



*Competition for a Conceptual Design of Interior Decoration Elements of the Temple of Divine Providence.*

Guidelines of the Commission for the Artistic Expression of the Interior of the Temple of Divine Providence to

**A CONCEPTUAL DESIGN OF INTERIOR DECORATION ELEMENTS  
OF THE TEMPLE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE**

*IN WARSAW*

**IDEAS PROGRAMME OF THE INTERIOR**

*“It is important that figures of saints and of angels do not draw the faithful to them, but to the ideal centre of the temple and of the cosmos, which is Christ in Majesty and his altar on earth.”*  
*Excerpt from “The Ideas Programme of the Interior and the Competition Guidelines”*

**The first commandment of the Decalogue strictly forbids making any likeness of God, man, or any living creature, because God is invisible (Ex 20:1-6). In Christ God became man, Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). The mystery of the incarnation is the foundation of sacred art. Sacred art evokes and glorifies in faith and adoration, the transcendent mystery of God - the surpassing invisible beauty of truth and love visible in Christ, who “reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature,” in whom “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” (CCC 2502)**

*The ideas programme of the Temple of Divine Providence matured over five years (2010-2014) and is the product of many discussions among theologians, liturgists, art historians and artists held in commissions set up by Cardinal Kazimierz Nycz. It was adopted at the commission meeting on 6 January 2015.*

*The term “ideas programme” is accepted in art history and in artistic criticism to signify the iconographic concept of a specific work, both old and contemporary and functions synonymously with the term “iconographic programme.” The task of the ideas programme (i.e. iconographic) of the temple is to describe its theological concept, not its visual form. Theologians are responsible for drafting the theological concept, while artists are responsible for giving it a visual form. In the case of*



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*new projects, the ideas programme has to fulfil conditions of wholeness and coherency and express the theological thought that was described in principles.*

### **Preliminary principles**

1. The guiding idea of the temple's iconographic programme is **Divine Providence** as it was revealed in the history of the Polish nation, in the context of the universal Church and the history of salvation.
2. The programme originates from Europe's Christian iconographic tradition and accounts for the thousand-year-old Polish tradition.
3. The ideas programme accounts for the temple's architectural structure which is formed by:
  - a) the central plan (round) inscribed in a square with four corner chapels and three entries which emphasize the main axis (main entry – the altar) and the transverse axis (the eastern entry – the western entry),
  - b) the vertical axis (the pinnacle of the dome – the centre of the circular nave) emphasized by light from the dome and the related optical axis of the altar and of the altar wall,
4. The implementation of the programme requires integrality and transparency of the proposed design in which each of the composite elements is subordinated to the central idea.

### **The central idea**

The central idea of Divine Providence is most profoundly expressed by the image which in iconography is called **Christ in Majesty (*Maiestas Domini*)** showing the Saviour sitting on a throne (optionally, standing) in mandorla (signifying His Deity and humanity) with the symbols of the Four Evangelists in the corners (tetramorph). Such representation stems from an ancient common spiritual tradition of the Church and is represented in the oldest monuments of Polish art. *Maiestas Domini* symbolises the Resurrection of Christ, His universal Kingdom and His second coming for the Last Judgment. The **Holy Spirit**, usually depicted as a Dove, is shown above Christ, and above the Holy Spirit is **God the Father**, depicted as the Hand of God (*Manus Dei*). Standing on the sides, the greatest representatives of humanity turn towards Christ: on His right hand side is the Virgin Mary (the New Testament, the feminine element), on his left hand is St. John the Baptist (the prophet who closes the Old Testament; the masculine element). The composition with Mary and John the



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Baptist, called **Deesis**, has a strong theological structure that refers to the liturgical and iconographic tradition of the spiritual Church, and also to the beginnings of Christianity in Poland (Bogurodzica, the oldest Polish hymn, the oldest polychromy in Tum near Łęczycza, 12<sup>th</sup> cent.). Thus the figure of Christ in Majesty is an ideal keystone of the vertical trinity axis that leads from the dome towards the altar and, also, of the horizontal earthly axis, rooted in history to which the People of God congregated in the temple belong. The figure of Christ in Majesty reveals the Divine Providence and the second coming of Christ for the Judgment, which also signifies the future terminal end of the earth's history.

