

THE VIRGIN MARY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Gietrzwald, Poland 1877

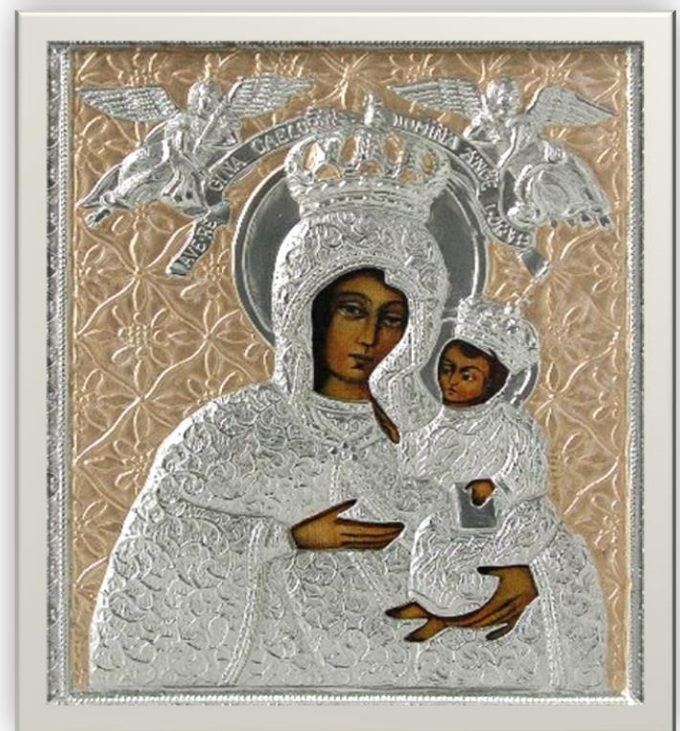
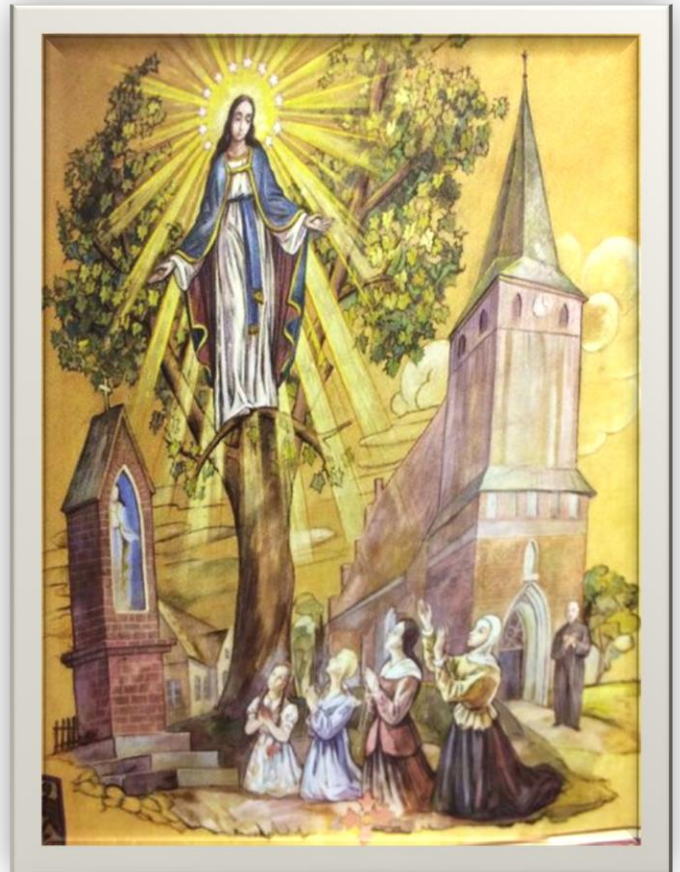
NINETEEN years after the apparitions at Lourdes in which the Blessed Mother identified herself as the Immaculate Conception, she called herself by the same name to two indigent girls in Gietrzward, Poland. The visionaries were Justyna Szafrynska who was thirteen years old and Barbara Samulowska who was twelve.

THE FIRST APPARITION

Justyna had just taken an examination prior to receiving her First Holy Communion and was walking home with her mother when she saw the Blessed Mother in front of the church in Gietrzwald. The date was June 27, 1877. The next day Barbara also saw the “bright lady” sitting on a throne with the Infant Jesus. The vision, which was surrounded by angels, took place near a maple tree in front of the parish church.

Both girls asked the Blessed Mother, “What do you require, Mother of God?” The heavenly answer was “I would like you to recite the Rosary every day.” As to the question, “Who are you?” The vision answered, “I am the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception.”

