



Architecture of the church of St. Joseph in Zabrze by Dominikus Böhm – historicism with the announcement of modernism and liturgical renewal¹

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Abstract: The article presents the church of St. Joseph in Zabrze by Dominikus Böhm as an architecturally unique object from the first half of the 20th century. When describing the spatial arrangement of the temple defined in the appropriate language of artistic and symbolic expression, the historicist element is emphasized as being of primary importance over the modernist one in the construction of the sacral arrangement. Consequently, preservation of the authentic historicizing content, after the post-conciliar changes in the liturgical arrangement of the interior in the second half of the 20th century, proves the originality of the concept of St. Joseph's church, inspired by Romanesque, Gothic and even ancient Rome architecture. Simultaneously-introduced modernism refines the above content, which is related to a real return to the sources of early Christian thought. All this corresponds to the work of Dominikus Böhm. The universality of his architecture, after years of pre-conciliar use, responds well to the changes in the liturgical renewal of Vatican II. The sensitivity of the interior of the church in Zabrze to liturgical and cultural changes proves a high quality of his artistic work.

Keywords: sacred architecture, facade, liturgical interior, altar, tabernacle, Dominikus Böhm, Vatican II.

Introduction

A decision about the construction of St. Joseph's Church in Zabrze, designed by Dominikus Böhm, was made on 11 March 1930. The final site of its implementation was determined by the municipal architect, dr Wolf, who pointed to the termination of the present-day Damrota street, formerly known as Farna street. The street linked a newly-built housing estate to the old parish Church of St. Andrew the Apostle in the district of Stare Zabrze (Old Zabrze) (Wagner, 2003, p. 52). The construction of the new church was decided due to a rapid growth of the population in the south-west part of the city (Wagner, 2002, p. 422).

St. Joseph's Church was constructed as a three-nave hall church of a short four-span body with a series of chapels located on both sides, created by massive walls in the form of internal buttresses, with

openings serving the purpose of low arcade passages which define side aisles. The church body, which internally accentuates the rhythm of the spans, is based on the projection of a short rectangle, which is terminated by a semi-circle of the chancel. The chancel is positioned above the crypt and is distinctly elevated above the level of the nave. The main part of the church is preceded by a courtyard, atrium, a specific *paradisus*, defined by massive angular side pylons containing stairs and chapels. From the northern side, the courtyard is terminated with a high openwork wall in the form of large arcades, which simultaneously constitute the façade of the whole architectural object. On the east side, an angular bell tower adjoins the church. The bell tower as well as the whole complex built from brick (the material contributing to the

¹ Article in polish language: https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/60P_BogM.pdf

visual impact) emphasize the compact and succinct character of the form (Chojecka, Szczypta-Gwiazda, 2009, p. 408).

The Church of St. Joseph is a unique temple in many aspects. The author of the concept invokes original symbolics, which requires the recipient's sensitivity in order to discover the synthesis of sacral art and liturgy. From the very beginning, this architectural object exhibited the search for objectivism, whereas the applied symbiosis of historical and modernist content was expressed in the form of an architectural stronghold. A similar 'fortification' siding with reason, protects in an earthly way the thing that never dies and becomes the experience of faith. The interior of the church highlights this by the elevation of the chancel and altar by means of twelve steps in relation to the level of the nave. The hall church in Zabrze proves that a complete departure from a historical mysticism treating the church as God's House is impossible in the artistic work of this architect.

The massive body of St. Joseph's Church in Zabrze definitely creates an impression of a closed-off, walled-in and inaccessible space (Chojecka, Szczypta-Gwiazda, 2009, p. 408)². This effect is increased by the fact that the faithful must follow a certain road to enter the temple. They must stick to the main axis of the complex, whose axis constitutes the prolongation of the Damrota street axis, and must go across the courtyard zone, finally to enter the interior with lavabos and a baptismal font (the zone of cleansing, purification). Next, along the main axis of the composition in the central nave, the road leads to the chancel.

The presence of a formally historical content (referring to the epoch of the Middle Ages) in the architecture of St. Joseph's Church in Zabrze definitely becomes the grounds on which the structure of this temple is organized. Juxtaposed with modernist elements of the spatial organization and the sensitivity of the whole system to announcements

of the liturgical renewal, an authentic sacrum came into being. The above-mentioned three elements become the source of knowledge of the authenticity of the architecture of St. Joseph's Church in Zabrze. That refers not only to the sacral system defined by its designer as a symbolic 'church of the way' (in German: Wegkirche), but also to the civilization of Christocentrism, applying minimalism to express a deeply spiritual content.

1. State and purpose of research

In 1930, August Hoff in his book entitled 'Dominikus Böhm' (Berlin-Leipzig-Wien, 1930) described Dominikus Böhm's artistic work prior to the construction of St. Joseph's Church in Zabrze, whereas Josef Habel in his book 'Dominikus Böhm Ein Deutscher Baumeister', published in 1943 (Regensburg, 1943), includes the time of his work after the implementation of the church. Also, a joint monograph entitled 'Dominikus Böhm', published in 1962 in München, by August Hoff, Herbert Muck and Raimund Thom refers to that artist.

The everlastingness of artistic work characteristic of Dominikus Böhm was described by August Hoff in two magazines, the first one *Die Christliche Kunst* from 1925 (issue 22), the second one from 1955 *Das Munster* (issue 8). Rudolf Seibold continues this topic in his book 'Dominikus Böhm. Der Mensch und sein Werk', published in 1984. The same is done by Prof. Dariusz Kozłowski in his article 'A Lost Temple or a (Sentimental) Journey to Places and Objects' (*Zagubiona świątynia albo podróż (sentymalna) do miejsc i rzeczy*), published in the magazine *Architektura Murator* (1999, issue 7).