The temple's ideological and liturgical centre is the **altar**, the place for the liturgy of the Sacrifice. Next to it stands the **pulpit** – place for the liturgy of the Word.

An important element of the optical vertical axis is a **two-sided cross** hanging over the altar and forming its integral part. This cross shows the Paschal nature of the liturgy celebrated on the altar, and at the same time refers to the figure of Christ in Majesty, showing the connection between the passion, paschal and eschatological elements – the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and the cosmic Parousia. The Cross on the obverse (from the side of the nave) shows Christ suffering, which is the historical dimension of the Passion. The reverse of the Cross (from the side of the chancel) shows the glorious risen Saviour (tradition sometimes depicts Him in priest's robes), which reveals the resurrective nature of Christ's Passover.

The skylight in the soffit of the dome depicts – in reference to the ancient Church tradition – **the Holy Spirit descending upon** Virgin Mary and the Apostles. This scene is intentionally connected with the cross that crowns the temple, while in the ideas programme of the interior sort of crowns the image of the Church expressed in the figure of the Deesis, thus emphasizing its Marian and apostolic nature.

There is a suggestion to place the **baptismal font** in the centre of the circular nave directly under the dome with the Pentecost. Its transparent bottom could also play the role of a skylight that lights the lower church. The light illuminating the lower church through the bottom of the baptismal font – the skylight would permeate through the water in the baptismal font, thus stressing the relation between baptism and Light.

The vertical axis of the temple (the Pentecost – baptismal font) is synonymous with the axis of light, a reference to the creation of the world (the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters), to the baptism of Christ, and to the sacrament of baptism. Looking from the side



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of the main entry, this axis corresponds optically and ideologically with the axis of *Maiestas Domini* – the Cross. It is the main ideological axis of the iconographic programme. The horizontal axis (north-south) is its extension. It connects the main entry, the baptismal font, the pulpit, and the altar. It draws the semantic axis *Baptism – the Word of God – the Eucharist*. Placement of the baptismal font at the crossing of the vertical and horizontal axis of the temple displays the sacrament of baptism, sort of inscribed into the cross, which becomes displayed as a place where earth meets heaven, and also as a road leading to the Word of God and the Eucharist.

The extension of the horizontal line of *Deesis* is made up of symmetrically placed figures of two archangels (Gabriel and Michael) and of saints representing the universal Church of the East and of the West: St. Peter and St. Paul, St. Benedict and St. Scholastica, St. Cyril and St. Methodius. St. Stanislaus and St. Adalbert. Their figures could be placed in the altar wall or on rectangular fields surrounding the circular external nave. The two last pairs of saints represent a connection between the universal Church and the Church in Poland. The *Deesis* is continued with **Polish Saints**. Their figures are shown on rectangular fields on the walls of the circular nave. They represent different periods in history, different lands of the Republic of Poland, different estates and communities. The hall of saints is opened by 20<sup>th</sup>-century Polish saints: St. John Paul II and Servant of God Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński, the Primate of the Millennium. The presence of two great Poles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century near the altar is also connected with the Museum dedicated to them which is situated around the dome. In the suggested set of Polish saints there are also (in addition to the two saints mentioned earlier): Saint Otto of Bamberg, the Five Martyr Brothers, Andrew Świerad, St. Kinga, Blessed Yolanta, St. Hyacinth, St. John of Dukla, Blessed Wincenty Kadłubek, St. Hedwig of Silesia, St. Hedwig Queen of Poland, ST. Casimir, St. John Cantinus, St. Stanislaus Kostka S.J., St. John Sarkander, St. Andrew Bobola S.J., St. Jozafat Kuncewicz, St. Brother Albert, St. Raphael Kalinowski, St. Faustina, Blessed Jerzy Popiełuszko. In the immediate vicinity of the respective presentations of saints there will be placed particulars of their relics integrated with them visually and ideologically. Thus every image of a saint together with his/her relics will become the object of individual and public cult. The suggested list of saints is not closed, but open to the present day and to the future. For this reason there is a suggestion to leave one



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or more rectangular fields empty, for example in the vicinity of the main entrance, for Polish saints of the future.

