



WOODEN HERITAGE
OF THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF GNIEZNO



TOURIST TRAVEL-GUIDE

CIENIN KOŚCIELNY

INOWROCLAW

LADEK

ŁUBOWO

MŁODOJEWO

POPOWO KOŚCIELNE

SOKOLNIKI

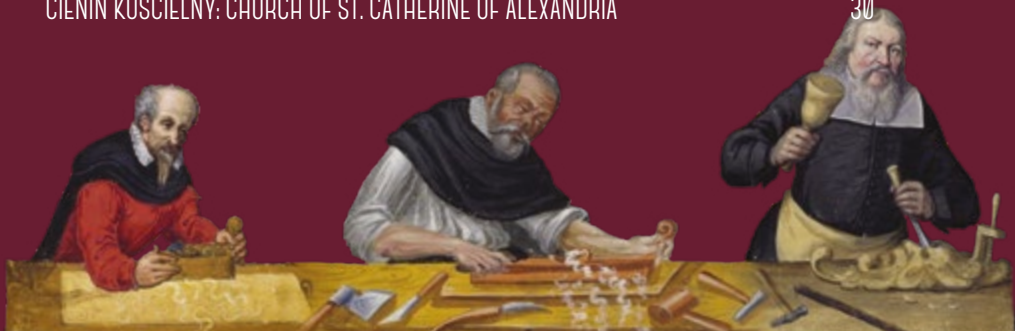
WALISZEWO

WRZEŚNIA



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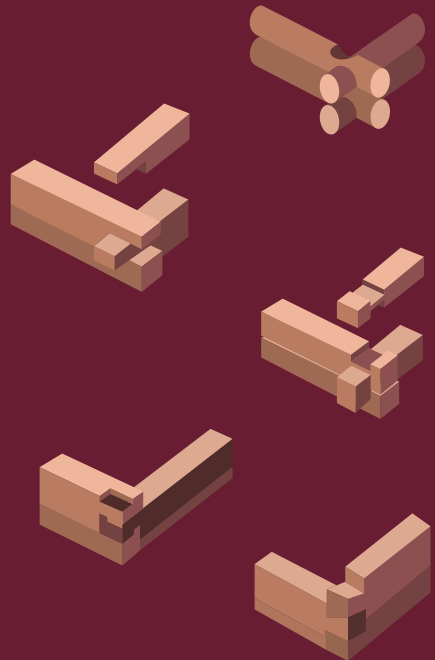
Almost 80 wooden historical objects in nine churches have been renovated and have undergone maintenance as a part of European Union subsidy in the region of the Archdiocese of Gniezno. We would like to encourage you to see the effects of work of a team which consisted of 60 people who have been engaged in preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.

The project is co-financed by European Union subsidy as a part of European Regional Development Fund
Priority axis VIII Protection of cultural heritage and development of cultural resources
Action 8.1 Protection of cultural heritage and development of cultural resources
Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment

HOW WERE WOODEN CHURCHES BUILT?

The construction process of all wooden churches is difficult to describe because each team of carpenters had their unique, original way. They approached each project individually by adjusting to the terrain. However, let's try to explain the process of construction of a wooden church taking as an example log frame structure.

