

LADY OF OPOLE CHAPEL

For centuries, the Lady of Opole painting has been staking out an important place in the hearts of not only Opole residents but also many pilgrims. Today, the followers come to the Lady of Opole with minor and major worries of everyday life. Sometimes they just drop by for a while to pay their respect to Virgin Mary. They bow their heads, whisper a prayer and leave full of faith and hope that the Savior's Mother would listen to them, just as she listened to those who confided their life in her.

And there are many examples proving it. The miraculous nature of the painting from Piekary was formally recognized in the XVIIth century, when Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor, moved it to the Saint Clements Jesuit Collegiate Church in Czech Prague in order to protect the city. The city at Vltava was decimated by a plague at that time. Sources say that those who prayed in front of the painting, at that time called The Lady of Piekary, regained health.

On March 15th, 1680 the painting was moved along the street of Prague in a solemn and pleading procession to the Saint Wit Cathedral, shortly after ... the plague stopped. The Prague bishop John Friderick described it as "miraculous". The Lady was given votives as a gift and once She came back to Piekary, Her cult became common. On August 8th, 1681, Opole residents set off on a thankful pilgrimage to thank the Mother of God for the end of the plague from 1679 to 1680. According to the recommendations of the City Council of that time, one person from every family from Opole took part in the pilgrimage.

In 1739 during the great fire in our city, the painting of the Mother of God was carried along the streets of Opole. According to sources, when the procession was heading to the church, heavy rain fell and extinguished the destructive fire. One year later, the Mother of God supported the residents of our borough and ceased the flood in the same way. As a result, followers from Silesia and even Czech Republic started to make pilgrimages to the Lady of Opole. There were tens of pilgrimages every year. One year, there were even 113 of them!

In 1683, Jesuits moved the miraculous painting to Opole for the first time in order to protect it from the coming attack of Turks. The followers from Piekary, despite protests, had to accept the copy of the painting. It was the copy of the painting in front of which, the Polish king John III Sobieski was praying on the way to the legendary Battle of Vienna. As a sign of gratitude for the victory over the Turks, he gave the Mother of God a silver dress as a gift. In 1697, the future Polish King August II Sas was also praying in front of the painting on his way to the coronation. Later, in 1702, in a fear of Deluge, the Lady of Piekary was moved to Opole and stayed here for good.

It is certain that the image of the Mother of Jesus from Piekary was painted on three joined boards made of lime tree. This tempera was created in an anonymous painting workshop between 1480 and 1500. Where? We don't know. The painting bears some similarities to the paintings created in Czech Republic at that time. The Virgin Mary in the painting holds Baby Jesus in her right arm and gives an apple to Christ with her left arm. Baby Jesus on the other hand, indicates his mother with his right hand and supports his left arm on the Gospel Book.

The Jesuits' chronicle from the XVIIIth century says that the Mother of God from the painting seems to watch everyone looking at her with her mother eyes.

For a long time, the miraculous painting was exhibited in several places. After the liquidation of the Jesuit monastery in 1810, the painting was placed in one of the Opole churches, the so-called "church on a hill", which is situated not far away from here. In 1830, during the Napoleonic wars it was moved to the Holy Cross Church and placed in a southern side chapel.

Today the image of the Lady of Opole is placed at a beautiful baroque altar dating back to 1718. The altar was bought by the parish priest of that time - priest Józef Kubis. in Jelenia Góra. He was the same priest who, due to the war, commissioned Mrs. Professor Fey from Berlin with creating a faithful copy of the Lady of Opole. The copy was next hung in the cathedral and the original was hidden in nearby Prószków. The painting came back to its place after the war.

June 23rd 1983 is one of the most important days of the history of the painting, but also of the Opole Cathedral and the whole diocese. John Paul II during his second pilgrimage to Poland also visited St. Anna Mountain. There he crowned the image of the Lady of Opole with the papal crowns.

It is worth to add that, other great celebrities presented the Lady of Opole with other precious objects over centuries. Pope John XXIII gave the Lady of Opole a golden medal and Pope Paul VI a chalice and a golden rosary made of pearls as a gift. Undoubtedly, it is a proof of the painting cult.