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## The symbolic dimension of sacred space around sanctuaries of the Virgin Mary in the landscape of Warmia and Mazury

### Introduction

Christianity has incorporated both local traditions of worship and biblical symbolism as well as the majority of archetypical notions from Judaism, for instance, the concept of the Holy Land, which is associated with the meaning of sacral space or *the sacrum*, expressed by phenomena and the powers of nature. A green grove or a garden prompts spiritual values, praying and contemplation. The myth of the biblical paradise arising from Christian worship was one of the most important factors that shaped the attitude of man towards nature<sup>2</sup>. Numerous images of the garden are in the background of scenes and depictions from the lives of Mary, Jesus and the saints, to whom trees and flowers were assigned as attributes and ornaments. The tree itself receives a novel, universal dimension of a cross as the Tree of Salvation<sup>3</sup>. The biblical spring was also depicted symbolically with a well or a fountain situated at the confluence of alleys located in a garden (being its equivalent) on a square plane surrounded by walls. Four sides symbolized the

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<sup>2</sup> I. Połucha, E. Marks, K. Młynarczyk, *Wybrane aspekty sztuki ogrodów na tle jej historycznego rozwoju*, "Humanistyka i Przyrodoznawstwo" 6 (2000), pp. 109–119.

<sup>3</sup> M. Swaryczewska, *Ogród i drzewo w europejskiej tradycji kulturowej*, Olsztyn 2003, pp. 102–109.

rivers of Eden as well as the evangelists and cardinal virtues, namely: wisdom, justice, moderation, courage<sup>4</sup>.

The objective of this paper is to assess the need for including historical determinants and the symbolic dimension of the elements of sacral space in designing green spaces near religious sites.

### Symbolism of sacral space

A human being, as a creature who expresses his internal experiences, needs symbols to come closer to everything that is spiritual; experiencing their rich content may often affect a person more than words. Symbols combine different things in one total experience, whereas language may only partially and gradually explain what symbols depict. Since the first centuries, Christians have used symbols in addition to the alphabet (and probably even more so) as not all of them could read. Therefore, while delivering their sermons, the Fathers of the Church drew upon examples from the world of symbols<sup>5</sup>.

Thanks to symbolic, aesthetic and nurturing features and determined boundaries, the sacral garden is a special and selected space. As a closed system, it has gates linking the things that are godlike — the *sacrum* with the external world — *profanum*. It is sometimes a model of the cosmos and a projection of creation. In a modern definition, the garden is the highest achievement of civilisation, where the effect of human thought and planned order combine with nature. One may say that the sacral garden is a work of the utmost perfection understood as the harmonic co-existence of nature and culture. The cross, being the symbol of Passion, is one of the most meaningful Christian symbols and, thus, the reflections of sacral assumptions often refer to this symbolism. The shape of the fish is important in this context, as it alludes to the multiplication of food by Jesus. Alfa and omega are equally important in Christianity — these are the symbols of the beginning and the end<sup>6</sup>.

The world of plant composition has brought invaluable benefits to religion and all of human culture. Both primordial polytheistic beliefs and religions that were subsequently created, including Islam and Judaism, present timeless rewards in the same manner — these are great gardens that are rich in everything that is valued on Earth: lands of beauty, happiness and fulfilled dreams and desires “Indeed, the righ-

<sup>4</sup> L. Majdecki, *Historia ogrodów. Od starożytności po barok*, t. 1, Warszawa 2008, pp. 112–229.

<sup>5</sup> D. Forstner, *Świat symboliki chrześcijańskiej*, tłum. i oprac. W. Zakrzewska, P. Pachciorek, R. Turzyński, Warszawa 1990, pp. 7–192.

<sup>6</sup> A. Sędłak, I. Połucha, *Symboliczny wymiar sacrum i profanum w otoczeniu współczesnych obiektów sakralnych*, w: *Horyzonty architektury krajobrazu — język architektury krajobrazu*, red. B. Szulczewska, M. Szumański, Warszawa 2010, pp. 58–63.

teous will be in gardens and pleasure...<sup>7</sup>. One should remember that vegetation is accompanied by inanimate elements which many have a symbolic dimension such as water, wood, rocks or clusters of stones. In a space with sacral meaning, there is always an expanded symbolic frame, richness of meaning and a fascination that is elicited by the power and capacity of nature for cyclic renewal<sup>8</sup>.

