

## MULTIFUNCTIONAL CHARACTER OF RELIGIOUS COMPLEXES OF THE 1970' AND 1980'

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### Summary

The buildings policy in the 1970' and 1980', as well as the transformation of the Catholic Church itself and its new functions, found its expression in the architecture and functional programme of religious complexes in Poland. Significant evolution in architecture enriched the functional programme. Broad activity of the Church led to the creation of comprehensive functional programmes, by which the space of constructed objects grew larger and sometimes exceeded the actual demand. Social programme of new churches was also taken into account. Many new parishes quickly became not only places of worship, as separate temples, but also educational, charity, entertainment or cultural centres, and focal points of independent public life. The bulk of temple, in principle taking a dominant place, was linked with a complex of other buildings that previously had completely different character and functions.

Architecture of religious objects and complexes of that period, thanks to their diversity and specificity of functions, still remains original and significant.

### Keywords

multifunctionality of temples • churches of the Małopolska region • Archdiocese of Kraków

### 1. Introduction

Between 1970' and 1980' is the period of intensive changes in Polish architecture and construction.<sup>1</sup> Construction of churches at that time had great momentum and dynamic. The Catholic Church finally obtained the long-awaited construction permits, and as a result enormous number of churches and chapels<sup>2</sup> were built with

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<sup>1</sup> Political, economic and social changes taking place in Poland had a direct influence not only one the construction and investment process, but also on programming and functional principles of investment related to religious buildings. All design projects had to comply with the complicated and extended system of norms, constantly changing regulations, and required agreements of numerous institutions.

<sup>2</sup> The number of temples erected at that period in the Archdiocese of Kraków largely met the demands for religious buildings. It was possible thanks to the lifting by the authorities, in 1980',

new tasks to fulfil. Constitutions and decrees adopted by the Second Vatican Council set the Catholic Church new tasks and formulated a principle of subordinating all actions to religious purposes.

The largest number of catholic temples was designed between 1970 and 1985, and then constructed and opened to the faithful between 1977 and 1989. The great boom in the domain of constructing churches and temples came to an end around 1985.<sup>3</sup> The situation of these years have been described by Andrzej Basista: “It was accompanied by an atmosphere of brief opportunity and so there was no time nor conditions to submit projects to competition procedure” [Basista 2001]. He added: “For many years the permits to construct new temples were rejected, that is why in a short time there were no more proper locations, the expectations were high, and sometimes architecture objects were erected illegally. All this created an abnormal situation, responsible for various accidental features of the new sacral architecture and especially its gigantic scale, being the result of an atmosphere of brief opportunity (...). It disrupted the competition process, did not create a space for critical discussion and the objects themselves were designed and constructed as a challenge issued to the reality of communism” [Basista 2001].

Favourable political situation and overcoming of bureaucratic barriers and difficulties created by the state authorities gave an impulse for investment works resulting in a great number of new churches. At that time not only independent temples for conducting liturgies were erected but also major investments – large-scale religious complexes,<sup>4</sup> diverse and based on extensive programmes, which quickly became significant centres of independent public life. Buildings for religious educations and for cultural and recreational purposes were erected in large numbers. As Andrzej Kadłuczka said: “These investments were designed not only as places of worship, but mainly as centres of catholic culture to stimulate activity of local communities. These centres shortly became an attractive alternative for them and also for artistic and intellectual elites, and for the authorities an inconvenient and dangerous phenomenon of the clandestine (or samizdat) circulation in culture and science [Kadłuczka 1995].

## 2. Functional programme of religious complexes in the context of formal and administrative restrictions

Better chances for obtaining permits for construction churches, that emerged after 1970, also meant new problems for the designers and investors. The problems resulted from a difficult political situation and binding regulations which undeniably and

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some of the restrictions on sacral buildings, and also to intense personal involvement of the pope John Paul II [Gil-Mastalerczyk 2013].

