



SILENT HOMILIES

The Vow Under Giewont

*Krzęptówki, and the church they promised
if the Pope lived*



Silent Homilies

Little Treasures



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*Krzepiówki, and the church they promised
if the Pope lived*

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

Before You Begin

Most visitors who come to Zakopane for the mountains never hear the name Krzeptówki until someone points to a wooden church about four kilometres from the town centre. At first it looks like another highland sanctuary under Giewont. It is that. It is also something more particular.

The church that stands there was not planned as a tourist stop. It was promised on a single evening, in a small chapel that could not hold the people who had come to pray.

The evening was 13 May 1981. That afternoon, in Saint Peter's Square in Rome, a man named Ali Ağca fired at Pope John Paul II. The date was not an accident. It was the anniversary of the first apparition of Our Lady at Fatima in 1917. In Krzeptówki, priests and highlanders gathered in front of a Fatima statue that had already been travelling through Poland for twenty years. Between eight and nine o'clock that night, Father Mirosław Drozdek, the Pallottine priest who looked after the chapel, made a promise. If God saved the Pope's life, they would build a church here as a thanksgiving for that life.

The Pope lived. The church was built. Sixteen years later the same Pope came to consecrate it. He said the shrine was particularly near and dear to him, because he knew what had been prayed here while he lay in a Roman hospital.

This little book tells that path in ordinary words. It also tells the quieter years before the vow: why Pallottines came to a neglected cluster of cottages in 1950, why a bishop from Fatima gave a statue meant to cross the Iron Curtain, and why Karol Wojtyła, still only a bishop of Kraków, was the one who blessed it.

You do not need to settle every argument about Fatima in order to understand Krzeptówki. You only need to see that a shrine can be born from gratitude rather than from a plan, and that a mountain parish can keep a promise for sixteen years until the man they prayed for walks through the door.

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Chapter 1

A Poor Edge of Zakopane

Krzeptówki takes its name from a highland clan. The Krzeptowski family lived here for generations. Guides, shepherds and the storyteller Jan Krzeptowski Sabała all belonged to that world of timber houses and steep meadows at the foot of the Tatras. In 1950 the edge of Zakopane that carried this name was not a shrine. It was a neglected scatter of old cottages. There was no reason, on a map, to expect a national sanctuary.

The Pallottine fathers of the Province of Christ the King came looking for a simple house. They wanted a place where their students and missionaries could rest and make retreats. Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak, who was then looking after the Archdiocese of Kraków, gave them permission. They chose Krzeptówki because it was quiet and cheap, not because it was famous. In 1951 they built a house and a chapel dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Archbishop Baziak consecrated that chapel on 11 October 1959.

From the beginning the priests used the chapel for Fatima. They preached Marian sermons. They taught the First Saturdays and the rosary. At first there was no statue from Portugal. There was only a picture of the Lady appearing to three children. That is worth remembering. The later church did not invent the devotion. It grew out of a poor chapel that had already been teaching Fatima for years, while Poland was still under a government that disliked such things.

If you walk the lane today you can still feel the older scale. The great church stands, but the first chapel stands beside it. The place began as a house of rest for missionaries. It became a house of thanksgiving for a Pope. The two purposes are closer than they sound. Both are about people who need a quiet room in which to recover and to pray.

A Small Reflection

We often notice a place only after it becomes famous. Krzeptówki was first a cheap house and a small chapel. The later church did not appear out of nowhere. It grew from years of ordinary prayer in a room that no tourist would have photographed. If a large work of faith ever grows in your own life, it may begin in the same way: not with a plan for a shrine, but with a quiet duty that someone is willing to keep when nobody is watching.

A short prayer

Lord of neglected lanes that become holy almost by accident, teach us to notice the small chapel before we photograph the large church. Amen.

Chapter 2

Why Fatima Came to Poland in 1946

The story of Krzeptówki does not start with a mountain. It starts with a consecration. In 1946 the Polish bishops consecrated the Church in Poland to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. They were answering something Our Lady had asked at Fatima: that the world, and nations within it, be entrusted to her Heart. Poland had just come through a war that had torn the country in half. The bishops were not decorating a feast. They were placing a wounded people under a protection they believed was real.

One of the priests who helped prepare that act was Father Leon Cieślak, a Pallottine. After the consecration he began organising night vigils of reparation on the First Saturdays at Jasna Góra, the shrine of the Black Madonna at Częstochowa. He also travelled the country teaching the Fatima requests: the rosary, conversion, prayer for sinners, and the First Saturdays. The Pallottines decided that this work needed a home of its own, a centre from which the message could keep moving. They believed they were being pointed toward Zakopane.

