


## Article

# Popular Piety and Devotion to Parish Patrons in Poland and Spain, 1948–98

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**Abstract:** This paper will show the dynamics of change in the celebration of the parish patron's day at the turn of several decades (before and after the Second Vatican Council) at a Marian shrine in Poland and the cult of Cross from Monjardin in Spain. It will refer to various forms of ritual which are manifestations of popular piety: cultural expressions, services, prayers and songs which form part of the veneration of Our Lady of Sorrows, Chelmino and the Cross in Villamayor de Monjardin. The article will also examine the different ways in which these feasts were celebrated during the period and the impact they had on the religious life of pilgrims. The study will be based on written sources: memories, diaries, newspaper clippings, and historical studies which are instrumental in demonstrating the transformation of how the parish patron's day was celebrated over time.

**Keywords:** liturgy; rite; cult of saints; popular piety; Christian identity; sacred place

## 1. The Place and Significance of Popular Piety in the Liturgy of the Catholic Church

The constitution on the liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* calls to mind that “the spiritual life is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy” (SC 12), and therefore recommends “popular devotions of the Christian people” (SC 13), noting that “devotions proper to individual churches, also have a special dignity if they are undertaken by mandate of the bishops according to customs or books lawfully approved” (SC 13). The aforementioned devotions of the people stem from their piety, therefore the *Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy* understands the term “popular piety” as “diverse cultic expressions of a private or community nature which, in the context of the Christian faith, are inspired predominantly not by the Sacred Liturgy but by forms deriving from a particular nation or people or from their culture” (DPPL 9).

At this point, it should be emphasized that although popular piety and various kinds of devotions related to it are of great value, they cannot exceed or replace the liturgical celebration, which is an action of “Christ the Priest and of His Body, which is the Church” and “is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree” (SC 7), “the Sacred Liturgy, in virtue of its very nature, is by far superior to pious exercises, and hence pastoral praxis must always accord to the Sacred Liturgy “that preeminent position proper to it in relation to pious exercises; Liturgy and pious exercises must co-exist in accordance with the hierarchy of values and the nature specific to both of these cultic expressions” (DPPL 73). Thus, the liturgy, “if it is to shape the life of Christians, must remain in permanent contact (dialogue) with popular piety. ( . . . ) However, the priority of the liturgy denotes that it is to evangelize piety and, if necessary, correct it.” (Perszon 2019, p. 82) Nevertheless, popular piety—in utilizing the means appropriate to the culture of a given society—helps us to understand the liturgy and the truths of faith—and therefore represents a valuable path towards deepening Christian life. It arises as if “from below” often linked to matters related to everyday life (Krakowiak 2016, p. 78; Krakowiak 2017, p. 26), and manifests—as Pope Paul

VI says—“a thirst for God known only to the poor and to the humble, rendering them capable of a generosity and of sacrifice to the point of heroism in testifying to the faith.” (EN 48).

Diverse gestures and undertakings, such as: organizing pilgrimages, processions, visiting holy places and shrines, kissing images and relics of the blessed or saints, making votive offerings, wearing holy medals or special outfits, as well as formulating prayer texts, hymns and composing music, are useful in practicing popular piety (cf. CCC 1674). All this helps in experiencing the mysteries of faith and is a manifestation of the spirit of popular piety, which the Church values as “an innate sense of the sacred and the transcendent” (DPPL 61). Furthermore, it combines the realities of faith and culture, sometimes so strongly that within particular nations the first integrates the identity of the second.

It can certainly be said that the manifestations of popular piety presented in this study are a sign of variety in “its forms of expression, that have arisen and been accepted in many particular Churches throughout the ages, and are a sure sign of the extent to which the faith has taken root in the hearts of particular peoples, and of its influence on the daily lives of the faithful” (DPPL 91; Wólkowski 2019, p. 227–9), which is a form of inculturation of faith (Berry 2017, p. 235). This can be seen in the descriptions of celebrating the parish indulgence—in the selected example of Spanish and Polish popular piety—linked to the cult of the miraculous image of Mary and the Cross of Monjardin. This in turn is in line with the teaching of the Second Council of Nicaea (787), which states that “similar to the depictions of the precious and vivifying Cross of our redemption, the sacred images are to be used for veneration (...) images of Our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, holy Mother of God, venerable Angels and Saints (...)” (DPPL 238). According to the teaching of the Church, sacred images are an assistance to the faithful in prayer, they stimulate us to imitate the saints, and contribute to meditating on the articles of faith (see DPPL 240).

Popular piety plays an important role in the liturgy of the Church, because it helps believers to open themselves up to transcendence and find meaning in life, it gives a sense of security aimed at salvation, deepens community life by performing the same rites and celebrating together, and becomes a part of everyday life thanks to its simple structure (Nadolski 1992, p. 294–5; Ryan 2012). Thus, the liturgy cannot exist without popular piety, since it would be devoid of being anchored to a particular believer.

This article will compare two ways of experiencing patronal feasts in Poland and Spain—countries with a Catholic background—which are distinguished by the peculiarity of the material form of religion. In these examples, it will be possible to observe the changes initiated by the Second Vatican Council, or rather which coincided with the time of the council. However, they are not too great in the case of Poland when it comes to the liturgical celebration itself, and in Spain, the reception of the Council as breaking with tradition resulted in the disappearance of some previous forms of celebration. Cultural and social circumstances played a much greater role than the teaching of the Council. Two towns were adopted as the reference point: the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Sorrows in Chełmno (Diocese of Toruń) in Poland, and the parish of St. Andrew in Villamayor de Monjardin (Archdiocese of Pamplona) in Spain. The analyses will cover various forms of worship and celebrations of indulgences that shape the religious and social identity of the inhabitants of the given town. Due to the distinct political situation in both countries, the development of popular piety differed in both cases. These dissimilarities will be presented in three stages. Firstly, the significance of the parish indulgence will be analyzed, secondly, the way it is experienced in both towns in Poland and Spain, and finally the conclusions of the analyses will be provided.

## 2. The Essence of the Parish Indulgence and the Forms of Its Implementation

It can certainly be stated that the parish is a privileged place for practicing popular piety, which can be expressed and implemented in a parish indulgence (Duda 2006, p. 316). A parish indulgence is a celebration of the title of the church, for according to the Code of Canon Law “each church is to have its own title which cannot be changed after the church has been dedicated” (CIC, can. 1218). Whereas, the title of the church can refer to various mysteries of faith, events in the life of Jesus Christ or realities

combined to His passion, and those referring to the Mother of the Savior.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the titles can take the names of the Holy Spirit, Annunciation, Birth of Jesus, Transfiguration of the Lord, Ascension, Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Presentation of Jesus, Assumption.

In the case, when a church is consecrated with reference to the intercession of a particular Saint, then that person becomes the patron saint of that church, which cannot be equated with the patron saint of the given place. The parish indulgence is therefore a celebration of the title of the church, which should be celebrated solemnly. Before the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, the parish indulgence in the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours bore the rank of 1st class.<sup>2</sup> This gave the opportunity to start celebrating the parish indulgence with vespers of the preceding day, that is, on the eve of the celebration. However, on the very day of the indulgence—around noon—a Solemn Mass took place, followed by a procession with the Blessed Sacrament around the church. During it, the celebrant intoned the hymn *Te Deum*, whereas after returning to the church, the priest, turned with the monstrance towards the faithful, sang *Salvum fac populum tuum Domine* three times, after which he blessed the assembled with the Blessed Sacrament, then, kneeling on the steps of the altar, incensed the monstrance and reposed the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. During this time, the people sang “Niechaj będzie pochwalony” (Praised be Jesus Christ) three times. Then, in the afternoon, there was a liturgy of vespers, but without exposing the *Sanctissimum*.

After the Second Vatican Council—in the priority table for liturgical days—the day of the church title is considered a celebration. It is found within the first group—among its own celebrations—and in third place after the celebrations of the main patron saint of the village or town, the celebration of the consecration of the church or the anniversary of its consecration. The importance of the parish indulgence requires that the faithful prepare themselves well and spiritually for this event, that is why the prayer *triduum* still can be found in some parishes. It is a three-day period during which homilies—referring to the title of the church or the figure of the patron saint—are preached. At the same time, the faithful can take advantage of the sacrament of penance, so that—on the day of the parish indulgence—they can receive the grace of a plenary indulgence, that is, the remission before God “of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven” (CCC 1471). It is not uncommon that priests from the deanery help in confession.

