

Robert Nęcek

Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow

Tribute of the Highlanders as a manifestation of their communication with John Paul II

Hołd Górali jako przejaw porozumiewania się z Janem Pawłem II

ABSTRACT

The homage of Polish Highlanders was a manifestation of communication between the inhabitants of Podhale and the Pope Highlander.

Undoubtedly, the tribute was an expression of honor and respect for a specific person, being an element of communication. Then the communication system becomes a sequence of different events taking place one after the other.

It was such a great and momentous event that the Holy See's spokesman, Joaquin Navarro-Valls, noted at the time that it has never happened in history that a civilian spoke to the Pope during the Eucharist. And it happened near Wielka Krokiew. Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, on the other hand, emphasized more than once that the papal visit to Zakopane would not have happened had it not been for the exceptional efforts of Mayor Adam Bachleda-Curuś. The world of Podhale chose this form of communication to emphasize honesty towards the Holy Father and make the world aware that if a person does not open himself to the reality of love and beauty, he will remain alone and close in himself. For this reason, the highlander tribute showed the compatriots the necessity of a circulation in which care for one another enables the promotion of the culture of meeting, and the Christian faith once again becomes a look at temporality through the prism of eternity.

KEYWORDS:

Tribute, communication, culture, media, personality of Adam Bachleda-Curuś

ABSTRAKT

Hołd Górali Polskich był przejawem porozumiewania się mieszkańców Podhala z Papieżem Góralem. Niewątpliwie hołd był wyrazem czci i szacunku dla konkretnej osoby, będąc elementem komunikacji.

Wtedy bowiem system komunikacji staje się sekwencją różnych zdarzeń zachodzących jedno po drugim. Było to tak wielkie i doniosłe wydarzenie, że rzecznik Stolicy Apostolskiej Joaquin Navarro-Valls zaznaczył wówczas, że nigdy w historii nie zdarzyło się, aby podczas Eucharystii przemawiała do Papieża osoba świecka. A stało się to pod Wielką Krokwią. Z kolei kard. Stanisław Dziwisz nieraz podkreślał, że do papieskiej wizyty w Zakopanem nie doszłoby, gdyby nie wyjątkowe starania prezydenta Adama Bachledy-Curusia. Świat Podhala wybrał tę formę komunikacji, aby podkreślić szacunek wobec Ojca Świętego i uświadomić światu, że jeśli człowiek nie otworzy się na rzeczywistość miłości i piękna, pozostanie sam i zamknięty w sobie. Z tego powodu trybut góralski ukazał rodakom konieczność obiegu, w którym troska o siebie nawzajem umożliwia krzewienie kultury spotkania, a wiara chrześcijańska na nowo staje się spojrzeniem na doczesność przez pryzmat wieczności.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:

Hołd, komunikacja, kultura, media, osobowość Adama Bachledy-Curusia

INTRODUCTION

The John Paul II's pilgrimage to the Podhale Region, to Zakopane, was a long-awaited visit. As a historical event closely related to the famous Highlander's tribute, it revealed the unique communication between them and the holy pope. The Tribute of Polish Highlanders paid by Mayor Adam Bachleda-Curuś was reflective of their feelings and solid foundations of their Christian faith. No wonder therefore that "*Zakopane – said present Mayor of the city, Leszek Dorula – will always remember this particular time while the city's coat of arms depicting the cross on Giewont with two crossed st. Peter's golden keys behind has become an important symbol preserving the memory of this significant occurrence*"¹. It was "*an extraordinary event broadcast by the Polish public television and many international television stations*"². That is why the whole world could with amazement see that the Highlanders and the Pope communicated one with another in a unique way. In such a context the following subjects will be discussed: the contemporary phenomenon of the Podhale Region, John Paul II in communication with the Highlanders and the latter's tribute as a communicative expression of an admiration for John Paul II.

I. CONTEMPORARY PHENOMENON OF THE PODHALE REGION

Undoubtedly, Podhale – Poland's southernmost region, sometimes referred to as the "Polish Highlands" – is one of the best ethnographically researched regions in the country. Highlanders' culture and wonderful landscapes attract attention of scientists, artists, writers and the clergy. Polish intelligentsia fell in love with the region and promoted Highlander's traditions as a unique example of the national culture³. Certainly, the phenomenon was greatly influenced by prof. Józef Tischner, who popularised sympathy for the Highlands, strengthening also the

¹ L. Dorula, *Obchody 25-lecia wizyty Jana Pawła II w Zakopanem*, <https://www.zakopane.pl/inne/strefa-miejska/kalendarz-wydarzen/wydarzenia/2022-05/obchody-25-lecia-wizyty-jana-pawla-ii-w-zakopanem> [dostęp: 4.01.2023].

