

Catholic-Orthodox Relations in Poland during the Pontificate of John Paul II

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The article is an attempt to analyze mutual relations of two biggest Churches in Poland: Catholic Church, which has had a historically and demographically dominant position, and the biggest minority Church — Polish Orthodox Church. The time of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II (1978–2005) was a period of intense inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue. There were many meetings among representatives of both Churches. On the basis of the reports from the above-mentioned meetings, statements of hierarchs of both Churches, and official documents, the author presents the history of mutual relations pointing out both hardships and successes in the ecumenical dialogue. One of the obstacles worth mentioning in the religious dialogue is Uniatism. It constituted the most relevant barrier for the dialogue in Poland. Antagonisms perpetuated throughout centuries have evoked negative emotions until now. However, theological problems were much easier to solve. There had been other successes achieved in this field: the agreement on theological understanding of sacraments, along with indicating the dominating role of the Eucharist, and the mutual recognition of baptisms. The Catholic-Orthodox dialogue in Poland placed in a wider international context of inter-religious relationships can be evaluated as burdened with difficulties but developing, with its historical peak during the pontificate of John Paul II. Despite the barriers which still exist, it has to be stated that many significant matters have already been solved. Numerous undertaken incentives have survived and have become a starting point for further efforts. However, favourable conditions are needed.

Keywords: Polish Orthodox Church, Catholic Church, John Paul II, ecumenical dialogue.

Католическо-православные отношения в Польше во время понтификата Иоанна Павла II

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В статье предпринимается попытка проанализировать взаимные отношения двух церквей в Польше: католической, которая исторически и демографически доминировала, и крупнейшего меньшинства православной церкви. Время понтификата папы

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Иоанна Павла II (1978–2005) было периодом интенсивного межрелигиозного и экуменического диалога. Состоялось много встреч между представителями обеих церквей. На основании отчетов о встречах, заявлений иерархов обеих церквей и официальных документов автор представляет историю взаимных отношений, указывая и на проблемы, и на успехи в экуменическом диалоге. Одним из препятствий, заслуживающих упоминания в религиозном диалоге, является униатство. Оно представляет собой наиболее важный барьер для диалога в Польше. Противоречия, формировавшиеся на протяжении веков, до сих пор вызывают негативные эмоции. Однако богословские проблемы решить было гораздо проще. Так, в этой области было достигнуто соглашение о богословском понимании таинств наряду с указанием доминирующей роли евхаристии и взаимным признанием крещений. О католическо-православном диалоге в Польше, включенном в более широкий международный контекст межрелигиозных отношений, можно сказать, что он хотя и непросто, но плодотворен; его исторический пик приходится на время понтификата Иоанна Павла II. Несмотря на существующие барьеры, можно констатировать, что многие важные вопросы уже решены.

Ключевые слова: Польская православная церковь, католическая церковь, Иоанн Павел II, экуменический диалог.

The Catholic Church has a dominant position in the religious structure of Poland. It is estimated that there were 34.754 million Catholics in 1980, 35.895 million in 1990, and 34.607 million in 2000, which comprised 95.7% of all citizens¹. On the other hand, the Polish Orthodox Church constitutes the biggest religious minority. Namely, there were 460,000 worshippers in 1980, 570,600 in 1990, and 509,500 in 2000².

The analysis of the relationship between the two biggest Christian churches in Poland can be conducted from a range of perspectives. Firstly, the relations between demographically and historically dominant force (the Catholic Church) and minority church can be explored to assess the condition of inter-religious relationships in Poland³. Secondly, it is possible to evaluate the direction of mutual relations over a long period, and as a consequence — to evaluate ecumenic tendencies and real problems connected with the mutual dialogue, which is of crucial importance. Thirdly, the analysis can concern particular historical events and the effect of influential individuals on the shape of mutual relations. The three approaches do not cover the entire scope of possible research but they constitute examples of research areas connected to the relationship of the Catholic Church and the Polish Orthodox Church. Thus, this article presents an analysis based partly on the three aforementioned problems, with the third aspect taken as a starting point and a leading approach.

