



SILENT HOMILIES

The Hill They Named a Wall

*Tyniec, and the Benedictines
who kept coming back*



Silent Homilies

Little Treasures



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*Tyniec, and the Benedictines
who kept coming back*

*A small book of forgotten facts,
short stories, and quiet hope.*

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the Benedictines of Tyniec, who have prayed on a limestone hill above the Vistula for most of a thousand years, and to the people who still take the slower road out of Kraków in order to sit in a church that has been burned, emptied, and begun again.

Preface

Most visitors to Kraków see Wawel, the Market Square and Łagiewniki. Tyniec sits a few kilometres down the river. It is easy to miss if you are in a hurry. That is part of its character. The abbey was never built only to be photographed. It was built as a place of prayer on a rock, at a time when the young Polish Church and the young Polish state had both nearly fallen.

The name already tells a story. Tyniec comes from an old word for a wall or a fence. Before there were monks here there was a fortified settlement. The Benedictines did not invent the hill. They were invited onto a place that already knew how to hold.

This book is not a list of opening hours. It tries to say, in ordinary language, why this rock still matters, and what a visitor is looking at when the Vistula turns below the limestone. Some of the facts are well known. Some are less so. Historians still argue about who exactly founded the abbey. Under the present floor lie the graves of early abbots, a tiny gold travelling chalice, and the oldest abbatial croziers found in Poland. For one hundred and twenty-three years there were no monks at all. They came back in July 1939, a month before the war, because an archbishop in Kraków thought a ruin was still worth a community.

I have tried to write so that a reader who has never been there can feel the hill, and a reader who has been there can notice something they walked past.

How to use this book

You may read the chapters in order. They follow the hill from its name to the present community.

If you are going to Tyniec this week, you may begin with the chapter on what lies under the floor, and the chapter on an ordinary monastic day. If you care first about meaning rather than dates, begin with the name, with Peter and Paul, and with the Rule.

Each chapter ends with a short reflection and a prayer. The facts have been checked against the abbey's own history, the work of archaeologists who dug here in the 1960s, and the public record of the return in 1939. Where the sources disagree, I say so. A holy place is not helped by a tidier story than the Church actually possesses.

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Chapter 1

A name that means a wall

Tyniec, tyn, and a fence that became a home.

The name Tyniec is older than the abbey, and it is not a saint's name. Scholars trace it to a word that meant a wall, a fence, or a fortified place. Near Kraków a related word, tynianka, still meant a board from a fence within living memory.

There is a folk tale that a nobleman's horse slipped on the cliff edge and so gave the village its name. The story is charming. It is almost certainly wrong. The hill was called a wall because it behaved like one.

That already changes the way a visitor looks at the limestone. The monks did not arrive in an empty landscape and invent a fortress of prayer. They were placed on a site that people had used as a defence long before the first Benedictine habit was seen on the Vistula. A Celtic word for wall may sit under the Slavic one. Coins and traces of a workshop have been found from centuries before Poland was a Christian kingdom. When the Church came, she did not flatten that older story. She built on top of it. That is often how she works.

A wall can keep danger out. It can also protect a way of life. Tyniec has done both. The river is a wall of water on one side. The rock is a wall of stone. The Rule of Saint Benedict is a wall of hours. None of these walls is unkind. They are the sort of walls that allow a garden to exist.

A Small Reflection

A good wall is not only a refusal. It is also a kindness. A garden needs an edge, or the path walks through the vegetables. Families need an edge too. So do prayer, rest and work. We sometimes treat every boundary as unfriendly. The name of this hill suggests something quieter. Some walls exist so that something living can grow inside them.

A short prayer

Lord, teach me the kindness of a good wall: the sort that keeps a garden alive. Amen.

Chapter 2

The hill before the monks

Stone Age, Celts, Vistulans, and a royal rock.

If you walk the hill slowly, the monks are late arrivals. People were here in the Stone Age. On the summit called Góra Klasztorna there are traces of a Neolithic settlement, including signs of pottery.

