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| THE LEGEND OF SAINT KINGA |

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| In the 13th century a young Polish prince, called Bolesław, of the Piast Dynasty, decided to get married and for his wife chose a beautiful Hungarian princess of the Arpad Dynasty, the daughter of king Bela IV, Kinga (or Kunegund, as she is sometimes called).  When Bolesław’s proposal was accepted, the loving father asked Kinga what she would like to get from him as a wedding present, what she would like to take to her husband and the new country. Kinga replied that she wanted no gold and jewels, since they only brought unhappiness and tears. She wanted something that could serve the people she was going to live with. Her request surprised the king greatly – she asked for salt.  The king was determined to keep his promise. He offered Kinga the biggest and most prosperous salt deposits in Hungary – the Marmaros salt mine. However, nobody knew what Kinga could do with the treasure.  On her way to Poland the princess visited the mine. She kneeled to pray next to the entrance and – to everyone’s surprise – suddenly threw her engagement ring inside. She gathered a group of the best Hungarian salt miners and told them to follow her.  When the party arrived in Poland and was approaching Kraków, Kinga stopped and asked the miners to look for salt. They started digging and suddenly hit something very hard. It was a lump of salt. When they broke it, everyone saw what was hidden inside – Kinga’s engagement ring!  That is how the Hungarian princess brought salt to our country.  Right now in Wieliczka there is the most famous salt mine museum.  To commemorate the princess, 101 metres under the ground, down in the mine there is the world’s biggest underground chapel, dedicated to Saint Kinga. |