



Ways of shaping love for God and people and historical memory during the Year of St. Stanislaus Kostka

Sposoby kształtowania miłości do Boga i ludzi oraz pamięci historycznej w czasie Roku św. Stanisława Kostki¹

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Abstract: The aim of the article is to show the many various ways in which the Year of St. Stanislaus Kostka, announced in 2018 on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of his death, was celebrated, and how were the ways of shaping love for God and people during that time. The article presents a review of the most important facts about the main jubilee celebrations in Poland and abroad which were also possibilities to build the historical memory. The year of St. Stanislaus Kostka was part of a long tradition of celebrations marking the anniversaries of this patron saint of Poland, held since the year of his beatification (1602/1605), and more solemnly since his canonization in 1726. The text discusses the worldwide and nationwide events commemorating the Saint of Rostkowo, and presents the main publications and conferences devoted to this saint. It also mentions the exhibitions and various pastoral initiatives taken during the year. Particular attention has been paid to celebrations in the Diocese of Płock, where Rostkowo, the birthplace of St. Stanislaus Kostka, is located. On this basis, the pertinence of the saint's message has been discussed as well.

Keywords: hagiography, Jesuits, Poland, Year of St. Stanislaus Kostka, St. Stanislaus Kostka

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest ukazanie bogactwa obchodów Roku św. Stanisława Kostki, ogłoszonego w 2018 r. z okazji 450. rocznicy jego śmierci, a także w jaki sposób kształtowano miłość do Boga i ludzi w tym czasie. Artykuł ma charakter przeglądowo-problemowy, zebrano w nim najważniejsze informacje o głównych wymiarach jubileuszu w Polsce i za granicą, które były także okazją do budowania pamięci historycznej. Rok św. Stanisława Kostki wpisal się w długą tradycję świętowania rocznic tego patrona Polski, obchodzonych od roku jego beatyfikacji (1602/1605), a bardziej uroczyste od czasu jego kanonizacji w 1726 r. W tekście przywołano wydarzenia o zasięgu światowym i ogólnopolskim związane z upamiętnieniem Świętego z Rostkowa, następnie opisano główne publikacje i konferencje, poświęcone temu świętemu. Wskazano również wystawy i różne inicjatywy duszpasterskie tego roku. W szczególności sposób zwrócono uwagę na obchody w diecezji płockiej, na terenie której leży Rostkowo – miejsce narodzin św. Stanisława Kostki. Na tej bazie została również opisana aktualność przesłania św. Stanisława Kostki.

Słowa kluczowe: hagiografia, jezuiti, Polska, Rok św. Stanisława Kostki, św. Stanisław Kostka

Introduction

Since 1674, Stanislaus Kostka has been one of the five main patrons of Poland, the first Jesuit to have been beatified, awarded this title already in 1602 by the Pope, which was officially confirmed in 1605. Throughout the 17th century, the *fama sanctitatis* of the Saint of Rostkowo was the subject of many studies and procedural investigations. The devotion to St. Stanislaus was popularized in the Republic of Poland, and the Jesuits spread his fame to the

ends of the world through their missions, which culminated in his canonization, along with his Jesuit fellow brother, Aloysius Gonzaga, by Benedict XIV on 31 December 1726 in Rome. In the following centuries, the subsequent anniversaries of birth, death, and canonization of St. Stanislaus Kostka were commemorated. During the years of partitions and occupation of Polish lands, the proper commemoration of this patron saint of Poland was not possible. It was not until after 1918 that interest in the figure of St. Stanislaus Kostka was reborn on a broad scale,

¹ Artykuł w języku polskim: <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-1Kucko.pdf>

particularly in 1926 when a portion of his relics was brought to the place of his birth on the occasion of the Catholic Congress in Warsaw. Nevertheless, for centuries St. Stanislaus was seen as an intercessor for the Republic, and many believed he had interceded during numerous battles, including the battle of Chocim in 1621 and the battle of Warsaw in 1920. Until the times of St. John Paul II, St. Stanislaus Kostka was one of the best-known Poles in the world.

