Magiczny Kraków

Heritage of the epidemic – witnesses of pandemics in the past in Krakow

2020-04-29

- **Lanterns of the Dead** - the former lanterns of the dead existing to this day in Krakow, were rebuilt into chapels (top holes were bricked up, places where light sources were once set up: lamps, olive muzzles, torches and enriched with statues of saints). They were supposed to warn against places unfriendly to the living, but also to show the way to passers-by and wanderers, and marked exceptional spaces marked with death - they appeared in the vicinity of hospitals, shelters, cemeteries or dangerous places. Examples in Krakow:

  - The only Gothic and best preserved (today located at the Church of St. Nicholas at 9 Kopernika Street – transferred from another location where since the 14th century was warning against crossing the thresholds of St. Valentine's Hospital for lepers.

  - At the exit of St. Sebastian's Street at the back of the Royal Hotel - it was placed in its current location in the early 19th century. It dates back to the middle of the 17th century, probably standing by the now non-existing St. Sebastian's church, which once housed a hospital for the venereal patients and where there was a cemetery for the victims of cholera epidemics. Today it is commonly called the chapel of St. Gertrude.

- **The Chapel of St. John of Nepomuk** - refers to the history of Black Village, where the river Rudawa used to flow, (the saint, associated with Czech Prague, is said to have the power to prevent floods). The chapels with this image were called Nepomukes.

- **The memorial chapel - a pole with a crucifix -** was founded in 1776 - in the place where there used to be a plague cemetery, which was created as a result of a deadly epidemic. The founders of the chapel managed to protect it from death, so in gratitude they were to erect this very cross.

- **The cross commemorating the victims of cholera**, which decimated towns and villages in the 19th century is located at the former cholera cemetery.

- **Small windows in the presbytery of the Basilica of Corpus Christi**, through which holy communion was given and confessions were confessed during the plague (plague air) that prevailed in Krakow in the early 18th century.

- **The grave of St. Simon of Lipnica in the Bernardine Church in Stradom**. Bernardine, who in the 15th century helped the sick during the cholera epidemic in Krakow (the care of the sick was then provided by Franciscans from the Bernardine monastery), fell ill himself and died. After his death, more than 370 miraculous healings and graces were recorded at his tomb, which were attributed to his intercession.

- **Dance of Death** - a Baroque painting combining civic and religious themes on the fragility and

transience of human life, addressed to all states of society. Painted in the last quarter of the 17th century by an unknown artist (Bernardine Church).

- **A special turntable installed in the gateway in the convent of the Sisters of the Discalced Carmelite** (Kopernika Street). The sisters living behind the cloister only through the grille make contact with people coming to the monastery, and the turntable is used to receive and hand over objects to people outside the monastery, limiting direct contact with the outside world.

- **The statue of Our Lady of Graces (of Faenza) from 1771** - (on the Planty, near Collegium Novum), comes from the cemetery gate of St. Mary's Church (after the liquidation of the cemetery it was moved twice, destroyed during the storm in 2007, was restored and returned to the university district. It is a symbol of the one "which crushes the shots of the plague, the shots of all evil, and which goes through the world again" – patron of displaced people.