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## Protection of the Life of Conceived Children in the Pastoral Activities of the Jasna Góra

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## Abstract

*Protection of the Life of Conceived Children in the Pastoral Activities of the Jasna Góra*

In the face of the threat to human life conceived, which in the modern world is a reality that is widespread and growing in strength, it is necessary to take the most appropriate measures to stop the destruction of the life of children conceived. This article is an attempt to indicate the forms that defenders of life can take to save unborn children, both spiritually and through social and pastoral commitment. Bearing in mind the seriousness of the issue in question and the awareness of the role that Jasna Góra has played in the history of Poland for centuries, the author shows the considerable significance of this place also for the theme of promoting pro-life culture. Among many initiatives undertaken in the Sanctuary of the Nation, the Central Centre for the Spiritual Adoption of the Conceived Child, which has been functioning for over twenty years, deserves particular attention. It not only constitutes the realisation of the Jasna Góra Vows of the Nation taken years ago, but also meets the expectations of the multitude of pilgrims arriving each year at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Częstochowa.

**Keywords:** abortion, spiritual adoption, pastoral care, Jasna Góra

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## Abstrakt

*Ochrona życia dzieci poczętych w działalności duszpasterskiej jasnogórskiego sanktuarium*

W obliczu narastającego zagrożenia poczętego życia ludzkiego, które we współczesnym świecie jest rzeczywistością powszechną i nasilającym problemem, należy podejmować jak najodpowiedniejsze działania zmierzające do zatrzymania procederu unicestwiania życia dzieci poczętych. Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą wskazania form zaangażowania, jakie obrońcy życia mogą podjąć dla ratowania dzieci nienarodzonych zarówno w wymiarze duchowym, jak i poprzez aktywność społeczną oraz pastoralną. Mając na uwadze powagę omawianego zagadnienia oraz świadomość roli, jaką Jasna Góra od stuleci odgrywa w dziejach Polski, autor ukazuje niebagatelne znaczenie tego miejsca w propagowaniu kultury pro-life. Spośród wielu inicjatyw podejmowanych w Sanktuarium Narodu, na szczególną uwagę zasługuje funkcjonujący od ponad dwudziestu lat Centralny Ośrodek Duchowej Adopcji Dziecka Poczętego, który nie tylko stanowi realizację złożonych przed laty Jasnogórskich Ślubów Narodu, ale także wychodzi naprzeciw oczekiwaniom rzeszy pielgrzymów przybywających każdego roku do Sanktuarium Matki Bożej Częstochowskiej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** aborcja, duchowa adopcja, duszpasterstwo, Jasna Góra

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Among the important topics that repeatedly recur throughout history and gain their next “life” in the public space is the issue of abortion. The topic is ancient, for already primitive peoples resorted to abortion, and the first medical prescriptions for the removal of the human fetus are more than 4600 years old.<sup>1</sup> However, the issue is still relevant and vital, as the evolving contexts of human existence postulate further, often negative trends in the perception of human beings at the prenatal stage of their development and innovative ways of eliminating the yet unborn human life.<sup>2</sup>

According to analysts and researchers of modern civilization, the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period when two tendencies seeking to enslave people co-existed. The first includes the ideological totalitarianism of communism and fascism. The second, on the other hand, is the attempts to subjugate the human person to all manner of biotechnological experiments, including eugenics, genetic engineering and neuroscience, reducing him “to a transitory element of cosmic evolution, plotting fantastic visions of his future.”<sup>3</sup> Both phenomena are still present, although they take on new guises over time. In the face of all threats to human life in the fetal period, it is therefore necessary to take action to protect this existence, and this is done both in the dimension of social, economic, political and religious life.<sup>4</sup>

## 1. Contemporary threats to prenatal human life

The assault on the lives of conceived children that we are witnessing forces man to reflect on the reasons for this. A proper look at this issue requires broadening horizons and paying attention first to the general condition of modern man, and then pointing out the factors that directly threaten the existence of the unborn.

