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**Pilgrimages and Religious Tourism in  
Poland in the 21st Century : Current  
Situation and Perspectives for  
Development**

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**PILGRIMAGES AND RELIGIOUS TOURISM  
IN POLAND IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY – CURRENT SITUATION  
AND PERSPECTIVES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**Abstract**

The purpose of the paper is to analyze the current situation in the area of pilgrimages and religious tourism in Poland. According to various sources there are between 500 and 800 Catholic holy sites in Poland characterized by various degrees of spatial impact. Most of the sites are dedicated to Mary the Mother of God – approximately 430 sites. More than 200 of these sites feature an image of the Mother of God wearing a crown. Other holy sites belong to other religious organizations including Orthodox Christians, Greek Catholics, Muslims, and Jews. Between five and seven million Poles take part in pilgrimages every year. This is more than 15% of the country's total population. Poles currently constitute about 5% of all Christians making pilgrimages throughout the world and more than 20% of Christians making pilgrimages in Europe. About 1.5 million foreign pilgrims visit Poland every year.

Current pilgrimage patterns in Poland are largely a reflection of Poland's pilgrimage heritage and strong association with this type of religious practice. The pilgrimage tradition remains a key part of religious life in Poland today. This fact is confirmed by the number of pilgrims, level of pastoral activity at holy sites, and the development of new sites.

**Keywords:** pilgrimages, religious tourism, holy sites, Poland

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## Introduction

A pilgrimage is a social phenomenon observed in many religions. Early pilgrimages in the Christian religion were associated with two key Christian sites – Jerusalem and Rome. The former was essentially a symbol of the Holy Land as a whole. Poland became a Christian nation in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and pilgrimages also became a popular religious activity in Poland. Unlike the case in many parts of contemporary Western Europe, pilgrimages remain popular in Poland today.

The role of Poland in the global pilgrimage community is significant. Every year several million Poles participate in organized pilgrimages to holy sites in Poland and abroad. New types of pilgrimages have also emerged. New holy sites and pilgrimage trails have also emerged in recent years. The purpose of the paper is to analyze today's pilgrimage movement and religious tourism in Poland as well as to identify growth patterns.

### 1. Pilgrimages and religious tourism at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century

Poles currently constitute about 5% of all Christians making pilgrimages throughout the world and more than 20% of Christians making pilgrimages in Europe. Between five and seven million Poles take part in pilgrimages every year, which is more than 15% of the country's total population. In addition to Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics, pilgrims include Orthodox Christians, Muslims, and Hasidic Jews. According to available data, Poland receives about 1.5 million foreign pilgrims every year.

According to various sources, Poland boasts between 500 and 800 holy sites, most of which belong to the Roman Catholic Church (98%). Most Catholic holy sites in Poland are devoted to Mary the Mother of God (430 sites). More than two hundred of these sites feature an image of the Mother of God wearing a crown.<sup>1</sup>

The largest pilgrimage centers in Poland attract pilgrims from across the world. These include the Catholic Shrine of Jasna Góra in Częstochowa and the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy in Kraków as well as shrines in Kalwaria

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<sup>1</sup> A. Jackowski, *Święta przestrzeń świata. Podstawy geografii religii*, Wyd. UJ, Kraków, 2003, p. 226.

Zebrzydowska, St. Anne's Mountain, and Licheń. The former concentration camp in Auschwitz is also a unique site that resembles a pilgrimage site. It is visited by members of many religions and faiths. Other holy sites with international appeal include the Orthodox Christian site in Grabarka as well as Hasidic burial sites of the Tzadikim in Leżajsk, Bobowa, Góra Kalwaria, and Remuh Cemetery in Kraków.

The following cities and towns feature holy sites with primarily domestic pilgrims: Piekary Śląskie, Gniezno, Warsaw, Zakopane-Krzęptówki, and the Orthodox Christian site of Jabłeczna. Each site has a different history of pilgrimages. The most important holy sites for Polish Muslims are mosques in Bohoniki and Kruszyniany in Sokółka County.

Twenty five holy sites attract pilgrims from even larger regions (several dioceses) in Poland. The most renowned of these are Bardo Śląskie, Wambierzyce, Trzebnica, Ludźmierz, Tuchów, Kalwaria Paławska, Kodeń, Leśna Podlaska, Gietrzwałd, Święta Lipka, Wejherowo, Swarzewo, Święty Krzyż, Dukla, and Kałków-Godów. In addition, 135 holy sites attract pilgrims from smaller regions and more than 300 sites attract mostly local pilgrims.