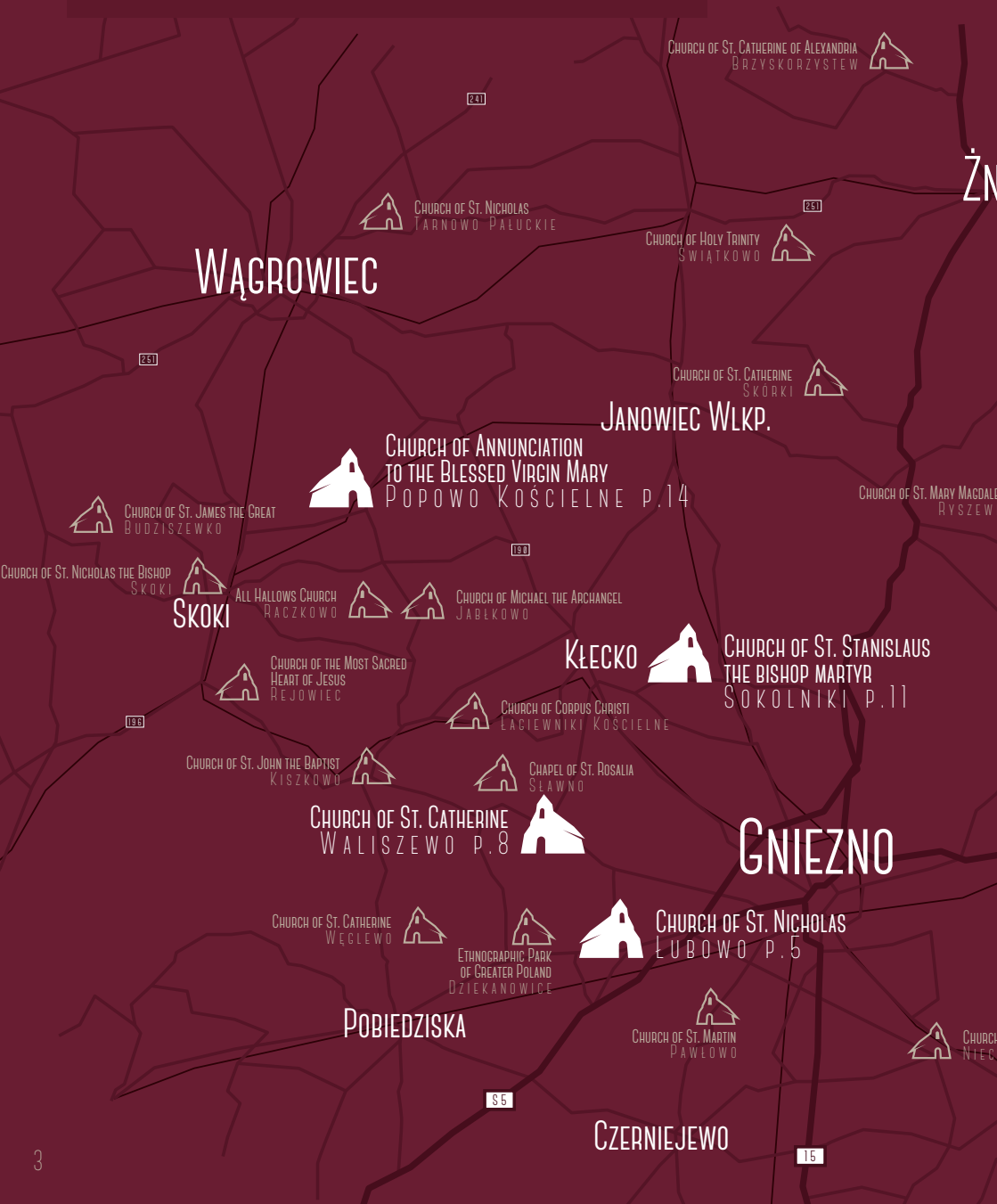
Presumably the stage that took the longest was wood collection - oak for sole plates, and pine, fir or spruce for walls. Wood had to be conditioned which means that it should lie after having been chopped through all four seasons which gives the material enough time to "work", i.e. undergo the processes of expansion and contraction due to atmospheric conditions: precipitation and temperature. After conditioning, wood was hewed and polished with axes. The thickest beams were used for sole plates and walls, and other for construction elements of the timber roof truss, e.g. rafters, collar beams and battens, and shake was prepared then as well. The preparation period before the building of a church could take a few months (sometimes even years). The erection of the church itself took a couple of weeks on average. First, sole plates were put on the foundations made of stones and bound only with sand. In the corners the biggest boulders were placed, so called foundation stones which wall nodes rest on. Then walls were erected by placing logs with notches connected with each other by the full scribe method. When the wall construction was finished, the interior of the church was covered with a roof and next a timber roof truss was built. Connected rafters leant on wall plates and the opposite rafters were additionally supported by collar beams. The roof was covered with end-jointed shingles. After the erection of the church and building the roof a tower was added or sometimes a chapel, a vestry, and in some cases a signature block was placed on the ridge.



In time, the church was timbered (covered with extra planks) on which additional beams, so called studs, were nailed. This was used when a church started to "bulge", in order to strengthen the construction. The church was protected against adverse biological influence and fires. Thus, tar was used among others, which is why today churches are often black.

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF GNIEZNO

NORTHERN PART



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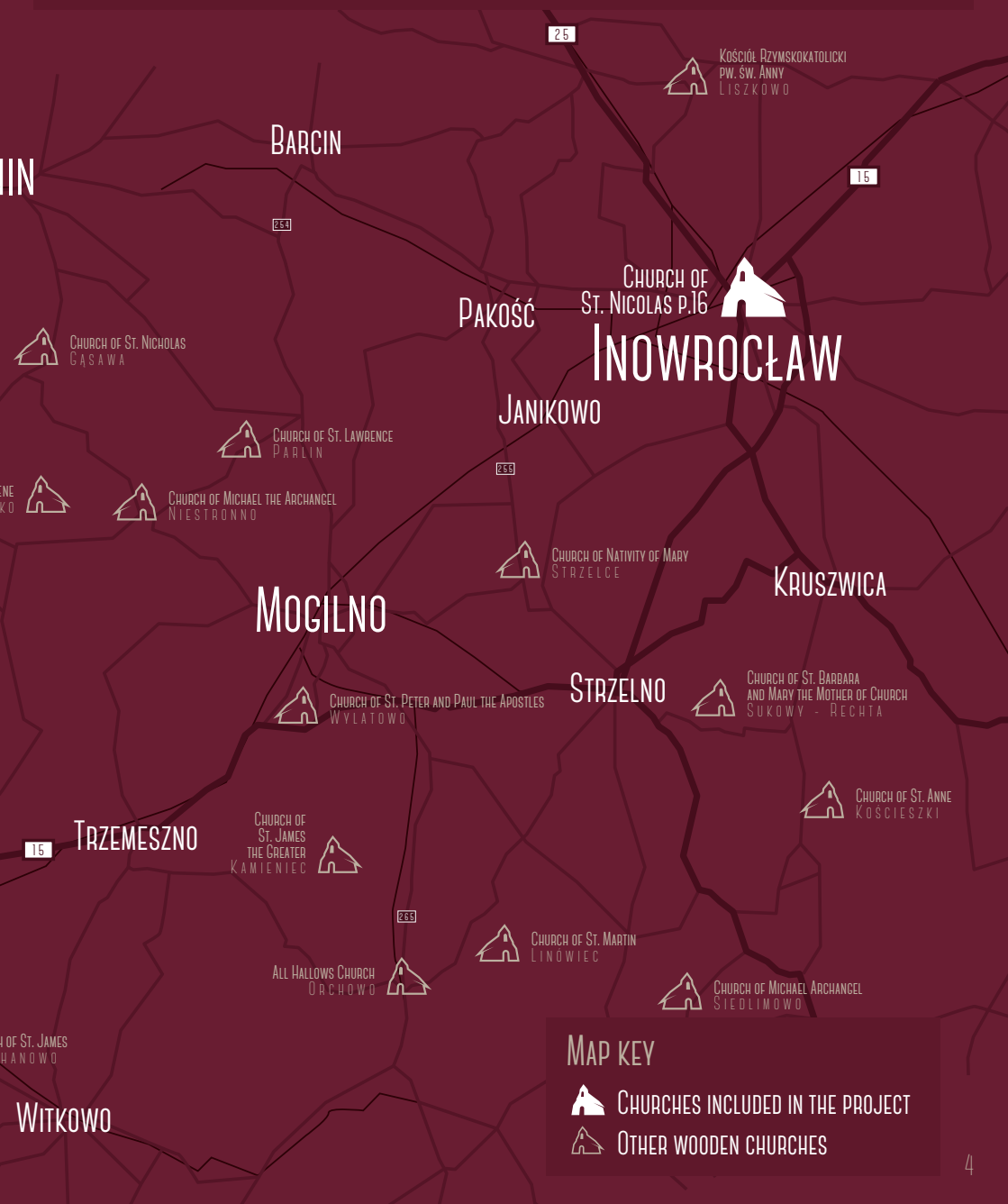
CZERNIEJEWO