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- 1 R. Tokarczyk, *Normatywne ujęcia prokreacji*, Poznań 2000, p. 221–223 (Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny, 12).
  - 2 See G. Hołub, *Godność osobowa dziecka nienarodzonego*, in: *Od bólu po stracie do nadziei życia. Pogrzeb dziecka poronionego*, eds. J. Dziedzic, P. Guzdek, Kraków 2013, p. 11–22.
  - 3 A. Zwoliński, *Nowe grzechy*, Jasna Góra 2023, p. 179.
  - 4 J. Dziedzic, *Pastoralno-teologiczne aspekty straty dziecka poronionego i martwo urodzonego*, Kraków 2021, p. 114–123.

In the introductory lecture of the Constitution *Gaudium et spes* of Vatican Council II, an insightful analysis of human life was presented, grasping the issue in the context of numerous, profound and rapid social, cultural and religious changes.<sup>5</sup> Despite the existing enormous opportunities facing modern man, which include the scope of his all-round development, one can at the same time perceive confusion and incompetence in giving human actions the right direction. The document reads: “Thus while man extends his power in every direction, he does not always succeed in subjecting it to his own welfare” and “gradually and more precisely he lays bare the laws of society, only to be paralyzed by uncertainty about the direction to give it.”<sup>6</sup>

A proper understanding of the topic requires an awareness of the constant changes in the conditions of life and the transformation of the reality in which man lives. The human mind is increasingly shaped by the natural and mathematical sciences, and its operation is becoming more dependent on the development of various branches of technology. This, in turn, affects the perception of culture, and man’s adoption of attitudes toward it and the way he thinks about the world around him. There are also taking place, absent until now, skyrocketing changes in the social order.<sup>7</sup> The traditional model of marriage and family is being transformed in favor of an individualistic lifestyle, the former authority of the family, Church or school is giving way to idols or influencers, and unverified, often falsified and duplicated online news is more easily assimilated by the mass media audience than the statements of people who enjoy widespread respect.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned factors is the fact that many young people no longer draw on the values inherited from their ancestors, but rather question and challenge them, as expressed by the departure of many from religious practices. Thus, the negation of God is no longer simply the result of personal choice, but often becomes an expression of the new humanism and is a manifestation of misunderstood scientific

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5 Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, Dec 7, 1965, 4–10.

6 Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 4.

7 Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 5–6.

8 See F. Adamski, *Rodzina. Wymiar społeczno-kulturowy*, Kraków 2021, p. 167–186, 234–275; W. Półtawska, *Samo życie*, Częstochowa 1995, p. 155–193.

progress. The consequences of such attitudes can be seen both in the assimilation of mores incompatible with the Decalogue or a weakened relationship to fellow human beings, but also with the increasingly frequent state of existing social tensions, contradictions and inequalities.<sup>9</sup>

Thus generally outlined, the situation of modern human life appears as a further or indirect source of threats to human existence, especially to conceived children. Alongside them there are factors (attitudes) closer, direct, which, selected by man in freedom, affect the protection of defenseless yet unborn children or become a trap and a threat to them. The first speaks of general, global trends, against which an individual person is unable to oppose, but only has to, as it were, agree to the current state and do everything not to adopt the model of life and functioning imposed from outside. In the second situation, it is more about each person's personal choice and his or her stand for or against the culture of death.

Among the immediate dangers to conceived human life, the following factors can be identified, following John Paul II.<sup>10</sup> The first to be mentioned is the progress of science and technology and medicine. Individual researchers in pursuit of the development of their specialties disregard the ethical requirements of experimentation in the human field and disregard the boundaries that even in science must not be crossed. This includes prenatal diagnosis, genetic engineering research, resorting to artificial reproduction techniques, experimenting on embryos as research material or using *in vitro* methods.<sup>11</sup> How timely seems to be the warning of Benedict XVI, who said – “If technical progress is not matched by corresponding progress in man's ethical formation, in man's inner growth (cf. Eph 3:16; 2 Cor 4:16), then it is not progress at all, but a threat for man and for the world.”<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in medicine, which by its nature and vocation should be oriented towards the protection of

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9 Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 6–10; See also Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, Nov 24, 2013, 52–60.

10 John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, Mar 25, 1995, 3, 4, 10–14, 17, 19, 20–21, 23.

11 John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 63; See also Congregation for the doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitas personae*, June 20, 2008, 11–22.

