



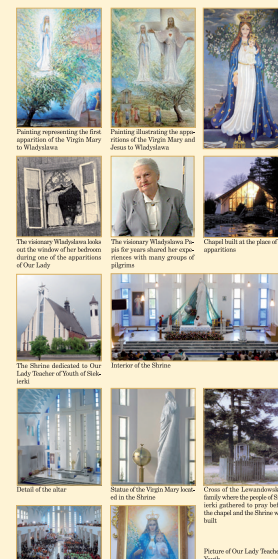
**THE APPEALS
OF OUR LADY
APPARITIONS
AND
MARIAN SHRINES
IN THE WORLD**

Apparitions of the Virgin Mary at SIEKIERKI

POLAND, 1943

During the Second World War there weren't churches in the region of Siekierki and it was not even possible to build one due to the war. Thus the people assembled to pray near a large cross placed in a field. On the evening of May 3, 1943, during the celebration of Our Lady Queen of Poland, in the midst of the war, twelve-year-old Władysława Papias returned home after having gone with other children to pray beneath the cross. Władysława leaned out of the window of her small bedroom to admire the splendid view that overlooked an orchard full of trees in bloom, next to the Wilanówka River. Once again, like near the cross, she prayed through the intercession of the Virgin Mary for two boys: one a Jew, who after escaping from the Ghetto had found refuge with the inhabitants of the village and one mentally ill, resident of Siekierki. At the end of this moment of prayer, behind a cherry tree in bloom, the girl discerned a luminous figure, similar to the Virgin Mary depicted on pictures. She welcomed her with a long and intense prayer. The Virgin Mary observed her and waited. Władysława sensed to have forgotten someone in her prayers. Then she remembered about her uncle who was very sick and asked that he could be restored to health. However, the Holy Virgin was still waiting. Władysława understood that her prayer was not yet finished and said: "I ask you to heal my uncle but if it does not happen, I beg you to take him to Heaven, next to you dear Mother". At that point Our Lady turned to the right three times and disappeared. Afterwards she recounted the entire occurrence first to her mother and then to her father. The parents of Władysława were skeptical and very concerned, thus they brought their daughter to the doctor. Numerous and accurate medical exams showed that the girl was healthy and did not need any kind of treatment. The diagnosis of a well-known psychiatrist in Warsaw, was confirmed by the counsel of eight physicians with different specialties. The visions repeated themselves during the following days, months and years. However each vision was different, as if completing and deepening the previous ones. The manner and type of contact with the Virgin Mary was becoming always more mature. At first the girl was seeing only the image, full of warmth and affection. After the conclusion of every vision she longed to see the Lady again. During the following visions, next to Our Lady appeared some signs, writings and symbols. For example: "Sing and pray here"; now build a cross or a chapel; "pray, because upon you is about to arrive a severe punishment, a heavy cross"; "the people are not converting"; "this place is sacred"; "I have come to let you know that if you will follow me you will not get lost". On May 21, 1943, when the Virgin Mary was urging conversion, she had with her a stone tablet with the number "X" written symbolizing the Ten Commandments after the Warsaw Uprising. Władysława asked, on behalf of the people present gathered in prayer, the date of the conclusion of the war. On a "strip of light" appeared the date "1945". The apparition of July 19, 1943 was exceptionally important. Right then the Virgin Mary dictated to the girl the text of the Litany to Our Lady and of the prayer in her honor. There were also some predictions transmitted by the Virgin Mary to Władysława that came true on time. One example is the one regarding the handing over of the place "to the friars devoted to teaching", the creation of a Shrine devoted to the education of the youth, the bells that would have announced the particular presence of the Virgin Mary in this place, and numerous others... Upon request of the ecclesiastical prefect, Father Feliks Smit, who was not skeptical towards those revelations, Władysława began to write some notes following the apparitions. In this way "the register of the apparitions of Siekierki" was created. The register represents an important document that describes the events of that time. After the apparitions, Władysława, faithful and obedient to Our Lady, organized group prayers for youth and adults. The group prayers were becoming always more popular and brought to Siekierki increasingly larger crowds. It is important to point out that the German soldiers who had their headquarters in the vicinity, knew about these gatherings and never intervened. The pilgrims who were coming to pray brought some stones and other materials and objects originating from the destroyed buildings of the capital. In 1946 the chapel was built with these materials, while the apparitions were still ongoing. The last apparition took place on September 15, 1949, during the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. At that time Władysława was 18 years old. This time Jesus Christ appeared to her, pronouncing the following words: "I came to tell you that I am with you... All those who do not respect me put me on the cross. Pray for them. Defend me, because one day I will thank you... Do not abandon me, all of you who obey me. Now I am leaving but you continue to pray to my Mother, because