A Polish author who contributed greatly to the knowledge of the architecture of St. Joseph's Church in Zabrze and Dominikus Böhm's artistic work is professor Tomasz Wagner. This fact is proven by his PhD dissertation entitled 'Sacral Architecture of

2 Prof. Ewa Chojecka and Barbara Szczypta-Gwiazda drew attention to a 'stronghold' character of the architectural object of St. Joseph's Church, where the presented vision corresponds to the image of a temple as the emanation of God. That evokes the words from the Book of Psalms "For you are my rock and my fortress" Ps.31:4. The design of the temple in Zabrze was influenced by the architect's fascination with the Italian architecture of the Middle Ages, which became particularly strong after the journey to Italy the architect made with his wife.

Dominikus Böhm in the Region of Upper Silesia and Its Significance in the Context of the Development of Architecture and Cultural Landscape of Upper Silesia' (Politechnika Śląska, Gliwice, 2002). The same author continues this subject in his monograph from 2003, entitled 'Zabrze. Unknown Faces of Silesian Architecture' (*Zabrze. Nieznane oblicza śląskiej architektury*), published in collaboration with the Centre of Cultural Heritage of Upper Silesia (Centrum Dziedzictwa Kulturowego Górnego Śląska) and another one entitled 'Modernist Architecture of Zabrze' (*Architektura modernistyczna Zabrza*) (Urząd Miejski w Zabrzu, 2016).

The subject of Dominikus Böhm's artistic work is raised by professor Ewa Chojecka in the first edition of the book 'The Art of Upper Silesia from the Middle Ages to the End of the 20th Century' (*Sztuka Górnego Śląska od Średniowiecza do końca XX wieku*) from the year 2004 and in the second revised edition from 2009, both published by the Silesian Museum in Katowice (Muzeum Śląskie w Katowicach). The co-authors of the monograph are as follows: Jerzy Gorzelnik, Ima Kouma and Barbara Szczyńska-Gwiazda.

As for other publications, two more articles should be mentioned, which were written by Ewa M. Żurakowska and published in the magazine *Space and Form (Przestrzeń i forma)* represented by the Szczecin Foundation of Education and Additive Development 'SPHERE' (Szczecińska Fundacja Edukacji i Rozwoju Addytywnego „SFERA”). The first article, entitled 'Dominikus Böhm's Artistic Work in Silesia' (*Twórczość Dominikusa Böhma na Śląsku*) was published in 2011, in issue no. 16, whereas the second 'Dominikus Böhm's Artistic Work in Silesia Part 3' (*Twórczość Dominikusa Böhma na Śląsku – część 3*) was published in 2012, in issue no. 18.

The author of this paper refers to the presented subject in his article entitled 'Pre-conciliar Architecture of St. Joseph's Church in Zabrze Designed by Dominikus Böhm and Post-conciliar Liturgical Renewal' (*Architektura przedsoborowa kościoła pw.*

Św. Józefa w Zabrzu autorstwa Dominikusa Böhma a posoborowa odnowa liturgiczna), which appeared in the magazine *Liturgia Sacra* published by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Opole (Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu Opolskiego) in 2023, issue 2(62).

Dominikus Böhm's artistic outlook can be better understood through his connections with the concepts of the liturgical renewal movement as well as the book entitled 'Geist der Gotik' (the Spirit of the Gothic) by Scheller, which was a source of inspiration for this great designer. Contrary to Gothic inspirations, it is important what G. Pigafetta and A. Mastrorilli write in the book entitled 'Paul Tournon architecte (1881-1964) (Sprimont 2004), where they define Böhm as an architect who, in the late 1920s, turned more to the Romanesque inspirations in his designs.

The Church of St. Joseph in Zabrze is an example of Historicism. Its architecture designed by means of a conservative design enriched with symbolics actually supports the modernist language of expression. It literally introduces the adaptation of the designed interior to the developing-in-time liturgical transformations. Therefore, even after the post-conciliar update of the interior, the universal language of Böhm's architecture still serves its purpose. It applies elements of Historicism, which, despite the flow of time, have not lost much of its previously-defined topicality.

Nowadays, with this in mind, the parish is planning to complete the implementation of stained-glass windows in the west wall. Obviously, the unavoidable renovation works require vast knowledge of the genesis, history and symbolics of the church. It is absolutely indispensable to carry out proper research in such a situation. What reinforces this argument is the fact that since 1999 St. Joseph's Church in Zabrze has been enlisted in the register of heritage buildings (Register of Immovable Monuments – Silesian Voivodeship, 1999, p. 28)³.

3 Register of Immovable Monuments – Silesian Voivodeship (*Rejestr zabytków nieruchomych-województwo śląskie*). Institute of National Heritage (Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa). Parish Church of St. Joseph, ul. Roosevelta 104, Zabrze, 1930-31, Entry no.: A/5/99 of 30.04.1999, p.28.

2. A profile of the designer of St. Joseph's Church in Zabrze

Dominikus Böhm born in 1880 in Jettingen, between Ulm and Augsburg, a graduate of the Higher Technical School in Stuttgart in 1906, already during his life, as a remarkable architect, was granted the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1950 by the President, professor Theodor Heuss. Böhm was an honorary member of the Academy of Fine Arts in Stuttgart. In 1952, he received the Order of St. Sylvester from Pope Pius XII, and two years later, a Great Award of Northern Westphalia (Wagner, 2013, p. 72). Retired in 1953, he continued his collaboration with his son Gottfried, however, he worked on a more modern interpretation of architecture. Dominikus Böhm, an architect, a representative of an artistically talented Swabian-Bavarian family of craftsmen, a great interpreter of eclectic references to previous implementations, sensitive to the new artistic application of previously-used motifs, died on 6 August 1955 in Cologne, Westphalia (Wagner, 2002, p. 419).