This is why Krzeptówki is sometimes called the Polish Fatima. The nickname can sound too grand if you have only seen a postcard. It is more accurate if you remember the order of events. First came the national consecration. Then came the First Saturday vigils. Then came a poor chapel in the Tatras. The church of the 1990s is the latest room in a house that was already being lived in.

Fatima, for these priests, was never only a Portuguese hillside. It was a set of requests that could be kept in any language. A highland parish that said the rosary on a Saturday morning was already answering Cova da Iria, even if the speaker had never seen Portugal. That is the quiet logic

that made Krzeptówki possible long before anyone spoke of a vow for a Pope.

A Small Reflection

A consecration is easy to treat as a ceremony that ends when the bishops go home. The Pallottines did not treat it that way. They kept teaching the rosary and the First Saturdays in ordinary places. National acts of faith only stay alive if someone continues them in a parish. If your own country, family or parish has ever been entrusted to Our Lady, the next question is simple: what is still being done about it on an ordinary Saturday?

A short prayer

Lady of the Immaculate Heart, you asked for nations as well as for souls. Keep us from treating a consecration as a ceremony that ends when the bishops go home. Amen.

Chapter 3

The Statue That Was Meant for the Iron Curtain

In 1961 the Bishop of Leiria, the Portuguese diocese that includes Fatima, gave Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński a statue of Our Lady of Fatima. The gift had a purpose that is easy to miss. Other pilgrim statues of Our Lady of the Rosary had already travelled the West. They had not been able to travel the countries behind the Iron Curtain. The message of Fatima spoke of Russia. Communist governments treated that sentence as a political problem. A wooden figure from Portugal was not welcome on those trains.

The bishop's intention was that this statue should go where the others could not go. Cardinal Wyszyński entrusted it to the Pallottines at Krzeptówki. On 6 October 1961 it arrived. Five days later Bishop Karol Wojtyła of Kraków blessed it. From that day the figure began a pilgrimage through Polish parishes that would last more than twenty-five years. Pallottine priests from Krzeptówki travelled with it. They preached retreats on the Family Rosary. They taught the requests of Fatima in rooms that the official press did not mention.

So the statue that now stands in the old chapel is not a decoration bought for a new church. It is a figure that spent a generation on the road, crossing a country that was not free to speak easily about Fatima. When people later called Krzeptówki a Fatima shrine, they were naming a place that had already sent the Lady through Poland in person.

There is a simple fact here that is easy to forget. A shrine is often imagined as a spot that pilgrims come to. This statue first made the opposite journey. It went out. Only after the long pilgrimage, and after a Pope had crowned it in Rome, did it settle again under Giewont. The

homecoming was earned by years of parish halls and borrowed beds.

A Small Reflection

We often wait for people to come to the holy place. This statue first went to them. That is a useful picture for any parish that has grown used to staying inside its own walls. The message of Fatima was not kept as a private treasure in the Tatras. It was carried into ordinary rooms. If devotion never leaves the place where it is comfortable, it has not yet done the work these priests thought it was meant to do.

A short prayer

Lady who was packed into a case and carried through a watched country, stay with every parish that receives you for a week and then has to let you go. Amen.

Chapter 4

The Bishop Who Blessed It Before He Was Pope

It is easy, looking backwards, to treat every gesture of Karol Wojtyła as a rehearsal for the papacy. That habit flattens the man. In October 1961 he was the auxiliary bishop of Kraków. He blessed a statue because it had been given to his Church and because Fatima already mattered to Polish Catholics. He did not know that twenty years later he would be shot on the anniversary of the first apparition, or that the same statue would be waiting in a Tatra chapel while he bled in Rome.

He already knew the mountains. He had walked the Tatras as a student and as a priest. He knew Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. He knew Wadowice. Krzeptówki sat inside a landscape he understood with his feet as well as with his office. When he later said that the shrine under Giewont was particularly dear to him, he was not only thanking a building. He was recognising a piece of his own geography.

The blessing of 1961 also ties two Polish names together that history sometimes keeps apart. Wyszyński received the statue from Portugal and gave it to the Pallottines. Wojtyła blessed it and sent it on its way. Primate and young bishop, Warsaw and Kraków, the man who had already suffered under Stalin and the man who would later suffer in Saint Peter's Square both touched the same figure before the vow of 1981 existed.