### Religious symbolism through the prism of history

A sacral space is a reflection of a godlike paradise. In religions based on the Bible, Eden was the first garden: a land of eternal happiness from which the proto-parents Adam and Eve were expelled. Garden art — understood as an amazing mosaic of smells, sounds and light that originated from the human desire to comprehend the secrets of creation — lays at the basis of images of the paradise garden. This resulted from constant attempts to create a garden to equal the work of the Creator. The biblical perception of paradise that was used in garden designs, was a model of the Cosmos regarded as a metaphor of a perfect spiritual life. The image of the universe as a “paradise on the Earth” was divided by four rivers: (Gihon, Pishon, Tigris and Euphrates) that diverged into different directions of the world. A nurturing spring was the centre of a recreated paradise. The whole image was a specific magical area filled with figures and symbols; it indicated a spiritual pathway towards godlike secrets<sup>9</sup>. The sacral space can be thus regarded as a “symbol of cosmic arrangement, seclusion, contemplation, and innocence”<sup>10</sup>.

The paradise garden became a manifestation of the human need to oppose primordial nature, which was understood as chaos. In the Middle Ages, greenery was mainly arranged as monastery gardens. As mandated by their monastic rules, Benedictine monasteries had to have a garden. Many of the activities of these monks exerted a significant impact on the shape of green areas and the cultivation of ornamental and agricultural plants in Europe. Many monasteries also included the cultivation of land. Based on their usage, monastery gardens were divided into ornamental and agricultural elements. The first group included agricultural, medical, hospital, and cemetery gardens, while the second comprised a patio (a constantly repeated component of monastic premises) and an abbot’s garden<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> A. Michałowski, *Drzewa w krajobrazie kulturowym — natura między cywilizacją a kulturą*, t. 1, Warszawa 1991, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> I. Połucha, E. Marks, K. Młynarczyk, *Wybrane aspekty...*, pp. 109–119.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem; J. Bogdanowski, *Ogrody polskie*, Warszawa 1978, pp. 17–18.

<sup>10</sup> H. Biedermann, *Leksykon symboli*, tłum. J. Rubinowicz, Warszawa 2001, p. 245.

<sup>11</sup> A. Majdecka-Strzeżek, *Zieleń obiektów sakralnych w Polsce — tradycja i współczesność*, Warszawa 2003, pp. 87–88; Z. Włodarczyk, *Ogrody przyświątynne i klasztorne. Rekonstrukcja, rewitalizacja, pielęgnacja*, Wrocław 2003, pp. 73–80.

The patio was fitted into a square of monastic cloisters and was geometrically divided into planes based on the rule of *ad quadratum*<sup>12</sup>. Even in antiquity, the square was considered a perfect figure. In the Middle Ages, it remained a privileged figure and was often used as the basic module for constructions. The quadrature was quickly adopted as the basis for planning and designing gardens due to its practical values, not only for monasteries, but also in renaissance and baroque gardens<sup>13</sup>.

Since ancient times, gardens have been an inherent element of holy sites. Initially, places dedicated to God were surrounded by the beauty of wild nature. Over time, temples were accompanied by carefully-designed garden compositions on a different scale. Past styles may also be found in modern times. Designed greeneries accompany temples and monastic premises as well as sanctuaries, calvaries, wayside shrines and wayside crosses. In Poland, the scale of garden premises is diversified and adjusted to the size of a sacral object. In all types of sacral gardens, garden elements are used in a double role: both aesthetic and meaningful based on Christian symbolism. Despite regional diversity, sacral gardens have a durable and identifiable spatial structure. The structural stability that results from ancient traditions forms the features and identity of native landscapes<sup>14</sup>.

### Religious symbolism of the tree

The tree is a special symbol in Christian culture; it is portrayed as an element that links heaven and the Earth through its trunks and roots seated deep in the ground. The trunk signifies the existence on earth between life underground and life in heaven. The tree is also a reflection of revival and life by its development throughout the year. Ever-green coniferous trees are a symbol of life and immortality, whereas trees that lose leaves for the winter and come back to life in spring are a symbol of revival<sup>15</sup>.

Nature and natural phenomena were worshipped even in prehistoric times. In Babylonian and Assyrian cultures, the holy mountain and the holy tree are also found. The worship of the power of nature also lies at the source of Islam, which, for instance, portrays the effects of God in plants. The tree plays an important role in each perception of paradise. Leaves cast a life-giving shadow and pure water and rivers of milk and honey flow from beneath the roots. Both in the Old

<sup>12</sup> A. Majdecka-Strzeżek, *Ukryta symbolika ogrodów*, "Zieleń Miejska" 11–12 (2008), pp. 18–19.

<sup>13</sup> L. Majdecki, *Historia ogrodów. Przemiany formy i konserwacja*, Warszawa 1981, pp. 61–64; M. Siewniak, A. Mitkowska, *Tezaurus sztuki ogrodowej*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 86–87.

