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**The Motif of the Scarlet Robe and the Crown of Thorns  
(Mt 27:27-31)  
and their Analogies in the Life  
of Blessed Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński**

1. Literary analysis of the pericope Mt 27:27-31 – 2. Exegetical and theological analysis of the pericope Mt 27: 27-31 – 3. The robe and zucchetto of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński

In the Gospel according to St. Matthew, there are several references to the royal dignity of Jesus. In Mt 2:2, 6, 11 we read that the Magi from the East came to Jerusalem and inquired about the newborn king of the Jews, to whom they wanted to pay homage. The evangelist quoted the prophecy of Micah (Mic 5:1) about a ruler who was to come from Bethlehem and who was to be the shepherd of Israel. The inspired author also noted that one of the gifts of the Magi from the East for the infant Jesus was gold. The evangelist Matthew, describing the solemn entry of Christ into Jerusalem, referred to the words of the prophet Zechariah (Zech 9:9) about a gentle king sitting on a donkey (Mt 21:4-5). The motif of the Son of Man, who as a king will judge people at the end of time, appears in Mt 25:31-46. References to the royal dignity of Jesus also appear in the Passion. During the interrogation, Pilate asked Christ if he was the King of the Jews. Jesus gave a positive answer (Mt 27:11). Christ, as the King of the Jews, was ridiculed by the soldiers of the governor (Mt 27:29), and later by the high priests, scribes, and elders (Mt 27:42). Above the head of the crucified Jesus was the inscription: *houtos estin Iēsous ho*

*basileus tōn Ioudaiōn* – “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews” (Mt 27:37)<sup>1</sup>. It is also worth mentioning that at the end of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Christ clearly stated that he had all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18).

In this article, the author focuses on the pericope Mt 27:27-31. The text, based on the historical-critical method, will first be examined from a literary perspective and then subjected to an exegetical and theological analysis. In this way, it will be possible to better understand the meaning of the use of the scarlet robe and the crown of thorns and to answer several key questions: what did the crown of thorns placed on Christ’s head look like, what was it made of and what was it used for, and what could the scarlet robe be and for what purpose was it placed on Jesus. At the very end, the author will also refer to the *Prison Notes* by Blessed Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (1901–1981). The aim of the undertaken research and comparisons will be to show whether in the life of the Primate of the Millennium one can speak of any analogies to these two attributes mentioned by the evangelist Matthew in the pericope Mt 27:27-31.

## 1. Literary analysis of the pericope Mt 27:27-31

Jesus, announcing his death to the apostles, stated that he would be mocked, scourged, and crucified by pagans (Mt 20:17-19). The motif of mockery appears three times in the description of Christ’s suffering, and not only in the context of pagans. The first time, Jesus experienced humiliation was from members of the Sanhedrin (Mt 26:67-68). Then he was mocked by non-Jewish soldiers of Pontius Pilate (Mt 27:27-31). He was also humiliated when hanging on the cross. At that time, unfavorable words were spoken against him by passersbys, the chief priests, the scribes, the elders, and those who had been crucified with him (Mt 27:39-44)<sup>2</sup>.

In this article, we will focus on the second scene of mockery (Mt 27:27-31), which describes the humiliation of Christ by Pilate’s soldiers. They stripped Jesus<sup>3</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> All biblical quotes that are included in the article are from the Millennium Bible: Augustyn Jankowski et al. (ed.). 2002. *Pismo Święte Starego i Nowego Testamentu w przekładzie z języków oryginalnych*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Pallottinum.

<sup>2</sup> Stanisław Gądecki. 1992. *Wstęp do Ewangelii Synoptycznych*. Gniezno: Prymasowskie Wydawnictwo „Gaudentinum”, 268; Mary Healy. 2020. *Ewangelia według św. Marka. Katolicki Komentarz do Pisma Świętego*. Trans. Eliza Litak. Poznań: Wydawnictwo „W Drodze”, 358–359.

<sup>3</sup> Codex Minuscule 33, the Syriac (Harclensis) translation, a single Sahidic and Bohair manuscript, and manuscripts containing the Middle Egyptian dialect text add: *ta himatia autou* ([and having taken off] His garments). This addition was intended to complement the verb *ekdyō* (to take off) and to refer to the passage in Mt 27:31. In the revised Codex Sinaiticus, the Vatican and Beza Codes, Minuscule 1424, manuscripts representing Italy, and Vulgate manuscripts, the form *ekdysantes* (hav-

put a scarlet robe on Him<sup>4</sup>, put a crown of thorns on his head<sup>5</sup>, and a reed in his right hand. Then the soldiers knelt before Christ, mocked his kingly dignity<sup>6</sup>, spat on him, and struck him on the head with a reed. Finally, they took the scarlet robe off<sup>7</sup> Jesus, put his own clothes on him, and<sup>8</sup> led him out to be crucified. The mockery of Christ took place in the inner court of the praetorium. This scene is full of irony, because the ridiculed Jesus was indeed a king – both of Jews and of Gentiles, and his authority encompassed heaven and earth (Mt 28:18; Phil 2:10-11)<sup>9</sup>.

