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Sacrum under the blue sky

In 2002 the 8th and last Apostolic journey to Poland of Pope John Paul II took place. For the arrival of the Pope almost 60 papal altars were built in different towns and different regions of Poland. By *the papal altar* we should understand an architectural structure with a sacral and temporary character and whose central element constitutes the altar – sacrificial table, which is built in order to celebrate the Eucharist with the participation of the Pope during the Apostolic journey in a given country. Histories of the papal altars, in particular towns, which were built in the years 1979–2002, ended along with the end of the papal visits. In order to commemorate pilgrimage ceremonies, here and there – at the places of their performance – crosses were left¹. Other tokens such as sacrificial tables were given to newly erected churches, papal thrones found their places in museums², whereas many sculptures and paintings were used as interior decorations in churches. It also happened that the designs of some papal altars were used during constructions of new structures, e.g. chapels³. However, the papal altar was assumed to be a temporary structure and was supposed to have a motto of the papal pilgrimage by means of its form full of expression as well as to create a unique and exceptional climate of the meeting with the Pope – becoming ‘a temple of one day’.

Considering the issue of papal altars we are faced with the notion of a phenomenon in three dimensions: spatial and temporal, symbolic, and cultural:

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¹ For example, in Krosno, Elk, Białystok, etc.

² For example, in Sary Sącz, in the room under the main podium of the papal altar, a museum of souvenirs connected with the stay of Pope John Paul II in Sary Sącz was built.

³ For example, in Zakopane the papal altar was reconstructed in this room and situated in Our Lady of Fatima Sanctuary in a smaller scale. At present, it serves as a chapel for pilgrims and visitors.

1. The phenomenon of altars in the **spatial and temporal** aspect – the papal altar was designed for a particular ceremony with the participation of the Pope, for one day and in natural surroundings.

2. The phenomenon of Polish papal altars owing to **a rich formal message of symbolic contents**. Despite its temporary usage the designers managed to create the works with a deep symbolic meaning that remained in the awareness of the celebration participants for a very long time.

3. The phenomenon of Polish papal altars with regard to the culture of a particular region and values cherished by a local population – **new pilgrimage centres**.

The first phenomenon is strictly connected with the second one. The papal altar was assumed to be a temporary structure – designers expressed religious ideas by means of architectural methods and with the use of cultural codes characteristic of a given region in an expressive and emotional way.

Analysing the solutions of papal altars from various regions of Poland and the whole world, we can observe the existence of some elements which are permanent in space – architectural and urban elements. They include as follows:

- papal altar – ‘stage’ – its architectural form is a dominant of the spatial structure and sectors for pilgrims along with approach roads
- sectors for pilgrims – ‘audience’ – usually designed on the amphitheatric plan between roads going radially from the altar and strategically combined with the urban structure of the town.

The papal altar and sectors for pilgrims create a material temple under the blue sky – a temple erected for a particular celebration with the Pope’s participation. On the basis of many scientific studies we can conclude that certain compositional elements in a Christian temple as regards their meaning possess the features which are common for



Fig. 1. 'Holy Mount' – the papal altar in Sosnowiec, 1999. The view at night. Designed by AiR Jurkowski-Architects (photo: R. Jurkowski)

Il. 1. 'Święta Góra' – ołtarz papieski w Sosnowcu, 1999. Widok w nocy. Proj. AiR Jurkowski-Architekci (fot. R. Jurkowski)

many religions. They are, among other things, an elevated sacrificial altar – Holy Mount (Fig. 1); a holy area, *sacrum* and *profanum* zone – the temple exterior and interior; cosmos, the Universe – the vault of the temple; the axis of the world (*axis mundi*) – vertical elements of the temple, e.g. a tower⁴. In accordance with the studies by M. Eliade, we can conclude that sacral architecture takes up and develops a discussion about cosmological symbolism. The sacral space experience enables a religious human being 'to set up his/her own world' at the place where *sacrum* is manifested in space⁵. Therefore, the universe finds its symbolic equivalent in the vault of the temple while the earth can be seen in the foundation of the temple and its supporting structure, i.e. columns and walls [4], [11]. The papal altar with its surroundings, namely pilgrims and the open space, create a natural temple.

⁴ Cf. [2].

⁵ Cf. [1].

Inspirations

Following the conversations of the author with the designers of papal altars from various parts of Poland, it appears that the creation of the symbolic altar form was influenced by the following factors:

- firstly: a pilgrimage motto – the Pope's message
- secondly: traditions of a given region – the symbol of a place
- thirdly: an emotional attitude towards the Pope – a Pole.