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St. Adalbert who appears in the logo is the patron saint of the Archdiocese of Gniezno. His attributes are objects made of wood: a cross and an oar with a spear with which he was killed during his mission to christianize Prussia in 997.



WOODEN HERITAGE
OF THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF GNIEZNO



MAP KEY

-  CHURCHES INCLUDED IN THE PROJECT
-  OTHER WOODEN CHURCHES

MANNERIST ALTAR

The main altar was made in the Mannerist style in the middle of the 17th century. The style stems from the Renaissance and constitutes its reshaped, changed (mannerist) artistic form. It is characterized by sophistication, refinement, artistry, deliberate artificiality of forms which presumes freedom of artist's imagination and creativity. An element of surprise, illusion and a fanciful unconventionality of ideas are appreciated.

Realistic figures of saint bishops, the patron saints of Poland: St. Adalbert and Stanislaus, were placed in sophisticated frames in auricular style.



THE PATRON SAINT OF POLAND

St. Adalbert, the first patron saint of Poland, was born in 956 in Libice in Bohemia. He received thorough education in a cathedral school in Magdeburg. Despite his young age, when he returned, he became the bishop of Prague. He called for transformation of life and abandonment of bad habits of the noblemen and the clergy as well, however, his opinion was not popular. He left Prague and joined the Benedictines and together with his brother, Radzym Gaudenty, he settled in a monastery on the Aventine Hill in Rome. After many voyages to European sanctuaries he visited the court of the Prince Bolesław the Brave. From there, he left for a mission to the pagan Prussia. During his Christianization attempts with his companions, he was attacked and killed. The martyr's body was reclaimed by Bolesław the Brave and buried in Gniezno. Just after two years after his death he was canonized.

ROOD BEAM

The Group of Crucifixion placed on a rood beam is an interesting object. In the center there is the crucified Christ with the Mother of God and St. John the Evangelist. The expression of the image, the muscular body, visible emotions shown by the poses and faces are characteristic of the Baroque style. Also typical for this period is the shape of the perizonium, the loincloth around Christ' hips, which is relatively narrow with a finesse knot on the side and a rope. There is also an additional element to the cross – a halo which symbolizes divinity and eternal glory.



SACRUM AND PROFANUM

Some elements of furnishings in wooden churches had symbolic functions in dividing the spheres of *sacrum* and *profanum*. Undoubtedly, the rood beam was one of them but one should also pay attention to a balustrade because it has not been preserved in many churches. The balustrade was put on the chancel's steps where the faithful knelt while taking Communion. It is the element of the church's furnishings where the faithful come close to redemption by accepting the Holy Sacrament.

The balustrade consists of decorative balusters. It is finished with a stylized flowery ornament with a capital in a form of head (this way a stylized caryatid – a column in a shape of a woman the type of which dates to Antiquity – was made). All the experience and knowledge was conveyed in this wooden work by an anonymous woodcarver.



PRIVATE ALTAR

An object which stands out from other wooden historic monuments is an altar from the side chapel built in 1720 and made of larch wood. Its founders were the Lutomski family, the owners of the village Łubowo.

Presumably the altar was an expression of gratitude and served for private prayer. Probably the placement of St. John of Nepomuk here – a martyr who died because he didn't want to break the seal of confession – was not accidental. He was the patron saint to whom the most secret pleas, requests and thanksgiving were entrusted. The altar in the chapel, erected as a votive offering, thanksgiving, is a place of focus and silent, inner prayer.

The symbol of the Eye of Providence surrounded by a halo with golden rays.

The fabric is clipped by a crown which is held by angels called puttos.

Characteristic for this altar is a draped, silvered fabric in its centre, called paludamentum.

A votive offering with the Szeliga coat of arms.

On the sides of the fabric there are figures of the Mother of God and St. John of Nepomuk.



WALISZEWO: ST. CATHERINE CHURCH

Date of construction:
1759

MOTHER BOWED WITH GRIEF APPALLING

The date of construction is confirmed by the inscription put of the rood beam – 1759. This place has a special meaning: it's just below the vault between the chancel and the main nave which stands for a symbolic connection of *sacrum* of the chancel and *profanum* – the nave. The Polish name *belka tęczywa* refers to rainbow which links heaven and earth (in English "the rood beam" refers to its role: it supports a large cross at the entrance to the chancel).