² A. Bachleda-Curuś, *Jan Paweł II jako ojciec komunikujący się słowem*, w: *Jan Paweł II. Komunikacja i Kultura. W 100-lecie urodzin Wielkiego Papieża. Seria: Edukacja Medialna – 5*, red. R. Nęcek, J. Sobczyk-Pająk, Wydawnictwo Arsarti, Kraków 2020, s. 110.

³ Por. A. Małanicz-Przybylska, red. *C o słycać na Podhalu – tradycja we współczesności*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2014, s. 9–10.

Highlanders' faith and power to survive. Thus, a proud Highlander did not suffer from an inferiority complex towards townsfolk and their culture⁴. Professor Stanisław Hodorowicz stated that Fr. Tischner “*elevated the Highlanders' culture to new heights! However he basically relied on the Tetmajer's stories, he understood perfectly their mentality*”⁵. Most especially, John Paul II greatly influenced the Podhale Region, supporting its inhabitants in difficult times and encouraging them in their attachment to their culture and tradition⁶. Therefore, what is worthy of note is the cultivation of traditions, the respect for private property, the promotion of patriotism and the popularisation of sports.

1. Cultivation of tradition

The Highlanders' culture of Podhale was more widely discovered in the 19th century thanks to Tytus Chałubiński, who promoted the climatic properties of Zakopane and the surrounding area. The oldest documents about Zakopane come from the beginning of the 17th century. The first people to come to the Tatra Mountains were herb pickers and hunters. A cable railway to Kasprowy Wierch and a funicular railway to Gubałówka were built in 1936 and 1938, respectively. The offer of services for tourists was extended thanks to the activities of the emerging tourist agencies. Tourists were attracted by sports and regional events presenting the diversity of local art and folklore. At the same time, Zakopane and the whole Podhale Region turned into a stronghold of Polishness⁷. Antoni Kroh – an expert in the Highlanders' culture – noticed for example that the Podhale costume was the most popular and the best preserved folk costume in Poland that was instantly recognizable as a symbol of Polishness abroad⁸.

⁴ Por. J. Dziadowiec, E. Wiącek, *Góralczyzna, góralstwo – konstruowanie i funkcjonowanie podhalańskiego mitu*, w: *Semiotyczna mapa Małopolski*, ed. E. Wiącek, Wydawnictwo: Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2015, s. 276.

⁵ S. Hodorowicz, J. Sadecki, *Rektor zbójnik. Z profesorem Stanisławem Hodorowiczem rozmawia Jerzy Sadecki*, Wydawnictwo Universitas, Kraków 2017, s. 53.

⁶ Por. M. Motor-Grelok, *Wciąż czujemy jego obecność (2.02.2009)*, www.radiomaryja.pl/bez-kategorii/wciaz-czujemy-jego-obecnosc/ [dostęp: 4.01.2023].

⁷ Por. J. Dziadowiec, E. Wiącek, *Góralczyzna, góralstwo – konstruowanie i funkcjonowanie podhalańskiego mitu*, w: *Semiotyczna mapa Małopolski*, red. E. Wiącek, Wydawnictwo: Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2015, s. 267-271; por. także: J. Kolbuszewski. *Tatry i górale w literaturze polskiej. Antologia*. Wydawnictwo Biblioteka Narodowa. Wrocław 1992 s. 6-10.

⁸ Por. A. Kroh, *Tatry i Podhale*, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław 2002, s. 82.

In 1964, bishop Karol Wojtyła, visiting the Zakopane deanery, stated that the Highlanders form *“the type of a society that bears the hallmarks of a great Polish tradition, so great that it needs to be continued, so that no custom, no style and fashion of the present day should either destroy or displace this great tradition of Podhale”*⁹. This means that tradition is a value that should be maintained, protected, nurtured, defended and respected. It is an authority that can be appealed to, an authority that teaches and obliges to do something¹⁰. In this perspective, the Metropolitan of Kraków was aware of the highlanders’ love of tradition. That is why he strengthened their hearts in the difficult times of communist rule. Anyway, *“we Highlanders – as Maciej Motor-Grelak said – show what is ours, what grows out of our culture and tradition: faith, clothing, dialect and patriotic attachment to what is Polish. Poland and the services rendered to the Fatherland is what a Highlander gives priority to”*¹¹.