Another important occasion to honor the Young Man of Rostkowo was the Year of St. Stanislaus Kostka announced on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of his death (August 14, 1568), which coincided with the Aloysius Gonzaga Jubilee Year marking the 450th anniversary of his birth (see: Bałabuch, 2018). The entire year 2018 thus became an appropriate time to recall the history and revive the devotion to this saint in many dimensions of church and social life in Poland, as will be discussed further on in the article.

1. St. Stanislaus Anniversary Traditions

The 450th anniversary of the death of St. Stanislaus Kostka (1550-1568), falling on the 100th anniversary of Poland's independence, became an opportunity to bring to light the person of this somewhat forgotten patron of Poland and patron of children and young people. At the request of the Bishop of Płock, Piotr Libera, during the 377th Plenary Meeting of the Polish Bishops' Conference held on October 13-14, 2017 in Lublin as a follow-up to World Youth Days in Panama and the Synod on Youth in Rome, the year 2018 was declared the Year of St. Stanislaus Kostka (cf. KEP, 2017, p. 989).

Anniversary celebrations in honor of the Saint of Rostkowo have been organized numerous times in Poland. In 1918, 350 years had passed since his death. November 11th fell during the novena in honor of the saint, whose memorial in the liturgical calendar at that time fell on November 13. It was two years later, however, in the context of the Polish-Soviet War, that Poles fervently turned to God through the intercession of the holy Young Man of Rostkowo.

The decisive battles of the war took place on August 15th, the anniversary of his death (*Adoracja*, 1920, p. 1; *Dziękczynne*, 1920, p. 3).

On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of his canonization celebrated in 1926, the saint's relics were brought from Rome to Warsaw (cf. Kućko, 2018a; Kućko, 2019a). At the end of August that year, on the occasion of the First Catholic Congress a reference was made to the person and life of the saint in a commemorative note, including information from Cardinal Camillo Laurenti, then Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, about the founding in Rome of a Committee of the 200th Anniversary of St. Stanislaus Kostka (cf. *Jednodniówka*, 1926, p. 55; *Księga pamiątkowa*, 1926; Knyspel-Kopeć, 2016).

During the difficult Stalinist period, efforts were made in the Church to commemorate the 400th birthday anniversary of St. Stanislaus Kostka (Cegłowski, Gretkowski, 2014, p. 97-102). Large celebrations were organized in Poland on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Kostka's death in the years 1967-1968 as an extended part of celebrations marking the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland in 1966 (Celmerowski, 1967, p. 9-27; Cegłowski, 2012, p. 203-225). Recent historical analyses have shed more light on the circumstances of these celebrations and on how their organization was affected by the then Security Service of the Polish People's Republic (cf. Zygner, 2018, p. 111-184).

The 250th anniversary of the canonization of Stanislaus Kostka was celebrated in 1976-1977 on a somewhat smaller scale, mainly in the Diocese of Płock (the shift in the date was due to the peregrination of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa icon; cf. Sikorski 1977, p. 59-60; Żebrowski, 1977, p. 146-152). As the 450th anniversary of the saint's birth fell in the year of the Great Jubilee of Christianity, celebrations related to St. Stanislaus were not very impressive; one important highlight, however, was the naming of the parish church in Rostkowo as a diocesan sanctuary (cf. Wielgus, 2000, p. 287-288).

The year 2018 offered a new opportunity to popularize and disseminate knowledge about the person of St. Stanislaus Kostka. The extensive pastoral work performed during that time, as well as the numerous scientific initiatives, symposia and exhibitions

contributed to discovering the richness of Polish history, which included the life and veneration of the Saint of Rostkowo.

2. Worldwide and nationwide events

The Year of St. Stanislaus Kostka was symbolically opened by the reading in all churches in Poland of a letter of the Polish Episcopate, entitled *Kostka znaczy więcej* (Kostka Means More), presenting the figure of the forgotten saint (cf. Pastors of the Church in Poland, 2018, p. 203-205). In addition to basic biographical data, it talked about the context in which the young nobleman from Rostkowo, a future Jesuit novice, grew up and was educated. According to Polish Bishops, Stanislaus of Rostkowo teaches the love of God and one's homeland, piety in the spirit of his life motto *Ad maiora natus sum*, as well as perseverance in professing faith. It is worth noting that the letter erroneously attributes the passage it quotes from the poem *A ty się odważ...* to Cyprian Kamil Norwid (the text of the poem, without stating the author, can be found in: Warszawski, 2002, p. 151-153). Katarzyna Janus believes that the poem has been erroneously attributed to Norwid, particularly in the Internet, while its artistic form suggests its contemporary origins (cf. Janus, 2019, p. 88-89).