If you stand in front of that statue now, you are looking at wood that two future cardinals handled in a Poland that still had to be careful. The later coronation in Rome did not invent its dignity. It recognised a journey that had already been made in secret and in ordinary parishes.

A Small Reflection

Most holy work is done without knowing what it will mean later. A young bishop blessed a statue. That was the task in front of him. He did not need a vision of 1981 in order to do it well. The same is true of many small acts of faith. We bless, we pray, we receive, we send something on its way. Years later the meaning may become clearer. Until then, the faithful thing is the duty we can actually see.

A short prayer

Lord who lets a young bishop bless a statue without telling him what the statue will mean, teach us to do the small holy work we can see, and to leave the rest to You. Amen.

Chapter 5

The Evening of the Thirteenth of May

On 13 May 1981, at seventeen minutes past five in the afternoon, Ali Ağca shot John Paul II as the Pope moved through the crowd in Saint Peter's Square. The bullet passed through the abdomen. Doctors later said the path of the shot missed the main artery by a margin so small that many people, including the Pope himself, spoke of it as a Mother's hand turning the metal aside. John Paul II would later say, with a simplicity that annoyed some commentators, that one hand fired and another hand guided.

The date was the anniversary of Fatima's first apparition. In Krzeptówki the news arrived in a chapel that already held the travelling statue. People came. The chapel could not hold them. They said the rosary for the Pope's life. Father Mirosław Drozdek was already the soul of the place that evening. The parish of the Immaculate Heart would be formally erected in 1983, and he would become its first parish priest. In 1981 the promise was made before that title existed.

He remembered the hour exactly. Between eight and nine o'clock that evening, he said, a decision was taken. If God saved the life of John Paul II, they would build a church on this ground as a thanksgiving for the saved life of the chief shepherd.

Drozdek later insisted that the church was born that night, not on the day the first brick was laid. He meant that the promise already existed, even before there was timber or stone. What existed at nine o'clock on 13 May was a sentence spoken in front of a statue that had already walked Poland. The Pope himself would one day accept that reading. He said he knew they had gathered in that chapel to obtain for him a return of health and strength, and that the plans for the shrine

began then.

A vow of this kind is not a bargain in the cheap sense. The priests were not offering God a deal. They were saying what gratitude would look like if the life they were begging for was given back. When the life was given back, they had to keep their word. That is the moral centre of Krzeptówki. The later church is what that evening prayer looked like when people were willing to spend years keeping it.

A Small Reflection

It is one thing to pray hard when the news is bad. It is another thing to decide, in the same hour, what thanksgiving will look like if the prayer is heard. Many of us make promises in fear and forget them in relief. Krzeptówki is a story of people who did not forget. If God has ever given back a life, a peace or a chance you thought you might lose, the Catholic instinct is not only to feel better. It is to keep the word you spoke when you were still afraid.

A short prayer

Mother who stood between a bullet and a shepherd, teach us how to make a promise that we are then willing to spend years keeping.

Amen.

Chapter 6

A Spiritual Bridge to a Roman Hospital

John Paul II spent weeks in the Gemelli Hospital. In Zakopane the chapel filled every day. Father Drozdek later called those weeks a time of spiritual growth. He also used a phrase that is easy to skip: a spiritual bridge between Krzeptówki and the Gemelli. He meant that the rosaries said under Giewont were not a private comfort. They were aimed at a particular bed in Rome.

This is one of the lesser-known textures of the shrine. Before there was a great church, there was a daily habit of asking. Highland families who would never see the Vatican still treated the wounded Pope as their own parishioner. That is not only sentiment. It is how a Catholic people behaves when it believes the Church is one body. A man shot in Rome can be prayed for in a wooden chapel four kilometres from a Polish market square, and the prayer is not a lesser kind.

The Pope felt it. In 1997 he said so without embarrassment. You have always helped me. You were with me and you understood my concerns. I felt this. It was a great support for me. A pontiff is not obliged to speak that way. He chose to, because he knew the difference between a crowd that cheers and a chapel that keeps watch when the cheering has stopped and the surgeons are still working.

If you visit Krzeptówki only as a monument to a famous rescue, you will miss this middle stretch. The vow was spoken in one evening. The keeping of the vow began as ordinary daily Mass and an overflowing rosary while a man in another country tried to live. The church is the visible end of that stretch. The stretch itself was made of people who came back the next morning.