As before the conciliar reform—also today—a solemn mass is celebrated on the day of the parish indulgence. It is followed by a Eucharistic procession ending with the hymn *Te Deum*, the benediction with the Blessed Sacrament and a singing of the closing hymn “Boże coś Polskę”<sup>3</sup> at the end of the liturgical celebration. The procession—which passes once or three times around the church—is usually attended by the standard-bearers (sometimes the carriers are dressed in the same national costumes), feretories, flower-scattering children who have received Holy Communion for the first time in a given year or those who celebrate its first anniversary, the liturgical service of the altar, guest priests, a priest carrying a reliquary with the relics of the patron saint of the church (if the parish possesses such) and the main celebrant carrying a monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament under the canopy. Sometimes the singing of the people is accompanied by the assisting local orchestra or parish choir. In some regions, there is an indulgence celebration of vespers held in the afternoon, although it seems that this custom is less and less practiced.

It should be noted that—apart from the spiritual and religious dimension—the parish indulgence also plays a community-building role, by revealing the historical and social roots of this event. The parish indulgence is therefore a celebration of Christian culture. It enriches personal culture and offers

<sup>1</sup> The Church may have more than one patron saint, which results in the parish experiencing two indulgences per year. Usually one of them is celebrated more solemnly than the other, gathering more faithful.

<sup>2</sup> In the pre-conciliar liturgy, there were four classes of liturgical celebrations, depending on the importance of the feast in question. Such a gradation has always existed in the history of the liturgy, and in the case of the 1st class it concerned the possibility of celebrating the vigil. Details are provided in the General Rubrics of the Tridentine Missal, Chapter 2, Section 8.

<sup>3</sup> “Boże coś Polskę” is a Catholic religious hymn which aspired to be recognized as the national anthem after Poland regained independence in 1918.

leisure time as an opportunity to break the everyday monotony, consolidate family ties, social and cultural integration and maintain traditional hospitality (Platovnjak 2017, p. 340). The indulgence also strengthens the local community, where some of the residents engage in the preparation of the celebration by cleaning and decorating the church and the area around it—along with the parish cemetery, preparing dishes or cakes and handing them over to the parish priest so that he may host the priests who arrive. Thus, the celebration of the parish indulgence attended by priests from the deanery and from beyond its borders is also a good opportunity for sustaining priestly fraternity not only at the Eucharistic table, but also at the feast table, where conversations and enriching exchanges of pastoral experiences can take place during the refreshments.

Indulgences in the countryside, in particular, were often combined with a boisterous dance party attracting newcomers from nearby towns. Sometimes they ended with various excesses, fights and brawls, which did not correspond to the religious seriousness of the parish indulgence, that is why the parish priests forbade organizing games on the day of the indulgence (Dziura 2017, p. 131).

When discussing the issue of the parish indulgence, one cannot ignore the element of sensualism manifested in the sacred impact of objects and in the “sensation” of time and place separated from everyday life. This can be noticed in indulgence rituals, community rites, the experience of the *sacred*, and the interpenetration of spiritual and material elements. Thus, a procession with figures and images, washing or taking water from miraculous springs, touching some sacred object, bringing flowers, herbs or lighting candles, pilgrimages along designated places and paths—give believers the opportunity to express their faith, which enhances a multisensory experience, liberates emotions and embodies the spiritual realm in a way. Hence, the parish indulgence and its course become a good example of the coexistence of liturgy with popular piety.

### 3. Celebration of the Parish Indulgence in the Example of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Sorrows in Chełmno

Popular piety is manifested especially in the veneration of the Mother of God. According to the Directory,

the faithful easily understand the vital link uniting Son and Mother. They realise that the Son is God and that she, the Mother, is also their mother. They intuit the immaculate holiness of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in venerating her as the glorious queen of Heaven, they are absolutely certain that she who is full of mercy intercedes for them. Hence, they confidently have recourse to her patronage. The poorest of the poor feel especially close to her. They know that she, like them, was poor, and greatly suffered in meekness and patience. They can identify with her suffering at the crucifixion and death of her Son, as well as rejoice with her in his resurrection. The faithful joyfully celebrate her feasts, make pilgrimage to her sanctuary, sing hymns in her honour, and make votive offerings to her.

(DPPL 183)

A good example of such piety is the celebration of the indulgence in honor of Our Lady of Sorrows in Chełmno. For that reason, this part of the study will introduce the history of the Chełmno sanctuary and the development of the cult of the image of the Mother of God. Next, the forms of popular piety related to the indulgence and its proceedings will be presented. In the last part, the changes in the celebration of the indulgence at the turn of five decades will be depicted. The discussed issue is based on written materials preserved in various historical studies, the contemporary press, and parish informers, which constitute the archival resource of the Chełmno Land Museum.

#### 3.1. An Outline of the History of the Sanctuary in Chełmno

The sanctuary in Chełmno is related to the cult of Our Lady of Sorrows in Chełmno, thus, the one with the miraculous image of Our Lady. It is located in the side chapel of the parish church dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is worth mentioning that this image is the first image

in the Republic of Poland to be crowned with papal crowns (Zieliński 2006, p. 267). It depicts Mary on whose knees rests the body of Jesus taken down from the cross. This is an interesting depiction, for Mary does not embrace her Son's body with her hands nor eyesight, but her sad, teary eyes are turned towards heaven and her hands stretched upwards, making a gesture of offering in seeking help and consolation from God. The suffering of Mary is magnified by a painted sword piercing her heart, which alludes to the prophecy of Simeon, found in the Gospel: "Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother: Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against, and a sword will pierce through your own soul" (Luke 2:34–35). The color of the sky, which takes on a bloody hue, adds to the visual drama.

It is difficult to establish the beginning of the cult. It dates back to the 15th century, but its greatest development took place at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. The cult is linked to the tradition (established in the nineteenth century) of a blind boy who, thanks to the Our Lady of Sorrows (who appeared to him during his sleep), found a spring near the Grudziądz Gate of the town of Chełmno, from which water with miraculous, healing properties flowed. After the boy washed his eyes with this water, he regained his eyesight. In commemoration of this event, the image of the Mother of God was placed on the town gate. From that time on, Mary began receiving special veneration not only as the patron saint and guardian of the town, but also as a helper of the sick and the distressed, as evidenced by numerous votive offerings given by the faithful. In 1649, by the decision of the then parish priest, Rev. Jan Schmack, the image of the Mother of God was moved to the side chapel of the parish church. This was due to the miracle of healing of the mentioned priest who in the form of gratitude presented this image with a silver crown. Over the years, the image of Our Lady of Sorrows was considered miraculous—not only by the population, but also by the church authorities—as evidenced by the record of Rev. Mateusz Antoni Donadzki from 1721: "Spiritual suzerainty, among other authentic miracles and the Chełmno image of the Holy Mother. It counts as miraculous" (Donadzki 1721). In this way, the fame of the miraculous image of the Mother of God spread not only in the area of Royal Prussia, but also extended to Kuyavia, the Dobrzyń Land or Mazovia. Numerous pilgrimages come to Chełmno to bow down before the Blessed Mother.

It is worth mentioning that the transfer of the painting from the Grudziądz Gate to the church did not indicate the disappearance of the cult in its original location. The manifestation of this was the erection of the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, commonly known as the "Gate," on the foregate of the Chapel. At the top, in a recess, a carved Pietà with the inscription: "Monstra Te esse Matrem" ("Show yourself to be a Mother!") was placed. The area where water flows from the spring has also been decorated with a roadside chapel, which was extended over time and turned into a brick chapel.

