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Youth pilgrimages along pilgrimage routes in Europe

Amongst hundreds of speeches of Saint John Paul II to young people, his most permanently remembered words were uttered on 3 June 1997 on Adam Mickiewicz Square in Poznań: “Be in this world bearers of Christian faith and hope by living love every day. Be faithful witnesses of the Risen Christ, never turn back before the obstacles that present themselves on the paths of your lives. I am counting on you. On your youthful energy and your dedication to Christ.”¹ This youthful enthusiasm and faithfulness to Jesus is clearly visible when we look at thousands of young people who go on a pilgrimage along the pilgrim routes in Europe. Probably for many it seems startling that going on a pilgrimage has become a popular phenomenon in the contemporary world, in which each day the processes of secularisation of the public life and societies builds up, in the world where the feeling of abandonment, loss and emptiness

1 Apostolic Journey of His Holiness John Paul II to Poland (May 31 – June 10, 1997), Youth Meeting, Homily of John Paul II, Poznań, 3.06.1997, 5, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1997/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19970603_giovani-poznan.html (07.07.2016).

escalates. This phenomenon is even more difficult to explain when we look at the percentage of the young abandoning their faith and declaring themselves to be non-believers, which increases every year.

It is possible to estimate the percentage share of young people in organised pilgrimages to the largest Christian pilgrimage centres at least at 25–30%. It is hard to explain explicitly this phenomenon. The crucial factors affecting the popularity of pilgrimages amongst young people comprise: a desire to experience retreats on the way, making the balance of the current life, discovering and getting to know oneself. For many, the pilgrimage is an important practice of communication and social interaction.²

1. Renaissance of pedestrian pilgrimages along medieval pilgrimage routes

St. John Paul II, during the first apostolic trip to Spain on 9 November 1982, visited one of the most famous pilgrimage centres operating since the Middle Ages – Santiago de Compostela. At the tomb of St. James the Apostle, the Polish pope gave a speech called “the European Chart,” which is considered to be one of the most important documents of his pontificate.³ The Holy Father reminded the whole world of the importance of both the Sanctuary of St. James and the pilgrimage routes leading to Santiago de Compostela: “This place, so dear to piety of the province of Galicia and all Spaniards, has become, over the centuries, a point of attraction for Europe and for the whole of Christianity. [...] I am looking at this moment at the entire European continent, this vast network of transport roads that connect its constituent cities and nations; I can see those roads that, since the Middle Ages, have led countless pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela [...], attracted by the devotion to the Apostle James. [...] Here they came – from France, from Italy, from Central

2 Cf. F. Mróz, Ł., Mróz, *Nowe trendy w turystyce*, in: R. Pawlusiński, *Współczesne uwarunkowania i problemy rozwoju turystyki*, Kraków 2013, p. 113.

3 A. Jackowski, F. Mróz, *Wstęp*, in: “Akt Europejski” *bt. Jana Pawła II, a renesans Drogi św. Jakuba w Europie*, red. A. Jackowski, F. Mróz, Kraków 2012, pp. 17–18.

Europe, from the Nordic countries and from the Slavic nations, Christians of all states, from kings to the humblest villagers, Christians of all spiritual levels.” Currently, researchers dealing with issues associated with pilgrimages and religious tourism in the world agree that the words spoken by John Paul II in Santiago de Compostela in 1982 have become the basis for the process of the renaissance of medieval pilgrimage routes, and also contributed to a number of new pilgrimage routes in Europe. In October 1987, the way of pilgrims to Compostela was declared the first European Cultural Route by the Council of Europe. Six years later the Way of St. James in Spain was registered by UNESCO in the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of Humanity. In 1998 the entry was extended by the section of the trail in France. In July 2015, UNESCO extended the network of *camino* routes, inscribed into the World Heritage List, up to four routes in Spain: *Camino Primitivo* (starting in Oviedo), *Camino Costero* or the Way of the Coast (936 km) *Camino interior del País Vasco y La Rioja* (the trail starting in La Rioja and leading across the Basque Country) and the *Camino de Liébana* – in total more than 1, 500 km of the Way of St. James.⁴