Carrying out the analysis of papal altars, which were built in the years 1979–2002 in Poland, we can state that there are two groups of papal altars:

1. Altars – symbolic forms [10], presented religious and non-religious contents in a metaphorical way; in order to achieve this goal, designers employed architectural methods entering into a 'dialogue' with the imagination of a spectator–pilgrim at the same time. Doing this, they referred to traditions of a given region [6, p. 51].

2. Altars – symbolic decorations, conveyed symbolic contents in a literal and direct way by means of artistic compositions. Their characteristic feature was a certain kind of typification – in most cases there were no references to local or regional traditions.

Altars – symbolic forms

A perfect example of conscious cooperation between a designer, investor and contractor constituted papal altars of the 1990s. – in particular the papal altar in Zakopane (1997), Ludźmierz (1991) as well as most of the altars built on the occasion of the Pope's 7th pilgrimage to Poland in 1999. It must be emphasized that as part of the trend of such altars-symbols there are also altars which were built in two opposite regions of Poland: the altar-shepherd's hut in Nowy Targ (1979) as well as the altar-boat built in Gdańsk (1987). The former became an inspiration for designers of papal altars in the Karpaty region: in Ludźmierz, Zakopane and Stary Sącz in the years 1991–1999. The symbolism of the altar whose author was Tadeusz Jędrisko, an architect, referred to traditions of the Podhale region – formally expressed in the form of a shepherd's hut. Sectors for pilgrims around the altar were designed for about 400 thousand persons in the territory of an airport. The whole complex – the papal altar

and sectors for pilgrims were built within ten days only⁶. An integral part of the main celebrations was a musical and vocal programme⁷ which when combined with the spatial composition of the papal altar in the Podhale style constituted a comprehensive work which showed the culture of this region. Eight years after the first Apostolic visit in 1987, the next great work of sacral architecture was built – the work of 'one day'. It was the altar-boat made in Gdańsk Zaspą – a residential district, whose originator and partly performer was Marian Kołodziej – a remarkable theatrical set designer. The author included many meta-

⁶ There were eight persons involved in the process of erecting the altar – carpenters from nearby villages, whereas other works were done by 50 to 60 workers. As many as 3000 Mountaineers performed as security service in the sectors during the ceremony.

⁷ Performed by Mountaineers dressed in regional clothes and the mixed choir consisting of 400 singers. Cf. [5, pp. 153–156].



Fig. 2. The papal altar in Gdańsk, 1987. Designed by M. Kołodziej
(photo: archives M. Kołodziej)

II. 2. Ołtarz papieski w Gdańsku, 1987. Proj. M. Kołodziej
(fot. z archiwum M. Kołodzieja)

phors in his concept [7]. The altar-boat – and more precisely, the altar-Galleon (Fig. 2) as it was called then – was a metaphor of the Church as a community of believers. The scaffolding at the back and on both sides of the altar was supposed to illustrate the Church which is still under construction. This idea also referred to the character of the ceremony with the participation of the Pope, which was celebrated on behalf of working people. The symbolism of the altar also referred to the place – the city of Gdańsk, a coastal region, its history and traditions. The designer – with spatial intuition typical of a set designer – excellently adjusted the whole altar scale to the size of the square, blocks of flats, a distance from the remotest participant to the Pope⁸ who stood or sat on the throne behind all altars. According to the author's words, the residential district also acquired something metaphysical thanks to this scale. The whole complex was designed in such a way so that it could bring about a theatrical effect. And it really happened so. The altar composition was surmounted by three massive metal crosses-masts⁹ which came from three various points and at the top they formed a compact structure of the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers of 1970 – a characteristic symbol of Gdańsk. On the extensions of the cross arms on upper yards there were two white-red and one white-yellow standards as well as two flags – the papal and Gdańsk – which at a height of 40 meters were moved by means of winds and in this way they made the impression that the whole altar-galleon was in motion. This effect was additionally reinforced by clouds passing in the sky. The pilgrims who gathered in the square participated not only in *misterium*

⁸ About one million people were expected to gather at the square. Cf. [6, pp. 54–57].