As for Dominikus Böhm's first achievements in the field of introducing modern architectural means of expression into German sacral objects, one should mention St. Joseph's Church in Offenbach, erected between 1919-1920. After the inspirations drawn from the South German Baroque, the first successful attempts of introducing Gothic inspirations to the 'language' of modern architecture were visible in his designs of a church in Neu-Ulm (1922-1926) and a temple in Bischofsheim (1926) (Wagner, 2003, p. 41). In the late 1920s, Böhm experienced a turn towards a more conservative architecture. This trend was expressed by Böhm's use of large surfaces or planes undivided by pilasters, flat tops and quadrangular towers. In those days, his inclination to the inspiration by the Romanesque art was confronted by Gothicism in the church architecture (Pigafetta, Mastrorilli, 2004, p. 115). Beginning from 1926, as the head of the Cologne branch of Christian Art of the Werkschule, at the turn of the 1920s and the 1930s, Böhm developed a very characteristic and recognizable style of his buildings and became one of the most highly regarded architects in Germany (Wagner 2013, p. 72). Having a mystic outlook on the reality, he used an interesting, revolutionary in his time, solution

designed by him, namely, a parabolic vault made from reinforced concrete. The most convincing example is the Church of St. Engelbert in Cologne completed in 1932 (Joedicke, 1961, p. 30).

From a historical perspective, it was the Plebiscite in 1921 that contributed to the fact that Dominikus Böhm began his work in Zabrze. After the Plebiscite, Zabrze became a border city (the city rights obtained on 1 October 1922) and along with the cities of Gliwice and Bytom was incorporated into Germany. Therefore the creation of an industrial agglomeration, including Gliwice, Bytom and Zabrze, which would compete with the city of Katowice (which was on the Polish side of the border), became a priority. The most remarkable German architects and urban planning experts were brought to Silesia. A vision of a harmoniously developing civilization of the future was to be created by: Max Berg, Paul Bonatz, Gustaf Allinger, Erich Mendelsohn and Dominikus Böhm – the creator of an outstanding implementation of St. Joseph's Church in Zabrze (Żurakowska, 2011, p. 636-637).

When describing Böhm's architecture, we should enumerate his other designs and implementations in the context of the region of Silesia, in the scope of sacral architecture. One of the examples is the interior of the Church of St. Camillus in Zabrze in the House of Religious Associations (Parish House) of Camillians Fathers (Dom Związkowy Kamilianów) constructed in accordance with the concept of Heinrich Gerlach, an engineer from Gliwice. Apart from the House of Religious Associations, there is an important modernist implementation of a hospital and a monastery complex. The design of an independent building of the church dedicated to St. Camillus was never implemented, a similar fate befell the concept of the Chapel Church in Zabrze. Another never-implemented Böhm's concept was the extension of the sanctuary on St. Anne's Hill (Sankt Annaberg). The only part that was constructed was the Pilgrim's House. The Church of Christ the King in Gliwice (1934-1935), which was initially designed by Dominikus Böhm, was finally constructed on the basis of the design created by Karl Mayr (Bogdan, 2023, p. 198).

The Church of St. Joseph in Zabrze is a scenographically characteristic object in the whole artistic work of Dominikus Böhm. Fortunately, the temple

was not destroyed when the Red Army entered Zabrze in January 1945 and still stands there till our present day. Its interior mobilizes the faithful and visitors particularly to observe the altar. Twelve steps lead up to the chancel, which is elevated high above the nave floor. This architectural solution evokes the symbolics of Mount Zion⁴. The application of the mystic language is also visible in a crypt constructed in the Church of Joseph. A historical witness to the Middle Ages supports the weight of the chancel surrounded in the background, this time, by the ambulatory in a modernist style.

In the interwar period, in his artistic work, Dominikus Böhm does not define historical styles as those that hamper the way to the creation of modern, in his opinion, architectural sacral form. He draws from early medieval Christian philosophy and the roots of sacral architecture. Numerous connotations in his work to the mystic significance of the temple involve the use of colour, numerical systems, form and spatial solutions in the system of the sacral complex and its composition in the landscape. His work is an artistic continuation of the Christian tradition in the scope of symbolics and semantics with a creative application of archetypal patterns of Christian architecture (Wagner, 2002, p. 424).

While designing the zones of profanum, such as: residential buildings, schools, students' dormitories, hospitals, public administration buildings, factories, etc. (Wagner, 2013, p. 72), Dominikus Böhm created the interiors of his architectural objects with great enthusiasm and furnished them with self-designed furniture. He equipped the churches with his own custom-made altars, pulpits, crucifixes, lavabos, baptismal fonts and stained-glass windows. Apart from being an outstanding drawing artist and stained-glass window creator, Dominikus Böhm also composed short musical pieces (Żurakowska, 2011, p. 635).

After the war, similar to Rudolf Schwarz and Otto Bartning, he rebuilt devastated churches. This encompassed 300 re-constructed churches within a 40 km

radius of the Diocese of Cologne (Joedicke, 1961, p. 30). When he built new churches, they were often designed in the style of mature Modernism, where he used a more diversified form and lighting of the interior different from his pre-war interiors permeated with mysticism. Drawing eclectic inspirations from earlier implementations, these forms apply previously-used artistic motifs which make it possible to introduce elements of modern architecture (Bogdan, 2023, p. 199).

