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The Eucharistic Congress in the Town of Wieluń in 1931

1. Social situation of inhabitants – 2. The meaning of the Wieluń region in bp Teodor Kubina's teaching – 3. The course of the Eucharistic Congress in the town of Wieluń – 4. Final provisions

The idea of organising Eucharistic congresses dates back to the end of the 19th century when the first was organised in Lille in France. The main aim of the Eucharistic congress was strengthening and reviving the cult of the Eucharist. It was a Mass event. During the congress, alongside the celebration of the Holy Mass, there were presented a lot of papers, which led to the discussion focused on the presence of Jesus Christ through the appearance of bread and wine. Most of these types of events took place in Europe. The first congresses outside the continent of Europe were organised in Jerusalem (1893), Canada (1910), Argentina (1934), Brazil (1955), Columbia (1968), Kenya (1985) and the South Korea (1989)¹. They had international, national and regional reach.

Teodor Kubina², the first bishop of Częstochowa, saw great hope in increasing the Eucharistic awareness of his faithful by organising similar events in his

¹ Stefan Koperek. 1986. "Polskie kongresy eucharystyczne". *Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny* 4 (4): 325–344.

² Bishop Teodor Kubina (1880–1951) – a Catholic clergyman, the first bishop of the diocese of Częstochowa, a community worker; awarded a title of a PhD in philosophy (1904) and in theology (1907) in Rome; organised social associations and soup kitchens; gave lectures on the culture and history of Poland for the youth as a parish priest in the city of Katowice; worked as a priest in the Lake District and in Berlin (also as a parish priest) among Polish emigrants; the co-organiser of the Silesian Society for the Friends of Learning as well as the co-organiser of "Gość Niedzielny"; pub-

diocese. As he wrote, he took part for the first time ‘in the Universal Congress’ in 1926 in Chicago, where he presented his paper. Furthermore, he became a nationwide and region-wide initiator of such religious initiatives. He was perceived to have been one of the main specialists on theology of such events. In 1928, he had already been invited to present another paper during the Eucharistic Congress in the city of Łódź. In the same year, he held the 1st Diocesan Eucharistic Congress in the city of Częstochowa where he made an inaugural speech on the 9th November. This event became a great manifestation of faith and gave rise to other religious events of such a type³. The 2nd Diocesan Eucharistic Congress was organised in the city of Sosnowiec in 1929. At that time, the Zagłębie Dąbrowskie region particularly required its religiousness reviving, which had been mentioned by the bishop in his sermon *The Peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ and the Holy Eucharist (Pokój Chrystusowy w Królestwie Chrystusowym a Eucharystia Święta)* while opening the meeting. The 3rd Eucharistic Congress in the town of Wieluń was also organised on the initiative of bishop Teodor Kubina. The 4th Congress took place in 1932 in the town of Radomsko. It crowned all of his activities promoting Eucharistic devotion, which covered the whole regions of the new diocese. Furthermore, during his pastoral service in the diocese of Częstochowa, similar meetings took place in the towns of Dąbrowa Górnicza, Kłobuck and Zawiercie⁴.

lished the social and political works in magazines and newspapers, such as “Chrześcijańska Biblioteka Społeczna”, “Ruch Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny”, “Ateneum Kapłańskie”, “Przewodnik Katolicki” and “Der Oberschlesische Kurier”; appointed the bishop of the newly opened diocese of Częstochowa in 1925 – organised its church structures; committed himself into activities of seasonal workers; created social societies; received the doctor honoris causa degree from the Jagiellonian University; left nearly 200 publications; awarded with the Commander’s Cross with Star of the Order of Polonia Restituta (1935) for outstanding achievements for his social work. Jerzy Wolny. 1971. Kubina Teodor Filip. In *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Vol. 16. Ed. Emanuel Rostworowski, 28–30. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk. 1926. “Wizyta pasterska”. *Niedziela* 1 (2): 8.

