

The Truth about the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Sermons by Dominican Friar Peregrine of Opole against the Background of Selected Mediaeval Heritage of Polish Preaching¹

Prawda o Niepokalanym Poczęciu NMP w kazaniach
dominikanina Peregryna z Opola na tle wybranych
średniowiecznych zabytków kaznodziejstwa polskiego

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Abstract: This article examines the evolving position of Polish mediaeval Dominicans on the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary by tracing the gradual shift from opposing to supporting views within Polish theology and Marian devotion. It explores selected mediaeval Polish preaching heritage to illustrate this transition. Initially, the article discusses the 14th-century sermons by the Dominican friar Peregrine of Opole, who staunchly upheld opposing beliefs on the Immaculate Conception. It then moves to the 15th-century sermons by Piotr of Miłosław, which reflect a gradual shift in Polish theology and worship from the conception and purification of Mary in the womb of Saint Anne to an acceptance of the Immaculate Conception. Finally, it presents sermons by the 16th-century preacher Jan of Szamotuły (Paterek), a prominent advocate for the Immaculate Conception. The findings confirm that while the opposing stance, prevalent among mediaeval Dominicans such as Peregrine of Opole and influenced by Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas

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Aquinas, remained significant, it increasingly yielded to the Immaculate Conception supporting perspectives of the Franciscan School.

Keywords: Immaculate Conception, mediaeval Dominicans, Peregrine of Opole

Abstrakt: Artykuł przedstawia stanowisko polskich średniowiecznych dominikanów i średniowiecznych dominikanów polskich wobec Niepokalanego Poczęcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny. Czyli to, śledząc drogę stopniowego przechodzenia z pozycji makulistycznych do immakulistycznych w polskiej teologii oraz pobożności maryjnej na podstawie wybranych średniowiecznych zabytków kaznodziejstwa polskiego. Po przedstawieniu głównych rysów tego procesu omawia najpierw XIV-wieczne kazania dominikanina Peregryna z Opola, który jednoznacznie wyraża przekonania makulistyczne. Następnie przywołuje XV-wieczne kazania Piotra z Miłostawia, które są świadectwem stopniowego przechodzenia w polskiej teologii oraz kulcie od tajemnicy poczęcia Maryi i Jej oczyszczenia w łonie św. Anny do Niepokalanego Poczęcia Matki Bożej. Na końcu reprezentuje kazania XVI-wiecznego Jana z Szamotuł (Paterek), który jest już wielkim czcicielem Niepokalanego Poczęcia. Przedstawione wyniki badań poświadczają, że obecne u Peregryna z Opola i charakterystyczne dla średniowiecznych dominikanów mieszkających na terenach Polski, pod wpływem teologii oraz autorytetu Bernarda z Clairvaux i Tomasza z Akwinu, stanowisko makulistyczne coraz bardziej ustępowało immakulistycznym poglądom szkoły franciszkańskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: Niepokalane Poczęcie, średniowieczni dominikanie, Peregryn z Opola

Introduction

The mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary has been the subject of intense theological discussion for centuries, particularly in the Western Church. This debate was influenced by the theological problem of the relationship between sinlessness and the necessity of virgin conception, characteristic of the Latin tradition and part of the broader context of the relationship between nature, grace, and original sin.³ Additionally, the ever-growing Feast of the Conception of Mary, influenced by ongoing theological discussions and the cult of the Immaculate Conception, gradually incorporated more content supporting the doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception.⁴ In the Middle Ages, Bernard of Clairvaux was regarded as the strongest advocate of Mary's greatness. However, he did not recognize any exception concerning the conception of the Mother of Christ, as evidenced by his famous Letter 174 addressed to the canons of Lyon.⁵ Among the opponents of the 'uniqueness' of Mary's sinless conception was the eminent theological authority of scholasticism, Saint Thomas Aquinas,

³ Cf. J. Pelikan, *Maryja przez wieki*, Kraków 2012, pp. 175–177.

⁴ Cf. J. Kopeć, *Bogarodzica w kulturze polskiej XVI wieku*, Lublin 1997, pp. 200–203.

⁵ Cf. Bernard z Clairvaux, *List do kanoników z Lyonu w sprawie Poczęcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny* 'Roczniki Teologiczne' 2 (2001) 48, pp. 147–152.

along with most Dominican theologians. Their opposition was rooted in the erroneous notion of human animation and the related moment of Mary's sanctification, commonly accepted as true, particularly pertaining to the universality of salvation through Jesus Christ.⁶

In this article, I aim to present the position held by medieval Polish Dominicans on the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I will trace the gradual transition from opposing positions on the Immaculate Conception to supporting views within Polish theology and Marian piety, based on selected examples from the mediaeval heritage of Polish preaching. After outlining the main features of this process, I will first examine the 14th-century sermons by the Dominican friar Peregrine of Opole, who unequivocally expressed opposition to the Immaculate Conception. I will explore the extent to which he relied on the authority of Bernard of Clairvaux, and especially on Dominican friar Thomas Aquinas. Next, I will discuss the 15th-century sermons by Piotr of Miłosław, which testify to the gradual transition in Polish theology and devotion from the mystery of Mary's conception and purification in the womb of Saint Anne to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Finally, I will present the sermons by 16th-century Jan of Szamotuły (Paterek), a fervent advocate of the Immaculate Conception. Each of these authors created their works in specific periods, characterized by different theological, liturgical, and preaching contexts, thereby demonstrating the evolution of views on the conception of Mary. These works reveal that the opposition to the Immaculate Conception, characteristic of mediaeval Dominicans in Poland and influenced by the theology and authority of Aquinas, gradually succumbed to the supporting views of the Franciscan School. In my research, I will refer to primary sources⁷ as well as previous studies on the topic. Notable works in this field include those by Bishop Julian Wojtkowski, Józef Kopeć, Bogusław Kochaniewicz, and Krzysztof Bracha. The research topic has not yet been explored in the manner proposed here.

The celebration of *Conceptio Mariae* in Poland

The earliest manifestation of the cult of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Poland, notable for its antiquity, is found in the 'Cracow Benedictional', dated to the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries. This document includes an episcopal blessing related to the celebration of the Conception of the Mother of the Lord. However, this early European testimony should not be seen as represen-

⁶ Cf. B. Kochaniewicz, *Średniowieczni dominikanie o Matce Bożej*, Kraków 2008, pp. 20–33.