A Small Reflection

Prayer is often treated as a feeling we have near a person we can see. These highland families prayed for a man they could not visit. That is a hard and useful kind of faith. Most of the people we ought to pray for are not standing in the same room. A chapel that keeps watch for someone in another country is already living the Communion of Saints in a very practical way. The next morning matters as much as the first evening.

A short prayer

Lord of hospital corridors and of chapels that stay open when the news is bad, let our prayer be as concrete as a bed we cannot stand beside.

Amen.

Chapter 7

Two Stones in One Foundation

Permission to build was not simple. Communist Poland did not hand out church licences as a courtesy. The Pallottines obtained leave in 1987. At the end of July that year the ground was blessed. The local architect Stanisław Tylka, a Zakopane man who already knew how sacred buildings should sit among timber and stone, made the design. Highland craftsmen would raise it. The church was to be of Tatra wood and Tatra rock, so that the thanksgiving would belong to this soil and not only to a Roman event.

On 13 May 1990, nine years to the day after the shooting, Cardinal Franciszek Macharski laid two foundation stones. Two stones in one foundation is unusual. Each stone had a geography. One fragment came from the tomb of Saint Peter in Rome. The other came from the place of the first apparition at Fatima. Rome and Cova da Iria were set under a highland church so that no one could later pretend the building was only a local curiosity.

Into the foundations they also placed a photograph of John Paul II and a rosary he had given. Under each foundation brick, according to the memory of the builders, a Miraculous Medal was set. These details sound like folklore until you remember what a foundation is for. A foundation is the part of a church you will never see again. What you bury there is what you want the walls to stand on. They wanted Peter, Fatima, a Pope's beads, and Mary's medal.

A model of the church was taken to Rome and blessed by the Pope who had survived. Father Drozdek led the delegation. The man for whom the vow had been made put his hand over the future timber before the timber existed. Then the highlanders began to build. The

work lasted about five years. Money came almost entirely from the gifts of ordinary people who were grateful that the Pope was alive. The shrine is, in that sense, a collection of small gifts that became walls.

A Small Reflection

The most important part of a church is often the part nobody photographs. These people buried Rome, Fatima, a rosary and a medal under the floor. They were saying, in objects, what the building was meant to rest on. Our own lives have foundations too, though we rarely name them. What we quietly trust, give and remember will hold more than the visible walls. A small gift, given because we are grateful, can still become part of something that lasts.

A short prayer

Lord of hidden foundations, bless what we bury and will never photograph: the true reasons a house of prayer is able to stand. Amen.

Chapter 8

What They Buried With the Walls

A few facts about the finished church surprise people who know only the story of the vow. The building rises about twenty-five and a half metres. It has a single tower. There are ten altars. John Paul II later gave a bell that hangs in the tower. Relics of the True Cross and of Saint Louis de Montfort are kept here. Montfort matters in this company because John Paul II took his papal motto, *Totus tuus*, from that saint's teaching on belonging entirely to Christ through Mary.

The crowned Fatima statue did not move into the new high altar as if the old chapel had been discarded. It remains in the chapel of the 1950s, which still stands beside the greater church. That decision says more than a plaque. The vow produced a large thanksgiving. It did not wipe out the poor room in which the vow was spoken. Pilgrims who only enter the new nave miss half the meaning of the place.

Outside lies the Fatima Park. In that park stands the altar at which John Paul II celebrated Mass on 6 June 1997, the day before he consecrated the church. A monument by Czesław Dźwigaj later set the Pope beside Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, the secretary who had been with him in the square when the shots were fired. In 2005 a chapel was dedicated in memory of the Pope's death. The shrine kept adding rooms of gratitude as the man himself completed his life.

In 1992 the Apostolic Penitentiary granted the shrine the privilege of a plenary indulgence on certain days, including 13 May, for pilgrims who make the usual confession, Communion, prayer for the Pope, and an act of faith. In 2018 the Polish Bishops' Conference named Krzeptówki the National Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima. The title did not create the devotion. It recognised a centre that had already been

doing the work since the poor chapel of 1951.

A Small Reflection

When a larger church is built, the first room is often treated as leftover space. Here the old chapel was kept, and the statue stayed in it. That is a good instinct. New gratitude should not erase the place where the first prayer was said. In ordinary life the same temptation appears. We move on and forget the first kitchen, the first parish, the first promise. The old chapel at Krzeptówki is a reminder not to despise beginnings.

A short prayer

Lady who is willing to stay in the old chapel after a larger church is built, keep us from despising the first room in which we learned to pray. Amen.