### **1.1. Pilgrimages to holy sites with an international reputation**

The oldest pilgrimage center in Poland with an international reputation is Jasna Góra in the city of Częstochowa – with 3.5 to 4.0 million pilgrims per year.<sup>2</sup> The Shrine of Jasna Góra was founded in 1382 by the Pauline Fathers who continue to own and operate it. The shrine remained in private hands even during the occupation of Poland by its three powerful neighbors (Russia, Prussia, Austria) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the time, many holy sites in Poland had been taken over by the three occupying powers, but Jasna Góra remained in the hands of the Pauline Fathers. Russia was the power occupying the Częstochowa region at the time.

While Jasna Góra has been a popular destination for foreign pilgrims since the Middle Ages, its primary significance is associated with events in the history of Poland. The shrine has been a key factor in the establishment of ethnic bonds and government unity in Poland, especially in times when religion was a very

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<sup>2</sup> [www.jasnagora.pl](http://www.jasnagora.pl) (1.03.2014).

important part of national life and government policy. Jasna Góra has exerted influence far beyond its role as a holy site for centuries. Its effects on the Roman Catholic Church have been observed at the national level and even the international level. Jasna Góra received its right to issue indulgences in 1429. The Feast of Our Lady of Jasna Góra became a Roman Catholic holy day on August 26, 1904 thanks to Pope Pius X. In 1906 the shrine was designated a minor basilica also by Pope Pius X. The next pope – Pius XI – established a new holy day in 1924, which became a national holy day in Poland – the Feast of Our Lady the Queen of Poland (May 3). This new holy day became synonymous in Poland with the image of Our Lady of Jasna Góra.<sup>3</sup>

Officials of the Roman Catholic Church have been visiting the Jasna Góra Shrine for centuries including Papal Ambassador Achilles Ratti in 1918 who later became Pope Pius XI and the future Pope Paul VI (1923). The image of Our Lady of Częstochowa was placed in 1920 in the Papal Chapel at the Castel Gandolfo papal summer residence. Visits by popes themselves were also quite meaningful and included John Paul II in 1979, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1997, and 1999, as well as Benedict XVI in 2006.

The close relationship between John Paul II and Jasna Góra upgraded the status of the shrine during his time in office. Pope John Paul II also helped organize the 6<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day at Jasna Góra in 1991. Other major events held at the request of the Pope included the 19<sup>th</sup> International Mariological Congress and 12<sup>th</sup> International Marian Congress in 1996. The two meetings were the largest international events to have taken place at Jasna Góra. The election of a Polish pope helped spark a great deal of national enthusiasm in Poland, which helped produce many new prayer services and pilgrimages to Jasna Góra in the intention of John Paul II. This fact is borne out by pilgrimage statistics. The number of pilgrims making the trek to Jasna Góra increased rapidly in the 1980s. The changing politics of the era in Poland also helped increase the number of pilgrims. By 1989 Poland had initiated a transition from communism to capitalism. The number of pilgrims at Jasna Góra had ranged between half a million and one million between 1945 and 1975.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> S. Kośnik OSPPE, *Jasna Góra – Sanktuarium Kościoła*, “Peregrinus Cracoviensis” 1996, Vol. 3, pp. 17–19.

<sup>4</sup> E. Bilska-Wodecka, I. Soljan, *Przemiany krajobrazu religijnego Częstochowy w XX wieku*, “Peregrinus Cracoviensis” 2011, Vol. 22, pp. 346–347.

It seems unusual that the Jasna Góra Shrine is the only medieval shrine to effectively compete with great shrines built in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and which had served as locations for apparitions of the Mother of God (Lourdes and Fatima). Prior to World War II, both Jasna Góra and Lourdes welcomed the same number of visitors every year – around one million. While the trend in the last few years has been one of growth in the case of Fatima and Lourdes and decline in the case of Jasna Góra, this was not always the case. In the mid-1990s all three shrines received more or less the same number of visitors – between four and five million per year. The percentage of foreign pilgrims visiting Lourdes and Fatima is much higher than that at Jasna Góra. As a result, Jasna Góra is a key national shrine for the Polish nation in addition to being a major Christian shrine. Jasna Góra still receives several million visitors per year, although that number is decreasing every year, as is the case with other pilgrimage-oriented shrines in Poland.<sup>5</sup>

Organized pilgrimages headed to Jasna Góra include national pilgrimages, short range regional pilgrimages, pilgrimages on foot, and groups of tourists who use the services of tourist guides. The Jasna Góra Information Center keeps track of tourist traffic. More than half the pilgrims who come to Jasna Góra arrive as part of organized pilgrimages. This high percentage of organized pilgrims is uncommon at other shrines. Organized pilgrimages account for 20% to 30% of all traffic at other major shrines. The prevalence of organized pilgrimages at Jasna Góra is the result of centuries of organized pilgrimages to this shrine.