<sup>3</sup> In the 1980' the Church obtained more than 1.5 thousand construction permits for building religious objects [Mroczek and Kucza-Kuczyński 1991].

<sup>4</sup> The concept of parish centre, finding its expression in spatial solutions, was known already before the II World War [Rosier-Siedlecka 1979].

strongly influenced the style of sacral architecture and arrangement of functions. All endeavours to obtain permits for construction temples were always related to real and actual needs of future parishioners.

At the first stage, before starting the design process, a functional programme of the building had to be prepared.<sup>5</sup>

The size of a church was a question that played an important role in the programme assumptions. At this stage of works, a detailed analysis of the parish's needs was equally essential. It entailed the need to plan necessary rooms fulfilling various functions of a parish activity, such as: a meeting place of a parish community, pastoral council meetings, religious education rooms, chapels and all kinds of utility rooms. This function was usually located on the ground floor, which was partially under the ground level due to the restrictions, mainly on the size of a church, permissible built-up area, and location and small area of the land plot where a church was to be constructed. In bigger parishes, in which the construction of presbytery was planned, these kinds of rooms were situated there, together with the church administrative office and other related rooms. Proper separation of the living area function (presbytery) from the educational and office ones, and then combining these functions with the church building were also important [Gil-Mastalerczyk 2013].

Formal and administrative restrictions, determining the future architectural form of a temple, had a strong impact on the functional programmed of the planned investment. A good example here is a limitation on the size of churches.<sup>6</sup> Investors and architects, due to necessity of including as many ancillary functions as possible – in planned sacral complexes they often tried to circumvent the regulations and restrictions but it usually led to far reaching changes in the object's architecture. Therefore they resorted to multi-storey solutions to fit large group of functions.

In many cases churches were planned as two storeys buildings because its first part, usually the lower chapel, could be put into use sooner, while the works on the upper part could be continued. It meant that the construction was completed in a few stages, and it was hard to predict when it will be terminated, because many finishing works continued, such as laying floors, furnishing interiors, and the building was used illegally and often functioned with makeshift elements [Basista 2001].

Temple's location was also essential part of the functional programme of sacral complexes, because getting construction permit from the authorities also depended on it. Current urban layout of a place (a town, a village or a city district) as well as

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<sup>5</sup> An investor – a parish priest, often in consultation with a Parochial Council and representative of the parish as well as Architecture-Artistic Commission, a part of Episcopal Curia – prepared a programme of the future church. Final version of the temple's programme was discussed in detail with a future designer, an architect [See Rosier-Siedlecka 1979].

<sup>6</sup> One had the best chances for obtaining construction permit if a planned church didn't exceed 250 m<sup>2</sup> in area and if no presbytery was planned together with it. The next range of area restriction for temples fell between 250 and 600 m<sup>2</sup>. Obtaining permits for the construction of this kind of churches was also slightly easier, because they were issued by local authorities. If the total built-up area of a church exceeded 600 m<sup>2</sup>, it was much harder to get the construction permit. In this case the decisions were taken on the ministerial level [Gil-Mastalerczyk 2013].

land development plans and communication accessibility were analysed in detail. The question of a car parking, that is a number of parking places in a direct vicinity of the church, was also important, because if there were no such places, they had to be included in the future building plot. Sometimes small plots did not allow for the car parking to be included, or for managing the area around the church for liturgical functions, not mentioning the residential function (presbytery).

The authorities issuing construction permits were most inclined to accept the location of a new church, if it was to be situated far away from existing settlements (e.g. on the outskirts of a town) and in places to which road access was limited.<sup>7</sup> The size of a plot, its shape and unfavourable location regarding the directions of the world were a serious impediment regarding the location for a future temple. These places, however, shortly after the construction was completed, became centre-forming. The emergence of a new sacral function in many cases led to the urbanization of the surroundings, previously, as a rule, not very attractive and totally uninhabited. Often, these places saw an emergence of a main development axis of a town or village. They became centres, the services flourished, new residential building complexes were constructed and the market value of lands went up [Gil-Mastalerczyk 2013].