The pericope analyzed herein is located between Mt 27:15-26 and Mt 27:32-34. Observing in closer context allows us to see the change in the subject matter, characters, and place of action. The excerpt Mt 27:15-26 includes a description of the release of Barabbas, and the entire action takes place outside the palace. The following characters appear in this text: Pontius Pilate and his wife, Jesus, Barabbas, the high priests, the elders, and the crowd of Jews. In turn, the pericope Mt 27:32-34 mentions Jesus' way of the cross, which led to Golgotha. A new character also appears in this excerpt – Simon of Cyrene. All of the above events took place on

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ing taken off) is replaced by *endysantes* (having put on), which would refer to Jesus' nakedness at the time of the scourging. It is worth noting that in Mk 15:17 there is no mention of Christ's own garments being taken off just before he put on the purple robe.

<sup>4</sup> In the Codex Bezae and in manuscripts representing *Italy*, the words appear: *himation porfyroun* (purple garment). It is precisely this garment that is mentioned in Mk 15:17 and Jn 19:2.

<sup>5</sup> In the Codices: Alexandrinus, Beza, Cypriot, Petropolitanus, Washington, Tischendorf IV and Sangallenus, in manuscripts belonging to the Lake family, in minuscules: 565, 579, 700, 1241 and 1424 and in lectionary 844 the words: *epi tēn kefalēn* (on the head) appear. The form *tē(i) kefalē(i)* appears in minuscule codex 33. On the other hand, the lesson: *epi tēs kefalēs* appears in the Codiced: Sinaiticus, Vatican, Royal, Koridethi and 0281, in manuscripts belonging to the Ferrara family, in minuscule 892 and in the writings of Eusebius († 339/340).

<sup>6</sup> Codices: Alexandrian, Cypriot, Petropolitan, Washington, Sangallen and Koridethi, Lake's family and Ferrara, minuscules: 565, 579, 700, 1241 and 1424, lectionary 844, the Vulgate and some Old Latin witnesses, and the writings of Eusebius contain the lesson *enepaidzon* (they mocked – ind. imperf. act.). In turn, in Codices: Sinaiticus, Vatican, Beza, Royal, Tischendorf IV and 0281, and in minuscules: 33 and 892, the verb *enepaiksān* appears (they mocked – ind. aor. act.). Many manuscripts contain the passus imperfectum perhaps in order to harmonize it with the *etypton* (they scoffed) in Mt 27:30. Roman soldiers mocked Jesus' kingly dignity by saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" The word *basileu* (king) occurs in the Codices of Vaticanus, Bezae, Sangallenus, Koridethi and 0281, the Lake family, and the 844 lectionary. On the other hand, the form *ho basileus* (king) occurs in the Codices of Sinaiticus, Alexandria, Cyprus, Royal, Petropolitan, Washington and Tischendorf IV, in the Ferrara family, in the minuscules of 33, 565, 579, 700, 892, 1241, and 1424, and in the texts of Eusebius.

<sup>7</sup> Codices: Sinaiticus and Royal and minuscules: 33 and 892 contain the participium *ekdysantes* (having taken off). Most likely, the intention was to harmonize this form with Mt 27,28.

<sup>8</sup> The conjunction *kai* (and), which appears between the information about Jesus taking off the scarlet robe and the information about Christ putting his own clothes on, is missing in the Codex Sinaiticus and in the minuscules: 33 and 892.

<sup>9</sup> Larry Chouinard. 1997. *Matthew*. Joplin: College Press, 487; Donald Hagner. 2002. *Matthew 14–28* (WBC 33B). Dallas: Word, 829.

Friday morning, but at different times. Thus, the text of Mt 27:27-31, beginning with the word *tote* (then), constitutes a separate literary unit that is connected with the story that precedes and follows it.

The motif of Jesus being mocked by Pilate's soldiers appears in Matthew 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20 and John 19:2-3. In Matthew and Mark, this story functions as a separate event. In John, on the other hand, the scourging and mockery took place simultaneously and took place during Christ's trial, not at its conclusion. After these dramatic events, Jesus was not immediately led to crucifixion (as in Matthew and Mark), but was taken out of the praetorium and stood before the people. For Pilate, this was the last chance to save Christ. Only when this failed did the governor order the crucifixion<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, the evangelist Luke recorded that Jesus was despised by Herod and his guards. He ordered Christ to be dressed in a shining robe (*esthēs lampra*) and then sent back to Pilate (Luke 23:11).

