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THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
“STEFAN WYSZYŃSKI – THE PRIMATE OF THE MILLENNIUM,
A GRADUATE OF KUL... CANDIDATE FOR THE ALTARS”
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On December 10, 2016, the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin hosted an international conference entitled “Stefan Wyszyński – the Primate of the Millennium, a Graduate of KUL... Candidate for the Altars,” organised by the Association of Graduates and Friends of the Faculty of Law of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (SAWP KUL) and the Department of Public and Constitutional Church Law.

The event was opened with a church service celebrated in the academic Church for God’s blessing of the conference participants and the Association. Rev. Dr. Krzysztof Nykiel, the regent of the Apostolic Penitentiary, presided over the Mass and delivered a homily.

The main objective of the conference was to reflect on human life and the work of Servant of God Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (1901–1981), who was closely connected with the history of the Lublin Region and the Catholic University. The speakers introduced interesting yet often unknown facts of Wyszyński’s life, who was presented as a student and

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graduate of KUL, Bishop of Lublin, Great Chancellor of the Lublin University, Primate of Poland, Father of the Second Vatican Council, and a candidate for the altars.

The Conference was inaugurated by Rev. Dr. Hab. Mirosław Sitarz, professor of KUL, President of the Association. As Head of the Department of Public and Constitutional Church Law – where Rev. Wyszyński drafted his doctoral dissertation under the supervision of the first head of this department, Rev. Prof. J. Wiślicki – reminded the attendees that the department had been functioning as part of the university structure from the moment the faculty was established. While defining the aim of the conference, Professor quoted John Paul II, who once said: “Primate, the late Cardinal Wyszyński, his person, his teaching, his role in this difficult period of our history. Make all of this the object of your meditation and take up this grand and onerous task, the legacy of more than two thousand years of history, upon which he, Cardinal Stefan, Primate of Poland, Good Shepherd, left a durable and indelible mark. May this work be taken up by the Pastors of the Church with the highest degree of diligence, may it be taken up by the clergy, presbyters, religious families, the faithful of all ages and professions. May the young people undertake it. May the whole Church and the whole Nation undertake it. Every person, in their own way, just like God and their own conscience tell them to. Take this up and pursue it towards the future.” Father Sitarz welcomed all the guests from Poland and abroad, the speakers who had come from Ukraine, Italy and Poland, the heads of the sessions and members of the Association of Graduates and Friends of the Faculty of Law, KUL.

The first session was led by Dr. Hab. Krzysztof Wiak, professor of KUL, Dean of the Faculty of Law, Canon Law and Administration.

In his report, entitled “Stefan Wyszyński – from child to a KUL graduate,” Prof. Sitarz presented the early years and the youth of the future Primate of the Millennium, the time spent at the seminary, the early period of pastoral ministry and the years spent in Lublin. The speaker mentioned the sources of formation and first experiences in Wyszyński’s life which moulded his personality. He stressed that fact that Father Wyszyński spent his adolescence at home, where despite both love and discipline special emphasis was placed on issues of faith and prayer, which greatly contributed to the shaping of humanity in the young generation of the day. Next, Prof. Sitarz presented the most important stages in the future Primate’s education, making reference to those who had special significance for his formation, the period of the studies at KUL, crowned by the award of doctorate in canon law, and Wyszyński’s social work.

The second speaker was Piotr Krzysztof Kutty, the president of the Foundation “Our Tradition”, who delivered a paper entitled “Stefan Wyszyński, the Bishop of Lublin.” He underscored that Bishop Wyszyński headed the diocese of Lublin for nearly three years. He examined the events of the spring of 1946, associated with the nomination, consecration and ingress of the eighth ordinary of Lublin, mentioning also selected aspects of the Bishop’s pastoral and episcopal ministry over the years to come. He also depicted the historical background of the events connected with the period following the war, when Wyszyński had to grapple with the unstable political situation, and the time of difficulties associated with the

destruction of the diocese of Lublin by the turmoil of the war. The presentation was accompanied by visuals and it included fragments of the texts of addresses and pastoral letters. At the close, the speaker encouraged the participants to get acquainted with an exhibition devoted to Cardinal Wyszyński, which had been organised by the Foundation "Our Tradition" and installed in the cloisters of the Dominican Monastery in Lublin.

Rev. Prof. Dr. Hab. Stanisław Wilk (KUL) delivered a lecture entitled "Stefan Kardynał Wyszyński, a Father of the Second Vatican Council." Prof. Wilk explained: "The name of fathers of the Second Vatican Council was applied to those bishops who in the years 1962–1965 took part in the conciliar sessions at the Roman basilica of St. Peter." The speaker emphasised the special contribution of Wyszyński to Vatican II, not only during the sessions in the conference hall of the Council but also with respect to the realisation of the conciliar work. In this context, the rector examined the preparatory period and the tasks that Wyszyński initiated in Poland, such as his proposal of the subjects to be addressed in the following conciliar deliberations. The Primate saw the necessity of paying more attention to the need for changes in the personal law of the clergy and faithful, norms of the procedural law, substantive and criminal law. He also postulated the redaction of the code of liturgical law. He also suggested that the subject of the conciliar deliberations be such matters as the unity of the Church, lay apostolate, the reform of the breviary and religious robes, or peace among nations. The cardinal also proposed that the Council acknowledge that Blessed Virgin is the Mother of the Church. Next, the speaker discussed the involvement of Wyszyński in the most important organs of the Second Vatican Council, i.e. the Central Preparatory Committee, Secretariat for Extraordinary matters and the Presidium of the Council.