<sup>14</sup> J. Rylke, A. Różańska, T. Krogulec, *Ogrody. Historia architektury i sztuki ogrodowej*, Warszawa 2002, p. 178; A. Majdecka-Strzeżek, *Zieleń...*, p. 87–88.

<sup>15</sup> Á.P. Chenel, A.S. Simarro, *Słownik symboli*, tłum. M. Boberska, Warszawa 2008, p. 47.

and in the New Testament, trees have numerous meanings and wide metaphoric connotations. In the ancient Jewish culture, there was the worship of rocks, hills and trees, particularly long-lived oaks (*Quercus* sp.) and terebinths (*Pistacia palaestina* Boiss), under which sacrifices were laid. Greeks and Romans associated individual tree species with symbolism: olive trees with affluence, cypress with mourning, bay and oak with wisdom and bravery. Before they started to erect temples, their places of worship were located in holy groves<sup>16</sup>.

The worship of trees as the axis of the cosmos and symbolizing eternity is also found in northern tribes. In the German mythology, there is the “tree of the universe” with a much expanded function. Gods were seated on boughs, while beneath the roots was a freezing and dark land resembling hell. Slavs had their own holy groves with oaks, limes, maples, ashes, and elms. Celts worshipped trees in yew groves and oak groves and they — as the first ones — created sanctuaries. Apple trees are commonly found in the literature and iconography. Until now, a special emotional attitude toward trees has persisted. Churches and cemeteries surrounded by old lime trees have become a typical element in the Polish countryside. Wayside shrines and votive figures are situated on or under trees. Trees with a holy painting are often carefully preserved relics in lanes, parks or along small roads<sup>17</sup>.

### Religious symbolism of plants

Christian symbolism of plants refers to both individual species and their colours (tab. 1). Apart from green, red is also a privileged colour that is often evoked in the symbolism of gardens. The colours of roses, blood, juice or wine are the colours of life and death, ecstasy and oblivion. A red rose among thorns, with a colour that resembles blood, is both the attribute of martyrs and a symbol of Passion. A white rose without thorns symbolizes the virtues of Mary, her Immaculate Conception and virginity. Moor compared the birth of Christ by the virgin to roses blooming on a thorny bush, whereas Dante perceived Mary as a mystic rose<sup>18</sup>.

Among flowers, representing the seasons (particularly spring), the rose is the most valued due to its beauty and fragrance. Greeks trace its name back to “flow, effuse” as streams of fragrance effuse from it, yet at the same time its living substance evaporates and thus it fades so quickly. The ancients were impressed both by the splendour of the rose and its short life. Pilny the Elder wrote: “Nature gave

<sup>16</sup> L. Majdecki, *Historia ogrodów. Przemiany formy i konserwacja*, Warszawa 1981, pp. 61–64.

<sup>17</sup> M. Swaryczewska, *Ogród...*, pp. 102–109.

<sup>18</sup> E. Zaraś-Januszkiewicz, M. Szymczak-Piątek, J. Wieczorek, *Symbolika roślin i związana z nimi obrzędowość w tradycji ludowej*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 143–144; D. Forstner, *Świat...*, pp. 7–192.

birth to flowers and odours for a short time; this should caution people — the things that bloom beautifully (such as roses, lilies, and violets) fade quickly”<sup>19</sup>. The Bible enumerates the rose among aromatic plants to which eternal wisdom is compared<sup>20</sup>. According to the Wisdom of Sirah (39:13), the children of God shall bloom as the rose. Thorns of the rose also have a symbolic meaning as they picture sins and their consequences, pain and sufferings. Thorns foul the temple of suffering of the Saviour “among the thorns of putridity, there is virginity enlightened and free of thorns”. The Immaculate Virgin Mary is the true “rose among thorns”<sup>21</sup>.

The symbolism of the lily representing the Virgin Mary is widespread; it is an inherent attribute of the Annunciation, symbolizing the virginity of Mary — three lilies are a sign of triple virginity: before, at and after the birth of Christ<sup>22</sup>. In Palestine, the lily can be found among thorn bushes, where it grows lusciously. The Immaculately Conceived Mary is identified with a lily that blooms among the thistles and thorns of sinful human beings. Christ himself calls in the Evangelists to admire flowers “Look at lilies as they grow [...], even Salomon in all his splendour was not dressed equally to one of them” (Matthew 6:28). As decoration in churches, flowers have been a silent tribute to God since ancient times. Roses and lilies were offerings that could be placed around the altar during processions<sup>23</sup>.