A Crucifixion Group, which was created in the first quarter of the 15th century, was put on the rood beam. It is the oldest structure, older than the church itself. It dates back to a former, older church in the place of which a new building was erected.

*Mother bowed with grief appalling
must thou watch, with tears slow falling,
on the cross Thy dying son!
Through my heart, thus sorrow riven,
must that cruel sword be driven,
as foretold – O Holy One!
Oh, how mournful and oppressed
was that Mother ever-blessed,
Mother of the Spotless One:
She, whose grieving was perceiving,
contemplating, unabating,
all the anguish of her Son!*

Sculptures are relatively small, made of unpainted wood. They were made in a coarse manner which resembled folk style.

13th century Latin song
Stabat Mater Dolorosa



Draped robes entwine calm, static figures whose expression is shown mainly by the tilting of their heads. Their poses don't exactly convey sadness and pain after losing the loved one but rather reverie and grief. The figures symbolize reflection on the human life, maybe on its destiny. The wooden sculptures express experience and focus which accompanied anonymous artist who was unmistakably inspired by "the divine spark" seen in those works of art.

SALVADOR MUNDI

The central image of the main altar is a statue Salvador Mundi, i.e. the Savior of the World. It is a hieratic, majestic, frontal image of Jesus Christ shown as the Lord and God. The iconography of a traditionally reigning Christ depicts Him standing or sitting on a throne, holding an orb in His left hand and giving blessings with His right. In later periods, the orb was sometimes replaced with a globe with a cross on top. The image also shows the divine descent of Christ and God-given power over the world.



"MAY YOUR WORD
TO ME BE FULFILLED."

The side altar shows the scene of the Annunciation which is especially important because it presents the most crucial Christian event, often depicted among the themes of religious art. The event from gospels mentioned here is not only an important moment in Mary's life but has also an epochal significance for the history of humankind. In the history of salvation as presented by Christianity, the Annunciation is the moment when the fate of the world is decided, because Mary had a right to choose – she could accept or deny her calling.

SAINT MARTYRS

On the altar's crowning two figures were placed: of St. Barbara (with the tower) and St. Agnes (with the sword, lily and the lamb).

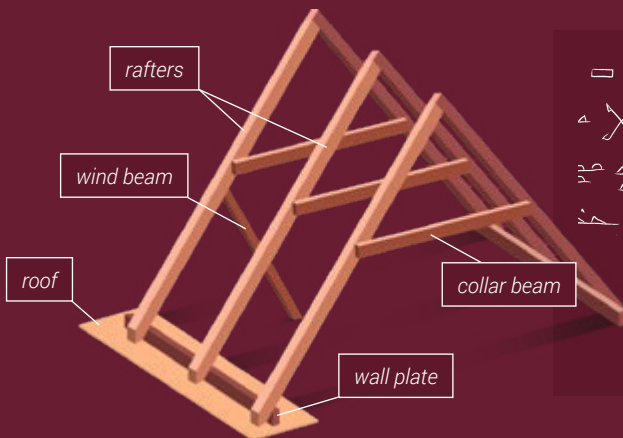
St. Agnes in Antiquity was one of the most popular saints. As a 12 year-old girl who came from an old family, she was to die a martyr's death on a stadium of Domitian around 305. According to an old custom, two lambs are sacrificed on January 21 – to commemorate her death in defense of innocence. She died a martyr's death by beheading with the means of the sword. She was supposed to die by burning at a stake but the saint was not injured. She was sentenced to death due to her denial of marriage proposal because she remained faithful to Christ. Agnes is the patron saint of children, maidens and gardeners.



St. Barbara was depicted with a tower where she was imprisoned because she did not want to renounce Christian faith. She was not given food in order to break her and make her denounce her faith. However, angels fed her with communion wafers during her imprisonment. Then, oppressors tried to break her with tortures and humiliation, eventually, she was beheaded with sword. St. Barbara is the patron saint of hard-working people: miners, steelmakers, sailors, soldiers and stone masons.

ARTISTRY OF CARPENTRY

Rafters are elements present in every building, integral to the construction. They are often underestimated witnesses of history which can provide much new information on a building's story. A rafter roof with collar beam support in the church in Waliszewo is the evidence of that.



Carpenters used woodworking signs, which were graphic marks of construction elements. This allowed to fix the elements in a proper place. Sometimes a date was put – not only in reference to the date of construction of the church but also as a mark of its renovations – and the worker's signature.

SOKOLNIKI: CHURCH OF ST. STANISLAUS THE BISHOP MARTYR

Date of construction:
1682-1712

THE MURDER OF THE BISHOP

The church in Sokolniki is characterized by a beautifully painted interior. Polychromies were made in 1787 by Ignacy Ocaszalski. A fragment of the painting shows "The Martyrdom of St. Stanislaus" to whom the parish is dedicated. St. Stanislaus, whose name means "become famous", was born in 1030 in the village Szczepanowo. From the chronicle of the annalist Wincenty Kadłubek we learn that the bishop was in conflict with the king Bolesław the Bold: he criticized the king's attitude towards the subjects, he rebuked the king and asked Bolesław to come to his senses. He was sentenced to martyr's death by having his limbs cut off. According to the annalist, the hot-headed king killed the disobedient clergyman by himself and cut his body to pieces with a sword.

