

## MISCELLANEA

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### MONUMENT IN BOGURZYN AND OTHER FORMS OF PRESERVING THE MEMORY OF FR. WŁADYSŁAW SKIERKOWSKI, HISTORIOGRAPHER OF FAMILY LIFE IN KURPIE

**ABSTRACT:** The Catholic Church has always cared for and continues to cherish the memory of the past. For centuries, the Catholic clergy tried to spread Polish culture related to faith in God and the Church. A beautiful page in this field was written by Fr. Władysław Skierkowski (1886-1941), priest of the Płock diocese, builder of the parish church in Płock-Imielnica, and, above all, a researcher and popularizer of Kurpie culture, songs and historiographer of marriage and family life. The aim of the article is to discuss the existing forms of preserving the memory of this priest and martyr, murdered in the German Nazi camp of Soldau. The text contains information about all plaques and inscriptions devoted to this priest-ethnographer, and the history of the birth of the idea and circumstances of erecting a monument to this priest in Bogurzyn in 2021, where he was baptized in the parish church and grew up until his studies at the Płock seminary.

**KEYWORDS:** Bogurzyn, Fr. Władysław Skierkowski, Kurpie, Kurpie region, Kurpie music monument.

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### Introduction

The care of history and national identity, especially cultural heritage of little Homelands, is one of the most characteristic features of righteous memory developed in the activities of the Catholic Church<sup>1</sup>. It is very important to unravel history and solidify the

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<sup>1</sup> More about the just and unjust memory, cf. A. Kobylński, *Just and Unjust Memory? The Moral Obligation to Remember All Victims of Wars and Totalitarian Regimes*, „Journal of Military Ethics” 19 (2020) 2, pp. 151-162.

heritage of the past, particularly such groups and communities which are decreasing as a consequence of demographic crises and other social transformations. Great merit in this respect is ascribed to Fr. Władysław Skierkowski, martyr of the German Nazi Camp Soldau, born in the parish Bogurzyn in the Płock diocese. The aim of this article is to explore and describe the existing forms of preservation of the memory of this priest. The text contains information about plaques and inscriptions dedicated to this priest-ethnographer. The history of the idea and circumstances of the erection of the monument of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski in Bogurzyn in 2021 will as well be presented. The person of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski has become one of the ambassadors of today's Mława county and Kurpie region that he described through his efforts in documentation and his publications<sup>2</sup>.

### **1. The Life and Works of Fr. Skierkowski**

Władysław Skierkowski was born in the village of Głuźek in the parish of Bogurzyn in the district of Mława as the eldest of six children of Jan and Ewa née Woźniak. He developed his musical talent first at the local organist in Mława, later between 1903 and 1904 in the secret school for organists of Professor Eugeniusz Gruberski in Płock. After graduation in 1904, he was employed as an organist in the seminary church of John the Baptist in Płock, where his vocation to the priesthood came to living. He studied in the Płock Theological Seminary in the years 1906-1912, where, aside from acquiring philosophical and theological knowledge, he developed his musical talent. The Bishop of Płock Antoni Julian Nowowiejski ordained him to the priesthood on 23 June 1912. Subsequently, he worked in the vicariate in Dzierzgow (1912-1913), and later in Myszyniec (1913-1915), which was the centre of Zielona Forest (Green Forest) of the Kurpie region. Precisely the time of World War I and contacts with traditional faith and Kurpie piety influenced his fate as a young priest for many years to come. In Myszyniec, he collected materials and notes and melodies of the folk songs he heard, owing to which they survived

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. L. Zygner, *Tradycja Mazowska. Powiat mławski. Przewodnik subiektywny*, Warszawa 2016, pp. 66-67.

until today as the invaluable collection and testimony of those times and traditions.<sup>3</sup>

Next, Skierkowski worked in the vicariates in Krasnosielec (1915-1917), Różań (1917-1920), after which he obtained his own parish in Ciachcin near Płock (1920-1925), and from 1925 in Imielnica near Płock. Especially during summer holidays, he would return to the Green Forest to wander through nearby villages: Myszyniec, Kadzidło, Łyse, Baranów, Czarnia, Zalas and many other to collect 200 songs, melodies, descriptions of the wedding rites and other Kurpie customs. When he was a parish priest in Imielnica, the Płock Scientific Society published “Puszcza Kurpiowska w pieśni” (“Kurpiowska Forest in Song”) in several issues, followed by his (?) stage work “Wesele na Kurpiach” (“The Wedding at Kurpie”), performed many times in Poland and abroad.<sup>4</sup>

In Imielnica, between 1927 and 1935, Fr. Skierkowski realised his deed of the erection of a new church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, according to the design of Brunon Zborowski<sup>5</sup>. After the outbreak of World War II, he initially organised the pastoral care to the inhabitants of Płock. On the night of 6 and 7 March 1941 he was arrested with other priests from the Płock county and transferred to Płock, to be later taken to the German Nazi Camp in Działdów. There, as a result of great suffering, he died on 20 August 1941. To this day, his burial place has not been found, nor have burial places of many other priests and bishops who shared his fate.<sup>6</sup>

An important and rediscovered work of Fr. Skierkowski was the consolidation of the Kurpie singing memory, making it possible to reproduce musical pieces no longer known or already forgotten. As noted by the Lviv Professor Adolf Chybiński, “although the collector did not use a phonograph, yet knowing the melodies by heart, he was

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. M. Grzybowski, *Władysław Skierkowski 1886-1941*, *idem*, *Duchowieństwo diecezji płockiej*, vol. 2, part 2, Płock 2008, pp. 326-327.