Vegetation that was used to decorate wayside shrines and crosses was planted according to local traditions. Therefore, different plant species can be found near churches, holy figures or in cemeteries. Yew trees, thujas, and ivies are commonly planted as they are not only decorations but also a manifestation of the belief in eternal life. Plants associated with the worship of Mary are often used, such as white lily (*Lilium candidum* L.), iris (*Iris* sp.), and rose (*Rosa* sp.). Wayside shrines and crosses are often located next to trees that are strongly associated with Christian traditions, thereby signifying the connection between heaven and earth. High greenery with a sacral meaning is represented by trees that are deeply seated in folk traditions and that were often perceived through the prism of beliefs. In many regions of Poland, their glorification is a remainder of the Slavic worship of trees. This mainly concerns trees that surrounded temples with their boughs,

<sup>19</sup> I. Połucha, O.A. Elkhatib, *Symbolika religijna roślin w chrześcijaństwie i islamie*, w: *Horyzonty architektury krajobrazu — język architektury krajobrazu*, red. B. Szulczewska, M. Szumański, Warszawa 2010, pp. 64–71.

<sup>20</sup> The Bible quoted after *The New Jerusalem Bible*, New York 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Z. Włodarczyk, *Ogród roślin biblijnych jako ilustracja Biblii*, w: *Z badań nad Biblią*, t. 9, red. T. Jelonek, Kraków 2004, pp. 57–58.

<sup>22</sup> D. Forstner, *Świat...*, pp. 7–192.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

enshadowed graves, chapels, wayside shrines, figures, paintings depicting the saints, wayside crosses and holly springs<sup>24</sup>.

Particularly trees involved in apparitions of Mary were worshipped. This was usually the lime (*Tilia* sp.) often regarded as a protective tree. The other commonly used tree species included maple (*Acer* sp.) and sycamore (*Acer pseudo-platanus* L.), protecting against misfortune, ash (*Fraxinus* sp.) and briars (*Crataegus* sp.) providing peace and justice, affluence and health, and oak (*Quercus* sp.) which was the symbol of power, durability and strength<sup>25</sup>.

Table 1. Symbolism of selected plants for use in sacred space

Plant	No of page in lexicon*	Sacral meaning
Ivy	(50)	Symbol of eternal life and fidelity; it strongly binds to its substrate
Pansy	(54)	Herb that is called “the flower of the Holy Trinity”
Cedar	(58)	Ever-green plant, a symbol of paradise and eternal life as well as strength and beauty in the Old Testament
Cypress	(69)	Symbol of the paradise and eternal life; according to Sirach, it is a symbol of wisdom and of selected people (including Mary); in Poland, a symbol of mourning and death
Lemon	(69)	Symbolizes life and harvest; it is used for weddings, christenings and funerals
Oak	(76)	The holy tree for Germanic people; it symbolizes strength and eternal life (hard wood; it resists decomposition)
Olive tree	(84)	Symbolizes eternal life and immaculate and healing grace of the Mother of God
Pumpkin	(85)	Symbolizes the transitory nature of human life
Violet	(103)	Identified with the humility of Mary; the colour indicates the Passion and godlike Kingdom of Christ
Alpine violet	(104)	Plant of the Virgin Mary; red colour in the middle of the flower refers to the heart of Mary that bleeds of pain

<sup>24</sup> E. Zaraś-Januszkiewicz, M. Szymczak-Piątek, J. Wiczorek, *Symbolika...*, pp. 143–144.

<sup>25</sup> A. Majdecka-Strzeżek A., *Zieleń...*, pp. 87–88.

<b>Plant</b>	<b>No of page in lexicon*</b>	<b>Sacral meaning</b>
Dianthus	(113)	Sanguine flower is a symbol of passion, whereas leaves and flowers with the shape of a nail indicate the future death of Christ on the cross; came in the 13th century together with the Knights of the Cross
Iris	(124)	Plant of the Virgin Mary, (from Greek, it means “a rainbow”); it symbolizes reconciliation of humans with God, the alliance renewed before the sacrificial death of Christ
Maple	(145)	Tree that protects against misfortune
Clover	(157)	Reference to the Holy Trinity
Lily of the valley	(158)	Smell and colour of the flower are identified with tenderness and virgin purity of Mary
Wood avens	(170–171)	Blooming in yellow; it is used as a herb; it indicates that Christ is the Saviour of the world
Lily	(177–178)	Red flowers indicate the Passion, whereas white flowers signify virgin-like purity and innocence, the attributes of Mary; it was a symbol of light and life in the Mediterranean region, it commonly means trust in God’s grace, clerical authorities
Lime	(180)	Regarded as a protective tree
Mallow	(186)	Symbol of the healing power of Mary
Marguerite	(189)	Signifies a pearl, the symbol of cried tears; it indicates the sufferings of Christ and the martyrs
Almond	(203)	Spring-blooming symbol of God’s vigilance
Calendula	(213)	A sign of the healing power of Mary; is called a favourite of the Sun
Narcissus	(215–216)	Symbol of a mystic bride (together with lily and lily of the valley); it also signifies the Resurrection
Columbine	(237)	Herb that symbolizes fertility; 7 flowers are interpreted as 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit; leaves refer to birds (doves), also associated with the Holy Spirit
Nut	(237–238)	Symbolizes Christ; bitter green cover signifies sufferings of Jesus on the earth; wooden shell indicates the wood of the Cross, whereas sweet fruit means the God’s nature that gives life; also a symbol of harvest and fertility