12 Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi*, Nov 30, 2007, 22.

human health and life, in numerous cases it becomes a tool for depreciating the personal dignity of man and a means of eliminating him.<sup>13</sup>

Another in the list of factors endangering human life concerns the cultural patterns adopted—often uncritically—when the unfettered freedom of the individual justifies the wickedness of abortion and even usurps the right to decide the fate of the child conceived and developing under the heart of the mother often as a result of the adopted worldview or ideology.<sup>14</sup>

Another is the issue of state legislation, when people motivated by subjective beliefs and interests establish laws that marginalize the fate of the unborn, and even consider it a civilizational breakthrough and achievement, as the French boasted when they wrote the right to abortion into the Constitution.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, it is necessary to point to the moral crisis of man expressed in the weak condition of the human conscience, which often can hardly discern the difference between good and evil, and thus in fundamental matters, when it comes to human life—it ceases to be an instance that warns against the wickedness of abortion. At the root of such attitudes is, first of all, distancing from God and turning to the mirages of this world. A person who rejects the Creator falls into a number of traps of a self-centered lifestyle, and even “adopts a degenerate and vile vision of human freedom.”<sup>16</sup> When detached from the truth about the value and dignity of another’s life as God’s creation, then it is easy to grant oneself the power to decide the life and death of others.<sup>17</sup>

Both the Church and a number of people of good will, aware of the dangers posed by the shapes of modern man’s functioning, undertake a number of tasks aimed at minimizing the consequences of the unauthorized spawn of defenseless conceived children. Therefore, it seems necessary to point out at least several levels of such involvement.

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<sup>13</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 4.

<sup>14</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> F. Kucharski, *Aborcja w Konstytucji. „Francja sięgnęła dna”, „Gość Niedzielny”* Mar 10, 2024, p. 5; John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 4, 16, 19, 20, 57, 59, 68–73, 91.

<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 20–21; Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 274.

## 2. Forms of involvement in the defense of unborn children

All activity aimed at saving unborn children is man's response to the inner imperative of his conscience to do good and avoid evil. This law is not imposed by any person on himself, but is written in his heart. It should be obeyed, because submission to the natural law testifies to man's dignity and at the same time is the measure by which he will be judged (cf. Rom 2:14–16).<sup>18</sup>

Defense of the lives of the most vulnerable children does not stem from ideological or philosophical motives, but from the undeniable truth of the origins of human existence, that is, from the moment of fertilization. Despite the irrefutable medical evidence authenticating the moment of the existence of human life, the testimony of science is rejected and denied, the proper view of human life is distorted, some of the stages of its development are depreciated by invoking the so-called ethics of quality, and the concept of the person itself is sought to be redefined.<sup>19</sup>

The Church, on the other hand, invariably defends the truth about the origins of human life, its dignity and value, and states that: “the human being must be respected—as a person—from the very first instant of his existence” and “life once conceived, must be protected with the utmost care; abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes.”<sup>20</sup> It is impossible not to quote here John Paul II's very eloquent exhortation to “defend life and strengthen it, honor it and love it—this is the task that God entrusts to every human being.”<sup>21</sup> This is an expression of the co-responsibility that the Creator places in the hands of each person and a share in God's rule over the world. In this way, man not only cares for the least of these, but worships his Creator to the fullest.<sup>22</sup> The commitment and attitude of protecting the life of a being not yet born should also be “clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is

18 Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 16; John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, Aug 6, 1993, 54.

19 R. Kiełtyka, *Wartość (nie)chcianego życia. Status antropologiczny płodów i noworodków anencefalicznych*, Kraków 2008, p. 71–115.

20 Congregation for the doctrine of the Faith, *Donum vitae*, Feb 22, 1987, I, 1; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 51; John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 60.

21 John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 42.

22 John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 42.

always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development.”<sup>23</sup>

There are many levels within which one can undertake the defense of the life of conceived children. Among them are: cultural, political, legal, academic, scientific, artistic, educational or through social involvement and pastoral ministry.<sup>24</sup> This is the task of both clergy and laity. After all, by virtue of the grace of baptism, they are also called to carry out the prophetic, royal and priestly mission of Jesus,<sup>25</sup> which is most fully expressed through service to others in imitation of Christ, who came not to be served, but to serve (cf. Mk 10:45). This statement finds its authentication in the words of Pope Benedict XVI, who said:

In this particular area, the work of priests should be adequately assisted by lay educators, including professionals who, with their knowledge enlightened by faith, can show the way to ecclesial communities. Therefore, I ask God to send to you, dear brothers and sisters, and to those who work in the fields of science, medicine, law and politics, witnesses endowed with a true and righteous conscience, who will show the “glow of truth” and defend it, thus serving life, which is a gift and a mystery.<sup>26</sup>

In the Polish arena, the defense of the unborn had its beginning in the Church, Catholic environment, where associated lovers of life opposed all forms of attack on the lives of conceived children in the context of ongoing debates on the legalization of abortion.<sup>27</sup> In connection with these events, the Church in Poland organized numerous meetings, scientific sessions, exhibitions and lectures to make the right tasks more real, and thus raise awareness of the dangers of legalizing abortion and

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<sup>23</sup> Francis, *Gaudete et exultate*, Mar 19, 2018, 101.

<sup>24</sup> J. Dziedzic, *Pastoralno-teologiczne aspekty straty dziecka poronionego i martwo urodzonego*, p. 121.

<sup>25</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, Nov 18, 1964, 9–12.

<sup>26</sup> Benedykt XVI, *Życie jest pierwszym dobrem, jakie otrzymujemy od Boga i podstawą wszystkich innych*. Przemówienie do uczestników zgromadzenia plenarnego Papieskiej Akademii Pro Vita, Watykan, Feb 24, 2007, „L'Osservatore Romano” wydanie polskie 28 (2007) nr 5, s. 44–45.

<sup>27</sup> A. Muszala, *Debata nad polską ustawą o ochronie życia nienarodzonych*, in: *Bioetyka polska*, ed. T. Biesaga, Kraków 2004, p. 310–311.



the harmful effects it brought to individuals, families and society as a whole.<sup>28</sup>

Among the significant entities shaping pro-life culture in Poland are: Polish Federation of Movements for the Defense of Life, the Polish Association of Defenders of Human Life, the Pro-Life Foundation or the Little Feet Foundation. The scope of their influence is far-reaching and is expressed, among other things, through: education on the origins of life and responsible parenthood, supporting and taking action to obtain legal protection for conceived children, awakening social sensitivity to human life, providing specialized legal, material, social, psychological or medical assistance to single mothers, as well as to families facing financial problems or experiencing other difficulties, such as caring for a disabled child, supporting families who have lost their child, facilitating adoption procedures, engaging in dialogue for the protection of life, and many others.<sup>29</sup>

An extremely important form of influence today is the media. Therefore, especially valuable are all initiatives that educate and make the public aware of the dignity of human life in the form of various online recordings, i.e. webinars, documentaries, current commentaries on pro-life events, conducted fanpages and others. Also distributed are numerous flyers, posters, conducted training workshops and pro-life clubs.<sup>30</sup>

There is also a form of commitment that cannot be lacking—it is prayer. John Paul II wrote:

“a great prayer for life is urgently needed, a prayer which will rise up throughout the world”. Through special initiatives and in daily prayer, may an impassioned plea rise to God, the Creator and lover of life, from every Christian community, from every group and association, from every family and from the heart of every believer. Jesus himself has shown us by his own example that prayer and fasting are the first and most effective weapons against the forces of evil (cf. Mt 4:1–11) and taught his disciples, some demons cannot be driven out except in this way (cf. Mk 9:29).<sup>31</sup>

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28 A. Muszala, *Debata nad polską ustawą o ochronie życia nienarodzonych*, p. 312–313.

29 Ł. Filipiuk, *Duchowa adopcja dziecka poczętego*, Kraków 2020, p. 92–97.

30 See [www.pro-life.pl](http://www.pro-life.pl) (Apr 16, 2024).

31 John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 100.

This prayer cannot be limited to Catholics only. It is also strongly recommended that a kind of service to human life should take place within the framework of ecumenical dialogue. This is because “no single person or group has a monopoly on the defence and promotion of life. These are everyone’s task and responsibility”.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, it is also related to the fact that “life certainly has a sacred and religious value, but in no way is that value a concern only of believers. The value at stake is one which every human being can grasp by the light of reason; thus it necessarily concerns everyone.”<sup>33</sup>

### 3. The role of Jasna Gora in spreading pro-life culture

Among the places where pro-life culture can and should be realized both in the dimension of prayer, pastoral involvement and undertaking other numerous initiatives is Jasna Góra. The reasons for pointing to the Sanctuary of the Nation are many and can be classified according to three categories.