The peculiarity of the Catholic-Orthodox relations lies in the organisational structure created within two fractions of Christianity. In terms of organisation, the Catholic Church is a centralised institution, which has its own country — Vatican, which keeps diplomatic ties with other countries. All Catholics around in the world are subordinate to the Pope. In contrast, the Orthodox Churches are characterised by autocephaly, thus Churches in particular countries are not subordinate to any higher church authority. The situation

¹ *Łazowska B.* Struktura wyznaniowa ludności Polski // 1050 lat chrześcijaństwa w Polsce. Warszawa, 2016. S. 68.

² *Ibid.*

³ See: *Romański-Cebula S.* Prawa i wolności religijne we współczesnej Polsce. Ustawodawstwo a realia społeczno-kulturowe. Kraków, 2011.

makes the dialogue between two churches two-dimensional: the dialogue between the Catholic Church and representatives of many autocephalic Orthodox Churches, which can be simplified as the general dialogue or the international dialogue; and the dialogue between the Catholic Church and a single autocephalic Orthodox Church. It does not exclude mutual documents within a country, however, in the case of the Catholic Church it has to be approved by the Pope.

It is indisputable that John Paul II was an advocate of ecumenism during his entire pontificate (1978–2005). He expressed it in his first message *Urbi et Orbi* on 17 October 1978, the day after he became the Pope:

“Nor at this point must we forget the Brethren of other Churches and Christian confessions. For the cause of ecumenism is so lofty and such a sensitive issue that we may not keep silent about it. How often do we meditate together on the last wish of Christ who asked the Father for the gift of unity for the disciples (Jn 17:21–23)?”⁴.

The notion was also put into practice in the general policy of the Rome, in particular during the Pope's eight pilgrimages to the mother land. It had a noticeable effect on the position of non-Catholic religions, especially in Poland, because the concordat policy became one of the exceptionally important elements of Vatican's influence, after ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue. Tadeusz Zieliński, a professor of law and a Protestant theologian, has emphasized that concordats concluded by the Holy See de facto influence the introduction of analogous regulations of the state towards other religions. Legislation which is established and negotiated by the Roman Catholic Church becomes the law applied towards all legal religions⁵. It is of crucial importance because the abovementioned religions do not have the same influence as the Holy See, which is an independent legal entity of the international law. In this way, the Concordat, being an international contract, becomes a guarantee of the introduction of analogous regulations towards other religions. Being a legal act positioned in the hierarchy right below the constitution and above other legislations, it implies a requirement for legislation made in the Polish legal system to be compatible with a higher-ranking act, which is the Concordat and the constitution in this case.

The extent of the influence of John Paul II's pontificate on the position of the Catholic Church in Poland, which was indeed significantly strengthened, is outside the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that it resulted in a temporary increase in priestly vocations. For instance, the record number of the seminary alumni in 1987 was 9,038 people⁶ (in 2017 this number was 2,200)⁷. Obviously, the pontificate was not the only factor affecting religiousness. Its forecasted decline after the death of the pope did not happen immediately. As Janusz Mariański noted in 2013: “Sociological research in the Polish society, especially the surveys, indicate that in spite of radical political, economic and socio-cultural changes, the level of church religiousness and the meaning of religion in everyday life stayed at a fairly constant level two decades after 1989”⁸. First pilgrimages preceding the

⁴ Jan Paweł II w dialogu miłości z Kościołem Wschodnim / red. A. Polkowski. Warszawa, 1984. S. 59.

⁵ Zieliński T.J. Trzy systemy prawnej ochrony wolności religijnej o zasięgu międzynarodowym // Religia a współczesne stosunki międzynarodowe. Kraków, 2010. S. 25–16.

⁶ Jaroń J. Seminarium i katolickie szkolnictwo // Kościół katolicki w Polsce 1918–1990. Rocznik statystyczny. Warszawa, 1991. S. 235–251.

⁷ Sadłoń W. Annarium Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia AD 2019. Warszawa, 2019. S. 4.

⁸ Mariański J. Praktyki religijne w Polsce w procesie przemian // Postawy społeczno-religijne Polaków 1991–2012. Warszawa, 2013. S. 61.

political transformation constituted a serious problem for the Polish authorities who faced the harsh situation of three coincidences: loyalty towards political allies, fear for their own image on the international arena, and the expectations of the vast majority of the Polish society welcoming the new Polish pope. The pilgrimages of the Head of the Church to Poland were profound religious, social and political events. The elevated sense of community contributed to the establishment of NSZZ (Independent Self-Governing Trade Union) "Solidarity", the signing of the August Agreements (Gdańsk Agreement) and the political transformation, in the long run. During subsequent pilgrimages to Poland, the Pope eagerly addressed the faith and its relevance to social life.