Plant	No of page in lexicon*	Sacral meaning
Delphinium	(239–240)	Symbol of the nobility and chivalry; it soothes eye pain and thus the reference to salvation from spiritual blindness thanks to Christ and Mary
Thistles and briars	(240)	Onerous weed; initially a symbol of sins and difficulties
Primerose	(251)	Old herb; it grew at the spot where St. Peter dropped the key to heaven; also a symbol of the Mother of God who, via her Godlike Son, opens heaven for people
Stone pine	(253)	Symbolizes life and fertility
Snowdrop	(262)	Symbol of hope; the attribute of the Mother of God, a source of Christian hope
Rose	(277–278)	Red flowers: a symbol of sanguineous martyrdom of the saints; white flowers: Mary's flowers
Chamomile	(279–280)	Herb that signifies the healing power of Mary
Rockfoil	(293)	In the Middle Ages it was believed that this plant, growing in rocky slits, could crack stones; it was referred to in the Resurrection of Christ from the tomb.
Sunflower	(294)	Symbol of soul that heads towards God
Daisy	(299)	According to legend, it grew from tears cried by Mary during the flight to Egypt
Sage	(309)	Herb that is identified with the healing power of Mary
Tulip	(347)	Symbolizes vanity, paltriness and insignificance of all evanescent things; a symbol of death
Willow	(355)	Branches used in religious rituals; a vital plant that, when clipped, produces new stems — a symbol of the Evangel whose message is always current, regardless of the area on the globe where it is delivered
Vine	(357–358)	Symbol of the Church and Christ
Anemone	(372)	Flower that quickly fades; it symbolizes death (pheasant's eye); a symbol of the martyrs' blood and sufferings of Christ

Source: J. Siebert\*, *Leksykon sztuki chrześcijańskiej. Tematy, postacie, symbole*, tłum. D. Petruk, Kielce 2007; S. Kobielus, *Florarium christianum. Symbolika roślin — chrześcijańska starożytność i średniowiecze*, Kraków 2014.

### Religious symbolism of digits, numbers and colours

Digits, numbers and colours carry a clear message in Christian symbolism with a special meaning attributed to the following digits and numbers: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 12. The ancient mythologies depicted god-like triads (the Egyptian triad: Osiris — Isis — Horus; the Babylonian triad: Sin — Shamash — Ishtar) and the digit “three” has since always symbolized universalism, perfection and completeness. In the Bible, “three” represents the Trinity of God (three God-like Persons) and refers to god-like virtues: faith, hope and love as well as to the Resurrection after three days and nights. This digit has also a pejorative meaning, as Satan teases Jesus three times in the desert, Peter abjures Christ three times, and Cimmerian darkness lasted three days (Luke 4:13). In general, the digit “three” may be regarded as a symbol of everything that is god-like (*sacrum*).

The digit “four” signifies the nature of cosmic unity: the cardinal directions, main winds and seasons of the year are all four each. In Eden, a stream separates into four paradise rivers and, in the Apocalypse, God’s throne is watched over by four animals that symbolize the whole world created by God. This digit carries a clear message in the persons of Evangelists, the riders of the Apocalypse and the division of cardinal virtues. The name of the first man is composed of four letters, of which each is the beginning of the Greek names of cardinal directions: *Anatole*, *Dysis*, *Arktos*, and *Mesembria*<sup>26</sup>. It may be thus assumed that “four” symbolizes the things that are telluric (*profanum*).

The sum of “three” and “four” is “seven”, which in Christianity is a symbol of completeness (a combination of god-like elements, namely, the human soul, with a telluric human body; it is also a combination of virtues). On the seventh day, God rested after creating the world; Noah waited seven days for a dove to return; the Paternoster includes seven attempts; there were seven years and fat cows and the same number of skinny ones; and lastly, there are seven holy sacraments and an equal number of cardinal sins. The digit “seven” symbolizes the unity of two worlds; it is their combination which signifies completion (Psalm 119:164; Book of Revelation 1:20; 13:1; 17:10).