Mt, Mk and J mentioned soldiers, but only Mt indicated that they were the soldiers of the governor (*hoi stratiōtai tou hēgemonos*). On the other hand, the cohort that gathered around Christ was only mentioned in Mt and Mk. The inspired authors used personal pronouns to refer to Jesus. Only in one place does the name Jesus (*Iēsous*) appear – Mt 27:27. Mt and Mk clearly stated that the place where Christ was mocked was the praetorium and that is where the soldiers took Jesus. Mk additionally mentioned the inner court (*esō tēs aulēs*). In J, on the other hand, the immediate context leads the reader to the praetorium.

When it comes to the mockery itself, only Matthew mentions the stripping of Jesus' garments. This evangelist records that after this event Christ was clothed in a scarlet robe (*chlamys kokkinē*). Mark mentions purple (*porphyra*), and John a purple robe (*himation porfyroun*). All three evangelists record that the soldiers made a crown of thorns and placed it on Jesus. It is worth noting here that in the Gospel according to John the crowning with thorns precedes the putting on of the purple robe.

The next stage of mocking Jesus was by placing a reed in his right hand. However, only the evangelist Matthew mentioned this event. Then – according to the account in Matthew – the executioners knelt before Christ. It is worth mentioning that this motif also appears in the Gospel according to St. Mark, but later – immediately before removing the purple from Jesus. All three evangelists recorded the soldiers' mocking words towards Christ: *chaire, basileu tōn*

<sup>10</sup> Richard Lenski. 1961. *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1099; Jarosław Charkiewicz. 2021. *Jezus Chrystus w Świętej Ewangelii*. Vol. 2. Warszawa: Warszawska Metropolia Prawosławna, 375–376.

*Ioudaiōn* (Hail, King of the Jews). However, in J the noun “king” appears in the nominative case and is preceded by the article (*ho basileus*)<sup>11</sup>. In Matthew the above quote was preceded by the verb *enepaiksān* (they mocked), and in Mark – *aspadzesthai* (to greet). J – as the only one – mentioned that after this verbal mockery the soldiers slapped Jesus. Then the executioners spat on Christ and hit him on the head with the reed. In Mark we see a change in the order of these events, and J did not mention them at all. Finally, Matthew and Mark record that the soldiers stripped Jesus of the mocking garment, put his own clothes on him, and led him away to be crucified.

The historicity of the event about Christ’s crowning with thorns is supported by the transmission of two traditions (Mk/J). The evangelist Matthew relied on Mk 15:16-20, but in his text the mockery of Jesus (Mt 27:28-29) was clearly separated from the abuse (Mt 27:30). Most likely, Mk reported the event, and Mt also showed its deeper dimension. It is worth noting that in Mk the reed was shown exclusively as an object used to beat Christ, while in Mt it was also shown as a prop imitating a scepter. Evidence of the editorial hand of Mt is also the initial *tote* (then), which appears about 90 times in his work<sup>12</sup>.

As for the literary form of the analyzed pericope (Mt 27:27-31), it is a description of the mockery and physical abuse of Jesus by Pontius Pilate’s soldiers. There is only one declaration in the entire text (Mt 27:29). It concerns the words of the soldiers who mocked the kingly dignity of Christ. Donald Hagner stated that the pericope has the form of a dramatic narrative and consists of a series of relatively short sentences that are connected with each other by means of the repeated conjunction *kai* (and)<sup>13</sup>.

At the end of this part of the article, it is worth paying attention to the literary structure of the pericope under study. A careful reading of the text of Mt 27:27-31 allows us to state that it has a concentric structure, and at its core there is a passage about Pilate’s soldiers kneeling before Jesus and their mocking words about his royal dignity. The author of the article would like to propose the following structure of this pericope:

<sup>11</sup> It occurs that in Greek the nominative case is used instead of the vocative case. In such a case the nominative case is usually preceded by an article. Andrzej Piwowar. 2010. *Greka Nowego Testamentu. Gramatyka*. Kielce: Instytut Teologii Biblijnej „Verbum”, 57.

<sup>12</sup> Antoni Paciorek. 2008. *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza (rozdziały 14–28). Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz* (NKB.NT I/2). Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła, 644.

<sup>13</sup> Hagner. 2002. *Matthew*, 830.

