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The Sanctuary of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska as an example of outdoor preaching

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Abstract

The Sanctuary in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska as an example of outdoor preaching

The Sanctuary in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska was established in the early 17th century. As the first Polish replica of the holy sites in Jerusalem, it very quickly became a pilgrimage destination. To this day, it remains popular as a place of prayer, meditation, preaching, and listening to the Word of God. The aim of this article is to provide a synthetic presentation of the phenomenon of outdoor preaching of the Word of God at this sanctuary, both during liturgy and outside of it. The addressed problem might be summarised in a question: Is the Word of God preached here outside the sacred buildings, and what are the distinctive features of this form of preaching? The analysis covers the following issues: the circumstances of preaching the Word of God, used forms, the person of a preacher, and the content of the sermons. An attempt was also made to indicate the advantages and disadvantages of this type of ministry. The historical method, analysis, and synthesis were used as a method. The results of the analysis show that the Word of God is also preached outdoors at this sanctuary and has its own specificity.

Keywords: Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, outdoor sermons, Word of God, preaching

Abstrakt

Sanktuarium w Kalwarii Zebrzydowskiej jako przykład przepowiadania plenerowego

Sanktuarium w Kalwarii Zebrzydowskiej powstało w pierwszych latach XVII wieku. Jako pierwsza polska kopia miejsc świętych w Jerozolimie bardzo szybko stało się celem pielgrzymek. Do dzisiaj nie traci na popularności jako miejsce modlitwy, medytacji, głoszenia i słuchania słowa Bożego. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest syntetyczne przedstawienie zjawiska plenerowego głoszenia słowa Bożego w tym sanktuarium: podczas liturgii i poza nią. Podjęty problem można zamknąć w pytaniu: Czy słowo Boże jest tu głoszone poza obrębem obiektów sakralnych i jakie szczególne cechy posiada ta forma głoszenia? W ramach analizy omawianego zjawiska uwzględniono następujące zagadnienia: okoliczności głoszenia słowa Bożego, praktykowane formy, osobę głoszącego i treści zawarte w wystąpieniach. Podjęto także próbę wskazania atutów i mankamentów tego rodzaju posługi. Posłużono się metodą historyczną, analizą i syntezą. Wynikiem analiz jest stwierdzenie, że słowo Boże w tym sanktuarium jest głoszone także w plenerze i posiada swoją specyfikę.

Słowa kluczowe: Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, głoszenie plenerowe, słowo Boże, kaznodziejstwo

For over four centuries, the Sanctuary of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska has been a place of preaching the Word of God. This rich, multifaceted and yet insufficiently explored issue continues to invite scholarly investigation. The purpose of following paper is to examine to what extent the Word of God is preached beyond the confines of sacred buildings and to identify the characteristics of the outdoor preaching practiced in this place.

Searching for answers to these questions, we shall look at Kalwaria as a sanctuary that has extended beyond the walls of its original church from the very inception by subsequent devotional structures, liturgical celebrations and—notably by preaching. A distinction will be drawn between outdoor preaching within liturgical context and beyond it. Each form will be examined with reference to circumstances, modes of expression, preachers and content. Finally, an evaluative reflection will be conducted highlighting the strengths and limitations of outdoor preaching.

1. The outdoor shape of the Sanctuary in Kalwaria

1.1. The territorial expansion of the Sanctuary

From the very beginning of the Sanctuary in Kalwaria it was evident that the piety and generosity of the founder of that site—Mikołaj Zebrzydowski—would bear fruit in more than a single structure. Already on 4 October 1601—the day the Church of the Crucifixion on Mount Żarek was consecrated—Zebrzydowski was seriously considering the construction of additional chapels modelled on those erected in Jerusalem and commemorating the events that there had taken place.¹ In the founding act of Kalwaria, issued on 1 December 1602 at Wawel Castle, Zebrzydowski, referring to the first church he had built, wrote among other things: “Beside this church, if God allows, we intend to build, also in imitation of Jerusalem, [...] a chapel of the Holy Sepulchre.” Entrusting the site to the care of the Franciscan Observants—known in Poland as the Bernardines—he added: “These same brothers [...] shall also assume

¹ See H.E. Wyczawski, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. Historia klasztoru bernardynów i kalwaryjskich Drózek*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 2006, p. 94.

responsibility for the administration of this entire place and for the churches and chapels we shall build in the future.”² Eventually, Mikołaj Zebrzydowski erected (besides the original church and monastery) seventeen structures³, his son Jan added sixteen, while two erected by his father expanded.⁴ In later centuries, seven additional chapels were built (two in the XVIII, four in the XIX and one in the XX century). Thus, the complex of Kalwaria, apart from its main church and monastery, consists of over forty structures scattered across an area of approximately 6 km² along a 5 km long pilgrimage route.⁵

1.2. Religious services celebrated outside the church

The increasing number of pilgrims was associated with the fact that the liturgy, religious services and prayers were celebrated not only within the main church but also beyond its confines. The pastoral ministry—in a broad sense—extended beyond the church walls encompassing other sacred buildings as well as the surrounding space. It resulted from two primary reasons. The first was the nature of major celebrations which attracted large groups of pilgrims who could not be all accommodated within any single structure. The second reason was the specific character of certain religious services typically conducted outdoors—such as processions or distinctive prayers along so-called Dróżki (The Paths) during which participants follow a route linking successive chapels.⁶

² H. E. Wyczawski, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska...*, pp. 459–460.

³ See W. F. Murawiec, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. Informator-przewodnik po zabytkach architektury sakralnej*, Kraków 1974, pp. 64–83.

⁴ W. F. Murawiec, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska...*, pp. 64–83.

⁵ See R. A. Gajczak, *Tryptyk kalwaryjski*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 1990, p. 69.

⁶ Developed largely during the first years of the sanctuary's existence, the order of the devotions is presented in prayer books from Kalwaria, systematically published and compiled by various authors, e.g. S. Podworski, *Drogi kalwaryjskie czyli książka do nabożeństwa służąca do użytku pobożnych Kalwarię Zebrzydowską zwiedzających z dodatkiem historii o cudownym obrazie Matki Boskiej oraz historii klasztoru i kościoła*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 1938; A. Chadam, *Modlitewnik kalwaryjski*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 1971; E. A. Obruśnik, *Na kalwaryjskich drogach. Modlitewnik na Dróżki*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 2010; R. Pancerz, *Z Jezusem i Maryją na Kalwarii. Rozważania i modlitwy na Dróżki*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 2019; and the most recent one: F. Kuśnierz, *Pielgrzymi nadziei—modlitewnik na Dróżki kalwaryjskie*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 2025.