The representation of Polish saints is a symbolic synopsis of the history of the Church in Poland and, at the same time, evidence of the operation of Divine Providence at the different turns and stages of the nation's history. These saints join in the prayer of the saints of the universal Church, in the prayer of angels, of Mary and of John the Baptist, and, at the same time, in the prayer of the faithful congregated in the temple. Stained glass in the temple's windows will be an important element of the interior's iconographic programme. The stained glass windows may depict angels, who play an important role in the operation of Divine Providence. Angels who represent the spiritual world are constantly present in the earthly world, because the Creator assigned them the role of guardians of the corporeal reality. The light shining through the stained glass windows renders this subtle presence of the spiritual world. Early Christian tradition is already familiar with the concept of the Nine Choirs of Angels. The Choirs represent different tasks entrusted to angels by Divine Providence. For this reason, the Nine Choirs of Angels especially express the concept of the perfect eternal state (heaven), in which everyone is assigned particular tasks and obligations. So, the angels from the different Choirs are those who, on behalf of God, fight against evil, care for the natural elements and accompany people on the path to salvation through difficult turns of fate. Their main task carried out by the entire hierarchy is nonetheless to accompany all mankind on the path to salvation, which is also the primary goal of Divine Providence.

Thus the prayer of the faithful congregated in the temple – both in artistic and theological sense – is enwrapped in the prayer of saints and angels. Through the liturgy performed on the altar, the Church's prayer (gr. *deesis*) is directed to Jesus Christ, and through Him to the Holy Trinity. It is important that figures of saints and of angels do not draw the faithful to them, but to the ideal centre of the temple and of the cosmos, which is Jesus Christ in Majesty and his altar on earth.

The fourteen stations of the Way of the Cross placed on pillars supporting the vault (on every second pillar, from the inside of "the external nave") and twelve consecration crosses referring to the consecration of the temple, with candles in candlesticks (placed on pillars from the side of "the central nave") complement the iconographic programme of the temple's central space. In the further perspective, near the pillars from the side of this central



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nave, a place is provided for the coat-of-arms of individual dioceses, as well as symbols of cathedrals, which create the structure of the Church in the historical Republic of Poland and which commemorate their contributions to the construction of the Temple of Divine Providence.

**The four chapels**

Four chapels situated in the corners of the square on which the temple's plan is based are inscribed in the circular plan of the nave. Their iconographic programme expresses key events in the history of Redemption. The sequence of these events is inscribed in the direction of the Sun's path and the dials of the clock, imitated in the path of procession inside and outside the temple. Great historical and art works or their copies are suggested to be placed in the chapels. The presence of such works would call to mind Polish religious and art tradition, and would also engage in a dialogue with the present-day. Here is the suggested content and function of the chapels, starting from the south-east chapel (to the left of the altar):

1. Christmas. Mary's Chapel. In its centre there is an altar and a copy of the most famous image of Mary in Poland – the icon of Our Lady of Częstochowa, which expresses the mystery of the Incarnation and, at the same time, symbolically connects the traditions of the East and of the West. The chapel may be a place of private prayer of parents, godparents and the newly baptised, and of the newly married after the end of the liturgy of the sacrament of marriage. At Christmas time, the traditional crèche could be placed in the chapel.
2. Maundy Thursday. The Adoration Chapel. In its centre is the altar where daily Mass is celebrated and where the Holy Sacrament is exposed, and in the background, behind the altar is the tabernacle and the scene from the Last Supper. The tabernacle should be on two levels, with a minimum of six cups with the maximum height of 30 cm placed on each level. The tabernacle could be used for the Altar of Repose on Maundy Thursday.
3. Good Friday. The Expiatory Chapel, without an altar. The place is dedicated to confession. In the chapel there should be at least ten confessionals, closed, one-sided would be the best option. In the centre of the chapel is the cross or an image of the Crucifixion. It could be a medieval crucifix from one of the churches in the Warsaw Archdiocese (for example, from the church in Grójec) or from the National Museum