In this article I will analyse the Catholic-Orthodox inter-religion and ecumenical dialogue during the pontificate of John Paul II. The choice of the period is justified by the unusually intense relationship between both Churches. I will refer to the most important events and documents of the general Catholic-Orthodox dialogue so as to look at the dialogue conducted or initiated by the Pope in Poland in this context. Moreover, I will characterize the most evident successes and difficulties in the dialogue between the Catholic Church in Poland and the Polish Orthodox Church.

Ecumenism. General context. The stance of the Polish Pope on the ecumenical dialogue was not a *novum*. It should be regarded as the deepening and continuation of the work of his predecessors, Jan XXIII and Paul VI, and it should be seen as the development of the ideas presented at the Second Vatican Council. Thus the relations between the Catholic Church and the Polish Orthodox Church constituted part of a wider context of ecumenical relations initiated by John Paul II.

At the most general level, it concerned inviting the Orthodox Church, as one of the many in Eastern Christianity, to enter into the dialogue with Catholics. It happened during the Pope's visit to Turkey in 1979 and his meetings with representatives of Eastern Churches, when it was decided to create the International Commission involved in the theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and Orthodox Churches. It would have been impossible without the open-minded attitude of the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I of Constantinople. The Commission included representatives of the Catholic Church and fourteen autocephalic Orthodox Churches⁹, among which was the Polish Orthodox Church represented by Michał Sawa Hrycuniak, the prospective metropolitan of Warsaw and Poland, and Szymon Romańczuk, prospective archbishop of Poznań and Łódź.

At the end of the 1970s and in the 1980s, the ecumenical dialogue was rapidly developing giving hope for crossing new barriers. The mutual declaration of John Paul II and Dimitrios I seems to have been groundbreaking, yet still not realized: "we affirm again our resolute determination to do everything possible to hasten the day when full communion will be reestablished between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church and when we will at last be able to concelebrate the divine Eucharist"¹⁰.

⁹ These were: the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the Patriarchate of Antioch, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Patriarchate of Moscow, the Serbian Orthodox Church, Romanian Orthodox Church, Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Georgian Orthodox Church, the Church of Cyprus, the Church of Greece, The Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, the Orthodox Church of Albania and the Polish Orthodox Church.

¹⁰ Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Dimitrios I (November 30, 1979). URL: <https://www.apostolicpilgrimage.org/-/joint-declaration-of-pope-john-paul-ii-and-ecumenical-patriarch-dimitrios-30-november-1979> (accessed: 15.09.2020).

Soon afterwards, the work of the Joint International Commission For Theological Dialogue between Catholic Church and Orthodox Churches brought about documents: *The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity* (1982)¹¹, and *Faith, Sacraments and Unity of the Church* (1987)¹². The term “sister Churches”, which was often used by John Paul II and representatives of Orthodox Church who supported the idea of ecumenism, became popular¹³. It was used in the document from Balamand (1993), calling for rebuilding of the mutual relations¹⁴.

The encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* released in 1995 was the completion and summary of ecumenical dialogue. It was recognised as vital for ecumenical dialogue and was appreciated by Christian Churches, including the Orthodox ones. The Pope again emphasized the importance of Cyril and Methodius (the saints of the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church) in the evangelisation in the East, before the division in Christianity took place. With reference to this, paragraph 54 reads:

“In this perspective an expression which I have frequently employed finds its deepest meaning: the Church must breathe with her two lungs! In the first millennium of the history of Christianity, this expression refers primarily to the relationship between Byzantium and Rome. From the time of the Baptism of Rus’ it comes to have an even wider application: evangelization spread to a much vaster area, so that it now includes the entire Church. If we then consider that the salvific event which took place on the banks of the Dnieper goes back to a time when the Church in the East and the Church in the West were not divided, we understand clearly that the vision of the full communion to be sought is that of unity in legitimate diversity”¹⁵.