As soon as the decision was made to build the Polish Jerusalem, as the new sanctuary came to be called, the route of the future Paths was marked out by means of a plough under the direction of Zebrzydowski. Stakes were set in the places designated for the chapels and these were later replaced by crosses painted red. This *novum* drew the attention of local inhabitants and travellers alike. They were informed by the monks that was the beginning of a future Calvary and that site had been endowed by the Holy Father with numerous indulgences so people felt a desire to pray there. Some did it individually, while others sought the assistance of the monks. That marked the beginning of the *paths* devotions, which—gradually refined and codified in the Calvarian prayer books—became an integral part of the sanctuary's spiritual life: the Paths of Our Lord Jesus, the Paths of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and, from 1840 onward, the Paths for the Dead.⁷

The celebration of Holy Mass outdoors is evidenced, among other things, by the balcony with an altar located on the facade of the basilica, constructed at the close of the seventeenth century. One of the early accounts describes this site as follows:

Here Holy Masses are celebrated during major indulgences, for the church, however spacious it may appear, is scarcely able to accommodate one-tenth, and quite often merely one-twentieth or one-thirtieth, of the pilgrims. When, however, the priest celebrates the Holy Mass on this gallery, several tens of thousands of people can simultaneously see him and participate in the Holy Sacrifice.⁸

Among the many events that necessitated the celebration of services outdoors, one should mention the coronation of the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1887. For the 300th anniversary jubilee of Kalwaria, celebrated in 1902, the Bernardine friars obtained from Cardinal Puzyna permission to erect a field altar in the Rajski Square, beside the column with a statue of St. Francis, raised especially for this occasion.⁹ Another site of major celebrations was the altar occasionally set up at the top of

7 See H. E. Wyczawski, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska...*, p. 102.

8 *Święta Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. Na podstawie kronik i dokumentów klasztornych*, Kraków 1939, p. 12.

9 See H. E. Wyczawski, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska...*, p. 325.

the stairs in front of the basilica, and later, from 1984 onward, the field altar constructed directly opposite the descent from Mount Calvary. The amphitheatrical formation of this area enables all participants in the liturgy to observe the place of celebration and to take part in the services more fully.¹⁰

1.3. Preaching the Word of God outside sacred structures

A natural consequence of the territorial expansion of the sanctuary, the impressive attendance of pilgrims, and the celebration of liturgical services for them outside the sacred structures was the open-air preaching the Word of God – both during and beyond the liturgy. The rich spiritual life of the sanctuary and the abundance of initiatives undertaken by the friars serving there provided numerous occasions for such preaching.

Already at the consecration of the first structure by the nuncio Claudio Rangoni, a sermon was delivered under the open sky. The author of the nineteenth-century history of the sanctuary, quoting an excerpt from the sermon given by the Jesuit Kasper Sawicki, begins with the following words:

The rite of consecration commenced. When Rangoni had completed the ceremony, Father Kasper Sawicki ascended a pulpit prepared under the open sky and began his speech with these prophetic words.¹¹

Having established the Paths called *Dróżki* (the devotional paths), the Bernardine friars, accompanying the pilgrims, not only led them in prayer but also explained to them the mysteries of redemption. This was a response to the faithful's own invitation, who – wishing to celebrate this new devotion with faith – asked: "Reverend Fathers, come with us now to the crosses and to Calvary, and, we beseech your reverences, speak to us of the Passion of our Savior."¹²

¹⁰ H. E. Wyczawski, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska...*, p. 205.

¹¹ See J. Łepkowski, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska i jej okolice pod względem dziejowym i archeologicznym*, Kraków 1850, pp. 19–20.

¹² See C. Bogdalski, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. Pamiątka dla pobożnych pielgrzymów przybywających na Kalwarię wydana z okazji koronacji cudownego obrazu Matki Boskiej*,

Due to the increasing number of arriving pilgrims, the local friars were unable to accompany all who desired such guidance. Quite early, already in the second half of the 17th century, this accompaniment—combined with open-air ‘narration’ of the events of the Passion and Death of Jesus—was entrusted to designated lay persons.¹³

The fact that outdoor preaching of the Word of God was regarded from the very beginning as an indispensable part of the Calvarian observances is evidenced by the very architecture of the chapels and churches situated along the Paths. The vast majority of them are equipped with external pulpits. These pulpits, intended for delivering sermons or meditations, fulfilled a function analogous to that of those located within church interiors: they rendered the preacher visible even to large crowds and allowed his voice to reach a broader audience. This was particularly important before the sanctuary was equipped with a sound amplification system.

In addition to liturgical and paraliturgical ceremonies conducted in the open air, another setting conducive to preaching the Word of God were the addresses delivered by the guardians of the sanctuary to the pilgrims—words of welcome and farewell. Such ceremonies often took place outdoors, by the cross in front of the church or near the Chapel of St. Raphael the Archangel. Occasionally, upon the pilgrims’ arrival, a priest accompanying them—or even one of the pilgrims themselves—would address words of encouragement to the gathered faithful. The first chronicler of the monastery, Father Ludwik Boguski, recorded that when the pilgrims reached the sanctuary, “they were accustomed to arrange themselves in pairs in a semicircle—men separately, women separately. Then they would fall prostrate, and the parish priest or the most distinguished pilgrim would deliver an appropriate address. Rising again, they would extend their hands to one another in a gesture of peace and, with a hymn upon their lips, enter the church.”¹⁴

It should also be noted that the open-air preaching the Word of God at Kalwaria, beyond its purely practical dimension, also possesses

Kraków 1887, p. 20; A. Chadam, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. Rys historyczny*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 1995, p. 7.

¹³ See H. E. Wyczawski, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska...*, p. 360.

¹⁴ H. E. Wyczawski, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska...*, p. 312.

a symbolic one. Since this sanctuary is— to some extent— a reflection of the Homeland of Christ—a remembrance of the places and events inscribed in the life of the Savior—the preaching of the Word of God under the open sky evokes yet another memory: in the preachers of the Good News walking the paths of Calvary, one may perceive Christ Himself—the itinerant Teacher who delivered most of His teachings beneath the open heavens.

2. Liturgical outdoor preaching

2.1. Circumstances

Preaching the Word of God outside the church, within the context of the liturgy, most frequently takes place during the major indulgence celebrations (the Holy Week and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary), during so-called field Masses and outdoor Vespers.