As part of this academic event, the book entitled *Bonds of unity between John XXIII and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. A Selection of Documents*, ed. S. Wilk (A.D. Wójcik: Lublin, 2016) was presented by Anna Wójcik. The publication addresses the unique relationship existing between Pope John XXIII and Cardinal Wyszyński, using reports of contemporary witnesses. "It was a friendship full of reverence. It was born out of this special attitude which Pope demonstrated towards Poland, and it was based on reverence and trust that he had for the Mother of Jesus." The book makes reference to 153 documents, half of which have an archival character, as well as unique photographs, diary fragments, public speeches and correspondence.

The second session was led by Dr. Hab. Hanna Witczak, professor of KUL, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Law, Canon Law and Administration.

The lecture entitled "Stefan Wyszyński – extraordinary powers in respect of the communist regime," was delivered by Rev. Prof. Dr. Hab. Józef Krukowski (Polish Academy of Sciences Branch in Lublin), who introduced the issue of extraordinary powers of Stefan Wyszyński – tools with which he engaged in a struggle against the communist regime in Poland. The speaker argued: "After the war operations were over, pope Pius XII fully understood the threats facing the Church under the Soviet rule. He granted extraordinary powers to diocesan bishops and the superior of the Churches in the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe which had been incorporated into the Soviet Bloc. The powers were related to

the issuance of decisions regarding executive authority and later the judiciary, too, which under normal circumstances would have been reserved for the Holy See. They were permitted to use these powers only under extraordinary circumstances, should state authorities impede their contact with the Holy See. Next, Rev. Krukowski mentioned the scopes of those powers, their subjects and their significance in the difficult time for Poland, when both the Nation and the Church had to grapple with the dictatorship of the Communist party whose aim was to transform the cultural identity by imposing an ideology based on Marxist and Leninist thought, expected to supplant the religion which constituted the identity base for the Poles. Prof. Krukowski presented the Cardinal's confrontation, which relied on the ideas he professed, with the Regime, which was built upon the Soviet dictatorship. He stressed that the Nation's culture must not be isolated from Christianity; he emphasised the importance of the Church in the teaching about the right of nations to their own identity. He presented Wyszyński's critical attitude towards the operations of state authorities which violated the good of the Nations and its rights, and he showed the correct method of solving conflicts using dialogue and reconciliation in the spirit of historical truth.

The lecture entitled "Stefan Wyszyński – competences concerning the faithful of the Greek Catholic rite in Poland" was delivered by Rev. Dr. Stanisław Kawa (St. Józef Bilczewski Theological Institute in Lviv). He stressed that after the War was over, apart from the changed borders on the map of Europe, radical political changes took place, bringing social, economic and demographic consequences, and this new situation called for changes in the Roman and Greek Catholic Churches. Rev. Kawa presented the competences of the Polish Primate who was also the President of the Episcopal Conference of Poland towards the faithful of the Byzantine-Ukrainian Rite in Poland in the years 1948–1981. He made reference to the critical period when the structures of the Greek Catholic Church were destroyed, the Communist regime would eradicate even the smallest traces of religiousness, while the pastoral concern for Greek Catholics living in Poland required the special powers be granted to primates. The speaker judged the special powers granted to Cardinal Wyszyński as valid and such that permitted effective implementation of the mission of the Church, whose role was to meet the spiritual needs of the faithful.

Rev. Dr. K. Nykiel (Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome) presented a paper entitled "Stefan Wyszyński – concern for the sacramental life of the Nation" with respect to the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and priesthood. The speaker emphasised that the care of the sacramental life of the People of God was a priority to Wyszyński. Father Nykiel quoted the words of the Archbishop Wyszyński, which were addressed to the clergy and faithful: "Do I still have to introduce myself to you? I am neither a politician, nor a diplomate, nor an activist, nor a reformer. But what I am is your spiritual father, shepherd and bishop of your souls; I am an apostle of Jesus Christ. My mission is priestly, pastoral and apostolic since it derives from the eternal Divine thoughts, from the salvific will of the Father who happily shares his happiness with every human being. My task is to baptise, confirm, consecrate, offer, teach and judge. I am bringing to you *Lumen Christi* – the Light of Christ." The regent noted that although Cardinal Wyszyński had to face many problems in all spheres of his ac-

tivity, his real ministry for the realisation of the idea of the sacraments should be evaluated very positively. He said that “the pastoral initiatives undertaken during the time of Primate Stefan Wyszyński should be judged as satisfying and building the glory and fortitude of the religious and national life in the Catholic Church.”

The last lecture entitled “Stefan Wyszyński – a candidate for the altars” was delivered by Rev. Prof. Dr. Hab. Zbigniew Suchecki, a postulator in the beatification process of Servant of God Cardinal Wyszyński (Pontifical University Antonianum, Rome). He presented the general and only non-confidential facts concerning the process. He presented the roles of individual participants, listed the persons and requirements necessary for the initiation and pursuance of the beatification process, and also presented in a chronological order the stages leading to the raising the Primate of the Millennium to the altars.

Each session was followed by an interesting discussion with the participation of both the speakers and the audience. The Conference was concluded by Prof. Sitarz, who gave his respects and words of thanks to all those who had been involved in the organisation of that academic event. He issued words of gratitude to the speakers and guests, and invited all to pray together for the prompt beatification of Servant of God Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. The prayer was led by Father Suchecki.

As part of the international academic conference, a general meeting of the SAWP KUL was held, which was concluded with wafer-sharing and carol singing.

Translated by Tomasz Palkowski



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