In specifying the functional programme of a church the following functions played a vital role: economic aspect, duration of construction works till the building shell is completed, than duration of finishing works and furnishing the object and its interior decoration.<sup>8</sup>

“In composing the architecture the general principle was that the faithful had optimal conditions enabling them to participate actively in a liturgy, and to create an atmosphere of concentration for individual prayer” [Białkiewicz 2006].

The presented programme assumptions on church construction were becoming one of the most fundamental guidelines for making a design and planning the functions.

### 3. Multifunctional character and diversity of solutions – exemplified by churches of the Małopolska region

The programme assumptions of sacral objects were oriented at maximally developed functional programme, which is exemplified by a sacral complex of the Holy Virgin Mary the Queen of Poland, also called the Lord's Ark (Arka Pana) at Nowa Huta Bieńczyce (1967–1977), designed by Wojciech Pietrzyk. The church, founded on an irregular plan, resembling inequilateral triangle with well rounded angles, is a multi-space building. It fulfils various functions to meet the needs of the parish and possesses sufficient space for it. One of the main elements of the extensive functional programme is a central nave of 1300 m<sup>2</sup> with a capacity of 4000 people

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<sup>7</sup> The choice of a right plot depended not only on the actual purchasing power but also on obtaining the construction permit.

<sup>8</sup> The temple – because there was an enormous demand for it among the faithful, living even 5 km from it – was very often used yet before all the construction works were finished.