Chapter 9

A Crown Given in Rome

On 21 October 1987, on Saint Peter's Square after an audience, John Paul II crowned the Fatima statue from Zakopane. Twenty-six years had passed since the figure began its Polish pilgrimage. The Pope said the crown was to be a reminder of what the Mother of God has done for her people. He was not only decorating a statue. He was naming a history: a nation consecrated in 1946, a statue sent through a watched country, a bullet turned aside on a Fatima date, a chapel that had refused to go home after the evening news.

Crowning an image is an old Catholic language. It does not mean the wood has become a goddess. It means the Church publicly honours the person whom the image represents, and honours the way that person has already acted among this people. The Zakopane figure received in Rome what it had already earned on Polish roads.

There is a symmetry here that is almost too neat, and yet it is historical. The statue was blessed in 1961 by Bishop Wojtyła. It was crowned in 1987 by Pope Wojtyła. The same hands, older and wounded, completed a gesture they had begun without knowing the middle of the story. A Catholic does not have to force a miracle into every symmetry. It is enough to notice that God is not ashamed of patterns.

After the coronation the statue came home to the chapel under Giewont. From then on the figure that had travelled was also the figure that waited. Pilgrims now come to her. For a quarter of a century she had been the one who came to them. Both movements belong to Fatima. Our Lady goes out. Our Lady also stays.

A Small Reflection

A crown in the Church is first a memory of help received. It is not a prize for a statue. It is a public way of saying: this people was helped, and they have not forgotten. The same hands that blessed the figure in 1961 crowned it after the Pope had been shot and had lived. We do not need to turn that into a theory. We only need to see that gratitude can complete a work that began long before we understood it.

A short prayer

Lady crowned in a square where your Son's shepherd had already fallen and risen, remind us that a crown in the Church is first a memory of help received. Amen.

Chapter 10

The Day He Came to Consecrate It

On 7 June 1997, during his sixth pilgrimage to Poland, John Paul II consecrated the church at Krzeptówki. The day before, he had celebrated Mass at the outdoor altar under Krokiew. He wanted the visit. The priests who had kept the vow wanted it more. Sixteen years after a promise spoken between eight and nine in the evening, the man they had prayed for walked into the thanksgiving they had built.

His words that day are worth reading slowly, because they are not a tourist blessing. Your shrine in Krzeptówki is particularly near and dear to me. He linked the building to 13 May 1981. He said he knew they had gathered in the chapel to recite the rosary for his recovery. He said the plans for a shrine at the foot of Giewont began then, as a votive offering of thanksgiving that his life had been spared. He said the church had been built by many hands and many hearts, and that it was hard for him to speak of this without being moved.

Then he thanked them as a man thanks a parish that has actually carried him. I have come among you to thank you for your goodness, your thoughts and your continuing prayer. You have always helped me. He ended in the language that was already his whole life: *Totus tuus*. He said the church was, in some sense, the continuation of his own gratitude to God and to God's Mother.

A consecration is a liturgical act. The bishop — in this case the Bishop of Rome — sets a building aside for the Eucharist and for prayer. At Krzeptówki the rite had an extra layer. The Pope was consecrating a vow that had been made over his own body. That is a rare sentence in the history of sanctuaries. It is why the place cannot be treated as only another wooden church in the Tatras. Something happened here that

involved a particular life, a particular date, and a particular evening rosary.

A Small Reflection

Sixteen years is a long time to keep a promise. Many good intentions die much sooner. The people of Krzeptówki kept working until the man they had prayed for could walk through the door. Thanksgiving that costs years is different from thanksgiving that lasts an evening. If you have ever been given back a life you feared losing, this chapter asks a simple question: what did gratitude actually build afterwards?

A short prayer

Lord who let a wounded shepherd bless the house that gratitude built for him, keep our own thank-yous from stopping at words. Amen.

Chapter 11

What This Shrine Is Not Allowed to Be

Krzeptówki can be misunderstood in more than one direction. It is not a claim that Fatima is only about John Paul II. The apparitions of 1917, the call to conversion, the rosary, the First Saturdays, the consecration of Russia — these are larger than one Pope, even a Pope whose life was bound to that date. The shrine is a Polish answer to those requests, and also a thanksgiving for one man's spared life. Both sentences must be kept.

It is not a museum of a shooting. The bullet is part of the story. It is not the altar. People who come only to feel the drama of 1981, and who do not kneel, have used the place as a stage set. The Pallottines did not build a stage set. They built a church in which Mass is said and confessions are heard and First Saturdays are still kept.

