

Pilgrimages to Jasna Góra in the space of the town of Częstochowa and its region

(Summary)

Although the literature devoted to Jasna Góra is fairly rich, not much has been said about the problems of the pilgrimic movement in the space of the town and the region, especially in the present times. The authors have made an attempt to present the role of the pilgrimages to Jasna Góra in the existence of the town and the region.

The motives of the Jasna Góra pilgrimages

The majority of pilgrims come to Jasna Góra of purely religious reasons. In the seventies such pilgrims constituted about 95% of all, at present the percentage ranges from 65 to 90%, depending on the day or the month. For the majority of visitors (80-90%) the town of Częstochowa and Jasna Góra are the final destinations of their journey. The prevailing, religious motif of the wanderings to Jasna Góra, places the Sanctuary among the most important Marian sanctuaries of the world. Religious motivation is closely correlated with an exceptional position and importance of Jasna Góra in the history of the Polish nation and the Polish Church. Pilgrimages to Jasna Góra have always been strongly connected with Polish religiousness and were often perceived as a manifestation of patriotism.

The development of the pilgrimage function of Jasna Góra and Częstochowa

The tradition of pilgrimages to Jasna Góra goes back to its origins (1382). It was connected with the placing of the Miraculous Picture of the Black Madonna in the Paulite monastery. Within several dozen of years Jasna Góra became an international centre visited by thousands of pilgrims, mainly from Central and Eastern Europe.

Both rulers and ordinary people pilgrimized to Jasna Góra. In the period between the 14th and the 15th centuries the Black Madonna of Częstochowa was first conferred with the titles of The Queen and The Patron of the Nation. Thousands of believers from Poland and abroad participated in the main religious celebrations. The number

of pilgrims visiting the Sanctuary increased significantly after the famous defence of Jasna Góra from the Swedish army (1655) and the Lvov Pledges of Jan Kasimir (1 April 1656). It was then that the cult of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa- the Queen of Poland was established. The coronation of the Holy Picture in 1717, the first such celebration on the Polish territory and the first one outside Rome was a very important event in the history of the Sanctuary.

The tradition of regular foot pilgrimages to Jasna Góra dates back to the 17th century. It was then that special pilgrimage routes (for example from the region of Mazowsze - Fig. 1; from Kraków - Fig. 32) were laid out. Warsaw Foot Pilgrimage (Fig. 3 and 31) has been held every year since 1711.

The Jasna Góra Sanctuary played a special role during the partition of Poland (1772-1918) when it contributed to the consolidation of national ties in the Polish society. The leading of the Warsaw-Vienna railway to Częstochowa (1846) was an important date in the development of the pilgrimage movement.

During the pre-war period (1918-1939) Jasna Góra played an important role in the process of the integration of the Polish society. Only in 1938 about 1 million pilgrims, many from abroad, visited the Jasna Góra Sanctuary.

During the second world war the pilgrimage movement to Jasna Góra did not stop. The Sanctuary was visited mainly by small groups and individual pilgrims. Besides the Warsaw Foot Pilgrimage, academic pilgrimages of students and professors from Warsaw, Kraków, Lublin and Lvov were organised. Karol Wojtyła - the present Pope, was among the students of the then illegal Jagiellonian University, who pilgrimized to Jasna Góra in 1942 and 1943.

After the war, because of the persecutions of the pilgrims by the communist regime, the majority of pilgrimages suspended their activities. The celebrations connected with the Millenium of Christianity in Poland (966-1966) and the 600th Anniversary of Jasna Góra (1982) (Fig. 2, 4) became the turning points for the enlivenment of pilgrimages.

The position of Jasna Góra and Częstochowa in the system of the pilgrimage centres of the world, Europe and Poland

The most important catholic cult centres of the world, visited by 25 million pilgrims a year, are: Rome and Vatican (about 8 million people yearly), Lourdes (6 million), Jasna Góra in Częstochowa (4-5 million) and Fatima (4 million). Jasna Góra is also the second, after Lourdes, centre of the Marian faith which is distinguishable by foot pilgrimages with a many hundred years old tradition.