Later, in the centuries around the birth of Christ, Celtic people lived in this bend of the river. Historians still speak of a “Tyniec group” when they describe that culture. Silver Celtic coins were struck somewhere on this ground. The hill was already a workshop and a look-out before it was a place of prayer.

The Vistulans, a Slavic people, settled here around the tenth century. By the year 1000 the place belonged to the early Polish realm and was royal land. That last detail matters. An abbey founded on royal land is not a private hobby of a pious noble. It is a decision of the crown about what the country needs after disaster.

The disaster is easy to forget if you only see the present towers against a blue sky. In the 1030s Poland went through what later writers called a pagan reaction. Churches were attacked. The young state almost came apart. Then Duke Bretislaus of Bohemia raided and carried treasures away from Gniezno. Casimir, later called the Restorer, had to begin again. When he looked for help he did not only look for soldiers. He looked for monks who knew how to pray the hours, copy books, and farm a ruined landscape into order. That is the weather in which Tyniec was planted.

A Small Reflection

We often notice only what stands on top of a place. The Church usually builds on ground that already has a story. So do our lives. Before grace arrives, there is already a family, a habit, a wound, a skill. Beginning again does not always mean starting on empty land. It often means returning to the same hill with more patience.

A short prayer

God of the Restorer, when my own life feels pulled apart, give me the patience of people who begin again on the same hill. Amen.

Chapter 3

After the breaking of the young kingdom

Why Casimir looked for Benedictines.

The traditional date is 1044. Jan Długosz, writing in the fifteenth century, says that Casimir the Restorer founded the abbey in that year, and that the first abbot was Aaron, a monk connected with Cluny, who soon became Bishop of Kraków. Długosz does not tell us where he found the date. The foundation charter itself has not survived. Historians therefore argue, politely and at length.

Some say Casimir began the work and his son Bolesław II finished it. A document of the papal legate Giles of Tusculum, from around 1124 or 1125, speaks of endowment from a King Bolesław and a Queen Judith. That can be read in more than one way. Aaron seems to have come from the abbey of Brauweiler. Some of the first community may have come from Liège. The certainty printed on a tourist plaque is warmer than the surviving parchment.

This uncertainty is not a failure of the place. It is a reminder that the Church's oldest houses in Poland stand on a thinner paper trail than we would like. What is not in doubt is the purpose. After chaos, Benedictines were asked to restore order in two directions at once: toward God, by the daily hours of prayer, and toward the land, by work, teaching and a stable community that would still be there when princes were not.

Ora et labora — pray and work — was not a motto for a gift shop. It was a programme for a wounded country.

A Small Reflection

We like a clear founding story. Real beginnings are often messier. Dates argue. Papers go missing. What remains is the purpose. After a collapse, someone has to pray and someone has to work. The two belong together. A life that only prays can float away. A life that only works can forget why the work matters.

A short prayer

Give me honesty about what I do not know, and courage to live what I do. Amen.

Chapter 4

Aaron, abbot and bishop

The first father of the house.

Aaron, if the tradition is right, is one of the more surprising first abbots in Europe. He did not remain only a father of monks. He was made Bishop of Kraków. Some sources even speak of him with a higher dignity in a Church that was still finding its map. A man who has sung the night office on a rock is sent to govern a diocese. The hill and the cathedral are not two careers. They are two rooms of the same house.

There is a later legend that young Casimir himself had taken monastic vows at Cluny and needed a papal dispensation to return and rule, on condition that he found a monastery. The story is beautiful. It is not securely proved. What it captures, even if the details wobble, is the feeling of the eleventh century: that a Christian kingdom without monks is a kingdom with no memory and no choir. Tyniec was meant to be both.

The first church on the hill was not the baroque building a visitor sees today. It was a Romanesque basilica of sandstone blocks, about twenty-four metres long and twelve metres wide, with three naves ending in three apses. It was a modest stone sentence spoken on a large rock. Under the present floor you can still walk its outline. The Church of Saints Peter and Paul that stands now is a later voice. The first voice is underground.