In the second half of the 17th century, an increase in the importance of the celebration of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary—falling on 2 July in the liturgical calendar of that time (until the Second Vatican Council)—could be observed. This celebration began to take on more and more significance, which was emphasized, among others, by the presence of individual bishops celebrating Mass in the parish church in Chełmno or in the Chapel of the Miraculous Image itself. The rank of the ceremony was raised in 1717 by Pope Clement XI who granted the sanctuary the privilege of a plenary indulgence—related to the forty-hour service beginning on the feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul (29 June) and ending with Vespers on the eve of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary—while in 1753 Pope Benedict XIV issued a bull authorizing the imposition of papal crowns<sup>4</sup> on the Chełmno image of Our Lady of Sorrows (which were stolen in 1850). Whereas, on 26 March 1792, Pius VI assigned a plenary indulgence to the celebration of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

A description of the celebration from 1746 indicates the formation of a scheme of liturgical celebrations and customs related to the Marian solemnity: The celebration began on 29 June and ended

<sup>4</sup> The rite of "papal crowns" refers to the pious institutional act of the Pope, in which he bestows an ornamental crown, diadem or halo to a Marian image or statue that is venerated in a particular locality.

on 3 July. Thus, they lasted five days. Great emphasis was placed on the accession of the faithful to the sacrament of penance and the Eucharist. Confirmation was granted by the bishops. On 2 July, the obtained indulgences were announced from the pulpit, and the appointed clergyman wrote down the graces people had received. The only preserved census covers the years from 1635 to 1747. The records contained therein eloquently testify to the great veneration of the Blessed Virgin before the Miraculous Image as well as the often deep faith carrying the power of healing. One of them, experienced by the young Franciscan Franciszek Skulski, took place in 1645:

On 18 March 1662 (AD), the Father Franciscus Skulski Ordin stayed at the Order of Friars Minor Conventual in Chełmno, while being here at the novitiate he became blind (17 years ago), and for seven or eight Sundays he remained in this blindness. Knowing about the Miraculous Image of the Virgin Mary of Sorrows above the Grubieńska Gate, he went there. The brothers took him there, first he washed his eyes with water from the Spring—built in the shaft under the mountain—then he went to the Image, where he—thanks to this Virgin—regained his health and sight.

(Zieliński 2006, p. 271)

Precious votive offerings—left over the centuries by all sorts of people: the clergy, the nobility, townspeople and the poor—are the evidence of other numerous physical and spiritual healings. Some of the gathered votive offerings were melted down to make dresses for the image or liturgical vessels. “129 votive offerings—which the frontal and predella of the altar were lined with—have been preserved to this day. This is one of the most interesting collections of this type in Poland. Both supplications and expressions of gratitude can be read on the votive offerings, such as:

*Dismiss the plague with Your uplifted Hand.*

*Restore the crop, destroy all the blemishes in the grains.*

*Let the devilish and human anger subside.*

*By your grace, more fruitful crops will follow.*

Or such as:

*The poor beggar seeks your help*

*That you may protect him both day and night*

*O Mother full of counsel in this image.*

(Zieliński 2006, p. 276)

Votive offering (thanksgiving) Masses were also requested in the Chapel of the Miraculous Image, with the intention of expressing gratitude to the Mother of God for saving the town from being burnt by the Russians besieging Chełmno during the Third Northern War (1700–1721). In this way—especially during the partitions—the Chełmno sanctuary became a place of cultivation and manifestation of the Polish character. This is mentioned in the record from 1861: “Last week in Chełmno, the usual great indulgence for Our Lady of the Visitation took place [...]. Years later, the Summer gathering of pious people in Chełmno was smaller than the others, reaching maybe 6000 to 7000, apart from the parishioners. The clergy was comprised of 30 priests. Three companies from Lisewo, Wąbrzeźno and Chełmża came under the guidance of their pastors, and were solemnly greeted and introduced by the local parishioners, singing in a mighty chorus—from the town gates to the church thresholds—an old hymn of our supplications and sorrows, by repeating: “Przed Twe ołtarze zanosim błaganie” (Before Thy altars we carry our plead), and so on.”<sup>5</sup> The Prussian authorities did not want to tolerate this type

<sup>5</sup> “Nadwiślanin” no. 66 (15 July 1861), p. 4. Author’s translation.



of demonstration of the Polish character, that is why they even went so far as to close the sanctuary, which, however, did not last long due to the stubbornness of the local population. Still, they tried hampering the faithful in cultivating Marian piety, which the following testimony conveys: “Numerous crowds of believers and Polish singing at the ‘Gate,’ above the main street of the town—Grudziądzka Street—did not please the Germans. Wanting to put an end to such ‘manifestations,’ the government constructor issued an opinion that the walls of the ‘Gate’ were in danger of collapsing, and therefore services were forbidden” (Działowski 1937, p. 15–16). Despite the harassment and inconveniences on the part of the invaders during the Kulturkampf period, the significance of the parish indulgence in Chełmno—related to the miraculous image of Our Lady of Sorrows—endured. As a result, in 1882 the influx of pilgrims was so great (about 10,000) that there was a shortage of communion hosts (6000 Communion hosts were distributed) which had to be baked on a regular basis.<sup>6</sup>

Over the following centuries, the Chełmno indulgence—related to the cult of the miraculous image of Our Lady of Sorrows—became permanently inscribed in the liturgy of the local church. This was evidenced by the numerous, groups of thousands of pilgrims visiting the sanctuary with their priests, as well as the presence of various bishops and suffragans of the Chełmno diocese and invited hierarchs from outside its territory present at the indulgence ceremonies. This is well reflected in the prayer uttered by Bishop Kazimierz Kowalski in 1970: “God, in your love you want to make the world happy, we, the Pastors of the Diocese, together with the bishops, the clergy and the faithful people, offer our humble thanks for your action through Mary. We specially give thanks to You, our great God, for the favors—through the intercession of the Mediatrix of Our Lady of Sorrows—that we have received here in Chełmno from the very beginning of the Chełmno Diocese. Mother of God of Chełmno! Your honor among the people of this land has been spread for a long time. You are the Patroness of the Chełmno People, a special Mediatrix of the grace of healing of body and soul.” (Zieliński 2006, p. 286) Hence, it can be clearly seen that the Mother of God in the Chełmno image still remains—just as it was in the past centuries—a source of consolation and an intermediary of grace for pilgrims coming before Her miraculous image.

### 3.2. Forms of Popular Piety Related to the Indulgence of Chełmno

First of all, it should be noted that in spite of the post-conciliar reform of the liturgical calendar and the transferring of the solemnity of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to 31 May, the Chełmno celebrations related to the indulgence are traditionally celebrated on 2 July, just as they were centuries ago.<sup>7</sup>

When considering popular piety linked to the cult of the image of Our Lady of Chełmno, one cannot fail to mention its reach. In 1926, the indulgence celebrations were commented on as follows:

This year’s Chełmno indulgence was held in extremely beautiful weather and with an exceptionally large number of pilgrims—some of them already arriving on the eve of the indulgence—pouring into our town from all parts of Pomerania. On Friday morning, trains

<sup>6</sup> See “Pilgrim” no. 76 (6 July 1882), pp. 2–3.

<sup>7</sup> While discussing this part of the article, it should be clarified that the acquired information and historical records derive from before 1948 and date back to the 1920s and 1930s. This is due to historical and political conditions. During World War II, from 1939–1945, Poland was under Nazi occupation, which impeded the traditional celebration of the indulgence on account of anti-religious regulations. In view of the dramatic war events, there was no intention of perpetuating the pilgrimage celebrations. Moreover, at that time, due to the prohibition of the Germans regarding the impossibility for the faithful—from outside Chełmno—of coming to the sanctuary, the pilgrimage movement ceased completely, which forced the traditional celebration of the indulgence to be abandoned. A similar situation took place after the end of the war. In Poland, under the influence of the Soviet Union, communism, atheization and a systemic struggle with the church and religion prevailed. There was no possibility of publishing topics promoting faith or providing information on religious events in the press. Hence, little can be found about the Chełmno indulgence. The situation changed after 1989, when communism collapsed in Poland. Although the partially obtained materials go beyond the time frame adopted in the article, this does not in any way affect the reliability of the presentation of the issue related to experiencing the parish church indulgence in Chełmno. On the functioning of the Chełmno sanctuary during World War II, see (Hojak 1988)

brought several companies of pilgrims, who were greeted with unrolled banners and a chant in the procession heading for the Gate. Both Dworcowa and Grudziądzka Street—reaching from the *Starosta* building to the Water Gate—were literally packed with people. This is the evidence on how large masses of people participated in the procession. People attending the celebration are estimated at 12,000. Pilgrimages led by priests from the St. Cross in Grudziądz and from Wabcz parishes were greeted at the Gate by the rev. dean, dr. Rogal, and the companies of pilgrims from St. Trinity church in Bydgoszcz. The last group came by steamboat, and was therefore greeted by the rev. dean in front of the Water Gate. 32 priests arrived. Seven sermons were preached, and innumerable crowds of pilgrims approached at the Lord's Table.