In the program of the Holy Week indulgence, two occasions can be found when the Word of God is preached outdoors. The first occurs on Holy Thursday during the rite of the washing of the apostles' feet, which inaugurates the Passion Procession. At 1:00 p.m., pilgrims gather on the slope of Mount Calvary, directly opposite the field altar. The ceremony begins with the singing of Lenten Lamentations (*Gorzkie żale*) followed by the *mandatum*—the washing of feet. This rite should be regarded as liturgical, even though it is not combined with the Mass of the Lord's Supper and does not take place between the homily and the Prayer of the Faithful, as suggested by the Roman Missal.¹⁵ The presiding priest wears liturgical vestments—an alb and a cope. The Gospel passage assigned for the occasion is read, followed by a homily. During the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper celebrated in the basilica, the rite is not repeated. The second occasion is Good Friday, when the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion is celebrated at the conclusion of the Passion Play on Mount Calvary. It is presided over by one of the auxiliary bishops of the Archdiocese of Kraków, who also delivers the homily after the proclamation of the Passion narrative.

¹⁵ See *Mszał rzymski dla diecezji polskich*, 2nd revised edition, Poznań 2012, p. 127.

The second major feast in Kalwaria is the indulgence of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Its program includes several outdoor celebrations at which a homily is preached. The first of these is the solemn Vespers inaugurating the Procession of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, held on the podium in front of the Chapel of the Holy House of Our Lady. Vespers are presided over by an invited bishop, who also delivers the homily. The solemn conclusion of the Dormition Procession is the field Mass celebrated in front of the Church of the Tomb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This liturgy, too, is presided over by a bishop—either the ordinary of the Archdiocese of Kraków or an invited guest—who likewise preaches the homily. A field Mass, with its accompanying homily, also marks both the beginning (celebrated at 6:30 a.m. in front of the Church of the Tomb of the Blessed Virgin Mary) and the end (celebrated at 11:00 a.m. at the field altar) of the Procession of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the latter constituting the culminating moment of the entire indulgence. All these celebrations take place regardless of weather conditions. When the weather is favourable for outdoor prayer, two additional Masses are celebrated in the *Rajski Square* in front of the basilica: on Thursday—a Mass with the participation of the Bernardine missionaries, and on Saturday—a Mass for the youth.¹⁶

A third event that draws a significant number of pilgrims to Kalwaria and includes an outdoor homily is the September pilgrimage of families from the Archdiocese of Kraków, usually held on the Sunday following September 8. At 11:30 a.m., a Mass is celebrated at the field altar, typically presided over by one of the bishops of Kraków under the leadership of the metropolitan, who also delivers a homily. A similar character and course mark the pilgrimage of married couples and families from the Diocese of Bielsko-Żywiec¹⁷, also organized in September.

Among the outdoor Masses accompanied by a homily, one should also mention the Mass celebrated on the last Saturday of August for the pilgrimage of the *Light-Life Movement* (*Ruch Światło-Życie*) and the altar

¹⁶ See *Program of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Pilgrimage in 2025*. See <https://kalwaria.eu/uroczystosci-odpustowe-ku-czci-wniebowzicia-nmp-2025/> (accessed July 21, 2025).

¹⁷ See <https://diecezja.bielsko.pl/aktualnosci/16diecezjalnapielgrzymkarodzindokalwariizebrzydowskiejzaproszenie/> (accessed July 21, 2025).

servers of the Archdiocese of Kraków, as well as the Mass for participants in the pilgrimage of horseback riders and horse-drawn carriages on the next-to-last Sunday of August. The latter, due to the presence of horses, is celebrated on the Paths at the fourth station of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.¹⁸

2.2. Forms

The principal form of proclaiming the Word of God during the liturgy—whether celebrated indoors or outdoors—is a homily. It is a mode of preaching that serves to explain, interpret, update, and apply in practice the texts contained within a given liturgical celebration. It is delivered by a person authorized by the Church.¹⁹ The homily reflects the very manner of proclaiming the Good News employed by Christ Himself. Its rightful place within the liturgy was restored by the Second Vatican Council. The homily is intended as an actualization and continuation of what has been expressed in the liturgical readings or contained within the Mass formulary. Inspiration for it may be drawn from the liturgical year, from the fixed elements of the liturgy known as the *Ordinarium*, and from those parts which emphasize the mystery of the day or of the particular celebration (*Proprium*).²⁰ The conciliar documents state that in the homily, based on the sacred text, the mysteries of faith and the principles of Christian life are to be presented.²¹

One additional form of preaching the Word of God, practiced during the aforementioned outdoor celebrations, is ‘the words of welcome’ delivered at the beginning of the Mass. After the initial greeting—or, more rarely, immediately upon the arrival of the procession at the altar—these words are spoken by the custodian of the sanctuary or by one of the hosts of the celebration. At first glance, this form may seem unrelated to the proclamation of the Word of God and to serve merely as

18 See *Kalendarium uroczystości 2025*, <https://kalwaria.eu/kalendarium-uroczystosci/> (accessed July 21, 2025).

19 See R. Zerfas, *Od perykopy do homilii*, Kraków 1995, p. 11.

20 See H. Simon, *Teksty liturgiczne jako źródło przepowiadania*, in: *Liturgia i przepowiadanie*, ed. W. Przyczyna, Kraków 2010, pp. 172–185.

21 See Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1963, no. 52.

a gesture of courtesy. However, an analysis of these addresses reveals that, in addition to their polite formulas, they also contain elements of instruction and exhortation.²²

2.3. Preachers and content

According to the law of the Church, only an ordained minister may preach a homily, which forms an integral part of the liturgy.²³ Thus, the preachers of outdoor homilies in the Kalwaria sanctuary are bishops, priests, and deacons who preside at or participate in the liturgy. Since, as mentioned above, liturgical preaching outside sacred buildings in Kalwaria takes place primarily during the most solemn celebrations, the homilists are most often bishops. They preside over the liturgy and assume the role of preacher.²⁴ A similar pattern applies in the case of presbyters, although exceptions sometimes occur.²⁵ The words of welcome incorporated into outdoor liturgies are typically delivered by the custodian of the sanctuary or his deputy. The homily should comprise three essential elements: biblical (an interpretation of the scriptural

²² This form evokes an association with the *fervorino* described in homiletic literature, referring to a short, joyful address calling for zeal, adherence to certain principles, and the awakening of greater enthusiasm. See K. Panuś, *Sztuka głoszenia kazań*, Kraków 2008, pp. 40–41.

²³ *Codex Iuris canonici auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus*, 25.01.1983, Legal Status as of 18 May 2022, canon 767.