*Here contending for justice,
He did not yield before the anger of the king:*

*Because he constantly reminded
The tyrant of his brutality,
He gained the crown of a martyr,
And fell quartered into pieces.*

*The Heavens wrought a new miracle,
For the Celestial Physician by His power
The martyr's quartered body
Once more miraculously joined into whole.*

A fragment of 13th-century song
Gaude Mater Polonia
Wincenty of Kielceza (1200-1262)



Over time the cult of St. Stanislaus developed and the bishop was thought to be the patron saint of Poland. The legend of his limbs miraculously fused together with the body had gained special importance. He was considered to be a symbol of the permanence of the state, which united after the feudal fragmentation. Probably the canonization of the saint Wincenty of Kielceza wrote a hymn "Gaude Mater Polonia prole fecunda nobili" (Rejoice, oh Mother Poland, rich in noble offspring) – the song tells about the bishop's service, his martyrdom and miracles which took place after his death.

HOW THE ALTAR WAS BUILT

The most important elements of the church's furnishings are the main altar and a tabernacle inside it. Due to the easiness of processing, the cost and the material's availability they were made of wood. The process of the creation of an altar can be divided into stages. The most important is the collection of the material: wood has to be seasoned properly. The next stage is the removal of knots and the elimination of all roughness. Then on a polished surface a mixture of adhesive-chalk is spread, which is later decorated with ornaments and everything is polychromed, that is painted.

Retable – a kind of an altarpiece. These were usually paintings, sculptures or gold objects, or elements which imitated architectural details put in decorated frames.

In the centre there is a painting of the Mother of God with Child and at the bottom the scene of St. Stanislaus the Bishop's murder was painted. The composition of the scene was copied from the wall polychromy and changed slightly by adding witnesses of the event – standing men in Sarmatian clothing and a dismembered body of the bishop above the group of figures.



Images of Moses and Aaron in laurel wreaths are put above the gates.

Predella – a rectangular element of an altar, the base for the altarpiece standing on the mensa.

Gates on the left and the right sides of the altar allow to walk around it (this solution is modelled on stone churches which possessed the ambulatory).

Tabernacle – a reference to a tent where the Israelites kept the Ark of Covenant (Latin tabernaculum – 'tent'), a richly decorated cabinet used for keeping of consecrated Hosts – the central point of a church.

Mensa – altar plate, often in a shape of a box or a sarcophagus, covered by three linen tablecloths which resemble white sheets which enveloped the body of Christ in the grave.

TO COMMEMORATE

Behind the altar a unique inscription in Latin was placed, which does not appear anywhere else, and which relates to the restoration of the church in 1772 by a priest Andrzej Kosmaciński.



"This church was founded by the faithful in 1682 and when it dilapidated in time it was restored by the most reverent Andrzej Kosmaciński, the doctor of philosophy at the University of Kraków, the rector of Sokolniki and the dean of Gniezno by the church of Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul. In addition, he has recently founded the tower, the two chapels, the vestry and two brick niches. He also ordained many robes thanks to the help of the faithful. Then in 1787 he decorated his beloved church in Sokolniki with beautiful paintings. May God show him His mercy by the prayers of the parishioners and the neighboring people. Once

again in 1886 the church was restored with the help of all parishioners and beautifully painted by the effort of the most reverent Paweł Iwicki and the patron of the church noble sir Franciszek Kruszyński, the owner of Sokolniki estate. It was painted by Bernard Gąsienicki and Bolesław Zwolski of Gniezno."

THE FOUNDERS OF THE CHURCH

On the rood wall on the chancel side portraits of the church's founders were placed. One of them was the rector Adam Gradowicz who was also the rector of the school of St. Mary Magdalene by the Cistercian church in Wągrowiec. He was an extremely colorful character of the 17th century world, he was a philanthropist, and above all, a booklover. He gathered a valuable book collection which included theological, philosophical, historical and poetic works. Eighteen invaluable old prints which belonged to Gradowicz have preserved until today, among them one of the oldest publications of Aristotle (edition form 1545) or Erasmus of Rotterdam (from 1549).



The co-founder of the church in Sokolniki together with Adam Gradowicz was Wawrzyniec Kłosowski. His image was also placed in the medallion on the rood wall.

POPOWO KOŚCIELNE: CHURCH OF ANNUNCIATION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Date of construction:
1629

SARMATIAN TRADITIONS

We can find an image of St. Stanislaus also in the church in Popowo Kościelne – it can be found on the side altar. Here (as in Sokolniki) an artist transferred the historical scene from the 11th century to his times – into the 17th century. The bishop is shown here in typical clergyman's clothes but the rest of the figures are wearing Sarmatian clothing typical for 17th century noblemen.

A Polish Sarmatian was a warrior, his character traits were courage, manhood and also freedom. He should fight to defend the country and Christian faith. Sarmatism as one of the schools of thought and artistic trends of Polish Baroque is an untypical phenomenon. In the church in Popowo Kościelne one can notice its influence in coffin portraits put on the walls made at the end of the 17th century and on many portraits of founders presented in Sarmatian clothing.



Sarmatian clothing was very grand, rich and colourful. It consisted of a caftan tied with a belt, on which a robe called kontush was worn. Shalwar pants were put on legs. Characteristic for a Sarmatian were a mustache and a beard, a trimmed head with a lock of hair left on its top.

According to an 11th century legend Stanislaus the bishop of Cracow planned to build a church. He bought a piece of land from a knight called Piotrowin, who soon died. Stanislaus was accused on taking the land unlawfully. A court was called and the trial began. Because Stanislaus couldn't prove his innocence, the resurrected the deceased Piotrowin so that he could testify. This way the accusation was lifted and St. Stanislaus regained his honour.

PATRON'S LOGE



In the church chancel, the place for the clergy, a patron's (founder's) loge was built. It is a separated area for a few people, usually designed for important people or founders. The Latin word "*collator*" means a donor, patron of the church or its founder. Those people were usually estate owners from the parish area. They had a right to present the bishop candidates for church's benefactors. They could also place tomb slabs in the church and possess their benches.