⁷ In my research, I will refer to previously published source texts. I must acknowledge that my searches conducted in the Archives of the University of Wrocław, the Ossolineum, and the Dominican Fathers in Cracow did not result in the discovery of new source texts.

tative of Polish territories since it is associated with a foreign liturgical circle.⁸ The oldest testimonies of the veneration of the Conception of Mary in Poland date back to the mid-14th century.⁹ This period saw the creation of the oldest manuscripts of mass and breviary formularies related to this feast,¹⁰ as well as the Cracow Latin liturgical calendar (*cisiojanus*), which mentions this feast and was created between 1323 and 1370.¹¹ The liturgical texts from this period referred to the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, altering the name from Nativity to Conception.¹² Another eminent instance of veneration is the foundation of a chapel dedicated to the Conception of Mary by Bishop Bodzanta of Janków at the Wawel Cathedral in 1351. In this chapel, the cathedral canons and vicars were to recite the officium of the Conception of the Mother of God.¹³ Additional early testimonies include a document for Kalisz issued on 8 December 1370 and a letter issued at the request of Queen Jadwiga ‘on the Monday after the Feast of the Conception’.¹⁴ By 1390, the feast was acknowledged by Bishop Jan of Radlica from Cracow, who had studied in Paris. The Feast of the Conception of Mary was formally introduced as a ceremony obligatory for both clergy and laypeople by the statute of Bishop Piotr Wysza in 1396.¹⁵ In the same year, Peregrine of Opole’s sermons on the Conception of Mary were added to the ‘*de sanctis*’ collection in Cracow.¹⁶ At the beginning of the 15th century, the Polish Cistercians

⁸ Cf. J. Wojtkowski, *Początki kultu Matki Boskiej w Polsce w świetle najstarszych rękopisów*, ‘*Studia Warmińskie*’ 1 (1964), p. 235; J. Kopeć, *Bogarodzica...*, p. 202.

⁹ Cf. J. Wojtkowski, *Wiara w Niepokalane Poczęcie Najświętszej Maryi Panny w Polsce w świetle średniowiecznych zabytków liturgicznych. Studium historyczno-dogmatyczne*, Lublin 1958, p. 113.

¹⁰ J. Wojtkowski identifies among the oldest mass formularies the one belonging to the Wrocław Missal of 1323, which originally did not contain any prayers for 8 December. Only later was the collect added in the margin. Another example is the Silesian Missal from 1300–1335 and the Missal from Nysa, dated 1340–1350. Additionally, there is the gradual of the Wrocław Norbertines, completed in 1351 by Jan Lozacco. These sources indicate that at least by the second quarter of the 14th century, the Conception of Mary was observed in Poland, particularly in Silesia. Later years bring more accounts, and it can be confidently stated that by the 14th century, the Conception of Mary was observed with its own formularies in Cracow, Gniezno, and Włocławek. Cf. J. Wojtkowski, *Wiara...*, pp. 113–114.

¹¹ Cf. H. Wąsowicz, *Łaciński cyzjojan krakowski*, in: *Materiały do dziejów społeczno-religijnych w Polsce*, red. Z. Sułkowski, E. Wiśniowski, Lublin 1974, pp. 6–8, 16.

¹² Cf. J. Wojtkowski, *Wiara...*, p. 112; J. Kopeć, *Bogarodzica...*, p. 209.

¹³ Cf. J. Fijałek, *Nasza krakowska nauka o Niepokalanym Poczęciu NMP w wiekach średnich*, ‘*Przegląd Polski*’ 6 (1900), pp. 420–486; J. Wojtkowski, *Wiara...*, p. 45.

¹⁴ Cf. J. Kopeć, *Bogarodzica...*, pp. 202–203.

¹⁵ Cf. J. Wojtkowski, *Wiara...*, p. 45.

¹⁶ Cf. J. Wolny, *Łaciński zbiór kazań Peregryna z Opola i ich związek z tzw. „Kazaniami gnieźnieńskimi”*, in: *Średniowiecze. Studia o kulturze*, red. J. Lewański, t. 1, Warszawa 1961, pp. 199, 234.

adopted the new feast, as evidenced by sources from Łąd and Mogiła.¹⁷ The first records of veneration in the Archdiocese of Gniezno and the Dioceses of Przemyśl and Płock also come from this period. In 1415, the first synod of the Diocese of Przemyśl under Bishop Maciej Janina's term established a set of liturgical regulations, which also mentions our feast among the celebrations observed in the diocese.¹⁸ By 1420, the synod of Kalisz had approved the feast for the Archdiocese of Gniezno. Gradually, the feast spread to all Polish dioceses.¹⁹

The celebration of the Feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary did not initially mean imply belief in the Immaculate Conception. Early opposition primarily came from the Dominicans, who advocated for the sanctification of Mary in the womb of Saint Anne (*sanctificatio Mariae*). Among the first supporters of the sanctification of Mary were Dominicans such as Peregrine of Opole, active at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries, as well as Piotr Polak²⁰ and Paweł, a lector of the Cracow convent living in the 14th century, whose story is recorded by Jan Długosz.²¹ This stance is further corroborated by Dominican liturgical books from the 14th and 15th centuries, including the 'Gaudamus—Supplicationem' formularies and the 'Hec est Regina mundi' officium,²² as well as by the Teutonic liturgy that employed Dominican texts²³ and the 15th century Code of Regular Canons of Saint Augustine in Wrocław.²⁴ The privilege of the Immaculate Conception of Mary was supported by the Cracow Academy from its inception. Early proponents of this privilege included professors of the

¹⁷ This is confirmed by sources from Łąd and Mogiła. These include the Łąd calendar from the 12th century, which contains a 15th-century annotation on the Feast of the Conception. Additionally, the Mogiła calendar from 1406 and the Mogiła breviary from 1412 also feature the Feast of the Conception. Cf. J. Wojtkowski, *Wiara...*, p. 45.

¹⁸ Cf. J. Kopeć, *Bogarodzica...*, p. 203.

¹⁹ Cf. J. Wojtkowski, *Wiara...*, pp. 46–47.

²⁰ He is known as the author of the commentary on Luke 1:26ff. Cf. J. Fijałek, *Nasza krakowska nauka...*, p. 424. According to J. Wojtkowski, he is mentioned in sources from the 15th century. Cf. id., *Wiara...*, p. 47. Thomas Kaeppli also mentions Piotr Polak, known as Piotr of Chełmno, who lived in the 14th century. Cf. T. Kaeppli, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, vol. 3, Romae 1980, p. 251.

²¹ According to Jan Długosz's account in 'Historia Polski' from 1361, he died in front of his listeners while preaching in Polish against the Immaculate Conception. Later mediaeval texts also repeat this account, and this case was included among the miracles of the Mother of God. Cf. Ioannis Długosi, *Historiae Polonicae*, vol. 3, Cracoviae 1876, p. 283. Thomas Kaeppli does not mention Paweł Polak in his work. However, we find reference to the Dominican Paweł Meysner, who lived in the 15th century as a lector of the Wrocław convent. Cf. T. Kaeppli, *Scriptores...*, p. 207.