²⁴ For example, during the field Mass celebrated on the occasion of the family pilgrimage of the Diocese of Bielsko-Żywiec on 21 September 2024, the homily was delivered by the principal celebrant, Bishop Roman Pindel. See <https://kalwaria.eu/pielgrzymka-rodzin-diecezji-bielsko-zywieckiej-2/> (accessed July 21, 2025). During the field Mass of the family pilgrimage of the Archdiocese of Kraków on 8 September 2024, the main celebrant and preacher was Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski. See <https://kalwaria.eu/xxxii-pielgrzymka-rodzin-archidiecezji-krakowskiej-do-kalwarii-zebrzydowskiej/> (accessed July 21, 2025). Likewise, during the Light-Life Movement pilgrimage on 31 August 2024, the outdoor Mass was presided over and the homily delivered by Archbishop Jędraszewski. See <https://kalwaria.eu/52-pielgrzymka-do-kalwarii-zebrzydowskiej-rekodziekczy-nienie/> (accessed July 21, 2025).

²⁵ For instance, during the indulgence solemnity on 19 August 2018, the principal celebrant was the Metropolitan Archbishop of Kraków, Marek Jędraszewski, while the homily was delivered by the invited guest, Archbishop Józef Michalik. See <https://kalwaria.eu/19082018-glowne-uroczystosci-ku-czci-wniebowzicia-nmp-w-kalwarii-zebrzydowskiej/> (accessed July 21, 2025).

texts included in the liturgy), existential (an awareness of the current situation and needs of the listeners) and liturgical (an acknowledgment of God's active presence within the liturgical assembly).²⁶ The content of homilies generally reflects these three dimensions. An illustrative example is the homily delivered by Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski on 18 August 2019, during the solemn field Mass concluding the indulgence of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. That year's celebration also marked the 40th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's first visit to Kalwaria in 1979. The preacher skillfully intertwined the papal, Marian and eschatological themes derived from the nature of the feast. He first recalled the importance of the Kalwaria sanctuary in the life of John Paul II: "While preparing this sermon, I strove to read more about this centre of Marian devotion. What struck me deeply was how profoundly the Holy Father was attached to this sacred place." He then reflected on the role of Mary in the life of Jesus and the Church: "Here we, too, become aware that Mary is not only the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of God, but also our Mother—the Mother of us all, the Mother of each and every one of us". Finally, referring to the meaning of the feast itself, he emphasized that Mary's greatest desire is the eternal joy of her children: "What else could the Mother of God and our Mother desire for us more fervently than that we might fulfill God's will as perfectly as possible and attain eternal happiness?"²⁷

In the case of the family pilgrimage, preachers frequently refer to the motto of that year's gathering. Around this theme are centred the texts of the prayers as well as the content of the homily itself.²⁸ Similarly, the words of welcome incorporated into the liturgy often refer to the

²⁶ See L. Szewczyk, *Kierunki badań w homiletyce polskiej na podstawie zawartości Bibliografii homiletycznej*, "Polonia Sacra" 21 (2017) no. 2 (47), p. 55.

²⁷ See the homily by Zenon Grocholewski, cardinal (available as audiorecording), <https://www.radiomaryja.pl/multimedia/homiliakskardzenonagrocholewskiegowygloszonapodczasuroczystosciodпустowychwniebowziescianajswietszejmaryipannywkalwariizebrzydowskiej/> (accessed 21 July 2025).

²⁸ In 2025 the pilgrimage motto was "Rodzina sanktuarium życia," in 2024 "Maryja – Matka Pięknej Miłości," and in 2023 "Miłość, która jest gotowa oddać życie, nie zginie," – Sanctuary of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, <https://kalwaria.eu/> (accessed July 16, 2025).

pilgrimage experience, to liturgical texts or to the theological message of the particular celebration.²⁹

3. Non-Liturgical outdoor preaching

3.1. Circumstances

Non-liturgical outdoor preaching at the Kalwaria Sanctuary, much like the outdoor preaching conducted within the framework of the liturgy, reaches particular intensity during the major indulgence celebrations—Holy Week and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The programs of these events include numerous gatherings organised outside the main church and other sacred structures forming part of the Kalwaria complex. Some of these events are not directly connected with the liturgy.

During Holy Week, the Passion Play (*Misterium Męki Pańskiej*) begins on Palm Sunday. It is a devotional observance combining the dramatization of events from the Passion of Christ with prayer and the proclamation of the Word of God. At 3:00 p.m., the faithful gather to participate in the re-enactment of two Gospel scenes: Christ's entry into Jerusalem and the expulsion of the merchants from the Temple. After the "theatrical" portion concludes, a preacher appears before the gathered

²⁹ As an example, one can cite the welcome address delivered during the 27th Family Pilgrimage of the Archdiocese of Kraków on September 8, 2019, by the then custodian of the sanctuary, Fr. Konrad Cholewa OFM. The speech can be divided into two parts. Courteous elements appear in the second part, where the custodian welcomes and thanks the pilgrims, with special attention to families, single individuals, and parents bringing their children to the sanctuary. He also greets the clergy and representatives of state and local authorities. The first part of the address serves as an encouragement based on the pilgrimage motto, "The Bridegroom is with you," taken from John Paul II's letter to families *Gratissimam sane*: "Sisters and Brothers, this is the assurance that Christ is with us, that He has gathered us, that He is with every family, every married couple, and every person, young or old. May this assurance once again bring joy, peace, and hope into our hearts and our lives. 'The Bridegroom is with you.' Christ wishes today, once more, from the hill of Kalwaria, to knock at the doors of our homes. He desires to meet anew with all of us, and with Him—His Mother, the one from the Kalwaria icon." The text is taken from the recording. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rA8hue3BLYs> (accessed July 21, 2025).

participants at the field altar. He begins with a short prayer, followed by a sermon referring not only to the biblical scenes just presented, but also serving as the inaugural address for the entire indulgence.

Another occasion for outdoor preaching during Holy Week occurs on Holy Thursday. After the *mandatum* rite described earlier, participants in the Passion Play set out along the Paths. The procession's destination is the chapel commemorating the house of the high priest Caiaphas. Before reaching their destination, the pilgrims stop at seven stations. At each one, a short prayer is recited, followed by a sermon focused on the particular theme associated with that station.

The final day of the Passion Play is Good Friday. The observance begins at 6:00 a.m. at the chapel commemorating Caiaphas's house, with the morning trial of Jesus. The participants then proceed along the route leading from that chapel to the hill of Calvary. Along the way, they listen to thirteen sermons delivered at successive stations.