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in Warsaw (as a deposit). The chapel may be a place where a tableau of Christ's Tomb is placed on Good Friday. During the initial period of the temple's operation, the chapel will temporarily serve as a staircase to the John Paul II Museum.

4. Resurrection. In the chapel there is an altar and an image of Divine Mercy (Jesus I trust in You), which evokes the Resurrection.

The programme of the temple's interior, and especially the central image of Christ in Majesty, is the closing and culmination of the programme of the four chapels and three doors (see: description below).

### **Three pairs of doors**

The temple's interior shows the transformed reality of the Heavenly Jerusalem. The earthly history emphasizing the role of Divine Providence in Poland's history is shown outside the temple. The main weight of the historical narrative is depicted on three pairs of doors leading to the temple. Thus, the ideological concept of the temple shows that the nation's history, being part of mankind's history, is a fragment of the history of salvation and, at the same time, the temporal side of reality, whose metahistorical centre is God's Kingdom.

The iconographic tradition of the entry door as a symbol of Christ dates back to the first centuries of Christianity. It is recommended that the doors to the Temple of Divine Providence refer in substance and form to the tradition of medieval bronze doors, including the most outstanding works of Polish Romanesque art – the Płock Doors and the Gniezno Doors.

The iconographic programme of the three pairs of doors is an integral component of the whole programme; it specifically ties in with the programme of the four chapels by creating, together with them, a series of events of the history of Redemption. The subject matter of the scenes refers to the oldest traditions that illustrate events from the Old Testament that foretell the New Covenant that is Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary. Scenes from Poland's history are written into this programme.

The iconographic programme of the three pairs of doors is intended to be read outside the temple. It represents an integral part of the whole programme, and is specifically connected with the programme of the four chapels by creating, together with them, a series of events from the history of Redemption.



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1. The main door (northern): The Annunciation
2. The eastern door: The Transfiguration of Christ
3. The western doors: The Last Judgement

The subject matter of the scenes refers to the oldest traditions, according to which the main doors are an entry to the New Covenant, with the symbolism of light on the eastern side, and with the symbolism of the Last Judgement on the western side.

These theological themes are completed by scenes from Poland's history, understood in the vertical dimension as *historia sacra*, and in the horizontal dimension as the history of the lands and peoples that created the Republic of Poland. This can be accomplished using different keys, e.g. a. the Annunciation and the beginnings of Christianity in Poland, Ruthenia and Lithuania; b. the beginnings of new works, institutions, organisations; Transfiguration: a. "Lights" in the history of the Republic of Poland, b. Events / Places / People connected with the Republic of Poland in the East ("the Eastern borderlands"); The Last Judgement: a. The tragic events in the history of the Republic of Poland; b. Events / Places / People connected with the Republic of Poland in the West (e.g. with Poland within its present-day borders).

### **The main idea**

The suggested ideological concept is deeply rooted in the theological and iconographic tradition of the Church both of the East and of the West, which sees the temple as a microcosm where liturgy is celebrated, which is projected onto the whole history of salvation and is a reflection of the heavenly liturgy, the source and end of which is the **Holy Trinity**. The specificity of the proposed programme against the background of other European projects is its national aspect, which stems from the nature of the temple as a votive offering of the Polish nation. This aspect is written into the ecclesial and salvation historical context focused on the central mystery of faith, which is the **Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ**. The thus formulated programme emphasises **Divine Providence** in the soteriological, ecclesiastical and sacramental dimensions, as well as in the hagiographical and national and historical dimensions.



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