

Institute of National Remembrance

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Prof. Krzysztof Szwagrzyk with the Włodzimierz Pietrzak Award

“It was difficult to find our heroes, but it happens fortunately and on a scale that arouses my joy. I believe that this is a fulfillment of the Polish Christian duty,” said the Deputy President of the IPN and acting Director of the Office for Search and Identification Prof. Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, receiving the Włodzimierz Pietrzak Award at the Royal Castle in Warsaw.















The laureates of the 71st edition of the distinction awarded by the "Civitas Christiana" Catholic Association are also the architect Stanisław Niemczyk and the director Michał Kondrat.

During the gala at the Royal Castle in Warsaw a letter from Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki was read out by Paweł Szrot, Deputy Head of the Prime Minister's office. "'Civitas Christiana' honours people who implement the values of Christian humanism and patriotism, promoting the principles of Catholic social teaching. The Włodzimierz Pietrzak Award is an expression of appreciation for the momentous achievements of people who work for the common good from the need of the heart. Respectfully, I pay tribute to the winners of this year's award, " wrote the Prime Minister.

Morawiecki congratulated the winners. Prof. Szwagrzyk was appreciated for his "invaluable contribution to restoring the Indomitable Soldiers and victims of the communist regime to their homeland ". "Thank you for the tireless activity and commitment that makes the independent Poland regain its heroes," added the Head of the government. The laudation in honour of the Deputy President of the IPN was given by the editor Marcin Wikło. Quoting his words: "Every district in Poland has its own Lot "Ł", each is equally important to us", he added that prof. Szwagrzyk is an excellent teacher, having inspired many filmmakers and journalists.

"No one will ever be able to undo what has been achieved"

"In the 1950s, a certain Social Security officer told a prisoner he knew

would be executed: "We are going to kill you and hide the burial place so that Anders cannot put up a monument to you." We can refer these words by the executioner to the entire communist system. To kill a man and then make this place secret. Because the murderer always hides what he did. And the communists were murderers," said the Deputy President of the IPN.

"It seemed that in this case they were flawless, even after the date when they lost power, it was difficult to find the heroes. But this is happening and it is on a scale that arouses our joy. I believe that this is the fulfillment of our Polish Christian duty. And we just have to do it. It will always be difficult. Every month, every day somebody wants to prevent our actions", emphasized Prof. Szwagrzyk.

However, according to the Deputy President, several dozen employees of the IPN's Office of Search and Identification and a multitude of volunteers - last year it was 250 people - "have crossed a certain limit". "We are in such a moment that no one will ever be able to undo what has been achieved, it's impossible. This is a proof that this has become holiness for all Poles," he summed up his speech.

The Włodzimierz Pietrzak Award has been awarded continuously since 1948 for "outstanding scientific, artistic and literary creativity, as well as for significant achievements in formative, cultural and social activity, being a testimony of universal human and Christian values, and attitudes and achievements expressing them in the life of the nation."

Prof. Krzysztof Szwagrzyk heads the IPN's search for secret burial sites of the victims of the communist regime. He conducts exhumation activities, including on "Łączka" - at the Warsaw Military Cemetery in Powązki. Works under his direction are also held in Służewiec and at the Bródno Cemetery in Warsaw, in the Opole region, in Białystok, in Rzeszów and at the Garrison Cemetery in Gdańsk. Motivation for the Chapter to award Prof. Krzysztof Szwagrzyk is his "tireless and determined efforts to restore Indomitable Soldiers to the Homeland," we may read in a special statement by "Civitas Christiana".

The Włodzimierz Pietrzak Award was also received this year by the architect Stanisław Niemczyk, the creator of outstanding works of sacred architecture, which - in the opinion of the Chapter of the Award - are the fruit of faith and talent. Called the "Polish Gaudi", he is the designer of commercial, residential and religious buildings. He became famous as the creator of unusual churches: the Pentecost and the Franciscan Church in Tychy, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Katowice-Pawłowice, Christ the King, the Redeemer of Man in Czechowice-Dziedzice, and the Divine Mercy on the Oficerskie estate in Cracow.

Promoting evangelical values in various aspects of public life - this is the motive for awarding the Pietrzak award to the director Michał Kondrat, the creator of films about Christian themes. Documentary-fictionalized productions: "Jak pokonać Szatana" [How to Defeat Satan] (2013), "Matteo" (2014) or "Dwie Korony" [Two Crowns] (2017), win cinema audiences and prestigious awards from critics. The last film

devoted to Father Maximilian Kolbe was viewed on the big screen by over 200,000 viewers, which is the Polish record for a documentary film of recent years. The director himself says: "I am an economist by education, a director and a producer by passion, and a Christian by heart."

As explained by Tomasz Nakielski, chairman of "Civitas Christiana", the Chapter of the Award wants to recognize and distinguish those people and institutions in the fields of culture, formation, education or social involvement that in their activity, not only present a high level, but are also characterized by faithfulness to religious and patriotic values. "The point is that they are the witnesses of values, that in their life and work they should be guided by religious and national values," explains Tomasz Nakielski.

The Chapter of the Włodzimierz Pietrzak are: Bishop Prof. dr hab. Michał Janocha - chairman of the Council of the Polish Episcopate Conference on Culture and Protection of Cultural Heritage, Bishop Dr Wiesław Alojzy Mering, Father Dr Dariusz Wojtecki, Tomasz Nakielski, Sławomir Józefiak and Romuald Gumienniak (Secretary of the Chapter).

Since the very beginning Włodzimierz Pietrzak (1913-1944) - lawyer, writer and literary critic, cultural theoretician and journalist, but also a social and political activist and a soldier of the Warsaw Uprising, has been the patron of the Award.

Sources: IPN, Civitas Christiana

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