“Nadwiślanin” nr 54 (7 July 1926, p. 2)

Such a great crowd of arriving pilgrims required an organizational change of celebrating the indulgence solemn mass outside the church building instead of inside its walls. This was justified especially in 1931, when 12,400 Holy Communion were distributed,<sup>8</sup> while in 1933 the estimated number of arriving believers reached 20,000 and 10,500 Communion were given out.<sup>9</sup> In 1939, according to the press, 35,000 people attended the church indulgence in Chełmno (*sic!*).<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the number of priests participating in the indulgence ceremonies increased. In 1932 the number included 43 priests, among others, from Toruń, Pelpin, Tczew, Puck and Gdynia. There is also information that pilgrims from Brusy, Łęg, Czersk and, Bory Tucholskie<sup>11</sup> arrived in 1922, whereas in 1933 from Grudziądz, Bydgoszcz, Fordon, Chełmża, Boluminek, Czarze, Unisław and Drzycim.<sup>12</sup> Hence, it can be seen, that the indulgence celebration had a supralocal dimension, covering a vast region. The huge crowds of arriving pilgrims and the copies of the images of the Chełmno Madonna—present in various churches in Pomerania and Kuyavia—are the evidence of this. Unfortunately, as the following decades went by, the Chełmno indulgence lost its importance, which influenced the dimension of its celebration and the visits by the faithful. To illustrate, in 1997, six pilgrimages from neighboring towns came to the indulgence (the furthest had to overcome about 35 km), bringing together a total of just over 1000 pilgrims.<sup>13</sup>

On the occasion of the celebration of the Chełmno indulgence and out of concern for the pilgrims—who increasingly arrived before the miraculous image of Our Lady—dedicated prayers, pictures and holy medals were prepared. In the interwar period, the hymn “Bolesna Matko” (Sorrowful Mother—sung to this day) became popular, whose text reads as follows: “Sorrowful Mother, Most Pure Virgin! Indeed, you are our Eternal Queen. Here, the fathers have praised you for centuries, they asked God for favors through You.” This is not the only musical piece composed in connection with the indulgence. It is also possible to come across the hymn from 1920 (by Anastazy Kałdowski) “Lud u stóp Twych Niebios Pani” (A people at Your feet, Lady of Heaven), which is the people's supplication to Our Lady of Sorrows asking for her help and receiving forgiveness.<sup>14</sup> Jerzy Kałdowski continued his musical work in honor of Our Lady of Chełmno by composing, among others, the hymns “Mater Culemsis” (1998) and “Okaz się Matką” (Prove yourself to be a Mother), composed for the inauguration of the indulgence in 1995.

<sup>8</sup> The data comes from the parish bulletin “Głos” no. 61 (1–2 July 1997), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> See *Kalendarz Kościelny dla Parafii Chełmińskiej na rok Pański 1934*, p. 22. A year earlier, 12,000 Communion were distributed, and 38 priests were listening to confessions in the confessional. See *Kalendarz Kościelny dla Parafii Chełmińskiej na rok Pański 1933*, p. 26. To illustrate the number of arriving pilgrims, it is worth noting that as of 17 April 1926, the number of Chełmno inhabitants was 10,571. Thus, the crowd of believers participating in the indulgence was in fact huge. See “Nadwiślanin” No. 31 (17 April 1926), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> See “Dziennik Bydgoski” no. 150 (4 July 1939), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> See “Nadwiślanin” 1922, no. 42 (9 July 1922), p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> See “Głos” no. 61 (1–2 July 1997), pp. 3–4. Cf. “Pielgrzym” no. 83 (13 July 1926), p. 3. To illustrate: the distance between Chełmno and Gdynia is about 150 km, Puck 170 km, Brusy 90 km, Czersk 70 km.

<sup>13</sup> See “Głos” no. 62 (31 August 1997), p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> See “Głos” no. 83 (1–2 July 1998), p. 4.



The custom of reciting the Novena to Our Lady of Sorrows which can be dated back to the 1930s,<sup>15</sup> and the Litany to Our Lady of Sorrows of Chełmno, the so-called “Oranienburg Litany”<sup>16</sup> composed by Bożysław Kurowski, was another manifestation of popular piety. The name comes from the town of Oranienburg, where the concentration camp was located. The author who composed the text of the litany in 1943, was held in that camp. Until recently, the litany was sung during an indulgence in the chapel at the Gate. An earlier litany to Our Lady of Sorrows taken from an old songbook (from 1853) is also possible to come across; however, it is no longer used today. (Gólkowski 1853) The arrangement of the chaplet, which consists of an invocation with the following content—“Mother, may Your raised hands protect us from all evil”—is yet another form of popular piety. This text was placed on the reverse of the picture with the image of Our Lady of Sorrows in Chełmno. The folk origin of the chaplet can be evidenced by the fact that it is only intended for private recitation. From time immemorial there has been a cultivated custom of lighting candles before the miraculous image of the Madonna from Chełmno in order to pay tribute to Her.

In the context of the feast schedule, it is important to mention its transformation in relation to previous years. The celebration does not begin—as it once did—with Vespers on 29 June, but the main celebrations take place on the 1st and 2nd of July, in which the ordinary bishop and auxiliary bishop take turns. The schedule of the indulgence ceremonies slightly differed in the nineties, however, there are some fixed points such as: Holy Mass at the Grudziądz Gate, Holy Mass at the Spring, indulgence Solemn Mass in the parish, a procession with the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of the town from the sanctuary to the Spring with the participation of the clergy, residents of Chełmno, arrived pilgrims and with the accompaniment of the local brass orchestra. The prayer vigils before the miraculous image of Our Lady and the so-called “Midnight Mass of Mary” followed by a procession with candles, cannot be forgotten. This name is more symbolic than liturgical for it indicated the Midnight Mass from the 1st to the 2nd of July, as a kind of vigil for the faithful before the main indulgence Solemn Mass. Priests who came from the parish church or used to work there attended this Midnight Mass.

Although the main indulgence ceremonies ended on 2 July, its celebrations continued the next few days (usually about five). On particular days, Masses and services were organized for the pilgrims who arrived. The following pilgrimages coming to the miraculous image of Our Lady of Sorrows in Chełmno consisted of different groups of people: the blind, the sick, worshippers of the Association of the Living Rosary, children who received the Holy Communion for the first time in a given year, the liturgical service of altar servers and acolytes, and the pilgrimage of the Third Order of St. Francis.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the custom of prolonging the indulgence days was the aftermath of an ancient tradition, for as early as 1861, as the press at that time reported, “throughout the whole octave (...) the faithful were gathering in the local parish church every evening carrying pious singing (...) to the throne of God.”<sup>18</sup> There was also a custom of getting married before the miraculous image.

Moreover, the indulgence celebrations were at times combined with the secular celebration of the Chełmno Days (known already in the 1930s<sup>19</sup>). When analyzing the posters of this event, it can be noticed that during communism—although the parish church indulgence was held at the same time as the celebration of the Chełmno Days—these events were separate. It was only after the political changes and the fall of communism in Poland (1989) that the two celebrations were linked to each other, and the Chełmno indulgence was officially inscribed in the celebration of the town, as it can

<sup>15</sup> See *Historia cudownego obrazu Matki Boskiej Bolesnej w Chełmnie*, Wąbrzeźno 1938, pp. 25–27.

<sup>16</sup> The reprint of the litany text can be found in “Głos” no. 61 (1–2 July 1997).

<sup>17</sup> An exemplary calendar of the indulgence celebration, see “Głos” no. 82 (21 June 1998), p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> “Głos” no. 61 (1–2 July 1997), p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> See “Przegląd Chełmiński” no. 74 (5 July 1938), p. 3.

be viewed on the posters from the 1990s.<sup>20</sup> Except for various cultural, artistic and entertainment events organized by the Chełmno authorities, there was also room for a religious event related to the experience of the parish church indulgence.