The desire for “full communion between the East and West”¹⁶ expressed in the document could be considered its apogee. To realise it, there were pointed out fundamental topics, issues and obstacles which required mutual contemplation. The encyclical states that building unity is an imperative of Christian conscience guided by love.

In addition to issuing of documents, the pontificate of John Paul II was filled with ecumenical meetings, which were sometimes combined with mutual prayers of Christians and even representatives of other religions. The most famous ones were the International Days of Prayers for Peace in Assisi. During the second meeting in Assisi, one of the three prayers for peace during the ecumenical mass was said by the representative of the Polish Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Jerzy Pańkowski¹⁷.

¹¹ Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and The Orthodox Church. *The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity*. Munich. June 30 to July 6. 1982. URL: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19820706_munich_en.html (accessed: 15.09.2020).

¹² *Faith, Sacraments and Unity of the Church*. URL: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19870616_bari_en.html (accessed: 15.09.2020).

¹³ This is the title of one of the chapters of the encyclical of John Paul II. *Ut unum sint*. See also: *Kałużny T. Sytuacja międzykościelna w Rosji // “Kościoły siostrzane” w dialogu*. Opole, 2002. S. 266.

¹⁴ *Nossol A. Dialog między “Kościołami siostrzanymi” // Ibid*. S. 219.

¹⁵ *John Paul II. Ut Unum Sint. On commitment to Ecumenism*. Vatican. 25.05.1995. URL: http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html (accessed: 15.09.2020).

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁷ *Igańska E., Sakowicz E. Ekumeniczne i dialogiczne implikacje modlitewnych spotkań w Asyżu // Pontyfikat ekumenicznej nadziei. Z Janem Pawłem II na drogach ekumenii*. Opole, 2008. S. 131.

John Paul II was looking for different forms of rapprochement and elimination of tensions by supporting ecumenism and expressing it in a wide array of ways. Among the gestures of special importance in the ecumenical dialogue were: giving places or artefacts of cult to other Churches (for example, handing over a Roman Catholic church of Saint Theodore to the Greek Orthodox Church on 30 November 2000; handing over an icon of Kazan Holy Mother to the Russian Orthodox Church in 2004; handing over the relics of Saint Gregor of Naziansus and John Chryzostom to Patriarchate of Constantinople in 2004) and different smaller incentives which strengthened understanding, among which — a request to script the Way of the Cross sermon held every Great Friday in Roman Colosseum and to broadcast it worldwide, which was done in 1994 by the Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, and by the Orthodox theologian Olivier Clement in 1998¹⁸. During the visit in Greece in 2001 the Pope apologised for the sins of Catholics towards the Orthodox, especially for conquering Constantinople by crusaders in 1204¹⁹.

Summarising the collaboration and looking forward to the future, both sides decided to establish a foundation for further relationship. They agreed to formally commit to further dialogue and cooperation on the basis of the document Ecumenical Charter of 26 April 2001 signed by the Orthodox Metropolitan Jérémie of France, who led Conference of European Churches (CEC), and the Cardinal Miroslav Vlk of Czech, who led Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe²⁰. It remains to this day an ecumenical challenge for both Churches.

Catholic-Orthodox dialogue in Poland. Under Polish conditions, given almost monolithic religious structure, ecumenical dialogue would not have been possible without serious and perservering involvement of the Catholic Church, which has well-founded historical and traditional influence²¹. A natural consequence of the presence of a dominant cultural group in a given society, the Catholic Church, is the possibility of imposing behavioural patterns or ethical systems which shape the society²². Therefore, the support of ecumenism by the head of the Church coming from the Western Poland was crucial to its success. The popularity of John Paul II in Poland made it possible for ecumenic activities to find its followers and continuers here.

Pilgrimages of John Paul II to Poland were often accompanied by ecumenical events. These were, above others, meetings with representatives of Churches associated with the Polish Ecumenical Council²³, which accepts Churches that worship the Holy Trinity and Jesus Christ as the Human-God and Redeemer. Polish Ecumenical Council organised ecumenical masses, conferences, youth camps; it was also involved in charity and in consultation with the state authorities on matters connected with religion and ecumenism²⁴. In its wide range of activities it could count on John Paul II's support.