A Small Reflection

Some people are asked to stay in one room. Some are asked to serve in two. Aaron's story is not about collecting titles. It is about a Church that needed both a choir and a bishop. Hidden prayer and public responsibility are not enemies. A person who never learns to be quiet will not lead well. A person who never leaves the quiet may be needed elsewhere too.

A short prayer

Saint Aaron of Tyniec, pray that those who lead the Church may still know how to pray when no one is watching. Amen.

Chapter 5

Peter and Paul on a rock

Why these patrons belong on this cliff.

Why Peter and Paul? The choice of patrons is easy to treat as decoration. On this hill it reads like a sentence.

The Gospel says that Peter is a rock, and that on that rock Christ will build his Church. Tyniec is a limestone crag more than twenty metres above the water. To put Peter's name on such a place is almost a homily in stone. Paul, the apostle of journeys, sits beside him because the river below was a road. Goods, armies and ideas went west toward Silesia along this bend. An abbey here was never only a retreat. It was a lamp on a route.

Cardinal Giles of Tusculum, himself a Cluniac Benedictine, seems to have consecrated the Romanesque church around 1124 and to have left the first surviving document for the house. From that moment Tyniec is no longer only a story Długosz would later tell. It has a paper voice. The legate's visit also ties the hill to Cluny, which in those centuries was teaching Europe how a monastery could be both poor in spirit and rich in order.

A visitor who lights a candle at Peter and Paul in Tyniec is doing something older than the black marble altars. He is answering a dedication that said, in effect: this rock will try to be a church, and this river will try to be a road for the Gospel rather than only for trade.

A Small Reflection

A rock without a road becomes a private hideout. A road without a rock becomes only traffic. The two patrons on this hill keep that balance. Some of us need more stability. Some of us need to move toward people we have avoided. The Church asks for both: a place to stand, and a willingness to travel.

A short prayer

*Peter and Paul, hold this rock and this road. Hold also the small road
I walk today. Amen.*

Chapter 6

Fire from the east and fire from a kinsman

Tatars in 1259, Gerlach in 1306.

Peace was not the climate of the hill. In 1259, or 1260 depending on the chronicle, Tatar horsemen coming from Kraków toward Silesia destroyed the abbey. The stone wall and the towers that had been added in the thirteenth century were not enough.

Half a century later, in 1306, the place was burned again. This time the fire did not come from a distant horde. It came from Gerlach de Culpen, kinsman of Bishop Jan Muskata, in the ugly war between the bishop and Duke Władysław Łokietek.

A house of prayer can be burned by Christians as well as by pagans. The hill has known both. Each time the monks came back to the same rock. That stubbornness is easy to praise from a distance. It is harder to live.

Rebuilding a church with the smell of the last fire still in the stones is a form of faith that does not photograph well. The fourteenth century added stronger fortifications. For a time the abbey even served as a royal stronghold on the southern edge of the state. When the border moved, Tyniec lost some of that military job. That may have been a mercy. A monastery that is too useful as a fortress will be treated as one.

A Small Reflection

Not every wound comes from outside. Sometimes the damage is done by people who share the same faith and the same language. The hill does not hide that fact. Coming back without bitterness is slower than coming back with a speech. Repair often begins with one stone, not with a new war about who was right.

A short prayer

Christ of burned churches, show us how to come back to the same place without bitterness. Amen.

Chapter 7

The church they consecrated in 1463

Gothic stone, black marble, a pulpit like a boat.

The church a pilgrim enters now is mostly a later building. A new Gothic church was raised in the fifteenth century and consecrated on 9 October 1463, in the time of Abbot Maciej of Skawina. The scale is local rather than imperial. It fits the hill. Gothic cloisters grew around the courtyard. A chapter house with a cross vault had already appeared in the east range at the start of the fourteenth century.

