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JOHN PAUL II'S FOOTSTEPS IN THE VATICAN

Arkadiusz NOCOŃ, *Śladami Jana Pawła II po Watykanie. Przewodnik* [Following John Paul II's Footsteps in the Vatican. A Guide], Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła 2015, 192 pages. ISBN: 978-83-7797-503-9.

Among all of the papal pontificates in the Church's history, without a doubt, John Paul II's 26 years of leading the Church was an outstanding event. For the generation that remembers this pontificate, the events that made it up are still alive. We must keep in mind, however, that it seems that our present high school graduates no longer remember John Paul II (or to a very limited extent). Hence, there is a need to recall the person of the Polish Pope, his teachings, the events connected with him, and also the places that perpetuate specific events.

Prelate Rev. Dr. Arkadiusz Nocoń, an employee of the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments and a lecturer at the Pontifical Gregorian University has undertaken the task of consolidating and describing the "traces" of St. Pope John Paul II at the Vatican. The author is a priest of the Archdiocese of Katowice. He graduated in the field of Christian and classical literature, and also specializes in patrology, hagiography and fiction. He is the author of several book publications.

The publication discussed here entitled *Following in the Footsteps of John Paul II at the Vatican. A Guide* is an extended version of the series of broadcasts that the author delivered on Vatican Radio from 2012 to 2014. The book was published by St. Paul's Edition. Ilona Kisiel edited the publication, proofreading was done by Ewa Stuła, and the cover was designed by Amadeusz Targoński. The front endpaper shows the plan of the Vatican. The book is divided into eight parts, which in a clear and logical way describe the subsequent places associated with the Polish Pope.

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At the very beginning of the book, the author thanks those who helped him during the writing of his publication. The foreword was written by Archbishop Mieczysław Mokrzycki, Metropolitan of Lviv, who was the Pope's second secretary during the last nine years of John Paul II's life. In the introduction, the author writes that his goal is to: "recall memories related to him [John Paul II—editor's note], both the material ones (inscriptions, mosaics, buildings), as well as the immaterial (events, gestures, words). All this is done with the hope that following the footsteps of John Paul II in the Vatican will bring us closer to his character and let us more fully discover the richness of his spiritual heritage: the unending power of his testimony and the depth of his teaching" (p. 13).

The first part concerns the Sistine Chapel and shows its composition in a graphic cross-section. The author reminds us that during John Paul II's pontificate, the chapel was restored and its Renaissance paintings were shown in new splendor. This place, however, is associated with a different moment in the life of Karol Wojtyła, namely his election as the Successor of St. Peter. The author also refers to a fragment from *Roman Triptych* written by the Pope.

The next part is called the "Blessing Lodge." Here, Fr. Nocoń describes the course of events after the election of the new Pope. He discusses the events of October 16, 1978 with great precision and in a picturesque way, when Cardinal Pericle Felici during the "Urbi et orbi" announced the pope "from a distant country." The author then quotes Pope John Paul II's first public presentation, including a comment evoking the feelings of the people present there at St. Peter's Square.

The third part of the presented publication is about St. Peter's Square, where the most important events of John Paul II's pontificate took place. This part of the book is divided into several chapters. First, the author recalls the Holy Mass inaugurating the pontificate of the Polish Pope on October 22, 1978 and cites a fragment of the papal homily. At the same time, he explains that today's liturgical celebration for St. John Paul II is associated with this day. The next event associated with St. Peter's Square which the author addresses is the assassination attempt on John Paul II on May 13, 1981. The description leads the reader to the truth that it was not the "events" that were decisive about saving the Pope's life, but the protection of the Mother of God. A poem by S. Noeli Wojtakowicz, *Majowa Pieta* [May Pieta] is included in this information.