The largest number of organized pilgrims in Poland arrive at Jasna Góra as part of national pilgrimages – about one million pilgrims per year in recent years. The majority of these pilgrims organize themselves into groups of professionals such as farmers, teachers, railway workers, miners, doctors, veterinarians, fire fighters, hairdressers, and lawyers, as well as associations and religious organizations including Radio Maryja, Catholic Action, Marian Sodality, Local Children's Rosary Clubs, and the Marian legion. New pilgrimages appear every year and are often the product of the changing political and social situation in Poland (e.g. Pilgrimage of the Unemployed). More than one hundred national pilgrimages head to Jasna Góra every year. The number of participants ranges from 20,000 to 100,000 people. The largest pilgrimages are designated the Radio Maryja Pilgrimage and the Working People's Pilgrimage.

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<sup>5</sup> I. Soljan, *Sanktuaria i ich rola w organizacji przestrzeni miast na przykładzie największych europejskich ośrodków katolickich*, Wyd. IGiP UJ, Kraków 2012, pp. 159–162.

Two special groups of pilgrims coming to Jasna Góra are new high school graduates and children following their First Communion. The former are a really sensational group – up to 50% of new graduates make a pilgrimage to Jasna Góra. Diocesan pilgrimages tend to attract the largest number of new high school graduates – up to 80,000 per group.

Pilgrimages on foot provide about 140,000 visitors per year. About 250 groups come to Jasna Góra on foot each year. These pilgrimages often start in major cities as well as in small parishes throughout Poland. Larger pilgrimages are managed by regional dioceses. No other Catholic shrine attracts so many pilgrims on foot. Another unique pilgrimage to Jasna Góra is the Pilgrimage of the Disabled, which takes place on foot starting in Warsaw.<sup>6</sup>

Night vigils are a popular form of prayer service at Jasna Góra. More than 200 night vigils take place at the Chapel of the Miraculous Picture every year. Many are preplanned as part of pilgrimage programs. Most two-day pilgrimages (except those on foot) include a night vigil: Marian Legion Pilgrimage, Teachers' Pilgrimage, Scouts' Pilgrimage, and the Sobriety Apostleship Pilgrimage.

It is difficult to estimate the exact number of foreign visitors at Jasna Góra. The shrine's information bureau indicates that pilgrims and tourists from around the world visit the holy site every year – 65 to 83 countries in the period 2000–2010. Several thousand groups of visitors have been identified. Each group includes tens of thousands of visitors. In 2008 a total of 5,807 groups of foreign visitors were identified for a total of 142,000 visitors. Most foreign visitors are Italian, German, and American. Each of the three groups contributes between 10,000 and 20,000 visitors per year. Some foreigners also take part in pilgrimages on foot. More than a thousand Italians usually take part in the Kraków (Nowa Huta section) pilgrimage since the year 2003. The Soldiers' Pilgrimage consists of pilgrims from Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Germany, and the United States. It is really several pilgrimages that start in several cities. Finally, another internationally oriented pilgrimage to Jasna Góra is the International Pilgrimage of Youth from Many Backgrounds and Cultures. This pilgrimage also takes place on foot. The estimated total number of foreign pilgrims is 300,000 to 400,000 per year.

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<sup>6</sup> D. Ptaszycka-Jackowska, A. Jackowski, *Jasnogórskie pielgrzymowanie w przestrzeni miasta i regionu Częstochowy*, IG UJ, Kraków 1998, p. 19; I. Soljan, *Sanktuaria i ich rola w organizacji przestrzeni miast na przykładzie największych europejskich ośrodków katolickich*, Wyd. IGiP UJ, Kraków 2012, pp. 161–162.

The Sanctuary of Divine Mercy in Kraków (Łagiewniki) is also considered a site with an international reputation. The sanctuary has experienced dynamic growth since the 1990s due to a number of important events. These include the beatification of Sister Faustina in 1993 and her canonization in the year 2000. Other key events include the construction and blessing of a new basilica and the recognition of this new basilica as a global center of the devotion to Divine Mercy. The basilica was consecrated by Pope John Paul II in 2002 and named the Basilica of Divine Mercy. In addition, the Pope made an official pronouncement at the basilica where he entrusted all of humanity to Divine Mercy.