³ Teodor Kubina. 1928. “List Pasterski w sprawie Diecezjalnego Kongresu Eucharystycznego w Częstochowie”. *Wiadomości Diecezjalne* 3 (4): 31–32; Jan Związek. 1987. Kongresy eucharystyczne w diecezji częstochowskiej. In *Eucharystia źródłem życia*. Ed. Stanisław Grzybek, 41–71. Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne; Jan Związek. 1987. “Kongresy eucharystyczne w diecezji częstochowskiej”. *Niedziela* 30 (23): 4–5.

⁴ Teodor Kubina. 1931. *W podniosłych chwilach i doniosłych sprawach*. Vol. 1. Częstochowa: Drukarnia F.D. Wilkoszewskiego w Częstochowie, 334–335; Józef Mielczarek, Marian Mikołajczyk. Ed. 2006. *Katalog Archidiecezji Częstochowskiej 2005*. Częstochowa: Drukarnia Częstochowskie Zakłady Graficzne S.A., 45.

1. Social situation of inhabitants

The establishment of the diocese of Częstochowa under the bull of *Vixdum Poloniae unitas* on 28th of October 1925 by Pope Pius XI took place after Poland's independence in 1918 and the signing of a concordat between the Republic of Poland and the Holy See in 1925. Rev. Teodor Kubina, the current parish priest of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary parish in Katowice, was appointed the first bishop of Częstochowa on 14th December 1925. After having been ordained bishop in the Jasna Góra Monastery on the 2nd February 1926, he faced a difficult task of integrating the new diocese including 48 parishes from the diocese of Kielce and 126 parishes from the diocese of Włocławek⁵.

The territory of the new diocese covered an area of 8,524 square kilometres and it consisted of around 877,037 faithful in the 1920's and 1,2 million people lived there just before the outbreak of the Second World War. The western borders of the diocese, including the borders of the Wieluń district, entirely covered the frontiers of the Second Republic of Poland with Germany⁶. These regions were characterised by historical distinction and a typically agricultural structure of people, who lived in the deaneries of Bolesławiec, Brzeźnica (only three parishes there), Praszka, Wieluń and Wieruszów. A huge proportion of the population were of the Jewish faith as well as of German origin and had settled there from the beginning of the 19th century. They undertook mass seasonal work which resulted in travelling abroad work, especially to Germany, France and Belgium. This influenced the religious and social indifference among the inhabitants of the district of Wieluń⁷ and had a huge impact on the nature of pastoral activity in these areas. The other parts of the diocese of Częstochowa had their own nature. The Zagłębie Dąbrowskie region was dominated by working class people. According to bishop Teodor Kubina, the Shrine of Our Lady Mother in the Jasna Góra Monastery⁸ was to be an element integrating all the people from the diocese. Furthermore, restoring sacramental life in the faithful, in which the Eucharist occupied the central position, was to be used for this purpose. In order to revive the religiousness amongst the inhabitants of the

⁵ Mielczarek, Mikołajczyk. Ed. 2006. *Katalog Archidiecezji Częstochowskiej 2005*, 44–45.

⁶ Jan Związek. 1974. "Powstanie diecezji częstochowskiej". *Częstochowskie Studia Teologiczne* (2): 13–38; Jan Związek. 1976. "Martyrologium kapłanów diecezji częstochowskiej w czasie II wojny światowej". *Częstochowskie Studia Teologiczne* (4): 185–298.

⁷ Jan Związek. 1974. "Powstanie diecezji częstochowskiej". *Częstochowskie Studia Teologiczne* (2): 34.

⁸ Andrzej Zakrzewski. 2002. "Straty duchowieństwa diecezji częstochowskiej w okresie II wojny światowej". *Rocznik Wieluński* (2): 53–54.

district of Wieluń, the Eucharistic Congress in the town of Wieluń was held on 27–29 June 1931.

2. The meaning of the Wieluń region in bishop Teodor Kubina's teaching

Bishop Teodor Kubina wrote about the town of Wieluń in the following way:

Wieluń played a role in the religious life of our nation. There still had not been the Jasna Góra Monastery (...), but there had already been a magnificent House of God in Wieluń, around which the powerful religious life developed. The spirit of St. Adalbert also survived in the Wieluń region. The people living there are well-known for their deep faith, devotion and profound attachment to the Catholic Church (...). The land of Wieluń appears to be the Galilee of our diocese. This land may seem poor, but it is beautiful and gentle; its people, though simple and indigent, are zealous and religious⁹.

