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Poles object to Assumption Day Madonna concert

Jonathan Luxmoore | Jun. 24, 2009

WARSAW, Poland -- Roman Catholics here are trying to stop a Madonna concert planned for the day the church celebrates the assumption into heaven of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

"To make money by holding a concert on such a day by a singer with such a name is ethically dubious," said Grzegorz Kalwarczyk, chancellor of the Warsaw archdiocese. "Although it will probably go ahead, it is not surprising that people are voicing dissatisfaction, and protesting."

Madonna's concert in the Polish capital is planned for Aug. 15, which is a public holiday in Poland. The word, "Madonna," from the Italian meaning "my lady," is a traditional way of referring to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Catholics believe that at the end of her life Mary, unlike other people, was taken up -- or assumed -- body and soul into heaven.

Kalwarczyk said his office has received numerous telephone calls from Catholics worried about the concert, which will form part of Madonna's 15-country "Sticky and Sweet Tour," opening in London next month. "It may be a deliberate provocation, or just a case of thoughtlessness. It is hard to say," Kalwarczyk said.

A senior lay Roman Catholic, Krzysztof Zagozda, who is a spokesperson for Poland's Catholic Unum Principium association, said the newly formed protest committee would "do everything" to prevent the performance.

"We do not believe in accidents. Someone has chosen this date deliberately," Zagozda was quoted as saying on the Moje Miasto Web site.

In 2006, the Vatican protested when Madonna appeared crucified on a giant cross at Rome's Olympic Centre, less than a mile from St Peter's Square.

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