The key to the growth of the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy is the universal message of the immense love and mercy of God. This message is directed to everyone and not just one particular audience. An additional key driver of growth has been the Congregation of Our Lady of Divine Mercy. The congregation consists of religious sisters who lecture on the mission of Sister Faustina in many countries around the world. The image of the Merciful Christ found in the sisters' chapel is now recognized by millions of people around the world. Copies of this image can be found in faraway places such as chapels in Madagascar, Senegal, and Indonesia as well as Catholic churches in India.

Pilgrimages to Łagiewniki began shortly after the death of Sister Faustina on October 5, 1938. This was a period of war, but still the sisters made their chapel available to the faithful. The future Pope John Paul II prayed in this chapel quite often during the war. In 1943 the painter Józef Hyła placed an image of the Merciful Christ in the sisters' chapel. Once the war ended, devotion to the Divine Mercy became even stronger and Łagiewniki became its epicenter. One reason for this was that Vilnius – the home of the first image of the Merciful Christ – was no longer in Poland. The Vilnius image had been painted during the lifetime of Sister Faustina. On June 22, 1968, the Archbishop of Kraków, Karol Wojtyła, designated the Łagiewniki shrine a diocesan sanctuary. In the 1970s and 1980s most pilgrims came from the Kraków Archdiocese, Katowice Diocese, and Tarnów Diocese. The three regions are adjacent to one another, which makes Łagiewniki more accessible to pilgrims.<sup>7</sup> The number of pilgrims was small at the time, and the number of groups of pilgrims was small as well (several groups per year in the 1970s).

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<sup>7</sup> I. Soljan, H. Matlak, *Pilgrimages to the Shrine of the Divine Mercy at Cracow-Łagiewniki*, "Peregrinus Cracoviensis" 2001, Vol. 11, pp. 154–156.



The number of pilgrims coming to Łagiewniki ranges between 1.5 and 2.0 million per year. Pilgrims arrive from across Poland and various foreign countries. It is the second largest pilgrimage site in Poland today – after Jasna Góra – and one of the thirty largest sites in the Christian world. Key celebrations at the Łagiewniki sanctuary include the Feast of Divine Mercy (first Sunday after Easter) and the Feast of Sister Faustina (October 5). The former is attended by about 150,000 pilgrims every year.

Visitors from close to 100 countries come to the Łagiewniki sanctuary in Kraków. Most visitors are European (78%) and North American (16%). There is a large contingent of Slovaks whose Radio Lumen pilgrimage is one of the largest to visit the sanctuary. In recent years Polish pilgrims have begun to walk to Łagiewniki from distant cities including Poznań, Warsaw, and Białystok.<sup>8</sup>

The congregation running the sanctuary expects to expand the site and especially its sacred areas. The goal is to enrich the pastoral offering as well as the tourist offering. The city government of Kraków is also eager to work with the sanctuary and its closest neighbor, the John Paul II Center, in order to take advantage of the fact that religious tourism is currently one of the city's three main pillars of the tourist industry. The 2006 municipal document "Tourism growth strategy for Kraków in the period 2006–2013" assumes new development near the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy site in Kraków. The document proposed to increase the role of the sanctuary as a center of religion in Kraków and help tourism-oriented businesses thrive in the vicinity of the holy site. However, in practice, this has not happened to any significant degree in terms of actual investment.

Other holy sites such as Kalwaria Zebrzydowska and Licheń receive about one million pilgrims and tourists per year. The former is thus far the only holy site in Poland to make the UNESCO World Heritage List (1999). It is the only holy site in Europe to provide religious reenactments of the Holy Week and the Funeral and Triumph of the Mother of God, which is associated with the Assumption. Both events draw more than 200,000 participants. Despite the significant growth of the Łagiewniki sanctuary in Kraków, the sanctuary in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska continues to thrive and receives a steady influx of pilgrims.

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<sup>8</sup> A. Jackowski, I. Soljan, *Zasięg oddziaływania Orędzia Miłosierdzia na podstawie ruchu pielgrzymkowego do Sanktuarium Bożego Miłosierdzia w Krakowie-Łagiewnikach*, in: *Promieniowanie Orędzia Miłosierdzia. 10 lat po kanonizacji św. Faustyny*, F. Ślusarczyk (ed.), Wyd. Misericordia, Kraków 2010, p. 151.

The sanctuary in Licheń, on the other hand, is an example of sensational growth. Its period of growth began in 1945 and continued through the 1980s. The number of pilgrims has reached two million per year. The site is also interesting from a spatial planning point of view. The Licheń sanctuary has progressed from a large regional center to an international religious center in a matter of twenty years. The sacred area on the grounds of the center is expansive. Its design mirrors that of the largest sanctuaries in Europe including Łagiewniki. What is surprising about Licheń is the degree of national symbolism involved. This is not matched by any European religious center outside of Poland. Licheń includes a number of symbols within its sacred area that do not serve any religious purpose.