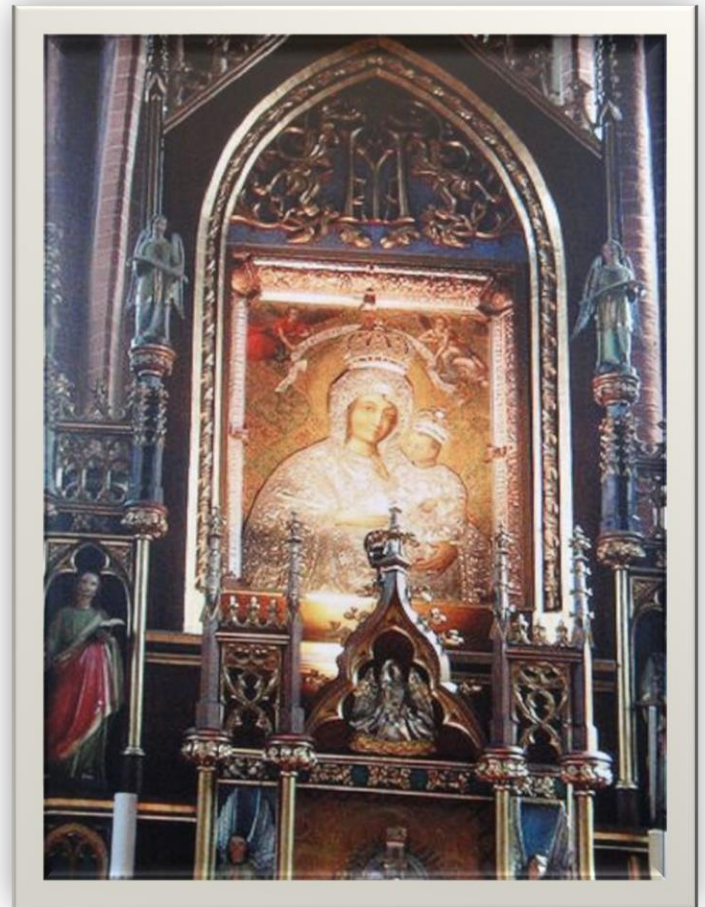
The girls asked other questions, including whether sick people who came there



would be healed. The vision assured them that many would be healed, but they should pray the Rosary.

THE SECOND APPARITION

Because the area was then under the oppression of the Russians, Barbara asked the apparition on August 1, 1877, during the second apparition, whether the deserted parishes would open and receive priests. The Holy Mother answered, “If people pray zealously the Church will not be persecuted and the parishes will receive their priests.” On August 8, at seven o’clock in the evening, the Holy Mother blessed the nearby spring and said the words: “Now the sick people can take this water for their healing.” The water from this spring has been used as a sacramental ever since.



The Blessed Mother appeared for the last time on September 16, 1877.

Our Lady’s predictions had come true. Many were healed by using the water from the spring, and the closed parishes were opened with many priests assigned to them. Before the last of the visions, the administrator of the diocese, Bishop Filip Krementz, assembled a commission to examine the authenticity of the apparitions. The members were to observe the state and behavior of the visionaries in the course of their apparitions and to prepare a record of their testimonies and those of pilgrims and clergy. The commission’s first declaration was that the girls behaved normally and did not seem to be seeking profit or acknowledgment. “They possessed modesty, sincerity and simplicity.”

After receiving the results of the commission, the bishop promoted the publication in German and Polish of a study entitled “The Apparitions of Our Lady in Gietrzward to the Catholic People According to the Official Documents.”

As in all churches in the world, the Gietrzward church also has a revered image, a

portrait of the Blessed Madonna holding the Infant Jesus on her left arm. In time, the garments and crowns were sheathed in silver. Dating from 1568, the portrait was renovated many times. For the ninetieth anniversary of the apparitions the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski visited the shrine and crowned the image. Soon after, the Holy See granted the Gietrzward Virgin's feast to be observed on September 8 with special propers (the prayers that pertain specifically to the feast being celebrated) of the Mass and Breviary. Pope Paul VI elevated the church in Gietrzward to the rank of Basilica Minor. The apparitions were again confirmed on the one hundredth anniversary by Bishop Jozef Drzazga and reads in part, Taking into account the conformity of the Gietrzward apparitions with faith and morality, the integrity of the recipients of those apparitions, and the blest effects of them over the whole century ... we hereby approve the devotion to Our Lady's apparitions in Gietrzward as not contradicting Christian faith and morality whose miraculous and divine nature cannot be excluded.

As a result of the visions, the people took Our Lady's message to heart and recited the Rosary in private homes, in churches, and in groups. In some churches, the Rosary was recited three times a day. The visionaries received their education in the St. Joseph House in Pelplin. Both took the habit of the Sisters of Charity in 1880. Barbara Samulowska was in France for a time and was then sent to Guatemala where she was the administrator of the Central Hospital for many years.