3. Spatial layout of St' Joseph's Church in Zabrze

Dominikus Böhm had been planning to construct an ideal temple in Zabrze, which was called by him a chapel church (Kapellenkirche). The never-implemented church, preceding the Church of St. Joseph, was based on the axial system and was supposed to be constructed on a different site to the current one. The design of its composition presented a system of twelve high chapels connected with one another and with the walls which formed the main nave; the chapels connected by means of low passages between them, which formed low and 'reduced' side aisles (Bogdan, 2023, p. 199-200; Żurakowska, 2012, p. 301). The chapel church, presented in rough drawings, was supposed to be built on the outskirts of the DEWOG housing estate, in the line of other public buildings. They were connected with the urban planning axis perpendicular to Damrota street. In the end, Damrota street (the-then Farna street) found its special purpose in the implementation of St. Joseph's Church in Zabrze (Wagner, 2023, p. 52).

The Church of St. Joseph in Zabrze underwent the evolution of design concepts before its erection. They particularly focused on the idea of a complex frontal façade. Even the earliest design drawings already showed its original character. That refers, among other things, to the composition including

4 "When twelve generations had settled in the Holy Land, in David's time, God chose as a place of his presence Mount Zion, which was later called Mount Moriah up to the days of Babilonian exile, on which mountain Salomon built a magnificent temple. That religious centre was a place of pilgrimage for Jews, where they went to on all religious holidays. That was a mountain 'where God loved dwelling and where God will dwell forever' (Ps. 68,17) (Dorothea Forstner, *The World of Christian Symbolics-Świat symboliki chrześcijańskiej*, Warszawa 1990, p. 84).

a massive westwork in the form of an arcade niche. The niche was supposed to feature a longitudinal window providing the nave with an additional source of lighting (Bogdan, 2023, p. 201). In front of the window, in the third design variant, the aisle layout was preceded by a feature characteristic of the implemented concept, namely *paradisus*. The then plan of the church was based on a rectangular and featured the chancel terminated with a flat wall, without the function of going around the chancel. The then nave zone was divided into three parts by means of twelve pairs of pillars (square in cross-section), where the outermost pillars were blended into the church walls (Wagner, 2003, p. 53).

The openwork wall of the present-day façade consists of two larger entrance arcades and twelve smaller arcades exhibited on three higher levels. The transparent structure formed in this way evokes associations with Roman aqueducts. It differs from the one designed in 1930. According to Dominikus Böhm, it functions symbolically as the gate to heaven—*porta sacra* (Wagner, 2002, p. 423). Its form leads to a large vestibule located in the open air, that is *paradisus* – paradise with the wood of cross in the middle. Behind it, there is the façade without the openwork structure, parallel to the gate *porta sacra*, where the planes of glazing and the central zone of entrance doors are located. Above them, there is a zone of a clinker wall, crowned with a clearly visible great rosette, which intuitively brings associations with French Gothic rose windows (Wagner, 2003, p. 54).

The rosette, which is filled with stained glass featuring white colour, various shades of green and dark blue, and even red colour, is perceived from the church interior as a composition in an emerald colour. It is decorated with geometrically positioned, radial 'crystals', with the bordure in its circumference, including also geometrical forms of crosses. Being the artistic work of the designer of the church, the rosette was already completed for the ceremony of the church consecration on 12 December 1931 (Żurakowska, 2012, p. 292).

By locating the *paradisus* in front of the great rose window, Böhm provided a space which builds an acoustic distance between the church and the street. In doing so, he brought reminiscences of the atrium accompanying early Christian basilicas (Wagner, 2013, p. 78). In the past, it was a symbolic site of purification, a kind of a link between *profanum* and *sacrum*, where the focal point of the relatively small courtyard was not a high wooden cross (like in Zabrze), but a well – *cantarus*. The cross located in the middle of a small courtyard in the church in Zabrze, was supposed to, according to the architect's intent, 'direct the eyesight towards the heaven'⁵ (Wagner, 2002, p. 423). The composition of this open-towards-the-heaven interior is flanked on both sides by large pylons of cubatures taller than the cubature of the church body. Internally, the pylons serve the purpose of chapels and stairs, whereas externally, their form symbolizes arms embracing this symbolic courtyard—*paradisus*.

The space of St. Joseph's Church is organized as the system of three, compositionally parallel axes, where the most important, the central one explicitly indicates the way leading from the vestibule to the altar. The parallel side axes bilaterally flank the central axis of the composition and refer to the interpretation of a three-nave system. This effect is achieved by means of two passages leading through internal buttresses (the so-called brick wall-shields) and creating arcade-like openings. Thus created spaces designate places for a private prayer in front of chapels organized along the external walls. Two systems of chapels, accentuated in such a way, organized in a parallel way and on the opposite sides of the main nave, refer to the request—to surround the interior of the church with a row of chapels—made by Cardinal Adolf Bertram. Dominikus Böhm designed none of the *retabula* placed there. They are very modest compositions and originate from later times (Żurakowska, 2012, p. 297).

Adjacent side aisles do not lead, however, to the ambulatory (as it was in accordance with the Romanesque and Gothic layout) but to the side altars

5 A similar function of the cross refers to Christ, who through his crucifixion and resurrection has become a symbol of the victory over death and glory for his followers (Langkammer, Biblical Dictionary, *Słownik biblijny*, 1984, p. 92). Symbolically, only such a cross is able to lead us through the façade doors to the interior of the church in Zabrze. The cross is situated on the main axis of the layout and announces that at its end there is the altar, the most important element of the sacral liturgical interior.

positioned against the background of the outermost inner buttresses of the chancel. These buttresses along with the remaining ones surround the zone of the chancel. At the termination of the left arcade-like passage there is an altar dedicated to St. Joseph, the patron saint of the church, whereas the right-side altar was erected to the glory of Christ the King. The main altar is located in the chancel, which is elevated high above the crypt. The chancel is surrounded by a single ambulatory with preceding, centrally bordering inner buttresses, which are radial in relation to the chancel centre. All this constitutes the termination of the vista, the perspective in the form of a central radial composition.