On the occasion of the anniversary of the death of St. Stanislaus Kostka, Pope Francis, the first ever Jesuit to sit on the throne of St. Peter, sent a special letter to the Bishop of Płock, Piotr Libera, in which he called the young novice "one of the most excellent sons of the Society of Jesus" Poland gave to the world (Francis, 2018a, p. 8). Quoting the words spoken by the Polish Pope at the Quirinal on November 13, 1988 about the "cross-country race" of St. Stanislaus's life, from Mazovia through Vienna to Rome, Pope Francis referred to his intercession for young people and his life motto: "*Ad maiora natus sum*," encouraging them to live a life of truth and authentic freedom (cf. English text: Francis, 2018b).

It is worth mentioning also other initiatives of the Year of Kostka outside of Poland. One of them was a meeting organized on June 6, 2018 at the Polish Institute in Rome (Istituto Polacco di Roma) entitled "San Stanislao Kostka (1550-1568): sulle tracce scritte del santo a Roma" (Saint Stanislaus Kostka (1550-1568): Roman traces in written sources"). During the meeting, Professor Waldemar Turek of the Università Pontificia Salesiana in Rome presented letters of Polish kings on the canonization of Kostka; their Latin texts and Polish translations had previously been the subject of scientific research (cf. Turek 2019, p. 84-108).

Another initiative was the "St. Stanislaus Kostka. Patron of Children and Youth" knowledge competition for children, young people and adults held under the honorary patronage of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland at the Holy See and the St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish in Rostkowo. It was organized by the Social and Cultural Association "Le Rondini" in cooperation with the pastoral care ministry to the Polish community at the St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr Church in Rome. The competition was held in October 2018 (cf. Kućko, 2019b, p. 23-24).

On November 9, 2018, a concert entitled "Heiliger Rebell – Elżbieta Towarnicka zu Ehren des hl. Stanislaus Kostka" ("The Holy Rebel. Elżbieta Towarnicka in tribute to St. Stanislaw Kostka") was held in the capital of Austria on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the saint's death, under the honorary patronage of Professor Piotr Gliński, Minister of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland, Archbishop of Vienna Christoph Schönborn, and President of the Polish Bishops' Conference Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki (cf. Łukaszuk-Ritter, 2020a). Vienna was the place where St. Stanislaus Kostka and his brother Paul continued their education. At Kurrentgasse 2 there is a room where they both lived from 1565 to 1567; since 1742 it has been the chapel of St. Stanislaus Kostka.

On the occasion of the Year of St. Stanislaus Kostka, Poczta Polska S.A. (Polish Post) issued commemorative publications. The first to appear in a new series of postage stamps called "Patron Saints of Poland" was the saint from Rostkowo. On August 19, 2018, the Polish Post's Philately Office published a postage stamp with a special leaflet containing an explanatory text in Polish and English written by Fr. Wojciech Kućko.

The 43 × 31.25 mm PLN 2.60 stamp, rotogravure printed on fluorescent paper, was designed by Bożydar Grozdew and issued in 120 thousand copies. The main motif of the stamp is a contemporary painting showing St. Stanislaus Kostka in the uniform of a Jesuit college student, painted by Elżbieta Pleca-Hoffmann in 1996 at the commission of Fr. Jan Cegłowski (the painting can now be admired in the sanctuary in Rostkowo). It is accompanied by a decorative floral motif with the inscribed silhouette of a white eagle wearing a crown (cf. Grzybowska, Kamiński, Malczyk 2019, p. 206-207). On the first day of circulation the stamp was accompanied by a first day cover (FDC) with a commemorative stamp of the post office in Przasnysz. Stanislaus Kostka was baptized in the parish church in Przasnysz shortly after his birth in 1550; his parents and siblings rest in the same temple in the Kostka Chapel (cf. Bońkowski 1986, p. 48-52). The envelope designed by Bożydar Grozdew features photographs of documents and places related to the life of St. Stanislaus: a fragment of the saint's handwritten request, dated October 27, 1567, for an interview and admission to the Jesuit novitiate in Rome, bearing his authentic signature, stored in Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu in Rome in the Armadio Ne Pereant (cf. Latin text and Polish translation: Danieluk, 2019, p. 61-62; cf. also Danieluk, 2018, p. 50-52), and a photograph of St. Andrew's Church at the Quirinal in Rome where there is a chapel with the saint's relics (more about the church and the artistic decoration of the saint's chapel: Terhalle, 2011, p. 93-120).