Creatures that were hostile towards God had their numerical name which was symbolized by “six” and multiples thereof. It is suspected that this digit was used to describe Nero, the enemy of Christians. The number “twelve” (permeation of the digits “three” and “four”) is mainly associated with the Apostles who are the pillars of Christian church. In the Old Testament, twelve generations of Jacob, who formed Israel, are mentioned; twelve scouts were sent to the promised land

<sup>26</sup> M. Lurker, *Słownik obrazów i symboli biblijnych*, tłum. K. Romaniuk, Poznań 1989, pp. 25–270.

and twelve bulls supported the “sea” of bronze<sup>27</sup>. The Book of Revelation also evokes the cosmic meaning of this number — “A woman carries on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Apocalypse of John, chapter 12) as a reflection of animals from zodiac signs; the old men gathered around the throne, twelve on each side. In addition, the number one hundred and forty-four thousand is also symbolic and signifies the saved, namely, twelve thousand chosen persons from each generation (Apocalypse of John, chapter 7).

The meaning of colours in Christian religion is important as they describe different attributes of saints and God, which is reflected in using chasubles during ecclesial ceremonies. White symbolizes the purity and innocence of Mary and the salvation of the world by Christ; blue signifies perfection and eternity; red — martyrdom of Christ (the coat put on his shoulders after whipping was purple) yet also anger and violent emotions; violet — humility as well as dignity and authority; silver symbolizes purification, justice and pure conscience (St. Anne, Mary’s mother, is called “the mother of silver” and is the patron of silver mines), whereas gold signifies internal richness and all things that are telluric and transient<sup>28</sup>.

### Small sacral architecture

Crosses, figures of saints and shrines are objects with a special meaning in the landscape. Of them, the most precious include old, traditional shrines with the imprint of passing time engraved in rings of wood or in stones and located somewhere under an aged tree or the majestic green meadows surrounded by colourful compositions of natural flowers. Their presence is a reflection of human spiritual needs as well as the faith of former generations. They are found in the natural environment all over Poland. The form of a shrine was inspired, for instance, by traditions of native architecture. Shrines were built from wood and bricks and were ornamented with a roof of tiles or steel sheet and sometimes covered with plaster or paint. Shrines and crosses are most often surrounded by a small rail fence which emphasizes the uniqueness of such a place. The interior of a small garden is filled with plants associated with Christian symbolism. Around a cross, the highest layer of plants is often composed of common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris* L.) and rugosa rose (*Rosa rugosa* THUNB.) bushes as well as sunflowers (*Helianthus* sp.) and mallow (*Alcea* sp.). The lower layer of plants includes coneflowers (*Rudbeckia* sp.), irises (*Iris* sp.), day lilies (*Hemerocallis* sp.), and nasturtium (*Tropaeolum* sp.)<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>29</sup> A. Majdecka-Strzeżek, *Zieleń...*, pp. 87–88; A. Sędlak, I. Połucha, *Symboliczny wymiar sacrum...*, pp. 58–63.

### **Symbols in the history of sanctuaries of the Virgin Mary in the Warmia Archdiocese**

The history of the Warmia Archdiocese sanctuaries indicates the great role of the power of nature and the symbolism of trees in the development of places where the Virgin Mary is worshipped. The awareness of the value of these objects allows for a deeper insight into the nature of designing new sites with complex Christian symbolism.

#### **Gietrzwałd — The Sanctuary of the Mother of God**

The history of the church in Gietrzwałd dates back to the early 14<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 1). A temple was built at the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century and developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its furnishings are neo-gothic and the style is eclectic. Since 1970, it has had the status of a smaller basilica. The history of the sanctuary entwines two elements: a graced painting and the 19<sup>th</sup>-century revelation of the Mother of God. From 27 June to 16 September 1877, the Mother of God appeared



Fig. 1. The Sanctuary of the Mother of God in Gietrzwałd; photo by I. Połucha  
Ryc. 1. Sanktuarium Matki Bożej Gietrzwałdzkiej; fot. I. Połucha

for two girls: thirteen-year-old Justyna Szafryńska and twelve-year-old Barbara Samulowska. She spoke to them in Polish and appeared over a maple tree (that

today does not exist) near the church. The visionaries disseminated the worship of Mary and sanctified a spring that was blessed by the Mother of God. The revelations brought about an inflow of pilgrims and also caused the persecution of believers and priests from Gietrzwałd by invaders. At the spot where the Mother of God appeared, a shrine with the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary and a fragment of wood from the maple was built. The rosary alley leading to the spring and the scenic way of the cross also have a symbolic dimension<sup>30</sup>.