Baroque and then rococo dressed the interior later, after further wars. The black Dębniaki marble of the high altar, the work of Francesco Placidi, still startles people who expect only gold. The pulpit in the form of Saint Peter's boat is a piece of theatre that happens to be theology. Peter fishes from a wooden pulpit because the hill is still a shore.

None of this decoration should hide the poorer fact that the community kept having to begin again. The Swedish Deluge of the mid-seventeenth century damaged the abbey as it damaged so much of the Commonwealth. A library was built after that wound. That is a very Benedictine reply to fire: copy more books.

A Small Reflection

After damage, some people reach first for a slogan. The monks reached first for a library. That is not glamorous. It is wise. When something is broken, the next faithful act may be very small: a hinge, a page, a repaired roof. Grand speeches can wait. The boat-shaped pulpit still says the same thing. The Church is not only a fortress. She is also a boat that keeps fishing.

A short prayer

Blessed the hands that built again in 1463. Bless the hands that still repair a hinge. Amen.

Chapter 8

The fortress, the emperor, and 123 years

Bar, 1816, lightning, empty walls.

In 1771 the Bar Confederates — Poles in revolt against Russian influence and a king they did not trust — turned Tyniec into a fortress. Earthworks appeared on neighbouring rises. The monastery hill became the heart of a small war. The fighting that began around 20 May 1771 lasted more than a year. When the confederates finally surrendered, it was to Austrian troops. The abbey that had been a choir was now a wreck with gun-positions in its memory.

The partitions of Poland completed what the siege had begun. Tyniec passed into Habsburg Galicia. On 8 September 1816 the Emperor Francis I signed the decree that dissolved the abbey. The furnishings, the treasury, the library and the archives were taken away. Some of the metalwork from Tyniec now lives in the cathedral treasury at Tarnów.

A house can lose its plate and still be a house. A house that loses its monks for more than a century becomes a different kind of silence.

From 1821 to 1826 the church served as the cathedral of a short-lived Diocese of Tyniec, with Bishop Grzegorz Tomasz Ziegler, who had himself been a monk, in the chair. Then even that dignity faded. Lightning started a great fire in 1831. The later Benedictines would call the empty ranges the Great Ruin. Trees grew in the walls. For one hundred and twenty-three years the prayer of the hours on this hill was the parish Mass and the wind.

A Small Reflection

A long silence is not always the end of a story. It can be a waiting that nobody chose. Parishes know that kind of waiting: an empty choir loft, a closed school, a family that no longer comes. The hill does not say that emptiness is good. It says that emptiness is not always final. Someone may yet return. Until then, even a parish Mass and the wind are not nothing.

A short prayer

Lord, in every long silence, keep a wick alight. Amen.

Chapter 9

They came back in July

Sapieha, eleven Belgians, and a month of peace.

The return has a date you can hold. On 29 May 1939 Cardinal Adam Stefan Sapieha, Archbishop of Kraków, signed the paper that gave the Benedictines their buildings again. The first monks arrived on 27 June. The solemn handing-over was on 30 July 1939, in the presence of Abbot Théodore Nève of Saint-André in Zevenkerken. The new prior was Father Karol van Oost, a Belgian who had first seen the ruin in 1929 and had not been able to forget it. Eleven monks moved into the only habitable house, the Opatówka. A month later Germany invaded Poland.

It is worth stopping on that calendar. A community chose to begin again in a ruin at the worst possible moment in modern European history. They were not naïve. They were Benedictine. Stability, in the Rule, is a vow to stay. They stayed through occupation. In January 1945, when the front lay on the Vistula, the abbey was under artillery for three days. They were still there when the guns moved on.

Sapieha, who would later send a young worker named Karol Wojtyła toward the underground seminary, understood that Kraków needed more than administration. It needed a choir on the old rock. Tyniec's second founding is therefore tied, quietly, to the same archbishop who shaped the future John Paul II. The hill and the young priest belong to one diocesan story, even if they do not share a photograph.