Currently, *El Camino de Santiago* – the Way of St. James – is the most famous Christian pilgrimage route in the world. The trail, since the end of the 90s of the twentieth century has been experiencing a tremendous growth and is called, among others, Europe’s main route, the most beautiful road of the world and the way of life and transformation. In 2015 the Office of Pilgrims at the Archbishopric of Santiago de Compostela (Oficina de Acogida al Peregrino) registered 262,516 Camino pilgrims who received a “Compostela,” (a document confirming the completion of pilgrimage to the tomb of St. James – walking on foot the last 100 km of *El Camino de Santiago* or riding those 100 km on horseback or 200 km by bike).⁵

Based on the data from the Pilgrimage Office at Santiago de Compostela, we can conclude that since the late 80s till the end of the 90s of the twentieth century, the structure of pilgrims (who received the above-

4 [www.whc.unesco.org/en/list/669/\(25.05.2016\)](http://www.whc.unesco.org/en/list/669/(25.05.2016)).

5 www.oficinadelperegrino.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/peregrinaciones2015.pdf (26.05.2016).

-mentioned “Compostela”) was clearly dominated by young people, aged up to 30. The share of this age group accounted in this period for ca. 48% to 63% of the total Camino pilgrims. It should be noted, however, that since 1989 the proportion of young people gradually decreases every year, for example, in 1989 it was 63.2%, in 1995 – 58.2% and in 1999 – 52.1%⁶. In 1989 Pope John Paul II arrived in Santiago de Compostela for the second time to meet 400 thousand young people taking part in the fourth World Youth Day (August 15–20). The world youth meeting at the tomb of St. James the Apostle – as pointed out by the Metropolitan Santiago de Compostela, Archbishop Julian Barrio Barrio – left an indelible mark on the history of pilgrimages to Compostela and caused an increase in the “interest in St. James’ pilgrimages, seen as a spiritual experience for many people and many institutions of the Church.”⁷

Since the year 2000 the age structure of pilgrims to the Tomb of St. James has begun to be dominated by people aged 30–60, the exception was the year 2004 (celebrated in Santiago de Compostela as the Holy Year of St. James),⁸ when all registered pilgrims were dominated by young people, aged up to 30 – 54.8%⁹. In 2010–2015, the share of young people (under 30) walking to the Tomb of St. James averaged 28.5%. Since 2009 the percentage of Camino pilgrims over the age of 60 has been significantly rising (in 2009 it amounted to 5.4%, in 2015 – 16.6%).

The popularity of pilgrimages along the *Way of St. James* among young people is affected by many factors – a trail rank, an individual character of pilgrimage and a promotion of the way. As mentioned above, *Camino de Santiago* is currently the most recognised pilgrimage and cultural trail in the world, crossed each year by the residents of more than 160 countries

⁶ www.archicompostela.org/Peregrinos/Estadisticas/peregestageneral.htm (26.05.2016).

⁷ J. Barrio Barrio, *Europa widziana z Santiago*, in: “Akt Europejski” bł. Jana Pawła II..., pp. 14–15.

⁸ The Holy Year of St. James (*Ano Santo Jacobeo*) is proclaimed in Santiago de Compostela when liturgical commemoration of St. James (25 July) falls on Sunday. The faithful who visit the tomb in the Holy Year of St. James can get a jubilee indulgence. The Holy Year is celebrated every 5th, 6th and 11th year. The last one (119) was celebrated in 2010 and the next one will happen in 2021.