A	Jesus' introduction to the praetorium	(v. 27)
B	taking off clothes	(v. 28a)
C	putting on a scarlet robe	(v. 28b)
D	crowning with thorns and putting the reed into the hand	(v. 29a)
E	kneeling and verbal mockery	(v. 29b)
D'	spitting and hitting the head with a reed	(v. 30)
C'	taking off the scarlet robe	(v. 31a)
B'	putting on the robes	(v. 31b)
A'	leading Jesus to crucifixion	(v. 31c) <sup>14</sup>

## 2. Exegetical and theological analysis of the pericope Mt 27: 27-31

In the time of Tiberius, the Roman Senate passed a resolution under which a criminal – after hearing the sentence – had at least ten days to prepare for death<sup>15</sup>. Meanwhile, immediately after being sentenced, Jesus was led by soldiers to the praetorium (*praitōrion*). Initially, this name referred to the praetor's tent in a military camp, and later – the residence of the Roman governor. Pontius Pilate was normally stationed in Caesarea Maritima, and appeared in Jerusalem in connection with great feasts and in times of potential unrest. At that time, his seat was Herod's palace, located in the western part of the city, or the Antonia Fortress (named after Mark Antony), which was located north-west of the temple<sup>16</sup>.

The governor's soldiers took Jesus into the large inner court (Mark 15:16) and there gathered the entire cohort (*holēn tēn speiran*) around him. Non-Jewish residents of Palestine and Syria were conscripted for military service. A cohort, or tenth of a legion, numbered about 600 soldiers. Pontius Pilate had five cohorts. It is highly likely that the reference to “the entire cohort” is a literary exaggeration<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Similar structures can be found in: William Davies, Dale Allison. 2004. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*. Vol. 3. London – New York: T&T Clark International, 597; Hagner. 2002. *Matthew*, 830; Paciorek. 2008. *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza*, 643; Zdzisław Żywica. 2011. „Wina i odpowiedzialność za śmierć Jezusa oraz perspektywy zbawcze pogan w świetle Mt 27,1-66”. *Studia Elckie* 13 : 511.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Henry. 1996. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Peabody: Hendrickson. <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/matthew-henry/Matt.27.26-Matt.27.32> (1.06.2024).

<sup>16</sup> David Turner, Darrell Bock. 2005. *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Matthew and Mark*. Vol. 11. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 359. It is likely that Roman governors who came to Jerusalem stayed at Herod's palace. Antonia, on the other hand, may have been the home of the commander of the Roman military unit stationed in the city. Przemysław Nowogórski. 1997. „Pretorium w Jerozolimie: historia i archeologia miejsca w kontekście procesu Chrystusa”. *Saeculum Christianum* 4 (2) : 31.

<sup>17</sup> John MacArthur. 1989. *Matthew*. Chicago: Moody Press, 248; Craig Blomberg. 1992. *Matthew* (NAC 22). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 414; Joachim Gnllka. 2001. *Das Matthäusevangelium 14,1–28,20* (HThK.NT I/2). Freiburg – Basel – Wien: Herder, 465.

Jesus fell into the hands of Roman soldiers, who most likely saw him as a false pretender to the royal throne, so they decided to humiliate and ridicule him. At the same time, they abused him mentally and physically. Christ could not count on their respect, gentleness and compassion (cf. Ps 22:17). The soldiers' actions were also intended to ridicule the Jews and their messianic expectations. Richard Lenski believes that the mockery of Jesus was ordered by Pilate. However, there is no mention of this in the biblical text (unlike, for example, the scourging). Pontius Pilate could have prevented the mockery, so we can say that he was partly responsible for the whole situation<sup>18</sup>.

At the very beginning, the soldiers stripped Jesus of his own garments (Mt 27:28a). This suggests that Christ was dressed after being scourged. If so, one can only guess the pain that Jesus felt when they stripped him of his blood-soaked garment. Then the soldiers threw a scarlet robe (*chlamys kokkinē*) over Christ. Most likely, it was an ordinary red robe that served as the soldiers' outer garment. The scarlet dye, used to dye fabrics and leather, was produced by an insect (*caccus ilicis*). In turn, in Mk 15:17, there is a mention of purple (*porphyras*), which would indicate that Jesus was dressed in the attire of a king, emperor, or imperator. Costly purple was obtained in Tyre and obtained from the secretions of a snail. Josephus Flavius noted that the body of Herod the Great was wrapped in purple (*Ant.* 17:8, 3). The word *porphyras* used by Mark was a technical term for a *chlamys*, a short Macedonian cloak, circular or square in shape, with a neck opening, worn from the left side, across the back and chest, and fastened with a buckle on the right shoulder<sup>19</sup>. Since the soldiers, in mocking Jesus' kingship, used a common reed instead of a golden or wooden scepter, a thorn instead of a golden crown or laurel wreath, and physical violence instead of loyal homage, then the use of a common red soldier's cloak (imitating royal attire) rather than costly purple fits the whole context of mockery.