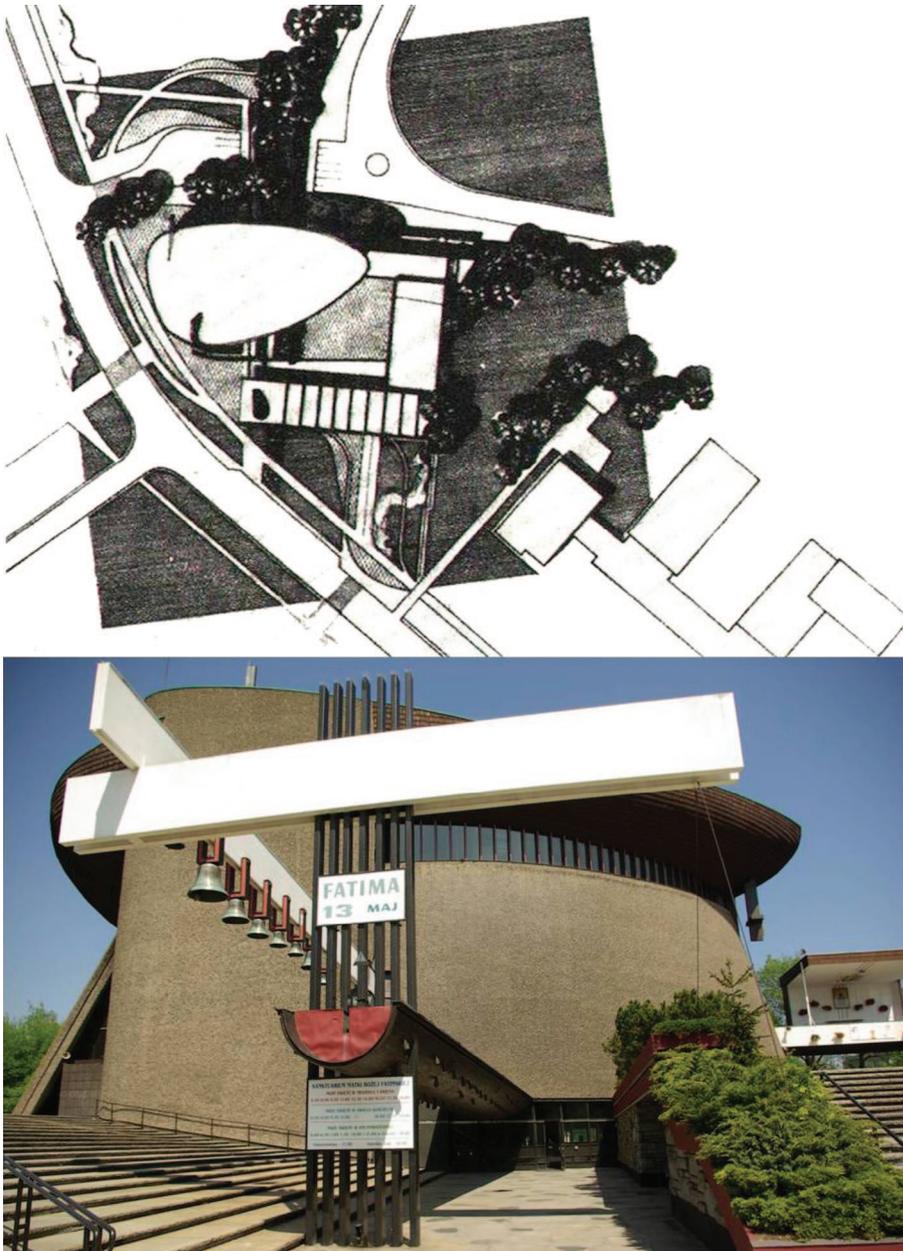


Photo by Gil-Mastalerczyk 2013

**Fig. 1.** The church of the Holy Virgin Mary the Queen of Poland, called the Lord's Ark, at Nowa Huta; 1967–1977, designed by Wojciech Pietrzyk, the idea of spatial development plan [after: Szafer 1979], the view of the body of building from the entrance on the low storey of the church, to the Chapel of Our Lady of Fatima

[Mroczek, Kucza-Kuczyński 1991]. The building volume is around 3000 m<sup>3</sup> [Szafer 1979]. The interior and the functional programme consists of three main levels, comprising chapels and places for individual prayer. On the first underground floor there is the Chapel of Reconciliation, on the second – the Chapel of Our Lady of Fatima, on the third – the main church with a chancel and the altar area with a slightly sloping and amphitheatrical passage leading to it. A separate fourth floor consist of a side organ loft. The church is the first architecture object, which – in its functional solutions – complies with the recommendations of the Second Vatican Council. K. Nawratek wrote: “The church is obviously a ‘civic’ church and as such it is probably one of the first really post-Council churches in the world” [Nawratek 2005]. It is proven by, among other things, a new functional interior design with an altar in the centre of the church. It is placed seven steps above the floor on a platform, is clearly visible and easily accessible to the faithful from every part of the church and the organ loft.

The sacral complex of the Saint Queen Jadwiga in Kraków Krowdrza (1978–1988), designed by Romuald Loegler and Jacek Czekaj, also stands out by a new functional solution of liturgical interior recommended by the Second Vatican Council. The church is a clear span large-size building: building volume is 58650 m<sup>3</sup>, usable volume is 5930 m<sup>3</sup> [Mroczek and Kucza-Kuczyński 1991]. Multifunctional sacral character is emphasised by the main body of the temple and two wings of parish premises, of auxiliary function – surrounding the church courtyard. Here are the rooms of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, the religious education rooms etc. A few sports fields adjoins the right wing. On the ground floor, situated slightly below the surrounding terrain, there is a chapel – of Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn. The ground floor of the lower church also houses rooms fulfilling technical function and a car parking. Such plan elements as an amphitheatre and an ave-bell have not been realized up to this day.

The post-Council composition of the liturgical interior give a good visibility of the altar, which is accentuated by several steps high platform. The altar, as the most important spiritual centre of the temple, is also clearly and artistically highlighted by: directional natural lighting – skylights in the roof and stained glass lighting – reflected and diffused.