In turn, in his pastoral letter to the faithful of the Wieluń region, in which he showed his idea of holding a congress for this part of the diocese of Częstochowa, he formulated the desire of the Catholics to undertake this task:

I have felt that such a resolution responds not only to the wishes of the Divine Heart of Our Saviour, but also to your wishes, my Dear Faithful. All of you have a deep desire to show how much you love the Eucharistic Jesus and how you can worship Him; all of you deeply wish for sanctifying the land on which you live and work with the Eucharistic blessing of Greatest of the Lords; all of you deeply wish for making your region become like the heart of the diocese and gather all the faithful of it around the Most Holy Host for at least a few days of the Eucharistic Congress.

The bishop was aware of the fact that the inhabitants of Wieluń would eagerly respond to the appeal for large participation in this event particularly owing to the fact that 28th June was on a Sunday and the 29th June – the Solemnity of the Saints Peter and Paul – was a public holiday¹⁰.

⁹ Teodor Kubina. 1931. "List Pasterski w sprawie III Diecezjalnego Kongresu Eucharystycznego w Wieluniu". *Wiadomości Diecezjalne* 6 (2): 36.

¹⁰ Teodor Kubina. 1931. *W podniosłych chwilach i doniosłych sprawach*. Vol. 1, 326–327.

3. The course of the Eucharistic Congress in the town of Wieluń

The Eucharistic Congress took place in the town of Wieluń on 27–29 of June 1931. Primate cardinal August Hlond, bishop Wincenty Tymieniecki from the city of Łódź, bishop Paweł Kubicki from the city of Sandomierz, bishop Stanisław Okoniewski from the city of Pielpin, inhabitants of the entire district as well as guests from other parts of the diocese of Częstochowa¹¹ took part in it. The faithful prepared triumphant gates at a distance of a few miles from the town of Wieluń. Railwaymen decorated the railway station in the town with palms made of pine branches and they built a magnificent gate, which was illuminated at night. The whole town was adorned with greenery, garlands and flags. Around 40 clergymen and a huge number of the faithful gathered at the beginning of the congress in order to welcome bishop Teodor Kubina and bishop Paweł Kubicki. The Bureau of the committee, consisting of the district staroste (Head of the District) – Bogdan Kaczorowski¹² and the mayor – Stefan Groblewski¹³, welcomed the bishops in front of the parish church in Wieluń at 5 p.m. Next, the *Veni Creator* anthem was sung in the church at 7 p.m. and a procession around the church took place. The Holy Mass was celebrated on a specially built altar. Before the Mass, the crowds of the faithful had sung the Litany of the Heart of Jesus and bishop Teodor Kubina delivered a sermon entitled *The Eucharist as the source of strengths for the renewal of the word (Eucharystia św. źródłem sił dla odnowienia świata)*. In the evening, all the churches and public buildings were illuminated¹⁴.

From the early morning hours on 28th June 1931, companies with orchestras and banners were walking into the town of Wieluń from all directions, ‘so that the whole town was filled with the sea of people’. There came pilgrimages from all of the parishes of the Wieluń district as well as ones from the parish districts of Radom, Częstochowa and Zagłębie Dąbrowskie region. Altogether, around 40,000

¹¹ 1931. “Panie, do kogóż pójdziemy?”. *Niedziela* 6 (26): 325; 1931. “Na Kongres eucharystyczny diec. Częstochowskiej w Wieluniu”. *Niedziela* 6 (26): 339; 1931. “III Kongres Eucharystyczny Diecezji Częstochowskiej odbył się w Wieluniu w dn. 27–29 VI br.”. *Niedziela* 6 (27): 350–351; Marian Sikora. 1975. “Kongresy eucharystyczne diecezji częstochowskiej i ich znaczenie w życiu religijnym”. *Częstochowskie Studia Teologiczne* (3): 108.

¹² Bogdan Kaczorowski – the Head of the Wieluń District Board and the Staroste of Wieluń (since the 1st of February 1928); honoured with the Gold Cross of Merit in 1930; left the town of Wieluń in 1932. Tadeusz Olejnik. 2007. *Leksykon miasta Wielunia*. Wieluń: Zakład Poligraficzny “kolor-Druk”, 112.