The first is the importance of the Jasna Gora Sanctuary for the history of Poland and the individual. Our Lady of Czestochowa is widely recognized as a symbol of the Nation’s identity<sup>34</sup> and is seen as the One who was given to the Polish nation as “a preternatural help and defense.”<sup>35</sup> Over the centuries, “Poles have become accustomed—all, innumerable matters of their lives, its various important, decisive moments, moments of responsibility [...] to associate with this place, with this sanctuary.”<sup>36</sup> For through the holy Image of Our Lady of Jasna Gora most fully “expressed her maternal concern for every soul, for every child, for every

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32 John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 91; See Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis redintegratio*, Nov 21, 1964, 12.

33 John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 101.

34 B. Urbanowicz, *Matka Boża Częstochowska jako symbol tożsamości Narodu na przestrzeni wieków*, in: *Z dawna Polski Tyś Królową, Maryjo. 300 lat koronacji Obrazu Matki Bożej Częstochowskiej*, ed. M. Tabulski, Jasna Góra 2017, p. 155–167.

35 Liturgical collection for the Solemnity of Our Lady of Częstochowa.

36 Jan Paweł II, *Tutaj zawsze byliśmy wolni. Homilia podczas Pierwszej Pielgrzymki do Polski*, June 4, 1979, in: *Jasnogórska Bogarodzica w wypowiedziach błogosławionego Jana Pawła II*, vol. 1, ed. Z. S. Jabłoński, Częstochowa–Jasna Góra 2011, p. 37.

family, for every person.”<sup>37</sup> It was Jasna Góra that repeatedly proved to be for Poland “a fortress of the Nation’s spirit.”<sup>38</sup> It has fulfilled this role throughout the centuries and is full to this day.

An eloquent sign of devotion to Mary’s protection are all the acts of entrustment that were placed at the feet of the Divine Parent. The first of these are the Vows of King John Casimir in 1656, in which he chose the Great God-Mother of Man – the Blessed Virgin as Patroness and Queen of his countries.<sup>39</sup> In turn, in the twentieth century, many pledges were made to the Lady of Jasna Góra, among which should be mentioned: The Act of Consecration of the Polish Episcopate on behalf of the nation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Polish Crown (1920), the Act of Consecration of the Polish Nation to the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1946), the Jasna Góra Vows of the Polish Nation (1956), the Act of Surrender of Poland into the Maternal Slavery of Mary, Mother of the Church, for the freedom of the Church of Christ (1966), the Act of Entrustment of the Holy Father John Paul II (1979) or the Prayer of the Church in Poland, in which she places in the care of Mary her mission in the new historical situation (1993).<sup>40</sup>

This significance of the Jasna Góra shrine is further expressed by the presence of Mary in Her miraculous Image. Multitudes of the faithful come to the Mother of God as if to their own Mother, and at Her throne they seek consolation, rescue and intercession from God. This is evidenced by the numerous testimonies from which we learn of miraculous conversions and graces of healing that the faithful receive through the cause of the Black Madonna.<sup>41</sup>

The title attributed to the Lady of Jasna Góra on many occasions is also not without significance. Primate Stefan Wyszyński, in the National Pilgrimage of Physicians to Jasna Góra on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1956, expressed Mary of Czestochowa as the Mother of Life, saying:

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37 Jan Paweł II, *Tutaj zawsze byliśmy wolni*, p. 37.

38 S. Wyszyński, *Zapiski więzienne*, Warszawa 2006, p. 171.

39 S. Wyszyński, *Na drogach zawierzenia*, Warszawa 1996, p. 9.

40 S. Wyszyński, *Na drogach zawierzenia*, p. 11–45.

41 See A. Czupryn, *Cuda dzieją się po cichu. O jasnogórskich cudach i łaskach*, Warszawa 2018, p. 19–214.

Precocious is this Queen! With a Face twice wounded, and yet in her majesty serene! She is, after all, the Mother of Life! *Vita dulcedo*... It is impossible to kill Her, though it is possible to injure Her. She continues to give birth to Life. That is why the Nation, fearful for its existence, came to Her... to the Mother of Life!<sup>42</sup>