<sup>4</sup> W. Skierkowski, *Puszcza Kurpiowska w pieśni. Część pierwsza*, Płock 1928; *idem*, *Puszcza Kurpiowska w pieśni. Część druga. Zeszyt 1*, Płock 1929; *idem*, *Puszcza Kurpiowska w pieśni. Część druga. Zeszyt 2*, Płock 1933; *idem*, *Puszcza Kurpiowska w pieśni. Część druga. Zeszyt 3*, Płock 1934; *idem*, *Wesele na Kurpiach. Widowisko ludowe w 4-ch obrazach ze śpiewami i tańcami*, Płock 1933.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. W. Kućko (ed.), *Rocznik diecezji płockiej 2021. Struktura personalno-administracyjna*, Płock 2022, pp. 578-580.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Grzybowski, *Władysław Skierkowski 1886-1941*, pp. 328-329.

able to note them down with even greater certainty and accuracy. Having absolute hearing, he noted down each melody in the key in which he had heard it. [...] In the melodies of the Kurpie region there are many archaic elements in the range of tonalities, which do not only belong to the “ecclesiastical” ones. In this, perhaps, is the greatest characteristic of the Kurpie music”.<sup>7</sup>

In the pieces, songs and folk songs that he noted down, we can spot great praise of marital and family life, transmission of life and tradition to young generations, care of life in communion with God and nature, joy of life in the countryside and of promotion of customs from generation to generation. Utmost importance in the Kurpie region, which found its reflection in the works by Fr. Skierkowski, was assumed by moments crucial in the life of a man and a Christian, such as birth, baptism, wedding, and funeral.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Material commemorations to date

After World War II, attempts have been made in different research articles to picture the life and work of Fr. Skierkowski.<sup>9</sup> The end of the 1980s and the beginning of the third millennium were the periods which marked widespread interest in the figure of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski, especially his care of the Kurpie culture. A number of scientific and popular and scientific articles were published then that presented the contribution of this Płock priest in the Polish culture of the inter-war period.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> A. Chybiński, *Ks. Władysław Skierkowski*, „Przegląd Muzyczny”, 4 (1928) 9, pp. 11-12.

<sup>8</sup> Of the manuscript sources in this context, the following are worth mentioning: Biblioteka im. Zielińskich, *Dział zbiorów specjalnych, Rękopisy k. 1-67*, of the printed sources, apart from those mentioned earlier, e.g.: W. Skierkowski, *Muzykalność ludu kurpiowskiego*, „Kwartalnik Muzyczny” (1933) 1718, pp. 44-47; *idem*, *O niektórych tańcach kurpiowskich*, „Polski Rocznik Muzykologiczny” 2 (1936), pp. 159-161; *idem*, *Zwyczaj i obrzędy pogrzebowe puszczy kurpiowskiej*, „Głos Mazowiecki” (1939) 68-87.

<sup>9</sup> Full bibliography can be found in: M. M. Grzybowski, *Ksiądz Władysław Skierkowski. Etnograf Kurpiowszczyzny. 1886-1941*, Myszyniec 2011, pp. 95-101.

<sup>10</sup> We should refer to the following scientific articles: M.M. Grzybowski, *Martyrologium duchowieństwa diecezji płockiej w latach II wojny światowej 1939-1945*, Płock 1982, pp. 123-124; H. Gądomski, *Ks. Władysław Skierkowski – wybitny badacz Kurpiowszczyzny*, „Zeszyty Naukowe. Ostrołęckie Towarzystwo Naukowe im. Adama Chętnika”, (2004) 18, pp. 211-222; W. Graczyk, *Ksiądz Władysław Skierkowski – budowniczy kościoła pod wezwaniem Najświętszego Serca Jezusowego*

### a) commemorative plaques

Plaques and inscriptions dedicated to the life and work of distinguished people are a lasting and worthy way of promoting memory.<sup>11</sup> As early as 7 March 1948, seven years after the death of the priest and martyr, the parishioners of Imielnice founded a marble plaque placed in the church porch with the following inscription<sup>12</sup>:

†  
A CANON  
WŁADYSŁAW SKIERKOWSKI  
BORN ON 2 MARCH 1886  
PARISH PRIEST OF IMIELNICA FROM 1925

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w *Płocku-Imielnicy*, „Miesięcznik Pastorski Płocki”, (2007) 12, pp. 540-542; T. Żebrowski, *Ksiądz Władysław Skierkowski (1886-1941)*. *Folklorysta, zbieracz ludowych pieśni kurpiowskich*, „Studia Płockie” 39 (2011), pp. 215-226. Of the popular publications, we shall refer to: S. Pajka, *Rozstawił Kurpiów*, w: *Informator Krajowego Ośrodka Dokumentacji Regionalnych Towarzystw Kultury*, vol. 12, ed. B. Wiesiołek, Ciechanów 1999, pp. 147-153; S. Pajka, *Rozstawił Kurpiów*, „Literatura Ludowa”, (2000) 2, pp. 46-47; I. Choroszevska-Zyśk, *Śladami księdza Skierkowskiego*, „Gazeta Współczesna”, (2001) 218, p. 10; W. J. Kowalski, *Piewca Kurpiowszczyzny – rzecz o ks. Władysławie Skierkowskim*, „Niedziela Płocka”, (2001) 51, p. IV; S. Pajka, *Kurpiowski Kolberg. O Władysławie Skierkowskim*, „Martyria”, (2001), 11, pp. 16-17; I. Choroszevska-Zyśk, *Ksiądz i do Boga i do ludzi*, „Rozmaitości Ostrołęckie”, (2002) 49, p. 12. 15; EO, *Zwyczaj zapisane w pieśni. Zakończono prace nad spuścizną po ks. Skierkowskim*, „Gazeta Współczesna”, (2003) 233, p. 4; EO, *O Kurpiach w trzech tomach. Dzieło ks. Skierkowskiego zostało ocalone*, „Gazeta Współczesna”, (2004) 62, p. 4; EO, *Pieśni w komplecie*, „Gazeta Współczesna”, (2004) 56, p. 7; W. J. Mikulski, *Perelki księdza Władysława Skierkowskiego*, „Niedziela”, (2004) 17, dod. „Głos Katolicki”, pp. I, III; B. Kalinowska, *Zapisał 2178 pieśni kurpiowskich*, „Tygodnik Ostrołęcki”, (2006) 21, p. 20; S. Pajka, *Regionaliści przed II wojną światową*, „Kurpie”, (2006) 5, pp. 15-18.

<sup>11</sup> The original arrangement of texts located on plaques, as well as the character of the used fonts (lowercase and capital letters) was presented in the body of the inscription.

<sup>12</sup> See: M. M. Grzybowski, *Ksiądz Władysław Skierkowski. Etnograf Kurpiowszczyzny. 1886-1941*, Myszyniec 2011, p. 91. In the above publication (cf. p. 91) day dates of birth and death were included, differing from those which were engraved in the commemorative plaques. In the parish church in Imielnica, the date 2 March 1886 was included as the date of birth, while 2 August 1941 as the date of death. In the publications of Fr. M. M. Grzybowski, 12 March 1886 or 13 March 1886 appears as the date of birth, while 20 August 1941 as the date of death. Cf. Grzybowski, *Ksiądz Władysław Skierkowski*, p. 7; *idem*, *Władysław Skierkowski 1886-1941*, pp. 326, 328.

BUILT THIS TEMPLE FROM DONATIONS OF PARISHIONERS.  
 MURDERED BY THE GERMANS  
 IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP IN DZIAŁDÓW ON 2 MARCH 1941.  
 ETERNAL PEACE GRANT HIM LORD.

Yet another significant testimony of memory is depicted by a commemorative plaque, situated in the hall of the ground floor of the Płock Scientific Society on 8 Narutowicza Street in Płock, whose member was Fr. Skierkowski, commemorated also in the stained glass in the meeting room of the Board of the Society. The following inscription was placed on the plaque (the arrangement of the content from the plaque has been retained):

TO PRIEST  
 WŁADYSŁAW SKIEROWSKI  
 1886-1941  
 MEMBER OF THE SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY OF PŁOCK,  
 A DISTINGUISHED RESERACHER OF THE FOLK SONGS OF THE KUR-  
 PIE REGION, AUTHOR OF EXCELLENT WORKS “PUSZCZA  
 KURPIOWSKA W PIEŚNI”, “WESELE NA KURPIACH”, “MUZY-  
 KALNOŚĆ LUDU KURPIOWSKIEGO”, AND OTHER WORKS,  
 MURDERED BY THE NAZIS IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP  
 IN DZIAŁDÓW  
 ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PUBLICATION OF  
 “PUSZCZA KURPIOWSKA W PIEŚNI”  
 PŁOCK SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY  
 PŁOCK, DECEMBER 1978

On 19 November 2000, during the Great Jubilee of Christianity, a plaque of white marble with golden letters was unveiled in the parish church in Bogurzyn (in the present deanery of western Mława), where Fr. Skierkowski was baptised, thanks to endeavours of Fr. Józef Gałązka, parish priest, and the Society of Friends of Mława Land<sup>13</sup>:

<sup>13</sup> The description of this ceremony was presented by: W. J. K o w a l s k i, *Odślonięcie tablicy pamiątkowej w Bogurzynie*, „Notatki Płockie”, (2000) 4, pp. 48-51; *idem*,