²² Cf. J. Wojtkowski, *Wiara...*, p. 120.

²³ The Teutonic Knights enriched the 'Alma promat Ecclesia' officium with lessons and a hymn against the Immaculate Conception, and used the immaculate conception formulary 'In die illa'. Cf. J. Wojtkowski, *Wiara...*, p. 120.

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 120.

theological faculty of the Cracow university: Jan Isner (d. 1411), Cistercian friar Jan Szczekna (d. 1407), Mikołaj Wigandi (d. around 1414), Mateusz of Cracow (d. 1407), the author of the treatise on the Conception of the Virgin.²⁵ This support can be attributed to the connections between Cracow university and the universities of Paris and Prague. In Paris, the Feast of the Conception of the Mother of God had been part of the academic calendar since 1366. Bishop Jan of Radlica, mentioned earlier, studied in Paris.²⁶ In the Diocese of Prague, the Feast of the Conception of Mary had been celebrated since the mid-14th century. The local university, which had approximately 510 Polish students before 1400, also favoured the doctrine supporting the Immaculate Conception.²⁷

The documents of the Church's magisterium played a significant role in the dissemination of the doctrine supporting the Immaculate Conception in Poland. The most influential was the teaching of the Council in Basel (17 September 1439), which, although not considered ecumenical, unequivocally affirmed the holiness and immaculateness of Mary, free from original sin. Since then, conciliarist professors of the Cracow Academy have defended the Immaculate Conception of Mary as a truth of faith confirmed by the Church. From this period testimonies validating this special privilege of Our Lady have emerged. These include sermons by Nicholas of Błonie on the phrase 'Beautiful as the Moon' from 1438, 'Questio de Conceptione BVM' from 1441 by Paweł of Pyskowice, and 'Pia dictamina' found in the collection of sermons by Marc Bonifili, an envoy of the Council of Basel in Poland.²⁸

The doctrine supporting the Immaculate Conception was also reflected in Polish liturgy. From the mid-14th century until the end of the 15th century, the Polish liturgy of the Conception of Mary primarily featured forms of a historical nature, refraining from dogmatic reflections on Mary's immaculateness. In the 14th century, the cult of the Immaculate Conception appeared first in Cracow and then spread to other regions of Poland through the 'Alma promat Ecclesia' officium, which continued to be used throughout the 15th century. During the 15th century, other forms emphasizing Mary's freedom from original sin appeared sporadically in central Poland (the Archdiocese of Gniezno) and in Silesia. By the end of the 16th century, more dogmatically refined texts, such as the 'Sicut lilium' officium supporting the Immaculate Conception and the 'Egredimini' formulary, emerged.²⁹ The dissemination of these texts was influenced by the papal bull 'Praeexcelsa' issued by Pope Sixtus IV on 1 March 1476, which approved the mass formulary and officium authored by Leonardo de Nogarolis (d. 1499),

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 48–49.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁷ Cf. J. Kopec, *Bogarodzica...*, p. 203.

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 204.

²⁹ Cf. J. Wojtkowski, *Wiara...*, p. 121.

proclaiming Mary's freedom from original sin. Another significant contributor to liturgical texts declaring the privilege of Mary was the Franciscan friar Bernard de Bustis (d. around 1513) whose texts also received papal approval. Both these formularies can be found in liturgical books from Poland.³⁰ Documents of the Magisterium that endorsed the doctrine supporting the Immaculate Conception significantly contributed to elevating the status of the feast within the liturgy celebrated in Poland. From the mid-15th century onward, it became the feast of obligation and was celebrated in a solemn manner.

The Conception of Mary in the sermons by Peregrine of Opole

The theological content related to the observance of the Feast of the Conception of Mary became a focal point in sermons addressed to the faithful. These sermons primarily leveraged biblical testimonies, opinions of the Church Fathers, and outstanding theologians. Frequently, they also invoked testimonies of direct divine interventions (miracles and revelations) underscore the significance and form of the feast's celebration.³¹ One of the oldest recorded testimonies dates back to 1361 and is chronicled by Jan Długosz.³² This account mentions a Dominican preacher, Paweł, a lector from the Cracow convent, who preached, according to the Dominican tradition, that the Mother of Christ was not conceived without original sin. Paweł, however, did not complete his sermon as he fainted and died. This dramatic event profoundly impacted the faithful and was later cited by many authors as an argument for the Immaculate Conception.³³ In contrast, the 'Sermones de tempore et de sanctis' by Dominican friar Peregrine of Opole, dated to the early 14th century,³⁴ clearly articulate the belief in Mary's conception in original sin and her subsequent purification in the womb of Saint Anne.

³⁰ The influence of the liturgical texts of Leonardo de Nogarolis is evidenced by the 'Book of Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary', attributed to Waclaw, a pauper from Brodnia. These Hours, which unequivocally support the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, are a meticulous translation of the officium of the Italian Franciscan friar. Their creation dates back to 1476. Cf. J. Wojtkowski, *Powstanie Godzinek o Niepokalanym Poczęciu Najświętszej Maryi Panny z modlitw Waclawa*, https://repozytorium.theologos.pl/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/6149/Wojtkowski_Powstanie_godzinek.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [accessed: 5.10.2023]; J. Kopeć, *Bogarodzica...*, p. 204.

³¹ Cf. J. Kopeć, *Bogarodzica...*, p. 225.

³² Cf. Ioannis Długosi, *Historiae...*, p. 283.

³³ Cf. J. Wojtkowski, *Wiara...*, pp. 47–48.

³⁴ According to Jerzy Wolny, the series of sermons was composed between 1297 and 1304. Cf. J. Wolny, *Laciński zbiór...*, p. 181. Bogusław Kochaniewicz associates their creation with the Peregrine's tenure as prior in the Racibórz community (from 1303) and subsequently in the monastery in Wrocław. Cf. B. Kochaniewicz, *Średniowieczni dominikanie...*, p. 129.