The second major celebration at Kalwaria is the Indulgence of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In its current form, it begins on the Sunday preceding the feast of the Assumption (August 15) and concludes on the following Sunday. The program includes three great processions³⁰: on the opening Sunday—the Procession of Mary's Compassion with Jesus; on the Friday of the indulgence week—the Procession of the Dormition (or Funeral) of the Blessed Virgin Mary; on the concluding Sunday—the Procession of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Procession of Mary's Compassion with Jesus begins after the Sunday Mass celebrated in the basilica at 3:00 p.m. The faithful, carrying the statue of Our Lady of Sorrows, proceed from the basilica to the Chapel of the Holy House of Our Lady. Along the way, they stop at nine chapels, where a sermon is preached at each station. The second procession—the Procession of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary—takes place on the Friday of the indulgence week. Dedicated to the mystery of the end of Mary's earthly life, it begins with solemn Vespers at the Chapel of the Holy House of Our Lady. After Vespers, the procession moves

³⁰ For the first time, this order was presented in the prayer book published in 1630 by Fr. Mikołaj ze Skalbmierza, custodian of the sanctuary. See Mikołaj ze Skalbmierza, *Viarum compassionis, funeris et assumptionis... Virginis Mariae... remonstratio...*, Cracoviae, 1630.

toward the Church of the Tomb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The statue of Mary, depicted as resting in an open “coffin,” is carried in the procession, which stops at seven locations. At each one, a sermon is delivered. The third procession—the Procession of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary—takes place on the Sunday after August 15. It is preceded by a Mass celebrated at 6:30 a.m. in front of the Church of the Tomb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. During the procession, the statue of the Assumed Virgin Mary is carried and at seven stations along the route sermons are preached.

In addition to these major celebrations, pilgrims also engage in devotions along the Paths outside the main indulgence periods. Many pilgrimage groups arriving at Kalwaria include this form of prayer in their itineraries. The monastery also regularly organises devotions along the Paths, announcing in advance the dates and times of the planned services. Four main types of devotions are practiced: The Paths of Our Lord Jesus—consisting of two parts (the Way of the Arrest and the Stations of the Cross) encompassing 27 stations located in 22 chapels; The Stations of the Cross comprising the final 14 stations of the Paths of Our Lord Jesus; The Paths of the Blessed Virgin Mary consisting of three parts (the Stations of Mary’s Compassion with Jesus, the Stations of the Dormition and the Stations of the Assumption) encompassing 24 stations in 23 chapels; the Paths for the Dead which include stations belonging to the Paths of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At each station, a reflection is delivered.

Finally, one should mention another circumstance—rare but highly significant—namely, a papal visit. Pope John Paul II, who maintained a special bond with the Kalwaria Sanctuary, visited it on June 7, 1979, during his first pilgrimage to Poland. The meeting with the faithful took place at the site of today’s field altar, at the foot of Mount Calvary. On that occasion, the Holy Father delivered a sermon dedicated to the theme of prayer.³¹

³¹ Under similar circumstances, Pope Benedict XVI met with the faithful in Kalwaria on June 27, 2006. However, the Pope addressed the gathered crowd with only a few sentences, which can hardly be considered a homily or reflection. See Jan Paweł II, *Do tronu łaski. Kazania, przemówienia, homilie w sanktuarium pasyjnomaryjnym*

3.2. Forms

One of the most commonly practiced forms of outdoor preaching outside the liturgy at the Kalwaria Sanctuary is a sermon. This form may be defined as a salvific event realised through the public proclamation of Revealed Truth, carried out by an authorized servant of the Church in such a way that it shapes the life of the listeners.³² The sermon differs from a homily in two principal respects. First, it differs in context—a sermon is delivered outside the liturgy—and second, in terms of the preacher—a homily is reserved for those who have received the sacrament of holy orders, whereas sermons may also be preached by laypersons who have received a canonical mission to cooperate with the hierarchy in the official proclamation of the Word of God. The sermon holds an important place in the Church’s preaching ministry; it complements the homily, is equally rooted in Sacred Scripture and was practiced by Christ, the Apostles and the Fathers of the Church.³³ The most frequent forms of outdoor sermons delivered at Kalwaria are the Passion and Marian sermons, preached during the processions along the Paths during the indulgence celebrations of Holy Week and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The content of the Passion sermons, as the name suggests, centres on the work of human redemption, particularly on the Passion and Death of Christ. The Marian sermons, in the Kalwaria context, typically focus on Mary’s companionship with Jesus and on the end of her earthly life highlighting both her death and the heavenly glory bestowed upon her.³⁴

w Kalwarii Zebrzydowskiej, ed. T. Fułat and A. Bardecki, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 2020, pp. 267268.

³² See E. Staniek, *Z kaznodziejskiego warsztatu*, Kraków 2002, p. 11.

³³ See G. Siwek, *Blaski i cienie współczesnego przepowiadania. Przewodnik dla kaznodziejów i homilistów*, Kraków, 2007, pp. 209210, 215.

³⁴ On Marian preaching using the example of the sanctuary in Kalwaria, K. Panuś wrote, expressing the desire that such preaching “should grow out of the transmitters of revelation, emphasizing Mary’s connection with the history of salvation, and thus her link with Christ and the Church, so as to reveal her personal greatness and the mission she fulfills.” See K. Panuś, *W trosce o dobre kaznodziejstwo maryjne w sanktuarium kalwaryjskim*, in: *Sanktuarium kalwaryjskie w służbie pielgrzymującego Kościoła. Materiały z sympozjum naukowego 4 czerwca 2003 r.*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 2003.

Another form of outdoor preaching practiced here is a meditation delivered during the devotions along the Paths. The previously discussed forms—a homily and a sermon—are characteristic of the major indulgence celebrations. They are marked by a more solemn and elevated tone, predefined thematic structure, and the fact that each is usually preached by a different preacher. Meditations, by contrast, occur when a priest, religious, or lay guide leads pilgrims in prayer along the Paths throughout the year. Typically, all meditations during a given devotion are delivered by one person and they are simpler in form than sermons. They often relate the mystery contemplated at a given station to the daily life of the listeners. At times, the person leading the devotion relies on texts from prayer books published specifically for use at Kalwaria.

Yet another form is the welcome and farewell addresses to pilgrims mentioned earlier. In this context, they are delivered outside the liturgy, but their other characteristics remain the same: they are brief speeches addressed by one of the custodians of the sanctuary to the pilgrims as they arrive or depart, serving as a spiritual and hospitable gesture that frames the pilgrims' visit.

3.3. Preachers and themes

The first and least numerous group of preachers consists of bishops. An example of a sermon delivered outdoors by a bishop (the Metropolitan Archbishop of Kraków) is the Good Friday homily preached at Pilate's Chapel. This custom was initiated in 1982 by Cardinal Franciszek Macharski and was continued by his successors, Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz and Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski. The chapel has no pulpit; instead, a balcony on the facade of the building serves as one, from which the preacher addresses the assembled pilgrims.³⁵

Among the outdoor preachers, priests constitute the predominant group. The sermon inaugurating the Mystery of the Lord's Passion on Palm Sunday, due to its character and content, is usually delivered by the custodian of the sanctuary. Sermons at the individual stations of the Mystery or during the processions held on the Feast of the Assumption

³⁵ Some of these sermons have been published. See F. Macharski, *Kazania w Kalwarii, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska*, 1994.

of the Blessed Virgin Mary and are preached by priest-monks from the Calvarian monastery.