⁹ <https://oficinadelperegrino.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/peregrinaciones2004.pdf> (26.05.2016).

of the world. “Here is the whole world and peace. People can count on each other,” a pilgrim from Brazil points out.¹⁰ Thousands of people returning from Santiago de Compostela are leaving memories on social networks or on pages of diaries, and stress that the *Camino* teaches humility and patience and that you return a better person from the route and in Santiago “an old man dies and a new one is born.” Almost everyone who made the pilgrimage along the route of St. James’ shell certifies that on their way back home from Santiago they were planning another *camino*. It is not surprising that tens of thousands of Camino pilgrims migrated to the Tomb of the Apostle James many times via various sections of the *Camino de Santiago*.

What is extremely valuable for young people on the trail are friendships established with wandering companions. Cultural and religious differences as well as a language barrier do not matter. Many weeks of walking, cycling or horseriding allow for rethinking the past life. It is worth noting that each year the number of pilgrims who begin the pilgrimage from the threshold of their own home, wandering sometimes even several thousand kilometres, is growing. In the years 2005–2015 Santiago de Compostela offices registered a total of 251 Poles who came to Compostela from Poland. Among this group, a significant part constituted young people, mainly students who, having longer holidays, decided on such an expedition.

It is worth pointing out that on the Spanish sections of *Camino de Santiago* there are several-day-long pilgrimages of young people preparing for the sacrament of confirmation. They are always run under the care of a priest, and their program includes the daily Eucharist, Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, conferences, testimonies and shared meals. In Poland, the pilgrimages on the Way of St. James have been organized for several years by, among others, members of the Light-Life Movement, altar boys, seminarians, scouts and students. The network of the Ways of St. James – the length of which in our country is more than 6,000 km – also provides space for prayer and retreat for young people who are preparing for World Youth Day. A number of this type pilgrim’s initiatives could

10 www.deon.pl/religia/pielgrzym-pielgrzymka/art,54,wszystkie-drogi-prowadza-do-santiago.html (25.05.2016).

be seen on the Polish sections of *the Camino de Santiago* before World Youth Day in Madrid in 2011 and Rio de Janeiro in 2013, as well as in recent months in anticipation of the meeting in Kraków (26–31 July 2016.) It is hoped that the pilgrimage will leave an indelible mark in the lives of young people.

What should also be mentioned here is the idea of the so-called *academic pilgrimage* along the Way of St. James in the framework of the Academic Accreditation of Saint James. This is an important link between student youth and academic staff of universities with the idea of pilgrimage – hiking the trails of St. James. The project called *Campus Stellae* has been developed since 2002 thanks to the Association of Navarra University Graduates (Asociación ALUMNI – Universidad de Navarra) that collaborates with other Spanish universities situated along the French Way. The main objective of the project is to promote *Camino de Santiago* among the international university community.¹¹

It is necessary, however, to draw attention to other extremely important aspects related to the operation of the Way of St. James in Spain, which have been very clearly visible in recent years. These are: the commercialization of the route, promoting it only as a tourist product, and especially the abandonment of the pilgrimage character of the trail.¹² A particular threat to young people on the *Camino de Santiago* are active followers of other religions and ideologies, which is perfectly noticed and evaluated by A. Jaworska: “The old way of pilgrims becomes space in which the concept of pilgrimage is slowly undergoing a redefinition under the influence of the expansion of the ideology of the New Age and writers connected with it. [...]. Originally Catholic nature of the trail gives way to a syncretic ideology that seeks to redefine its Christian form and roots.”¹³

The development of the pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela gave impetus to priests, local communities and the authorities of each region for the revival of other forgotten medieval pilgrimage routes. One of them is the *Via Francigena* – the road which centuries ago led

¹¹ www.campus-stellae.org/polski/default.html (11.05.2016).

¹² A. Jaworska, *Camino de Santiago – tradycja i współczesność*, Kraków 2015, pp. 100–101.