We do not have verified information regarding the date of birth and death of the Opole friar. However, it is confirmed from sources that he served as the prior of the Dominican monastery of Saint James in Racibórz and as the confessor to the princely family before 1303. During this time, he also preached at the court of Prince Przemysław of Racibórz.³⁵ It is likely that Peregrine was born around 1260. His early years were associated with Opole and Racibórz where he graduated from the monastic school that operated at the Dominican monastery in Racibórz. His advanced theological education, which indicates attendance at one of the Dominican general study courses (Paris, Bologna, Cologne, or Oxford), further substantiates his academic background.³⁶ From 1305 to 1312, Peregrine served as the provincial of the Polish Dominican Province. Following this, he dedicated several years to pastoral work in Racibórz. In 1318, Pope John XXII appointed him as inquisitor in the Kingdom of Poland and the Czech Republic.³⁷ He held the office of provincial again from 1322 to 1327, at which point he resigned from the office of inquisitor. Since he is mentioned in the documents of Wrocław Dominican nuns from 1333, it is believed that he died in Wrocław after 1333.³⁸

The collection of sermons ‘De tempore et de sanctis’ was created with the intention of serving folk preaching. Peregrine of Opole, while editing his sermons, leveraged the patterns of sermons by Jacobus of Voragine and Bertold of Regensburg, which were popular in the Middle Ages.³⁹ This collection includes two cycles of sermons: the first cycle contains 64 sermons, spanning from the first Sunday of Advent to the 24th Sunday after Pentecost, while the second cycle comprises 55 homilies for the feasts of the Saints, from Saint Andrew to Saint Catherine. In addition, several sermons, not found in the main collections preserved in the National Library in Prague and the Vatican Library, were incorporated. In the cycle ‘Sermones de sanctis’, there are four sermons dedicated to Marian feasts: the Purification, Annunciation, Assumption, and Nativity of Mary.⁴⁰ These sermons contain references to the conception and purification of the Mother of God.

The first sermon in the collection is intended for the Feast of Purification, titled ‘In festo Purificationis Beatae Mariae Virginis’ (No. 15).⁴¹ After recalling the

³⁵ R. Tatarzyński, *Wstęp edytorski*, in: Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis*, red. R. Tatarzyński, Warszawa 1997, s. IX.

³⁶ Cf. B. Kochaniewicz, *Średniowieczni dominikanie...*, p. 129.

³⁷ Cf. R. Tatarzyński, *Wstęp...*, s. XII.

³⁸ Cf. B. Kochaniewicz, *Średniowieczni dominikanie...*, p. 130.

³⁹ Cf. J. Wolny, *Łaciński zbiór...*, p. 187, 193; B. Kochaniewicz, *Średniowieczni dominikanie...*, p. 130.

⁴⁰ B. Kochaniewicz, *Średniowieczni dominikanie...*, p. 130.

⁴¹ Peregryn z Opola, *In festo Purificationis Beatae Mariae Virginis*, in: Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermones...*, pp. 369–374.

Gospel words: ‘When the days were completed for their purification’ (Lk 2:22),⁴² the Dominican explains that the feast encompasses three events: the purification of Mary, the presentation of the Child Jesus in the temple in Jerusalem and, the meeting with an old man named Simeon. The name of the feast indicates the first of these events: the Purification of Mary. He comments on it as follows:

It is strange that she wanted to undergo purification because she was perfectly pure, purer than any creature. For already in her mother’s womb she was cleansed from original sin. Her purity increased even in a world in which she never sinned, not even in venial sin, which, as Bernard says, was not given to any woman born. However, she turned out to be the purest in the conception of her Son.⁴³

Peregrine, on the one hand, taught that Mary had been conceived in original sin and sanctified in the womb of her mother Anne. Conversely, he emphasized the exceptional holiness and sinlessness of the Virgin. This special grace was related to the mystery of her divine motherhood. The material used in this formulation contradicts the doctrine of the immaculate conception of the Mother of God. At the same time, Peregrine emphasizes, in accordance with the entire Catholic tradition, Mary’s unique sanctification and exaltation above all creation. As a witness to this truth, Peregrine invokes the authority of Mary’s greatest mediaeval worshiper, Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux. As Bogusław Kochaniewicz has shown, the famous Letter 174 of the Cistercian friar, dated 1139–1140 and addressed to the canons of Lyon, presents Bernard’s biblical and theological arguments against the introduction of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception into the official liturgy. This letter also influenced the negative attitude of Dominican friar Thomas Aquinas.⁴⁴ The analysis of the theological arguments in the texts of both great theologians reveals their significant similarity. Bernard’s position influenced the views of Aquinas, who adopted the arguments of the Cistercian theologian and further developed some of them (e.g., the biblical and liturgical arguments). Both stressed the primacy of Jesus Christ and His exclusive privilege of being conceived without original sin. Both, while teaching about the uniqueness of Mary, accentuated not so much the moment of her sanctification—which they believed

⁴² The Polish translation of the sermon text and the biblical quotations included within it is based on the translation by Father Jacek Salij, as published in: *Teksty o Matce Bożej. Dominikanie średniowieczni*, przekład i wstęp J. Salij OP, Niepokalanów 1992, pp. 73–78.

⁴³ ‘(...) sed mirabile est, quod illa vouit purificari, quae purificationi non indiquit, qua ipsa fuit purissima et purior omni creatura. Ipsa enim existens in utero materno sanctificata fuit ab originali peccato, fuit magis purificata in mundo, in quo numquam peccavit nec venialiter, quod nemini inter natas mulierum creditur esse donatum secundum Bernardum, sed maxime fuit purissima in Filii conceptione’. Peregrin z Opola, *In festo...* (= id., *Sermones...*), p. 369.

⁴⁴ Cf. B. Kochaniewicz, *Bernard z Clairvaux, Tomasz z Akwinu i uświęcenie Najświętszej Maryi Panny*, ‘Studia Koszalińsko-Kołobrzeszkie’ 28 (2021), pp. 159–176.

took place after the union of her soul and body—but rather her preservation from any stain of sin throughout her entire earthly life. ‘The grace of immaculateness understood in this way revealed the extraordinary spiritual beauty and holiness of the Mother of Jesus during her entire life.’⁴⁵ For Peregrine, the truth about Mary’s purification was the starting point for calling listeners to the inner path of purification: ‘Although she was so beautiful, she still wanted to undergo purification and went to the temple forty days later, in accordance with the Law. She did so out of humility and to encourage us to seek purification in all our members and senses.’⁴⁶ In the mysteries of her life, Mary is presented by the Dominican of Opole as a teacher and model of Christian life and asceticism.

The second sermon, ‘In festo Annuntiationis Beatae Mariae Virginis’ (No. 21), is for the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.⁴⁷ The Dominican preacher uses the following words as the starting point: ‘Ave, gratia plena; Dominus tecum’ (Lk 1:28). He then comments that the quoted Gospel of our salvation contains four dimensions that determine the content of the homily: firstly, from whom the message comes; secondly, by whom it is brought; thirdly, to whom the mission is directed; and fourthly, what is the nature of salvation.⁴⁸ Describing the Virgin Mary, the addressee of God’s message, he writes:

he was sent to the Virgin, beautiful in soul and body. She became beautiful in the soul because she was sanctified before birth. And after conception, she was so strengthened (in holiness) that she could not even commit a venial sin. Also in her body, she was so beautiful that no man as beautiful as she was came into the world.⁴⁹

In this sermon, therefore, Peregrine indirectly expresses his conviction about Mary’s purification from original sin in her mother’s womb and about her subsequent holiness and sinlessness. To convey her special grace of holiness, he uses the image of the unique beauty of her soul and body—a beauty that only a person inflamed and purified by love for God and devotion to the Pure Virgin can truly appreciate.⁵⁰ The statement, ‘And after conception, she was so strength-

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁴⁶ Peregryn z Opola, *Kazanie na święto Oczyszczenia Maryi Świętej*, in: *Teksty...* 1992, p. 74.