The author of the publication also draws attention to a small marble plaque with John Paul II's coat of arms and the date of the attack, located between the paving stones at the place of the attack. Next, he mentions the beatifications and canonizations celebrated by John Paul II. The Pope raised the greatest number of people in the Church's history to the altar. A natural extension of this description is mentioning other Masses and audiences at St. Peter's Square. The next description refers to John Paul II's funeral. It presents the events related to the death of the Pope on April 2, 2005, and then the funeral. He also recalls a poem written at that time by Szymon Babuchowski.

In this part, the author of the publication also makes a brief summary of the pontificate of the Polish Pope. The banner with the inscription "Santo subito" ("saint immedi-

ately”) is the motive introducing the next two descriptions presented by the author. They are his beatification and canonization. The first ceremony took place on May 1, 2011, and was presided by Pope Benedict XVI, and the second was on April 27, 2014 led by Pope Francis. Fr. Nocoń also quotes a fragment of Pope Francis’ homily from the ceremony of proclaiming Popes John XXIII and John Paul II saints. The next descriptions refer to other papal traces at St. Peter’s Square. The first of these is the Christmas nativity scene, set up in this place according to the will of Pope John Paul II starting in 1982. As of 1983, a Christmas tree also stands next to the nativity scene. The next papal “trace” is the figure of St. Jacek Odrowąż, placed next to the other 138 statues of saints at the top of the colonnade of Bernini. The next description takes the reader to the Gallery of Charlemagne, in which the exhibition titled “John Paul II. Benedict XVI’s Tribute on the Occasion of the Beatification” was opened before the Pope’s beatification. The last chapter of this book presents, though in only a few sentences, the Swiss Guard, which in the years of John Paul II’s pontificate was enlarged to include 100 soldiers.

The next part of the work is devoted to a discussion on the papal residence, or the Apostolic Palace. The first chapter presents the activities of Pope John Paul II connected with the “Papal window.” He first appeared there on October 23, 1978, and the last time was on March 30, 2005. The next chapter is devoted to the private papal chapel. It was a privileged place in the daily life of John Paul II, and soon after his death, his body was exposed there. Fr. Nocoń also describes the papal apartments on the fourth floor of the Apostolic Palace. These include the already mentioned chapel, his private office, but also the library in which the Pope received his guests. There is also a dining room where he always ate in the company of guests and the bedroom in which he died. Taking advantage of the occasion, the author presents an outline of the pope’s daily plan. The next two chapters refer to the images placed in the Apostolic Palace at John Paul II’s request. The first of these is the Stations of the Cross on the terrace of the building, and the second is a mosaic of the Mother of the Church in one of the windows of the Apostolic Palace, which is a votum of gratitude for her saving the Pope’s life on the day of the assassination attempt.

The fifth part of this publication deals with St. Peter’s Basilica. The author briefly presents its history and graphic cross-section. The first chapter mentions the gates of this church, through which John Paul II passed many times and where the workers carrying the coffin with his body on the day of the funeral stopped for a moment. The next chapter discusses the atrium of the basilica and describes two stone tablets engraved with the name of the Polish Pope. The first of these refers to 1999 when the atrium was restored at the Pope’s request. The second recalls the following ecumenical meetings: Paul VI with Athenagoras I in 1967 and John Paul II with Dimitrios I in 1987. The Holy Doors are the subject of the next chapter of the discussed publication. John Paul II opened them twice: on the occasion of the Jubilee Year of Redemption in 1983 and the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. There are two plaques over this Holy Gate commemorating the last time they were closed.