¹³ www.culture-routes.net/sites/default/files/EICR_29-factsheet_eng-fr.pdf (27.05.2016).

pilgrims from Canterbury in England via Dover, Arras, Reims, Lausanne, Pontarlier, the Great St. Bernard Pass, Pavia, Siena to the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome.¹⁴ In 1994 this trail was included into the list of the European Cultural Routes and qualified to the group of the Great Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.¹⁵

According to estimates by the European Association of *the Via Francigena* (Associazione Europea delle Vie Francigene), in 2013 it was followed by at least 10 thousand people, mainly from Italy (80%), and Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Spain, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, the United States and Great Britain. In this group, 60% of people completed the pilgrimage, and 3% went over the whole trail of 1,800 kilometres. Contrary to the pilgrimage along the Way of St. James, *Via Francigena* in recent years has recorded an increase in the share of young people (under 30 years) in the total number of all pilgrims.¹⁶

In the current year of 2016, which marks the 1,700 anniversary of the birth of St. Martin, there will probably be an increase in the popularity of pilgrimages and walks along the Way of St. Martin of Tours (*Via Sancti Martini*). This route connects ten European cities related to the life of Saint Martin. It is also the European Cultural Route.

For several years, young people have been also enjoying pilgrimage and hiking along the Way of St. Olaf in Norway, Denmark and Sweden. This pilgrimage route, which in the Middle Ages matched the rank of pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela, Rome and the Holy Land. In 1997 the old pilgrimage route between Oslo and Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, with the tomb of St. Olaf, was reopened. In May 2010 the Council of Europe officially awarded the title of European Cultural Route to it as an example of the cultural heritage of Europe.

14 Cf. K. Orzechowska-Kowalska, *Europejski Szlak Kulturowy Rady Europy – Via Francigena*, in: *Droga św. Jakuba w Polsce – historia, terażniejszość i przyszłość. W 10. rocznicę otwarcia pierwszego polskiego odcinka Camino de Santiago*, red. P. Roszak, F. Mróz, Kraków 2014, p. 585.

15 www.culture-routes.net/sites/default/files/EICR_29-factsheet_eng-fr.pdf (27.05.2016).

16 www.viefrancigene.org/it/resource/news/la-francigena-tra-dialogo-interculturale-conoscenz (27.05.2016).

In the last two decades, in many parts of Europe the emergence of new pilgrimage routes and the revival of old routes can also be observed, which concerns and affects a given country or a region. These pilgrimage trails are associated with saints living in the Middle Ages, and there are also pilgrimage routes which follow in the footsteps of saints – canonized and beatified during the pontificate of St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and the current Pope Francis. This type of a route in Italy includes, among others, the Trail of Saint Father Pio, the Trail of Gianna Beretta Molla as well as *Sentieri Francescani* (Franciscan Ways) and *Cammino di Sant'Antonio*.¹⁷

No doubt, the popularity of the latter routes among young people in the last three years has been caused by the “Francis effect” – a clear development of pilgrimage and religious tourism in Italy, initiated by the pontificate of Pope Francis. The famous pilgrimage route along the Italian peninsula is *Via Micealica*, also called *Via dell'Angelo* (Angel Road) leading to the Shrine of St. Michael the Archangel on the Gargano Peninsula. The trail was followed by pilgrims coming from the south of Italy and some countries of the Mediterranean region to Rome and those participating in pilgrimages to Jerusalem. *Via Micealica* in conjunction with the *Via Francigena* is a route that can be travelled along, traversing Europe from the Shrine of St. Michael on the Gargano Peninsula to the French Shrine of St. Michael in Mont Saint-Michel in south-west Normandy.

In Spain, in addition to the already mentioned Way of St. James, there is the Ignatian Route – very popular among pilgrims, especially the young gathered around the pastoral care of the Jesuits. The 700 km long route, which leads along the way travelled by St. Ignatius Loyola in 1522 after his decision to change the way of life, commences in *Santuario de Loyola* (in the Basque Country) and finished in Manresa (in the region of Catalonia).

17 P. Mróz, F. Mróz, Ł. Mróz, *Renesans Drogi św. Jakuba w Europie na przykładzie wybranych państw: Czech, Niemiec, Polski i Włoch*, in: “Akt Europejski” bł. Jana Pawła II..., pp. 149–152.