FR. WŁADYSŁAW SKIERKOWSKI  
 BORN ON 12 MARCH 1886 IN GŁUŻEK IN THE MŁAWA LAND  
 ORDAINED THE PRIESTHOOD ON 23 JUNE 1912  
 IN THE PŁOCK CATHEDRAL  
 MURDERED IN DZIAŁDÓW ON 20 AUGUST 1941  
 ARDENT SHEPHERD,  
 BUILDER OF THE CHURCH IN IMIELNICA  
 RENDERED GREAT SERVICE TO THE KURPIE CULTURE  
 RESPECTED IN THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

IN MEMORY OF  
 PARISH PRIEST AND PARISHIONERS OF BOGURZYN  
 THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF MŁAWA LAND  
 THE MUNICIPALITY OF WIŚNIEWO  
 AND THE DISTRICT STAROSTY OF MŁAWA  
 IN NOVEMBER OF THE JUBILEE YEAR 2000

With the effort of the Myszyniec parishioners in the Collegiate of Holy Trinity in Myszyniec on 10 November 2001, in the 60th anniversary of his martyrdom, a plaque with the following inscription was unveiled and consecrated:<sup>14</sup>

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*W Bogurzynie pamiętają o ks. Władysławie Skierkowskim*, „Niedziela Płocka”, (2000) 50, pp. I, II. More on this, cf. D. Domżałska, *To nasz ziomek – ks. Władysław Skierkowski*, „W Drodze do Emaus”, (2000) 12, p. 16; K. Jakubowski, *W hołdzie księdzu – etnografowi*, „Tygodnik Ciechanowski” – „Tygodnik w Powiatach”, (2000) 46, p. III; K. Jakubowski, *Temu, który ukochał kulturę kurpiowską. Bogurzyn*, „Tygodnik Ciechanowski”, (2000) 48, p. III; MB, *Tablica ku czci ks. Skierkowskiego*, „Tygodnik Ostrołęcki Weekend”, (2000) 102, pp. 7, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Grzybowski, *Ksiądz Władysław Skierkowski*, p. 93. More on this in: *Uroczystość poświęcona księdzu Władysławowi Skierkowskiemu w Myszyncu*, „Tygodnik Ostrołęcki”, (2001) 90, p. 15; I. Ch[orońska-Zyśk], *Epitafium dla badacza. Pamięci ks. Skierkowskiego*, „Gazeta Współczesna”, (2001) 216, p. 4; W. J. Kowalski, *W Myszyncu o ks. Władysławie Skierkowskim (1886-1941)*, „Notatki Płockie”, (2001) 4, pp. 45-46; S. Pajka, *Kurpie splacają dług ks. Skierkowskiemu*, „Niedziela”, (2001) 44, dod. „Głos Katolicki”, pp. I, III.

FR. WOJCIECH KUĆKO

OF BLESSED MEMORY  
 CANON  
 WŁADYSŁAW SKIERKOWSKI  
 (1886-1941)  
 MYSZYNIEC VICAR  
 IN THE YEARS 1913-1915  
 GREAT EULOGIST OF KURPIE FOLKLORE  
 AUTHOR OF THE OUTSTANDING WORK  
 „PUSZCZA KURPIOWSKA W PIEŚNI”  
 ON 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS MARTYRDOM  
 IN THE NAZI CAMP IN DZIAŁDÓW  
 GRATEFUL KURPIE  
 MYSZYNIEC, NOVEMBER 2001

In 2014 in Myszyniec, in the square near the minor basilica, plaques of merit of folk artists and local heroes for the Kurpie land were unveiled. Such was also awarded to Fr. Władysław Skierkowski, along with such personas as Zygmunt Padlewski, Adam Chętnik, Konstanty Rynarzewski and Stach Konwa. A brass plaque with an engraved image of Fr. Skierkowski and an inscription was placed on one half of the large fieldstone:<sup>15</sup>

PRIEST  
 WŁADYSŁAW SKIERKOWSKI  
 (1886-1941)  
 RESEARCHER, POPULARISER AND ENTHUSIAST  
 OF KURPIE CULTURE  
 IN THE YEARS 1913-1915,  
 HE CONDUCTED PASTORAL MINISTRY IN MYSZYNIEC.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Myszyniec: odsłonięto tablice zasłużonych (zdjęcia)*, <https://archiwum.mo-ja-ostroleka.pl/myszyniec-odslonieto-tablice-zasluzonych-zdjecia,1404284166,2.html> (accessed on: 10.03.2022). Plaques were created within the project of the European Union realised by Myszyniec and the County School Complex in Myszyniec. More in: L. Z y g n e r, *Piewca kurpiowskiego folkloru*, „Tygodniki Ostrołęcki”, (2016) 34, p. 18; *idem*, *Piewca kurpiowskiego folkloru. Mazowieckie impresje historyczne*, „Tygodnik Gazeta Mławska”, (2016) 34, p. 18.



