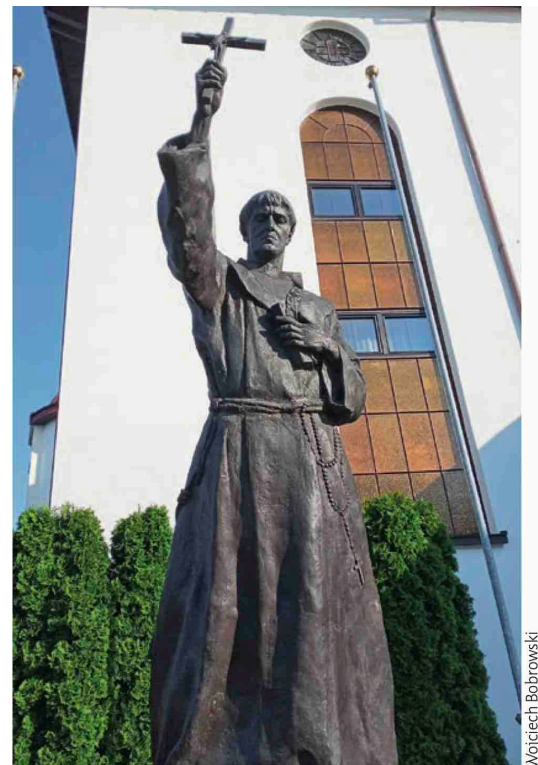


## BERNARDINE. MYSTIC. POET.

"It is impossible to understand Warsaw without Bl. Wladyslaw from Gielniow," said John Paul II in the 400th anniversary of the city's capital. Who was the man to whom the Polish Pope paid such honour?

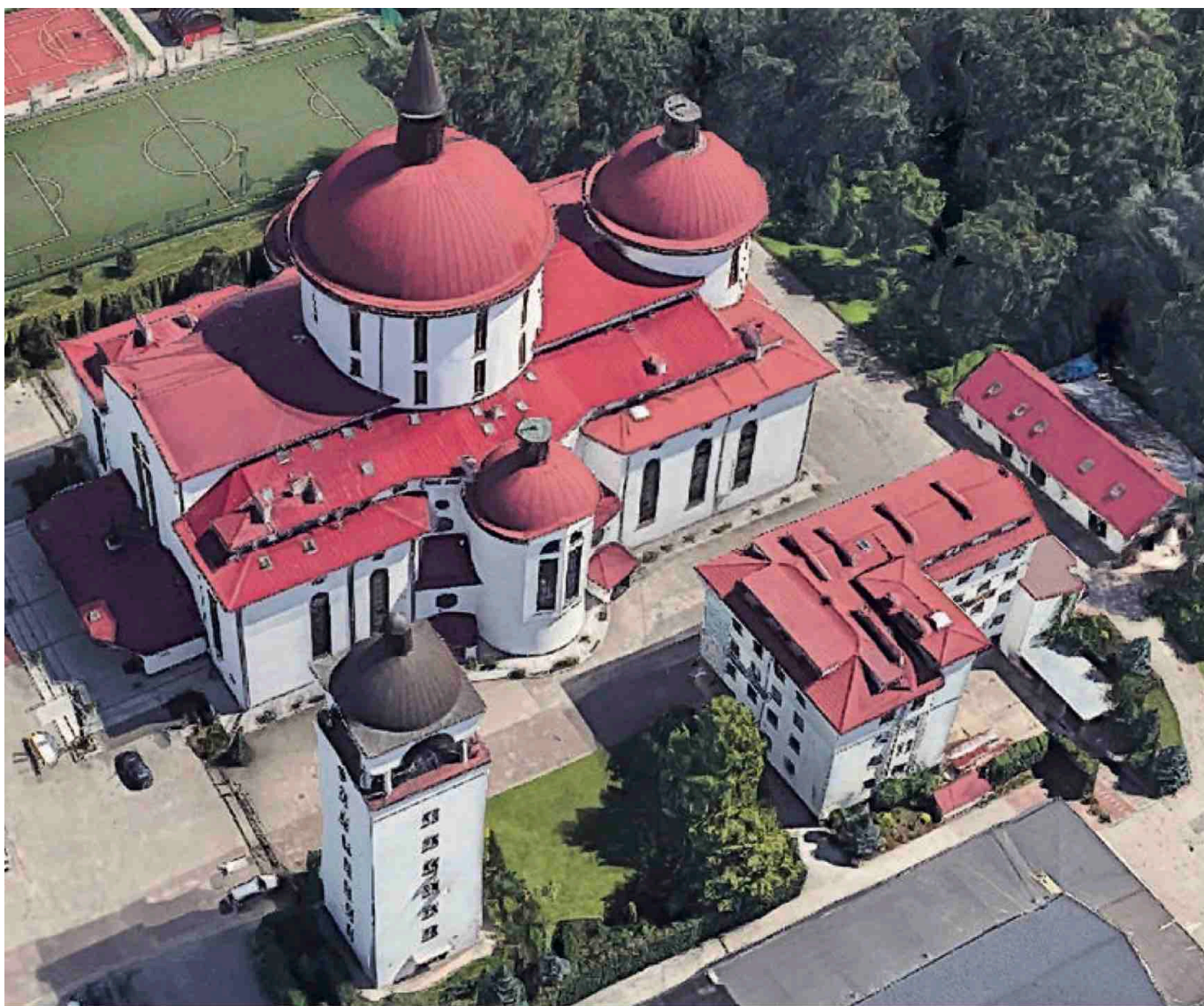
When a few months ago the whole world trembled with fear of an unknown virus, the Bernardines of the parish of St. Boniface from Taras in Mokotow, exhibited for the faithful a painting of a praying Blessed Wladyslaw. The faithful, as of centuries ago, recited a litany containing the invitation: "Bl. Wladyslaw, Protector during the plague, pray for us." The patron of Warsaw is remembered by his contemporaries as an ascetic, an exceptional confessor and preacher. His Bernardine brothers also remember him as an excellent organizer. On the other hand, literary historians describe him as one of the pioneers of Polish writing. The future blessed was born around 1440 in Gielniow near Opoczno. At baptism, he was given two names, Marcin and John. After graduating from the parish school, he continued his education at the Krakow Academy. In 1462, he joined the Bernardine Order, taking the name of Wladyslaw. He studied theology in Krakow and was ordained to the priesthood. He was twice elected the superior of the Polish Bernardine province. Every year he was obliged to visit all its locations, including the Warsaw one, and there were 22 of them all over the country. When Wladyslaw led in the Polish Bernardine Province, it expanded to include posts in the Lithuanian Polock and Skepe in Kujawy. However, the most significant work of Wladyslaw was his contribution to the creation of the constitution of the congregation, which for a long time became an internal law for the province. The legislator's and organizer's talents were not the only ones Wladyslaw possessed. Professor Ignacy Chrzanowski, father of blessed Hanna Chrzanowska, distinguishes him from other authors of medieval religious songs. He described Wladyslaw as the first Polish poet known not only by name, but also by deeds and great piety. Professor Chrzanowski also mentioned in his work that Wladyslaw was consistently introducing the Polish language to prayers and teaching. Wladyslaw's most popular work for a long time was the Song of the Passion. This piece has also been translated into Czech. Another interesting song is one of the first Polish Christmas carols about the Birth of the Lord. It has the form of "abecadius" because each verse began with the next letter of the alphabet. Bl. Wladyslaw was two generations ahead of Mikolaj Rej who has been announced in school textbooks as the first poet to write in Polish.