Fr. Nocoń's publication also contains a photograph and description of both these tablets with John Paul II's name on them. An interesting fact may be the descriptions of bricks that the author mentioned used to seal the Holy Doors, as well as other objects walled into these doors. This chapter ends with the note that in 2012, Benedict XVI blessed a copy of the Holy Doors, only one made with the permission of the Holy See, which was then transported to the Museum of the Family Home of John Paul II in Wadowice. The next chapter deals with the floor of St. Peter's Basilica, on which two of John Paul II's coats of arms are placed. The first is in front of the baptismal chapel and comes from 1994, the second is located opposite the Chapel of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and was made in 1998. On the occasion of the election of Karol Wojtyła to the papacy, information on the largest church in Poland, the Basilica of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Gdansk, was placed on the Basilica's floor in 1979. The author also mentions Karol Wojtyła's participation in the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council. He discusses a tablet with the names of the 148 popes buried in St. Peter's Basilica. This tablet is found in the corridor leading to the sacristy. John Paul II is the last pope written onto it. The next chapter of this part of the book is dedicated to the papal altar over St. Peter's grave. After the death of John Paul II, this coffin and his body were placed in front of this altar, and the author recalls some of the rituals connected with the Pope's funeral.

The next part of the publication presents the chapel of St. Sebastian in the Vatican Basilica, where today the tomb of St. John Paul II is found. The author mentions the Pope's first burial place, and then his relics being transferred to St. Sebastian's Chapel after his beatification in 2011. He also describes the mosaic of St. Sebastian. The next chapter is devoted to the tomb of St. John Paul II, under the mensa of the altar. Up until his beatification, the relics of Bl. Innocent XI were found there, who was the Pope during the time of the Vienna Relief. Mass is celebrated in Polish and broadcasted by Vatican Radio every Thursday at the grave of St. Pope John Paul II. The next two chapters of the publication are devoted to the monuments of Popes Pius XI and Pius XII located in St. Sebastian's Chapel. The first of them was an apostolic visitor and then an apostolic nuncio in Poland. He referred to himself as a "Polish bishop" because he accepted the episcopal consecration in Warsaw at the hands of the then Warsaw metropolitan. The Poles later called him "the Polish Pope." Pius XII, in turn, in the last year of his pontificate, appointed Fr. Karol Wojtyła to be the auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Cracow.

Located under St. Peter's Basilica are the Vatican Grottos, the topic of the next part of the presented work. The author describes the first grave of John Paul II, where the coffin with his body was placed after the funeral. The author recalls the liturgical rite of the Pope's funeral, as well as the appearance of the plate laid on John Paul II's grave. At the same time, the author reminds us that it is currently in the "Do not Be Afraid!" center in Krakow. The next chapter deals with the crypt of the confession of St. Peter and reminds us that it was John Paul II who, already in 1979, wanting to facilitate the

faithful access to the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles, ordered to breaking through the wall to the grave and have glass placed there. Today, in the wall behind the glass, there is a plaque informing people about the works carried out at the Polish Pope's request. In the next chapter, the author presents the altar of the grave of St. Peter, which is the main altar in the Vatican Grottos. John Paul II celebrated his first mass there after his election in 1979. The constructor placed this Pope's coat of arms on the wall of the present altar, dated 1999. The next seven chapters discuss the chapels surrounding St. Peter's grave.

The first is the chapel of Europe Patrons, St. Benedict of Nursia and Sts. Cyril and Methodius. It was John Paul II who announced that the last two were Europe's patron saints, and instructed the chapel to be prepared in their honor, which he consecrated in 1981. More space in the publication, which is understandable, is dedicated to the Polish chapel created in 1958. It was rebuilt and enlarged in 1982 according to the will of Pope John Paul II. The Pope also gave and sacrificed a new painting placed at that time on its altar. This painting was replaced in 1992 by the current mosaic. The plaque placed in the chapel informs people about the work done at the Pope's request in 1982. The chapel floor features the coat of arms of John Paul II made in 1982. Finally, the author recalls "the most important memorials of John Paul II in the Polish chapel." They are the crowns on the mosaic made of votives offered at Jasna Góra. These were placed on the image on the memorable morning of April 2, 2005. The Pope's motto "Totus Tuus" is written on them.