The walls, solids and arcades form the language of this architecture. It is a simple language, however, its formal semantics may be understood as the one spanned between a genetic essence of sacrality of the Christian temple and a mythic memory of rituality (Kozłowski, 1999, p. 56-57). In addition, the interior shows austere walls made of clinker bricks, similar to the ones used as a decorative element on the elevation. Huge brick blocks provide a perfect background for simple, but elegant, marble, wooden and metal elements of the furnishings designed by this architect from Cologne. Only stained-glass windows, created by this architect, contrast with the designed austerity. They are works of a deep colour saturation and present biblical content in abundance. Their lines resembling drawings, as if made for children, are somehow restraint, and yet unpretentious and perfectly lucid to everybody (Żurakowska, 2012, p. 292).

Different intensity of light on the right and left side of the interior is visually justified. In this way, Böhm followed the example of medieval architecture, in which the right side, namely the southern wall of the temple, was reserved for depictions of the New Testament, whereas the left, northern side was reserved for the Old Testament. The architect let the daily light into the interior through slender and Gothic-like openings, in the western wall (to the right of the altar), however, he maximally restrained the

light by designing small-size oculi high, right under the ceiling, on the eastern side (on the left side of the altar). The number of windows is full of symbolics, as there is a transition from the number of seven windows in the nave to eight windows in the close surroundings of the chancel, which symbolizes the transformation from earthly perfection to heavenly perfection (Wagner, 2003, p. 59).

At the same time, directing both light and shade, the architect referred to the luminist effect, so characteristic of his work. Therefore the light coming from the west side clashes with the darkness of the east wall. A similar direction of daily light combined with the linearly conducted, dim, artificial lighting emphasizes the character of space directed as the 'church of the way', i.e. the way starting with baptism at the baptistery in the zone of the temple's main entrance, then leading along the main axis of the layout to the altar – the source of salvation (Żurakowska, 2012, p. 296-297).

The subsequent combination in the zone of the altar of the motifs of an octagon, cross, the Eye of Providence on the ceiling and a 'mystic light', is an implementation of Johannes van Acken's postulate. In his work *Christozentrische Kirchenkunst, ein Entwurf zum liturgischen Gesamtkunstwerk*, he defines the altar as 'mystic Christ' and the culmination of the temple. Number eight, being a symbol of cosmos, is combined here with the symbolics of the Holy Trinity (Wagner, 2003, p. 59)⁶.

This concept is emphasized by the interpretation of a hidden light, which was often applied by Böhm. In the Church of St. Joseph, the pillars of the nave are responsible for this effect when they are lit on one side by seven invisible windows glazed with stained glass. According to the architect's concept they were to present allegories of seven sacraments and their brightness was to increase during the way along the main nave towards the altar. Obviously, the brightest light lightens up the altar when it comes into the interior between the pillars surrounding the chancel in a circular way (Wagner, 2003, p. 58-59).

6 It is a touch of the Antiquity by the number of eight, which was then considered to be a symbol of perfection, when in the picture of the world of seven planetary spheres corresponding to seven levels of heaven, the eighth sphere constituted the heavens of constant stars and was the crowning of the system, definitely serving the purpose of the 'Lord's Great Day' (Forstner, 1990, p. 48-50).

4. Dominikus Böhm and the post-conciliar reform of the Second Vatican Council in the 20th century

Despite the fact that Dominikus Böhm's life was not connected in time with the sessions of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), this sensitive artist had been long before aware of oncoming transformations and trying to interpret them in his own way. As early as in 1920, he made a lot of designs in the form of rough drawings, which presented church as a central building (Nyga, 1990, p. 9). He also proved it in his collaboration, among others, with Martin Weber and Rudolf Schwarz (1897-1961), when the last one started co-operation with a Catholic author Romano Guardini (1885-1968) in the magazine *Die Schidgenossen*. Rudolf Schwarz was, as for his time, an avant-garde builder of churches, whose architectural work in the pre-war period ideologically belongs already to the period of Modernism after World War 2 (Bogdan, 2013, p. 144).

Johannes van Acken, in his book entitled *Christozentrische Gesamtkunstwerk*, also refers, in his own way, to the search for liturgy as the mistress of sacral Christocentric art. The development of space beginning from the altar, which is present in his book, is later visibly implemented in many post-conciliar constructions and is also in agreement with rough drawings of central concepts made by Dominikus Böhm. The drawings were definitely included in the supplement to the second edition of that book (Muck, 1987, p. 190).

Johannes van Acken himself proposed that the liturgical altar should be moved to the site of the intersection of naves in churches built on the basis of a Latin cross and right under the dome in central floor plans. Similarly, acceptance of the altar solely as a sacrificial table was ahead of its time. It became an inspiration in the designing of the sacral space of new churches (Adam, 1985, p. 66). All this was influenced by the Liturgical Movement, among other things, by innovative conclusions presented by Fr. Lambert Beau-

duin and activity of Fr. Ildelfons Herwegen, abbot from Maria Laach. They led to the alteration of outlook on the liturgical zone of the altar. A breakthrough point was the publication, by the abbot of Maria Laach, of the first classic work of the Liturgical Movement (Romano Guardini, *Vom Geist der Liturgie*). When people became aware of the necessity of shaping the chancel zone anew, it referred to the attempt to make the zone of the faithful closer to the liturgical centre, i.e. to the altar. The-then widespread historical styles were the negation of that concept. They came into being as the result of the 19th-century Romantic interest in the Middle Ages as well as a deeply religious return to the sources. Therefore in 1912, Cardinal Anton Fisher from Cologne clearly demanded that the Romanesque and Gothic styles should be reflected in the newly-created architectural objects (Nyga, 1990, p. 7).