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The above statement can be confirmed on a micro scale in the words of the former president of the Highlanders Association in Harkłowa, Mieczysław Wrocławski, who emphasized that the achievements of the past generations became an inspiration for the activities of their successors: *“as inhabitants of Harkłowa, we try to preserve the legacy of our fathers and on this basis we organise and*

⁹ K. Wojtyła, *Tradycja Bożego Narodzenia po góralsku*, W: www.czystochowskie24.pl/czystochowa/tradycja-bozego-narodzenia-po-goralsku/ [dostęp: 4.01.2023].

¹⁰ Por. K. Kowalik, *Polska tradycja tradycji w świetle opracowań leksykograficznych*, Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis 107. Studia Linguistica VI, *Dialog z tradycją*, t. I, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UP, Kraków 2011, s. 27.

¹¹ M. Motor-Grelak, *Wciąż czujemy jego obecność (2.02.2009)*, www.radiomaryja.pl/bez-kategorii/wciaz-czujemy-jego-obecnosc/ [dostęp: 4.01.2023].

develop our town"¹². Therefore, the tradition that complies with the reality of culture becomes the proper way of existence of a human being¹³.

2. Respect for private property

Undoubtedly, Highlanders are able to resort to common sense in what they do, in accordance with the principle, as they used to say: *"be sensible in what you do and thus you will get far and you will be great"*¹⁴. It is worth emphasizing that they attach great importance to fundamental matters – in the ethical and economic dimensions. Along with thrift and hospitality they value human dignity, the Christian national tradition, respect for nature and for private property¹⁵.

Andrzej Gąsienica-Makowski expressed this kind of a practical attitude in his parliamentary speech: *"Many of you visit the mountains not only to regain strength and to breathe clean air, but also to come into contact with our culture. Here, before the war, the right idea of creating a national park was born. Its creators wanted to protect the Tatra Mountains' nature, but at the same time they sought to preserve customs and social life – while respecting the property of Podhale peasants"*¹⁶. While speaking about the forced Stalinist expropriations and promised compensations, he stated that Highlanders were deprived of their private property for pennies in the majesty of law. The point is that the system of the People's Republic of Poland was constantly striving to take away a sense of dignity, it aimed at *"destroying private property as well as breaking a moral and religious backbone of a Polish peasant. That is why the expropriation in the Tatra Mountains led sometimes to tragic result"*¹⁷.

¹² M. Wrocławski, *Edukacja i komunikacja*, w: *Piękno – Dziedzictwo – Komunikacja. Har-kłowa 2018*. Seria: Edukacja Medialna – 2, red. R. Nęcek, S. Gulak, Wydawnictwo Podhalańska Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa, Nowy Targ 2019, s. 21.

¹³ Por. Jan Paweł II, *W imię przyszłości kultury. Przemówienie w siedzibie UNESCO (Paryż, 2.06.1980)*, w: Jan Paweł II, *Dzieła zebrane*, t. X, Wydawnictwo M, Kraków 2008, s. 101.

¹⁴ M. Wrocławski, *Edukacja i komunikacja*, w: *Piękno – Dziedzictwo – Komunikacja. Har-kłowa 2018*. Seria: Edukacja Medialna – 2, red. R. Nęcek, S. Gulak, Wydawnictwo Podhalańska Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa, Nowy Targ 2019, s. 21.

¹⁵ Por. A. Gąsienica-Makowski, *Przemówienie na 36 Posiedzeniu Sejmu RP (Warszawa, 2.12.1994)*, <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata2.nsf/118b9e577f3fceeac125746d0030d0fa/a9eac39a328d99dec12574e80043425f?OpenDocument> [dostęp: 4.01.2023].

¹⁶ A. Gąsienica-Makowski, *Przemówienie na 36 Posiedzeniu Sejmu RP (Warszawa, 2.12.1994)*, <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata2.nsf/118b9e577f3fceeac125746d0030d0fa/a9eac39a328d99dec12574e80043425f?OpenDocument> [dostęp: 4.01.2023].

¹⁷ Tamże.