¹⁸ Pawłowski S. Ekumeniczne dokumenty i inicjatywy Jana Pawła II // Pontyfikat ekumenicznej nadziei. Z Janem Pawłem II na drogach ekumenii. Opole, 2008. S. 176–177.

¹⁹ Ibid. S. 177.

²⁰ Charta Oecumenica (Ecumenical Charter). Strasbourg. 21.04.2001. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20121225040803/http://www.ceceurope.org/current-issues/charta-oecumenica/> (accessed: 15.09.2020).

²¹ It is manifest in the creation of a social-cultural situation, for example, state holidays to a large extent overlap with Catholic holidays.

²² See: Mucha J. Oblicza etniczności: studia teoretyczne i empiryczne. Kraków, 2005.

²³ Polish Ecumenical Council has been active since 1946. It associates, besides to the Polish Orthodox Church, include four protestant Churches and two Old Catholic Churches.

²⁴ Romański-Cebula S. Prawa i wolności religijne... S. 168.

Wsiewołod Konach, an Orthodox theologian from the Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw, showed that ecumenical meetings and the Pope's speeches during his pilgrimages to the motherland influenced the ecumenical movement in Poland and the openness towards it²⁵.

During the Pope's third pilgrimage to Poland on 8 June 1987, there was an ecumenical meeting where John Paul II said: "It is needed for us, brothers, to live in the spirit of evangelic brotherhood and to be able to forgive what we did wrong towards each other in the past. We need to bravely shape better ecumenical future, 'forgetting what was behind us and making effort towards what is in front of us' (Philippians 3, 13)"²⁶.

This utterance shows the approach of John Paul II towards ecumenism. Modest and hopeful attitude to the discussion of difficult issues laid the foundation of successes in ecumenical field for years to come.

There was an unprecedented event during the fourth pilgrimage of John Paul II to Poland, when the Pope visited an Orthodox church in Białystok. In his speech he referred both to the difficult relations in the past and to the hope for forgiveness and sustaining a dialogue. The following utterance of the Pope was of crucial importance because of its appeal to break down barriers:

"Today we see clearer and understand better that our Churches are sister Churches. The term Sister Churches is not only a polite expressions but the basic category of ecumenical ecclesiology. Mutual relationship among all Churches should be based on it, including Catholic Church and Polish Orthodox Church"²⁷.

What we deal with here is the most open ecumenical definition of "Sister Churches" that the Pope had ever expressed. In hindsight, it turned out how important the term was for representatives of Orthodox churches. The Polish Orthodox felt acknowledged, and appreciated the Pope's presence in their church. Many years afterwards, an Orthodox archbishop Sawa commented on the meeting in Radio Białystok:

"Until 1991, Roman Popes had only visited two Orthodox churches: in Jerusalem and Constantinople. Saint Nicolas cathedral in Białystok was the fist Orthodox church of the Slavic world, the first in the Central Europe. What is more, the Pope was praying in the Orthodox church in his motherland and that could not go unseen among his fellow countrymen"²⁸.

The next ecumenical prayer that involved the Pope and representatives of Christian churches, Jewish communities and Muslims took place during the International Eucharistic Congress in Wrocław in 1997. In his speech, John Paul II accentuated that tolerance is

²⁵ Konach W. Jan Paweł II wobec prawosławia // Pontyfikat ekumenicznej nadziei. Z Janem Pawłem II na drogach ekumenii. Opole, 2008. S. 435.

²⁶ John Paul II's speech made during ecumenical meeting in the residence of the primate of Poland. Warszawa. 08.06.1978. URL: <http://www.nauczaniejp2.pl/dokumenty/wyswietl/id/485> (accessed: 15.09.2020).

²⁷ Podróż Apostolska do Polski. Przemówienie Jana Pawła II podczas ekumenicznego spotkania modlitewnego. Orthodox Cathedral. Białystok. 05.06.1991. URL: http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pl/speeches/1991/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19910605_incontro-ecumenico-bialystok.html (accessed: 15.09.2020).