The authors of the church of Saint Paul The Apostle in Wadowice (1986–1991), Jacek Gyurkovich, Ewa Węclawowicz-Gyurkovich and Przemysław Szafer, have proposed a modern architecture and construction adapted to new functional tasks. By the bulks layout, simple geometric figures and architectural details they achieved the expected representative character and profound symbolic function of the church. The project of the whole complex is characterized by the abundance of “schematically processed historical patterns” [Węclawowicz-Gyurkovich 1996]. Thanks to all these decisions the church is a valuable example of a modern sacral architecture and simultaneously fulfils a function of a parish centre and a place of votive worship.

The whole of the architectural and urban complex has an axial layout composition, in the centre of which three-nave church of Saint Peter the Apostle was

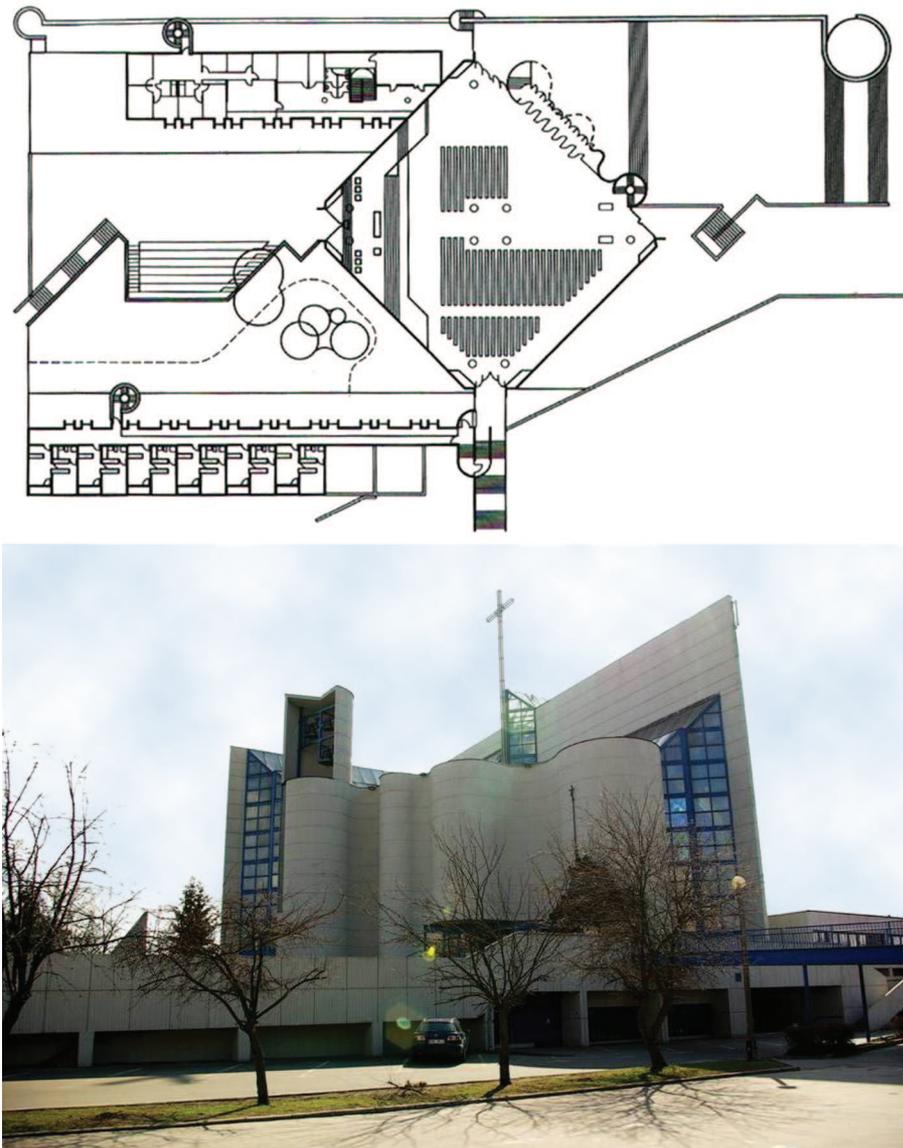


Photo by Gil-Mastalerczyk 2013

**Fig. 2.** The Church of Saint Queen Jadwiga in Kraków, 1978–1988, designed by R. Loegler, J. Czekaj; ground plan of the sacral complex [after: Kadłuczak 2001]; perspective view of a sacral layout from Wybicki street

situated and surrounded by a “wall” of objects with didactic, social and residential functions (referring in composition to historical church complexes) [Węclawowicz-Gyurkovich 1996]. The votive complex consists of – apart from the main body of the