Saint Anne's Mountain has served as a "holy mountain" for the inhabitants of Silesia for a number of centuries. This is especially true of the Opole region of Silesia. The number of pilgrims has increased significantly since the mountain was visited by Pope John Paul II on June 21, 1983. The influx of foreign pilgrims increased significantly in the 1990s – driven mostly by Germans coming to the area to visit lands they or their parents used to inhabit.

## **1.2. Pilgrimages to national-level sanctuaries**

Piekary Śląskie and Gniezno are pilgrimage centers that attract pilgrims from across Poland. In the former, a men's pilgrimage serves as a special feature on the last Sunday in May. It is attended by an average of 150,000 men. In addition, workers' pilgrimages to Piekary Śląskie have increased since the late 1970s.

Gniezno, the first capital of Poland, receives several hundred thousand pilgrims and tourists every year. The city became a key pilgrimage center following the 1,000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death Saint Adalbert in June of 1997. The anniversary mass was celebrated in Gniezno by Pope John Paul II who also met with a group of leaders of Central European countries.

The influx of pilgrims intensifies close to major religious celebrations, especially key events associated with indulgences. More than 450 such events are held in Poland at major religious centers characterized by regional impact or more. The granting of indulgences is a major part of the pilgrimage world. Every sanctuary in Poland is allowed to celebrate several feasts associated with indulgences – a custom reaching back to the Middle Ages. Only one or two such

feasts are considered major feasts that attract the largest number of pilgrims over the course of several days. Major feasts are usually associated with a specific holy site and its Marian imagery. The best known feast in Poland is that of Our Lady of Częstochowa, which is celebrated on August 26. This feast attracts pilgrims from across the world. Close to twenty other holy sites in Poland celebrate major feasts associated with indulgences and focus their celebration on the local image of the Mother of God.<sup>9</sup>

### **1.3. New sanctuaries and pilgrimage trails**

One sign that pilgrimages are a permanent fixture of Polish religious culture is the emergence of new sanctuaries. The first example is the John Paul II Center in Kraków, which is still under construction, but already receiving pilgrims. The Church of the Blessed John Paul II was consecrated at the site in June of 2013, while a pastoral center, educational center, and tourist center remain under construction. The plan is to build several hostels for pilgrims, a multifunctional Museum of John Paul II, and a convention center.

One reason for the construction of new sanctuaries is the growing strength of the devotion to Divine Mercy in Poland. Another trend is the construction of sanctuaries devoted to the Mother of God including the Diocesan Sanctuary of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Polanica-Zdrój as well as new sites in Wojcieszów, Rumia, Rokitnica, Jastrzębie-Zdrój, and Bydgoszcz. Another holy site with significant cultural value is the Włocławek Sanctuary of Blessed Father Jerzy Popiełuszko – a priest murdered by Poland’s communist government in the 1980s. Another new holy site receiving significant attention today is the Church of Saint Anthony in Sokółka. The church served as the site of an officially recognized miracle in 2008. The object of the miracle was a host, which is now available for viewing by pilgrims. While the Church of Saint Anthony is not an official sanctuary, pilgrims do come in large numbers and include organized groups.

Another important phenomenon in the pilgrimage tradition in Poland is the growth of the number of trails leading to the main Trail of Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain. The popularity of the trail leading to the grave

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<sup>9</sup> A. Jackowski, *Pielgrzymowanie*, Wyd. Dolnośląskie, Wrocław 1998, pp. 128–135.

of Saint James is increasing in Europe and also in Poland. This new pattern is even more interesting in light of the fact that Poles did not trek to Santiago de Compostela in large numbers in the Middle Ages. Today new trails are being identified in Poland that follow old trade routes and churches named after Saint James. Sixteen segments have been identified since 2005, with the first being the Lower Silesian Way of Saint James. Several new trails are in the planning stages. The total length of the trails is supposed to be 3,250 km.<sup>10</sup>

#### **1.4. New forms of pilgrimages**

Pilgrimage has been a phenomenon occurring for centuries, but its forms have been changing over time. This is primarily caused by civilisation changes and technological progress, which in turn translates into change of cultural patterns and standard of living. Pilgrimage today takes a large variety of forms, and more and more often there are pilgrimages deviating from their traditional image. Considering the three main stages of the pilgrimage: the starting point, the route and the stay in the sacred place, the most important changes regard the last two, i.e. the route and the stay in a sacred place. And these changes are also the most noticeable in the pilgrimage space. They include qualitatively different structural elements of the pilgrimage, both related to the external sphere and the internal, spiritual sphere. Therefore, new forms of pilgrimage can be systematized as follows:

- related to the different than the traditional ways (forms) of travelling the path to the sanctuary;
- related to new evangelism and pilgrimage priesthood forms;
- arising from changes in the Church and the development of ecumenical movements.