⁹ Masts were 39 meters in height, so they were higher than the tallest 10-storey block of flats in this area.

but also in *spectaculum*. Marian Kołodziej also designed the papal altar in Sopot in 1999. The architectural design was prepared by Gdańsk architects: Małgorzata Kruszko-Szotyńska, Szczepan Szatyński and Leszek Zaleski. The altar was supposed to be located in the area of Sopot horse racing. The main element of the altar and at the same time the background for the Pope's throne was a cross and sacramental bread made of resin and fixed on aluminium constructions – the whole structure was 23 meters high. A symbol of God in the Holy Trinity dominated above the altar. The altar composition was complemented by wooden sculptures and crosses, which were made by folk artists according to Marian Kołodziej's designs. The sacrificial altar at which the Pope celebrated the Holy Mass was built at a height of eight meters above the ground level. The designer of the altar concept also took into account the fact that the Pope was going to look at the altar from the bird's eye view. Therefore, he designed it in such a way so that from above it reminded a dove – a symbol of the Holy Spirit (Fig. 3).

Among altars – symbolic forms located in the area of Northern Poland the following altars are worth mentioning: in Pelplin, Elbląg, Elk, Drohiczyń, which were made on the occasion of the Pope's 7th pilgrimage to Poland. The papal altar in Pelplin was designed by the sculptor Jarosław Wójcik from Sierakowice. The message of the pilgrimage *God is Love* could be read in the altar's composition whose basic element was a steel construction – fishing nets pulled out by two birds situated at the height of over 20 meters. In this way, the author made a reference to the teaching of Christ about the Kingdom of God. An integral part of the composition was sacramental bread ten meters in diameter which was situated behind the Papal throne and a monumental cross 33 meters in height. The altar was made in Elbląg in the area of Aeroclub and designed by a design team under the guidance of the architect – Professor Szczepan Baum. In the centre of the whole

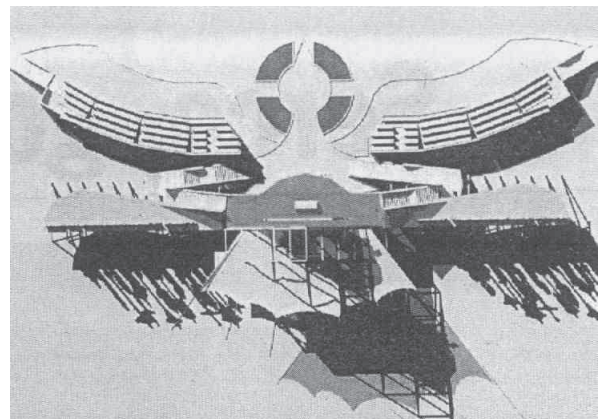


Fig. 3. The altar in Sopot, 1999. Bird's eye view, graphics.
Designed by M. Kołodziej

II. 3. Ołtarz w Sopocie, 1999. Widok z lotu ptaka, grafika.
Proj. M. Kołodziej

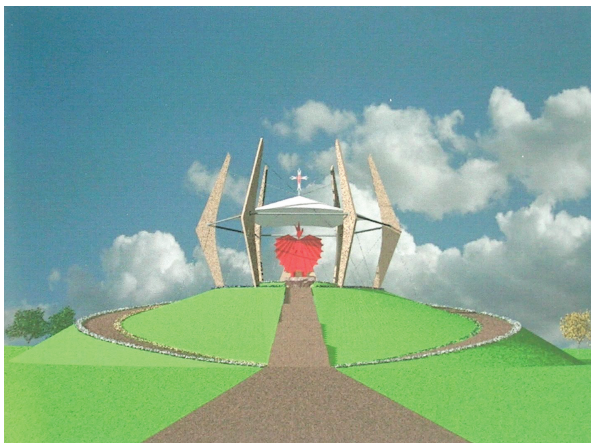


Fig. 4. The altar in Elbląg, 1999. Visualisation.
Designed by prof. S. Baum

Il. 4. Ołtarz w Elblągu, 1999. Wizualizacja.
Proj. prof. S. Baum

complex there was a burning heart – a symbol of love, and a papal throne (at the height of 11.4 meters above the ground level), which were surrounded by wooden poles made of laminated timber in the form of hands in an adoration gesture (Fig. 4). The whole complex was covered by a roof in the form of a tent with a cross at the top. In the altar symbolism the author also referred to the celebration of 1000 years of St. Wojciech's (Adalbert) mission and death and by means of wooden ribs he referred to the boat construction. A scene from St. Wojciech's life was presented on the sacrificial altar made of natural stone, whereas the theme of water and St. Peter's boat constituted the central idea of the papal altar designers in Elk – architects Witold Kowalczyk and Dariusz Jackowski. The altar blended in with the background while it was situated on the main gathering site. The background constituted the 19th-century downtown development, a Diocesan house and a dominating neo-Gothic tower of St. Wojciech Cathedral, the patron of Poland and Elk Diocese. From the papal platform the Pope could look at the river flowing in front of the altar. The altar roof symbolised a boat platform of St. Peter of our times, which crashed the waves made by means of side roofs. The pulpit was situated on a fragment of the altar platform sticking out in the form of a boat bow. According to Robert Łucka's solution, the architect and manager of the project, the altar in Drohiczyń referred to the ecumenical meeting in this town and at the same time it emphasised the character of the place – Podlasie Region where there are various religious denominations. A broken cross – a dominant of the altar architectural composition – symbolised divisions existing in Christian churches. The symbol of their common faith in Christ was the figure of the Crucified which connected two parts of the cross and St. Peter's fisherman's nets around the cross (Fig. 5). On the sides of the cross there were paintings which presented various religious denominations of Podlasie Region.