⁴⁷ Peregryn z Opola, *In festo Annuntiationis Beatae Mariae Virginis*, in: *Peregrinus de Opole, Sermones...*, pp. 395–400.

⁴⁸ I am the translator of this sermon.

⁴⁹ ‘(...) missus est ad Virginem in anima et corpore formosam. In anima fuit pulchra, quia ante santificata quam nata et post conceptionem in tantum fuit confirmata, quod nec venialiter peccare potuit. Item in corpore fuit in tantum pulchra, quod numquam homo natus est in mundo ita pulcher sicut ipsa’. Peregryn z Opola, *In festo Annuntiationis...*, (= *id.*, *Sermones...*), p. 399.

⁵⁰ ‘Et licet ipsa pulchra esset, numquam tamten aliquis ita immundus ipsam ita potuit respicere, qui eam in malo concupisceret, sed potius in bono et etiam accendebatur ad dilectionem Dei et specialem devotionem. De cuius pulchritudine legitur, quod quidam eremita fuit, qui audiens, quad

ened (in holiness) that she could not commit even a venial sin', merits further commentary. Here we find an echo of the opinions present in Thomas Aquinas.⁵¹ He emphasized the absolute primacy of Jesus Christ, including His humanity in the order of grace. Christ possesses the fullness of grace to bestow upon others. Referring to the hierarchical scheme of Pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas places Jesus Christ at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of saints, followed by the Virgin Mary and then other saints.⁵² Mary received such a fullness of grace to be closest to the Creator of grace, to serve as the Mother of the Son of God, and to act as the Mediatrix of grace for others.⁵³ This hierarchy also extends to the manner of sanctification. The Saviour, through His virgin conception, was free from original sin and thus did not require cleansing from it. In contrast, all other people, born in a state of sin, must be cleansed of it. The sanctification of Mary not only resulted in her purification from sin but also suspended the activity of 'fomes peccati', that is, 'the insubordination of the mental powers of the soul to the power of reason.'⁵⁴ As a result, Mary was not subject to any desire and did not commit even the slightest sin. This privilege does not apply to other saints, who did not avoid light sins. For Thomas Aquinas, the primacy of Jesus Christ in the order of grace is unconditional. Hence, it is impossible for him to recognize the privilege of the Immaculate Conception for Mary, as doing so would diminish the dignity of the Saviour and make the Virgin Mary similar to Him.⁵⁵ For Saint Thomas, acknowledging the Immaculate Conception would have anthropological and Christological implications, effectively placing two perfect humanities—Christ and Mary—at the same level. Such a solution was absolutely unacceptable to Saint Thomas.⁵⁶

The theme of Mary's special holiness and beauty is also revisited in the third sermon, which is devoted to the mystery of the Assumption of the Mother of God, 'In festo Assumptionis Beatae Mariae Virginis' (No. 38).⁵⁷ In this homily, Peregrine of Opole begins with a passage from the 'Song of Solomon': 'Who

Beata Virgo esset pulcherrima et quod nullus eam intueretur, quin ad devotionem accenderetur, venit ad montem Sion; habebat Beata Virgo mansionem, in qua manebat cum puellis et beatus Ioannes evangelista cum ea, qui curam eius habebat, et dixit Ioanni'. 'O pater sancte, utinam possem videre Dominam meam Virginem gloriosam'. Cui Ioannes: 'Custodi hic, donec circa horam nonam veniat ab oratione, tunc eam videbis'. 'Quae cum exisset et ille eam intuitus fuisset, prae nimio quadio stare non potuit, sed cadens in terram dixit aliud regnum caelorum habere nolle nisi hoc solum, u team aspicere deberem. Hoc scribit Ioannes et sic patet, quod Angelus missus est ad Virginem formosam'. Peregryn z Opola, *In festo Annuntiationis...*, (= id., *Sermones...*), p. 399.

⁵¹ Cf. Thomas de Aquino, *Summa theologiae*, III, Cinissello Balsamo 1988, q. 27.

⁵² Cf. B. Kochaniewicz, *Średniowieczni dominikanie...*, p. 30.

⁵³ Cf. Thomas de Aquino, *Summa...*, III, q. 27, a. 5.

⁵⁴ B. Kochaniewicz, *Średniowieczni dominikanie...*, p. 30.

⁵⁵ Cf. Thomas de Aquino, *Summa...*, III, q. 27, a. 3.

⁵⁶ B. Kochaniewicz, *Średniowieczni dominikanie...*, p. 31.

⁵⁷ Peregryn z Opola, *In festo Assumptionis...* (= *Sermones...*), pp. 478–483.

is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved' (Song of Sol. 8:5).⁵⁸ Peregrine intertwines the heavenly praise of Mary with the mystery of her holy life, her uncanny death, and the glory of the Assumption. The uniqueness of Mary's life is expressed in three aspects: her holiness, grace, and beauty.⁵⁹ Mary's special holiness is emphasized as follows: '(...) because Mary was sanctified even before her birth, and after the conception of the Son she was so firmly strengthened (in holiness) that she could not commit a venial sin.'⁶⁰ By virtue of her divine motherhood, Mary was endowed with the grace of special holiness, which was inaugurated by her sanctification in the womb of Saint Anne. Here, the Dominican indirectly expresses the belief that Mary was conceived in original sin and then sanctified in her mother's womb, without detailing the process. Peregrine aims to convey the exceptional holiness of Mary, who, akin to Solomon's temple, carried the Son of God in her womb. The Mother of God received a grace of holiness that surpasses the holiness of the entire earth, angels, apostles, evangelists, martyrs, believers, and virgins. '(...) All holiness was in her and her holiness surpassed all the saints.'⁶¹ Her holiness was coupled with grace and extraordinary beauty.⁶²

In the fourth sermon, intended for the Feast of the Nativity of Mary, 'In festo Nativitatis Beatae Mariae Virginis' (No. 42),⁶³ Peregrine of Opole does not mention the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. The birth of Mary is referred to as 'sanctissime', 'dignissime', and 'gaudiosissime'. She is most holy because '(...) she was sanctified by the Holy Spirit before she was born.'⁶⁴

In his four Marian sermons, Peregrine of Opole never mentions the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. He presents Mary as having been conceived in original sin and then sanctified by the Holy Spirit in the womb of her mother, Anne. Her holiness is unique, surpassing the holiness of all creatures, angels, and saints. She is the most beautiful of all creatures in both soul and body, endowed with this unique grace of holiness as she was chosen by God to be the Mother of the Son of

⁵⁸ Translation after: Peregryn z Opola, *Kazanie...*, in: *Teksty...* 1992, pp. 79–84.