It is not a replacement for Fatima in Portugal. No honest custodian would say that. Cova da Iria remains Cova da Iria. What Krzeptówki offers is a place where that same message took root in highland wood, under a mountain with a cross on its ridge, in a nation that had reasons of its own to ask Mary's protection. A second hearth does not put out the first fire.

It is also not a private club for people who already love John Paul II. The Pope himself, when he came, pointed away from himself toward the Mother and toward the Church. A shrine that forgets the poor chapel of 1951, or the statue's long road through ordinary parishes, or the highlanders who paid for the walls, has already begun to tell a thinner story than the one that happened.

A Small Reflection

Holy places are easily reduced to one headline. Krzeptówki is not only 13 May 1981. It is also 1946, 1951, 1961, a statue on the road, a chapel that stayed open, and Mass that is still said. When we reduce a shrine to a single dramatic night, we lose the years that made the night possible. The same happens in personal memory. One crisis becomes the whole story, and the quieter faithfulness disappears. This place asks us to keep the whole story.

A short prayer

Lady of Fatima and of Zakopane, do not let us make a sanctuary smaller than the gratitude that built it, or larger than the Gospel it was meant to serve. Amen.

Chapter 12

How to Walk Here, and How to Live After

If you ever come, begin with the old chapel. Stand before the statue that crossed a watched country and was blessed by a bishop who did not yet know his own future. Say a decade there before you enter the larger church. The order matters. Gratitude has an older room.

In the church itself it is enough to do what the place was built for. Mass. A rosary. A quiet look at the fact that two stones, from Peter's tomb and from Fatima, hold up a highland floor. If you are there on 13 May, you are standing inside the date that joins Cova da Iria, Saint Peter's Square, and this meadow. You do not need a speech. You need time.

Living with Krzeptówki after you have left is simpler still. Keep the promise that first made the place possible: prayer for the living shepherd of the Church, whoever he now is. Keep a First Saturday if you can. Say the rosary as if it still had work to do. A shrine is not well honoured by a photograph and a fridge magnet. It is honoured when the thing that happened there continues in an ordinary kitchen.

The vow under Giewont was very particular. It named one life. The habit it teaches is wider. When God gives back something we thought we might lose — a person, a peace, a chance to begin again — the Catholic instinct is not only to feel relieved. It is to build something that will remember the gift. Sometimes the building is timber and stone. Sometimes it is only a changed way of praying. Both are churches of a kind. Krzeptówki happens to be the kind you can walk into, with Giewont standing behind it.

A Small Reflection

You do not have to visit Zakopane in order to keep this story. Prayer for the Pope, a Saturday rosary, a promise that is actually kept — these can happen in any kitchen. The wooden church under Giewont is one shape that gratitude took. The same gratitude can take a quieter shape and still be real. The test is not whether you have stood on that meadow. The test is whether a gift you received was allowed to change the way you pray.

A short prayer

Mother of the Church, you kept a shepherd in the square and you kept a promise in the mountains. Teach us to keep the smaller promises that our own evenings still ask of us. Amen.

A Last Word

In 1950 a few Pallottine priests looked for a cheap house at the poor edge of Zakopane. In 1961 a statue meant for countries behind the Iron Curtain arrived and was blessed by Karol Wojtyła. On the evening of 13 May 1981 a parish promised a church if the Pope lived. He lived. They built. In 1997 he came and consecrated what their gratitude had raised at the foot of Giewont.

That is the whole path, told without decoration. The decoration is the place itself: wood, stone, an old chapel that was not demolished, a crowned figure that once had to travel because she could not safely stay.

If you remember only one thing, remember this. A shrine can begin as a sentence spoken between eight and nine at night. The Church is willing to spend sixteen years turning that sentence into walls.

May every visitor leave with a clearer idea of what thanksgiving looks like when it is willing to work. And may those who never see the Tatras still learn, from this story, how to keep a promise that was made in front of Mary.

Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us.

Saint John Paul II, who came home to consecrate a vow, pray for us.

*All you who kept watch in a small chapel on the thirteenth of May, pray
for us.*



Silent Homilies
Little Treasures

A word of thanks

If these pages have helped you understand why a wooden church stands under Giewont, a small gift on the Silent Homilies website would be received with real gratitude. It is never asked as a condition of reading — only as a kindness, if you wish and if you can.

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.