THE AUTHOR OF REMARKABLE WORKS:  
THE COLLECTION OF THE KURPIE FOLK SONGS  
“PUSZCZA KURPIOWSKA W PIEŚNI”,  
“MUZYKALNOŚĆ LUDU KURPIOWSKIEGO”,  
AND A THEATRE PLAY “WESELE NA KURPIACH”.  
TORTURED BY THE GERMANS  
IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP IN DZIAŁDÓW.

**b) other initiatives**

On 70th anniversary of the martyrdom of the Płock priest and ethnographer, the Mazovian Voivodeship Assembly adopted a resolution on 21 March 2011 proclaiming 2011 “Year of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski in Mazovia”.<sup>16</sup> The initiative was endorsed by the Society for the Promotion of Music “Przez Muzykę do Serc” (“Through Music to Heart”), and developed by many institutions, e.g. The Regional Centre of Kurpie Culture in Myszyniec, The Society for the Promotion of Music, Myszyniec Town Hall, the Roman Catholic Parish in Myszyniec, The Chopin University of Music in Warsaw, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Płock Cultural Association, Kurpie Culture Museum in Ostrołęka, Ostrołęka Starosty, Kurpie Association. The aim of the undertaken initiatives in 2011 was to bring out of the past the oeuvre of Fr. Skierkowski, which place him among the most outstanding folklore

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<sup>16</sup> The justification for the Resolution in: Grzybowski, *Ksiądz Władysław Skierkowski*, pp. 103-104. More on the topic of the celebration of the Year of Fr. Skierkowski, cf. K. J [akubowski], *Tu się urodził patron Mazowsza*, „Tygodnik Ciechanowski”, (2011) 15, p. 23; K. Jakubowski, *Lud wiejski w krańszej szacie. Głuźek. Śladami księdza Władysława Skierkowskiego*, „Tygodnik Ciechanowski”, (2011) 21, p. 17; B. Kacpura, *Propagator kultury kurpiowskiej*, „Czas Ciechanowa”, (2011) 25, p. 30; B. Kielak, *Pamięć społeczności kurpiowskiej o ks. Wł. Skierkowskim*, „Wędrowiec Nadnarwiański”, (2011) 1-2, pp. 2-3; K. Mróz, *Ks. Skierkowski z wizytą u Chopina*, „Kurpie”, (2011) 3, pp. 5-6; Z. Ścibek, *Fascynat kurpiowskich pieśni*, „Głos Katolicki”, (2011) 22, p. 21; A. Wołosz, *Kochał te pieśni*, „Tygodnik Ostrołęcki”, (2011) 14, p. 6; I. Wysocka-Ossowska, *O ks. Skierkowskim wiedzą wszystko*, „Tygodnik Ostrołęcki”, (2011) 47, p. 6.

eulogists, next to Oskar Kolberg and Zygmunt Gloger, and to promote the folk culture of the Kurpie region.<sup>17</sup>

A similar initiative, though on a smaller scale, was developed by the local government of Myszyniec, dubbing year 2021 the “Year of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski” on the 80th anniversary of his martyrdom in the camp in Działdów.<sup>18</sup>

In 2021 as well, in Bogurzyn near Mława, numerous initiatives were launched, aimed at material and intellectual commemoration of the figure and works of Fr. Skierkowski. The first point of the celebrations was the author’s evening, entitled “Myśli literą pisane” (“Thoughts in Letters”), which took place on 22 May 2021 in the Primary School in Bogurzyn. During the evening dedicated to the promotion of Fr. Skierkowski a book of poetry by Zbigniew Markiewicz was presented, vice-starosty of Mława, issued by the Social Committee for the Construction of the Monument of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski.<sup>19</sup> Three speeches were delivered telling about the priest from Głuźek from the context land culture. Fr. dr Wojciech Kućko from the Faculty of Family Studies at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in Warsaw in his speech “Just and unjust memory of the Polish manors, land and fold culture” pointed to great cultural heritage of the landed gentry and Polish nobility, almost entirely destroyed in Poland during the Communism era, today difficult to restore. A historian dr hab. Dariusz Milewski, also from the same University, discussed the cultural context of the activities of Fr. Skierkowski among the Kurpie community. In turn, Fr. dr Zbigniew Jaroszewski, parish priest in Myszyniec, presented contemporary forms of commemoration of this priest in the Kurpie Land.<sup>20</sup> The ceremony was attended by the local authorities of Mława, Mława County and the surrounding municipalities, Senior Bishop Roman Adam Marcinkowski and numerous invited guests.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. A. B o g u c k a, *O księdzu Skierkowskim na Mazowszu*, „Kronika Mazowiecka”, (2012) 3, pp. 38-39; J. M i c h n i e w i c z, *Rok ks. Władysława Skierkowskiego na Mazowszu*, „Kronika Mazowiecka”, (2012) 4, p. 4; K. P a r z y c h, *Festiwal Muzyki Kościelnej im. ks. Władysława Skierkowskiego*, „Głos Katolicki”, (2012) 23, p. 23; A. W n ę t a, *Wizytę sprzed wieku upamiętnili tablicą*, „Kurier Ostrołęcki”, (2013), 34, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Rok 2021 ogłoszony rokiem księdza Władysława Skierkowskiego w gminie Myszyniec*, <https://www.moja-ostroleka.pl/art/1609498928/rok-2021-ogloszony-rokiem-ksiedza-wladyslawa-skierkowskiego-w-gminie-myszyniec> (accessed on: 10.04.2022).