Fig. 5. The papal altar in Drohiczyń, 1999.
Designed by arch. R. Łucka with team (photo: R. Łucka)

Il. 5. Ołtarz papieski w Drohiczyźnie, 1999.
Proj. arch. R. Łucka z zespołem (fot. R. Łucka)

Papal altars of Podhale region in Ludźmierz (1991), Zakopane (1997) as well as in Stary Sącz – during John Paul II's 7th pilgrimage to Poland – turned out to be a phenomenon which was very similar to the one in Gdańsk Zaspas in 1987. Although these altars¹⁰ were built in the regions with different traditions and natural conditions, their common idea became a method of designing space so that the pilgrims could participate not only in misterium but also in spectaculum. The papal altar in Zakopane, whose originator was the architect and sculptor Marek Szala¹¹, became the form – symbol equally combining a symbolism of the place as well as the general motto of the pilgrimage¹². A wooden form of the papal altar symbolized a shepherd's hut (the symbol of the place) and it also referred to Jesus' work on Earth – Shepherd of the Sheep Flock. The saving mission of Christ was presented figuratively on the sculptural decoration – referring to the Biblical 'Jacob's ladder' – blending with the front façade of the altar. Three elements in the spatial composition of the altar referred to the person of Christ: a sacrificial altar, sculptural decoration and a wooden openwork cross. The vertical and symmetric composition of the altar 'strengthened' by a perpendicular, central sculptural decoration

¹⁰ i.e. in Gdańsk and in the Karpaty region.

¹¹ The architectural and building design was elaborated by architect Zbigniew Śliwiński.

¹² The pilgrimage motto in 1997 was the following: *Christ yesterday, today and forever.*



Fig. 6. The papal altar in Gliwice, 1999. Designed by prof. A. Lisik, visualization archives A. Lisik
 Il. 6. Ołtarz papieski w Gliwicach, 1999. Proj. prof. A. Lisik, wizualizacja z archiwum A. Lisika

division, which was led above the altar roof where it changed to the form of a sculptured cross was intended to emphasise this idea. According to the designer's assumptions, the altar roof form – the basic compositional element – which constituted the vertical axis was supposed to make the impression of lightness and at the same time of solemnity and monumentality. During the celebration with the Pope's participation, an integral part of the compositional entirety was a white ribbon which served as a way of connecting the papal altar (from the sacrificial table) with the cross placed on the ski jump against the background of mountains and forests. The papal altar surrounded by mountains as well as the vocal-musical programme performed by the Polish mountaineers called *Górale* dressed in original clothes created *spectaculum*. Similar conditions were in *Ludźmierz* and *Stary Sącz* where the only differences referred to the form and consisted in another way of symbolic values transfer.

Apart from the aforementioned *Podhale* and *Pomerania*, one of the most characteristic regions in Poland is the region of Upper Silesia. The papal altars of this region – in *Sosnowiec* (1999) and *Gliwice* (1999) – contained a deep significance. In a symbolic way, their form referred to the pilgrimage motto which was expressed by means of constructions and materials characteristic of this region.

The motto of the 7th pilgrimage to Poland *God is Love* found its particular expression in the realisation

of the papal altar in Gliwice. The moment of man's creation, which is the act of Divine love, as presented on the Michelangelo mural in the Sistine Chapel became the main inspiration for the altar design team whose manager was the architect, Professor Adam Lisik. The motif of extended hands of God and man – Adam found its formal presentation in the form of two spatial braced-rib arches¹³ leading to each other from the podium basis without connecting each other. According to Professor A. Lisik, a free space between arches symbolised the area of freedom which was given to man by God¹⁴. The massive, 10 meters in height podium of the altar reinforced the message of symbolic contents and was the image of Holy Mount – the place of contact between man and God, a creature and the Creator. An integral part of the altar composition – its dominant – was a steel cross (30 meters in height) which referred to the mast of Gliwice radio station – the symbol of the place (Fig. 6). The wall presenting the rising sun – the symbol of hope and new life constituted the background for the sacrificial altar.