A third group of outdoor preachers at Kalwaria includes laypersons known as *Kalwaria guides*. The institution of the lay guide emerged in Kalwaria at an early stage as a response to the increasing number of pilgrims and the insufficient number of monks able to provide them with pastoral care. Owing to the unique structure of the sanctuary and the multitude of sites forming part of the *Paths of the Passion and Our Lady*, the assistance of individuals capable of leading first-time pilgrims along the proper route, and of guiding prayer and song, became indispensable.³⁶ Church documents affirm the prophetic mission of the laity.³⁷ Saint John Paul II—an expert on the spirituality and character of this sanctuary—also emphasized the role of these guides.³⁸ Although this function has evolved over time, it continues to the present day.

What themes are addressed by the preachers of outdoor sermons at Kalwaria? Their subjects are primarily Passion and Marian in nature. As H. Sławiński observes, the long-standing practice of preaching Passion sermons has placed a particular emphasis on emotional engagement and vivid depiction of the realities of Christ's suffering, with the aim of arousing compassion for the suffering Saviour among listeners.³⁹ In light of the renewal of Passion preaching, however, a biblically and

³⁶ See H. E. Wyczawski, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska*..., pp. 311–312.

³⁷ See Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, 1964, no. 35; Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam actuositatem*, 1965, no. 24; *Codex Iuris canonici auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus*, can. 759.

³⁸ During a meeting of custodians of Marian sanctuaries held in Kalwaria on April 29, 1969, he said: "The Fathers who have guarded the Kalwaria sanctuary for centuries carry out pastoral ministry—they do not guide pilgrimages. These have their own program, passed down from generation to generation in individual parishes. [...] This program is a program of the laity. It struck me years ago, even before the Council, that they lead these pilgrimages themselves, they pray on their own." Speaking about the participation of the People of God in Christ's prophetic mission, he stated: "This participation is connected with a certain form of preaching. Although the guides have their traditional texts, which they read aloud, many of them enrich these traditional texts and add their own commentary, giving the texts a personal and often deeply spiritual character." See Jan Paweł II, *Do tronu łaski*, pp. 62–63.

³⁹ A 1935 homiletics manual notes that in Passion sermons, the preacher should vividly depict the Lord's Passion, awaken deep religious feelings in the listeners, and influ-

theologically deeper approach to these themes is now desirable, so that the kerygmatic message of the Gospel narratives of Jesus' Passion may be fully apprehended.⁴⁰

To achieve this ambitious objective, the thematic arrangement of sermons must be carefully structured. The topics, determined by the monastery's administration, attempt to combine the content associated with a given chapel with current events in the life of the Church and the lived experience of the faithful. They are frequently aligned with the annual pastoral theme promulgated by the Church or the Polish Episcopal Conference. The year 2025, celebrated by the Church as a Jubilee Year under the motto "Pilgrims of Hope", was announced by Pope Francis with the following desire: "May the Jubilee be for all an opportunity to rekindle hope. The Word of God helps us to find reasons for this," and elsewhere: "It is necessary to ensure that the People of God may fully participate in the proclamation of hope in God's grace and in the signs that confirm its efficacy."⁴¹

Accordingly, the themes of the sermons delivered along the Paths during Holy Week were devoted to the subject of hope. On Holy Thursday, at successive stations, the following themes were proclaimed:

- "Hope – the strong anchor of the soul";
- "Angels – collaborators in hope";
- "Mary, Mother of unwavering hope";
- "Hope does not disappoint";
- "Building bridges: forgiveness and reconciliation as conditions for restoring hope";
- "Crossing the threshold of hope: St. John Paul II, teacher of hope";
- "The Psalter – the book of hope";
- "Judgment and gossip – the killers of hope."

On Good Friday, similar topics inspired the preachers:

- "Spe salvi: Benedict XVI, teacher of hope";
- "We are enlivened by the hope of eternal life in heaven";
- "Mercy toward the poor – restoring hope";
- "Ave crux spes unica";

ence their will, life, and conduct. See *Homiletyka duszpasterska. Zbiorowy podręcznik nauki kaznodziejstwa dla polskiego kleru*, Kielce 1935, p. 321.

⁴⁰ See H. Sławiński, *Przepowiadanie Chrystusowego krzyża*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 15 ff.

⁴¹ See Francis, *Bull Spes non confundit*, 2024, no. 1 and 6.

- “Action and suffering as places of learning hope”;
- “Prayer as the school of hope”;
- “Christian hope is not cheap optimism”;
- “Kindling the torch of hope where darkness reigns”;
- “The Eucharist as the source of hope”;
- “You should not grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thess 4:13)”;
- Rebuilding hope within ourselves and bringing it to the world”;
- “Christ—the source of true hope.”⁴²

The thematic plan does not include Pilate’s Chapel, whereas mentioned earlier, the sermon is traditionally delivered by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Kraków, who enjoys freedom in choosing his topic.⁴³

A similar structure was adopted for the themes of the sermons delivered along the Paths during the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 2025. These concerned the theme of hope, as well. During the Procession of the Dormition, the following topics were addressed:

- “The Gospel of the childhood of Jesus as a school of hope”;
- “Angels as heralds of hope”;
- “Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as Mistress of life in hope”;
- “The apostles of Christ as witnesses of hope”;
- “Between illusion and steadfast hope”;
- “The Word of God as a source of consolation and hope”;
- “The holy sacraments—medicine of hope.”

⁴² See *Tematyka kazań na Drózkach w czasie odpustu Wielkiego Tygodnia 2025*, manuscript without reference number, Archive of the Sanctuary in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska.

⁴³ Nevertheless, the preacher generally, while reflecting on the events that took place in Pilate’s praetorium, views current events in the life of the Church or society from that perspective. The same was true in 2025, in the sermon delivered by Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski. He began with the words: “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out’ (Jn 12:31)—Jesus said to the Jews shortly before His Passion and death on the Cross. Exalted on the Cross, suspended between earth and heaven, He judged the entire world: all people of all generations and nations and each one individually. He judged in the name of the Cross, which became the deepest, most moving, and most powerful expression of God’s merciful love for humanity.” He then referred to the situation in Poland: “Now the judgment of Poland is taking place. The main persecuted and most endangered one today is the small, innocent, and defenseless child, killed by a deadly blow to its heart—killed both literally and metaphorically.” See <https://diecezja.pl/aktualnosci/abp-marek-jedraszewski-w-kalwarii-zebrzydowskiej-teraz-odbywa-sie-sad-nad-tym-swiatem-teraz-odbywa-sie-sad-nad-polska-teraz-odbywa-sie-sad-nad-nami/> (accessed: July 21, 2025).