<sup>19</sup> Z. M a r k i e w i c z, *Myśli literą pisane*, Mława 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Z. J a r o s z e w s k i, *Biblia w świadomości oraz żywej kulturze i tradycji Kurpiów. Studium biblijno-pastoralne (na przykładzie parafii Myszyniec)*, Myszyniec 2017.

On that day, the construction project and visualisation of the monument of Fr. Skierkowski in Bogurzyn were also presented.<sup>21</sup>

The promotion of the idea of the material commemoration of Fr. Skierkowski was also justified and developed at the scientific conference in Myszyniec on 11 June 2021.<sup>22</sup>

### **3. The monument of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski in Bogurzyn**

In 2021, Fr. Władysław Skierkowski, one of few priests of the Płock Diocese, was honoured with a monument, being an important element in restoring the memory of his priestly ministry and also his martyrdom. The idea of the monument was well received among the local government and residents, yet there were as well some critical voices. Despite this, the final form and execution of the monument was welcomed by the local community.

The history of the construction of the monument dates back to the year 2000, when the aforementioned memorial plaque was erected in the parish church of St Dorothy in Bogurzyn. During this ceremony, Zbigniew Markiewicz, the then president of the Section of the Catholic Action in the parish of St Dorothy in Bogurzyn put forward a proposal of the erection of the monument, which was welcomed by the then parish priest Fr. Józef Gałązka<sup>23</sup>. The above topic was further discussed in 2019, when “the Social Committee for the Construction of the Monument of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski” was established, which included the inhabitants of the village of Głużek, where the priest was born, as well as members of the public from other surrounding villages: Małgorzata Skierkowska (wife of Marek Skierkowski, whose grandfather was the brother of Fr. Władysław), Karolina Mackiewicz (distant cousin of Fr. Skierkowski), Iza Ostaszewska née Ławniczek (teacher in the School Complex No. 2 in Mława), Adam Rutkowski (chairman of the Local Council in Wiśniewo), Anna Jaroszewska (headmistress

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<sup>21</sup> K. J[akubowski], *Powrót piewcy kultury kurpiowskiej*, „Tygodnik Gazeta Mławska”, (2021) 21, pp. 1,19.

<sup>22</sup> Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Myszynca, *Etnograf Kurpiowszczyzny. Konferencja naukowa o księdzu Władysławie Skierkowskim, Myszyniec, 11 czerwca 2021 roku. Materiały konferencyjne. Konferencja współfinansowana ze środków Unii Europejskiej w ramach działania 19.2 objętego Programem Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich na lata 2014-2020, Myszyniec 2021.*

<sup>23</sup> Cf. K u ć k o (ed.), *Rocznik diecezji plockiej 2021*, pp. 505-506.



II. 1. The ceremony of the consecration of the monument of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski in Bogurzyn, 11 September 2021.  
Photo from the archives of Fr. Wojciech Kućko



II. 2. The monument of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski in Bogurzyn, 2021.  
Photo from the archives of Fr. Wojciech Kućko

of the Primary School in Bogurzyn) oraz Zbigniew Markiewicz (vice-starosty of Mława), appointed chair of the Committee by acclamation. After the preparation of relevant documents and a work plan, an application was submitted to the Ministry of Culture, National Heritage and Sport. The construction of the memorial was undertaken to commemorate the upcoming anniversaries: the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Bogurzyn Primary School and the 80th anniversary of the martyrdom of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski, as well as on the occasion of the naming of the school after Fr. Skierkowski, the unveiling of the school Patron's Hall of Memory and the founding of the school's banner<sup>24</sup>.

The application was highly rated by the Ministerial Commission and grant was awarded in the amount of eighty-eight thousand zloties for the Municipal Authority in Wiśniewo, who was realising this project. Grzegorz Nowakowski from the company NOW-KAM in Kisiny near Działdów and sculptors Sławomi Micek and Dawid Szluflik from Kielce became the contracts of this project<sup>25</sup>.

An important moment in the promotion of this project was the laying of the foundation stone for the monument on 20 August 2021, exactly on the 80th anniversary of Fr. Skierkowski's martyrdom. A Holy Mass was celebrated at the Church of St Dorothy in Bogurzyn presided by Fr. dr Piotr Grzywaczewski, chancellor of the Diocesan Curia in Płock. Fr. dr hab. Daniel Brzeziński, prof. UMK, research and development worker of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and vice-president of the Płock Scientific Society, presented the existing forms of remembrance of the martyrdom, priestly and cultural work of Fr. Skierkowski. The foundation act was signed by members of the Social Committee for the Construction of the Monument with its chairman Zbigniew Markiewicz, head of the municipality of Wiśniewo Grzegorz Woźniak, headmistress of the Primary School in Bogurzyn Anna Jaroszevska, as well as the clergy: Fr. Daniel

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<sup>24</sup> The archives of the author, *Notatki Zbigniewa Markiewicza z 2021 r.*; K. J [ a k u - b o w s k i ], *Pomnik dla Kolberga spod Mławy. Głuźek-Bogurzyn*, „Tygodnik Gazeta Mławska” (2020) 48, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> Sławomir Micek (b. 1956), graduate of the Faculty of Industrial Design at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, member of the Association of Sculptors, specialises in sculpture in bronze and marble sculpture. Dawid Szluflik (b. 1987), graduate of the Secondary Art School in Kielce, sculpts in marble from Italian Carrara or Morawica from the Świętokrzyskie region.