¹³ Stefan Groblewski – the local government activist; the Mayor of Wieluń since 1929; involved in foundation and activity of many social institutions; left Wieluń after having been dismissed from the office on charges of maladministration. Tadeusz Olejnik. 2007. *Leksykon miasta Wielunia*, 100.

¹⁴ 1931. “III Kongres Eucharystyczny Diecezji Częstochowskiej odbył się w Wieluniu w dn. 27–29 VI br.”. *Niedziela* 6 (27): 350.

people, including 80 priests, took part in the congress on that day. Beside the bishops, the town of Wieluń was also visited by Łódź voivode (Governor) Władysław Jaszczolt¹⁵. At 7 a.m. silent Holy Masses were celebrated for particular states in all the churches of the town. One of Masses took place in the parish church for women – the sermon entitled *The Eucharist and the Catholic Woman (Eucharystia św. a niewiasta katolicka)* was given by fr. Zygmunt Zawadzki, dean from the town of Krzepice. The next one took place in the church of the Franciscans where the sermon entitled *The Eucharist and the Catholic man (Eucharystia św. a mężczyzna katolicki)* was given by fr. Teofil Jankowski, dean from Brzeźnica. Another one, which was addressed to the youth, took place in the Piarists church where the sermon entitled *The Eucharist and the youth (Eucharystia św. a młodzież)* was given by PhD rev. Stanisław Czajka from the city of Częstochowa. There were also Masses in the missionary church and in the Bernardine Sisters church. The sermon *The Eucharist and children (Eucharystia św. a dzieci)* in the missionary church was directed to the youngest, whereas the one from the Bernardine Sisters church entitled *The Eucharist and the Intelligentsia (Eucharystia św. a inteligencja)* was delivered by bishop Paweł Kubicki¹⁶.

The solemn High Mass, which took place at 11 a.m. in the Cave of the Virgin Mary of Lourdes by the church of the Franciscans, was celebrated by primate cardinal August Hlond; the sermon entitled *The Eucharist and the Family and Nation (Eucharystia św. a rodzina i naród)* was delivered by monsignor rev. Stanisław Marchewka from Jędrzejów. Following the blessing, bishop Teodor Kubina read the letter by Pope Pius XI in which he expressed his joy with the congress and in which he ensured the apostolic blessing to the participants of the congress. At 3.30 p.m. there was the men's meeting in the square in front of the parish church. The paper *Royal Priesthood of the Catholic Man (Królewskie kapłaństwo mężczyzny katolickiego)* was presented by rev. Zygmunt Sędzimir. Meantime, the meeting of the women took place in the square by the church of the Franciscans. Then, rev. Stanisław Bilski presented his lecture *Royal Priesthood of the Catholic Woman (Królewskie kapłaństwo kobiety katolickiej)*. At 5 p.m. in the square in front of the parish church there was a meeting of the male youth during which rev. Zy-

¹⁵ Władysław Jaszczolt (1883–1962) – a lawyer, politician, national activist of the Second Polish Republic; Łódź Voivode from 1926 to 1933. Jacek Majchrowski. Ed. 1994. *Kto był kim w II Rzeczypospolitej*. Warszawa: Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza "BGW", 112.

¹⁶ 1931. "III Kongres Eucharystyczny Diecezji Częstochowskiej odbył się w Wieluniu w dn. 27–29 VI br.". *Niedziela* 6 (27): 350; Stanisław Zapałowski. 1936. *Moje trzynastoletnie pasterzowanie w Koziegłówkach*. Warszawa: Bracia Albertyni, 94; Michał Widera. 2021. *Dzieje Kościoła katolickiego w powiecie wieluńskim (1918–1939)* (Z Dziejów Kultury Chrześcijańskiej na Śląsku 108). Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 492.