The geographical location of Jasna Góra which is situated almost in the very heart of the European continent has been an important factor in the development of Jasna Góra as one of the main centres of religious cult in Europe and in the world (Fig. 5 and 6). It is the region where the cultures of both the Western and the Eastern Christianity meet and penetrate. In other words, the geographical location of Jasna Góra can be described as *ecumenical location*. Already in the 19th century it was commonly regarded as one of the spiritual capitals of Europe. Jasna Góra has been

and still remains the centre from which the ideas of developing or reviving foot pilgrimages radiate. These ideas have reached many different countries, in Europe and outside Europe. The popularity of foot pilgrimages to Jasna Góra has caused that they are seen as important, temporary migrations of the population, both in Poland and Europe.

The importance of Jasna Góra was esteemed by the succeeding popes which further promoted the popularity of the cult of the Black Madonna in the whole Catholic Church. This particular position of Jasna Góra was strengthened by John Paul II with his visits in 1979, 1983, 1987, 1991 and 1997. The Holy Father invited young people from the whole world to Częstochowa, to VI Day of Youth (August 1991) and the Black Madonna of Częstochowa is commonly called „*the Madonna of the Pope*”.

For centuries now Jasna Góra has been the biggest and the most important pilgrimage centre in Poland which has always played an important role in the history of the Polish nation. For centuries all classes of the Polish society have seen Jasna Góra as „*the spiritual capital of Poland*”.

Presently, in Poland there are more than 500 pilgrimage sanctuaries connected with the Roman Catholic Church and 430 of these are Marian sanctuaries. Among these there are about 180 sanctuaries with crowned pictures of the Virgin Mary. The most important centres, such as: Jasna Góra in Częstochowa, Niepokalanów, Warsaw, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Góra św. Anny and Krakow, have an international character (Fig. 7).

About 7 million people yearly, i.e. 18% of the population of Poland take part in pilgrimages. More than 70% of them pilgrimize to Jasna Góra. It is estimated that about 80% of all Roman Catholic parishes in Poland regularly, once a year, organise pilgrimages to Jasna Góra. The Sanctuary is also visited by 80% of foreign pilgrims coming to Poland. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is considered the second most popular, after Jasna Góra, sanctuary in Poland.

Spatial transformations of the town under the influence of Jasna Góra

The first mention of the town of Częstochowa, located on the Warta river comes from the year 1220. Close nearby, at the foot of a lime hill there was a village of Częstochówka. From the time the monastery of the Paulite monks, who had been brought from Hungary by Prince Władysław Opolczyk in 1382, was erected at the top of the hill, the development of both sites was closely connected with the Jasna Góra Sanctuary and the growing pilgrimage movement (Fig. 8). Almost from the very beginning pilgrimages played an important role in the urban formation. Looking at the urbanistic development from the turn of the 17th and the 18th centuries one can clearly see the formation of a district adjacent to the Jasna Góra hill.

The development of the present town owns very much to the fuse of Stara and Nowa Częstochowa in 1826. Before it happened a new axis of the united town, namely the present Aleja Najświętszej Marii Panny (NMP) had been laid out. Aleja NMP is considered to be the most convincing proof of the role of Jasna Góra in the urbanistic

development of Częstochowa. The route of Aleja NMP, which is mainly the pilgrims' tract, the only and most important *via sacra* in Poland, was laid out in 1818 (Fig. 10,11).

After the second world war communist authorities often ignored the existence of the Sanctuary in Częstochowa and their actions were aimed at the liquidation or the maximum possible limitation of its influences. Anti-church and anti-clergy policy of the communist regime was best reflected in the intended and systematic „distancing” of Częstochowa from Jasna Góra despite the existing urbanistic integration (Fig. 12).

The forms and the size of the pilgrimage movement (based on the 1995 data)

In 1995 altogether 3,055,000 people visited Jasna Góra (Fig. 2). Most visitors came in August (594,000 which makes about 19.5% of the total amount). Besides, a big attendance was noted in June, July and September. Altogether, during those four months 1,916,000 people (62.8%) arrived (Table 1). During the remaining months of the year the pilgrimage movement to Jasna Góra ranged from 2.2 to 6.0% of the total.