¹³ Truss arches were at the same time the roof of the altar. Cf. [3, pp. 16–19].

¹⁴ On the basis of the author's conversation with Professor A. Lisik, the altar's designer.



Fig. 7. The papal altar in Sosnowiec, 1999. Inspired by the industrial region. Designed by AiR Jurkowski-Architects (photo: R. Jurkowski)

Il. 7. Ołtarz papieski w Sosnowcu, 1999. Inspiracja regionem przemysłowym. Proj. AiR Jurkowski-Architekci (fot. R. Jurkowski)

Symbolic references connected with local traditions (scientific and technical character of the town) were expressed in steel, openwork and light forms of the cross and roof above the sacrificial alter (the main podium); whereas the papal altar in Sosnowiec first of all referred to local traditions. It was the monumental symbol of the place. The basic element of the architectural composition of the altar was an openwork arch made of the spatial steel truss. The truss motif referred to the industrial character of the town. A significant symbolic and compositional element was pine – according to Ryszard Jurkowski's idea, the manager of the design – presenting pine forests which used to grow in the whole region. Both pine and the wooden cross (which hung attached to the arch construction) were placed in the 'frame' which was set by the truss construction (Fig. 7). The motive of the frame constitutes a symbol of the triumph, victory – hope for the future as well as 'window on the world'. It was possible to read the following message: the future of Sosnowiec is in the natural environment respect and in the cross – a symbol of Jesus Christ whom God sent to the world out of love for man. The altar elements such as pine, the arch-gate, altar platform (Holy Mount) were symbolic and archetypal references connected with primitive experiencing of sacral space¹⁵.

¹⁵ A tree, wooden pole, Holy Mount, etc. were the places of saint-hood revelation.

Altars – symbolic decorations

These altars had symbolic contents in a literary and direct way by means of artistic compositions. A certain kind of typification was a characteristic feature of the altars and in most cases there were no references to local or regional traditions.

The group of altars of this character certainly comprised the ones built in the following places: Kraków (1979, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1997), Gniezno (1979), Warsaw (1979, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1999), Niepokalanów (1983), Poznań (1983), Katowice (1983), Wrocław (1983, 1997), Lublin (1987), Tarnów (1987), Szczecin (1987), Gdynia (1987), Łódź (1987), Olsztyn (1991), Koszalin (1991), Legnica (1997), Kalisz (1997), Krosno (1997), etc. Let us analyse these most interesting altars which belong to this group. The meeting in Wrocław took place under the banner of the 46th International Eucharistic Congress which was connected with the pilgrimage motto: 'Christ yesterday, today and for ages'. Professor Edward Zielonka was the author of the altar design. The main element and axis of the composition was the cross 26 meters in height on which (at the place of arms 'crossing') the symbol of Eucharistic bread supported by hands coming out of the globe was placed. The gesture of open hands supporting the Eucharistic bread indicated unity of Christian churches

– expressed hope for the future. The whole composition of the papal altar, in the form of a triangle, consisted of arches spreading radially (sectors of a circle) and presenting the light beaming from the Eucharistic bread – it was the symbol of Jesus Christ – Light of the world (Fig. 8). In 1983 the meeting at Wrocław hippodrome



Fig. 8. Altars – symbolic decorations. The papal altar in Wrocław, 1997. Designed by prof. E. Zielonka (photo: A. Mas)

Il. 8. Ołtarze – symboliczne dekoracje. Ołtarz papieski we Wrocławiu, 1997. Proj. prof. E. Zielonka (fot. A. Mas)