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<sup>10</sup> F. Mróz, Ł. Mróz, *Geneza i rozwój polskich odcinków Camino de Santiago – najpiękniejszej drogi świata*, in: Š. Sittek, N. Widok ks., *Drogi Jakubowe i inne szlaki pątnicze w Polsce i Czechach. Svatojakubské cesty a jiné poutní stezky v Polsku a v Česku*, Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, Opole 2012, pp. 73–100.

#### **1.4.1. New forms of pilgrimage associated with other than the traditional ways of travelling the path to the sanctuary**

Since the late 1990s, there is an increasing number of pilgrimages choosing unprecedented forms of travelling. The reasons for this should be undoubtedly sought in the need for more attractive forms of pilgrimage and for attracting new potential pilgrims. The target group of this kind of pilgrimage are primarily young people, seeking adventures and experiences also in the area of religion. The most common forms are cycling and hiking pilgrimages. Cycling pilgrimages to Jasna Góra brought over 6000 people in recent years. Other unprecedented pilgrimage forms are also skating, roller skiing, motorcycles or horse-back riding pilgrimages. The only roller skater pilgrimage organised every year since 2003 goes from Warsaw to Jasna Góra. The number of participants continues to grow: in 2003 there were 40 people participating, in 2013 as many as 95. There is also the annual pilgrimage of more than 1,000 people on motorcycles from Wadowice to Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. In 2012, at the Shrine of Jasna Góra, there was the first Polish Caravan Pilgrimage. There was also a registered moto-glider pilgrimage. New forms of pilgrimage are also organized in the Orthodox Church, an example of which is the annual canoe pilgrimage from Gródek to Supraśl (since 2011).

#### **1.4.2. New forms of pilgrimage associated with new ways of evangelism and new forms of pilgrimage priesthood**

Decreasing religiosity and progressive secularization of the society are becoming more and more evident in the life of the Church and do not remain without effect on pilgrimage forms. In order to revive the pilgrimage movement, the organizers and pilgrimage priests offer both new pilgrimage type events and enrich the programme for the visitors of sanctuaries. In this context, a good example is the Lednica nationwide youth meeting, organized yearly since 2000. In a dozen or so years Lednica has become the largest religious gathering of Polish youth, also increasingly attracting pilgrims from abroad. Poles also participate in great numbers in the International Youth Day, held at the initiative of John Paul II since 2000. Such meetings of the youth are certainly a new form of pilgrimage, distinguished by an extremely attractive programme and combining religious

elements with elements typical for entertainment and culture. Religious events for youth being a part of the pilgrimage movement are the response of the Church to the current needs and expectations of the young generation.

When writing about new forms of pilgrimage in Poland, it should be noted that there is lack of certain actions that are noticeable in foreign pilgrimage destinations. For several years, the largest sanctuaries in Europe have been introducing special programs for individual pilgrims. Unfortunately, such an initiative has not yet appeared in Polish sanctuaries. And this is an important requirement of our times, as the number of individual visitors in sanctuaries is constantly growing. In Poland, the only initiative that could be considered such a response was marking up St. James's trails, destined for individual pilgrims or small groups.

### **1.4.3. Ecumenical pilgrimages**

European Young Adults Meetings organized since 1978 in many European cities by the ecumenical community of Taizé enjoy great interest among young people. Polish youth hosted those meetings four times: in 1989 and in 1995 in Wrocław, in 1999 in Warsaw and in 2009 in Poznań. Ecumenical meetings are also held in the sanctuary of St. Adalbert in Gniezno, initiated by a pilgrimage of Pope John Paul II and the meeting of the presidents of Central European countries in 2000. Since 2005, there is an ecumenical pilgrimage from Gniezno to Magdeburg, with participants from Poland and Germany, Christians of various denominations. The initiative of ecumenical pilgrimage is developing. In 2014, a small group of cyclists covered more than 600 km in the pilgrimage of Catholics from Kłodawa to Oschatz in Saxony, visiting Catholic, Evangelical and Protestant churches on their way (Niedziela 2014, No. 33).

## **2. Growth perspectives in the pilgrimage and religious tourism sector in Poland**

Existing research on pilgrimages and religious tourism in Poland has focused on the spiritual dimension of such activity. However, there is also a social and economic dimension that needs further attention. This is especially true of villages, towns, and cities found along pilgrimage routes.