It is no different during the numerous prayers and pledges, when, with their eyes fixed on the face of the Jasna Góra Mother of Life, the faithful ask her to “look like a Mother on the countless children who are not allowed to come into the world”<sup>43</sup> and ask for the grace of openness to the Gospel of life proclaimed every day. In addition, the title of Mother of Life and Defender of Human Life also referred to Our Lady of Czestochowa during the pilgrimages of pro-life circles to Jasna Góra.<sup>44</sup>

The second category showing the role of Jasna Góra in shaping the civilization of life is the multidimensionality of the services provided at the Sanctuary. At the forefront is the issue of the Holy Sacraments celebrated there—primarily the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Years ago, John Paul II said that Jasna Góra is the altar and confessional of the Nation, through which the spiritual renewal of many Poles takes place.<sup>45</sup> He went on to add that “sometimes only here, at Jasna Góra, can a person lift himself from the deepest fall to the top.”<sup>46</sup> So the importance of these sacraments is enormous. “For the most holy Eucharist contains the Church’s entire spiritual wealth: Christ himself, our passover and living bread. Through his own flesh, now made living and life-giving by the Holy Spirit, he offers life to men.”<sup>47</sup> This supernatural life not only directs man toward his final destiny, that is, eternal life

42 S. Wyszyński, *Głos z Jasnej Góry*, Warszawa 1986, p. 19–21.

43 *Modlitwa do Maryi Jasnogórskiej Matki Życia*, in: *Jasna Góra—sanktuarium troski o życie Narodu*. Ogólnopolskie Sympozjum Mariologiczno-Maryjne, Jasna Góra, Apr 28, 2009, ed. Z. S. Jabłoński, Jasna Góra–Częstochowa 2009, p. 12–13.

44 I. Krysiak, *Maryja Matka Życia inspiracją dla ruchów pro-life*, in: *Maryja Matka Życia*, eds. G. M. Bartosik, I. Klimczyk, I. Krysiak, Warszawa 2020, p. 142–145.

45 Jan Paweł II, „Tak” Chrystusowi, „Tak” Kościołowi. Przemówienie w czasie spotkania z pielgrzymami, Jasna Góra, June 4, 1997, in: *Jasnogórska Bogarodzica w wypowiedziach*, p. 286.

46 Jan Paweł II, *Wyjątkowe powołanie*. Przemówienie do paulinów, Jasna Góra, Kaplica Cudownego Obrazu, June 6, 1979, in: *Jasnogórska Bogarodzica w wypowiedziach*, p. 91.

47 John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 1.

in God, but it also “spurs us on our journey through history and plants a seed of living hope in our daily commitment to the work before us”<sup>48</sup> as well as contributes to building the world according to God’s design to a measure that corresponds to human dignity. Among these efforts, John Paul II mentions the defense of human life from conception to natural death.<sup>49</sup>

The Jasna Góra Sanctuary is also famous for its ministry of the sacrament of penance, where the spiritual transformation of many hardened sinners takes place in the Nation’s confessional. Reconciled with God, with each other and with the other, many pilgrims take up again the cooperation with God’s grace and in this way their dynamism of Christian life is renewed.<sup>50</sup> The experience of forgiveness after an abortion often pushes the faithful to engage in the work of protecting the life of the unborn, such as the Spiritual Adoption of the Conceived Child. After many conversations at the Family Counseling Center, Stanisława Nowicka has no doubt that the confessional should be the first line of Jasna Góra ministry.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to the sacraments, the daily preaching of the Gospel plays an important role. Jasna Góra is a place where the Good News can be heard proclaimed every day. This is extremely important for the reason that the sanctuary is a privileged place of encounter with the Word of God, thanks to which faith can be born in man (cf. Rom 10:17), and it constantly creates new opportunities for evangelization of both pilgrims and tourists.<sup>52</sup> As John Paul II repeatedly reminded—one of the most important tasks of the sanctuary is to bring the pilgrim to a personal encounter with the living Christ.<sup>53</sup>

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48 John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 20.