An emotional approach to historical architecture was reflected in the Church of Saint-Jean-de-Montmartre, designed by Anatole de Baudot, built in Paris in 1894-1904. This architectural object is drawing closer to the Art Nouveau rather than to Modernism, and shows the transition phase from the Romanesque to Gothic architecture. Having applied the synthesis of Gothic forms and the structure of reinforced brickwork, the architect used a construction system developed by Paul Cottancin⁷ living in the years 1865-1928 (Bogdan, 2013, p. 73). All that supported the modernist image of a three-nave basilica, without the transept, with the interior axially oriented in the direction of the altar. The longitudinal layout and inspirations drawn from different epochs as well as the-then novel construction material attempted to make a fusion of architectural Historicism with Modernism in that temple; all that happening before the authorization of the Liturgical Movement in Malines in Belgium (1909) (Bogdan, 2023, p. 206).

The Church of St. Joseph in Zabrze, designed by Dominikus Böhm, brings closer these two epochs in its architectural implementation. The time of its erection, following the construction of the above-mentioned church in Paris, suggests that it should have a more perfect form of the Modernist expression

⁷ Cottancin's construction system refers to frames carrying reinforced concrete along with panels filled with bricks or some ceramic slabs, supported with metal nets or meshes.

than the one it really has. In comparison with the Church of St. Joseph in Zabrze, a parallel-built concrete church dedicated to St. Casimir the Crown Prince in Katowice (Kościół Kazimierza Królewicza w Katowicach) (1931, arch. Leon Dietz d'Arma, Jan Zarzycki) is deprived of Historicism and constitutes a clear Modernist work. The Modernist design of that church serves the purpose of an explicit exposition of the altar at the termination of a symmetrical system (Bogdan, 2023, p. 206). The three-nave, axial spatial system itself was interpreted anew by placing simple, geometric forms into the pillar-beam framework of the ferro-concrete structure. These new concepts contributed to the avant-garde character of *De Stijl* and changed the image of Dutch architecture, which had been so-far traditional, decorative and deprived of cool objectivity of implementation (Chojecka et al., 2009, p. 396).

The Cathedral of Christ the King, which was built in the vicinity of the Church of St. Casimir the Crown Prince in Katowice, in its initial stage of implementation was constructed at the same time as the Church of St. Joseph in Zabrze (1930-1931). After a competition for an architectural design of the cathedral, finally, a modified version of the design made by Zygmunt Gawlik in collaboration with Franciszek Mączyński was chosen for implementation. When the construction works began in 1927 and the layout of the temple showed a central system topped with a dome, nobody expected that the consecration of the completed cathedral would be as late as on 30th October 1955. The final implementation had to accept the lowering of the dome, which was imposed by the-then political regime. Another aspect that was changed was the resignation from the central system proposed by the Liturgical Movement in favour of the placement of the main altar within the chancel (Nyga, 1990, p. 64).

The cathedral in Katowice demonstrates the central layout, however, in a different way to the Churches of St. Joseph in Zabrze and St. Casimir the Crown Prince in Katowice. There is a characteristic difference between the projections of these temples. The layout of the cathedral with the post-conciliar altar (currently located close to the geometrical centre of the system) is characterized

by two chapels flanking the chancel. The other two churches do not feature such chapels. Each chapel is situated symmetrically on the opposite side of the zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy (chancel), whose axial termination is the cathedral's place of presiding (sedilia) and not the tabernacle.

It was as late as in 1975 that the cathedral finally received a new, post-conciliar interior. Architect Mieczysław Król was the author of a general concept. The chapel on the left side of the chancel received a function of the baptismal chapel. The chapel on the right side, with an identical projection, was dedicated to storing the Blessed Sacrament. For this purpose, a sculpted standing tabernacle was made and placed directly on the floor on a prominently-displayed spot constituting the termination of the system, which serves the chapel of worship during the week (Nyga, 1990, p. 75).

The Church of St. Joseph is an example of a visually participatory axial interior, which is organized as a longitudinal layout of the temple. The postulate of a characteristic elevation of the chancel zone in relation to the nave floor level, which exists in this church, builds the centralist character and puts emphasis on the cult of the Eucharist. It is in compliance with the pre-conciliar Canon Law, when the tabernacle could be located on the mensa of the one and only altar. In order to find its place on two altars, the exhibition of the Perpetual Adoration was obligatory on one of them out of respect for this rule (Danilewicz 1949, p. 76). Without the Perpetual Adoration in the church in Zabrze, both the pre-conciliar tabernacle elevated above the mensa of the main altar and the post-conciliar tabernacle exhibited without the presence of the mensa refer to the same place. It is the termination of the chancel, the honoured sphere in the church interior. At the same time, it emphasizes the rank of the post-Tridentine placement of the box storing the Blessed Sacrament, its presence connected with the retabulum at the axial termination of the historical sacral layout (Bogdan, 2023, p. 85).

It is not contradicted by the Instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, which orders a compulsory placement of only one tabernacle in the sacral interior. That refers to the tabernacle which is solid and not

transparent, which excludes the risk of profanation (Eucharisticum Mysterium 1967, no. 52; OWMR, 2002, no. 314). Its presence, in accordance with the Code of the Canon Law should be marked with a constantly lit lamp, supplied with oil or wax. In such a way, it is supposed to show the presence of Christ and encourage to give Him praise (KPK 1983, canon 940; OWMR, 2002, no. 316).