When analyzing the growth perspectives of Poland's pilgrimage and religious tourism sector, it is important to focus on the geography of pilgrims and tourists who flock to selected holy sites in large numbers. An understanding of this pilgrimage geography is the key to proper hotel and restaurant management as well as other tourist-oriented services.

The following is a list of religious centers that already enjoy a large influx of domestic and foreign visitors. We believe these centers should be given priority in the assignment of investment funds and other development privileges:

1. Jasna Góra – a major holy site that will remain the center of religious life in Poland for decades or centuries to come. It is also expected to remain a key religious site for foreign visitors and individuals devoted to Our Lady of Częstochowa. The devotion to Our Lady of Częstochowa was made especially popular by Pope John Paul II. Jasna Góra is located in the heart of Europe at the point of intersection between Western and Eastern Christianity. It is sometimes called an ecumenical location – a term used to describe Częstochowa and no other city in Poland. The city could also become an intersection for pilgrimage trails from the East to the West and from the North to the South. This, of course, assumes that secularization will not overwhelm European society, as statistical evidence seems to suggest. Today Jasna Góra is found along the International Marian Trail linking Mariazell in Austria with Częstochowa. What makes Jasna Góra unique is its number of pilgrims who come to the shrine on foot. Many of these pilgrims are not from Poland. In light of the long tradition of pilgrimages and their geographic reach, pilgrimages to Częstochowa are considered to be some of the most important religious migrations in the world.<sup>11</sup> In light of the initiative to create a Central European pilgrimage trail in Slovenia, Austria, and neighboring countries, it may become possible to include Jasna Góra as a stop along this trail. The purpose of this project is to help integrate Central European countries on a cultural and religious level.
2. Kraków – Łagiewniki – a global center of the devotion to Divine Mercy established by Pope John Paul II. This particular devotion is becoming increasingly popular around the world, which makes this holy site special among

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<sup>11</sup> A. Jackowski, *Jasnogórskie pielgrzymowanie bez granic*, Tyg. Katolicki „Niedziela”, Częstochowa 2005, p. 20; D. Ptaszycka-Jackowska, A. Jackowski, *Jasnogórskie pielgrzymowanie w przestrzeni miasta i regionu Częstochowy*, IG UJ, Kraków 1998, pp. 23–25.

others in Europe and elsewhere. The holy site at Łagiewniki is already one of the thirty largest Christian holy sites in the world. The universal message propagated by the Łagiewniki holy site in conjunction with its extensive pastoral offering may help make the site a key pilgrimage center in Europe in the near future. This is also an opportunity for the city of Kraków, which was selected to be the home of the new John Paul II Center (“Fear Not”). In addition, the city is home to a number of much older religious sites such as the Wawel Cathedral, Skafka Church, Ecce Homo Church, and Mogiła.

3. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska – one of the best known European centers of the devotion to the Suffering Christ and the Mother of God. Pilgrims and tourists come from all over Europe to participate in the celebration of the Passion of Christ during Holy Week and the Feast of the Mother of God in August. Foreign visitors are also drawn to the site because of its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The listing includes the holy site’s shrine, park, and cross, all of which were classified as very valuable in 1999. The nearby town of Wadowice may join Kalwaria Zebrzydowska in creating a joint pilgrimage destination based on the fact that Pope John Paul II was born in the former. An addition favorable factor is the town’s location near Kraków (Łagiewniki) as well as Ludźmierz in the nearby Podhale region, both of which are already pilgrimage destinations.
4. Licheń – a religious center popular with Poles living in Poland and abroad. The center’s existing infrastructure favors the expansion of its sacred area, which is already being realized.
5. Saint Anne’s Mountain – a popular destination for pilgrims and tourists from neighboring Germany. The percentage of German visitors is quite high. Other holy sites in Poland that may become attractive to German visitors in the future include Bardo Śląskie, Wambierzyce, Trzebnica, Gietrzwałd, and Saint Lipka.
6. Warsaw – the hometown of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko. His beatification has led to increased devotion to his person, which should spark a pilgrimage movement to his grave in Warsaw. The residents of Eastern Europe often like to view the relics of Saint Andrew Bobola. In addition, many individuals staying in Warsaw make the short trip to nearby Niepokalanów, which is associated with the figure of Saint Maximilian Kolbe.



