THE “BLACK MADONNA” TO VISIT OUR CHURCH

A copy to have been “written” on BVM’s table top from her house in Nazareth by Luke the Evangelist will visit our church for ONE DAY ONLY (July 30, 2014). She has been credited with numerous miracles and healings – both of a spiritual and physical nature. A beautiful copy of this icon has been blessed and consecrated at the monastery of Jasna Gora in Czestochowa, Poland, where the original is kept, and entrusted to the defense of life and family. Now, after traveling 40,000 miles from Vladivostok in eastern Russia through 24 countries in
Europe, she will be visiting St. Margaret Mary Parish in Oakland on July 30th, 2014 on her global pilgrimage.

Please join us as we welcome her to St. Margaret Mary Church: 1219 Excelsior Ave. OAKLAND, CA 94610 to ask for her protection of life and family as well as personal petitions. A welcoming ceremony will be held at 8.00am Holy Mass and image will stay the whole day. Our church will be open all day for private prayer and meditation. Confession will be heard all day.

Please inform and invite others to come and pray. More information about this miraculous Icon by calling tel. 510-482-0596, ext. 202 (after July 24).

ICON OF OUR LADY OF CZESTOCHOWA (Black Madonna)

According to tradition, the icon of Jasna Gora was painted (“written”) by St. Luke the Evangelist on a tabletop built by Jesus himself, and the icon was discovered by St. Helen, mother of Emperor Constantine the Great; and collector of Christian relics in the Holy Land. The icon was then enshrined in the imperial city of Constantinople in her son’s Constantine the Great Chapel; according to the tradition, where it remained for the next 500 years.

In 803, the painting is said to have been given as a wedding gift from the Byzantine emperor to a Greek princess, who married a Ruthenian nobleman. The image was then placed in the royal palace at Belz, where it remained for nearly 600 years.

History first combines with tradition upon the icon's arrival in Poland in 1382 with a Polish army fleeing the Tartars, who had struck it with an arrow.
History has it that during the looting of Belz, a mysterious cloud enveloped the chapel containing the image.

A monastery was founded in Czestochowa to enshrine the icon in 1386, and soon King Jagiello built a cathedral around the chapel containing the icon. Czestochowa is located in south central Poland.

However, the image soon came under attack once again. In 1430, Hussites (pre-Reformation reformers) attacked the monastery, slashed the Virgin's face with a sword, and left it desecrated in a puddle of blood and mud.

It is said that when the monks pulled the icon from the mud, a miraculous fountain appeared, which they used to clean the painting. The icon was repainted in Krakow, but both the arrow mark and the gashes from the sword were left and remain clearly visible today.

The miracle for which the Black Madonna of Czestochowa is most famous occurred in 1655, when Swedish troops were about to invade Czestochowa. A group of Polish soldiers prayed fervently before the icon for deliverance, and the enemy retreated. In 1656, King John Casimir declared Our Lady of Czestochowa "Queen of Poland" and made the city the spiritual capital of the nation.

The Virgin again came to the aid of her people in 1920, when the Soviet Russian Red Army gathered on the banks of the Vistula River, preparing to attack Warsaw.

The citizens and soldiers fervently prayed to Our Lady of Czestochowa, and on August 15, the Feast of Our Lady of Czestochowa, she appeared in the clouds above Warsaw. The Russians were defeated in a series of battles later dubbed the "Miracle at the Vistula."

During Nazi occupation, Hilter prohibited pilgrimages to Jasna Gora, but many still secretly made the journey. In 1945, after Poland was liberated, half a million pilgrims journeyed to Czestochowa to
express their gratitude. On September 8, 1946, 1.5 million people gathered at the shrine to rededicate the entire nation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. During the Cold War, Jasna Gora was a center of anti-Communist resistance.

Pope John Paul II, a native of Poland, was a fervent devotee of the Virgin Mary and of her icon at Czestochowa. As pope, he made pilgrimages to pray before the Black Madonna in 1979, 1983, 1991, and 1997. In 1991, he held his Sixth World Youth Day at Czestochowa, which was attended by 1,000,000 young people from across the world.

Other popes have honored the "Queen of Poland" as well. Pope Clement XI officially recognized the miraculous nature of the image in 1717 and in 1925 Pope Pius XI designated May 3 a feast day in her honor. Pope Benedict XVI visited the shrine on May 26, 2006.

What to See at Jasna Gora Monastery

The large baroque monastery of Jasna Gora dominates a hilltop in Czestochowa and is always bustling with pilgrims and worshippers. As pilgrims approach the monastery, the most striking sight is the 106-meter bell-tower, reconstructed in 1906 (the bottom part dates from 1714).