⁵⁹ 'Fuit autem mirabilis in vita quantum ad tria, scilicet ad sanctitatem, ad pietatem, ad speciositatem', Peregryn z Opola, *In festo Assumptionis...* (= *Sermones...*), p. 479.

⁶⁰ Peregryn z Opola, *Kazanie...*, in: *Teksty...* 1992, p. 80. 'Mirabile quod fuit in sanctitate, quia ante sanctificata fuit quam nata et post conceptionem Filii in tantum fuit conformata, quod nec venialiter peccare potuit'. Peregryn z Opola, *In festo Assumptionis...* (= *Sermones...*), p. 479.

⁶¹ Peregryn z Opola, *Kazanie...*, in: *Teksty...* 1992, p. 80. 'Quia igitur merito habuit omnem sanctitatem et transcendit omnes sanctos santitate (...)'. Peregryn z Opola, *In festo Assumptionis...* (= *Sermones...*), p. 479.

⁶² 'In tantum enim fuit pulchra, quod numquam pulchior homo et delectabilior creatura nata fuit'. Peregryn z Opola, *In festo Assumptionis...* (= *Sermones...*), p. 480.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 495–500.

⁶⁴ 'Item secundo nata est sanctissime, quia sanctificata fuit per Spiritum Sanctum, antequam nata'. Peregryn z Opola, *In festo Nativitates Beatae Mariae Virginis...* (= *Sermones...*), p. 499.

God. The mystery of her divine motherhood is fundamental to the entire reflection on the Blessed Virgin by the Dominican theologian.⁶⁵ Since she is Theotokos, Mary is the most holy Virgin and Mediatrix, full of all virtues and a model of holiness for Christ's disciples. In his sermons, addressed to a wide audience, Peregrine was not interested in dogmatic disputes or controversies regarding the mystery of Mary's conception. The purpose of his sermons was not to present theological controversies but to depict the Mother of God in the mysteries of her virtuous life as a model of Christian living. Each sermon begins with a quote from Holy Scripture, followed by references to Church Fathers such as Saint Augustine⁶⁶ or Saint John of Damascus.⁶⁷ For example, in the sermon intended for the Feast of the Nativity of Mary, he recalls a text attributed to Saint Bernard of Clairvaux,⁶⁸ which is actually from a sermon by Gueric of Igny.⁶⁹ It appears that Peregrine did not use authentic sources in his sermons but relied on texts provided by other authors, notably the 'Golden Legend' by Jacobus de Voragine, which is referred to in each of Peregrine's four Marian sermons.⁷⁰ There is no evidence that he directly quoted the works of Saint Thomas Aquinas.⁷¹ However, based on the analysis of his four Marian sermons, it can be suggested that Peregrine was aware of the negative views on the conception of Mary held by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas Aquinas, but he did not directly refer to their works. As a Dominican friar, he was likely familiar with Aquinas' Marian thought such as the doctrine of suspending the activity of 'fomes peccati' in Mary, who was cleansed of sins. In his sermons, which were more pastoral and catechetical in nature, he conveyed a Mariology typical of the theology of the 13th and early 14th centuries, consistent with the sermons of most Dominicans of that period.⁷²

The Immaculate Conception in selected examples of Polish preaching heritage

The topic of the conception of Mary in Polish preaching gradually began to be enriched with various motifs supporting the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Sermons often included testimonies of direct divine interventions, such

⁶⁵ Cf. B. Kochaniewicz, *Średniowieczni dominikanie...*, p. 146.

⁶⁶ Cf. Peregryn z Opola, *In festo Purificationis...* (= *Sermones...*), p. 370.

⁶⁷ Cf. Peregryn z Opola, *In festo Nativitates...* (= *Sermones...*), p. 500.

⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 497.

⁶⁹ Cf. B. Kochaniewicz, *O źródłach dominikańskiego kaznodziejstwa XII wieku na przykładzie kazań Jakuba z Voragine i Peregryna z Opola*, in: *Święty Jacek i dziedzictwo dominikańskie*, red. E. Mateja, A. Pobóg-Lenartowicz, M. Rowińska-Szczepaniak, Opole 2008, p. 98.

⁷⁰ Cf. B. Kochaniewicz, *Średniowieczni dominikanie...*, p. 151.

⁷¹ Cf. *id.*, *O źródłach...*, p. 112.

⁷² Cf. *id.*, *Średniowieczni dominikanie...*, pp. 20–33; *id.*, *O źródłach...*, p. 113.

as miracles and revelations, which were cited to justify the importance and form of the feast's observance. In the 14th century sermons, both opposing and supporting positions regarding the Immaculate Conception were reflected. For example, in Wrocław, a collection of conferences preached by monks around 1370 featured a Dominican preacher who strongly advocated the doctrine opposing the Immaculate Conception, referring to the authority of Saint Thomas Aquinas.⁷³ Conversely, another position from Wrocław, created around 1390, is represented by 'Defensorium Virginis,' a collection of descriptions of miracles that defended the privilege of the Immaculate Conception.⁷⁴ Often, texts justifying both positions were placed next to each other in the same collection. An example of this is 'Prayerbook' by Nawojka⁷⁵ and 'Przemysł Reflections.'⁷⁶ The latter, created around 1460, is considered the most valuable biblical and apocryphal work of the Polish Middle Ages.⁷⁷ The author of these meditations, while discussing the mysteries of the conception and sanctification of Mary in the womb of Saint Anne, juxtaposed the views of both the Dominican and Franciscan schools in consecutive chapters.

From the second half of the 15th century comes 'Postylla,' called 'The Collection of Piotr of Miłosław,' one of the most popular sermons for the entire liturgical year in Polish preaching of the late Middle Ages.⁷⁸ Little is known about Piotr himself. He lived in the 15th century and was associated with Miłosław in the Wielkopolska Region. He underwent religious formation, most likely Franciscan (Bernardine) or Pauline. The so-called Collection of Piotr of Miłosław is a compilation of *ad populum* sermons, in which several can be attributed to a group of outstanding 15th-century preachers who either originated from or were active in Cracow. These preachers include Paweł of Zator, Jan of Słupcza, Łukasz of Wielki Koźmin, Jan Štékna, Mateusz of Cracow, and Jan Sylwan (Publicanus, Silvanus) from Prague. This collective authorship contributes to the collection's popularity and its exemplary character, as the sermons were intended for a secular audience. Piotr of Miłosław's role is perceived primarily as that of a copy-

⁷³ Cf. J. Kopeć, *Bogarodzica...*, p. 225.

⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 226.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Książeczka do nabożeństwa Jadwigi księżniczki polskiej wg pierwotnego wyd. z r. 1823 powtórnie wydał Stanisław Motty*. The text is available at 'Wielkopolska Biblioteka Cyfrowa': <https://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/publication/540472/edition/460105?language=pl> [accessed: 6.10.2023]. Cf. J. Wojtkowski, *Kult Matki Boskiej w polskim piśmiennictwie do koniec XV wieku*, 'Studia Warmińskie' 3 (1966), pp. 241–242.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Rozmyślenia przemyskie*; reflections are available in digital form in the 'Polona' Library: <https://polona.pl/preview/6a83558e-1ac6-46e2-86c4-b145e04a3273> [accessed: 6.10.2023].

⁷⁷ Cf. *Teksty o Matce Bożej. Polskie średniowiecze*, wstęp, wybór i opracowanie R. Mazurkiewicz, Niepokalanów 2000, p. 294.

⁷⁸ Cf. K. Bracha, *Maria Mediatrix — Maria Adiutrix. Pobożność maryjna w nauczaniu kaznodziejским w Polsce późnego średniowiecza*, Warszawa 2023, p. 25.

ist-compiler.⁷⁹ Within the collection, there are six Marian sermons, in the following order: ‘De conceptione Virginis Marie’ (No. 10), ‘De purificatione Beate Marie’ (No. 30), ‘De annuntione Marie Virginis’ (No. 43), ‘De visitatione Marie Virginis’ (No. 84), ‘De assumptione Virginis Marie’ (No. 97) and ‘De nativitate Virginis Marie’ (No. 120). This set reflects the typical Marian feasts observed in the 15th century. The mystery of Mary’s conception is notably present in the first and last of these sermons.

Sermons by Piotr of Miłosław bear witness to the gradual transition from the mystery of Mary’s conception and her purification in the womb of Saint Anne to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. In the sermon for the Feast of the Conception of Mary,⁸⁰ the choice of the evangelical pericope is significant: ‘Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked’ (Lk 11:27), combined with the text of Exodus 3:1–5 about the burning bush. The fire of the Holy Spirit caused Mary to conceive the Son in purity and grace,⁸¹ serving as an allegory for her preservation from sin and her sinlessness. The preacher describes the Virgin as free from any roughness or cruelty, and as embodying generosity, grace, and benevolence.⁸² In his reflections, the preacher attests to the ongoing doctrinal discussion at the boundary of opposing and supporting ideas regarding the Immaculate Conception, asserting that Mary was sanctified immediately after conception in her mother’s womb. He writes, ‘Dominus eam beneficavit,’ indicating that God blessed her not only in her life but also at the moment of her conception by mother.⁸³ The author leans towards the conviction of Mary’s complete sinlessness from the moment of conception. However, to justify his opinion, he refers not to the idea of ‘redemptio praeservativa’ proposed by Duns Scotus, but to the views of Henry of Ghent, whom he mentions by name. In the sermon ‘De nativitate Virginis Marie’, addressing whether Mary, like her parents, was conceived in original sin, he definitely states that she was not. At the same time, this sermon contains formulations suggesting that Mary was cleansed from original sin and sanctified at the ‘moment of her conception’ (in instati tempore) or, in another place, ‘immediately after conception’ (post eius conceptionem statim), and ‘in her mother’s womb before she was born’ (in utero matris sue antequam nasceretur), which are closer to views opposing the concept of the Immaculate

⁷⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁸⁰ Cf. Petrus de Miłosław, *Sermo 10: De conceptione Virginis Marie*. The work references the research by K. Bracha, who provides the numbering of sermons from the so-called Collection of Peter of Miłosław, *Sermones dominicales et festivales* from the manuscript of the National Library (hereinafter BN) under reference 111 3021, f. Ira-379v. (p. 26).

⁸¹ Cf. Petrus de Miłosław, *Sermo 10...*, f.26b.

⁸² Cf. *ibid.*, f. 27ra.

⁸³ Cf. K. Bracha, *Maria...*, p. 185.

Conception.⁸⁴ Henry of Ghent's proposal, which refers to the theory of 'animation' commonly accepted in the Middle Ages, was a complex and controversial attempt to reconcile the idea of the Immaculate Conception with the views of its opponents. The Parisian theologian concluded his considerations with the assertion that, since God's intention had always been to sanctify Mary from sin, she was sanctified 'statim post illud instans.' Thus, according to Henry of Gent, God's grace sanctified Mary immediately after the moment of her conception.⁸⁵ In his sermon, Piotr of Miłosław did not investigate the intricate and esoteric arguments of Henry of Ghent but instead cited his final conclusion. In the sermon 'De conceptione BMV,' there are formulations that indirectly support the belief in the Immaculate Conception. However, explicit confirmation of Mary's is absent. Moreover, the author references to the authority of Bernard of Clairvaux, who was known to oppose this belief. Additionally, the sermon almost literally repeats the general idea from Jacobus of Voragine, who was skeptical of the Immaculate Conception: 'Successionem vero tempore, Anna concepit filiam et peperit, cuius nomen vocavit Maria.'⁸⁶ In summary, Piotr of Miłosław's sermons reflect the gradual process of dogma formation, characterized by the search for appropriate formulations and ongoing polemics.⁸⁷

After the promulgation of the papal bull 'Grave nimis' by Sixtus IV, support for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception became increasingly common in the territory of the Republic of Poland. Among the proponents of the Immaculate Conception was the academic environment of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, represented notably by Jan of Szamotuły, also known as Paterek (ca. 1480–1519). Paterek, a professor at Cracow University and preacher in the Saint Anne's Church,⁸⁸ is credited with two sermons on the Immaculate Conception and one on the Birth of the Virgin Mary.⁸⁹ Only two of these sermons, created between the years 1506–1518, are definitely attributed to him. Paterek's sermons take the form of mediaeval scholastic treatises. They present the truth about the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the spirit of Duns Scotus, incorporating biblical, patristic, dogmatic, liturgical, and apocryphal arguments.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ 'Et presertim nativitas matri eius, quam ipse subito solus post conceptionem spiritu sancto santificat et ab omni macula originalis peccati mundavit. (...) Utrum eciam hec virgo santissima fuit nata in peccato originali, sicut et patres eius? Ibi doctores communiter concordat, quoad non. Ut dicit quidam doctor Henricus de Gandow, licet in instanti tempore fuit ab eo mundata. Et b. Augustinus in tractatu ad Petrum episcopum de fide sovvens hunc inutilem communionem conorat hic et ponit exemplum'. Petrus de Miłosław, *Sermo 102*..., f. 320va. After K. Bracha, *Maria*..., p. 186.