CELEBRANT'S THRONE

Next to the patron's loge there is one other element of the church furnishing designed for important figures – that is a celebrant's seat. It is placed in the sedilia which is a place for the celebrant and his assistance, usually found in the chancel. Sedillias were put by the chancel's wall. In time, the seats started to resemble thrones, especially the ones for the celebrant. The priest sits there during liturgical chants performed by the choir or during readings. After the renewal of liturgy, the celebrant's and his assistants' seats have been directed so that the faithful know that the celebrant leads the liturgical community.



MYSTICAL CHRIST

In the centre of the Baroque side altar in the church of St. Nicolas there is a figure of the Crucified Christ which is almost 400 years older than the altar itself (it is dated to the half of the 14th century). It was adorned with the cityscape of Jerusalem made of silvered metal sheet with ornamental asymmetric flower motifs also made of metal sheet. The elements were added as recently as the beginning of the 20th century.

Christ Crucified represents a stylistic form of so called mystic type. Not uniform in style, sculptured in such a way that in some places is incorrect in regard to human anatomy (eg. the pattern of ribs is not accurate), it shows a special moment. It is the moment of agony shown by a falling head with a subtle wince of pain and the weight of body supported by hands which are tense with visible tendons. The connection of suffering and acceptance of inevitable destiny, peace which emanates from the tortured body is linked with need for presentation of the human nature of Christ – suffering and reconciled with his sacrifice.



A PROMINENT PREACHER

Another side altar shows the image of St. Anthony of Padua. He lived in the 13th century and became famous for passionate preaching when he called for conversion. He had a great memory, broad knowledge and a strong, clear voice. He was well understood not only by the Italians, but also by the Spaniards and the German. He was canonized a year after his death. He was buried in Padua in a church especially built for this purpose. His vocal cords which helped him to preach the glory of God have not decayed.



St. Anthony battled usury. During all his life he was poor and he cared for the poor that is why in our churches there are money boxes for the poor next to his images. In this respect the saint still cares for them. The legend has it that he possessed the gift of bilocation (which means he could be in two places at a time) and that he read people's hearts. He performed many miraculous healings from serious illnesses. He is depicted with little Baby Jesus because according to legend one night Baby Jesus visited him, kissed him and assured of God's love for him. In a short time he was pronounced a Doctor of the Church.

In order to protect the historical painting of St. Anthony, the silver dress has been hung separately, which allowed to exhibit the two works in their full glory.



PROTECT OUR CITY

In the side altar there is a painting of Our Lady of Consolation. This is a copy of the painting from the sanctuary in Borek Wielkopolski. In the second half of the 17th century a pilgrimage movement became strong there because the image of the Mother of God of Borek was famous for miracles and graces. Many copies were made then and placed in churches in the whole country, also in Inowrocław.

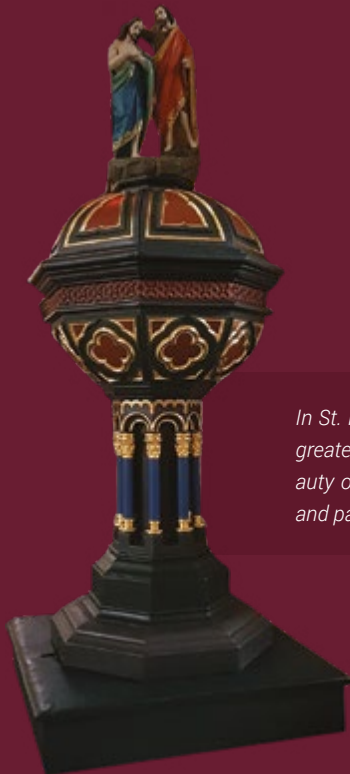
Above Mary's image there is an inscription: „Regina Poloniae praesidium urbs nostra” - Queen of Poland, protect our city.

The miraculous painting depicts Mary's torso – She is holding the Baby in the left hand and she is pointing at Him with her right hand, as if she was saying: “Go to Jesus, whatever he orders you to do, do it!”.



BAPTIZM IN THE JORDAN RIVER

Indispensable equipment of Catholic church is a baptismal font. The one in the church in Inowrocław is made of wood. It represents a goblet type baptismal font – its original elements are a bowl with a cover, the pillar and the foundation. A sculpture representing the scene of Christ's baptism performed by John the Baptist was put on the top.



The Gospel by St. Mark says: “John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

In St. Nicholas church in Inowrocław Jan Kasproicz, one of the greatest Polish poets, was baptized in 1860. He glorified the beauty of the landscape of the Kuyavia region where he was born, and parts of his poems were written in a stylized regional dialect

SKOKI

ALL HALLOWS CHURCH
RACZKOWO



CHURCH OF MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL
JABŁKOWO

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CHURCH OF THE MOST SACRED
HEART OF JESUS
REJOWIEC



CHURCH OF CORPUS CHRISTI
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CHAPEL OF ST. ROSALIA
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CHURCH OF ST. CATHERINE
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ETHNOGRAPHIC PARK
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CHURCH OF ST. MARTIN
KACZANOWO



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CHURCH OF ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE
NOWA WIEŚ KRÓLEWSKA K. WRZESNIA