During the Procession of the Assumption, the themes were as follows:

- “The hope of heaven and eternal glory”;
- “Daily prayer as a means of growth in hope”;
- “Faith and fidelity in everyday life”;
- “The Christian vocation to hope and joy”;
- “Trust in God’s promises as a guarantee of hope”;
- “Forgiveness and the healing of broken relationships as conditions of true hope”;
- “Saints of the past and present as witnesses of hope.”⁴⁴

4. The evaluation of outdoor preaching of the Word of God in Kalwaria

4.1. Advantages

The outdoor proclamation of the Word of God in Kalwaria has numerous pros, of which only some shall be mentioned here. One of the most significant advantages is the preacher’s ability to engage with an exceptionally large audience—one that could not be accommodated within the confines of a church. Situations in which the faithful exceed the capacity of a church building are rare today. The possibility for the preacher to address such a vast assembly presents both a great opportunity and a profound responsibility. For instance, on Good Friday in 2025, the number of pilgrims present along the Calvarian Paths was estimated at 120,000.⁴⁵ The scale of the audience naturally amplifies the potential impact of the preached word. This is confirmed by the reactions in the media, whose representatives, recognizing the significance of the event, often quote and comment upon the sermons—especially those whose content provokes debate or divergent opinions. Few preachers in the world are afforded the chance to reach so many listeners at once. Kalwaria, through its tradition of outdoor preaching, provides precisely such an opportunity, which a wise preacher will not squander. Aware of

⁴⁴ See *Tematyka kazań na Drózkach w czasie odpustu Wniebowzięcia NMP 2025*, manuscript without reference number, Archive of the Sanctuary in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska.

⁴⁵ See <https://krakow.gosc.pl/gal/spis/9223586.Wielki-Piatek-w-Kalwarii-Zebrzydowskiej-2025> (accessed July 16, 2025).

his responsibility for both the proclaimed word and its hearers, he will seek to offer them what is best.

Another advantage, stemming from the distinctive character of the site, lies in the listeners' capacity to receive a broad range of sensory and aesthetic stimuli conducive to spiritual openness. Kalwaria, in the intention of its founder and builders, was designed to integrate the beauty of nature, architecture⁴⁶ and faith—three dimensions that interpenetrate to form a harmonious composition directing the human mind toward the Creator. This conception was fully in accord with the spirituality cultivated by the guardians of the sanctuary—the Friars Minor, commonly known as Franciscans or Bernardines. The founder of their order, St. Francis of Assisi, sought traces of the Creator in the beauty of nature. Sensitive to the “signs” left by the Almighty in creation, he exemplified the proper understanding of humanity’s “dominion” over the world (Gen 1:26), showing what a genuine dialogue with the created world—God’s gift to humankind—should entail.⁴⁷

The enduring relevance of these truths was highlighted by Pope Francis in his encyclical letter *Laudato si'*, whose title was drawn from “The Canticle of the Sun” (also known as “The Canticle of the Creatures”) composed by the Poverello.⁴⁸ In the encyclical, the Pope writes that Francis “faithful to Sacred Scripture, invites us to recognize that nature is a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of His infinite beauty and goodness.”⁴⁹

A further pro also connected with the religious affiliation of the sanctuary’s custodians, is the continuation of the tradition of the Franciscan Order, whose members achieved remarkable success as itinerant preachers proclaiming the Word of God under the open sky. One may

46 These qualities led to Kalwaria being inscribed in 1999 on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a “Mannerist architectural and landscape complex and pilgrimage park.” See <https://www.unesco.pl/kultura/dziedzictwo-kulturowe/swiatowe-dziedzictwo/lista-swiatowego-dziedzictwa/europa-i-ameryka-polnocna/polska/> (accessed: July 21, 2025).

47 See P. Anzulewicz, F. H. Lipiński, *Ewangelia rozświeciła jego życie. Święty Franciszek z Asyża i jego dziedzictwo*, Gdańsk 1998, pp. 51–62.

48 See Pisma św. Franciszka i św. Klary, trans. K. Ambrożkiewicz, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska* 2022, pp. 153–155.

49 See Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, 2015, no. 12.

recall, for instance, the founder of the Bernardine province, St. John of Capistrano, a renowned preacher who came to Kraków in 1453 at the invitation of King Casimir IV Jagiellon.⁵⁰ Kantak described his ministry as follows: “He celebrated Mass under a canopy before the Church of St. Adalbert. After Mass, he would climb onto a barrel and preach for two hours. His words moved the listeners to tears, even those who did not understand his language. The people fixed all their attention upon the preacher. They gazed upon his radiant face, heard the voice filled with conviction, and saw in him an angel, a prophet of God. For two hours they stood in place, despite the cold and the storm, men on one side, women on the other.”⁵¹

Another advantage of outdoor preaching combined with communal prayer is its power to strengthen in the faithful an awareness of belonging to a great community of Christ’s disciples. In daily life, each believer individually confronts the difficulties that accompany the practice of faith—personal weaknesses, challenges in understanding and living according to the teachings of Jesus, external opposition, or even forms of persecution. Such circumstances may give rise to a sense of isolation. Listening to the Word of God and praying together in a large gathering, however, reminds the faithful that they are not destined to solitude. The Church is a community of people who can understand one another—since they face similar struggles—and who are able to offer mutual support through counsel, witness and prayer.

A commendable practice observed during the processions that form part of Kalwaria’s indulgence celebrations is that each sermon is entrusted to a different preacher and addresses a clearly defined theme. This ensures a variety of content and style for the listeners. Each preacher proclaims the Word of God in his own manner, which makes every sermon unique not only in message but also in reasoning, rhetorical approach and argumentation. Such diversity among preachers harmonizes well with the diversity of the audience, who differ in age, perspective on matters of faith, degree of religious commitment and intellectual capacity. Owing to this variety, almost every listener can find something that

⁵⁰ See T. Słotwiński, M. Damian, *Święci franciszkańscy na każdy dzień*, Wrocław 2003, pp. 471–472.

⁵¹ See K. Kantak, *Bernardyni polscy 1453–1572*, vol. 1, Lwów 1933, p. 6.

corresponds to his or her needs and abilities of perception. To ensure that this multiplicity of preachers does not lead to excessive thematic arbitrariness—or, conversely, to monotonous repetition of the same content—a thematic plan is prepared in advance. Consequently, the delivered sermons do not constitute a collection of spontaneous reflections but rather form thoughtfully composed elements that the listeners can integrate into a coherent and enriching lesson on matters of faith.