now she is listening to you". The Lord Jesus spoke also of His great love for the people and of His Real Presence in the Eucharist: "Do not pass with indifference near the churches. I wait for you in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I can alleviate any suffering; I can console any afflicted heart if that heart turns to me with trust and security" (September 26, 1943). "I am waiting for you, hidden in the Tabernacle. Kneel in front of the altar and pray" (January 19, 1944). Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland, often stayed at Siekierki. He knew very well the uniqueness and the difficulties of this place. He knew about the group prayers of the inhabitants of Siekierki and of the numerous pilgrims who were going there. In the 1960s Mrs. Władysława, following the suggestion of the Pauline Fathers of Jasna Góra and thanks to their support, prepared a description of the events of that time. The general minister of the convent of the Pauline Fathers, Father Paweł Kosiak, involved in the work of the Episcopal Commission for the devotion to Our Lady, sent that documentation to Cardinal Wyszyński. The Cardinal, during the visit to Siekierki of October 4, 1970 declared to the faithful gathered near the chapel: "If I will not do it, it will be my successor to build the church, so that the Virgin Mary may obtain her necessary glory". In those years such words were absolutely unrealistic. In Warsaw, already for many years, the communist authorities did not give any authorization to the construction of churches or of other sacred buildings. This prophecy of the Primate was fulfilled some years later. There were no other apparitions similar to those of Siekierki. In 1942 the Second World War was ongoing. Its enormity weighed also upon the young visionaries who came to know the events through accounts of the elderly. The war was here, at Siekierki. It killed the people - like the three men assassinated, because the Germans found the body of a murdered soldier on the Vistula River. The war caused hunger and poverty, depriving the family of the visionary of their house, built a few years earlier. Hunger meant that the mother of the visionary was forced before dawn, not respecting the curfew, to walk some kilometers towards the railway station to buy provisions and sell her flour at bargain prices in the bakeries of Warsaw. The family of Saint Bernadette of Lourdes was poor, also the family of Mariette of Banneux was poor. But such miserable living conditions as in Siekierki had never been experienced in any place where the Virgin Mary had appeared. We must add that the apparitions of Siekierki took place during the Warsaw Uprising, where many houses were burned, and where entire families were forced to migrate... There weren't similar apparitions also for other reasons. The Virgin Mary before then had never sung, even dictating the words and the notes of a song in her honor. Moreover, at Siekierki she invited the children to the recitation of the Holy Rosary also teaching them how to say it. In the apparition of October 10, 1943 she invited the people to practice the 3 theological virtues: "Difficult times will come, but those who will have a spark of faith, hope and love, will not be lost". At Siekierki the Virgin Mary seems to speak about the possibility of avoiding an historic cataclysm. We must remember that what we see and hear in the messages of Our Lady is always the representation of a network of roads on which humanity can travel and what awaits us if we don't convert. On September 2, 1943, the Virgin Mary asked to honor her as Our Lady of Youth saying also the following words: "My Son died young. Therefore, mothers, whose children died, pray and request in a particular way today, because today is your feast". Our Lady of Youth is not a patron of mothers who mourn their own children, but of the youth, who search their own way of life, of the true values and of the meaning of life. This different kind of interpretation does not surprise in these days, when "the youth are the hope of the Church and of the Pope". On July 31, 1945 the Virgin Mary gave this accurate message: "Pray because a great punishment is coming upon you, a very heavy cross. I cannot restrain the wrath of my Son, because the people are not converting. Kneel every day until August 6, from noon to 3 PM and ask to obtain forgiveness for the sins of the whole world". Mary has stated the purpose of her apparitions at Siekierki: "I have come to let you know that if you will follow my steps, you shall not die". It is a universal message, addressed to all humanity. Both Our Lady and Our Lord Jesus left many messages for the faithful. One of these was that Mary appeared as Mother and Teacher of the youth.



Painting representing the first apparition of the Virgin Mary at Siekierki.

Painting illustrating the apparitions of the Virgin Mary and Jesus to Władysława.

Chapel built at the place of the apparitions.

The visionary Władysława looks out the window of her bedroom during one of the apparitions of Our Lady.

The visionary Władysława Papias for years shared her experiences with many groups of pilgrims.

Interior of the Shrine.

The Shrine dedicated to Our Lady, Teacher of Youth of Siekierki.

Detail of the altar.

Statue of the Virgin Mary kneeling in the Shrine.

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Statue of the Virgin Mary kneeling in the Shrine.

Cross of the Lewandowski family where the people of Siekierki gathered to pray before the end and the Shrine were built.

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Photo: J. Kozłowski