3. Stronghold of patriotism

The people of the Highland are characterized by deep patriotism, and their love to the homeland is based on an exceptional attachment and love of family demonstrated regardless of time and place. Of course, it is difficult to imagine the ties that you have with your little homeland if you do not have a historical awareness. Therefore, prof. Anna Mlekodaj, while analyzing the figure of Juliusz Zborowski, noticed that he was a patient listener to the Highlanders, he wrote down and recorded their dialect, songs and stories *“to save their life wisdom that they inherited from their ancestors”*¹⁸.

In this context, prof. Kazimierz Dobrowolski distinguished four criteria that were fundamental for strengthening one's ties to one's little homeland:

- Memory of the past, formed by the oral tradition
- Knowledge of the past, based on collecting and elaborating the sources that were illustrative of it
- The store of historical knowledge related to social strata, social classes and job categories
- Assessment of their own past by living generations¹⁹.

The distinguished criteria constitute a program of conscious maintenance of ties that one has with his little homeland and that are in line with the teaching of the Pope. According to him patriotism means love of what pertains to the homeland: *“love of history, tradition, language and the very native landscape. It is the love that also includes the works of fellow citizens and the fruits of their genius. Any threat to such value as homeland is, becomes a test for this love. Our history teaches that Poles have always been capable of great sacrifices for the preservation of this value or for recovering it when it was lost”*²⁰.

4. Popularisation of sports

It is worth noting that sports occurs as one of the contemporary phenomena of Podhale. The turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the era of the

¹⁸ A. Mlekodaj, *Juliusz Zborowski na szkle malowany*, „Rocznik Podhalański” nr 14 (2019), s. 27.

¹⁹ Por. K. Dobrowolski, *Studia z pogranicza historii i socjologii*, Wrocław 1967, s. 38; D. Siemonides, *Więź regionalna a „mała ojczyzna”*, „Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne” nr 2 (1999), s. 68–69.

²⁰ Jan Paweł II, *Pamięć i tożsamość*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2005, s. 50.

development of pre-war skiing. The popularity of the new sport grew rapidly. In the first ski competitions at the world championships in 1929 and 1939, Poland was represented by Helena Marusarzówna in alpine skiing, Bronisław Czech and Stanisław Marusarz in ski jumping and Andrzej Marusarz in nordic combination. In 1925, a ski-jump of the Great Krokiew was built, becoming a skiing center in Zakopane. The constantly developed sports facilities in the Tatra Mountains have become a breeding ground for great talents for winter sports²¹. Skiing was the life passion of the Metropolitan of Krakow, who in February 1958 completed a weekly skiing course. When *“he was elected pope, he thought – as Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz recalls – that his sports activities would be definitely closed. After a few years, however, the young people of the Alps wrote an endearing letter inviting the Holy Father to go skiing”*²².

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Therefore, in this region of Poland, which is Podhale with Zakopane, as the pearl of the Tatra Mountains, winter sports should be appreciated in every possible way, because *“sports is of great importance today, because it can promote important human values among young people, such as loyalty, perseverance, friendship, community, solidarity”*²³. Therefore, it is not surprising that also in this agenda Cardinal Karol Wojtyła understood the Highlanders. The point is that sports triggers not only one’s physical, but also his spiritual and intellectual abilities.

²¹ Por. J. Dembowska, A. Kozak, Z. Moździerz, W. Szatkowski, M. Warchałowski, *Kultura, sport i turystyka pod Tatrami w II Rzeczypospolitej*, <https://www.tatry-przewodnik.com.pl/blog/?kultura-sport-i-turystyka-pod-tatrami> [dostęp: 4.01.2023].

²² S. Dziwisz, *Więcej sportu*, Wydawnictwo Rafael, Kraków 2006, s. 30.

²³ S. Dziwisz, *Więcej sportu*, Wydawnictwo Rafael, Kraków 2006, s. 30.