It is also worth noting that apart from experiencing the *sacred* of the Chełmno indulgence, the faithful also looked for enjoyment connected to the commercial part of the religious celebration. An indisputable attraction were the colorful stalls where it—after Mass—was possible to purchase products that are not normally available in stores. “In the Market Square and the adjacent streets a sea of heads waved along and there was great liveliness in front of the ranks of stalls.” (“Nadwiślanin” nr 54 (7 July 1926), s. 2) Devotional articles, like objects of religious worship in the form of small images of the Mother of God (see Figure 1), holy medals, rosaries (which after the indulgence Solemn Mass could be blessed, and—after the return from the ceremony—be given as a gift to the loved ones or neighbors),<sup>21</sup> were possible to buy at the occasional fair (see Figure 2). But also products of crafts and handicrafts, such as elements of outfits, headgear, scarves, or toys for children like: balls, pipes, windmills, inflatable balloons, firecrackers, caps and sweets in the form of hard candy, lollipops, cotton candy, ice cream on a stick, soda water and sweet drinks<sup>22</sup> could be found there. In the past, this was an infallible attraction giving especially the younger participants a lot of joy. Nowadays, in an age of developed industry and unlimited access to goods, the items in fair stalls are being associated with rubbish, kitsch and mediocrity with no particular value.

### 3.3. Differences in the Celebration of the Indulgence throughout Half a Century

Over a period of several decades, the parish indulgence underwent a transformation. This can be noticed foremost in the declining number of believers participating in the ceremonies and the groups of pilgrimages. For many years, Chełmno has not seen multitudes of thousands of pilgrims, for the number today reaches only a few hundred. As a result, the number of people receiving the sacrament of penance and the Holy Communion, and the pilgrimages of people of various groups: the sick, the blind, liturgical services, groups of the Association of the Living Rosary—which took place during the so-called octave of the Chełmno indulgence—have also declined.

The decrease in the number of priests participating in pilgrimage ceremonies can also be observed. Priestly meetings held after liturgical events are changing as well in the way they were celebrated. In the past, priests who came to the indulgence spent their time at the common guest table, chatting, exchanging experiences, and even inducing themselves in the entertainment of card games. Nowadays, priests leave quickly after the liturgy is over. The disappearance of the custom of visiting priests participating in the so-called “Midnight Mass of Mary” is also discernible.

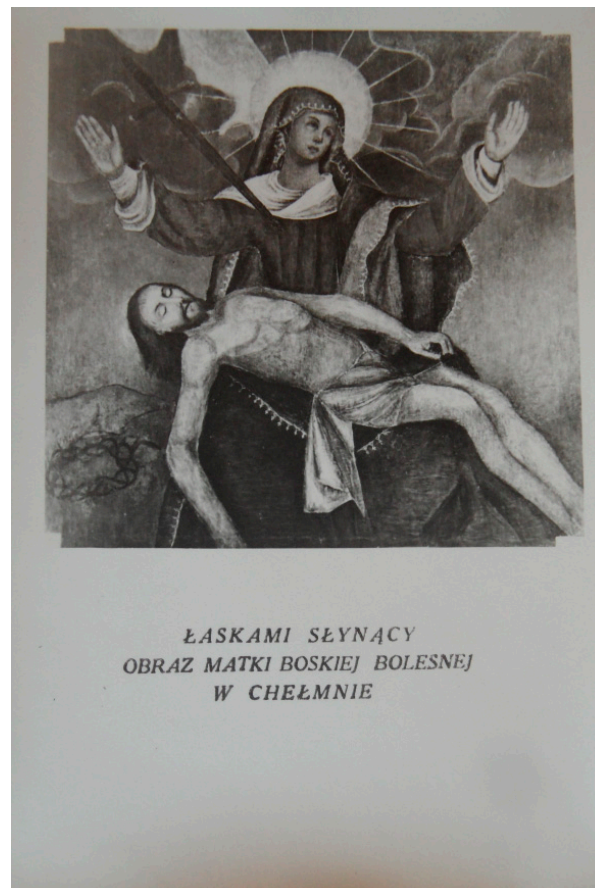
One may be tempted to say that the experience of indulgences is becoming secularized by being deprived of its religious spirit, and taking on a more folkloric, entertaining or social character. The celebration of the parish indulgence may resemble a kind of theatrical performance in which some people play their roles and others constitute the audience, which in turn leads to the transformation into popular religiosity. This is why the *Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy* draws attention to the danger of the Saint’s feast or the patronal feast of the parish, when being emptied of the Christian content that lies at its origin “( . . . ) becoming a mere popular observance or a social occasion, ( . . . ) serving, in the best instances, as little other than a social occasion for the members of a particular community. ( . . . ) It is not uncommon that there are groups or individuals who believe they know what to celebrate signifies, while their defined behaviour can be widely at variance with the true significance of the

<sup>20</sup> The change in question can be well seen when comparing the posters—informing about the Chełmno Days from the 1970s (available at the Museum of the Chełmno Land under the reference number MZCH/E/810, MZCH/E/703) and the 1990s (“Nadwiślanin” no. 6 (June 1993), “Nadwiślanin” no. 12 (19 June 1997), p. 4).

<sup>21</sup> For the indulgence in 1933, the local printing house issued a special souvenir of the Chełmno indulgence with the text of a prayer to the Mother of God.

<sup>22</sup> See “Czas Chełmna” no. 27 (9 July 1998), pp. 1.8–9; “Nadwiślanin” no. 27 (8 July 1998), p. 1.

feast” (DPPL 233). It can be said, that a general transformation in the ways of celebrating—in changing the mass dimension into an elite, individual and personal dimension—has taken place. Nowadays, it seems impossible to recall the words that the report in the old press communicated about the Chełmno indulgence: “Our town was wearing a festive garment. Flags with national and papal colors were fluttering on almost every house. (...) The indulgence in honor of Our Lady of Sorrows of Chełmno proved that the people faithfully uphold the Catholic faith and the Church.”<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 1.** Black and white picture with the image of Our Lady of Chełmno, with an inscription at the bottom: IMAGE OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS IN CHEŁMNO; dim: height 15 cm, width 10 cm; in inv. MZCH/E/1102.

<sup>23</sup> “Przegląd Chełmiński” no. 74 (5 July 1938), p. 3.



**Figure 2.** Holy medal with Our Lady of Sorrows of Chełmno, height 26 mm (with a pendant integrally connected with the holy medal), width 22 mm; Our Lady of Chełmno with the inscription above: The image of Merciful Christ. It is located in the collections of—The Museum of the Chełmno Land MZCH/E/982.

It also seems that, in addition to the decreased number of faithful participating in this religious event, the ludic element, joint celebration and material attractions in the form of markets and stalls cease to be important. In the past, apart from the indisputable and valued dimension of the *sacred*, the indulgence also had an element of entertainment. Contemporary materialism, consumerism and the development of technology provide so many attractions and stimuli on a daily basis that the religious, ritual and cult forms have become worn out in their formula, losing their attractiveness and becoming a kind of “open-air museum.” (Wiśniewski 2018, p. 211; Aulet and Vidal 2018, p. 244) Unfortunately, for many, tradition, religiosity, spiritual life, the sense of the *sacred* and transcendence, as well as building and integration of social and cultural life have stopped being important, which is not so much the result of conciliar changes, but the broadly understood transformation in the mentality of modern believers and the world around them.<sup>24</sup> And yet, the indulgence ceremonies “are not only an expression of the continuity of religious worship, but also a clamp linking the historical past with the present.”<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. *Fiestas Patronales and Parroquiales* in Spain and the Example of Villamayor de Monjardin (Navarra)

Bearing in mind the difference between parish and patronal feast days—of which the latter either covered a wider range (including the whole town, not just the parish which was visible particularly in larger towns) or were related to other feasts—the celebration of both of these feast days, however, remained analogous. It covered the entire local community, where at its center the cult of the patron

<sup>24</sup> After the end of World War II, thanks to the interference of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in Poland, a communist regime prevailed, with the main goal of a broadband atheization of the society and a fight against the Church, for which there was supposed to be no place in public space. Structural measures were taken to abolish religion lessons in schools, interfere with the appointment of new bishops, take the lands (land) that belonged to the Church, remove nuns from hospitals as nurses and replace them with lay people, recruit clergy as secret state collaborators who were to report on prominent people, especially their bishops and superiors. The communist state apparatus used intimidation and blackmail in its methods, but also physical violence and imprisonment, which happened to Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, who in that time was the primate of Poland. However, the Polish community, due to the steadfast attitude of the episcopate and clergy, did not succumb to the process of atheization, and what is more - the Church has become a symbol of freedom and independence. So there could be no question of secularization. Paradoxically, it was only after the fall of communism in 1989, when the process of atheization subsided, that secularization began, which was not so much related to the new political system, but to trends of changes coming from Western Europe, such as: postmodernism, globalization, individualism, moral permissiveness. Thus, the process of secularization is not related to the Second Vatican Council, as to the socio-cultural changes.