The second level contains four clocks, one on each side, that mark the passage of each 15 minutes with Marian melodies. Inside the third level are statues of St. Paul the Hermit, St. Florian, St. Casimir and the Saint-Queen Hedvig; the fifth level has statues of the church fathers St. Leo the Great, St. Gregory, St. Augustine and St. Ambrose.

The focus of pilgrims to Jasna Gora is not the monastery, but the icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa, which is displayed in a altar in the Chapel of the Black Madonna. The icon shows a serious Mary holding the infant Jesus on her left arm and gesturing towards him with her right hand. The Virgin's gaze is intense — pilgrims are moved by the way she seems to look right at them.
The Virgin's robe and mantle are decorated with lilies, the symbol of the Hungarian royal family. The infant Jesus is dressed in a red tunic and holds a Bible in his left hand and makes a gesture of blessing with his right. The Virgin and Child are dressed in bejeweled velvet robes and gold crowns for special occasions.

The image has been placed in a gold frame decorated with hundreds of precious jewels, and stands on an altar of ebony and silver donated by the Grand Chancellor George Ossoliński in 1650.

The altar with the icon is separated from the rest of the Chapel of the Black Madonna with a floor-to-ceiling iron screen. The large Gothic chapel includes five other altars, the most notable of which is the Altar of the Crucifix, to the right of the icon. Its cross dates from 1400. The walls of the chapel are full of ex-votos left by grateful pilgrims.

Attached to the Chapel of the Black Madonna is the baroque basilica, named the Church of the Holy Cross and Nativity of Mary. Rebuilt between 1692 and 1695, it has three aisles and ceilings decorated with accounts of the miracles of Our Lady of Czestochowa. The main altar was designed by the Italian artist Giacomo Antonio Buzzini between 1725 and 1728.

The monastery's treasury is a rich storehouse of votive offerings given to the Black Madonna over the centuries, from the 14th century to the present. Gifts range from swords and scepters to rosaries made of dried bread in concentration camps.

Kings, queens and popes have donated a vast array of precious objects, such as King Michael Korybut Wisniowiecki and the Archduchess Eleanor of Austria on the occasion of their wedding in Jasna Gora in 1670. Also donated to the Virgin are tear-gas cylinders used by the Communists against Solidarity protestors in the 1980s, and the Nobel Peace Prize won by Lech Walesa in 1983.
There is also a richly decorated library housing precious manuscripts. Since 1920, the library has hosted the meetings of the Polish Episcopal Conference.

Around the perimeter of the basilica, where the moat once was, are the 14 Stations of the Cross represented by bronze statues sculpted by Pius Weloński in 1913. Nearly every pilgrim group prays at the Stations of the Cross; some move from one station to the next on their knees.

Pilgrimages and Festivals

Every day, from early in the morning to late in the evening, a steady stream of pilgrims approaches the shrine of Częstochowa via the tree-lined main avenue. The groups leave a few hundred feet in between them, so as not to disturb the others as they pray the rosary and sing hymns. Young men carry batteries and speakers to lead the singing.

Pilgrims wear badges with the name of their town and a number showing how many times they have come on pilgrimage to Częstochowa — many have come every year for decades. After venerating the icon in the Chapel of the Black Madonna, pilgrims usually pin their badges to the walls as a votive offering.

As the national shrine of Poland, Częstochowa attracts delegations from all walks of life. Government leaders visit regularly; and students, veterans, miners, actors, former Stalinist prisoners, and factory workers arrive on organized pilgrimages.

The preferred days to make the pilgrimage to Częstochowa are Marian feast days, especially the Feast of the Assumption on August 15. On this day, up to 500,000 people crowd the city. Since 1711, a pilgrimage has left Warsaw and 32 other towns and walked in procession to Częstochowa for up to 21 days.
Four other national pilgrimage days bring throngs of visitors: the Feast of Mary, Queen of Poland (May 3); the Feast of Our Lady of Częstochowa (August 26); the Feast of the Nativity of Mary (September 8); and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8).

**PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF CZESTOCHOWA**

[TO BE SAID EACH DAY UPON ARISING]

HOLY MOTHER of Częstochowa, You are full of grace, goodness and mercy. I consecrate to You all my thoughts, words and actions my soul and body. I beseech Your blessings and especially prayers for my salvation. Today, I consecrate myself to You, Good Mother, totally with body and soul amid joy and sufferings to obtain for myself and others You blessings on this earth and eternal life in Heaven. Amen.