In addition, two postcards were published. One presented the picture of St. Stanislaus of Rostkowo painted by Elżbieta Plewa-Hoffmann, an outline of the tower of the present church in Rostkowo, and a photograph of a fragment of the Latin letter of St. Peter Canisius to St. Francis Borgia on admitting Kostka to the novitiate, containing the famous phrase: "*Nos de illo praeclara speramus*" (cf. Danieluk, 2019, p. 58-61). The other postcard, issued on the occasion of the 380th Plenary Meeting of the Polish Bishops' Conference in Płock, features a photograph of the oldest cultic image of St. Stanislaus Kostka from the Diocese of Płock without the gilded silver shields, currently stored at the Diocesan Museum in Płock. This 17th century 170cm × 105.5cm image

was associated with the first place of the veneration of Blessed Stanislaus Kostka in the church in Kacice. On the back of the nimbus there is an inscription with the date 1667 (more about the history of the painting and its renovation, see: Karpińska, 2018, p. 91-98; Kućko 2019b, p. 14, footnote 2).

3. Scientific conferences and publications

A very important element in the development of research on the heritage of the saint of Rostkowo were scientific conferences presenting the pertinence of the figure of St. Stanislaus and new areas of historical exploration. On September 21, 2018 in Pułtusk, as part of celebrations organized on the 21st Days of St. Matthew, patron of the city of Pułtusk, a conference was held entitled "Saint Stanislaus Kostka. Aspects Related to Pułtusk, Mazovia and the Catholic Church," under the honorary patronage of the Bishop of Płock Piotr Libera, organized by the City of Pułtusk, Aleksander Gieysztor Academy of Humanities, and the Polish Community House in Pułtusk. The conference discussed three aspects: the life and spirituality of the Young Man of Rostkowo, his cult and its pertinence as a model in educational work with youth. The findings were presented in a collective scientific publication *Saint Stanislaus Kostka – the Perspective of the Catholic Church and the Church in Płock* (Lolo, 2018). Two other symposium meetings were held on November 13, 2018, formerly celebrated as the liturgical memorial of St. Stanislaus Kostka in Poland, still appearing under this date in the Roman Calendar. At the University Library in Toruń a conference entitled "*Ad Maiora natus sum*". The Road to Holiness of Stanislaus Kostka SJ (1550-1568)" was held, co-organized by the Jesuit fathers from Toruń and the Vice-Chancellor's Office of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń under the honorary patronage of Fr. Tomasz Ortmann SJ, Provincial of the Wielkopolska-Mazovia Province of the Society of Jesus (cf. "*Ad maiora natus sum*", 2018, p. 4). The other scientific meeting, entitled

“Saint Stanislaus Kostka: History, Spirituality and Cult,” was held on the same day at the Historical Museum in Przasnysz.

The most extensive discussion of the Young Man of Rostkowo was presented during the 41st International Symposium of the Scientific Society of the Higher Seminary in Płock organized on November 15, 2018. Its title, “St. Stanislaus Kostka, Patron Saint of Poland. On the 100th Anniversary of Regaining Independence,” provided a framework of looking at the saint from different perspectives: from history and archival resources, through iconography in Polish and Italian art, to poetry, film, theatre and youth ministry. Thirteen speakers from Poland and abroad gathered at the Bishops’ Hall of the Higher Seminary in Płock delivered lectures which shed new light on the figure of the only canonized saint from the Diocese of Płock (cf. Kućko, 2019c; Kućko 2020, p. 206-208).