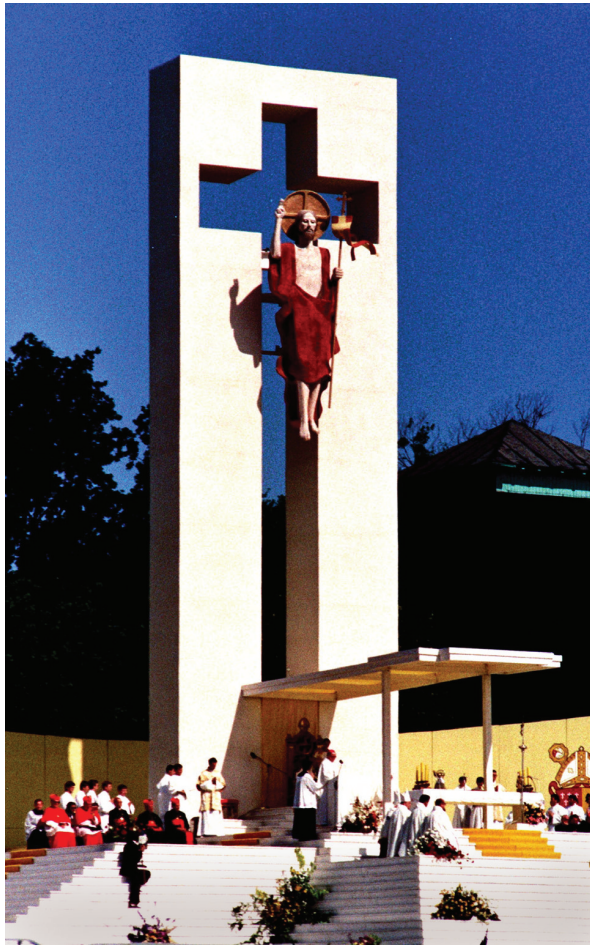


Fig. 9. Altars – symbolic decorations. The papal altar in Wrocław, 1987 (photo: A. Mas)

Il. 9. Ołtarze – symboliczne dekoracje. Ołtarz papieski we Wrocławiu, 1987 (fot. A. Mas)

took place under the following banner: ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled’. The meeting liturgy called for reconcili-

ation recalling St. Jadwiga Śląska, the patron of reconciliation. The hippodrome surrounded by trees constituted an interesting artistic setting of the meeting as well as of the papal throne which was designed in the form of a monumental rectangular prism with an inside opening in the shape of a cross. Against the background of the cross there was a sculpture of Resurrected Jesus (Fig. 9) as the answer to the papal motto of the pilgrimage: ‘Peace be with you Poland! My fatherland’. On both sides of the altar emblems of various towns in the Western Region were placed: Oleśnica, Leszno, Świdnica, Kłodzko, Jelenia Góra, Legnica, Wałbrzych, Zielona Góra and others.

According to the Rev. Cz. Mazur, the papal altar in Legnica presented symbolic motives which were strictly connected with the history of this region. A tent form of the altar and emblems of towns were a reminder of great battles (Legnica) which took place under Henryk Pobożny’s command in the defence of faith and the whole Christianity endangered by the Tatars invasion. A compositional dominant of the altar was a wooden cross placed in an axis position, which referred to the pilgrimage motto – it was the symbol of Jesus Christ. A massive dove descending onto the believers and situated at the top of the roof form presented the Holy Spirit – Consoler sent on the Pentecost Day. The most powerful meaning of symbols constituted a motive of the cross with the background of the sky under which the form of the gable roof represented the Holy Mount – Golgotha. The cross, which was placed exactly in the middle of the composition and above the roof, was a vertical axis (‘axis mundi’) – a ‘connector’ between the Earth and the sky.

The altar composition in Krosno was arranged by means of a monumental openwork steel cross which constituted the main dominant of the composition as well as by means of long horizontal roofs and a steel truss in the shape of the letter ‘M’ above the papal throne (which symbolised Mary, the patroness of Pope John Paul II). The steel cross (about 40 meters in height) was a formal reference to drilling rigs which were characteristic of this region; thus, it was the symbol of the ‘place’.

Significance of tradition

Tradition can be discussed from the point of view of local and regional values which consist of culture, architecture, the natural environment, etc. as well as from the point of view of religious values. The former and the latter are strictly connected with symbols – signs which make it possible to identify with the place and community. Cultivation of native, local, regional traditions gives a sense of security, stability and strengthens the sense of belonging to a given cultural or religious community. It is especially reflected in cultures – regions which have been established (and are being established) in the natural environment where everything that is ‘natural’ determines particular spheres of a community life. A temple is a distinguishing feature of place and city and its proper location in a city contributes to its stronger emphasis in the awareness of residents. An open space around the papal

throne creates special conditions of the exposition and strengthens the perception of symbolic meanings of the altar – symbol. Symbolic meanings – according to J. Krenz – apart from their basic identification function, which facilitates the usage of space, fulfill the role of a social groups integrating factor, take part in creating a social identity, constitute a cell of cultural continuity and strengthen a community sense of the place [8]. Architecture appeals to the user not only by means of its form, detail but also by means of the material. The most precious is the material which comes from natural resources of the Earth. It is said that such a material has a ‘soul’. Papal altars in Podhale were made of natural materials and they combined symbolism of the place and symbolism of Christian religion in one work. The wooden form of the papal altar, which presented a shepherd’s hut, wooden details and

