

IDEA AND SYMBOLISM IN SACRED ARCHITECTURE OF THE TEMPLE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE BUILT IN WILANÓW

DESIGN BRIEF:

In designing the Temple of Divine Providence we tried to re-discover the heritage of past centuries and the profound value inherent in cosmological and theological symbolism expressed by sacred architecture of the past centuries. Mindful of the fact that history is a guardian of identity, we looked for modern ways of expression and style to help us carry out our commission. Christian churches have and continue to represent monumental architecture. Their silhouettes topped by a steeple or a dome dominated the local (town or village) skyline and at the same time set a hierarchy of values. This type of architecture was a visible sign of God's presence and was intended to symbolize the heaven and earth coming together. Its floor plan consisted of simple geometrical figures: the circle as a symbol of heaven and God, the square (or rectangle) as a symbol of the earth, and the cross – Jesus Christ, who joined these two figures. The circle and the square are a prototype of the Christian church described in the Apocalypse of St. John. These two elementary geometric figures: the circle and the square on a plane; and the cube and the sphere in space and their mutual relation serves as the starting point for the idea and the realisation of Christian churches. The building's cube covered by a hemisphere is an image of the world, where the celestial sphere rises above the earth.

DESIGN:

The Temple of Divine Providence was designed on a square plan into which the Greek cross (with arms of equal length) and the nave's rotunda (circle) were inscribed. The nave is defined by pillars placed in a circle and converging in the dome. The layout of the vertical pillars, the rhythm of windows in the rotunda's tambour and the dome's shell are consistent elements symbolically expressing the rays of Divine Providence. Light shining through the dome's keystone and the nave to the Sepulchrum (burial place of Polish Heroes) is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Four gates – portals were designed in the body of the Temple at the end of the arms of the cross. They symbolise the four paths through which Providence led Poles to freedom. The Museum of Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński is situated above the aisle. Three chapels and a museum hall were designed in the vertical elements of the gates. The lower church and the Pantheon of Great Poles are located in the Temple's underground part.

IDEA OF THE INTERIORS

The temple's interior is defined by architectural and construction decisions. The central vertical axis is crucial for the design's composition. It is emphasized by the rhythm of the columns converging in the dome under the skylight and the rays of light that permeate from the dome through the glass opening in the floor to the Sepulchrum. The vertical axis is the culmination and keystone of the designed space. The chancel is defined by a monumental wall made of reinforced concrete – “the cloak of Providence” finished with a skylight. It provides a background for the altar and the liturgy. The soft form of the wall that closes off the chancel emphasizes, with its dynamism and expression, the rank of the place. In the ring of the aisle there are narrow stained-glass windows, entrances to the chapels and fourteen exhibition walls placed on the axes between pillars and intended to display sacred art. We would like the interior of the temple that we designed to be ruled by the idea of a modest and austere décor.

INTERIOR DÉCOR:

The dome's internal shell made of reinforced concrete is covered with expanded metal mesh the colour copper. It is installed on a grid made of glued laminated timber filled with mineral wool and black interfacing. The dome's décor corresponds to acoustic requirements and decisions regarding its aesthetics. Steel stairs built in the dome are leading to a gangplank under the skylight and to a support sub-construction for artistic composition. The dome's finial should be designed by an artist in the form of modern installation. The temple's floor was designed using marble stone laid out centrally corresponding to the geometry of the nave. A glass baptismal font was placed in the middle of the floor on the skylight. The baptismal font is surrounded by a ring made of blue marble.

The interior décor assumes that the wall made of reinforced concrete will be covered to its full height (26 meters) with vertical wood panels made of leafy plywood. The grid under the wood panels will be filled with mineral wool. The upper part of the wall - stained-glass windows are covered by movable blinds. This system will make it possible to use light to create different interior atmospheres. For instance, for the holiday of Pentecost, it will be possible to light the temple only from the inside of the dome. When concerts will be performed in the temple, it will also be possible to close the vertical blinds in order to increase the interior's acoustic values and to make a rearrangement to temporarily change the nave's spatial function. A parquet floor was designed in the aisle's ring. The altar wall made of reinforced concrete was intended by its authors to be

used partially for a sacred art composition. The expression of the reinforced concrete form should be consistent with the finish of the pillars. The space of the ceiling caissons of the aisle and the plane of the keystone will be filled in with panels covered with copper wire mesh. Black mineral wool was used in the background of the panels.

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