The person of St. Stanislaus Kostka was also discussed during the symposium “Patron Saints of the Republic of Poland and Pomerania on the 100th Anniversary of Regaining Independence” organized by the Pomeranian Academy Institute of Polish Studies and the Central Pomerania Museum in Słupsk at the Knights’ Hall of the Castle of Pomeranian Princes in Płock on December 11, 2018. Pola Pauba, one of the speakers, delivered a lecture on “The Image of St. Stanislaus Kostka in Ancient and Recent Literature. A Reconnaissance,” referring also to less known poetic works about the Saint of Rostkowo, such as “The Kashubian March” from the 1880 poem *O Panu Czórlinśczim, co do Pucka po sęcë jachól* by Hieronim Derdowski (1852-1902) (more on this subject, see: Krawiec-Złotkowska, 2019, p. 387-390).

An important element of the Saint’s Year were new publications, devoted essentially to his cult and presence in Polish history. They may be divided into several categories in terms of theme and content. The first, largest group, are books in popular, illustrated form, presenting the history and interesting facts about the life of St. Stanislaus Kostka, the circumstances of his canonization, as well as the known and less known prayers in his honor (cf. e.g. Cegłowski, 2018; Grochowski, 2018; Kaczmarek 2018; Kućko 2018c; Kwiatkowski, Stefaniak 2018;

Kwiatkowski, Wilczewski, Zakrzewski, Dudzik 2018; Mazur, 2018; Pabis 2018; Paterek 2018; Wójtowicz, 2018; Zdunkiewicz, 2018; Żyśko, 2018, p. 23-36).

Among other books that shed new light on the history of the Saint of Rostkowo it is worth mentioning the publication of mostly poetic or dramatic works about him. Bishop Piotr Libera published a poetic work by Grzegorz Wigilancius of Sambor (c. 1523-1573) *Vita Divi Stanislai Costuli Poloni* (Stanislaus Szarffenber excudebat, Cracoviae 1570) in the well-known 1894 translation by Wincenty Stroka (cf. Stroka, 1894), with editorial comments by Bożena Leszczyńska, Ph.D. OCV (Libera, 2018, p. 13-74). In addition, the publication also includes works about Kostka by Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595-1640) and Cyprian Kamil Norwid (1821-1883).

An interesting and entirely new translation of Samborczyk’s poem, the first poem written in verse to have been dedicated to Stanislaus Kostka, with literary and critical editorial notes, has been presented by Elwira Buszewicz and Wojciech Ryczek (cf. Buszewicz, Ryczek, 2018). The text has been accompanied by numerous explanations and a critical commentary, which makes it an important contribution to further research on this work and the popularization of the cult of St. Stanislaus of Rostkowo.

Poetry is also related to art and theatre, which was another important part of promotional projects organized by the Jesuits. Plays presented at Jesuit colleges had a didactic and moralizing purpose, and were often staged in connection with religious and patriotic celebrations (cf. Maliszewski, 2019, p. 168-169). This current also includes earlier as well as more recent theatrical plays devoted to the saint, published and staged on the occasion of the Year of St. Stanislaus Kostka.

Alberto Macchi (1941-), a Rome-born playwright and theatre director, created a play entitled “St. Stanislaw Kostka. A Performance-Itinerary Based on Motives from the Biography of St. Stanislaus Kostka,” which was staged by seminarians on November 15, 2018 at the Higher Seminary in Płock, directed by Piotr Adamiak, with suggestions and in the presence of the author (text of the play, see: Macchi, 2019, p. 250-278). Its first public performance had been on May 25, 2003 at St. Andrew’s Church at the Quirinal in Rome.

The Płock Publishing Institute published the Polish translation of a play about St. Stanislaus Kostka written by St. Therese of Lisieux (cf. Maria Lucyna od Krzyża, Seweryniak, 2018), based on a 2015 translation by an unknown author, entitled *St. Stanisław Kostka. A Pious Recreation*. The script by St. Therese of Lisieux was an inspiration for the performance, staged during the 18th Christian Culture Days on September 19, 2019 at the Browar B. Cultural Center Concert Hall by pupils and teachers of the Father Jan Długosz Catholic School Complex in Włocławek. Title of the play: *Saint Stanislaus Kostka – a Pious Recreation According to Długosz* (cf. Kędzierski, 2018, p. 175-179).