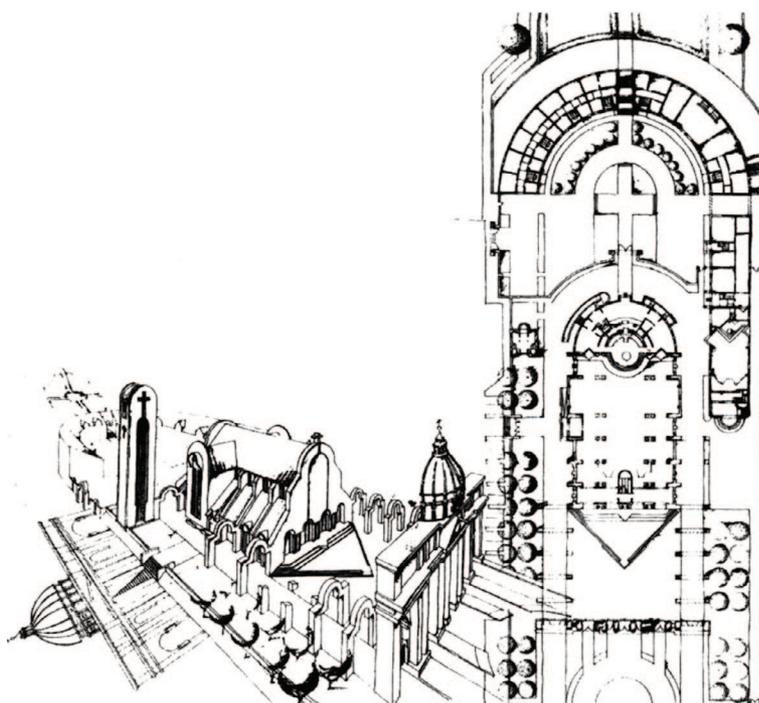


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**Fig. 3.** The Church of Saint Paul the Apostle in Wadowice, 1986–1991, designed by J. Gyurkovich, E. Węclawowicz-Gyurkovich and P. Szafer, the plan of the layout, project [Gyurkovich 1999]; perspective view of the church body and sacral layout from the golgotha behind the church

church – the following objects, fulfilling specific functions: a detached soaring tower and belfry situated near the church, the chapel of Christ the King, a building with halls, transformed into a residential function,<sup>9</sup> and the Way of the Cross, called the Golgotha of Wadowice,<sup>10</sup> located behind the church on a naturally sloping area, with recreational function. In front of the church there is a vast functional yard, where a monument of John Paul II was erected.

The entirety of the sacral layout has a deep symbolic meaning: “The idea of an axial urban layout with a *campanilla* at the end of an incoming road, a modern transformation of an idea of galleries, surrounding the inner courtyard, small ways of the procession road – intentionally refer to elements of historical cities fixed in memory. Paraphrased quotations from the architecture of Wadowice, Kraków, and above all Rome, woven in the complex are meant (...) to symbolize the Road of the Great Pole to the Holy See” [Węclawowicz-Gyurkovich 1996].