²⁸ Abp Sawa: Jan Paweł II inspirował do ekumenizmu. Radio Białystok. 01.05.2011. URL: <https://www.radio.bialystok.pl/wiadomosci/index/id/59010> (accessed: 15.09.2020).

not enough and the Churches need forgiveness and reconciliation²⁹. He addressed Christian Churches and summed up preceding years of ecumenical dialogue and appealed for further unity: “In recent years the distance which separates the Churches and Ecclesial Communities from one another has diminished significantly. Even so it is still too great! Too great! Christ did not will it so! We must do everything possible to restore the fullness of communion. We cannot stop along this path. Let us turn once again to Jesus’ priestly prayer, in which he says: ‘that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you... so that the world may believe that you have sent me’ (Jn 17:21)”³⁰.

Two years later, John Paul II visited Drohiczyn. It was the second city with a significant number of the Orthodox Church worshippers after Białystok he had visited. John Paul II appealed again for unity and reconciliation, and the Orthodox Archbishop Sawa who was present there said, “The spirit of real reconciliation needs us to fight with egocentric individualism by treating our differences as a gift”³¹. In the end he emphasised that Poland lacked understanding and friendship between the Churches.

Based on numerous meetings and masses, the Commission on Dialogue of Episcopal Conference of Poland and Polish Ecumenical Council and the Catholic-Orthodox Bilateral Team were founded. The most important achievement of the former was an agreement on mutual acceptance of baptism by different Christian Churches in Poland. The document, which crowned years of arduous work and agreements, was signed on 23 January 2000 by 7 Churches, including the Catholic Church and the Polish Orthodox Church³². The symbolic event at the beginning of the third millenium of Christianity was received enthusiastically in Poland. After its success, the Commission returned to the issue of mixed marriages, which had been discussed with intervals since the late 1970s. The work turned out to be very complicated and arduous. It was decided to closely observe the functioning of mixed marriages in practice, doing extensive research and analysing its results³³. The work spanned a considerable period and exceeded John Paul II’s pontificate.

Another significant incentive, as seen from the perspective of ecumenical dialogue, was collective translation of the Bible into the Polish language by representatives of Churches: the Catholic Church, the Polish Orthodox Church, the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, the Polish Reformed Church, the Methodist Church, the Polish-Catholic Church, the Old Catholic Mariavite Church, the Baptist Union of Poland, the Pentecostal Church, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and the Fellowship of Christian Churches. The Catholic Church was represented by priests Jerzy Banak and Stanisław Jankowski, and the Orthodox Church — by Warsonofiusz Doroszkiewicz. The Gospels of

²⁹ *Konach W.* Jan Paweł II wobec prawosławia // *Pontyfikat ekumenicznej nadziei. Z Janem Pawłem II na drogach ekumenii.* Opole, 2008. S. 436–437.

³⁰ John Paul II. Homily at the Ecumenical Prayer Service. Wrocław. 31.05.1997. URL: http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1997/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19970531_wroclaw-ecumenismo.html (accessed: 15.09.2020).

³¹ *Konach W.* Jan Paweł II wobec prawosławia // *Pontyfikat ekumenicznej nadziei. Z Janem Pawłem II na drogach ekumenii.* Opole, 2008. S. 437–438.

³² Besides the Catholic Church and the Polish Orthodox Church, the document was signed by: the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, the Methodist Church, the Polish Reformed Church, the Polish-Catholic Church, the Old Catholic Mariavite Church. See: *Sakrament Chrztu znakiem jedności. Deklaracja Kościołów w Polsce na progu Trzeciego Tysiąclecia.* Warszawa. 23.01.2000. URL: <https://ekumenia.pl/czytelnia/dokumenty-ekumeniczne/sakrament-chrztu-znakiem-jednosci/> (accessed: 15.09.2020).

³³ The work was not finished during the pontificate of John Paul II.

Matthew and Mark were translated in 1997, the Gospel of Lucas — in 2000 and the New Testament and Psalms — in 2001³⁴.

Mutual involvement in charity became an important aspect of the activity of Christian Churches. The Catholic charity “Caritas” along with the Orthodox “Eleos” and Lutheran “Diakonia” have been organising Christmas Eve Incentive to Help Children (Wigilijne Dzieło Pomocy Dzieciom) since 2000. The same organisations hold a charity called Lenten Offering Box (Skarbonka Wielkopostna) which helps the sick, the handicapped and the elderly. There is also ecumenical “Train Station Mission” (Misja Dworcowa) created in 2001 which provides assistance to the homeless³⁵.