The author next discusses the Irish chapel, which was restored during the pontificate of John Paul II, as indicated by the plaque placed there. In turn, the papal coat of arms was placed on the backrest of the celebrant's chair. When presenting the Clementine Chapel, which is the closest chapel to St. Peter's grave, the author recalls that it was restored in 1992 during John Paul II's pontificate. The next chapter is devoted to the Lithuanian chapel. There is a metal plaque placed there commemorating the 400th anniversary of the founding of Vilnius University. The next chapter recalls the Mexican chapel and reminds us that John Paul II agreed to its being built in 1983, and in 1992 he consecrated it. One of the bas-reliefs in the Mexican chapel presents this Pope blessing the faithful from the balcony of the Basilica in Guadalupe, and the Spanish-language inscription informs people about the papal visits to this sanctuary. Next, the author presents the Hungarian chapel, which John Paul II blessed in 1980. His coat of arms is found there, and on the large bronze medallion there is a scene of the Pope accepting the gift from the Primate of Hungary. In addition, a Latin and Hungarian inscription was placed under the medallion, informing us about the blessing of the chapel by John Paul II.

The last part of the publication is entitled "Other Traces of John Paul II at the Vatican." The first place described here is the "Redemptoris Mater" chapel in the Apostolic Palace. The name was given by John Paul II in 1988, and it gained its present appearance in 1997–1999 from the money the Pope received from the Cardinals for his golden jubilee of the priesthood. The Pope and the Roman Curia made their annual retreats in this chapel. The next chapter is about the Vatican Gardens. In them, next to the landing

site, there is a sculpture of Our Lady of Częstochowa, which the Pope received in 1994 from the Jasna Góra Pauline monks. A sculpture depicting the Fatima children is reminiscent of the attempt on the life of John Paul II. Another memorial of his pontificate is a granite stone resembling the Giewont peak. It is a gift from the people of Zakopane to the Polish Pope. The last chapter of the book is entitled "Buildings." Fr. Nocoń first mentions the "Gift of Mary" shelter established in 1987 where the Missionary Sisters of Charity (St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta) minister. Another sign of the pontificate of John Paul II is the Vatican printing house modernized in 1991, a rebuilt parking lot and offices at Piazzale Della Stazione in 1999 and at Piazzale Santa Rosa in 2004.

In addition, the author mentions the new entrance to the Vatican Museums, built in 2000. A dated plaque with the papal coat of arms is placed in the vestibule of the Vatican's entrance in the place where the injured pope was laid before he was transported to the polyclinic. Other signs of his pontificate are the "House of St. Martha" and the monastery of the "Mother of the Church." Cardinals live in the first one during a conclave, but on a daily basis it functions as a home for the employees of the Holy See and its guests. Today, it is also the home of Pope Francis. Cloistered sisters who pray for the intentions of the Pope live in the second building. Since 2013, Pope Sr. Benedict XVI lives in it.

The book ends with a bibliography that contains 19 items. The back endpaper has a drawing showing the panorama of St. Peter's Basilica, with its surrounding buildings and the bridge over the Tiber. The book is richly illustrated with color photographs. We must emphasize the author's efforts to find, collect and describe the "traces of John Paul II" in the Vatican. This pope's long and rich papacy was enriched with numerous signs. The book is, on the one hand, a great guide for tracing the footsteps of St. John Paul II at the Vatican, and on the other, it is fascinating and full of curious facts. The author colorfully tells us about many events from the history of the Church and Poland, waving them skillfully into the course of his narrative about John Paul II. We should also note that Latin texts on the plaques commemorating this Pope are included in the footnotes. The author, an expert in Latin, clearly gives their Polish translations in the text.

On only 192 pages in an A5 format book, including many photos, the author has packed a lot of interesting information. At the same time, the vivid style of the publication is not tiring or overwhelming due to the amount of information. We should express joy and gratitude for the fact that Fr. Prelate Arkadiusz Nocoń took on the job of creating this book, thus providing readers with a guide and at the same time a sort of textbook allowing them to rediscover the richness of the pontificate of St. John Paul II.

Translated by Jan Kobyłecki



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