The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary Displaying Miraculous Medallion in Zakopane, Olcza (1981–1988), designed by J. Tadeusz Gawłowski and M. Teresa Lisowska-Gawłowska, placed on an irregular plan, has a longitudinal functional layout. It is a two-storey building, of a large single-nave plan. The usable volume of the church is 2252 m<sup>2</sup>, the length along the main axis is 45 m, the width – 42 m [<http://www.misjonarze-zakopane.org/>, accessed: 24.04.2012], the size of central nave – 700 m<sup>2</sup> [Mroczek and Kucza-Kuczyński 1991]; the height of the highest segment together with the dome and cross – 46 m [ibidem]. The huge volume of the whole church (with presbytery – 30 000 m<sup>3</sup>) was functionally divided in a lower church, for social life of parishioners and pilgrims, and upper church, for 1500 faithful, intended for a liturgical function. The area of the upper nave alone – the upper church – is 700 m<sup>2</sup> [Mroczek and Kucza-Kuczyński 1991]. It houses a presbytery with an altar, located, according to the recommendation of the Second Vatican Council, in a central part of the last segment of the church body.

On the lower level, having larger usable volume than the upper level, there is a multifunctional parish hall, with a stage and a backstage and with an amphitheatre for 150 people, 6 smaller religious education rooms, and other necessary associated rooms.

The additional rooms in churches of that time had mainly religious education purposes, because the authorities did not allow religion to be taught in schools. Later, when religious education was moved to schools, these rooms became more or less useless, and with time they were adapted to serve various auxiliary purposes. Today in the rooms of the church at Olcza the classes of Music School, complementary religious classes for young people, meetings of parish groups are organized, and there is also a library [ibidem].

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<sup>9</sup> The author's interview with an architect E. Węclawicz-Gyurkovich, Kraków, 11.03.2013. The building with rooms was originally intended for teaching religion.

<sup>10</sup> By the path there are stations of the cross, boards with the Decalogue and the Beatitudes [<http://www.swpiotr.wadowice.pl>, accessed: 26.04.2012].

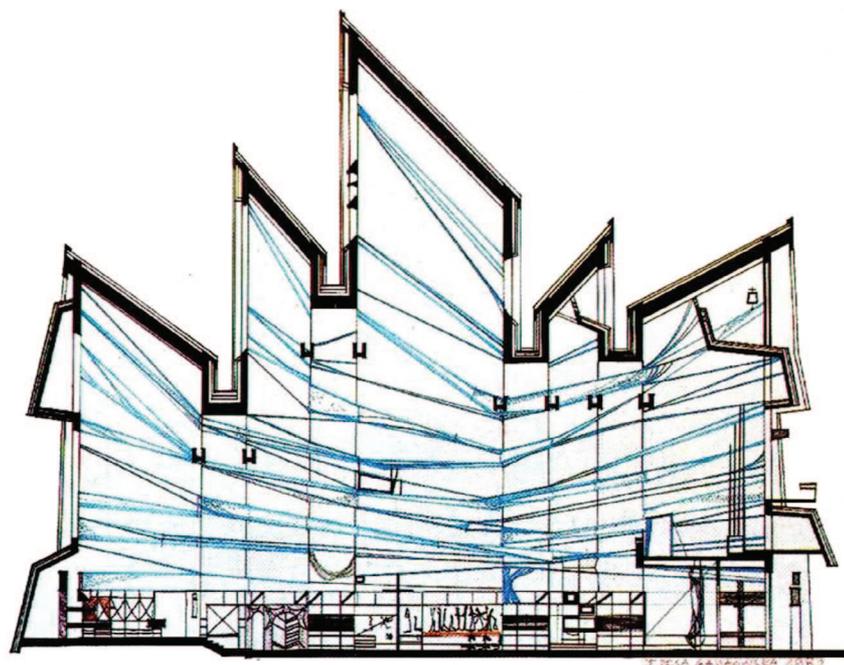


Photo by Gil-Mastalerczyk 2013

**Fig. 4.** The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary Displaying Miraculous Medallion in Zakopane, Olcza (1981–1988), designed by J.T. Gawłowski and M.T. Lisowska-Gawłowska; longitudinal cross section [project of 1981, T. and T. Gawłowski, A. Zaręba; T.P. Szafer 1988]; perspective view of the church body



Photo a: <https://www.google.pl/maps> (accessed: 02.05.2015); photo b: Gil-Mastalerczyk 2015