### **Kętrzyn — the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Mercy**

Priests who were educated in, or originated from, Vilnius and worked in the St. George parish contributed to popularizing the worship of Mary in the Kętrzyn region. The church, which dates back to 1359 and resembles a castle, has formed the panorama of the town for ages. It is a classic type of medieval fortified church. Inside, crystal vault deserves attention, which was made in 1515 by master Matz from Gdańsk. In 1525–1946, the church was used by Protestants and it was later returned to Catholics. The basement of the church served as a Teutonic prison — here, according to legend, a prisoner was held for whom Mary appeared and asked him to sculpt her figure. The Teutonic Knights perceived this event as supernatural and freed the prisoner, who hung the figure of Mary on a roadside lime tree on his way to Reszel. This spot later became famous for miracles and healings and was the origin of the sanctuary in Święta Lipka<sup>31</sup>.

### **Święta Lipka — the Sanctuary of Świętolipska, Mother of God**

The sanctuary in Święta Lipka is called the “Częstochowa of the North” (fig. 2) and its history dates back to the 14th century. At the spot where the released convict from Kętrzyn hung the figure of the Mother of God, a 8 × 12 m chapel was built with a lime extending through a hole in the roof. According to the documents from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the fame of the sanctuary reached beyond the borders of the diocese. The inflow of pilgrims continued despite its location in a Protestant region, the demolition of the church in 1524, a ban on pilgrimages and the worship of Mary. Since the Reformation, Święta Lipka has been a destination for pilgrims, as well as for Evangelists. Pope John Paul II designated the church as a small basilica in 1983<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> [online] [www.sanktuariummaryjne.pl](http://www.sanktuariummaryjne.pl) [2015-01-23].

<sup>31</sup> [online] [www.bazylika-ketrzyn.olsztyn.opoka.org.pl](http://www.bazylika-ketrzyn.olsztyn.opoka.org.pl) [2015-03-03].

<sup>32</sup> [online] [www.swlipka.org.pl](http://www.swlipka.org.pl) [2015-02-09].



Fig. 2. The Sanctuary of Mother of God in Święta Lipka; photo by I. Połucha  
Ryc. 2. Sanktuarium Matki Bożej Świętolipskiej; fot. I. Połucha

### **Stoczek Klasztorny — the Sanctuary of the Mother of Peace**

The church from 1671 is a baroque building laid in stone in the shape of rotunda with a tower. The furnishings of the church originate from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The church was built on the site of a former shrine that commemorated the discovery of a figure of the Mother of God in a trunk of an old oak by two girls, although its creation in its modern shape was associated with the political situation after the Swedish occupation. The history of the sanctuary after the war is related to the imprisonment of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the Primate of Poland. He was kept in the church from 12 October 1953 till 6 October 1954; during this period he spiritually gave himself over to the mother of God. The Pope John Paul II granted the church in Stoczek the status of a small basilica on 9 May 1987. Since 1957, the Marian Order has maintained the sanctuary<sup>33</sup>.

### **Olsztyn — the Sanctuary of Fatima, Mother of God**

A parish dedicated to Fatima, Mother of God in Olsztyn was established in 1995 (fig. 3). Located on the outskirts of the city, the church with a tapered shape

<sup>33</sup> [online] [www.stoczek.pl](http://www.stoczek.pl) [2015-02-23].

plays an important role in the spiritual development of residents from nearby housing estates. The origin of the worship of Mary refers to Fatima, where her revelations over a holy oak were observed in 1917 and thus the symbolism of trees is of special importance in this space. This town situated in central Portugal, approximately 130 km from Lisbon and to the south-east of Leiria, and is nowadays a global destination for pilgrims. There, the Mother of God told three children — small shepherds (Lucy, Francis, and Hyacinth) to say the rosary and build a chapel dedicated to her. Initially, next to the oak over which the Mother of



Fig. 3. The Sanctuary of Fatima Mother of God in Olsztyn; photo by I. Połucha  
Ryc. 3. Sanktuarium Matki Boskiej Fatimskiej w Olsztynie; fot. I. Połucha

God appeared, a wooden gate was put at the site where believers prayed. Then, a temporary chapel was built on 28 April 1919. On 13 October 1930, the Bishop of Leiria approved the credibility of the revelation at Fatima and gave permission for official and local worship of the Rosary Mother of God. On 13 May 1953, Cardinal Manuel Cerejeira, the Patriarch of Lisbon, consecrated a new temple that was built in 1928–1953 on the scheme of a Latin cross with 14 chapels that, together with the sanctuary, symbolized the mysteries of the rosary. The temple was consecrated on 7 October 1953 and since 1954, it has carried the status of basilica<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> G. Gałązka, *Moje Niepokalane Serce zwycięży*, Marki 2000, p. 20.