<sup>18</sup> John Ryle. 1993. *Matthew*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 279; G. Jerome Albrecht, Michael Albrecht. 1996. *Matthew*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub. House, 413; William Hendriksen, Simon Kistemaker. 1953–2001. *New Testament Commenary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (NTC 9). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 958; Lenski. 1961. *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, 1100.

<sup>19</sup> Paciorek. 2008. *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza*, 645; Ulrich Luz, Helmut Koester. 2005. *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary*. Transl. by James Crouch. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 514; Warren Carter. 2000. *Matthew and the Nargins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 530; Leon Morris. 1992. *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Grand Rapids – Leicester: W.B. Eerdmans, Inter-Varsity Press, 711. One hypothesis is that the robe used to ridicule Jesus was a garment thrown away by King Herod, which was found and appropriated by Pilate's soldiers. Henry Spence-Jones, Joseph Exell. 2004. *The Pulpit Commentary: St. Matthew*. Vol. 2. Bellingham: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 587.



The soldiers wove a wreath of thorns (*stefanos eks akanthōn*) and placed it on Jesus' head. They probably used a plant that grew wild in the immediate vicinity. There are about 200 species of thorns in Israel. They are usually low and shrubby thickets that appear especially in the dry season. The plant used by Pilate's soldiers could have been: acanthus, olive, sea buckthorn, blackthorn, hawthorn, jujube (e.g. *ziziphus spina-christi*, *ziziphus vulgaris* or *ziziphus lotus*), acacia, date palm, thorn burnet, thorny burnet or two-thorned thornbeam. The latter shrub was used to make hedges around vineyards and had flexible branches from which a wreath could easily be wove<sup>20</sup>. That the crown of thorns was wreath-shaped can be evidenced by a fresco from the Pretextata catacombs (2nd cent.), where Jesus was shown wearing a laurel wreath. However, researchers of the Shroud of Turin state that the crown of thorns resembled rather a Roman cap/spiked coif<sup>21</sup>.

It is worth asking what the purpose of this crown of thorns was for. First of all, it was to ridicule Jesus as the king of the Jews. The wreath of thorns was to bring to mind the rays of light emanating from the heads of deities (e.g. Helios), the headgear of the rulers of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties, and to be a cheap imitation of the radiant diadems of Augustus and Tiberius, which were presented on coins<sup>22</sup>. On the other hand, it should be remembered that this crown was made of thorns, and therefore it should also be associated with suffering (especially when the soldiers were beating Christ on the head). On the Shroud of Turin, one can observe a series of deep, bleeding and painful puncture wounds, which would indicate that the sharp thorns penetrated the tendon cap and reached the periosteum of the flat bones of the skull<sup>23</sup>. The motif of thorns and thistles appears in Gen 3:18, in connection with the curse of the earth after original sin. The crowning of Jesus with thorns symbolizes the bearing of the weight of nature's curse, from which Christ wants to free us<sup>24</sup>.

It is worth mentioning here a similar event that took place in 38 AD in Alexandria, and which Philo wrote about (*Flaccus 36-40*). During the spectacle, they

<sup>20</sup> Barbara Szczepanowicz. 2000. „Cierniowa korona”. *Ziemia Święta* 6 (2) : 30, 32.

<sup>21</sup> Franciszek Jóźwiak. 1974. „«Jezusa kazał ubiczować i wydał na ukrzyżowanie». Ewangelie o biczowaniu, cierniem koronowaniu i drodze krzyżowej”. *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 66 (1) : 32, 36; Tomasz Jelonek. 2006. „Cierniem koronowanie”. *Materiały Homiletyczne* : 173.

<sup>22</sup> William Albright, Christopher Mann. 2008. *Matthew: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 346; Davies, Allison. 2004. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 602.

<sup>23</sup> Jelonek. 2006. „Cierniem koronowanie” 173.

<sup>24</sup> Spence-Jones, Exell. 2004. *The Pulpit Commentary: St. Matthew*, 587.



wanted to ridicule King Herod Agrippa I. For this purpose, a man who was not quite right, named Carabas, was brought into the theatre. He was placed on a high seat so that he could be easily seen. The people of Alexandria took a papyrus leaf and made a crown out of it. They threw a carpet over Carabas to imitate a royal robe, and in his hand – instead of a scepter – they put a papyrus stalk that they found on the road. Several young men stood on either side of Carabas as his guards. Then people began to approach the man to pay him homage, address requests to him, or seek his advice. He was also greeted as “Lord”<sup>25</sup>.