The intensity of the pilgrimage movement depends mainly on the times of the Marian celebrations and the Jasna Góra meetings (Tables 2, 3). According to the Paulite's data there are six days in a year when about 100,000 to 200,000 people come to Jasna Góra. These are: The Assumption of the Virgin Mary (15 August), The Holy Virgin of Częstochowa Day (26 August) and occasional meetings at Jasna Góra, such as the meeting of the participants of the Movement of the Revival in the Holy Spirit, the pilgrimages of the listeners of Radio Maryja, or the pilgrimages of Farmers and Workers. One should also remember particular events, such as the meetings with the Holy Father John Paul II, when about 0.5-1.7 million pilgrims come to the town (Table 5).

In a year, there are many days (about 40.5%) when only about 1,000-5,000 pilgrims come to Częstochowa. This happens mainly in the first and the last months of a year (table 4, 6). 38.5% of the days, mainly from the months in the middle of a year are characterised with the arrival of 5,000-10,000 people. A similar distribution of days characterises the range of 10,000-20,000 people (15.6% of days). The days with the biggest attendance (more than 20,000 people) constitute only 5.3% and usually fall in the period from July to October.

Most pilgrims come to Jasna Góra on days which are free from work (Saturday and Sunday), although there are also many groups of pilgrims who arrive on weekdays. However, during a year it is not usual. There are also significant differences concerning the time of a day. One should stress the differences between days which result mainly from the type of the pilgrims' arrivals and stays (Fig. 13-15): relatively short, one-day visits to Jasna Góra, overnight stays, stays connected with a day long prayers, participation in several masses and the Way of the Cross, visits connected with the tour around the Sanctuary.

About 75-90% of individual pilgrims come to Częstochowa only for one day, for a few hours. The average time of the pilgrims' stay in the town is only 4.5 hours (Lourdes - 3 days, Fatima - 2.5 days). During August celebrations longer stays become more usual which is connected mainly with foot pilgrims.

Pilgrims from Central, South-Eastern and Southern Poland as well as from the region of Częstochowa prevail. In recent years the share of pilgrims from Western and Northern Poland has significantly increased.

Presently the majority of pilgrims - more than 50%, in some groups even 90% - are young. About 30% of them come to Jasna Góra in groups organised by parishes or other church organisations (Tab. 7). Among the registered groups there are many (30% of participants) pilgrimages of the students of the final year of high schools and schoolchildren, especially before the First Holy Communion. Youth pilgrimages usually arrive on weekdays.

The majority of visitors have a secondary or university education (about 60%). About 30% of pilgrims come from villages and 30% from big cities. It is estimated that 50% of pilgrims come by train and 35% by bus. Only 7% of pilgrims, mainly the individual ones, use their own car. For several years now cycling pilgrimages have been organised. They show a growing tendency. The lack of an own airport significantly lowers the international importance of Częstochowa. Only few pilgrims come by plane to distant airports located in Katowice, Krakow and Warsaw.

Every year 200,000-400,000 foreign pilgrims from more than 80 countries (Fig. 16) are registered at Jasna Góra. For half of them a visit to Jasna Góra is the only reason of coming to Poland. About 15,000 foreigners join Polish foot pilgrimages coming to Jasna Góra. The majority of foreign pilgrims come from Germany, Italy, France and the USA. There are also many people of Polish origin from all over the world (25-30%).

Pilgrimages in the space of the town

The location of the Sanctuary at Jasna Góra is vital in the distribution of the pilgrimage function of the town. However, the distribution of tourist services is also important.

Generally, accommodation facilities of Częstochowa are very poor. The ratio of hotel beds per 1,000 inhabitants (1.2) there is even lower than the average one for the rest of the country (1.5) and can be compared neither with Lourdes (5,000 beds/1,000 inhabitants) nor with Fatima (1,000). The shortage of accommodation causes that 80-90% of pilgrims stay in the town only for a few hours. The accommodation in convents changes the situation a bit (2,300 whole year's places and 800 seasonal ones plus 3,000 places at camping sites) (Fig. 18). They can be found in the vicinity of the Sanctuary and are cheap. The hotels are mostly situated far from Jasna Góra and are generally not used by pilgrims because of their location, high prices and secular character.

Although the gastronomical network has significantly improved in recent years, there is still a shortage of cheap eateries in the vicinity of the monastery. Because of this reason about 70% of pilgrims bring their own food.

Sanitary infrastructure is also insufficient, there is a shortage of public toilets and showers.

Travel agencies in Częstochowa deal primarily with the needs of local inhabitants and are hardly interested in tourists arriving to the town.