A Small Reflection

Good timing is a luxury. Some of the most important returns happen when the calendar looks foolish. A ruin in July 1939 was not a sensible project. It was a vow. Ordinary life has smaller versions of the same choice: going back to a hard conversation, a neglected prayer, a family duty, a parish that feels empty. Waiting for perfect conditions is a way of never beginning.

A short prayer

For Cardinal Sapiuha, for Karol van Oost, and for everyone who returns to a ruin because prayer belongs there. Amen.

Chapter 10

Always building

From the Great Ruin to a living abbey.

Rebuilding began in earnest in 1947 under Father Kazimierz Ratkiewicz. It was not a single campaign. The south-east range first, then the north-east, the centre, the west, and at last the south-west. The work ran into the early twenty-first century.

European funds later helped raise the Great Ruin into rooms that can hold guests and silence without letting in the rain. The monks have a joke about their letters: OSB — oni stale się budują — they are always building. It is a joke that happens to be a history.

In 1968 the Church of Saints Peter and Paul was formally an abbey church again. The community is now the largest Benedictine house in Poland. The hours are sung. Bread is baked. Books are published. Guests are received under the Rule's old command that a stranger should be welcomed as Christ.

The hill that was a Celtic workshop, a royal watch, a Tatar ruin, a confederate fort and an Austrian silence is once more what Casimir wanted: a place where the Church keeps time.

A Small Reflection

A monastery is never completely finished. Neither is a Christian. That is not an excuse for chaos. It is a warning against the fantasy of a final tidy version of ourselves. The next wall, the next habit, the next apology: that is usually the work. Always building sounds tiring. It is also honest. Holiness is not a completed wing. It is staying on the site.

A short prayer

Ora et labora. Give us this day both the hour and the work. Amen.

Chapter 11

What lies under the floor

A gold cup, two croziers, the first basilica.

Under the floor of the church there is another church. Archaeologists working between 1961 and 1965 uncovered the Romanesque basilica and a cemetery. At least six graves belong to that first age.

From two of the oldest tombs came a small gold travelling chalice with its paten, a lead cross, and fragments of two abbatial croziers from the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Those croziers are the oldest yet found in Poland. They rest now, as a deposit, at Wawel. In the abbey museum you meet them as copies and as a story.

One burial on the western axis has tempted some scholars to wonder whether Bolesław the Bold himself might lie here, a king who could not easily have been buried at Wawel after the death of Saint Stanislaus. The identification is not proved and should not be sold as fact. What is fact is stranger and sufficient: the first shepherds of this house were buried with the tools of their office, a cup for the road and a staff for a flock, under the same rock where their sons still sing.

A Romanesque reserve has now been opened to visitors under the cloister and church. You walk about two metres below the present pavement and see the first walls, a cut through old earth, and a grave arranged so that a modern pilgrim can understand what those brick boxes were for. The Church in Poland does not only remember Tyniec. She lets you stand in its cellar.

A Small Reflection

We notice what is above the floor. God often cares about what holds it up. A life can look ordinary on the surface and rest on years of prayer, duty and quiet sacrifice that nobody photographs. Foundations are not glamorous. They are the reason the later church can stand. Hidden faithfulness is still faithfulness.

A short prayer

For the first abbots under the floor, and for the little gold cup that still knows how to travel. Amen.

Chapter 12

A sacramentary and a carved leaf

Books that travelled, a palmette on a banknote.

Among the treasures that left the hill, and partly returned as copies, is the Tynieć Sacramentary: an illuminated liturgical book made in Cologne in the eleventh century, counted among the oldest of its kind connected with Poland. In the museum a careful model stands in for the fragile original. Nearby are books and vestments from the Benedictine nuns of Staniątki, an antiphonary of Abbess Dorota Szreniawska from 1535, choir books, chasubles.

The hill keeps other people's memory as well as its own. A Romanesque capital found in the excavations carries a carved leaf, a palmette, that later appeared on a Polish banknote. It is a small surprise and a good one. A monk's carved leaf, meant for a cloister where almost no one would see it, became public money.