II. JOHN PAUL II IN COMMUNICATION WITH THE HIGHLANDERS

The Highlanders' tribute triggered extraordinary feelings in the Pope, the feelings that accompanied whenever he had a chance to meet the "people of the mountains". Communication with Highlanders was characterised by warm and affectionate words, gestures and attitude, becoming at the same time both the communication of culture and the culture of communication. Anyway, already in Nowy Targ, John Paul II directly poured out the feelings of his heart, emphasizing his emotional state: "Hey, there is a tear in the eye", and recalling the Highlanders' greeting expressed by their "God bless" phrase, he- in the context of Highlanders' emigration – wished: *"let them make sure that while they become materially rich, they would not be impoverished spiritually, so that, after becoming Americans, they would not stop being Highlanders. Neither them, nor their children, nor their grandchildren"*²⁴. With this in mind, the key papal phrases addressed to the people of the mountains will be presented: "One can always count on you" and "Sursum Corda".

1. "One can always count on you"

These famous papal words addressed to the people of the Podhale region emphasised the Highlanders' continuous fidelity to the Church and their Homeland. Counting on someone means a certainty that one will be on the right side whenever an important issue comes to play, that someone is active in the community to which he belongs and that this community will not fail. The Highlanders were therefore aware that the Pope regarded them as a mainstay of Christianity. The then mayor of the City of Zakopane commented on this event as follows: *"Years pass, the world is changing, and unfortunately not always these changes go in the good – in our traditional understanding – direction, but in Podhale it is still as it was"*²⁵. The founder of "Podhalanki" ensemble emphasised the role of common sense in the context faith: *"not every sigh calling Jesus and Mary may help. Sabala gives an advice: Be sure that cheese and salt is in your jacket. Take it, because when*

²⁴ Jan Paweł II, *Homilia w czasie Mszy świętej (Nowy Targ, 8.06.1979)*, w: Jan Paweł II, *Dzieła zebrane*, t. IX, Wydawnictwo M, Kraków 2008, s. 129–130.

²⁵ A. Bachleđa-Curuś, R. Nęcek, *Górale w hołdzie Papieżowi*, Wydawnictwo Arsarti, Kraków 2022, s. 39.

*you go to the mountains, you have to be reasonable, and then God will help you. Yes! Faith is deeply rooted in the consciousness of the people of Podhale*²⁶.

It seems that the Pope was aware of the Highlanders' freedom combined with righteousness. He knew various problems and conditions, but he also knew that many Highlanders were open to the rest of the world, while at the same time keeping self-distance to it. Therefore, Fr. Tischner in "Sermons from Turbacz mountain" reminded everybody that a little feather sooner or later would sink in the water, but the song about freedom would never sink. (The Highlanders have a special word for freedom: "śleboda". In Polish language it sounds a bit like "swoboda", which means being free, but with a little inclination towards lawlessness). Of course, in literary language we speak about "swoboda", but "śleboda" has no tint of lawlessness. Well, "it is something a farmer feels about his farm. This is different from lawlessness, which destroys and tramples. It seems to make no difference between a field of grass or a field of grain... "Swoboda" destroys. "Śleboda" is wise. "Śleboda" knows how to take care of the farm, how to properly cultivate the land and how to grow forest. And in the case of a man, this kind of freedom can bring out what is the best of him"²⁷.

2. „And this Cross tells all Poland: Sursum Corda! Hearts up!”

Here is the second characteristic papal sentence referring to love that is always associated with a heart pierced on the cross, that is, with a heart that reveals love to the very end. Therefore, it is not surprising that John Paul II called upon the Highlanders to defend the Cross in all circumstances: "do not let God's Name be offended in your hearts, in your social or family life"²⁸. The Holy Father emphasized that Zakopane, located at the foot of the cross, developed in its shade. In addition, the people of the region take care of roadside shrines and papal tourist routes, which smuggle the secret of piety and faith²⁹. The point is that the faith of the

²⁶ S. Hodorowicz, J. Sadecki, *Rektor zbójnik. Z profesorem Stanisławem Hodorowiczem rozmawia Jerzy Sadecki*, Wydawnictwo Universitas, Kraków 2017, s. 43.

²⁷ J. Tischner, *Słowo o ślebobdzie. Kazania spod Turbacza 1981–1997*. Zebrał i oprac. K. Tischner. Posłowie W. Bonowicz, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2003, s. 12.

²⁸ Jan Paweł II, *Homilia w czasie Mszy świętej beatyfikacyjnej Matki Bernardyny Marii Jabłońskiej i Matki Marii Karłowskiej (Zakopane, 6.06.1997)*, w: Jan Paweł II, *Dzieła zebrane*, t. IX, Wydawnictwo M, Kraków 2008, s. 719.