One may reach Częstochowa by one of the roads which lead starlike to the town (Fig. 17). The most important one is E-75 motorway, which joins Warsaw with Silesia and Kraków. In the near future the A-1 highway will lead to the town from the west. The foot routes also reach the town starlike. The last sections of those, just outside Częstochowa, are in line with public roads.

There are two passenger railway stations in Częstochowa - the modern Main Station and the Stradom station of a very low standard but with several sidings. Unfortunately, Częstochowa cannot be easily reached by rail, as many long-distance trains omit the town, using the Central Coal Trunk Line. The Stradom station has poor connection with Jasna Góra by the public transport and is not easily accessible on foot and the Main Station is situated next to a very busy Aleja Wolności which pilgrims find very difficult to cross.

Buses and cars with pilgrims come as far as the car parks situated in the region of Jasna Góra. As the number of car places is limited, sometimes car parks in other parts of the town and side streets are used for parking. Sometimes the only available parking places are outside the town. This causes the increase of pedestrian traffic which cumulates close to the monastery, especially in Aleja Najświętszej Marii Panny (Fig. 19, 20).

A particular traffic intensity is noted after the main religious celebrations at Jasna Góra when about 100,000 people leave the premises within a few hours (e.g. on 15th August).

There are three zones of the pilgrimage movement in Częstochowa (Fig. 21): the largest zone, characterised by the heaviest concentration of traffic (on the days of the largest celebrations), the zone of a periodic and unusual traffic concentration (on the days of smaller and main celebrations) and the zone of a permanent concentration, located in the vicinity of Jasna Góra, with overlapping periodical and unusual concentrations. The last of the three was the first one to appear in the spatial structure of the town. Here one may find practically all „church” hostels, shops with souvenirs, devotional articles and religious literature, cheap eateries and restaurants and car-parks. However this zone, similarly to others, lacks the infrastructure necessary to serve crowds of pilgrims coming to Jasna Góra. Within all three zones there are some areas which are particularly crowded with parked vehicles and pilgrims camping in their tents.

Pilgrimages in the space of the Częstochowa region

The region of Częstochowa is especially important for the pilgrimage movement. Its inhabitants wander to Jasna Góra all year round. The greatest intensity of pilgrimages, mainly foot pilgrimages, is connected with the Day of the Częstochowa Archdiocese, celebrated on 26 August.

The whole region is also a transit area for all pilgrims coming to Jasna Góra (Fig. 23). During a year there are particular times when the intensity of arrivals by train or by car to the main celebrations at Jasna Góra significantly increases. In 1991, in connection with VI World Day of Youth, the whole region played an exceptional role. Besides being passed by 1.7 million pilgrims, it provided accommodation for tens of thousands of people (Fig. 26).

The role the region is especially important for foot pilgrimages. There are many pilgrimage routes which lead through the region. Its towns and villages offer the pilgrims with accommodation and camp sites, the last ones before reaching Częstochowa. Every July and August about 170,000 foot pilgrims cross the region on their way to Częstochowa. About 25,000 of them return home on foot. Other sanctuaries situated in the region, such as Leśniów, Lelów, Święta Anna, Mstów and Gidle (Fig. 23) are often incorporated into the routes of the pilgrimages wandering to Jasna Góra.

The accumulation of the pilgrimage function in the spatial structure of the region made it possible to separate a pilgrimage zone within it (Fig. 22). It covers the area around Częstochowa within the radius of about 30 km.

Specific features of foot pilgrimages to Jasna Góra

Foot pilgrimages which usually have a purely religious character were often, especially in the periods of political constraints, marked with patriotic motives.

The extent of foot pilgrimages to Jasna Góra at present and in the past causes that Jasna Góra is considered to be the main such centre of religious cult in Poland and in the Christian world. The idea of foot pilgrimages radiates from Częstochowa to many countries in and outside Europe, for example to the USA or Australia. The arrivals of foot pilgrims from abroad at Jasna Góra have become more usual.

In 1995, 182,000 foot pilgrims, i.e. 6% of all visitors, came to Jasna Góra (Fig. 27, Tables 9, 10). They arrive mainly in groups which sometimes count only a dozen but sometimes more than ten thousand pilgrims. In 1995 there were about 270 groups (comp. Annex 2). Among the pilgrims there were about 15,000 foreigners.