The Ignatian Route was very popular in the seventeenth century. It has been renovated and adapted in terms of pilgrimage infrastructure in recent years. The rank of the trail grew when in 2015 Pope Francis gave a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions to pilgrims who undertake “retreats on the way” divided into 27 episodes and including pilgrimaging along this way and visiting shrines in Loyola and Manresa during the first Jubilee Year of the Ignatian Route.¹⁸

In Poland, in turn, there are still very popular Papal Trails that now comprise a network of hiking (mainly in the mountains), cycling and canoeing trails in many regions of Poland, following the tourist trips of Fr. Karol Wojtyła – St. John Paul II.¹⁹ Youth pilgrimage also along recently marked trails of, among others, St. Sister Faustina Kowalska, “The Martyr Way of Blessed Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko,” “Route of the Holy Mountains” (Chełmska Mountain – Holy Polanowska Mountain), a pedestrian hiking trail of St. Adalbert from Elbląg to the Shrine of St. Adalbertus in Święty Gaj, “the Kraków Route of Saints,” “the Trail of Saints and Blesseds of Tarnów Diocese,” “the Route of St. Stanisław Kostka in Rostkowo,” and “In the footsteps of Blessed Karolina Kózkówna in Zabawa.”²⁰

The development of the automotive industry and improvement of transport accessibility in the last two decades has not led to the disappearance of pedestrian pilgrimage. In the case of shrines of the local and regional rank, it is often much smaller than in previous periods. However, as far as the international centres of pilgrimage are concerned, they enjoy unflagging popularity of pedestrian pilgrimages. This applies both to the already mentioned centres located on the medieval routes of pilgrimages (Santiago de Compostela, Rome, Oslo), as well as to shrines, whose popularity stems from the century-old tradition of pilgrimages (Jasna Góra, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Assisi, Padua), or to those whose messages have a timeless and special character (Fatima, Lourdes, La Salette, Kraków-Łagiewniki).

¹⁸ Cf. www.szlakipapieskie.pl/szlaki_papieskie.html (29.05.2016).

¹⁹ Cf. www.szlakipapieskie.pl/szlaki_papieskie.html [obtained on 29.05.2016].

²⁰ Cf. F. Mróz, *Szlaki pielgrzymkowe w krajobrazie sakralnym Polski*, in: *Krajobraz sakralny*, red. M. Ostrowski, J. Partyka, Kraków-Lwów 2014, pp. 112–116.

Polish pedestrian pilgrimages to Jasna Góra is a unique phenomenon in the world. In recent years, the miraculous image of Our Lady of Częstochowa has been worshipped by over 120,000 pilgrims (in 2015, 122,000 people participated in 267 walking pilgrimages²¹). The participation of young people in pedestrian pilgrim groups represent more than 50% of all pilgrims. For example, in the Jubilee 30th Kaszuby Pilgrimage from Hel and Swarzewo to Jasna Góra, and then to the National Marian Shrine of Slovaks in Levoča, the share of young people aged up to 30 was 56% while the largest group of pilgrims was aged 19–25 (26%).²²

Secondary school leavers' pilgrimages belong to the second, after the parish pilgrimages, largest group of organised domestic pilgrimages registered in the Shrine of Jasna Góra. In recent years more than 700 groups of school leavers, i.e. over 130,000 young people, on average, preparing for the school leaving examination, set off on a pilgrimage to Jasna Góra. Although in the last decade, the number of school leavers who come to the Throne of Our Lady of Częstochowa has been declining every year (see: Table 1) (in 2015 it was a record low number of 536 groups comprising 113,600 people²³), the share of school leaver pilgrims to Jasna Góra in the total number of school leavers has remained at a constant level and equals (except for 2015) about 45% (Table 1). The current state of quantitative and demographic structure of pilgrimages to Jasna Góra is shaped mainly by the already mentioned demographic and socio-economic changes that has taken place in our country, at least, in the last 20 years.

