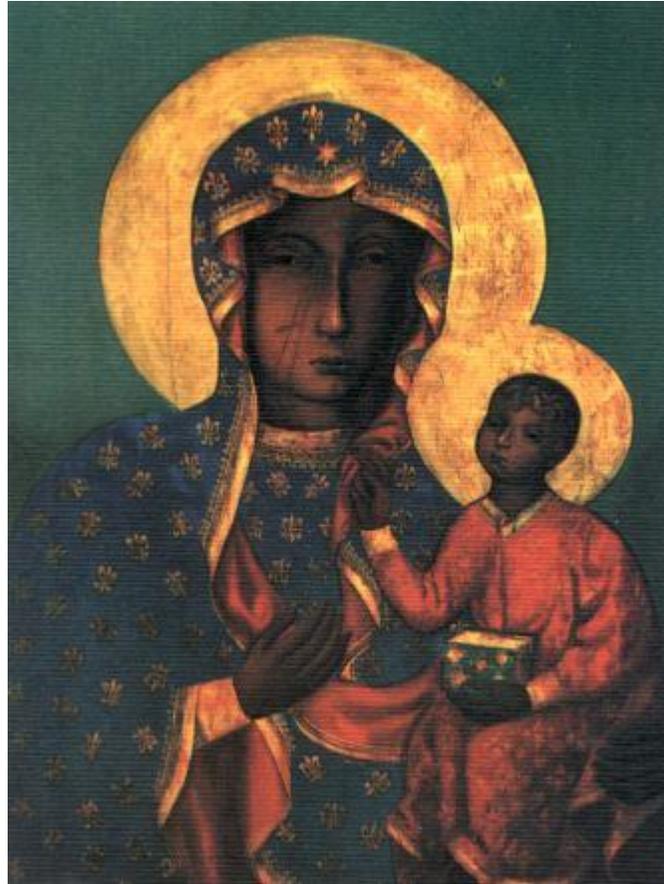


# The Black Madonna (Matka Boska) of Czestochowa



## Queen of Poland

**Czestochowa, Poland (1382)**

From Marypages

**T**he Black Madonna was painted by St. Luke the Evangelist; and it was while painting the picture, Mary told him about the life of Jesus, which he later incorporated into his gospel.



**T**he next time we hear of the painting is in 326 A.D. when St. Helen found it in Jerusalem and gave it to her son and had a shrine built for it in Constantinople. During a battle, the picture was placed on the walls of the city, and the enemy



army fled. Our Lady saved the city from destruction.

**T**he picture was owned by many other people until 1382 when invading Tartars attacked a Prince Ladislaus' fortress, where the painting was located. A Tartar's arrow lodged into through the throat of the Madonna. The Prince transferred the painting to a church in Czestochowa, Poland.

**I**n 1430, the church was invaded and a looter struck the painting two times with his sword, but before he could strike it another time, he fell to the ground in agony and pain, and died. The sword cuts and the arrow wound are still visible on the painting.

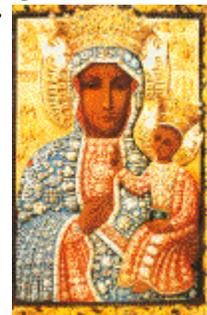
**T**he miracles worked by Our Lady of Czestochowa seem to occur mainly on a public scale. During her stay in Constantinople, she is reported to have frightened the besieging Saracens away from the city. Similarly, in 1655 a small group of Polish defenders was able to drive off a much larger army of Swedish invaders from the sanctuary. The following year, the Holy Virgin was acclaimed Queen of Poland by King Casimir.

**W**hen the Russians were at Warsaw's gates in 1920, thousands of people walked from Warsaw to Czestochowa to ask the Madonna for help. The Poles defeated the Russians at a battle along the Wisla (or Vistula) River. Today, every school child knows the victory as "The Miracle on the Wisla."

**D**uring World War II under German occupation, the faithful made pilgrimages as a show of defiance. That spirit deepened during the atheistic years of Soviet-enforced communism. Government attempts to stop the pilgrimages failed.



**I**n the early 1980s, Walesa didn't drape himself in the Polish flag when he was leading the outlawed Solidarity movement; he placed an Our Lady of Czestochowa lapel pin on his jacket. Poles knew it to be a subversive message.



**P**ope John Paul II, a native son of Poland, prayed before the Madonna during his historic visit in 1979, several months after his election to the Chair of Peter. The Pope made another visit to Our Lady of Czestochowa in 1983 and again in 1991.

### Why is She Black?

**T**here have been reports for centuries of miraculous events such as spontaneous healings occurring to those who made a pilgrimage to the portrait. It is known as the 'Black Madonna' because of the soot residue that discolors the painting. The soot is the result of centuries of votive lights and candles burning in front of the painting. With the decline of communism in Poland, pilgrimages to the Black Madonna have increased dramatically.



### **A prayer to Our Lady of Czestochowa**

**O Mary, our dear Lady of Czestochowa, look graciously upon your children in this troubled and sinful world Embrace us all in your loving and Motherly protection. Protect our young from godless ways; assist our dear ones grown old with age to prepare for their journey home; shield our defenceless unborn from the horrors of abortion, and be our strength against all sin. Spare your children from all hatred, discrimination and war. Fill our hearts, our homes and our world with that peace and love which comes only from your Son, whom you so tenderly embrace. O, Queen and Mother, be our comfort and strength!**

**In Jesus' name we pray.**

**Amen**