Presently more than 50 routes lead to Jasna Góra from all directions in Poland and this network still develops (Fig. 28). Some of the routes have been used for centuries (Fig. 1, 29). The longest route, *szlak kaszubski* is more than 600 km long. Pilgrimages with many participants are often divided into many smaller ones which

then take different routes and are re-united just before the gates of Częstochowa (Fig. 30).

Pilgrims spend nights under tents, in barns, or in private houses. Meals are prepared together or individually. Each pilgrimage has its own sections: medical, postal, quartermaster, transport (transportation of luggage and tents).

Foot pilgrimages wander to the Sanctuary from June till September but the majority arrive in August (92% of all foot pilgrims). On busiest days in 1995, Częstochowa was visited by 26,000 people (25 August) (Fig. 34, 37), 32,000 (13 August) (Fig. 32, 38a) and 47,000 (14 August) (Fig. 33, 38b). Within the town itself ten routes for foot pilgrimages have been laid out (Fig. 19, 20). Because of organisational reasons, the exact days, times and routes are earlier decided upon with the administrative bodies of the town. Aleja Najświętszej Marii Panny is the area of the greatest concentration of the pilgrimage movement.

More than 12% of foot pilgrims return home in the same way they had come, i.e. on foot (Fig. 40, 41). This is the case with The Łódź Foot Pilgrimage (Fig. 25). Some pilgrimages always arrive and return on foot (e.g. The Kaliska Pilgrimage since the 17th century).

There are significant differences between pilgrimages in relation to the celebration they want to participate in. This concerns the size of groups, the distance from the point of departure, i.e. the length of the route and the length of stay in Częstochowa.

Strong and weak points of Częstochowa and its region in providing services for the pilgrimage movement

The strongest point of Częstochowa and Jasna Góra is undoubtedly the central location in Europe, Poland and the region. Unfortunately, one does not take the advantage of it. The town has a pretty good railway network but international trains and local intercity trains generally omit Częstochowa. Częstochowa is easily reached by road but it lacks flight connections. The closest passenger airport is near Katowice, about 50 km from Jasna Góra.

The Jasna Góra Sanctuary is the main aim of the pilgrims' and tourists' peregrinations. Częstochowa lacks the objects which would attract the attention of ordinary tourists.

Tourist services are rather poor. The services supplied by the Paulite monks and other monasteries or convents somehow help to fill the gap. Due to poor services many foreign tourists and pilgrims omit Częstochowa. The town is totally unprepared to receive handicapped pilgrims. In result, the town, though visited by several million of people every year, does not earn any money on them.

Long years of the negative attitude of the communist regime towards the Jasna Góra pilgrimages and the Paulite monastery itself have taken their toll. The administrative bodies of Częstochowa suffer from the lack of separate organisational units, equipped with proper authorities to co-ordinate all activities connected with tourism. Hardly any good and commonly accepted concepts and programs devoted

to the servicing of the pilgrimage movement have been worked out and the existing ones have not been implemented either.

So far, neither the town authorities nor the Monastery have run any constant monitoring of the size of the pilgrimage and tourist arrivals to Częstochowa and Jasna Góra. The only exception here are foot pilgrimages which have had good documentation. Unfortunately, they constitute only about 6% of the total pilgrimage movement.

The development of the pilgrimage movement to Jasna Góra - its chances and threats

Before thinking of new concepts for Częstochowa one should analyse all chances and threats for the development of the pilgrimage movement to Jasna Góra.

The greatest chance for Częstochowa is the existence of the Sanctuary with The Holy Picture of The Black Madonna which draws millions of pilgrims to the town. Another big advantage is the central location of the town and the inclusion of Jasna Góra in the monastic and pilgrimage route planned by the European Council. Talking about the threats one should first of all mention the lack of the integration of the actions in regional and global scale which might ruin the existing advantages.

The most important problems are: to make Częstochowa easier to reach by plane, to resume international and intercity train connections and to build A-1 highway and West-East Motorway. If the accessibility to the town does not improve, it will eventually constitute the danger for the development of the pilgrimage and tourist functions of Częstochowa.