⁸⁵ Cf. K. Bracha, *Maria*..., p. 188.

⁸⁶ Petrus de Miłosław, *Sermo 10*..., f. 28rb. After K. Bracha, *Maria*..., p. 188.

⁸⁷ Cf. K. Bracha, *Maria*..., p. 189.

⁸⁸ Cf. Jan z Szamotuł (Paterek), *Kazania o Maryi Pannie czystej*, Kraków 1880.

⁸⁹ Cf. Jan z Szamotuł, *Kazania o Maryi Pannie czystej*, in: *Teksty*... 2000, pp. 265–280.

⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 265.

Paterek confirms that the doctrine of the sinless conception of the Mother of God is recognized by the majority of scholars from Cracow University.⁹¹ He refutes the popular misconception that Mary was conceived as a result of the kiss of her parents, Anne and Joachim.⁹² In his sermons, Paterek utilizes comparisons from nature and philosophy,⁹³ enriching his discourse with examples from everyday life and testimonies of miraculous interventions by the Virgin Mary. Among the stories is the extraordinary rescue of Abbot Helsin during a sea voyage, the miraculous resurrection of a French canon who drowned in a river,⁹⁴ and the apparition of the Mother of God to a seminarian, the brother of the King of Hungary.⁹⁵ To further engage his listeners, Jan of Szamotuły also recounts stories of individuals who opposed the privilege of the Immaculate Conception. He mentions the case of the Cracow Dominican Paweł and the preacher Gerard, who, during the celebration of Mass, had the Body of Christ hidden from him by the Virgin Mary after he spoke against the Immaculate Conception in his sermon.⁹⁶

In total, Paterek recalls twelve pieces of evidence for the conception of Mary without original sin. He refers, among others, to the testimony of Moses, the prophet Isaiah, the prophet Balaam, the prophecy of Sibylla, and the words of Muhammad.⁹⁷ These arguments confirm that he based his sermon on the 'Mariale de singulis festivitibus' by the Franciscan friar Bernardine de Bustis. This work contains the officium of the Immaculate Conception, from which Jan of Szamotuły drew all the aforementioned evidence. Copies of the 'Mariale,' which, in addition to the officium, contained 63 Marian sermons⁹⁸ describing the entire life of Mary, were available at that time in the library collections of Cracow University as well as at the Bernardine Fathers Monastery.⁹⁹ Paterek became a popularizer

⁹¹ Cf. Jan z Szamotuł (Paterek), *Kazania...*, p. 19.

⁹² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹³ 'Trzecie, dowodzę tego przez filozofy, którzy mówią, iż co może moc niższa, to może i wyższa; ale natura różę z cienia rodzi, słońce rzeczy smrodliwe grzeje a od nich smrodu nie bierze, coż Bog, tego stwórciel, mógł przeto Maryję Pannę, poczętą z rodziców podług natury grzesznych, grzechem pierworodnym, aby jej dusza nie była zmazana z rodzaju przyrodzonego od tego zachować [Thirdly, I prove this through philosophers, who say that whatever lower power can, can also be done by higher power; but nature gives birth to roses from the shadows, the sun warms stinking things and does not draw the stench from them, then God, the creator of it, could therefore save the Virgin Mary, conceived from parents, tainted by nature with original sin from it all so that her soul would not be tarnished]'. Jan z Szamotuł, *Kazania...*, p. 267.

⁹⁴ Cf. Jan z Szamotuł (Paterek), *Kazania...*, pp. 11–12.

⁹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 20–21.

⁹⁷ Cf. Jan z Szamotuł, *Kazania...*, pp. 267–274.

⁹⁸ Cf. J. Lewicki, *Bernardyn z Busti OFM*, in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. 2, Lublin 1995, c. 312.

⁹⁹ Cf. J. Kopec, *Bogarodzica...*, p. 230.

of the Immaculate Conception supporting views of Bernardine de Bustis. In his sermon, he also mentions the indulgences that the Feast of the Immaculate Conception received from Sixtus IV and the Council of Basel.¹⁰⁰ Paterek's thought is representative of Polish theology supporting the Immaculate Conception at the beginning of the 16th century. At that time, it was generally accepted that Mary, the true daughter of Adam, conceived naturally in the womb of Saint Anne, was saved from the universal inheritance of sin, which affects every human being. This was the fruit of a special grace, flowing from the previously foreseen merits of the Saviour.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

The four Marian sermons by Peregrine of Opole, edited at the beginning of the 14th century, testify to the opposition to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. They reflect the prevailing position in the Dominican school, supported by the theological insights of two great medieval authorities: Bernard of Clairvaux and the great master of the order Thomas Aquinas, though Peregrine does not directly reference them. According to these sermons, Mary was conceived in original sin and subsequently sanctified by the Holy Spirit in the womb of her mother, Saint Anne. Peregrine emphasizes the unique and incomparable holiness of Mary, related to her divine motherhood, without analyzing complex dogmatic discussions due to the catechetical, pastoral and ascetic nature of his sermons. The Blessed Virgin Mary is presented primarily as a mother, virgin, mediator, and a model of holy life, embodying purity, asceticism, and beauty in both soul and body for Christians and the Church. At that time, the theological innovations of Duns Scotus were not yet known. Over a century later documents from the Council of Basel and Pope Sixtus IV began to influence liturgical and preaching texts, gradually favouring the Immaculate Conception. In Poland, the sermons of the Wrocław Dominican friar Peregrine mark the early stages of the transition from opposition to support for the Immaculate Conception. This progression is evidenced by the 15th-century sermons in the collection of Piotr of Miłosław and 16th-century sermons by Jan of Szamotuły, which supported the Immaculate Conception. The culmination of this process was the proclamation of the dogma of the 'Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary' with the bull 'Ineffabilis Deus' by Pope Pious IX on 8 December 1854.

In the absence of other Dominican testimonies, Peregrine's sermons are a representative account of the position held by the Dominicans in Polish territories during the 13th and 14th centuries. It appears that the Dominicans in Poland did

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Jan z Szamotuł (Paterek), *Kazania...*, p. 12.

¹⁰¹ Cf. J. Kopeć, *Bogarodzica...*, pp. 230–231.

not introduce new perspectives to the European discourse on the Immaculate Conception, with the exception of an episode involving the preacher Paweł from the convent of the Holy Trinity in Cracow. The scarcity of preserved sources and the limited data available, due to the low numbers of mentions, significantly impact the understanding of this issue.

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