

Stefan Wyszyński and Elżbieta Róża Czacka beatified in Poland

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Two revered figures of the Polish Catholic Church were beatified on September 12—a cardinal who led the Polish church's resistance to communism and a blind nun who devoted her life to helping others who couldn't see.

In a time of growing secularization and societal divisions, the celebration of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński and Mother Elżbieta Róża Czacka was a reminder of the moral authority and the unifying power the church once held over Poland.

Wyszyński was Poland's primate, or top church leader, from 1948 until his death in 1981. He was under house arrest in the 1950s for his refusal to bend to the communist regime and was considered by some to be the true leader of the nation. His long resistance to communism is credited as a factor that led to the election of a Polish pope, John Paul II, and ultimately to the toppling of Poland's communist system in 1989.

Czacka, born in 1876 to an aristocratic family, went blind as a young woman and devoted the rest of her life to helping others. The Franciscan nun helped develop a Polish version of braille and opened a center for the blind near Warsaw.

The beatification ceremony came after the Holy See punished some ten Polish bishops and archbishops over reported cover-ups of sexual abuse of minors by priests under their authority. The revelations of clerical abuse and cover-ups have been pushing some Poles away from the church and leading some to take their children out of religion classes in schools. —Associated Press