4.2. Limitations

It is also necessary to acknowledge certain limitations associated with the outdoor preaching of the Word of God in Kalwaria. As noted in the discussion about the advantages of this form of proclamation, Calvarian outdoor preaching enables direct contact with a very large audience. While such a situation may motivate the preacher to exercise diligence and responsibility in his ministry, it also entails the danger of demagoguery. The Comprehensive Dictionary of the Polish Language defines demagoguery as “a method of influencing people, often employed in political activity, consisting in the proclamation of unrealistic slogans and the making of impressive but impossible promises”.⁵² The term, originally derived from Greek, once carried a positive connotation, signifying the ability to “lead the people” through the power of words. Over time, however, it acquired a pejorative sense, denoting an act of “leading the people” along paths that benefit not the listeners, but the speaker himself—a form of manipulation. In the context of preaching, this temptation may manifest as the desire to “lead the people” not by the way indicated by God in His Word, but by the way that seems right in the preacher’s own eyes; or as the wish to use the listeners as instruments for achieving one’s personal aims.⁵³

⁵² See <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/69816/demagogia> (accessed July 17, 2025).

⁵³ The term “crowd” may not be entirely adequate to describe the throng of pilgrims; however, within such a large gathering, phenomena comparable to crowd behaviour occur. One author wrote: “A crowd is something terrible and at the same time magnificent. It is like an element that, once unleashed, cannot be controlled. [...] Those who glorify crowds and those who curse them act unreasonably: just like the ruler who ordered the waves of the sea to be whipped. Understanding the nature of a crowd is as important for a politician and a speaker as understanding the characteristics of the

Another limitation lies in the difficulty faced by listeners in maintaining focus amid numerous external stimuli. The enclosed space of a church provides conditions more conducive to concentration. Participation in a liturgical celebration held outdoors is an unusual experience—one that most participants do not encounter in their daily lives. Fruitful participation in such an event requires a high degree of self-discipline⁵⁴, the ability to control one's gaze and to filter auditory stimuli so as to attend only to those intended by the preacher. In addition to movement and sound, which directly affect attention, the influence of weather conditions must also be taken into account. In the case of the Kalwaria sanctuary, the main celebrations are marked by extreme circumstances: the Holy Week indulgence occurs in late March or early April, when rainfall or even snowfall is common, while the Feast of the Assumption takes place in August, when high temperatures often prevail. Experts in the art of public speaking emphasize that adverse weather conditions create challenges not only for listeners but also for speakers. They recommend adjusting the length of one's address according to the degree of external discomfort. A good orator, therefore, will demonstrate time discipline⁵⁵ and show consideration for the fact that the audience, despite the difficulties, desires to listen. An example of such situational awareness and empathy toward the listeners can be found in the closing words of one Good Friday sermon delivered at Pilate's Chapel by Cardinal Franciszek Macharski: "I am well, for I have a roof over my head

diverse ocean waves is for a sailor." See A. Wiszniewki, *Sztuka mówienia*, Katowice 2003, p. 107.

⁵⁴ Publications addressed to pilgrims encouraged this practice. The repeatedly reissued Kalwaria Prayer Book by Fr. S. Podworski, in the instructions "for devout pilgrims," contains the following note: "Listen to the teachings delivered by the priests with heightened attention." See S. Podworski, *Drogi kalwaryjskie...*, pp. 28–29. In another publication for pilgrims, a warning was given: "While walking the Way of the Passion of the Lord, let us not be as indifferent as many pilgrims who, moving from station to station, talk loudly and discuss various matters unrelated to devotion: they eat, drink, and gawk. [...] Such vain prayer will not obtain any grace for us from the Lord God." See J. F. Peregrinus, *Pielgrzym do Kalwaryi. Na pamiątkę współbraciom i siostronom, aby odnieśli korzyść z pielgrzymki swojej*, Kraków 1902, p. 31.

⁵⁵ See A. Wiszniewki, *Sztuka mówienia...*, p. 33.

and do not stand in the mud. So I shall end, for you are in the mud, and an umbrella, however good, protects some while dripping on others.⁵⁶

Listeners' concentration may also be hindered by their inability to see the preacher. This is not insignificant, as research shows that verbal content constitutes only a small fraction of overall communication. A substantial portion of meaning is conveyed through vocal cues such as tone and modulation, while more than 50 percent of the message is transmitted through non-verbal signals—the so-called body language.⁵⁷

Another drawback of outdoor preaching at the sanctuary is the sheer number of sermons delivered during major events. For those who wish to participate in the entire Holy Week observance, the schedule includes: on Holy Thursday, eight sermons and two homilies; on Good Friday, thirteen sermons and one homily. During the Feast of the Assumption, the Procession of the Co-suffering features ten sermons and one homily; the Procession of the Dormition, seven sermons and two homilies; and the Procession of the Assumption, seven sermons and one homily. These numbers are indeed striking. It is difficult to imagine listening to such a multitude of addresses were the preachers to disregard thematic and temporal discipline or were each to act as though his sermon were the sole one delivered that day.

One author, acknowledging the challenges of speaking and listening in open-air settings, also notes that such difficulties can be overcome. Referring to Pope John Paul II, she writes: "When John Paul II preached in Mexico, people climbed trees, loudspeaker poles and even the shoulders of their friends—in short, they did everything they could simply to hear him. They wanted to know what the head of the Church had to tell them and they did not complain about uncomfortable seats. It was a true victory of the spirit over the body."⁵⁸ Few church preachers are capable of inspiring such dedication and willingness to make sacrifices as John Paul II did. Yet it remains true that the faith of both listeners and preachers—enabling the "victory of the spirit over the body"—can

⁵⁶ See F. Macharski, *Kazania...*, p. 41.

⁵⁷ One of the first researchers of body language, A. Mehrabian, defined these proportions as follows: 7%—words, 38%—vocal signals, 55%—other nonverbal signals. See A. B. Pease, *Mowa ciała*, Poznań 2007, p. 31.

⁵⁸ See J. Detz, *Sztuka przemawiania. Nie co mówić, ale jak mówić*, Gdańsk 2007, p. 135.

overcome many obstacles, allowing the proclaimed word to reach its intended recipients and bear the desired fruit.

Conclusions

The answer to the question posed in the introduction is as follows: the sanctuary in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is a place where the Word of God is proclaimed abundantly – not only within sacred buildings but also beyond them, in the open air. Outdoor preaching conducted within the framework of the liturgy differs little from that practiced in other comparable sites. However, non-liturgical outdoor preaching bears many distinctive features that are unique to this sanctuary and closely connected with its particular character. Although the outdoor proclamation of the Word of God in Kalwaria involves certain difficulties, its numerous advantages makes it a practice fully worthy of continuation.

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