49 John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 20.

50 J. Wątroba, *W trosce o życie duchowe*, in: *Jasna Góra – sanktuarium troski o życie Narodu*, p. 11.

51 Ł. Filipiuk, S. Nowicka, *O początkach Poradni Rodzinnej i dzieła Duchowej Adopcji Dziecka Poczętego na Jasnej Górze*, rozmowa Łukasza Filipiuka OSPPE ze Stanisławą Nowicką, członkinią Instytutu Prymasa Wyszyńskiego, Kraków-Skałka 2024, p. 95 (*Dissertationes Paulinorum*, 33/1).

52 Z. S. Jabłoński, *Posługa słowa w przestrzeni sanktuarium maryjnego*, in: *Jasna Góra – sanktuarium troski o życie Narodu*, p. 110.

53 Jan Paweł II, *List z okazji siedemsetlecia Sanktuarium Świętego Domu w Loreto*, in: *Jan Paweł II o Matce Bożej 1978–1998*, ed. A. Szostek, vol. 3, Warszawa 1999, p. 163.

Other prayers and devotions also occupy an important place in the shrine's daily schedule. Among them are daily prayers of the Rosary, the Hours of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Stations of the Cross, Saturday confessions to Mary, Jasna Góra days of recollection, gathering together for the Jasna Góra Appeal in the evening, and all-night vigils.

Other spaces of involvement in promoting pro-life culture, especially the life of conceived children, are realized at the Sanctuary of the Nation through: The wide-ranging activities of Radio Jasna Góra and other mass media, i.e. websites and a youtube channel, the Jasna Góra bimonthly magazine, the Family Counseling Center, the Psychological Counseling Center, the Jasna Góra Helpline, conferences, scientific symposia, or the functioning of such initiatives as the Jasna Góra Rosary Family and the Central Center for the Spiritual Adoption of the Conceived Child.

The third criterion is the reach of the influence of the Jasna Góra Shrine, which is known practically all over the world. The radiation of this place is not limited to the borders of the country, but extends to other countries and continents. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 4 million pilgrims flocked to the home of Our Lady of Czestochowa. During the pandemic, about 1.6 million pilgrims and tourists visited Jasna Góra in 2021, in 2022 there was an increase to 2.5 million, while in 2023 the number of visitors to the Sanctuary exceeded 3.6 million people.<sup>54</sup>

An important sign of promoting the civilization of life through the Icon of Our Lady of Jasna Góra is the peregrination of Her Image in the country and abroad. The latter idea, born of the initiative of lay leaders defending human life, went under the slogan *From ocean to ocean*. The copy of the Miraculous Image traveled from Vladivostok to Fatima. It peregrinated through 24 countries in Asia and Europe thus covering a route totaling about 65 thousand kilometers. For, as Ewa Kowalewska points out, "from Jasna Góra Our Lady radiates to the whole world. She is the spark that can transform and save the lost modern world."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Biuro Prasowe Jasnej Góry, Statystyki pielgrzymkowe, [https://www.jasnagora.com/tematy/Statystyki%20pielgrzymkowe/temat\\_61](https://www.jasnagora.com/tematy/Statystyki%20pielgrzymkowe/temat_61) (Apr 16, 2024).

<sup>55</sup> I. Krysiak, *Maryja Matka Życia inspiracją dla ruchów pro-life*, p. 150–156.

#### 4. The importance of the Central Center for Spiritual Adoption of the Conceived Child at Jasna Góra

Inscribed in the charism of the Pauline ministry and occupying a special place in the activities for the defense of the life of the unborn is the initiative of the Spiritual Adoption of the Conceived Child. The origins of the prayer date back to the late 1980<sup>s</sup>. At that time, in the Church of the Holy Spirit in Warsaw, on February 2, 1987, a group of young people from the Guard of Generations made the first pledges of spiritual adoption to the then Warsaw Prior, Father Szczepan Kosnik. The essence of the prayer consists of reciting for nine months a decade of the Holy Rosary and a so-called daily prayer for the intention of one unborn child, whose name is known only to God. In addition, an additional resolution can be taken.<sup>56</sup>

At Jasna Góra, the work of the Spiritual Adoption of the Conceived Child appeared in 1994. From the beginning, those responsible for promoting the prayer and taking the pledge were the ladies working in the Family Counseling Center. This was connected with their frequent contact with people struggling with post-abortion syndrome, who sought rescue and liberation at Jasna Góra. Many times the prayer of spiritual adoption brought them help and relief from their suffering.<sup>57</sup>