Brzeziński, Fr. Józef Gałązka, Fr. Piotr Grzywaczewski, Fr. Zbigniew Jaroszewski, Fr. Wojciech Kućko, Fr. Andrzej Jan Skorłutowski, Fr. Wojciech Wiśniewski. Subsequently, Fr. Józef Gałązka, retired parish priest in Bogurzyn, consecrated the cornerstone of the new monument in the square belonging to the municipal authorities of Wiśniewo just opposite the parish church. The cornerstone was ceremonially built in the prepared fragment of the pedestal.<sup>26</sup>

The ceremony of the consecration of the monument took place in Bogurzyn on 11 September 2021 after the field Holy Mass celebrated in the square next to the monument.<sup>27</sup> The prayer was presided over by the Bishop of Płock Piotr Libera with the numerous participation of the clergy and the faithful. W. Piętka noted that “something has revived from the spirit of Fr. Skierkowski in Bogurzyn, in his home land, where 138 years ago he was born. In the square between the Church and the town, that is between sacrum and every day life, in the very sphere of passion and study of this much regretted priest-ethnographer, a monument was erected. A Kurpie delegation took part in the ceremony, reading out some of the invocations of the prayers of the faithful in their dialect and carrying the altar gifts in the procession. There were more of those vivid, joyful Kurpie colours and patterns that Fr Skierkowski loved so much, also on the chasubles of the dozen or so priests who, together with the Bishop of Płock Piotr Libera celebrated the Holy Mass”.<sup>28</sup> (see: Il. 1). The consecration of the Hall of Memory and a new banner for the Primary School in Bogurzyn,

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<sup>26</sup> K. J [ a k u b o w s k i ], *Powrót piewcy kultury kurpiowskiej. Bogurzyn*, „Tygodnik Gazeta Mławska”, (2021) 21, p. 19; *idem*, *Bogurzyn. Akt i kamień pod pomnik*, „Tygodnik Gazeta Mławska”, (2021) 34, p. 2; *idem*, *Pomnik dokumentalisty kultury kurpiowskiej i męczennika*, „Tygodnik Ciechanowski”, (2021) 7, p. 7; A. B o g u c k a, *Etnograf w sutannie*, „Mazowsze. Serce Polski”, (2021) 7, pp. 40-41.

<sup>27</sup> W. P i ę t k a, *Bogurzyn k. Mławy. Wierność korzeniom*, „Gość Niedzielny” – „Gość Płocki” (2021) 38, p. II.

<sup>28</sup> W. P i ę t k a, *Bogurzyn i Kurpie pamiętają o ks. Skierkowskim*, <https://plock.gosc.pl/doc/7097299.Bogurzyn-i-Kurpie-pamietaja-o-ks-Skierkowskim> (accessed on: 10.01.2022). See also: P. L i b e r a, *Homilia Bogurzyn – poświęcenie pomnika ks. Władysława Skierkowskiego i sztandaru dla Szkoły jego imienia* (11 September 2021), <https://www.diecezja.plocka.pl/biskupi/piotr-libera/homilie/homilia-bogurzyn-poswiecenie-pomnika-ks-wladyslaw-slierkowskiego-i-sztandaru-dla-szkoly-jego-imienia-11-ix-2021> (accessed on: 10.01.2022).

which – by the resolution of the Municipal Council in Wiśniewo – received the name of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski on 21 May 2021, was also an important element of celebration.<sup>29</sup> The banner was created in the Artistic Embroidery Studio of the sisters *Congregatio Sororum Vestiariarum Iesu* in Włocławek.<sup>30</sup> Busts related to the Bogurzyn monument were donated to the Diocesan Museum in Płock and to the parish in Myszyniec. All the donors who paid an amount of 1000 zloties for the rection of the monument received commemorative statues with the image of priest-ethnographer.

The site of the monument was designated in the square with a car park opposite St Dorothy's Church in Bogurzyn. The monument depicts a life-size figure of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski (the whole figure measures approximately 2.15 metres with a small pedestal in white), made of white Italian marble. It was placed on a maroon-coloured plinth made of Swedish granite (dimensions: 1 m × 1 m and height 1.20 m), supported on a granite foundation of the same colour (four cuboids 0.4 m high and 1.5 m long). Everything was supported on a 2.5 × 2.5 m reinforced concrete foundation. The figure of Fr. Skierkowski, dressed in a cassock with a cape, is turned to the main entrance and tower of the church. He has a pleasing countenance and a head somewhat bent with a priestly biretta. In his right lower hand he is holding a rosary, in the left a book, perhaps a priestly breviary. The reinforced concrete foundation was built by Grzegorz Nowakowski's company, while technical documentation was prepared free of charge by Barbara Smolińska-Curyło. In its entirety the construction of the monument is 4 m high and weighs around 10 tonnes (see: II. 2).