<sup>25</sup> “Nadwiślanin” no. 10 (2 July 1990), p. 2.

saint of the main church of a given town was celebrated with many religious elements as processions, the cult of relics or other accompanied activities. Villamayor de Monjardin in Navarra, is an example of this which perfectly illustrates the changes that took place in the experience of feast days in the time era of interest to us. St. Andrew the Apostle was the patron saint of the Romanesque church, whose liturgical celebration falls on 30 November (in the Roman liturgical calendar), but has long been celebrated during the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (14 September) due to the obtained Cruz de Monjardin.<sup>26</sup> The combining of both feasts is a characteristic feature of religious celebration, connected to agricultural life, but also a reference to historical events and relations linked to the pueblo and the castle, which had consequences for religious life (San Martin Gil 2005; Caro Baroja 1971).

#### 4.1. *The Parish and the Organization of the Fiesta; the Cross of Monjardin as an Object of Worship; St. Andrew*

The village of Villamayor is both related to a castle on a nearby mountain—which dates back to the Roman times—and to the expansion of Musa ibn Quasi in the 9th century—which then remained a battle field between Muslims and the people of Navarra (Cañada 1976, p. 300). After being reclaimed by the king of Pamplona and Deyo Sancho Garcés I (905–925), it became a place of refuge—in troubled times—for the bishops of Pamplona, as well as a burial place of kings and bishops. Since 986, the fortress has been a donation to the cathedral of Santa Maria de Pamplona, which secured strong ties between this town and the capital of the diocese. Later it remained—especially the chapel san Esteban located in the fortress—under the care of the Irache Monastery in nearby Ayegui (Goñi Gaztambide 1979, p. 108).

The town is situated at the foot of the mountain and the fortress arose (it could be due to repopulation) at the end of the 12th century, thanks to king Sancho VII el Fuerte. The dynamic development of the way of St. James of the Camino de Santiago was a significant feature in the rise of the pueblo (Mróz 2019; Seryczyńska 2019; Mróz 2017), whereas the first references to hospitaleros who help pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela date back to 1350. It was then that the church was raised in honor of St. Andrew. It is a single-nave church, which, however, due to its size exceeds the surrounding churches from that same period. Among the existing cult objects, it is worth mentioning the 17th-century altar features scenes from the life of St. Andrew and two regional saints: St. Gregory Ostiense—known for the reliquary in the form of a head through which water was poured, flowing next to the relics—and St. Fermin, the patron saint of Pamplona. The famous sculpture of Santa Maria de Villamayor (Fernández 1989, p. 92) and a processional cross can be found in the temple. In the years 1973–84 restoration works were carried out to restore its original Romanesque character, and the altar was moved to the Church of San Salvador in Pamplona.

On the one hand, life on the border denoted strong cultural influences of the Muslim tradition, while on the other, it indicated a sensitivity and protection of what is Christian and determines identity (Roszak 2015). One of the material forms of this awareness is the Romanesque processional cross which dates back to the 10th century. It was made of oak and is covered with silver tiles, measuring 78 cm in height and 47 cm in width. It has the shape of a Latin cross—but topped in the form of a flower—with a handle to hold during the procession. There is a lamb in the back, and Christ himself is depicted in the moment of his greatest pain on the cross: yielding his spirit or breathing the Spirit on the believers with his mouth while hanging on the cross with his arms extended in an unnatural way. The arrangement of the legs and the robe situated from the waist to the knees (*perizonium*) suggests the approaching Gothic era. The crown is not of thorns, but royal with the inscription above: IHS: NAZARENO. REX IVDEORUM (San Martin Gil 2005, p. 176).

<sup>26</sup> It is similar in the neighborhood of Villamayor: St. Martin of Tours is the patron of the church in Ayegui, while St. Cyprian is the patron of the whole town, in whose honor a chapel was raised on Mount Montejurra. In Villatuerta, the parish is dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the feast days refer to the cult of St. Veremundo.



St. Andrew is the patron saint of this town, whose cult is widespread in the vicinity of Estella because of the history of a bishop from Patras in Greece who died in Estella—probably during his pilgrimage to Compostela—and the relics that were found with him. The Apostle Andrew is venerated on 30 November, but this feast has no rank similar to the patronal celebrations in September. *Hoguera de san Andres* takes place in November, with a bonfire being lit after holy mass in honor of the saint. The idea of transferring the celebration to other dates—for example from weekdays to Sundays or from one season to another—is known in the history of the Church and is related to the rhythm of the work of the inhabitants. Practically, in modern Spain, patron saints are not being celebrated *ipsa die*, but are being transferred to other dates conducive to relaxation (mainly holidays). Undoubtedly, the feasts themselves had, apart from a theological significance, a practical dimension as well: they were an opportunity for having a break from work, and a way of consolidating the local community (Huzarek 2018). In times, when holidays or vacations were not yet in place the moment for inviting close relatives and maintaining social relations seemed appropriate (Tykarski 2019; Pilarz 2020). This, in turn, triggered a chain of mutual visits, because the attendance at feasts in a given pueblo resulted in invitations by the visitors to feasts in their own towns. This, however, is one of the common characteristics of Polish and Spanish indulgences: the custom of “going” for indulgences was formed—that favored the development of the cult—in which the emerging transport facilities turned out to be helpful (Perszon 2020).

Before analyzing the parish feast itself, it is worth noting that the cult of saints in Villamayor was related to the already mentioned St. Gregory Ostiense, and involved visits to the reliquary once a year, the blessing of the field and *romeria* do Sorlada on 23 April. St. Anthony was yet another saint, venerated on 17 January, whose cult dates back to the Middle Ages and was linked to a blessing of animals (dogs, pigeons, horses, cows) just after Mass in the town square, and when the Mass ended a joint meal was served at the table (Jimeno Jurio 1988, p. 30). In the pueblo, processions are held on the occasion of Good Friday, but also on feast days of the Brotherhood of Nuestra Señora del Rosario, and also *rogativas*. Petitionary processions for crops or good weather—in which the faithful go to the chapel on Monjardin—are common too. However, the patronal feast day related to the Exaltation of the Holy Cross remains the key event.

#### 4.2. Forms of Popular Piety during Patronal Feasts

In the period of time that interests us, there have been significant changes in the experience of patronal feasts, but a certain basic pattern has remained present to this day. Their proceedings were focused on the triduum experience set on 13–15 September. It all began with vespers of the preceding day, that is the liturgical prayer—which in the case of great feasts was recited the day before—which in this way was becoming a signal for the beginning of the celebration. A solemn ringing of bells—among which the *repique* and *bandeo* were distinguished<sup>27</sup>—began vespers in Villamayor. Within the Christian tradition, this was a form of summoning the faithful to the liturgy. The parish priest greeted the representatives of the community (*Ayuntamiento*) at the threshold of the church, and after that the prayer began. The cross was at the center of the liturgy, placed on the altar, which the faithful honored with a kiss at the end. The culmination consisted of a solemn blessing, during which the hymn *Victoria, tu reinarás* was sung in honor of the Holy Cross. It was followed by a secular fiesta beginning with firing flares (*cohetes*), dinner and dancing.

The next day, 14 September, was marked by a festive procession with the cross, images of saints and the so-called *pendones*<sup>28</sup> to the chapel on the top of Mount Monjardin, where a solemn mass of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was celebrated (see Figure 3). After this, the community organized

<sup>27</sup> These were two different ways to ring the bell.

<sup>28</sup> The Spanish *pendón*—along banner hanging from a pole, generally finished in two ends, which is carried in processions as the insignia of a church, a brotherhood.



refreshments for the members of the brotherhood of Vera Cruz: bread and wine, and over time other dishes as well. Due to the overlapping of the brotherhood members with the inhabitants, this fraternity remained an active organizer.

