

Introductory Remarks by the Archbishop of Częstochowa, His Reverence Stanisław Nowak

I esteem it an honour to join the warm greetings today, directed towards all excellent guests from our country and abroad, and also from Częstochowa and its neighbourhood – especially the representatives of Jewish nation, probably the descendants of Jews from Częstochowa for whom Maria's Holy City was their own home.

In John Paul's II document on going beyond the point of New Millennium, there are many suggestions about undertaking similar initiatives which are taking place between 21 and 23 April. The Pope who made local churches complete martyrologiums of the General Church, also demanded commemoration of righteous and good-willed people who proved the truth in the times of growing nazism, lived in truth and died for it with dignity. Nowadays, the Church respectfully looks at those who died with loyalty to their vocation arising from the voice of their descent, culture, religion, history and tradition.

John Paul II expresses His real affection to the Jewish nation in various ways, which has been proved not only by His historical visit to the Jewish synagogue in Rome. It has also been shown in His act of apology expressed in His pray at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, during His pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and other gestures and acts of His kindness towards "our elder brothers of faith" – as he says.

I express, then, my joy of Commemoration Days devoted to Jewish society's history in Częstochowa. I congratulate you on the rich program of the Jewish Commemoration Days, the whole schedule of academic and cultural ceremonies. Częstochowa, undoubtedly, should do it, as the sign of Jewish nation's existence has clearly entered its history. I hope that Polish scholars' lectures will show this sign well. This place, where we are, has its special significance – why, it is a place of a former Jewish synagogue which used to be one of the most beautiful ones. Those two nations and religions have co-existed in harmony and co-operation for two centuries.

Therefore, I congratulate you, the President of Częstochowa City and creators, on your rich program of these days.

We have the right to hope that they are necessary for respect of mutual dialogue and co-operation, deepening mutual relations, contributing to peace and a further good way of development. First of all, I pay homage to those who were killed in concentration camps during World War II. Grudgingly speaking, it should be mentioned that a great deportation to an extermination camp in Treblinka in September and October 1942 took a heavy toll of human life. Let there be a glory to their blessed commemoration.

I wish Our Venerable Guests, who have arrived from our country and abroad to revere the Great Jewish Sons of Częstochowa, greatest spiritual experience and feelings.