On the plinth of the monument, on the black granite plaque, a commemorative inscription was engraved in silver letters:

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<sup>29</sup> *Uchwała Nr XXVIII/130/2021 Rady Gminy w Wiśniewie z dn. 21 maja 2021 r. w sprawie nadania imienia Szkole Podstawowej w Bogurzynie*, [http://edziennik.mazowieckie.pl/WDU\\_W/2021/4843/oryginal/akt.pdf](http://edziennik.mazowieckie.pl/WDU_W/2021/4843/oryginal/akt.pdf) (accessed on: 10.01.2022).

<sup>30</sup> The author's archives, *Notatki Zbigniewa Markiewicza z 2021 r.*

CANON  
 WŁADYSŁAW SKIERKOWSKI  
 BORN ON 12 MARCH 1886 IN GŁUŻEK  
 DISTINGUISHED ETHNOGRAPHER  
 AND EXPERT IN KURPIE CULTURE,  
 BUILDER OF THE CHURCH IN IMIELNICA NEAR PŁOCK,  
 MEMBER OF THE PŁOCK SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY,  
 MURDERED ON 20 AUGUST 1941  
 IN A GERMAN NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMP  
 IN SOLDAU (DZIAŁDÓW)

ON THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS MARTYRDOM  
 THE MONUMENT WAS FOUNDED BY:  
 THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE  
 AND NATIONAL HERITAGE AND SPORT,  
 MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT OF WIŚNIEWO  
 AND RESIDENTS OF THE MŁAWA COUNTY

BOGURZYN, 11 SEPTEMBER 2021

On both sides of the monument, at the level of the plinth, granite stones were installed, on the polished parts of which inscriptions were engraved reflecting the sense and the idea of commemoration. On the left side of the fragment of the book by John Paul II “Memory and Identity”:

“Patriotism means loving what is native:  
 love of history, tradition, language or the native landscape itself.  
 It is a love that also embraces the works of compatriots:  
 the fruits of their genius”<sup>31</sup>.

On the right, the quote from Karol Szymanowski’s words of appreciation for the work by Fr. Skierkowski:

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<sup>31</sup> The quote from John Paul II’s book is as follows: “Patriotism means loving what is native: love of history, tradition, language or the native landscape itself. It is a love that also embraces the works of compatriots: the fruits of their genius”, Jan Paweł II, *Pamięć i tożsamość. Rozmowy na przełomie tysiącleci*, Skultuna 2012, p. 51.



“May I at this point express to the Hon.

Author, the words not only of deepest appreciation for such a beautiful and valuable work, but also of sincere gratitude for making available to us – Polish musicians – this, so far unknown, so immensely rich a source of probably the most beautiful Polish folk song”

With honour Karol Szymanowski<sup>32</sup>

The total cost of the investment amounted to circa 220 thousand zloties. The amount of the ministerial subsidy was supplemented with subsidies from various sponsors and funds from the sale of donations in various denominations, distributed by the Building Committee. A few of them were built in the time capsule with the foundation stone for the monument.

## Conclusion

Writing down the memory of the martyrs of the 20th century was considered by John Paul II one of the most important challenges at the turn of the millennium. He talked about it on 7 June 1999 in Bydgoszcz: “Our 20th century, our century has its own special martyrdom in many countries, in many regions of the world, not fully written down. They need to be studied, they need to be affirmed, they need to be written down, as the martyrdom of the first centuries of the Church wrote down, and this is still our strength today – that testimony of the martyrs of the first centuries”.<sup>33</sup> Every form of the consolidation of memory of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century victims of the totalitarian systems, especially those faithful, is a fight to preserve their just memory. The article demonstrates how, at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, different forms of recording the memory of the work and the martyrdom of the Płock priest Władysław Skierkowski. All the inscriptions to date, especially the one created in 2021 in Bogurzyn of a priest – ethnographer and historian, are the symbol of proper thinking about the past for the future.

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<sup>32</sup> Quote by: K. Szymanowski, *Pieśni Kurpiowskie. 12 pieśni na głos solowy z fortepianem op. 58*, Warszawa 1934, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Quote by: Jan Paweł II, *Świadectwo męczenników XX wieku wspólnym dziełictwem Kościołów*, „Ethos” 14 (2001) 1-2, p. 13.

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**Illustrations**

- II. 1. The ceremony of the consecration of the monument of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski in Bogurzyn, 11 September 2021. Photo from the archives of Fr. Wojciech Kućko.
- II. 2. The monument of Fr. Władysław Skierkowski in Bogurzyn, 2021. Photo from the archives of Fr. Wojciech Kućko.

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