When the tabernacle finds its place as a beautiful termination of the sacral layout just behind the post-conciliar altar, like in the church in Zabrze, then it evokes a historical custom of kneeling before the tabernacle positioned in the chancel. In accordance with the liturgical renewal, the tabernacle itself, being an optional object in the zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy, takes a special place in St. Joseph's Church. It is the termination of the chancel, which, according to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, becomes a privileged place for the post-conciliar zone of the person presiding over the liturgical gathering – the sedilia. That refers to the chair of the priest located at the termination of the zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy, which should highlight the function of presiding over the congregation and leading prayers (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, OWMR 1975, no. 271; OWMR 2002, no. 310).

Obviously, in compliance with the liturgical law, the post-conciliar tabernacle may be situated in the chancel, like in the Church of St. Joseph, where, being located at the termination of the layout, it visually accentuates the liturgical self-sufficiency of the erection of one altar in the post-conciliar interior. This fact is emphasized by the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* which orders to build one permanent altar in new churches, which would signify one Christ and one Eucharist to the congregation of the faithful (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, OWMR, 1975, no. 262; OWMR, 2002, no. 303). The site of the altar in St. Joseph's Church is so characteristic, self-sufficient and elevated, that the altar itself will always be perceived as the only liturgical altar in this interior.

Also, Dominikus Böhm understood it in the same way, when, in the spirit of Christocentrism, he placed only the cross with crucified Christ at the main altar. It was rooted in the architecture of reformed churches. There are visible references to the first philosophical-aesthetic treatises, being the grounds of the Christian art. By transition towards transparency, the spiritual beauty–ideal and symbolic–becomes more important than the empirical one. It is about the Platonic goal of all aspirations as well as the emanation of the empirical beauty from the ideal beauty, a thought drawn from Platinus (Wagner, 2002, p. 424). In his own way, it was continued by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, who introduced the notion of the absolute and emanation to medieval aesthetics (Bogdan, 2023, p. 19-20).

In the search for the absolute, in accordance with Romano Guardini's words, the altar at which the liturgy is celebrated stands in the most holy place and is elevated above the rest of the church space by means of a series of steps. While ascending the steps we lift our spirit and anticipate reaching the height where everything is great and perfect. It happens so because 'the mountain top' is a symbol of everything that is good and noble. Consequently, a simple action of ascending, striving towards the height, tells us about our entity's rising towards God Most High. The existing stairs reinforce this effect, as numerous steps lead from the nave to the chancel – the most holy place of all (Guardini, 1987, p. 40-41)⁸.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, by recommending the placement of the tabernacle beyond the zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy, honours its individual presence in the sacral interior. However, it maintains its functionality in terms of circulation routes in relation to the altar and the place of distribution of the Holy Communion. It refers to a chapel located in the vicinity of the zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy, or in a different place, which is either completely open or sectioned off from the existing space of the interior (OWMR, 1975, no. 276; OWMR, 2002, no. 315 b).

8 'That is why the stairs lead from the street to the church. They say: 'You are going up, to the house of prayer, you approach God'. From the church nave lead the steps again to the chancel. They say: 'Now you are ascending the most holy place of all'. Then the steps lead to the altar. Whoever ascends them is spoken to by them, like Moses was spoken to by God once on Mount Horeb: 'Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground'. The altar is a threshold of eternity'.

The Church of St. Joseph in Zabrze, which features a full symmetry of the liturgical plan of the temple, is not adaptable in the area of its nave interior to the possibility of enclosing there a chapel, which would serve the purpose of worship during the week (a week church). The chapel of the week worship, in compliance with the post-conciliar renewal, should be an independent space which is separated from the nave and where the second altar should find its place. Such a chapel may also feature the tabernacle and baptismal font (OWMR, 1975, no. 267; *Inter Oecumenici* 1964, no. 93).

The second liturgical altar in St. Joseph's Church is situated in a chapel dedicated to St. Barbara, i.e. in the crypt (vault) supporting on its 'shoulders' the sacrificial table of the festive Sunday church. The crypt, which in practice plays a function of the chapel of worship during the week (week church), with its altar wall being the 'palate' of the chancel stairs, exhibits expression of specific concealment. It is emphasized by four pillars, based on the projection of a circle, which divide the existing space of the crypt and play a function of the reinforcement of the vault bearing the load of the most important object of the interior. The ambulatory, which is open towards the crypt, is accompanied by stained-glass windows at bilateral stairs leading to the level of the crypt. The stained-glass windows present allegories of the Ten Commandments and do not exceed the height of the concealed chapel (Bogdan, 2023, p. 213-214).

The post-conciliar renewal made use of the objective functionality of the chancel of St. Joseph's Church. In compliance with the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, its zone was adapted to the requirements of the obligatory presence of the sacrificial table, the pulpit—from which the word of God is preached and the sedilia—the place of presiding connected with the function of a priest, deacon and other serving persons. The above-mentioned church also meets the requirements of ensuring good visibility of the chancel as well as its characteristic form and interior decoration (OWMR, 2002, no. 295). The tabernacle, which according to the post-conciliar regulations, similar to the baptismal font, may but does not have to be in the Eucharistic Liturgy zone, remains in that zone.