7. Piekary Śląskie – the town’s men’s pilgrimage is gaining attention around the world. The town is located in an industrial part of Poland, which is why it may be the perfect location for workers’ pilgrimages from across Europe.
8. Gniezno – given the tradition of the Gniezno Conventions and the town’s association with John Paul II, it ought to become a key pilgrimage center for all Slavic peoples.
9. Grabarka – an Orthodox Christian holy site with a growing international reputation. Young Orthodox Christians from many different countries come here to meet and discuss their faith.
10. Leżajsk – a Hasidic pilgrimage center drawing Jews from around the world – more than 10,000 per year, especially during the *yahrzeit* (21 Adar) of Tzadik Elimelech Weisblum. The site does not yet feature infrastructure for pilgrims. A Hasidic Center is planned with an area of 6,500 square meters. The center will include a museum for the general public focused on Hasidic traditions in Poland. The museum will feature exhibits on rabbis, Jewish life in the town of Leżajsk, and a film screening room. The site will also include a synagogue, mikveh, hotel, restaurant, and forty public restrooms.
11. Oświęcim – also known by its German name Auschwitz. This is the site of the former German concentration camp, which now resembles a pilgrimage site for a variety of faithful from around the world. Oświęcim now serves as a meeting site for international ecumenical events.

Additional pilgrims and tourists are expected to come to the site in conjunction with the 2014 canonization of John Paul II and the opening of the Trail of John Paul II as well as the opening of the John Paul II Center (“Fear Not”) in nearby Kraków.

Pilgrimages in Poland do not boost the local economy in most cases. The Licheń site is one exception to this rule. Research has shown that more collaboration is needed between site operators (e.g. religious orders) and local governments. Such efforts have been made here and there, but with little economic benefit to show for.

One key feature of many pilgrimages in Poland is their regional character that may in itself become a tourist attraction. This includes local folklore and customs that can be found in abundance in regions such as Silesia, Kaszuby, Kujawy, Warmia, and the Carpathians.

## Closing remarks

The current state of the pilgrimage movement in Poland is largely the result of a long heritage of pilgrimages and a strong cultural link to this type of religious practice. Pilgrimages are also a key part of actual religious practice in Poland. The proof for this is in the numbers of pilgrims. Other key indicators of activity in this area include the pastoral work of old holy sites as well as the establishment of new holy sites in Poland. One site that has grown quite rapidly in the last twenty years is the Kraków – Łagiewniki Sanctuary of Divine Mercy. This relatively new holy site has become one of the key pilgrimage centers in Europe and a global center of the devotion to Divine Mercy.

The art of the pilgrimage has changed in the last few decades due to technological progress and changes in social attitudes. These two factors affect the entire Catholic world and not just pilgrimages. Special services designed for pilgrims and religious tourists are often provided by pilgrimage site operators (e.g. religious orders). Holy sites are starting to offer other attractions on-site and off-site. New pastoral offerings for pilgrims and upgrades within sacred areas are all designed to meet the needs of modern pilgrims and tourists. In addition, local governments and community organizations are becoming active in the area of religious tourism in Poland. Ultimately, better collaboration is needed between all stakeholders in order to help maximize potential benefits in the emerging sector of religious tourism.

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## PIELGRZYMOWANIE I TURYSTYKA RELIGIJNA W POLSCE NA POCZĄTKU XXI WIEKU – STAN OBECNY I PERSPEKTYWY ROZWOJU

### Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest analiza współczesnego stanu pielgrzymek i turystyki religijnej w Polsce. Obecnie w Polsce funkcjonuje, według różnych autorów od 500 do 800 sanktuariów katolickich o różnym zasięgu oddziaływania. Wśród nich dominują sanktuaria maryjne – około 430, z tego ponad 200 z koronowanymi wizerunkami Matki Bożej. Ponadto swoje obiekty kultu religijnego posiadają wyznawcy prawosławia, grekokatolicy, muzułmanie oraz Żydzi. W migracjach pielgrzymkowych w Polsce uczestniczy 5-7 mln osób rocznie (ponad 15% ludności kraju). Polacy stanowią obecnie około 5% chrześcijan pielgrzymujących na świecie i ponad 20% w Europie. Polskę odwiedza rocznie około 1,5 mln pielgrzymów zagranicznych.

Współczesny stan polskiego pielgrzymowania to w znacznym stopniu dziedzictwo historycznej przeszłości i silnego przywiązania do tego typu praktyk religijnych. Równocześnie zjawisko to jest nadal obecne w życiu religijnym Polaków. Świadczy o tym zarówno liczba pielgrzymujących, jak i aktywność duszpasterska istniejących sanktuariów oraz rozwój nowych ośrodków pielgrzymkowych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** pielgrzymki, turystyka religijna, sanktuaria, Polska