In Mt 27:29 we also read that the soldiers put a reed (*kalamos*) in Jesus’ right hand, which was to imitate a royal scepter. On Roman coins, Caesar was often depicted with a scepter in his hand. The soldiers knelt before Christ and in this way parodied the homage paid to rulers. Then they mocked Him saying: “Hail, King of the Jews!” (*chaire, basileu tōn Ioudaiōn*). These words were reminiscent of the common greeting of the emperor: *Ave Caesar, victor, imperator!*<sup>26</sup>.

When a subject paid homage to the ruler, he kissed him as a sign of his loyalty. Matthew records that Pilate’s soldiers spat (*emptyō*) on Jesus (Mt 27:30). Such behavior was used to humiliate a person and was a manifestation of contempt or hatred (Is 50:6). The spit of pagans was considered particularly unclean. It is worth mentioning that in ancient times, spitting on the devil was an element of the baptismal rite<sup>27</sup>. Finally, the soldiers took a reed and beat (*typtō*) Christ on the head with it. The verb *typtō* was used in the imperfect tense (*etypton*), which indicates that it was not a single blow, but a repeated action<sup>28</sup>. Such behavior of the soldiers was not only intended to humiliate Jesus, but also to cause him physical suffering (beating on the head, on which there was a crown of thorns).

After the mockery was over, the soldiers stripped Christ of the scarlet robe, put his own clothes on him, and led him away to be crucified (Mt 27:31). Usually, the condemned man, carrying the horizontal beam of the cross, was naked and continued to be scourged along the way. The Jews were not fond of public

<sup>25</sup> William Barclay. 2002. *Ewangelia św. Mateusza*. Vol. 3. Tłum. Zdzisław Pawlik. Poznań: Wydawnictwo „Słowo Prawdy”, 167–168; Adam Clarke. 1999. *Clarke’s Commentary: Matthew*. Albany: Ages Software. <https://bibleportal.com/commentary/section/adam-clarke/558637> (3.06.2024).

<sup>26</sup> Richard Gardner. 1991. *Matthew*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 390; Barclay Newman, Philip Stine. 1992. *A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew*. New York: United Bible Societies, 855.

<sup>27</sup> Davies, Allison. 2004. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 604; Craig Keener. 2000. *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Nowego Testamentu*. Przekł. Zbigniew Kościuk. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza „Vocatio”, 76.

<sup>28</sup> Piwowar. 2010. *Greka Nowego Testamentu*, 31. Christ has been spat on and beaten before, and this occurred during a hearing before the High Council (Mt 26,67).

nudity, so Jesus' clothing may be seen as a concession made by the Romans<sup>29</sup>. There is some uncertainty about the crown of thorns. Some scholars believe that it was removed because the Romans could not publicly ridicule the Jews and mock their "king". Moreover, early Christian art depicted the crucified Christ without the crown of thorns on his head (it does not appear in iconography until much later). On the other hand, there is no mention in any Gospel of the removal of the crown of thorns. The inscription on the tablet placed above the head of the crucified Jesus could also have been offensive to the Jews, and yet it was not changed (Mt 27:37)<sup>30</sup>. It is generally accepted that the crown of thorns remained on Jesus' head until the very end.

When reading the pericope Mt 27:27-31, it is easy to see that the silent and patient Jesus is at the center of this story, while the active characters are Pilate's soldiers, who mock Christ as the king of the Jews and inflict pain on him. It is also surprising that this text, compared to the information about the scourging, contains a great deal of detail.

### 3. The robe and zucchetto of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński

The motif of the purple robe and the crown of thorns appears in the *Prison Notes*, which is the account of Blessed Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński's three-year period of isolation (25/10/1953–28/10/1956) in Rywałd, Stoczek Warmiński, Prudnik and Komańcza. Under the date 28/10/1955, the Primate of the Millennium mentioned Jesus' robe. He stated that rulers wear beautiful coronation robes. Christ, on the other hand, was covered with the robe of his blood. His scourged arms are the most precious adornment. Cardinal Wyszyński noted that he spiritually moves to the praetorium, kneels on the floor and pays homage to the scraps of the royal robe of blood. The Primate of the Millennium compared this moment to the touch of the chalice during Mass with the lips<sup>31</sup>. In another place in his *Prison Notes*, Cardinal Wyszyński recalled that the cloak that Pilate's soldiers put on Jesus was associated with mockery. On the other hand, the purple cloak of the Primate of the Millennium, which had been given to him by the Polish

<sup>29</sup> John Nolland. 2005. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids – Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1185.