Over time, the need for a separate place whose primary task would be to promote this prayer was recognized. The Central Center for the Spiritual Adoption of the Conceived Child at Jasna Góra was founded on June 1, 2004. The initiator of its establishment was Father Stanisław Jarosz. The first location was in the Jasna Góra courtyard—opposite the Chapel of the Sacrament of Penance—and was connected to the Pauline Vocation Center. According to Fr. Jarosz, the struggle for the lives of unborn children and the concern for religious and priestly vocations have much in common. He used to say that “as long as the Pauline Fathers fight in defense of abortion-threatened conceived children, God will not allow them to run out of vocations.”<sup>58</sup> Today it is found within the “walls of Jasna Góra”.

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56 Ł. Filipiuk, *Duchowa adopcja dziecka poczętego*, p. 76–84.

57 Ł. Filipiuk, S. Nowicka, *O poczętkach Poradni Rodzinnej i dzieła Duchowej Adopcji Dziecka Poczętego na Jasnej Górze*, p. 92–93.

58 Ł. Filipiuk, *Duchowa adopcja dziecka poczętego*, p. 114–118.

Implementation of the basic tasks at the Central Center for Spiritual Adoption is expressed through: (a) accepting applications to take the pledge of spiritual adoption from participants of pilgrimages, both individual and notified groups; (b) keeping the Jasna Góra Book of Defenders of Human Life; (c) undertaking all pastoral and didactic activities that would involve organizing formation training for retreatants and animators of the work; (d) receiving testimonies from people experiencing graces through taking up prayer; (e) organizing and celebrating meetings—for animators, those undertaking prayer and those who support the work; (g) distributing guides, leaflets, brochures and any materials on spiritual adoption on the territory of Jasna Góra and making them available to all who ask for them; (h) providing any information related to the work in the mass media; and (i) keeping a chronicle.<sup>59</sup>

There are many places throughout Poland where it is possible to undertake the prayer of the Spiritual Adoption of the Conceived Child. Nevertheless, for several reasons, the functioning of the Central Center at Jasna Góra seems legitimate and desirable. First, Spiritual Adoption at the Sanctuary is the realization of the Jasna Góra Vows of the Nation made in 1956. Although the bishops and faithful present there pledged to keep their pledges as a Nation, Jasna Góra should be the first to fulfill them and, as it were, set an example to the entire homeland. Moreover, there is no other place in Poland that, both in terms of the pilgrims who come there annually, as well as in terms of the importance that the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Czestochowa plays in the history of Poland, the appeal for the defense of conceived life will not only resound with greater force, but also with the ability to reach a wider audience. Finally, it is necessary to emphasize the presence and role of Mary in the life of the nation, as well as every person. Elected Queen of Poland, she will strive in an unmatched way to protect the life of every human being—in the physical dimension of unborn children and in the spiritual dimension of those who undergo or perform abortions.

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59 Ł. Filipiuk, *Duchowa adopcja dziecka poczętego*, p. 112–113.



## Conclusion

A close observation of modern man's attitude to the life of conceived children can cause concern. On the one hand, a culture of exclusion is being created, in which man—in the words of Francis—is treated as “a consumer good that can be used and then thrown away.”<sup>60</sup> In this way, a globalization of indifference is being created and growing,<sup>61</sup> where it is becoming more and more difficult to hear the cries of the defenders of life speaking out on behalf of still unborn children. This is due to the fact that many succumb to the model of life that the current world imposes on man.

In the face of all dangers, one cannot remain indifferent. This is known to all those who manifest numerous expressions of concern for the life of every human being, especially the most defenseless, because they are still developing in the womb. Therefore, they initiate various actions and activities to protect them, the first of which is prayer. One of the places, unique on the map of Poland and important for the history of the Nation, is the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Czestochowa, where for centuries people have sought refuge and help. Also in the field of defense of the life of conceived children, Jasna Góra has a significant role to play both through the Holy Sacraments celebrated there, the Gospel proclaimed, undertaken—often—round-the-clock prayer and large-scale pastoral activities, which include the functioning of the Central Center for the Spiritual Adoption of the Conceived Child bringing irreplaceable help in the subject of the defense of the life of unborn children.

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<sup>60</sup> Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 53.

<sup>61</sup> Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 53–54.

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