Hidden work has a way of travelling. The same is true of the hours. Nobody photographs the night office on a wet Tuesday in November. The city downstream is still different because the hour was kept.

A Small Reflection

Not every act of love needs an audience. A carved leaf in a cloister was enough for the person who made it. Centuries later it turned up on a banknote. Most hidden work will never do that, and still matters. A kind word, a kept hour of prayer, a repaired hinge: these are the leaves. History books miss most of them. God does not.

A short prayer

*Bless the hidden leaf that became a public sign. Bless every quiet page.
Amen.*

Chapter 13

An ordinary day under the Rule

Stability, guests, and the hours.

Saint Benedict wrote a Rule for beginners. That is a humble way of saying that it is for everyone who stays. The day at Tyniec is still hung on those hinges: the Work of God in choir, reading, labour, meals in common, sleep that is allowed to be sleep.

Guests are not an interruption of the life. They are part of it. The porter's instruction in the Rule is to greet the stranger with gentleness and to tell the abbot. Christ may be poorly dressed.

A visitor who only photographs the two towers from the opposite bank at Piekary has seen a view and missed a vow. The vow of stability means that these men will still be on this rock when the visitor's bus has gone back to the hotels. The vow of conversion of life means that the rock is not a museum of the eleventh century. The vow of obedience means that the abbot's quiet word still organises the day more than the river does.

If you can, hear one hour of the Office. You do not need to understand the Latin or the Polish at once. You need only to notice that the hill is doing what it was founded to do. Everything else — the café, the bookshop, the ferry in summer — hangs on that sung spine.

A Small Reflection

Prayer that depends only on mood will miss most of the week. The monastic hours are stubborn in a useful way. They arrive whether you feel ready or not. Ordinary Catholic life needs a little of that same stubbornness: a time to pray, a time to work, a time to eat, a time to sleep. Guests, children and interruptions will still come. In the Rule they are not a nuisance first. They are people.

A short prayer

Saint Benedict, make us beginners again. Amen.

Chapter 14

Kraków's quieter rock

How this hill belongs to the same diocese.

Tyniec is now inside the city of Kraków, in the south-west, inside a landscape park that protects the limestone and the river woods. The old border-watch function is gone. The new function is quieter and perhaps heavier. In a country that can reach any shrine by coach, a monastery that still keeps the hours is a different kind of pilgrimage.

You do not collect it. You sit in it. John Paul II knew these houses of Małopolska from his years as a priest and bishop. The great public chapters of his life were written in Wadowice, in the quarry, at Wawel, in Rome. Tyniec belongs to the less photographed chapter: the diocese that still needed monks after the war, the archbishop who invited them, the young clergy who could take a boat or a tram toward a choir that had refused to stay dead.

A Silent Homily from this hill would say that restoration is a Benedictine word, and that Casimir's nickname — the Restorer — is still the right name for what happens here.

A Small Reflection

Not every holy place needs a crowd. Some places teach by staying put. A quieter rock can correct a busy faith. We do not have to collect shrines. We may need one place where we sit long enough to hear the psalms. Restoration, in the Christian sense, is not nostalgia. It is returning a house to its proper work.

A short prayer

Our Lady of this river bend, keep the choir faithful when no one is watching. Amen.

Chapter 15

If you go

Church, cloister, cellar, river.

If you go, go slowly. The church of Saints Peter and Paul will take a first visit. The cloister, where a Romanesque wall and a stepped portal still look into the courtyard, will take a second. The museum and the underground reserve will take a third, and they will change the first two.

Stand on the terrace and let the Vistula do what it has done since before there was a Poland. The water does not care about our dates. That is why it is a good teacher for a monastery.

Do not be surprised if the place feels both grand and ordinary. The towers are grand. The kitchen is ordinary. Benedict wanted both. A hill named for a wall is doing its old job when a guest can pray, eat soup, and leave without having been sold a legend that the parchments do not support.