<sup>30</sup> Paciorek. 2008. *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza*, 647; Richard France. 2007. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 1063.

<sup>31</sup> Stefan Wyszyński. 2001. *Zapiski więzienne*. Warszawa – Żabki: Wydawnictwo im. Stefana Kardynała Wyszyńskiego „Soli Deo”; Apostolicum, 190.

clergy of Rome, was given by Minister Antoni Bida (1897–1980) to the theater to serve as a prop used during mocking performances ridiculing the Church (12/03/1956)<sup>32</sup>. Finally, under the date 25/03/1956, Cardinal Wyszyński noted that purple in the Church can arouse desire and pride, but it must not be forgotten that it is a symbol of the Blood of Christ. The Primate of the Millennium stated that he only put on the cardinal's cloak as protection against the cold. However, as he later noted, such behavior was a manifestation of pride, because he thought more about himself than about Jesus' purple<sup>33</sup>.

In the *Prison Notes* there was also a mention of a wreath of thorns. Cardinal Wyszyński stated that this crown squeezed blood from Jesus' forehead. Meanwhile, all other kings squeeze blood from their subjects. Only Christ spared them, while not sparing himself. The Primate of the Millennium confessed that a piece of thorn from the crown placed on Jesus' head is more valuable to him than all the crowns in the world (28.10.1955)<sup>34</sup>.

Cardinal Wyszyński also mentioned the tonsure, which not only meant belonging to the clergy, submission to superiors and fidelity to one's calling, but also symbolized the crown of thorns and expressed readiness to accept various kinds of mockery. The Primate of the Millennium wrote that all of his colleagues from the Seminary suffered greatly because they were priests. Cardinal Wyszyński was afraid that he would be the only one who would not share their fate. On September 25, 1953, he noted:

All my colleagues went through concentration camps and prisons. Most of them gave their lives there, a few returned disabled, one died after serving a Polish prison sentence. In this way, the announcement given to us in the spring of 1920 by the professor of liturgy and director of the Lower Seminary in Włocławek, Fr. Antoni Bogdański, was partially fulfilled. This unforgettable man said during a certain lecture on liturgy: "The time will come when you will go through such torments as a man of our age cannot even imagine. Many priests will have nails hammered into their tonsures, many of them will go through prison"<sup>35</sup>.

The Primate of the Millennium, harassed by the communist authorities, joined his colleagues from the seminary pew and also suffered much for the name of Je-

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<sup>32</sup> Wyszyński. 2001. *Zapiski więzienne*, 222.

<sup>33</sup> Wyszyński. 2001. *Zapiski więzienne*, 226.

<sup>34</sup> Wyszyński. 2001. *Zapiski więzienne*, 190.

<sup>35</sup> Wyszyński. 2001. *Zapiski więzienne*, 15.

sus. In this context, the symbolism of his zucchetto can be interpreted even better. Cardinal Wyszyński stated that the first purple zucchetto was worn by Jesus, and it was a crown of thorns, the thorns of which pierced his head. In turn, the zucchetto of the Primate of the Millennium was a symbol of the bloody head of the savior (12.03.1956)<sup>36</sup>.

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The article analyzes the pericope Mt 27:27-31. The author used the historical-critical method. The delimitation of the text showed that this pericope constitutes a separate literary unit, which is closely connected with the preceding history (the release of Barabbas, the rejection of Jesus, the scourging and handing over to crucifixion) and then following on (the Way of the Cross and the crucifixion). In Mt and Mk, the mockery of Christ is a separate event that crowns the trial. In J, on the other hand, the scourging and mockery occurred simultaneously and took place during the trial. Mt based on Mk 15:16-20, but clearly separated the mockery of Jesus (Mt 27:28-29) from the abuse (Mt 27:30). Further research has established that the pericope Mt 27:27-31 is a dramatic narrative in which only one statement appears (Mt 27:29) and it is this statement that is at the center of the concentric structure proposed by the author.

The second part of the article included an exegetical and theological analysis of the pericope Mt 27:27-31. The author focused primarily on two motifs: the scarlet robe and the crown of thorns. The scarlet robe was probably an ordinary red cloak that was the soldiers' outer garment. In turn, the crown of thorns could have been shaped like a prickly cap and made from a plant called thorny burnet or jujube. First of all, Pontius Pilate's soldiers wanted to mock Jesus as the king of the Jews, which is why the scarlet robe, wreath of thorns, reed, verbal mockery and spitting were to imitate: royal attire, crown, scepter, greeting of the ruler and kiss. The soldiers also wanted to inflict pain on Christ, as evidenced by beating the head with a reed, on which there was a wreath of thorns.