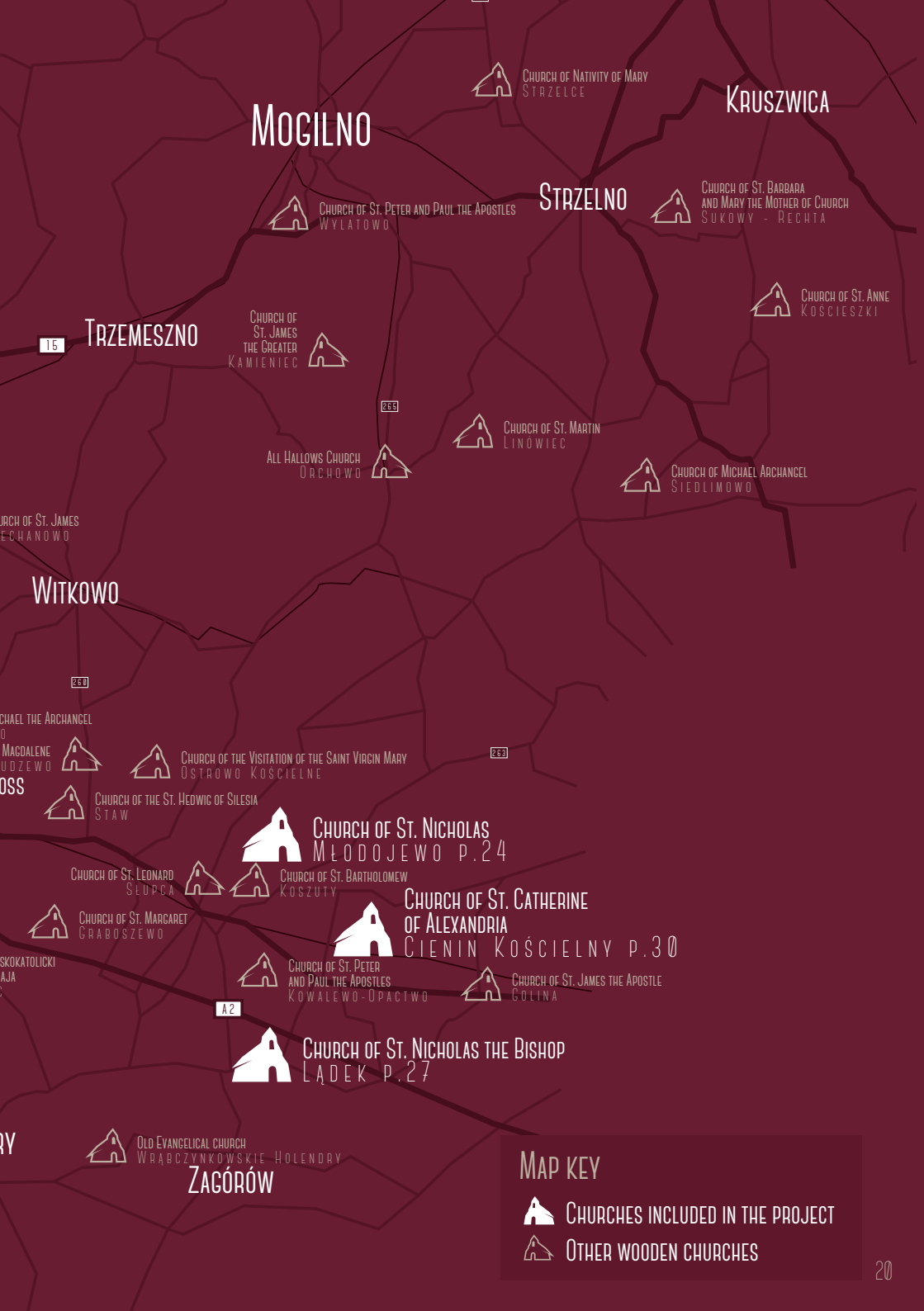
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Zieliniec

MIŁOSŁAW

PYZDRA

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF GNIEZNO

SOUTHERN PART



MOGILNO

CHURCH OF NATIVITY OF MARY
STRZELCE

KRUSZWICA

STRZELNO

CHURCH OF ST. PETER AND PAUL THE APOSTLES
WYLATÓW

CHURCH OF ST. BARBARA
AND MARY THE MOTHER OF CHURCH
SUKOWY - RECHTA

CHURCH OF ST. ANNE
KOŚCIESZKI

TRZEMESZNO

CHURCH OF
ST. JAMES
THE GREATER
KAMIEŃC

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CHURCH OF ST. MARTIN
LINOWIEC

CHURCH OF MICHAEL ARCHANGEL
SIEDLIMÓW

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OLD EVANGELICAL CHURCH
WRĄBCZYŃKOWSKIE HOLENDRY

ZAGÓRÓW

MAP KEY

-  CHURCHES INCLUDED IN THE PROJECT
-  OTHER WOODEN CHURCHES

ARMA CHRISTI

The central depiction in the church of the Cross in Września-Lipówka is a painting "The Crucifixion" which it thought to have been made in 1641. The main figures are Crucified Christ, the Mother of God and St. John. There is a panoramic painting of an unidentified city, an advancing army and a small figure of a kneeling priest in a surplice. It is probably the founder of the chapel, Stanisław Bielawski, the rector of Września from 1627 – 1648.