For princes and beggars, Wladyslaw was transferred to the Warsaw monastery of St. Anna, when he reached the age of 65 which was an incredibly old age for those times. This monastery was built in 1454. It was only a year younger than the first one in Krakow, which, through its patron Bernard of Siena, named the entire Polish branch of the Franciscan order. Today, centuries later, we can still visit and admire the church of St. Anna and the magnificent belfry in Krakowskie Przedmiescie. At this point, Wladyslaw came to the end of his days in the way that poet Norwid described: "The end-of-life whispers to its beginning: I will not scare you, no - I will emphasize you". Wladyslaw's entire earthly journey was filled with asceticism, prayer, and penance. He slept covering himself only with his own habit, walked barefoot, and mortified his body with fasting and whipping. He was so demanding of himself that he alerted the novice administrators that they would not be fervent in applying the trials on young candidates. However, he was extremely strict with the brothers who violated the constitution. In Warsaw, he confessed penitents from princely palaces as well as street beggars. He has also gone down in the history of the Church as an excellent, passionate preacher spreading the worship of Jesus Christ and Mary, The Mother of God. Hagiographic texts say that he worked many miracles during his lifetime. During the Good Friday sermon at St. Anna Church he fell into ecstasy. Legend has it that, preaching the Word of God, he rose above the pulpit. He died shortly after this event on May 4, 1504. Soon after, the people of Warsaw began to worship him as a saint.



*Monument to Bl. Wladyslaw from Gielniow*

In today's Warsaw, the cult of Bl. Wladyslaw is still alive, mainly concentrated in a few of the city's churches. Let us start with the church of St. Anna in Krakowskie Przedmiescie. There is a chapel bearing his name and an altar with the shrine of its patron. On the day of Bl. Wladyslaw's memorial, September 25, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński would visit the church of St. Anna. It was one of the three most important Warsaw places of worship, especially for young people and students. In the notes Pro Memoria of September 25, 1952, Cardinal Wyszyński made a remark in his sermon that Blessed Wladyslaw showed the positive importance of the saints' models for the living. John Paul II, with the words that it is impossible to understand Warsaw without its saints, with Wladyslaw in forefront, said the same words. The following year Cardinal Wyszyński couldn't go and visit the church of St Anna because he was arrested shortly after returning from the church in Krakowskie Przedmiescie.



The second place of worship of the patron saint of Warsaw is the Bernardine centre in the parish of St. Boniface of Tarsus located at the beginning of Czerniakowska St. It is here that the old painting of Wladyslaw with the city panorama in the background is located. The Blessed Wladyslaw prays before Christ to stop the arrows of God's wrath.

In Ursynow there is a parish whose patron is Bl. Wladyslaw. In the years 1985-2000 one of the largest churches in Warsaw was built there. Its builder was Fr. Eugeniusz Ledwoch. He performed his assignment with great determination, energy, and humility. Unfortunately, he died two years after the consecration of the church. The church is 72 meters long and 2.5 thousand sq m in capacity. It can accommodate over 4,000 worshipers. It also has the largest bell in Warsaw - named Wladyslaw. Due to its grandeur, the temple is clearly visible from the airplanes frequently flying over Kabaty. The interior of the church is even more impressive. In the middle of the 18th century, the beatification process of Wladyslaw was completed, and Pope Clement XIII declared him the patron of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania. Thanks to Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski in the sixties of the last century, John XXIII announced him the patron saint of Warsaw, which was an official confirmation of a centuries-old tradition. Currently, this title is given to the Blessed Virgin Mary Graced from the image in the Jesuit church in the Old Town, and Wladyslaw is a secondary patron of Poland's capital city. The canonization process of Bl. Wladyslaw started in 1963, it stopped at the stage of preparing the positio. Now we need a signal from the faithful about the miracle requested through his intercession.

Wojciech Bobrowski