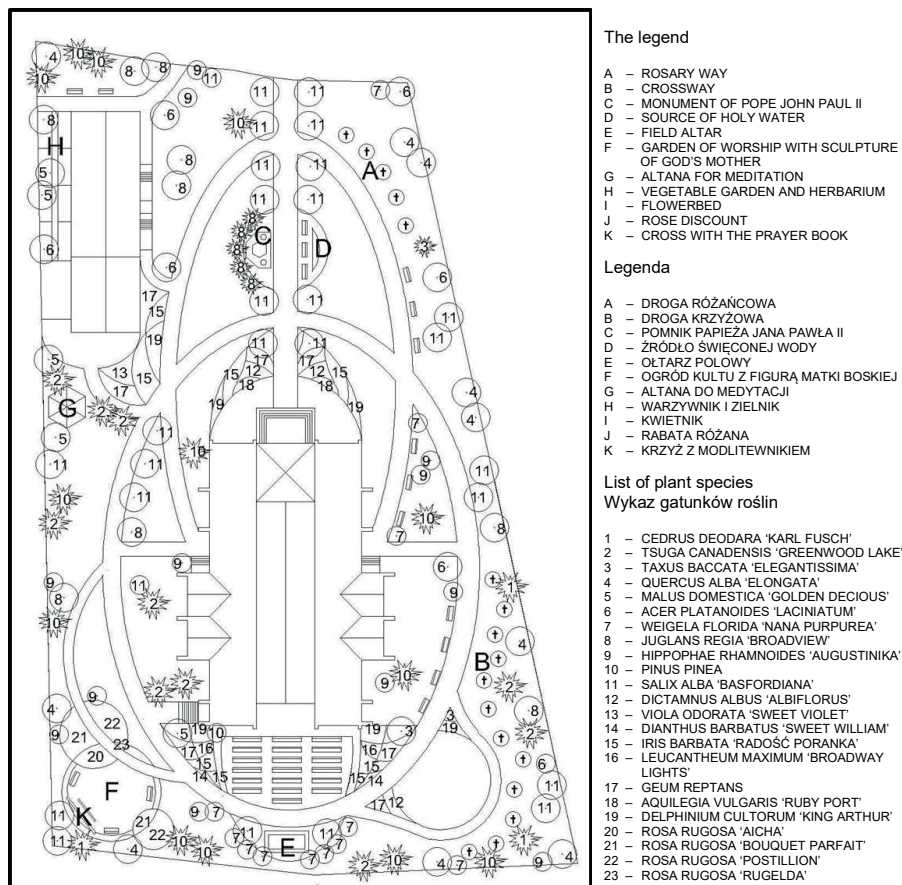


Fig. 4. The concept of sacred garden around The Sanctuary of Fatima Mother of God in Olsztyn by M. Łebkowska under substantive care of I. Połucha  
Ryc. 4. Koncepcja ogrodu sakralnego w otoczeniu Sanktuarium Matki Boskiej Fatimskiej w Olsztynie; oprac. M. Łebkowska pod opieką merytoryczną I. Połucha

In the parish of Olsztyn, on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of month, from May to October, there are church services held which are dedicated to the Mother of God from Fatima. They include: the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Holy Mass, the Rosary of Fatima with a procession to five rosary mysteries outside the chapel and an adoration vigil in front of the Holy Sacrament<sup>35</sup>. The Fatima celebrating proceed outside the church around the religious space. In the surroundings of the sanctuary in Olsztyn, there is still a need for depicting the value of religious object and histori-

<sup>35</sup> [online] [www.sanktuariumfatimskie.pl](http://www.sanktuariumfatimskie.pl) [2015-07-09].



cal revelations by means of the symbolic meaning of greenery, of which the arrangement was presented as the example of the concept of a sacral garden (fig. 4).

## **Symboliczny wymiar przestrzeni sakralnej w otoczeniu sanktuariów maryjnych w krajobrazie Warmii i Mazur**

### **Streszczenie**

Przestrzeń sakralna jest dopełnieniem obiektów kultu, a jej zagospodarowanie ułatwia odczytanie i rozumienie przesłania religijnego. W artykule poruszono aspekty aranżacji otoczenia kościołów powszechnie występujących w krajobrazie warmińsko-mazurskim, przy których warto kontynuować uwarunkowaną historycznie symbolikę komponentów zieleni. Zasadność kreowania przestrzeni sakralnej jako miejsc medytacji i przeżyć religijnych ukazano przez pryzmat znaczenia religijnego i wartości wybranych obiektów kultu maryjnego, do których należą sanktuaria na Warmii i Mazurach.

### **Słowa kluczowe**

teren zieleni, gaj, ogród sakralny, sanktuarium, symbolika, kult

### **Keywords**

green area, grove, sacred garden, sanctuary, symbolism, worship

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