The authorities of the town and the region often stress the necessity of the development of other forms of tourism. Unfortunately, besides Jasna Góra Częstochowa does not possess anything that could possibly be attractive to tourists. Of course it is always possible to create such attractions but it must be kept in mind that those would have to be accompanied by the development of the infrastructure and tourist services and their promotion. Częstochowa lies in the vicinity of the region of Jura Krakowsko-Częstochowska which is very attractive for climbers, riders, paragliders, speleologists, cyclists and walkers. The development of these forms of tourism would demand a proper inclusion of the town in the sphere of organisation and tourist services. One of possible threats may be the lack of the adequate policy in respect to the creation of the tourist infrastructure as well as inadequate funds for such investments. Another important problem is that Częstochowa is separated from the Jura region with a vast industrial zone and the existing system of communication is insufficient.

Pilgrimages are supposed to grow in the future but their growth also depends on the attitude of the inhabitants of the town and its self-governing and administrative bodies. Common undertakings of the Monastery and the local and regional authorities, aimed at working out a complex development plan of the region of Jasna Góra, its promotion and accomplishment, are necessary. One should also think of working out a system of tax rebates for the future investors.

A positive attitude of the inhabitants towards the pilgrimage movement and the pilgrims is a big chance for the town. The locals must be convinced that tourism, even when limited to pilgrimages, can be a very profitable industry. Some changes in the structure of employment, aimed at the growth of the sector of services will be necessary. This should manifest itself in the inhabitants' own initiatives to establish the network of tourist services. The assumed further growth of the pilgrimage movement will demand training of a qualified personnel to serve pilgrims. Taking into consideration the still existing legal and administrative barriers, centralism of management and the poor marketing policy, the renunciation of all these actions may result in the further lack of any financial effects. In the light of the fact that Częstochowa, a cult centre famous all over the world, is visited by millions of people each year this seems paradoxical.

On the verge of the 21st century

Presently, Polish pilgrimaging to Jasna Góra is seen as a phenomenon which influences many countries, mainly European. The importance of the Jasna Góra Sanctuary for the history of the Polish nation but also for a large part of our continent causes that it is commonly perceived as a spiritual centre of both Poland and Europe. The World Day of Youth held in Częstochowa in 1991 made people realise that pilgrimaging is not only religious but also a spatial, social and cultural phenomenon which spreads despite of existing borders and political divisions, leading to the integration of the continent or making the desired integration much simpler.

In the 19th century, pilgrimages to Jasna Góra were considered an important factor for the integration of Slavs; today they are seen as vital for the integration of the whole Europe. Thanks to pilgrims and tourists wandering to Jasna Góra, Częstochowa may play an important role in the process of creating Europe without borders, especially in the East-West direction.

The lack of proper tourist infrastructure and poor accommodation facilities constitute a serious barrier for the development of the pilgrimage movement and the visits of pilgrims from abroad. The existing infrastructure does not correspond with the importance of the town. It is high time to think about the „model” of the religious function of Częstochowa in the next century and at the beginning of the third Millennium. One thing is sure - the pilgrimage movement to Jasna Góra will intensify in the future and it will still play an important role in the spatial, social and economic structure of the town.

The following factors will have some influence upon the process of the transformation of the pilgrimage movement to Jasna Góra:

- religious needs of people,
- the continuation of the several centuries' long tradition of foot pilgrimages to Jasna Góra and its growing popularity in Europe and in the world,
- the inclusion of new groups of pilgrims, especially the sick and the handicapped, in the pilgrimage movement,

- the improvement of the conditions of staying in the region of Jasna Góra - the development of adequate infrastructure, located outside the *sacrum* zone,
- activities aimed at the popularisation of visits within the frames of religious tourism,
- further development of cultural events of a religious character and their popularisation in Poland and abroad,
- the improvement of the communicational accessibility of Częstochowa,
- actions aimed at the organisation of „Pilgrim Fairs” of a domestic and international character.

Accepting the „optimistic” variant of the development it may be assumed that after the year 2000 altogether 5 million pilgrims, 400,000-600,000 of them from abroad, will be coming to Jasna Góra every year.

The development of the pilgrimage and tourist movements will result in the growth of the importance of the Częstochowa region as a transit area. The increasing transit movement of pilgrims and tourists should lead to the development of communication tracks and accommodation facilities. This, in turn, will be connected with the creation of new places of work for the inhabitants of the region and the growth of their earnings.