²⁹ Por. Jan Paweł II, *Homilia w czasie Mszy świętej beatyfikacyjnej Matki Bernardyny Marii Jabłońskiej i Matki Marii Karłowskiej (Zakopane, 6.06.1997)*, w: Jan Paweł II, *Dzieła zebrane*, t. IX, Wydawnictwo M, Kraków 2008, s. 719.

Highlanders is a simple faith, rooted in the basic canon, subconsciously felt, that “*God looks at man through the prism of an individual. Man is not part of the crowd, but always an individual. The Highlander feels that he is close to God*”³⁰ That is why the previous mayor, Adam Bachleda-Curuś, emphasized in the book “John Paul II. Communication and Culture. On the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Great Pope”, published by the Arsarti publishing house, that the Pope received great deference and gift of prayer from Highlanders and he always reciprocated it³¹.

III. THE TRIBUTE AS A COMMUNICATIVE EXPRESSION OF ADMIRATION FOR JOHN PAUL II

Undoubtedly, tribute is an expression of honor and respect for a specific person, and is an element of communication. The communication system becomes a sequence of different events taking place one after the other. Already in 1991, after the Eucharist in front of St. Mary's Basilica, the Mayor of the city of Zakopane Maciej Krokowski and councilor Adam Bachleda-Curuś, assisted by prelate Tomasz Boroń, director of a resort villa for clergy located nearby and called Księżówka, for the first time invited Holy Father to make an apostolic visit to the town³². There were many similar invitations produced on various occasions.

Every act of communication has two aspects:

- The aspect of the substantive content – concerning information about the factual reality
- The aspect of determining the relationship between the interlocutors, the aspect consisting in the interpretation of the communication act in relation to the interpersonal relationship between the communicator and the recipient³³.

³⁰ S. Hodorowicz, J. Sadecki, *Rektor zbójnik. Z profesorem Stanisławem Hodorowiczem rozmawia Jerzy Sadecki*, Wydawnictwo Universitas, Kraków 2017, s. 42.

³¹ Por. A. Bachleda-Curuś, *Jan Paweł II jako ojciec komunikujący się słowem*, w: *Jan Paweł II. Komunikacja i Kultura. W 100-lecie urodzin Wielkiego Papieża. Seria: Edukacja Medialna – 5*, red. R. Nęcek, J. Sobczyk-Pająk, Wydawnictwo Arsarti, Kraków 2020, s. 105.

³² Por. A. Bachleda-Curuś, *Jan Paweł II jako ojciec komunikujący się słowem*, w: *Jan Paweł II. Komunikacja i Kultura. W 100-lecie urodzin Wielkiego Papieża. Seria: Edukacja Medialna – 5*, red. R. Nęcek, J. Sobczyk-Pająk, Wydawnictwo Arsarti, Kraków 2020, s. 105.

³³ Por. Z. Nęcki, *Komunikacja międzyludzka*, Wydawnictwo Antykwa, Kraków 2000, s. 27.

In this context, the Highlanders' tribute assumed a shape of a communicative expression of admiration for the Pope and became a message to which the world of Podhale constantly returns. Therefore, the following will be presented: Highlanders' love of fatherland and sense of pride, the personality of the Mayor of Adam Bachleđa-Curuś, the contents of the Tribute.

1. Highlanders' love of fatherland and sense of pride

The attachment to their fatherhood among Highlanders is extremely strong. Many of them – as prof. Hodorowicz noted – *“emigrated and put down roots in another part of the world, and they often no longer see their previous neighbours. But the land is not sold. In the villages of Podhale we see abandoned, empty houses”*³⁴, but the inherited land is preserved. That is why the farmer selling land was considered to be weak individual.

And who is “gazda”? Well, he is a man who owns a house and land, a reliable farmer. His wealth is gained due to his diligence, thrift, foresight, and life wisdom. “If you have a woman, a cottage and a field – you are already a «gazda»» – this is what a young man who has just started a family life and who has moved to his own settlement often hears. However, being a real farmer consists in fulfilling a series of obligations³⁵. The essence of being “gazda” is an honor, which results from consistent principles anchored in a membership in a community³⁶. If he gives his word, an honorary Highlander keeps it. Anyway, such a style was visible in the attitude of Mayor Adam Bachleđa-Curuś, who, while making an effort to materialise a papal visit to Zakopane, emphasized that *“regardless of the different views, we all strove together to receive our Holy Father as honorably as possible. There was harmony and unity”*³⁷.