Many important declarations and gestures of bishops have not caused a marked increase of local events, even though they have created favourable conditions for ecumenical activities. According to Waław Hryniewicz, a Catholic theologian and ecumenist, one should look forward to the behavioural changes of worshippers, which we still lack³⁶. An Orthodox priest, Henryk Paprocki, pessimistically defines Polish ecumenism as “occasional” due to rare local incentives³⁷. There were rather few, though noticeable, events, such as mutual Catholic-Orthodox processions on All Saints’ Day (1 November) in parishes in Warsaw: the Orthodox — Saint John Climacus and the Catholic — Saint Wawrzyniec, or ecumenical pilgrimage Białystok-Wilno, during which the pilgrims visited Catholic and Orthodox churches.

Among other significant ecumenical events in Poland, not always based on local incentives, however engaging worshippers of many churches, the following can be named: Silesian Ecumenical Week (Śląski Tydzień Ekumeniczny), which involved meetings and carol singing; International Weeks of Prayer for the Unity of Christians (ogólnoświatowe Tygodnie Modlitwy o Jedność Chrześcijan), which take place from 18 to 25 January, and which are one of the most important ecumenical events in Poland; Ecumenical Biblical Days in May (majowe Ekumeniczne Dni Biblijne), which have been organised since 1994; Kodeń Ecumenical Days (Kodeńskie Dni Ekumeniczne) or International Day of Prayer (Światowy Dzień Modlitwy)³⁸. Even though many years have passed since the death of the propagator of ecumenical dialogue, these events have survived.

Effects of Catholic-Orthodox dialogue. Since Second Vatican Council, in which representatives of Patriarchate of Moscow took part as observers in the first session, it has been obvious that the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church in the divided Christianity are separated by relatively few issues compared to other Churches. The possibility of starting and maintaining dialogue had been growing for years, and when it opened up in 1965, the Patriarch Atenagoras I of Constantinople and the Pope Paul VI withdrew anathemas imposed in 1054. After the event, the dialogue advanced and reached its peak during the pontificate of John Paul II. It became evident that it was not theological differences but historical events which constituted the fundamental barrier. A large number of attempts were made to break them down. A contemplation was initiated by Churches around the world in order to support each other instead of competing.

³⁴ Budniak J., Kijan Z. J. Praktyczne formy działalności ekumenicznej w Polsce // Encyklopedia Ekumenizmu w Polsce (1964–2014). Kraków, 2016. S. 115–119.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Hryniewicz W. Na drodze pojednania. Medytacje ekumeniczne. Warszawa, 1998. S. 40.

³⁷ Paprocki H. Przyjazna współpraca i co dalej? // Podstawowe idee Vaticanum II pół wieku później. Kraków, 2015. S. 29.

³⁸ It is impossible to mention all ecumenical retreat, meetings, masses or pilgrimages.

With reference to difficult historical experiences, the most significant effect of Catholic-Orthodox dialogue on the international level, which also affected the relations in Poland, was a mutual document created in Arricia (Rome) in 1991 that was confirmed by the declaration of Balamand from 1993, according to which Uniatism and proselytism were rejected as methods of seeking Church unification³⁹. The rejection of Uniatism and acknowledgment of its unacceptability in the future, did not exclude the right for the Uniate Churches to exist⁴⁰, which was a sign of respect towards people who belonged to the Churches at that time. Dismissing Uniatism did not eliminate the problem in the Catholic-Orthodox relations. In 2000, during a plenary meeting in Baltimore, US, the dialogue was almost interrupted because of the differences in understanding matters of Uniatism. The event should not be interpreted as a significant step backward. It rather indicated the need for more time to solve some issues. In Polish reality, the matter of Uniatism was causing incessant pressure, which was manifested (also during John Paul II's pontificate) in a Uniate-Orthodox conflict over Orthodox churches⁴¹. It was the most serious obstacle in the dialogue in Poland, creating a lot of negative emotions which were historically rooted.

