

THE ILLUSTRIOUS PATRONESS OF THE CITY OF KRAKÓW BLESSED BRONISLAVA IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORICAL RECORDS AND MEMORABILIA

Blessed Bronislava the Praemonstratensian Sister from Zwierzyniec, who died on August 29, 1259, became the focus of the centuries-long cult which started soon after her death and in 1839 was formally approved by the Holy See. Bronislava has been worshipped in Kraków since the 17th century as its illustrious patroness. She was born at the beginning of the 13th century in a noble family. It is believed that she came from the Odrowąż family and was a cousin of St Hyacinth. The first historical source mentioning the person of Blessed Bronislava is the *Liber mortuorum of the Sancti Vincentii Ordinis Praemonstratensis monastery*. This obituary book includes a commemorative entry from 5 April: “Bonislava soror de Zwirincia”, and an entry from 6 April: “Bronislava”. The next source is roughly a hundred years older and is connected with Kraków Dominicans. It is the 14th-century work *De vita et miracula sancti Iacchonis ordinis fratrum praedicatorum, auctore Stanislao lectore eiusdem ordinis*. In Chapter 16

we read: “De uisione, quam habuit soror Bronislava de sancto Iazechone.” We learn from the text that Bronislava was a noblewoman and a nun in the Provostry of the Praemonstratensian Monastery in Zwierzyniec for over forty years. She led an intense spiritual life and on August 15, 1257, during a prayer, she had a vision of the Mother of Mercy triumphantly ushering St Hyacinth to heaven.

In addition to strictly historical sources, there are also memorabilia regarding the Blessed Bronislava. These are the relics found during the reconstruction of the monastery church in 1604 and walled up again. Rediscovered during the reconstruction of the church in 1782, until 1840 they were kept under the altar of St Anne. After Bronislava’s beatification in 1839, they were opened in 1840 and placed in two reliquaries: a late-classicistic coffin, which was placed in the Praemonstratensian Church on the altar dedicated to Bronislava, and a neo-Gothic reliquary for the head of Blessed Bronislava stored in the monastery choir.