In the last part of the article, the author reached for *Prison Notes*, in which the Blessed Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński briefly speaks about the scarlet robe and crown of thorns of Jesus. His statements constitute a beautiful and edifying spiritual commentary on the pericope Mt 27:27-31. The author of the article also noticed two analogies. Namely, the scarlet robe was associated with mockery. On the other hand, the robe of the Primate of the Millennium was given by Minister Bida from

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<sup>36</sup> Wyszyński. 2001. *Zapiski więzienne*, 221.

the theater, where it was to be used as a prop during performances ridiculing the Church. In turn, the crown of thorns was, according to Cardinal Wyszyński, the first purple zucchetto in the world. In a figurative sense, it reminded the Primate of the Millennium of all the suffering he endured for the name of Jesus and was a symbol of the bloody head of the Savior.

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**Streszczenie: Motyw płaszcza szkarłatnego i korony cierniowej (Mt 27,27-31) oraz ich analogie w życiu bł. kard. Stefana Wyszyńskiego.** Żołnierze Poncjusza Piłata przy pomocy płaszcza szkarłatnego, wieńca z cierni, trzciny oraz poprzez przyklękanie, słowną kpinę i plucie, wyśmiali Jezusa jako króla żydowskiego i ośmieszyli oczekiwania mesjańskie ludu wybranego. Dodatkowo zadawali ból Chrystusowi poprzez bicie Go trzcina po głowie. Te wszystkie wydarzenia zostały opisane w Mt 27,27-31. Autor artykułu, posługując się metodą historyczno-krytyczną, przeprowadził analizę literacką oraz egzegetyczno-teologiczną powyższej perykopy. W artykule zwrócono szczególną uwagę na dwa motywy: płaszcza szkarłatnego i korony cierniowej. Podjęte czynności badawcze pozwoliły lepiej zrozumieć, dlaczego żołnierze posłużyli się akurat nimi, a nie jakimiś innymi przedmiotami, oraz odpowiedzieć na pytania, jak wyglądała, z czego była wykonana i do czego służyła korona cierniowa włożona na głowę Chrystusa oraz czym mógł być i w jakim celu został nałożony na Jezusa płaszcz szkarłatny. Autor, zafascynowany postacią bł. kard. Stefana Wyszyńskiego, nie zakończył swych dociekań na tekście biblijnym, lecz dodatkowo przeanalizował *Zapiski więzienne*, w których można odnaleźć wzmiankę o tym, że płaszcz Prymasa Tysiąclecia został przekazany przez komunistycznego ministra do teatru, by mógł być wykorzystywany podczas przedstawień ośmieszających Kościół. Natomiast pioska kard. Stefana Wyszyńskiego symbolicznie przywodziła mu na myśl koronę cierniową i poranioną głowę Chrystusa. Powyższe zestawienia potwierdziły zachodzącą analogię pomiędzy płaszczem szkarłatnym i płaszczem Prymasa Tysiąclecia oraz między koroną cierniową i pioską.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Jezus, płaszcz szkarłatny, korona cierniowa, bł. Stefan Wyszyński, płaszcz kardynalski, pioska.

**Abstract:** The soldiers of Pontius Pilate, using a scarlet robe, a crown of thorns, a reed, and by kneeling, verbal mockery and spitting, ridiculed Jesus as the king of the Jews and ridiculed the messianic expectations of the chosen people. Additionally, they inflicted pain on Christ by beating him on the head with a reed. All these events are described in Matthew 27:27-31. The author of the article – using the historical-critical method – conducted a literary and exegetical-theological analysis of the above pericope. The article pays particular attention to two motives: the scarlet robe and the crown of thorns. The research activities undertaken allowed us to answer the questions of what the crown of thorns placed on Christ's head looked like, what it was made of and what it was used for, as well as what the scarlet robe could have been and for what purpose it was placed on Jesus. The author, fascinated by the figure of blessed cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, also referred to his *Prison Notes*, which mentions that the coat of the Primate of the Millennium was given by the communist minis-



ter to the theater so that it could be used during performances ridiculing the Church. However, the zucchetto of cardinal Stefan Wyszyński symbolically reminded him of the crown of thorns and the wounded head of Christ. The above information confirms the analogy between the scarlet robe and the cloak of the Primate of the Millennium, as well as between the crown of thorns and the zucchetto.

**Keywords:** Jesus, scarlet robe, crown of thorns, blessed Stefan Wyszyński, cardinal's coat, zucchetto.