granite sculptures showed great devotion to local traditions and a deep love to natural materials. The idea was expressed by means of stone and wood. The form was emphasized by the material, whereas values of the material were underlined by details. The wooden material, which was the basic building material of papal altars in Podhale, is best ‘felt’ during the observation of details of these altars and examination of their various shapes as well as irregular lines. An industrial region is first of all associated with materials which are the products of man’s work and are produced in artificial conditions which are in opposition to the natural environment. Steel constructions (characteristic of the region of Silesia and Krosno), which were used during the construction of papal altars, formed openwork and light forms. Values of the material were exposed in details of construction joints and in thickness of particular construction elements (Fig. 10).

The phenomenon of papal altars in the Karpaty region

On the cultural and pilgrimage map of Poland the Karpaty Mountains are presented as a unique region. This is proved by the number of sanctuaries located in this region as well as by the number of pilgrims and tourists visiting historical places and sanctuaries of this region. In many scientific studies on sociology of religions, geography of religions, etc. we can encounter such expression as ‘the phenomenon of Polish pilgrimages’, the phenomenon of folk religiousness in Poland’. I. Soljan in her study [9] of this region stated that the Karpaty is a unique pilgrimage region in which, apart from the centres with many centuries of tradition and a well-established position, there still appear new centres which attract numerous pilgrims. This is further confirmed by the establishment of the Diocese Pilgrimage Centre in Stary Sącz and The Pilgrimage Centre in Ludźmierz. The altars in Stary Sącz and Ludźmierz, which were built for the main ceremonies on the occasion of Pope John Paul II’s visit in Poland, were left on the original building site and in this way they became a permanent part of the city landscape. Due to the presence of the exceptional Pilgrim, the altars became the object of a particular interest of pilgrims and tourists arriving at sanctuaries near which they were located. The Pope’s visit contributed to many enterprises in Stary Sącz – among other things, the organization of the procession with relics of Saint Kinga of Poland from the convent of St. Clares to the papal altar (located on the common of Stary Sącz near the convent) on the occasion of the church fair and commemoration of the Pope’s visit in 1999 (Fig. 11). Moreover, in Stary Sącz in the summer season a series of cultural and sport events is organised in which first of all young people take part, in particular from Nowy Sącz County. Undoubtedly, the geographical location of Stary Sącz, which is surrounded by the Beskid Sądecki Mountains, is conducive to the organisation of such events. Stary



Fig. 10. The papal altar in Sosnowiec, 1999. Steel construction
(photo: R. Jurkowski)

Il. 10. Ołtarz papieski w Sosnowcu, 1999. Konstrukcja stalowa
(fot. R. Jurkowski)

Sącz in Nowy Sącz County fulfils a very important role. It is the second town of this County as regards the number of population, it has many precious monuments and is characterised by tremendous values of the landscape. The location on the śródkarpaccy transportation route is the reason why Stary Sącz is a very attractive town for tourists and this is conducive to the development of tourism in this region. Undoubtedly, the Pope’s visit in 1999 contributed to the rapid growth of the pilgrimage tourism, which in comparison with the 1980s. – 15 000 to 40 000 people a year – increased up to 250 000 people a year after 2000. Geographical location as well as rich culture and history constitute great trumps not only of the Nowy Sącz County but also of the whole Karpaty region. In the process of uniting Europe, the Karpaty region fulfils a key role in the integration of states, in particular in East-Central Europe. On the one hand, the idea of building the Diocese Pilgrimage Centre in Stary Sącz (Fig. 12) as well as the Pilgrimage Centre in Ludźmierz resulted directly from spiritual and material needs of the towns’ residents. On the other hand, it was an attempt to react against disintegration and destruction of social bonds of various kinds as well as extreme individualisation of life which could be seen after political system transformations in 1989 in Poland. Finally, the ideas of building pilgrimage centres in Stary Sącz and Ludźmierz constitute an expression of emotional bonds with the



Fig. 11. The papal altar model in Stary Sącz, 1999.
Designed by arch. Z. Remi (photo: Z. Remi)

Il. 11. Makieta ołtarza papieskiego w Starym Sączu, 1999.
Proj. arch. Z. Remi (fot. Z. Remi)



Fig. 12. The papal altar and House of Pilgrim, Stary Sącz.
Visualisation. Designed by Z. Remi

Il. 12. Ołtarz papieski i Dom Pielgrzyma, Stary Sącz.
Wizualizacja. Proj. Z. Remi

blessed John Paul II who – before becoming the Pope – had headed the church province of Kraków for many years. On the basis of analysing the statistics of tourist and pilgrim circulation in Stary Sącz and Ludźmierz we can conclude that the presence of the Pope in those places still inspires many people to pilgrimage – not only to the historical sanctuary but also to the place-altar which was marked with the presence of this unique Pilgrim. Following the beatification of John Paul II, we can expect that these places will certainly become transformed into new cult centres.