The true story is better. They left. They came back in July. They are still singing.

A Small Reflection

A monastery is not a museum with better lighting. It is a house where people still pray. Visit as a guest, not as a collector. Look. Listen. Sit. If an hour of the Office is being sung, stay for it. Photographs can wait. The hill has outlasted many cameras.

A short prayer

*Lord Jesus, if I go to Tyniec, let me go as a guest and not as a collector.
Amen.*

Chapter 16

What the hill still means

A wall that learned to sing.

Meaning, at the end of such a walk, is not a single sentence.

Tyniec means that the Church in Poland chose, after collapse, to plant a choir on a rock. It means that a name can remember a fence and still become a home. It means that one hundred and twenty-three years of emptiness did not have the last word. It means that Belgian monks and a Polish archbishop trusted a ruin in the last summer of peace. It means that under your feet there may be a gold cup the size of a travelling Mass, and that the staffs of the first abbots are the oldest of their kind in the country.

It also means, more simply, that you can still go there on a Thursday and hear the same psalms that Aaron heard, in a language he would not have used, on a hill he would recognise by the river's bend.

That is enough meaning for one visit. The rest is given if you return.

The lesson is not only historical. It is about how to look. A wall. A floor. A leaf. A ruin that learned to sing again. Once you have seen them here, you may notice them elsewhere: in a parish that is tired, in a family that is repairing one hinge, in a life that is still unfinished and still worth staying with.

A Small Reflection

I came to learn about an old monastery. I left thinking about my own life. That is what a living holy place can do. It does not ask you to become a monk. It asks you to notice a wall, a floor, a return, and then to go home a little more willing to stay, to repair, and to pray.

A short prayer

On this rock, Lord, keep building Your Church. Amen.

A letter to the reader

Dear reader,

If this hill is new to you, you now know why a wall can be a name of mercy. If you already love Tyniec, you have been given a few extra stones: the argument about the founder, the croziers under the pavement, the Belgian July, the one hundred and twenty-three years when the rock had no choir.

Go if you can. Stay for one hour if you cannot stay for a day. The river will still be turning when you leave. That is a good image of the life the monks have chosen.

Prayers

A prayer on the road to Tyniec

Lord Jesus, You built Your Church on a rock and You walked beside water. Bless this hill named for a wall. Bless the men who sing there.

Make my visit a listening, not a list. Amen.

A prayer in the church of Peter and Paul

Holy Apostles, you knew failure and return. Pray for Poland, for Kraków, and for every community that has had to begin again on the same stone. Amen.

A prayer in the underground

Eternal rest grant unto the first abbots of this house. May the cup they carried still teach us how to travel light. Amen.

The blessing of a guest

May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. May He grant you a quiet arrival and a quiet road home. Amen.

Acknowledgements

The history in these pages follows the public work of the Benedictine Abbey of Tyniec, the excavations of the 1960s, the document of Cardinal Giles from the 1120s, the chronicle tradition of Jan Długosz, and the record of the return in July 1939 under Cardinal Adam Sapieha and Prior Karol van Oost. Where scholars disagree about the founder, the disagreement is left visible on purpose. The gold travelling chalice and the earliest Polish croziers are described from the published archaeological account.

The name Tyniec is taken from the old word for a wall or fence, not from the horse-legend.



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Little Treasures

A word of thanks

A hill is made of single stones. If these pages have helped you to see Tyniec more clearly, and if you are able to leave a small gift on the Silent Homilies website, it will be received with thanks. It helps a parish priest in South Wales to keep writing, visiting, and leaving books where someone else may need them. Please do so only if you wish, and only if you can. If you can help, I will be grateful.

Printing tip

*This booklet is designed in A5 format. For best results print double-sided on A5 paper (or print two pages per A4 sheet and cut).
Recommended paper: 80–100 gsm for a pleasant reading feel.*

Written to be read in one or two sittings.