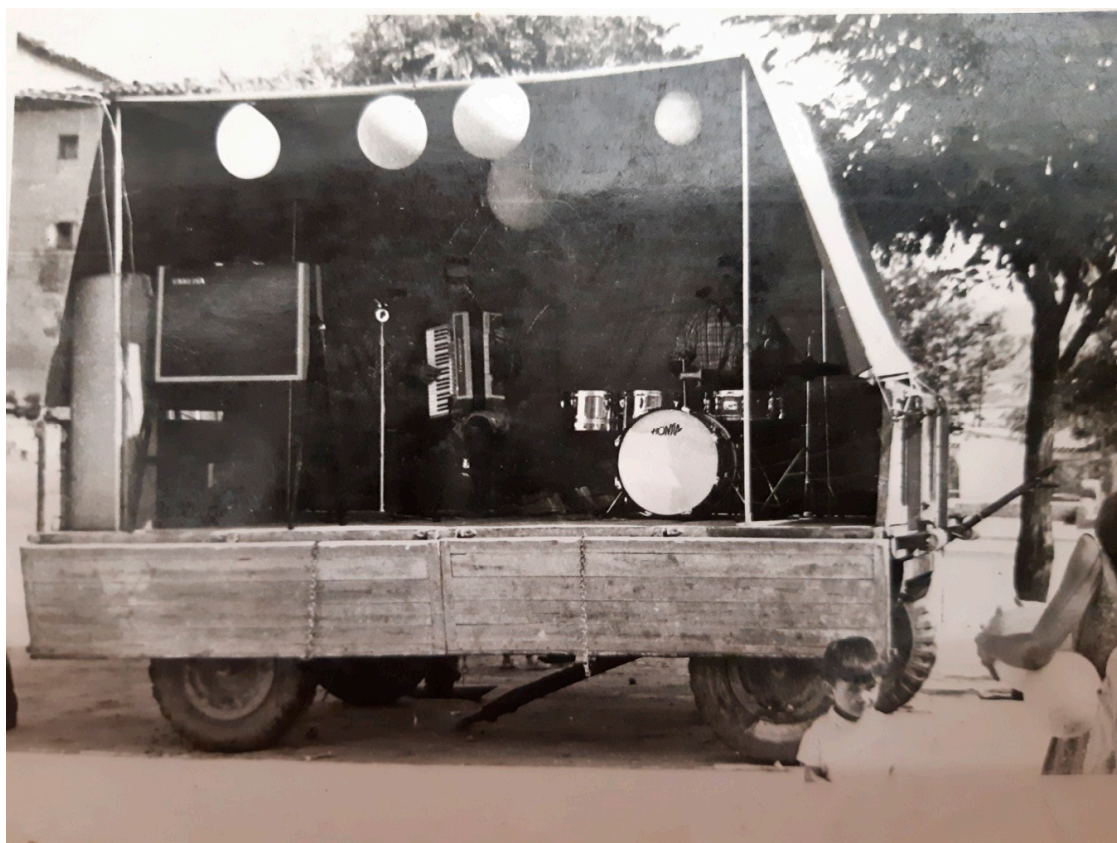


**Figure 3.** Procession to Monjardin in 1962. Source: Private Archive of Carmelo San Martín.

The third day, a Sunday, was dedicated to St. Andrew. On this day a solemn mass (*misa solemne*) was celebrated, followed by a procession (before 1948) through the streets of the pueblo. In small towns the central feast day was linked to the chanting of so-called *auroras*, hymns in honor of saints, sung at dawn by small local choirs.

As Carmelo San Martín Gil notes, there were three institutions that came together in the organization of the fiestas: the parish, the brotherhood and the municipal office, which shared the costs among themselves. These included the costs of specially invited preachers, refreshments, but also the musical ensemble that participated in both parts: church and ludic. Vespers and holy mass—mainly at the time of the consecration, but also when the doors of the church were opened and the national anthem was intoned—were accompanied by small orchestras, which also attended at the procession as well as after the celebration (see Figure 4).

Specially invited preachers usually belonging to esteemed religious orders—such as Dominicans and Capuchins—came to Villamayor from larger nearby towns such as Estella, Pamplona and Logrono. Their traditional role consisted in preaching and hearing confessions, while the costs of their travel and meals were covered by the event budget. The invitation to dinner at the house of mayor or the head of the brotherhood was a significant gesture for the preachers.



**Figure 4.** An orchestra adding splendor to the afternoons during feasts. It played on a trailer in which grain or other crops were transported. Source: Private Archive of Carmelo San Martín.

Contrary to Polish celebrations of patronal feasts, the Spanish constitute an organic unification of what is religious and community—wherein the fiesta becomes an experience of unity. From the theological point of view, joint religious celebration is not only an expression of gratitude to God for the saint and his patronage (Roszak 2018), but it strengthens bonds of people coming together around what is important to them. An expression of this is the peculiar Spanish way of dressing during the fiesta: a white shirt and *pañuelo* (scarf) in a color traditionally associated with the pueblo (red for Villamayor). This is a manifestation of unity, of not standing out from others, but a feeling of belonging to one community in which religious ties are the basis for other relationships.

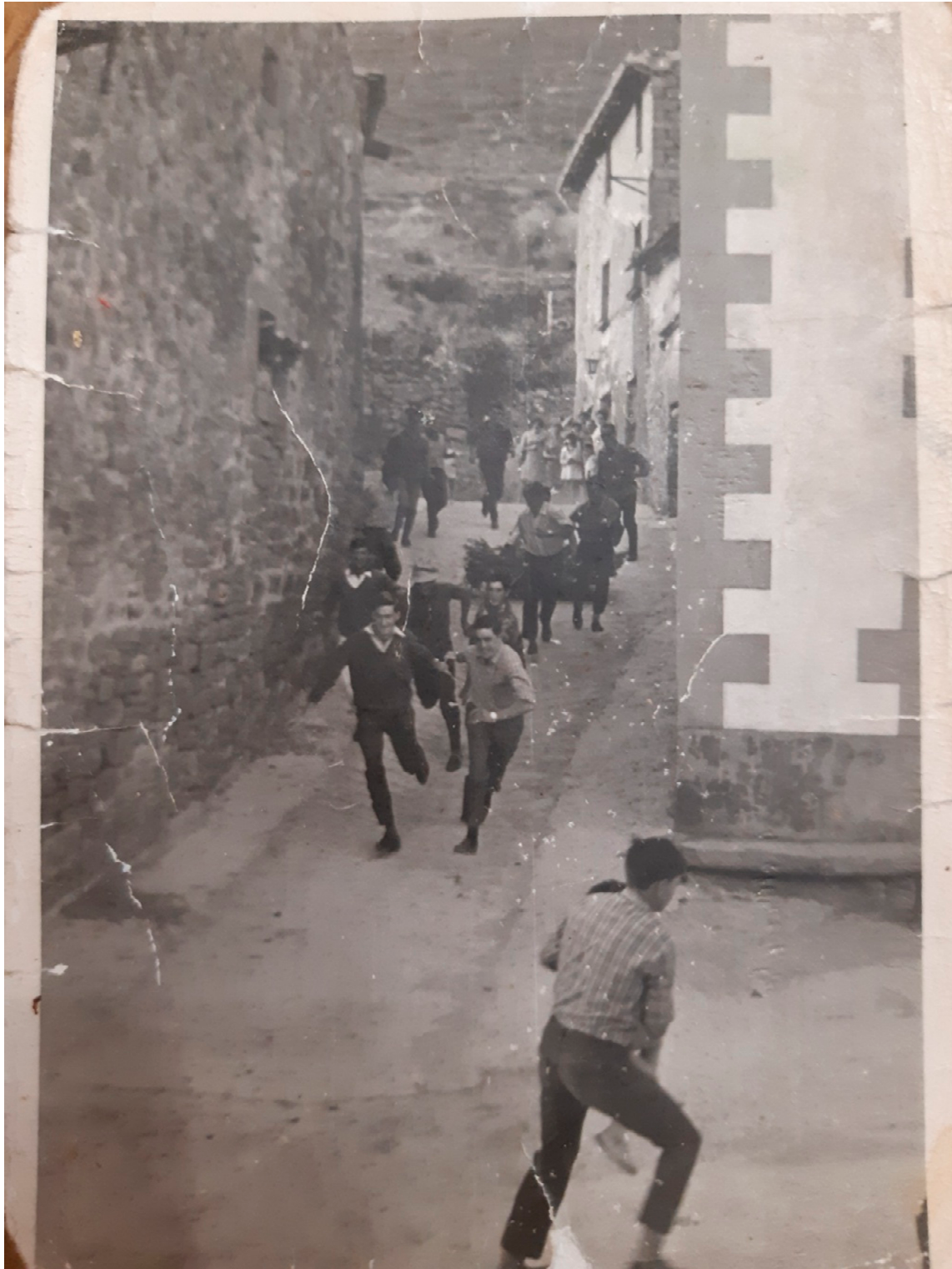
That is why the community (pueblo) always remains the organizer of the feast, whereas the distinction between the sacred and the profane is seen in the key of complementarity and not rupture (Roszak 2020). This attitude—as may be noted in the following part—changed after the Second Vatican Council, leading to the impression of two feasts: religious and secular. Nevertheless, although much depends on the political situation and the chosen composition of Ayuntamiento, the social foundation has not been broken and the feast days are still experienced in an integrated way, without the removal of any religious elements.