³⁴ S. Hodorowicz, J. Sadecki, *Rektor zbójnik. Z profesorem Stanisławem Hodorowiczem rozmawia Jerzy Sadecki*, Wydawnictwo Universitas, Kraków 2017, s. 42.

³⁵ Por. A. Mlekođaj, *Juliusz Zborowski na szkle malowany*, „Rocznik Podhalański” nr 14, (2019), s. 29–30.

³⁶ Por. S. Hodorowicz, J. Sadecki, *Rektor zbójnik. Z profesorem Stanisławem Hodorowiczem rozmawia Jerzy Sadecki*, Wydawnictwo Universitas, Kraków 2017, s. 43.

³⁷ A. Bachleđa-Curuś, *Jan Paweł II jako ojciec komunikujący się słowem*, w: *Jan Paweł II. Komunikacja i Kultura. W 100-lecie urodzin Wielkiego Papieża. Seria: Edukacja Medialna – 5*, red. R. Nęcek, J. Sobczyk-Pająk, Wydawnictwo Arsarti, Kraków 2020, s. 108.

2. Personality of Mayor Adam Bachleda-Curuś

Undoubtedly, Adam Bachleda-Curuś, the Mayor of Zakopane in the years 1995-2001, is particularly famous in the history of the town and the entire Podhale region. The Bachleda-Curuś family has been perceived as a kind of Highlanders' aristocracy since the interwar period. This family – to which Tadeusz Bachleda-Curuś belonged – was an owner of an ample real estate in Zakopane and the Tatra Mountains. His grandparents died in Auschwitz. Brother of Tadeusz, Adam died in the battle of Monte Cassino, and the other brother, Eugeniusz, was shot by the Germans in Krzeszowice while escaping from Oświęcim concentration camp. After the war, the communist regime expropriated father of Adam Bachleda-Curuś from his patrimony, depriving him even of a wooden cottage at Krupówki, where he was born.

After a short biographical note, it is worth mentioning that the efforts to invite Holy Father to Zakopane were undertaken since the beginning of Pope Wojtyła's pontificate. When it seemed that this plan would come to fruition, suddenly incomprehensible articles appeared in the Polish press about the costs of the pilgrimage, thereby creating an obstacle that was difficult to remove. Therefore, since Adam Bachleda-Curuś took over the office of Mayor of Zakopane, he and his associates, Piotr Bąk and Krzysztof Owczarek, renewed the efforts to obtain the consent for a papal visit. Frequent trips to Rome with Fr. Mirosław Drozdek and the pilgrimages to Żywiec and the Slovak Levoča brought the expected result. This is how the mayor recalls that time: *“On July 1, 1995, John Paul II made a pilgrimage to Slovakia, including Levoča and the sanctuary of Our Lady in Marianska Hora, and it was so close to Podhale. The authorities of the City of Zakopane decided to go to Levoča with another invitation. We made up a large group with visible banners with the words inviting Holy Father to Zakopane. After the service, we had an opportunity to meet Holy Father and again we could invite him personally”*³⁸.

This is no coincidence that during the Holy Mass in Levoča, John Paul II mentioned that Zakopane was eager to persuade the Pope to visit the rocky Podhale region, and he said: *“Maybe Our Lady of Levoča will somehow lead the Pope to Zakopane. Let the Highlanders from the other side of the Tatra Mountains often make pilgrimages here and request that he should arrive at Zakopane somehow, because it*

³⁸ A. Bachleda-Curuś, R. Nęcek, *Górale w hołdzie Papieżowi*, Wydawnictwo Arsarti, Kraków 2022, s. 21.

*is not an easy goal to attain. Although he was supposed to arrive there, he faced obstacles, but nevertheless with the help of Levoča, I hope he would finally be there*³⁹.

Thus, the persistence of the Mayor of Zakopane brought the expected results. Of course, his character was even more revealed after the papal pilgrimage. Having the opportunity to run in the presidential and parliamentary elections from the AWS list, the Mayor stated that the act of tribute could not become a springboard for a political career⁴⁰.