Summary and conclusions

While looking at the architecture of St. Joseph's Church in Zabrze, it should be stated that apart from the elements of the interior designed by Dominikus Böhm with great care and reverence, there are also elements which were introduced there in the 1930s, against which the very architect protested. It is important that works to complete the iconographic programme of the temple lasted till the end of the German jurisdiction in Zabrze (the-then HINDERBURG O/S). Finally, the presence of some elements, which were either transformed in relation to the original concept of the temple furnishings or never fully completed, bears testimony to universal architectural independence of the temple layout and structure. The temple itself constitutes such a beautiful orderly universe that no elements of different epochs are able to ruin or disturb the central theme of its architecture.

In the case of St. Joseph's Church, the central architectural theme refers to the association of the sacrum with the area of inaccessibility. It was implemented in the form emphasizing the majesty of the altar, which, existing in its eschatological sanctity on symbolic Mount Zion, should remain as such in its visual exhibition in the sacral interior. The means of expression is based on a decisive difference between the site of location of the sacrificial table and the nave floor. The elevation of the sacrificial table in relation to the nave level scenographically meets this purpose and was introduced in the Church of St. Joseph in Zabrze.

The chief asset of the design, showing the directed inaccessibility of the zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy, consists in constructing a perfect image of a stronghold-like façade, on the outside (see: Photo 1). When the Gate of Heaven (Himmelstor) in the fortress-like security walls serves the interior and harmonizes with the tabernacle (protected against profanation), the place of storing the Eucharist behind the altar visually emphasizes the respect for the mystery of the Eucharist. This place is located at the termination of the axial system, which already starts on the 'mystery-securing' façade.

Such an effect does not take place in chancels which are functionally organized without the presence of the tabernacle (see: Photo 2 A,B).

The chief asset of the created inaccessibility of the St.-Joseph-Church tabernacle, protected against the profanation, is the perfect implementation of the exposition of the termination of the longitudinal sacral layout. Distinctive elevation of the chancel in relation to the nave explicitly highlights this disposition. In longitudinal systems, a lot depends on the zone of the faithful being the place of observation of the chancel, where the altar erected on the compositional main axis precedes the tabernacle (see: Photo 3 A,B). Such a situation does not occur in central layouts where the chancel is surrounded by the zone of the faithful. It means, in the case of multilateral observation of the chancel zone.

The Church of St. Joseph in Zabrze, designed by Dominikus Böhm as a fortification, emphasizes the significance of a way or road. It leads to the eschatological mystery, and yet, at the same time, is protected by the architectural means securing this mystery. What is concealed must remain concealed till the end. The definition of the church perceived as the church of the way was implemented by Dominikus Böhm in his architectural creation. The way itself constitutes the chief asset in the interior of St. Joseph's Church. It leads straight to the goal or destination, even breaking through arcade-like openings in the shield-like walls (see: Photo 4). The way, serving also the purpose of the chancel ambulatory, never ends and always leads to a praiseworthy goal, however, without its overpowering formal presence. The most important factor is inaccessibility, constituting here a form of respect, and securing the impossibility of conversion of the longitudinal liturgical system into the central one.

The architecture of St. Joseph's Church in Zabrze created by Dominikus Böhm exhibits the 'language' of forms connected with the historical layout applied in the Romanesque and Gothic periods. That includes an explicitly legible historical disposition of the function of the façade, a three-nave hall layout and a radial composition of the chancel surrounded by the ambulatory. Other elements encompass: a massive bell tower at the side elevation of the church body and a French-like great rose window, bilaterally flanked by pylons, which delicately evoke the majesty of medieval twin towers of the façade. The introduced elements of early Christian basilicas include: the function of a courtyard preceding the body housing naves, a beautiful *paradisus* – paradise with the wood of cross in its middle and the gate to heaven—*porta sacra* leading to it from the street.

The Church of St. Joseph in Zabrze constitutes an outstanding masterpiece by Dominikus Böhm. It speaks to us in the language of love, the love towards God and the love towards mankind. It directly refers to the liturgical function of the Holy Mass, whose significance comes to the forefront in the proposed application of architectural Historicism. A traditionalist architect from Cologne, taking into consideration the beauty and the system of historical forms, applied at the same time, a Modernist intuition. It meant the departure from an eclectic fusion of details from different epochs and the search for new means of expression. The artist made use of only historical motifs, fusing tradition with avant-garde. Such an approach ensured a good implementation of the liturgical function in St. Joseph's Church, which works even in our time. The temple in Zabrze, in spite of its conservative elements, presents motifs which are universal in terms of style and sensitive to liturgical changes in each epoch.

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Photo. 1. Church in the form of a stronghold with the fortress-like façade and fortified termination of the nave. St. Joseph's Church (Kościół św. Józefa, Zabrze, 1930-1931, arch. D. Böhm). Photo: Mirosław Bogdan



Photo. 2. Eucharistic Liturgy Zone without the tabernacle and with its presence.
A). Cathedral of Christ the King (Katedra Chrystusa Króla, Katowice, 1927-1955, arch. Z. Gawlik, F. Mączyński.).
B). Church of St. Joseph (Kościół św. Józefa, Zabrze, 1930-1931, arch. D. Böhm). Photo: Mirosław Bogdan



Photo. 3. Longitudinal system terminated with the tabernacle, preceded by the altar on the main axis of the church.
A). Church of Saint-Jean-de-Montmartre (Paris, 1994-2001, arch. A. de Baudot).
B). Church of St. Casimir (Kościół św. Kazimierza, Katowice, 1931, arch. L. Dietz d'Arma, J. Zarzycki) Photo: Mirosław Bogdan.



Photo. 4. Temple designed as the 'church of the way' by the creator of its architecture. St. Joseph's Church (Kościół św. Józefa, Zabrze, 1930-1931, arch. D. Böhm). Photo: Mirosław Bogdan.