Common meals at one long table—set out in the central square—were an indication of this unity to which the liturgical celebration was aiming. Over time, even a menu of such meals, as *calderete* (mutton stew or rabbit with potatoes), lamb ribs, roast chicken, peas with rice, and many kinds of soups became established. At the end of the fiesta, *ajovarriero* (dried cod mixed with garlic, onions and peppers) was prepared for dinner. Wine, bread and *chorizo* were served after each liturgical celebration. In the evenings, the drink *zurrapote* (wine left for a few days together with peach, lemon and cinnamon) along with almonds was served.

In larger towns—pursuant to the possibilities of the pueblo—the feasts were complemented by bulls, including their running or fighting, as well as the release of young cows or bulls on the streets



(*corridas, encierros, suelta de vaquillas* or *novillos*). Near Villamayor, in the town of Los Arcos, the *balcón del clero* still remains until this day, from which the clergy and preachers invited to the feasts, watch the performances along with the entire community. Games and sports competitions were also arranged (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Simulated run in front of bulls. Source: Private Archive of Carmelo San Martín.

#### 4.3. Changes in the Forms of Celebration in 1948–98. Periodization

This model of experiencing patronal feasts has been shaped over the years, undergoing significant changes in its structure, range and forms of popular piety. Several periods can be distinguished in the time frame analyzed by us.

However, the most important thing is the reminder that Spain remained a religious state until 1978, hence patronal feasts overlapped with religious ones, and civil authorities participated in processions and acts of worship. When the agreement between the Church and State was signed (Díaz Moreno 1979), each of them—in maintaining their independence and within the framework of consensus principles—developed a new model of collaboration in ceremonies and demonstrations of popular religiosity.

The extent of time that is of interest to us can be divided into several periods. One of them concerns the years 1948–53, where there is practically no separation between Church and state. After this, the preparation for and experience of the Second Vatican Council (1953–1965) occurs. This opens up to a new period of experiencing religiosity and greater independence, but also a time for experiments and changes within liturgical rites. All these changes can be interpreted through the frame of “internal secularization” and many efforts of the Church to rationalize the popular piety (Isambert 1976). A unilateral interpretation of the council documents resulted in many cultural objects being withdrawn, hidden in the sacristy (like some figure of St. Mary or the Saints) or handed over to the museum (altar and paintings). This led to the suspension of many fraternities, and many of their traditional celebrations changed, such as vespers or the invitation of preachers. Similarly, musical bands (*gaiteros*) ceased to participate in the religious elements of these feasts. Today, many of these old customs have been regained, although not always for religious purposes, but rather cultural or even touristic. In case of Spain, it is true to say that faith has become cultural and the faithful are experiencing the forms of Christianity rather than explicitly professing belief in them. At the end of the 1960s, due to changes in the labor market—mainly the departure from the agrarian community and work taken up in nearby cities—the calendar became adapted to the weekends and the feast days were reduced to a certain minimum. This coincided with the liturgical renewal which restored the importance of Sunday as the central day of the week for Christians, because so far, feast days in honor of the saints celebrated during the week often nearly overshadowed Sunday.

The following decades (1965–79) brought new forms of celebrating patronal feasts, in which the revolution of 1968/69, tensions related to the infiltration of leftist groups into church organizations as well as the influence on patronal and religious feasts played an important role. During this time, a wide transformation of customs occurred, caused by many factors: industrialization and abandonment of agriculture, migrations from villages to cities—thus abandoning the traditional agrarian community—and changes in the way of working—which had a significant impact on the way patronal feasts were being experienced (Pérez Agote 2012).

The period, between 1979 and 98—after signing the agreements of Spain with the Holy See—is the time of adjustment to pluralism, derived from a kind of self-contradictory secularism: the community maintains popular piety joined by the authorities, having in mind the impact feast days have on tourism (Tanco 2003). The emergence of new entertainment opportunities among the inhabitants of small pueblos, linked to secularization often being associated with new atheism (Ramírez Téllez and Urrea 2020), has led to changes in the structure of feasts.

Thus, two periods in the celebration of feasts are clearly visible: 1948–68 and 1968–98, in which the perception of the cult of saints and its cultural significance are being changed. However, it does not disappear from the Villamayor calendar—although it is the evidence of the transition into a post-Christian community—but efforts to restore the authentic religious meaning of the cult of the saints as part of the fiesta can be observed (Oviedo 2019).

## 5. Conclusions

Despite the fact that Chełmno and Villamayor are towns with different populations and cultural traditions, they exhibit many common characteristics for popular piety, as evidenced by the feasts in honor of the patron saints of these towns. The cult of saints was centered around the relics (Villamayor) or the venerated image (Chełmno), and was permeated with hymns and prayers adapted from other regions. Both ways of experiencing feasts combine the attending to neighboring towns in order to obtain an indulgence, the proliferation of social forms of integration of the participants in patronal feasts, and a combination of elements associated with cult and entertainment. They provide an opportunity for brotherhoods and organizations—responsible for particular manifestations of piety—to show themselves in the social structure. In addition, they are an occasion not only for strengthening faith, but also building social bonds and uniting parishes through common celebrations and relaxation.

In the 20th century, both ways of experiencing patronal feasts were subject to fluctuations due to cultural factors: in Poland—the dominance of communism, which narrowed the possibilities of manifesting the cult in public spaces, whereas in Spain—secularism and the growing offer of other forms of social interaction, as well as changes in the structure of Spanish society and increasing industrialization (Horvat 2017; Delicata 2018).

When comparing the folk celebration of religious events in Villamayor and Chełmno, several differences can be noticed. In the first case, experiencing the indulgence had a broader scope and went beyond the “walls of the church,” covering with its range more ludic forms such as a joint meal at the table or the blessing of animals. The celebration of the Chełmno indulgence, on the other hand, takes on a more sacral and pompous character focused primarily on the transcendent and supernatural dimensions. Consequently, the forms of celebration such as feasting, games and dances which could be perceived as inappropriate or an insult to religious worship are unknown.

Hence, it is possible to see the boundary between the sacred and the secular which are, in a way, two separate parts of a single event that is the parish indulgence. For that reason, the participation of the secular authorities in the preparation of the indulgence is limited more to the role of the participant in the event than its organiser. It was only with the passage of time, when the decision of joining the celebration of the “Town Days” with the indulgence was taken, that local authorities were able to show their commitment. As in the case of Villamayor, the matter concerning shared costs and close cooperation in the organization of the event is unknown. The indulgence could be a chance for the parish to raise funds needed for maintaining the sanctuary. This was the situation in the 1920s, when funds were collected for the renovation of the parish church.

It is similar with the involvement of the brotherhoods. In the case of Chełmno, there was no special fraternity involved in the preparation of the indulgence celebrations. Naturally, there were religious groups which held designated prayers or vigils, but these were limited to the religious form. The parish priest and the clergy were primarily responsible for the schedule of the ceremony. It can be assumed that there were people who were particularly involved in the preparation of the indulgence. Among them, it is worth mentioning a father and son: Anastazy and Jerzy Kałdowski, who composed music and lyrics to hymns especially intended for the Chełmno indulgence with the aim of promoting the cult of the miraculous image.

Despite the differences, both ways of experiencing popular piety inspired by the cult of patron saints were—in addition to expressing gratitude to God for His grace—a systematic reminder of what is most important in the life of communities—which is the nucleus that connects the community of a given town.

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## Abbreviations

CCC	<a href="#">Catechism of the Catholic Church</a> (1992). Promulgated by John Paul II, October 11.
	<a href="#">Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments</a> (2002). <i>Directory on</i>
DPPL	<i>Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines</i> . London: Catholic Truth Society Publications.
	<a href="#">Pope Paul</a> (1975). Apostolic Exhortation <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> . On Evangelization in the
EN	Modern World. December 8.
	<a href="#">Second Vatican Council</a> (1963). <i>Sacrosanctum Concilium: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy</i> .
SC	December 4.

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