

Bogdan Sadowski

Centre for Thought of John Paul II

An institute of culture of the city of Warsaw, Poland

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<http://www.centrumjp2.pl>

“Thank God [...] do not quench the Spirit’, with these words on the 9th of June 1991 at the Okęcie airport John Paul II said goodbye to Varsovians. Fourteen years later, on the 2nd of April 2005, these words took on a significant meaning. Today, deeply grateful for such an exceptional pontificate, we are creating the Centre for Thought of John Paul II. Let us not quench our Spirit!”

The Centre for Thought of John Paul II, a local government institution of culture of the city of Warsaw, began its work on the 1st of April 2006. The scope of our activity has four dimensions: scholarships, research and education, popularization and archives.

We want to be a modern, energetic and a recognizable cultural institution, both nationally and internationally. Creating a meeting place for people interested in this extraordinary pontificate and its inspiring action, the Centre for Thought of John Paul II contributes to the development of Polish culture and inter-generational dialogue. In a short time it has also become a reference point, especially for young people, in the search for answers to the problems of the modern world.

We have realized over 200 different projects aimed mostly at young people, published over 200,000 copies of publications, recorded over 300 interviews and collected hundreds of souvenirs connected with John Paul II. We are one of the most active in Warsaw. As indicated by a poll conducted by the oldest research centre TNS OBOP 86 percent of Poles consider that such an institution should exist and therefore we cannot let them down.

Scholarships

The centre coordinates a scholarship program created by the president of the city of Warsaw. We organise the recruitment and then encourage young citizens receiving the scholarships, in the name of John Paul II from the city of Warsaw, to actively involve themselves in our activities. Every year over 600 people studying in Warsaw receive scholarships. Anyone between the ages of 11 and 24 can receive them.

Research and Education

We organise interdisciplinary research conferences, seminars, lectures, post-graduate studies and research projects. In our ventures we cooperate with such well-known names as George Weigel, Prof. Enzo Pace, Prof. Wojciech Roszkowski, Fr. Prof. Andrzej Szostek, Prof. Jerzy Gałkowski, Prof. Krzysztof Kosela and many others.

Popularisation

We organise exhibitions, media projects, competitions and public events. We prepared the largest multimedia exhibition dedicated to John Paul II in 2008. We are the main organisers of the Warsaw commemorations of the anniversary of the death of the Pope as well as of His apostolic travels to His fatherland. We created our own library, whose collection is dedicated entirely to the Pope from a 'distant country' which currently exceeds 6,000 books in languages including Polish, English, Italian, German, French, Spanish and even Japanese. The choir of the Centre for Thought of John Paul II numbers around 60 people, most of them being those who have received scholarships from our institution. We are the publishers of many books relating to the person and teachings of John Paul II, the titles of Vittorio Possenti, Jan Ross, Livio Melina, Angelo Scolia as well as CDs with recordings of the homilies of the Holy Father during his pilgrimages to Poland.

Documentation

We created a Mediatheque, a multimedia archive collecting sound and visual materials connected with John Paul II. We are still recording interviews with

people who personally knew Karol Wojtyła - at this moment we have completed interviews with 360 individuals.

Presenting selected projects:

Commemorations of the Anniversary of the Death of John Paul II in Warsaw

On the 2nd of April of each year we organize the commemoration of the death of the Holy Father, with accompanying social campaigns of the Centre for Thought of John Paul II- 'Stop, this passing has a meaning' in 2007, and also 'Life is eternal' in 2008. Two years ago a 'Lenten psalms' oratorio combined musical forms with elements of theatre, artistic scenes and live paintings. A vast multimedia show adopted the template of the Passion and was written into a present context - a city teeming with life, moving traffic and illuminated skyscrapers. This was successful in gathering close to 3 million people in front of their televisions. Around 10,000 people took part in the commemorations in 2010, which consisted of a collection for those suffering from Parkinson's disease, screenings of films about John Paul II and a 'Saints do not Pass Away' oratorio on Piłsudski square.

Exhibition 'Wojtyła: Productions. Drama of Speech and Gesture'

The exhibition documented the stage history of the dramas of Karol Wojtyła in theatres throughout Poland: from the premiere of 'The Brother of Our God' in Cracow on the 13th of December 1980, up until the most recent realizations, not excluding the 'Roman Triptych'. The exhibition showed materials tied to specific papal premieres, directorial editions, posters, invitations, photographs, stage setting and costume projects, decorative elements, and at the same time showing in an approachable way the process of realization, from the reading of a text to the very moment of a premiere. The exhibition in the Theatrical Museum at the National Opera was visited by 3000 people between the 7th of October and the 11th of November 2007.

Town of Mercy

During the charity festival in the Town of Mercy built by the Centre of Thought of John Paul II, over 70 various institutions, foundations and non-governmental

organizations met in the heart of Warsaw. They are connected through a common goal be it charity and philanthropy. These organizations are a living example of the social changes of the last three decades, being the fruits of the first visit of John Paul II to Poland. Lectures about volunteering, an exhibition promoting fair trade, a first aid course, theatre productions, many games and competitions for young people and film screenings were on offer for those visiting the town. Every visitor could take part in recording a film fragment, which in its final form showed Varsovians reading the text of a homily by John Paul II of the 2nd of June 1979, when the words ‘Let your Spirit descend! Let your Spirit descend and renew the face of the earth! The face of this land!’ were spoken.