Table 1. Organised school leaver pilgrimages to Jasna Góra in 2001–2015

| Year | Number of groups | Number of participants | The share of school leavers participating in organised pilgrimages to Jasna Góra in the total number of school leavers [%] |
|------|------------------|------------------------|--|
| 2001 | 800 | 125 000 | No data |
| 2002 | 1001 | 196 013 | No data |
| 2003 | 993 | 203 123 | No data |

²¹ www.jasnagora.com/wydarzenie-9854 (27.05.2016).

²² www.1040.pl/p/sponsorzy.html (28.05.2016).

²³ www.1040.pl/p/sponsorzy.html (28.05.2016).

| Year | Number of groups | Number of participants | The share of school leavers participating in organised pilgrimages to Jasna Góra in the total number of school leavers [%] |
|------|------------------|------------------------|--|
| 2004 | 985 | 218 286 | No data |
| 2005 | 940 | 212 298 | 68.7 |
| 2006 | 891 | 184 031 | 4.3 |
| 2007 | 926 | 203 933 | 45.7 |
| 2008 | 909 | 199 204 | 46.7 |
| 2009 | 802 | 184 529 | 50.3 |
| 2010 | 735 | 139 763 | 39.4 |
| 2011 | 849 | 167 152 | 48.8 |
| 2012 | 845 | 164 826 | 48.1 |
| 2013 | 713 | 141 215 | 43.2 |
| 2014 | 780 | 135 000 | 45.9 |
| 2015 | 536 | 113 600 | 36.6 |

Source: own study based on data from the Jasna Góra Information Centre and available at www.men.gov.pl

In the sanctuary of the Passion of Christ and Our Lady of Calvary in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska in recent years there has also been a record growth in the number of organized groups of children and young people. In 2013 and 2014, respectively, the Shrine of Kalwaria was visited by more than 460 youth groups and more than 800 groups of children (Table 2).²⁴

Table 2. Organized pilgrimages to the Shrine of Our Lady of Calvary and Christ Passion in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska in 2001–2015

| Year | Number of children groups | Number of youth groups | Number of adult groups |
|------|---------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 2008 | 556 | 523 | 1034 |

²⁴ My sincere thanks go to Fr. Antoni Kluska OFM for making pilgrimage books available and providing valuable information connected with pilgrimages to and the tourist traffic in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska.

| Year | Number of children groups | Number of youth groups | Number of adult groups |
|------|---------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 2009 | 424 | 323 | 1495 |
| 2010 | 338 | 302 | 1482 |
| 2011 | 880 | 385 | 2402 |
| 2012 | 470 | 267 | 2072 |
| 2013 | 826 | 463 | 2622 |
| 2014 | 1031 | 460 | 2839 |

Source: own study based on data provided by Fr. Antoni Kluska OFM

It should be emphasized that the current quantitative status and the demographic composition of pilgrimages in Europe is significantly affected by a number of socio-economic, demographic, cultural, religious and political processes taking place in particular countries in the last two decades.

3. New trends in youth pilgrimages

New trends in tourism and religious pilgrimage in recent years include, among others, the multiplicity of forms of running such expeditions. Special creativity in this area is characterised decidedly by young people, who not only seek spiritual experience but are also focused on emotions, rivalry and fun. No wonder there are so many new ideas for pilgrimage, for example, you can go by boat, on roller skis, scooters, and even paragliding.

A very popular way of worship among young people is pilgrimage on bicycles and motorcycles. The share of pilgrims utilizing this type of transport is increasing every year. As an example may serve a number of pilgrims registered at the Shrine of Jasna Góra who arrived there on bikes. In 2001 it was 1,000 people (32 groups), in 2010 – 3,116 people and in 2015 – already 6, 555 people (123 groups).²⁵

²⁵ www.jasnagora.com/wydarzenie-9071 (28.05.2016).