**Fig. 5.** Saint Joseph the Worker in Kielce (1975–1995), designed by W. Pieńkowski; a – top view to the fifth elevation of the sacral complex; b – perspective view of the church body

The post-council church of Saint Joseph the Worker in Kielce, today fulfilling a function of a diocesan Sanctuary of St. Joseph the Patron Saint of Family [<http://www.diecezja.kielce.pl/parafie/kielce-sw-jozefa-robotnika>, accessed: 9.10.2015], designed by Władysław Pieńkowski, built in 1975–1995 by construction permit issued in 1973. It is one of the biggest churches in Poland. The building has a quarter circle floor plan. The general form, placed in a quarter circle, has an oval body, vaulted with

openwork ribs converging radially over the main altar. The upper part of the church consists of a wide and high central nave, with a capacity of 5000 people. Under the upper church there is a lower church with a large chapel for 2000 people, with two entrances [Tkaczyk 2008]. This level is accessed by external stairs and passage. The upper level is accessed by an exposed concrete bridge, which serves as shelter over the lower entrance, and by an external staircase situated in front of the main body of the building. Its rich functional and spatial programme also includes other rooms used for fulfilling pastoral tasks, and designed to meet not only the architectural and theological but also social needs.

The sculpturally shaped body of the church stands out for sharply outlined and massive functional forms, added to the main body. Monolithic forms were designed as spaces for chapels and confessionals. The prism, located on the east side, houses auxiliary rooms. The other functional elements, such as hexagonal bell tower and a vertical church tower dominating over the whole layout, make the object clearly visible from the distance.<sup>11</sup>

The natural surroundings of the Church of Saint Joseph the Worker in Kielce also played a significant role in the design of its functional and spatial structure and arrangement of the *sacrum* place. Around the church, using the lie of the land and shifts of levels, functionally rich system of passages was planned leading to the two-level interior of the complex.

#### 4. Conclusions. The significance and value of functions of religious complexes constructed in 1970' and 1980'

Religious complexes of 1970' and 1980', with their diversity and uniqueness of functions, still remain original and significant architectural objects. They testify to the aesthetics of the time, reflecting the transformations in social relations, symbolize the changes in political system, economy and legal status of Poland. The transformations in the Church itself and the emergence of its new functions found their reflection also in architecture and functional programme of religious complexes.

Significant revolution in sacral architecture at the turn of 1970' and 1980' enriched the functional programme. The intense activity of the Church led to creation of extensive functional programmes, through which constructed buildings grew larger, sometimes of capacities exceeding the real needs. It found its expression in designs that took into account social programme.

Almost all sacral architectural objects of this time were constructed together with the additional buildings fulfilling all kinds of functions to meet the demands of a parish, and were fitted with adequate space for these functions. The bulk of churches, in principle taking a dominant place, was functionally linked with a complex of other

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<sup>11</sup> The height of the church had to be reduced at the project stage, so the bulk of the church is not so visible as the architect planned. But the gaps between buildings open up the perspective on the church.

rooms of quite different character that served other purposes. This programme was complemented with chapels for individual prayer.

Numerous new parish centres – being not only worship centres, as independent churches, but also as educational, charity, entertainment or cultural centres, quickly became focal points of independent public life. As a result, the rich functional programme strongly influenced the aesthetics of sacral forms.

Generally speaking, one can say that the objects of the time were constructed as too large for actual needs and uneconomically, because today they are hard to maintain and manage (as multi-storey buildings, with spacious and diverse functions). In many cases these generous and sometimes too large spaces are now unused. They require heating in winter and damp rooms need drying out.

As Andrzej Basista pointed out, the architecture of that time acquired new functions and gained more significance. He added: “New churches are a perfect illustration of a thesis that originality was acknowledged the principal characteristic of twentieth-century art. This originality in Poland of communist area acquired additional significance because building churches was a reaction against boredom and dullness of the imposed world” [Basista 2001].

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