gmunt Lipa presented a paper entitled *Royal Priesthood of the Catholic Youngster* (*Królewskie kapłaństwo młodzieńca katolickiego*). Simultaneously, the meeting of female youth took place by the Church of the Franciscans. Rev. Mieczysław Zawadzki from the village of Wilkowiecko read a paper entitled *Royal Priesthood of the Catholic Girl* (*Królewskie kapłaństwo dziewczęcia katolickiego*) there. At 5 p.m., there was the meeting of the intelligentsia in the auditorium of the *Goplana* Cinema. Prof. Klemens Jędrzejewski from the city of Płock presented a paper on tasks of the intelligentsia in Catholic Action. Bishop Teodor Kubina was a visitor to all of the state meetings and he delivered his speeches there¹⁷. At 8 p.m. in all of the churches there started an overnight Eucharistic adoration with sermons entitled *On obligations of compensation to Christ the Lord* (*O obowiązku zadośćuczynienia Chrystusowi Panu*).

The third day of the congress, which started with the Holy Masses celebrated right after midnight, was of a special nature. The Holy Communion was distributed among the crowds of the faithful from 4 to 9 a.m. At 7 a.m. the civil guard formed up the companies and organisations for the eucharistic procession. Thanks to favourable weather conditions, an even bigger number of pilgrims could fill up the whole square in front of the parish church. The eucharistic procession set out at 9.30 a.m. along the following streets: Sienkiewicza, Piłsudskiego, Krakowskie Przedmieście, Reformacka, Ogrodowa, Nowy Rynek, św. Barbary, Panieńska and Piłsudskiego¹⁸. It was led by bishop Wincenty Tymieniecki from the city of Łódź. A two-kilometre-long crowd of Catholic associations and delegations of pilgrimages carrying banners were walking in front of the Eucharist. Furthermore, nearly 80 clergymen, including bishop Teodor Kubina, bishop Stanisław Okoniewski and bishop Paweł Kubicki as well as prelates, participated in the procession. At first, the canopy was carried by the priests; next, it was carried by local landowners, town citizens, farmers, members of the *Sokół* association and the organising committee. Behind the canopy, there walked the representatives of the local government authorities, members of the congress committee and a countless number of faithful while children were scattering flower petals from balconies. In a few places, the choirs were performing some songs. The procession returned to the parish church by 11 a.m. Then, the solemn High Mass was celebrated by bishop Wincenty Tymieniecki, and bishop Paweł Kubicki gave a sermon entitled *The Holy*

¹⁷ 1931. "III Kongres Eucharystyczny Diecezji Częstochowskiej odbył się w Wieluniu w dn. 27–29 VI br." *Niedziela* 6 (27): 350; Zapałowski. 1936. *Moje trzynastoletnie pasterzowanie w Koziegłówkach*, 94.

¹⁸ These are the street names at the time. 1931. "III-ci Kongres Eucharystyczny Diecezji Częstochowskiej w Wieluniu w dniach 27, 28 i 29 VI 1931 r." *Niedziela* 6 (25): 322.

Eucharist and the Catholic Church (Eucharystia św. a Kościół katolicki). After the Holy Mass, the Resolution of the Congress, the telegram by the pope as well as the telegram by the president of the Republic of Poland were read out. Finally, bishop Teodor Kubina made a speech entitled *Tribute to Christ the King (Hold Chrystusowi Królowi)* and people were blessed with the Most Holy Sacrament¹⁹.

4. Final provisions

Postulates and plans, which were supposed to be implemented after the conclusion of the congress, were formulated in the so-called resolutions. They came out as a result of hearing the lectures and discussions of the participants. The resolutions of the congresses of the diocese of Częstochowa were connected amongst others with the financial situation of the working class and the upbringing of the young generations according to the principles of the Gospel. The diocese of Częstochowa was the only diocese in the country which managed to fulfil another desiderata of the congress, namely the organisation of the regional congresses²⁰.

The resolutions of the congress included: obligations of the faithful to receive Holy Communion more often (in order to spread the kingdom of Christ after a period of numerous wars, which eliminated it), a promise of the faithful to develop the Catholic Action and the Eucharistic Crusade – in the case of children, obligations to undertake social issues and take care of improving the situation of the workers, a demand concerning the right to the religious upbringing of schoolchildren including the practises of devotion, a call by the bishops for generous work in favour of the diocese, an appeal of the faithful to not organise meetings, rallies or sports events at the time of Church services as well as keeping distance of the above-mentioned events from the churches, an obligation to read and recommend the catholic weekly called *Niedziela* and an annotation about sending a telegram to the pope and the president of the country²¹.