The theological dialogue proceeded much more smoothly because it was possible to reach an agreement in the theological understanding of sacraments, indicating Eucharist as the peak of Christian initiation⁴². Mutual Eucharist was not feasible, however, and still remained at that point an unattainable completeness of Christian unity, even though both the Orthodox and the Catholic sides recognised the validity of Eucharist carried out by the other party⁴³. In combination with the weighty event of recognising the validity of baptism — the Churches acknowledged that they are driven by the same God and neither of them has the monopoly on the truth.

Evaluating the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue during the pontificate of John Paul II, it is possible to notice a constant engagement that brought about a number of satisfactory effects for both sides and a period of impasse after 2000⁴⁴. The latter was caused, on the one hand, by the lack of full or continuing acceptance of ecumenical activities within each Church, and on the other hand, —by negative reactions towards two Catholic documents issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: the declaration *Dominus Jesus* and *The Note* referring to the term “Sister Churches” and limiting the phrase to the relationship among local Churches⁴⁵. In the eyes of the Orthodox, the term “Sister Churches” was defined in a different way compared to its previous meaning and usage⁴⁶. After the death of John Paul II, ecumenical dialogue was continued by his successor. However, religious minorities in Poland were reserved towards it. Summing up John Paul II's pontificate in

³⁹ *Anchimiuk J.* Problem terytoriów kanonicznych. Prawosławny punkt widzenia // “Kościoły siostrzane” w dialogu. Opole, 2002. S. 14.

⁴⁰ *Nabywaniec S.* Jan Paweł II wobec Kościołów Wschodnich // Pontyfikat ekumenicznej nadziei. Z Janem Pawłem II na drogach ekumenii. Opole, 2008. S. 343.

⁴¹ *Romański-Cebula S.* Prawa i wolności religijne... S. 171–172.

⁴² *Glaeser Z.* Eucharystia w dialogu. Wokół bilateralnych uzgodnień doktrynalnych Kościoła prawosławnego na temat Eucharystii. Opole, 2007. S. 130–134.

⁴³ *Ibid.* S. 169–174.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* S. 195–196.

⁴⁵ *Majewski J.* Ekumenizm w zmieniającej się sytuacji // Pontyfikat ekumenicznej nadziei. Z Janem Pawłem II na drogach ekumenii. Opole, 2008. S. 287–288.

⁴⁶ *Konach W.* Jan Paweł II wobec prawosławia // Pontyfikat ekumenicznej nadziei. Z Janem Pawłem II na drogach ekumenii. Opole, 2008. S. 432.

terms of ecumenical efforts, Archbishop Jeremiasz of the Polish Orthodox Church stated that since the Pope's death, Vatican's action have been diminishing ecumenical message⁴⁷. Its maintainence and depth will depend on worshippers of individual "Sister Churches". According to a Polish ecumenical researcher, Eugeniusz Sakowicz, "those who take part in the dialogue should not resign from stating difficult questions and discussing complicated issues. The involvement in the dialogue leads to reorientation of one's own views, broadening the viewpoints and evaluating the reality of new, deeper way of thinking"⁴⁸. This was not missing in the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue during the pontificate of John Paul II.

The Catholic-Orthodox dialogue in Poland placed in a wider international context of inter-religious relationships can be evaluated as burdened with difficulties but developing, with its historical peak during the pontificate of John Paul II. Despite the barriers which still exist, it has to be stated that many significant matters have already been solved. Numerous undertaken incentives have survived and have become a starting point for further efforts. Favourable conditions are needed, however. During catechesis which closed the ecumenical series, the Pope stated that "the unity of the Church is not only hope for the future: it already exists. Jesus did not pray for it in vain"⁴⁹. The time will show if the dialogue will be maintained and deepened.

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⁴⁷ Anchimiuk J. Jan Paweł II — papież, teolog, duszpasterz // Pontyfikat ekumenicznej nadziei. Z Janem Pawłem II na drogach ekumenii. Opole, 2008. S. 470.

⁴⁸ Sakowicz E. Dialog międzyreligijny // Jan Paweł II. Encyklopedia dialogu i ekumenizmu. Radom, 2006. S. 130.

⁴⁹ Kochel J. Ekumeniczne przesłanie śródowych katechez Jana Pawła II // Pontyfikat ekumenicznej nadziei. Z Janem Pawłem II na drogach ekumenii. Opole, 2008. S. 268.

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