Theatre stages are part of the long tradition of Carmelite monasteries and their practice of “pious recreation” or “joint recreation”. Although these performances are not mentioned in the Constitutions of the congregation, various occasions, such as holidays, anniversaries, patron saint’s days, provide an opportunity to stage such plays. St. Therese was responsible for organizing performances at the Monastery of Lisieux for three years (1894-1897). In 1897, the golden jubilee of religious vows was celebrated by Sister Stanislaus of the Sacred Hearts (Marie Rosalia Guéret, born 1824), who bore the masculine religious name Stanislaus according to the custom common in French Carmelite monasteries where also women adopted masculine names of saints. By order of the Prioress, on the occasion of the jubilee St. Therese wrote her eighth, and last, theatrical recreation on February 8, 1879, this time, of course, in honor of the patron saint of the jubilarian, St. Stanislaus Kostka. The play tells the story of one day in the life of the saint on which he was admitted to the Jesuit order in Rome (October 28, 1567). Kostka turned out to be important in the life of St. Therese’s, who was to die at a young age just like the Polish saint (cf. Maria Lucyna od Krzyża, Seweryniak, 2018, p. 23-34).

4. Exhibitions

Anniversary celebrations are often accompanied by commemorative exhibitions. This was also the case on the occasion of the Year of St. Stanislaus Kostka. Probably the largest exhibition of the year,

entitled “Kostka means more – the Cult of St. Stanislaus Kostka,” opened at the Diocesan Museum in Płock on February 2, 2018. It presented exhibits related to the 400th anniversary of the saint’s death and the celebrations held in Rostkowo in 1968, as well as reliquaries, paintings and other articles of devotion from the collection of the Diocesan Museum of Płock, the Diocesan Archive, and the private collection of Fr. Jan Cegłowski from Mława. A special exhibit was a 1536 monstrance founded by Fr. Jan Krętkowski, brought from St. John the Baptist Parish in Węgra, before which St. Stanislaus Kostka may have prayed (Grzybowska, Kamiński, Malczyk, 2019, p. 183-184).

The Historical Museum in Przasnysz, the city where Stanislaus Kostka was baptized in 1550, organized a mobile exhibition *A Brief History of Holiness*, with the script written by Bartosz Drejerski and Monika Miłoszewska, and the artwork designed by Joanna Strękowska. The exhibition consisted of 16 boards depicting the most important facts of the life of St. Stanislaus with numerous illustrations. It was displayed, among other places, in the square in front of the parish church in Rostkowo, and presented materials from the collections of the Historical Museum in Przasnysz, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, the Archive of the Southern Poland Province of the Society of Jesus in Cracow, the Museum of the Southern Poland Province of the Society of Jesus in Stara Wieś, the Diocesan Museum in Płock, the National Museum in Cracow, the Czartoryski Princes Library in Cracow, the Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cracow, and the National Digital Archive. The exhibition was co-financed by the Museum of Polish History in Warsaw as part of the Patriotism of Tomorrow program (cf. Brykner, Drejewski, Miłoszewska 2018).

Waldemar Krzyżewski (b. 1953), veterinary physician and social activist, co-founder of the St. Stanislaus Kostka Gallery in Rostkowo (cf. Otłowska, 2018), presented his collection of religious pictures of St. Stanislaus from all over the world in a commemorative exhibition consisting of more than a dozen boards. It was presented in November 2018 at the Higher Seminary in Płock, as well as abroad, in

the St. Stanislaus Kostka Chapel in Vienna at the intersection of Steindlgasse 6 and Kurrentgasse 2 (Łukaszuk-Ritter, 2020b).

Another commemorative exhibition accompanied the symposium in Toruń mentioned above. It was composed of two parts. One presented the life of St. Stanislaus Kostka and publications related to his stay in Vienna and Rome. The other presented 19th and 20th century studies on the saint. In addition, large boards were prepared depicting the history of his life. The exhibition was open from November 13 to December 9, 2018 at the University Library in Toruń (cf. Dejnego-Białkowska, 2020).

