discussed the law of the holy sacraments in the face of contemporary challenges. The event was conceived as the inauguration of a recurring academic series devoted to these distinguished canonists. Among them is Elżbieta Szczot, who was known as “a person of humble, deep faith: in love with her Lord, a ‘disciple of the Master’ and a faithful ‘daughter of the Church.’”<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

In the final words of *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II proclaimed: “May Mary, Seat of Wisdom, be a sure haven for all who devote their lives to the search for wisdom.”<sup>42</sup> Professor Elżbieta Szczot, through the testimony of her life and professional activity, fulfilled this calling. Her contributions were recognized on numerous occasions – she received two individual Rector’s Awards (in 1998 and 2007), as well as several team Rector’s Awards: First Degree (in 2001) and Third Degree (in 2000, 2005, and 2006). In recognition of her service to the nation, she was awarded the Bronze Cross of Merit in 2005 by the President of the Republic of Poland. In January 2024, the Dean of the Faculty of Law, Canon Law and Administration submitted a request to the Rector of the University for the awarding of the Gold Medal for Long Service to Professor Szczot, emphasizing her exceptional professional and social commitment, as well as her attitude that served as an inspiration and model for generations of students and researchers.<sup>43</sup>

The story of Professor Elżbieta Szczot is an example of breaking barriers and setting new paths for women in the world of science. She was the first lay woman employed at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin in the field of canon law since its establishment in 1918. She was the first woman in Poland to obtain a doctorate in canon law. She also made history as the first Catholic woman to give a lecture at the Orthodox Theology Academy in Lutsk. Her innovative approach was also evident in her academic research, particularly on the situation of Catholics

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<sup>40</sup> KUL, “Dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot.”

<sup>41</sup> Dunaj, “Śp. dr hab. Elżbieta Szczot,” 347.

<sup>42</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 108.

<sup>43</sup> Buczek and Fiejdasz-Buczek, “Elżbieta Szczot 1965–2024,” 646.

living in non-sacramental relationships and issues related to the sacraments and political science.<sup>44</sup>

Summing up the inspiring life and achievements of Prof. Elżbieta Szczot, especially in the field of canon law, it must be emphasized that she was a scholar of internationally recognized authority. Students, doctoral candidates, colleagues, and all those who were in personal contact with her could repeatedly witness her academic competence, diligence, and high standards. Her scientific research secures her an honorable place among Polish canonists and brings pride to the Faculty of Law, Canon Law and Administration, as well as to the entire John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. Professor Szczot balanced her work at the university with her roles as a wife and mother. Despite her debilitating illness, she remained scientifically active until the end of her life. She never gave up her commitment, effort, and systematic approach. Her last works were published after her death in *Philosophy and Canon Law*.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Fiejdasz-Buczek, "Elżbieta Szczot," 31.

<sup>45</sup> Elżbieta Szczot, "Between Entitlement and Limitation of the Right to Sacraments During the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic. Internet as a Means of Transmission and Communication with the Faithful," *Philosophy and Canon Law* 9, no. 2 (2023): 1–21; Elżbieta Szczot, "Ginter Dzierżon, *Dyspensacja w kanonicznym porządku prawnym. Studium prawnohistoryczne [Dispensation in the Canonical Legal Order: a Legal and Historical Study]*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UKSW, 2020, pp. 186," *Philosophy and Canon Law* 9, no. 2 (2023): 1–4; Elżbieta Szczot, "Mirosław Chmielewski, Małgorzata Nowak, Piotr Stanisław, Justyna Szlich-Kałuża, and Dariusz Wadowski, *Komunikacja Kościoła Katolickiego w Polsce w okresie pandemii COVID-19. Raport z badań interdyscyplinarnych [Communication of the Catholic Church in Poland During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Interdisciplinary Research Report]*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo 'Scriptum', 2022, pp. 326," *Philosophy and Canon Law* 9, no. 2 (2023): 1–4.

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Professoressa Elżbieta Szczot presso l’Università Cattolica Giovanni Paolo II di Lublino (1965–2024) – Alla ricerca della verità :  
una vita accademica guidata dalla fede e dalla ragione

#### Résumé

Cet article rend hommage à l’activité scientifique, didactique et socio-organisationnelle de la professeure Elżbieta Szczot (1965–2024), membre de longue date de la Faculté de droit, de droit canonique

et d'administration de l'Université catholique Jean-Paul II de Lublin, et en présente une synthèse. Elle était une experte éminente dans le domaine du droit, en particulier du droit canonique, ainsi qu'une enseignante et une mentor respectée par de nombreuses générations d'étudiants. Le texte met en évidence les principaux domaines de ses intérêts de recherche, allant du droit des sacrements et de la protection du mariage et de la famille aux questions liées à l'intégration européenne et aux politiques spécifiques de l'Union européenne. Dans sa quête de la vérité académique, le professeur Szczot a su harmoniser la foi et la raison, restant jusqu'à la fin une personne travailleuse et humble. Malgré sa maladie, elle n'a pas cessé son activité scientifique. Elle est décédée le 10 mars 2024 à Varsovie, après une longue et grave maladie.

**M o t s - c l é s :** Elżbieta Szczot, droit canonique, sciences politiques, protection de la famille, Université catholique Jean-Paul II de Lublin

Malwina Kędracka

## Professeure Elżbieta Szczot à l'Université catholique Jean-Paul II de Lublin (1965–2024) – À la recherche de la vérité: une vie universitaire guidée par la foi et la raison

### Sommario

Questo articolo è un omaggio e una presentazione sintetica dell'attività accademica, didattica e socio-organizzativa della professoressa Elżbieta Szczot (1965–2024), membro di lunga data della Facoltà di Giurisprudenza, Diritto Canonico e Amministrazione dell'Università Cattolica Giovanni Paolo II di Lublino. Era un'eccezionale esperta nel campo del diritto, in particolare del diritto canonico, nonché un'insegnante e mentore rispettata da molte generazioni di studenti. Il testo mette in evidenza le aree chiave dei suoi interessi di ricerca: dal diritto dei sacramenti e la tutela del matrimonio e della famiglia, alle questioni relative all'integrazione europea e alle politiche specifiche dell'Unione Europea. Nella sua ricerca della verità accademica, la professoressa Szczot ha armonizzato fede e ragione, rimanendo fino alla fine una persona laboriosa e umile. Nonostante la malattia, non ha mai cessato la sua attività scientifica. È deceduta il 10 marzo 2024 a Varsavia, dopo una lunga e grave malattia.

**P a r o l e c h i a v e :** Elżbieta Szczot, diritto canonico, scienze politiche, protezione della famiglia, Università Cattolica Giovanni Paolo II di Lublino