A new form of pilgrimage – considered to be the only one in the world – has been organized since 2003 – it is a roller skate pilgrimage from Warsaw to Jasna Góra. In the pilgrimage participate about 100 people, mostly young people. On the other hand, in June 2013 UKK RAWA Siedlce sportsmen organized The First Roller Ski Pilgrimage, as a thank to Our Lady for her care and a successful ski season. Within four days the pilgrims covered 380 km from Siedlce to the Throne of the Black Madonna in Częstochowa.²⁶

More and more frequently the pilgrim routes in Poland witness competition and prayer among the runners. The number of events combining sports and religion is growing rapidly year by year, for example, in 2001 Jasna Góra was visited by 7 cross-country running pilgrimages with 150 runners, and in 2014 there were already 15 groups with 427 people.²⁷

The Polish pilgrimage space is gradually marked by skiing and canoeing pilgrimages, organised on the Polish sections of the Way of St. James. The Ski Pilgrimage along the Beskidy Way of James has been organised since 2011 by the Brotherhood of St. James in Szczyrk, and the Canoe Pilgrimage along the Nysa River Way of St. James – by St. Peter and Paul Parish in Nysa.

Popular horse pilgrimages in Spain (*Camino Caballo*²⁸) are organised in other parts of Europe, including Poland, among others on the trail of the Malopolska Way of St. James in parishes in Kotuszów and Więclawice Stare. Horseback riding pilgrims come every year, among others, to the shrines in Jasna Góra and Kalwaria Zebrzydowska and from the Sanctuary of St. Hedwig of Silesia to the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Licheń.

On 20 June 2015, in preparation for World Youth Day, the Diocese of Katowice witnessed (according to the organizers – the only one in the world) a pilgrimage on scooters and roller skates from Katowice to Piekary Śląskie. By the end of May 2016 they organized three editions of

26 Cf. www.ekai.pl/wydarzenia/temat_dnia/x68905/rozkrecic-wiare-lato-pielgrzymow; www.ekai.pl/diecezje/x68003/pierwsza-pielgrzymka-nartorolkowa-dotarla-na-jasnagore/ (28.05.2016).

27 www.jasnagora.com (28.05.2016).

28 Cf. F. Mróz, Ł. Mróz, *Nowe trendy w turystyce...*, p. 117.

the pilgrimage (the second edition from Katowice to Tychy).²⁹ In its third edition from Katowice to the shrine of St. Valentine in Stary Bieruń over 240 people took part, among them Renata Respondek, who recounts: “It was the craziest pilgrimage in which I have participated (contrary to what you may think, I have walked a couple of them in my life) and that was the first one that aroused such a great interest among people I told about it, as well as of the media and residents of nearby villages. Anyway, I think it had to be that way, since its purpose was the Sanctuary of St. Valentine – the patron saint of all those in love and barmy.”³⁰

4. Conclusions

The conducted research leads to the conclusions that the beginning of the twenty-first century is a period of the renaissance of pilgrimage and hiking trails in Europe. On the trails, young people constitute a significant group. The increasing growth of the secularization processes in the world does not affect the popularity of religious travelling. Is the phenomenon of youth pilgrimage going to survive in the coming decades full of demographic, cultural and socio-economic challenges? However, the current demographic situation in developed countries, particularly the increasing proportion of older people living in society, as well as the rapidly growing number of young people departing from faith and a lack of stable geopolitical situation will be important factors contributing to a decline of pilgrimages among the young. A distortion of their meaning and treating them exclusively as routes of active tourism and culture is also a threat. It must be emphasized that pilgrimage routes will attract a new crowd of young pilgrims only if they remain the ways of faith, prayer, conversion and Christian love.

29 www.mlodziamlodych.pl/iii-edycja-pielgrzymki-na-hulajnogach-i-rolkach/ (27.05.2016).

30 www.mlodziamlodych.pl/najbardziej-szalona-pielgrzymka-na-swiecie/ (27.05.2016).

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