5. Various pastoral initiatives

By decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary of November 20, 2017, St. Stanislaus Kostka was proclaimed the main patron saint of the Diocese of Płock (cf. Grzybowska, Kamiński, Malczyk, 2019, p. 20-21). The same dicastery issued a rescript with indulgences for the entire Year of St. Stanislaus and the associated special papal blessing (cf. Grzybowska, Kamiński, Malczyk, 2019, p. 22-24).

During the year, two folders about the Saint of Rostkowo were prepared. One was handed out to the faithful of the Diocese of Płock during the 2018 pastoral visit. The other, entitled "Saint Stanislaus Kostka (1550-1568)," with a text in English by Fr. Wojciech Kućko, was distributed to the participants of the 9th World Meeting of Families in Dublin (August 22-26, 2018) and during the 34th World Youth Day in Panama (January 22-27, 2019; cf. Grzybowska, Kamiński, Malczyk, 2019, p. 253).

The main jubilee celebrations in honor of the Saint of Rostkowo were organized on August 19, 2018 at his birthplace, and were presided over by Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz (cf. Dziwisz, 2018). These events were accompanied by a special thanksgiving service celebrated in the parishes of the Diocese of Płock (cf. Kućko, 2018b).

Another historic event was the 380th Plenary Meeting of the Polish Bishops' Conference, organized by the Diocese of Płock in the diocese's capital on September 25-26, 2018. It was devoted to the pastoral

care of young people, the issue of family ministry, and sexual abuse of minors (cf. Grzybowska, Kamiński, Malczyk, 2019, p. 151-172).

In two dioceses, Płock and Rzeszów, peregrinations of the relics of St. Stanislaus Kostka were organized. In the Diocese of Rzeszów, this initiative was coordinated by the Catholic Youth Association (cf. Peregrination, 2018). In the Diocese of Płock, the peregrination began in St. Matthew's Parish in Pultusk on April 6, 2018, and ended on December 7, 2018 in St. Bartholomew's Parish in Płock (cf. Grzybowska, Kamiński, Malczyk, 2019, p. 189-190, 248-249). These initiatives were organized by the diocesan youth ministry with Fr. Krzysztof Ruciński.

An original way of reaching out to children and young people to popularize the life message of the Saint of Rostkowo were comic books which presented the complex history of Kostka's life and vocation in an accessible graphic form (cf. Kaczmarek 2018; earlier this form had been used by: Wysogład, 2011)

6. Celebrations in the Diocese of Płock

By decree of the Bishop of Płock Piotr Libera of December 27, 2017, sixteen station churches were appointed in the Diocese of Płock where the faithful could receive a plenary indulgence in the Year of St. Stanislaus Kostka (cf. Libera, 2017). The year began with an inaugural service held on January 6, 2018 in all parishes of the diocese, prepared by Fr. Wojciech Kućko (cf. Kućko, 2017).

The 2nd Synod of Youth of the Diocese of Płock, organized at the Higher Seminary in Płock on September 1, 2018, culminated in the publication of a special message on the identity of the Church, the parish seen as a place of growth for young people and responsibility for life (cf. Grzybowska, Kamiński, Malczyk, 2019, p. 141-146).

The culmination of celebrations held in the Year of St. Stanislaus Kostka was the Holy Mass celebrated in St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish Church in Rypin on November 25, 2018, during which fourteen "Youth Confessionals" were inaugurated in the Diocese of Płock (cf. Grzybowska, Kamiński, Malczyk, 2019, p. 238-239).

As part of the “Write a Letter to St. Stanislaus Kostka” project launched by the New Evangelization Faculty of the Diocesan Curia in Płock received about 200 letters written in the traditional form, 10 in electronic form, and 153 from Polish community youth. They were all published as a collection (Zielonka, Zdunkiewicz 2019; cf. Grzybowska, Kamiński, Malczyk, 2019, p. 252-253).