¹⁹ 1931. “Program III Kongresu Eucharystycznego Diecezji Częstochowskiej w Wieluniu w dniach 27, 28 i 29 VI 1931 r.”. *Niedziela* 6 (24): 311; 1931. “III Kongres Eucharystyczny Diecezji Częstochowskiej w Wieluniu. Trzeci dzień Kongresu”. *Niedziela* 6 (28): 356–357; Widera. 2021. *Dzieje Kościoła katolickiego w powiecie wieluńskim*, 492–494.

²⁰ Stefan Koperek. 1986. “Polskie kongresy eucharystyczne”. *Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny* 4 (4): 336.

²¹ 1931. “Uchwały III-go Diecezjalnego Kongresu Eucharystycznego w Wieluniu”. *Niedziela* 6 (28): 357–358.

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The attachment of the inhabitants of the Wieluń district to the catholic faith as well as the difficult social and economic situation they found themselves in were the particular reason for which bishop Teodor Kubina held the third Eucharistic Congress. This event became a religious manifestation, which was also widely reported outside the borders of this part of the district. The crowds of the faithful, who walked in the pilgrimage from their parishes to take part in this tremendous celebration of the Eucharist, proved it. It was an opportunity to involve the inhabitants of the district in a joint religious undertaking and it was also a chance for their greater integration. Undoubtedly, their involvement in the Eucharistic Congress had an influence on their more conscious and numerous participations in the Holy Mass as well as in the other pastoral initiatives, which developed extensively in this part of the diocese of Częstochowa. The units of Catholic Action, which were established in every parish of the Wieluń district, proved it. Deeper religiousness of the inhabitants of this area helped them survive the tragic events of the Second World War, which started on the 1st September 1939 with the bombarding of the hospital in the town of Wieluń²².

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²² Tadeusz Olejnik. 2020. *Szpital w Wieluniu. Jego dzieje i zniszczenie 1 września 1939 roku. Pierwsza zbrodnia II wojny światowej*. Wieluń: Muzeum Ziemi Wieluńskiej w Wieluniu, 9–10, 99, 107–132.

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Abstract. Despite the difficult economic situation of the inhabitants of the Wieluń district in the Second Polish Republic and the necessity for their emigration mainly to Germany for work purposes, they were characterised by deep religiousness. Bishop Teodor Kubina underlined this fact many times in his utterances. It had an influence on the organisation of the Eucharistic Congress, which was the third most important one in the diocese

of Częstochowa, between 27th–29th June 1931 in the town of Wieluń. It took place with the involvement of the inhabitants of the Wieluń district, who walked in the pilgrimage from their parishes, which reflected their great respect towards the Divine Sacrament. This event deepened their religiousness, and it resulted in an even greater engagement in the activities of the Catholic associations.

Keywords: the Eucharistic Congress, the Wieluń district, bishop Teodor Kubina, the Second Polish Republic.

Streszczenie: Kongres Eucharystyczny w Wieluniu w 1931 r. Mimo trudnej sytuacji gospodarczej mieszkańców powiatu wieluńskiego w II Rzeczypospolitej i związanej z nią konieczności emigrowania głównie do Niemiec w celach zarobkowych charakteryzowali się oni głęboką religijnością. Wielokrotnie bp Teodor Kubina podkreślał to w swoich wypowiedziach. Wpłynęło to na zorganizowanie w dniach 27–29 czerwca 1931 r. w Wieluniu Kongresu Eucharystycznego, który był trzecim w kolejności w diecezji częstochowskiej. Odbył się on przy ogromnym udziale mieszkańców powiatu wieluńskiego, którzy pieszo pielgrzymowali ze swoich parafii, co świadczyło o ich wielkim szacunku wobec Najświętszego Sakramentu. Wydarzenie to pogłębiło ich religijność i zaowocowało jeszcze większą aktywnością w działalność stowarzyszeń katolickich.

Słowa kluczowe: Kongres Eucharystyczny, powiat wieluński, bp Teodor Kubina, II Rzeczypospolita.