3. Contents of the Tribute

The Tribute of the Polish Highlanders was paid on the knees, in Polish language – though not in their dialect – on June 6, 1997, during the liturgy, and it was done by Adam Bachleđa-Curuś, representing the Mayors of the Podhale, Spisz and Orawa regions and communes including the generations of grandparents, parents and grandchildren. It is worth noting that the content of the tribute consisted of a prologue and four thematic strands:

- Prologue expressing the joy of meeting John Paul II
- Gratefulness for his prayers and constant care for the nation
- Apologies for the irresponsible exercise of freedom
- Promise to abide by faith likewise the cross standing fast on the Giewont mountain
- Request for a papal blessing⁴¹.

The Highlanders' tribute was undoubtedly a message of love for the Holy Father and an expression of an ever-lasting brotherly bond. It was "*a message – as Piotr Bąk, the then Vice-Mayor of the City of Zakopane emphasised – that should have been spoken on behalf of entire nation by its representatives. However it was done by the Mayor of Zakopane on behalf of all of us*"⁴².

³⁹ Jan Paweł II, *Homilia podczas Mszy świętej przed sanktuarium maryjnym. Ewangelia nawiedzenia (Lewocza, 3.07.1995)*, w: Jan Paweł II, *Dzieła zebrane*, t. XI, Wydawnictwo M, Kraków 2008, s. 835.

⁴⁰ Por. A. Bachleđa-Curuś, R. Nęcek, *Górale w hołdzie Papieżowi*, Wydawnictwo Arsarti, Kraków 2022, s. 94–95.

⁴¹ Por. A. Bachleđa-Curuś, *Jan Paweł II jako ojciec komunikujący się słowem*, w: Jan Paweł II. *Komunikacja i Kultura. W 100-lecie urodzin Wielkiego Papieża. Seria: Edukacja Medialna – 5*, red. R. Nęcek, J. Sobczyk-Pająk, Wydawnictwo Arsarti, Kraków 2020, s. 107–108.

⁴² P. Bąk, *To papież ożywił góralszczyznę*, „Niedziela” nr 41 (2003) s. 5.

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CONCLUSION

It has to be said that the Tribute of Polish Highlanders was a manifestation of love of the inhabitants of Podhale to the Pope, who was considered to be one of them. It was a great and momentous event and the Holy See's spokesman, Joaquin Navarro-Valls, observed at the time that it has never happened in the history of the Church that a lay person would speak to the Pope during the Eucharist. And it did happen at the foot of the Great Krokiew ski-jump. Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz emphasised more than once that the papal visit to Zakopane would not have become possible had it not been for the exceptional efforts of Mayor Adam Bachleđa-Curuś⁴³.

The community of Podhale chose this form of communication to express their fidelity towards the Holy Father and to manifest to the world its belief that if someone does not open himself to the reality of love and beauty, one will remain withdrawn and alone. By the way, from God's perspective, even small but noble pieces of behavior will be noticed: an inconspicuous gesture of solidarity, a sympathetic tone of voice, a discreet smile. Likewise, not unnoticed would be: small intrigues, almost an absurd reluctance and complexes, an exaggerated suspicion⁴⁴. For this reason, the Highlanders' tribute showed their compatriots the necessity

⁴³ Por. R. Nęcek, *Wprowadzenie*, w: A. Bachleđa-Curuś, R. Nęcek, *Górale w hołdzie Papieżowi*, Wydawnictwo Arsarti, Kraków 2022, s. 6.

⁴⁴ Por. J. Życiński, *Okruchy myśli*, Wydawnictwo Gaudium, Lublin 2012, s. 36.

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of a circulation of love in which on the one hand the concern for each other enables the promotion of the culture of meeting, and on the other hand the Christian faith will once again look at the temporal order through the prism of the eternal.

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Biogram

Robert Nęcek, prof. ucz. – ksiądz, dziennikarz, profesor Uniwersytetu Papieskiego Jana Pawła II. Kierownik Katedry Edukacji Medialnej. Konsultor ds. Mediów Konferencji Episkopatu Polski. Wyróżniony nagrodą rektorską za wybitne osiągnięcia naukowe i organizacyjne (2010, 2017). Laureat nagrody Feniksa Specjalnego (2017). Odznaczony złotą odznaką św. Floriana Mazovia II klasy za wyjątkową skuteczność i kompetencje medialne. Uehonorowany tytułem „Zasłużony dla Gminy Nowy Targ” przez Radę Gminy (2022). Od 2022 roku członek redakcji „Humanities and Social Sciences” w Nowym Jorku.
ORCID: 0000-0001-8576-9908