Summary

The papal altar was a result of compensation of numerous symbolic meanings and codes. Depending on the given place (region) and the awareness of the designer, investor and developer, it presented various attitudes towards expressing a symbol and religious meanings. In the regions in which tradition plays a particular role (e.g., Podhale, Pomerania, Upper Silesia) we could observe a high level of awareness of the participants in the process of creating the architectural work. The idea of the project was visible in the entirety of the structure: in its spatial composition, construction, detail and mate-

rials used. In the process of creating the entire vision of the papal altar, apart from the aforementioned factors, it was significant for whom this architectural work was to erected. The symbolic meaning of the papal altar was closely connected with the pilgrimage motto which was inspired by the Polish Pope coming to his own country – Poland. The papal altars were architectural works which communicated symbolic meanings in an expressive and emotional way – we must bear in mind that they were designed for this one exceptional day, i.e. a ceremonious meeting with the Pope.

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Sacrum pod nieboskłonem

W 2002 r. odbyła się ósma i ostatnia podróż apostolska papieża Jana Pawła II do Polski. Na przyjazd papieża wybudowano blisko sześćdziesiąt ołtarzy papieskich w różnych miastach i w różnych regionach Polski. Ołtarz papieski z założenia miał być budowlą tymczasową, swoją pełną ekspresji formą miał wyrażać motto papieskiej pielgrzymki oraz budować niepowtarzalny i wyjątkowy klimat spotkania z papieżem – stając się świątynią „jednego dnia”. Pomimo tymczasowego przeznaczenia ołtarzy papieskich ich projektanci stworzyli dzieła urzekające bogactwem przekazu symbolicznego, na długo zapisując się w świadomości uczestników uroczystości.

Ołtarz papieski i sektory dla pielgrzymów tworzą materialną świątynię pod nieboskłonem – świątynię wzniesioną na konkretną uroczystość, z udziałem papieża. Na podstawie wielu opracowań naukowych można wywnioskować, że pewne elementy kompozycyjne w świątyni chrześcijańskiej, w warstwie znaczeniowej posiadają cechy wspólne wielu religiom. Są nimi m.in. ołtarz ofiarny na podwyższeniu – Święta Góra; święty obszar, strefa *sacrum* i *profanum* – wewnątrz świątyni i zewnątrz; kosmos, wszechświat – sklepienie świątyni; oś świata (*axis mundi*) – elementy pionowe świątyni, np. wieża. Opierając się na rozważaniach M. Eliadego, stwierdzamy, że architektura sakralna podejmuje i rozwija

symbolikę kosmologiczną. Doświadczenie sakralnej przestrzeni umożliwia człowiekowi religijnemu „założenie swojego świata” tam, gdzie *sacrum* przejawia się w przestrzeni. Wszechświat znajduje zatem swój symboliczny odpowiednik w sklepieniu świątyni, a ziemia widziana jest w podstawie świątyni i jej konstrukcji nośnej – kolumnach i ścianach. Ołtarz papieski wraz z otoczeniem, które tworzą pielgrzymi i przestrzeń otwarta, konstruują naturalną świątynię.

Ołtarz papieski był wynikiem kompensacji wielu treści symbolicznych, kodów, znaczeń. W zależności od miejsca (od regionu), od świadomości projektanta, inwestora i wykonawcy, przedstawiał różne podejście do wyrażania symbolu, treści religijnych. W regionach, w których tradycja odgrywa szczególną rolę (np.: Podhale, Pomorze, Górny Śląsk), można było zauważyć wysoką świadomość uczestników procesu powstawania dzieła architektonicznego. Idea projektu widoczna była w całości założenia: w kompozycji przestrzennej, konstrukcji, detalu, w użytych materiałach. Ołtarze papieskie były dziełami architektonicznymi, przekazującymi treści symboliczne w sposób ekspresyjny, emocjonalny – były przecież projektowane na ten jeden wyjątkowy dzień, uroczyste spotkanie z Papieżem.

Key words: sacral architecture, papal altars, history of religion, formal symbolism

Słowa kluczowe: architektura sakralna, ołtarze papieskie, historia religii, symbolika formalna