Among other pastoral projects aimed at promoting the cult of St. Stanislaus Kostka and attitudes based on the model of his life, the Diocese of Płock organized, among other events: the 3rd Diocesan Pilgrimage of Altar Servers to Czerwińsk (June 16, 2018); the 37th “Made For Greatness” Pilgrimage from Płock to the Jasna Góra Monastery; the 36th Pilgrimage of Children and Youth to Przasnysz and Rostkowo which gathered 9,500 pilgrims (September 15, 2018); a Jesuit pilgrimage to Rostkowo (October 13, 2018); as well as a diocesan pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Stanislaus Kostka in Rome (October 20-23, 2018); and the 25th anniversary of the Catholic Youth Association of the Diocese of Płock in Rostkowo on November 24, 2018. In addition, the town of Drobin, the birthplace of St. Stanislaus’s mother, was committed to the patronage of the Young Man from Rostkowo on December 19, 2018. In Przasnysz, the city where St. Stanislaus Kostka was baptized, a mural with the likeness of the saint, designed by Tomasz Jakubowski, was unveiled on September 15, 2018 on the façade of the parish building at św. Wojciecha Street (cf. Grzybowska, Kamiński, Malczyk, 2019, p. 194-251).

7. The pertinence of the message of St. Stanislaus Kostka

The celebration of the 450th anniversary of the death of the patron saint of Poland, children and youth certainly provided an opportunity to look at the saint with fresh eyes and consider the pertinence of the message of his life. One of the fellow students of Saint Stanislaus Kostka at the Imperial College in Vienna reminisced that although it was difficult for him to recall his face, he had known him by the nickname he was given: “The Best” (Majkowski 1965, p. 193). It seems that this trait of the young man’s character, full of ambition and enthusiasm,

may be relevant especially for youth at the beginning of the third millennium. Stanislaus Kostka appears as a man of action who was not deterred by any obstacle or adversity. Although his membership of the clerical state may not be understood very well among young people today, in the age of rivalry and competition St. Stanislaus may certainly be a bright example of fairness in competition and making choices in which one reckons not only profits and losses, but also values. Such perseverance in pursuit of one’s goals and determination in the realization of one’s vocation in life may impress the followers of St. Stanislaus (cf. Łabendowicz, 2018).

Secondly, it is worth paying attention to the context of the life and work of the Saint of Rostkowo. After the painful years of Reformation and the regrettable divisions in the Catholic Church, much hope was placed in the Council of Trent (1545-1563) which set itself the goal of renewing the Catholic faith and committed to the evangelization of the world as it was then being discovered. In this task the Pope was to be supported by the many religious congregations that were being founded at the time, among which the Jesuits, special “soldiers” in the battle for man, had a special place. Members of the Society of Jesus (Latin: *Societas Iesu*), established in 1534 by St. Ignatius of Loyola and his companions, made great efforts after the Council in the field of Catholic education and explaining faith through Christian art, making a significant contribution to the birth of the new era of Baroque. It was not without reason that Stanislaus of Rostkowo chose first to study at Jesuit colleges and then to join the Jesuit novitiate. He probably saw the great zeal and commitment of the Jesuits to guarding the purity of the Catholic faith. If modern times are marked by the many effects of moral relativism, post-truth and ethical subjectivism, then certainly the example of St. Stanislaus may be looked up to in the context of commitment to truth and a faithful interpretation of the Catholic faith. Interest in the history of the Jesuits and in St. Stanislaus Kostka as a son of this congregation in the year dedicated to him showed the need to explain the faith through publications, symposia, as well as art. All these dimensions were reflected in various initiatives launched that year. Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, whose teaching may be invoked as an inspiration for young people to live in the light of higher values, has left a valuable contribution and proposals for the formation of

children and young people following the example of St. Stanislaus Kostka, according to the motto of the Saint of Rostkowo: *Ad maiora natus sum*, taken from ancient philosophers (cf. Bednarczyk, 2018).

Jesuit novices once used to practice a form of prayer called Pactum Sancti Stanislai, which aimed to popularize the devotion to St. Stanislaus Kostka

and the values associated with him (cf. Comb, 1996, p. 638). The year 2018 showed that it is also worth recalling today the time-tested example of the life of the patron saint of children and young people – St. Stanislaus Kostka, especially in the context of a rational and well-planned care for the vocational discernment of young people.

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