In the main altar's antependium there is a unique painting depicting Arma Christi, i.e. the Instruments of the Passion. They include:

- the veil with the image of nailed feet and hands with a burning heart in front of the cross
- nails
- the crown of thorns
- INRI inscription
- the hammer and pincers
- the whip and the birch for flagellation
- the lantern (people of the high priest were looking for Christ with lanterns in the Gethsemane)
- the gauntlet (a motif from "Lenten Lamentations" which mention a soldier who was beating the Savior in the face)
- the money bag (Judas betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver)
- the scarlet robe (the color of martyrdom)
- the vessel
- the chain
- the dice (soldiers cast lots for the Lord's robes)
- the sponge on the reed (a sponge was soaked with vinegar and given to Christ)
- the lance (it pierced Christ's side)
- the ladder (the symbol of removal of Jesus' body from the cross)
- the column (by which Christ was whipped)

AN ESCAPE FROM THE PLAGUE

The erection of the church in Lipka is connected with a miraculous spring. The tradition of healings attributed to it is emphasized by the pictures of saints in the church: Rosalia and Roch who guarded from the plague and infectious diseases.

St. Rosalia was a virgin and a hermit who lived in the 12th century in Palermo. She was born in a wealthy family where she grew up in Christian faith. Her name Rosalia got her closer to God – rosa means love to fellow men and to God, and lilly stands for purity and devotion to God. The saint declined the proposition of marriage to a young man from a rich family and she escaped to a cave near to Palermo, where she led a hermit's life, full of prayers and mortification. She died at thirty-one.



*O Great St. Roch, deliver us,
we beseech thee,
from the scourges of God;
through thy Intercessory,
preserve our bodies from contagious diseases,
and our souls from the contagion of sin.
Obtain for us salubrious air;
but, above all, purity of heart.
Assist us to make good use of health,
to bear suffering with patience;
and, after thy example,
to live in the practice of penance and charity,
that we may one day enjoy the happiness
which thou has merited by thy virtues.*



St. Roch lived in the 13th-14th century and was born in Languedoc. As his mother prayed for a child, he was born with a cross-shaped birthmark on his chest. He gave all his money he inherited to the poor and he helped in a hospital in Rome. He became famous during his lifetime due to miraculous healing; however, he fell sick with the plague himself. When he returned to Languedoc, he was considered a spy and captured. Probably his jealous uncle was behind it. Roch died after being captured and put to jail and he was recognized by the local people thanks to the birthmark. On the body there was a piece of paper which said that those who asked St. Roch for help in the time of plague would be healed. St. Roch is the guardian of the sick, hospitals, prisoners and is called especially during plague.

LORD'S TRANSFIGURATION

Polychromy, multi-colored paintings which decorate walls, roofs or vaults, are one of the most common decorations of churches' interiors. The interior of the church in Lipówka is decorated with polychromy from the second half of the 19th century. Elements of architecture such as cornices, pilasters with marbleizing and a pedestal were painted on wooden planks – they imitated ornaments of brick buildings. Intense blue color dominates and fills spaces between painted bright pilasters. The central scene of the roof painting is the scene of Lord's Transfiguration. The paintings were made in the third quarter of the 18th century in the folk baroque style.

"After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus" (Mark 9, 2-9)



Under the wall panelling during conservation works, older polychromy was found (depicting consecration, apostle crosses usually put in twelve spots anointed by a bishop during devotement or consecration of a church, under which candlesticks or lamps were placed) as well as fragments of borders (an ornamental, draped fabric) which decorated the chancel's walls.

A STORY ABOUT THE PASSION AND RESURRECTION

The triptych from St. Nicholas church in Młodojewo is an outstanding and unique work of art. The name means that it consists of three main elements: the central one with the painting of Christ crucified and side movable wings covered on both sides with paint decorations. Usually the triptych is opened, apart from Easter period when the wings are closed to present the scenes connected with Resurrection.

veraikon – an image of Christ on a piece of cloth

farewell of Christ with His Mother before the Torment (a scene not identified completely)

flagellation

Crowning with Thorns

fall before the Cross

Ecce Homo

The main painting is the scene of "The Crucifixion of Christ" with two thieves.

The triptych was created in 1581-1582 (dates are put in different places of the painting).



The triptych is not a common painting that depicts the Crucifixion. Its artistic style connects two epochs: late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The form of the triptych is typical for the late Gothic and also the way the figures were painted and their styling were created in the Gothic aesthetics. However, the landscape in the background, the use of perspective, Mary Magdalene's and the horse-man's robes are Renaissance elements. Presumably, those figures are the founders. Additionally, the depiction of the founders in the same size as the rest of the figures in the painting is an innovation (in comparison to Gothic).



Unusual is also the way of presenting scenes of the Passion of Christ as a story, a tale with a message told by an anonymous artist. Through his work, the artist engages the viewer in a dialogue by including symbolic content and by referring to the viewer's erudition, knowledge and sensitivity (eg. dates, the figures of thieves, skulls). The work displays the artist's expression and skills, but it also conveys history – the obvious, mainstream one and the symbolic one found between brushstrokes. Undoubtedly, the divine spark had given the artist his talent thanks to which a mere piece of wooden plank turned into extraordinary work of art.

PENSIVE CHRIST

Pensive Christ image is first and foremost a depiction of human nature of God deprived of supernatural perfection who is sad and lost in thought over the cruelty of men. The iconography had become common in folk art – sculptures were put in small chapels by country roads which served for local, folk religious practices. In the old days, Pensive Christ was a commonplace element of the countryside.

The sculpture shows Christ who is sitting and contemplating, with his head supported by a hand. Some read this depiction as a figure of Christ waiting for crucifixion just after the torment, to which the Crown of Thorns and the marks of flagellation indicate. Another, more general interpretation states that this is a symbolic summary of the whole Passion.

The figure of Pensive Christ was made in the Gothic style from wood almost 500 years ago.

***What are you thinking about, sitting on a rock, lonely,
With the chin on your hand, O Christ, weary,
Probably about salvation, about death which will bind you,
About shattering of the gates of hell, about strong Kingdom of God.***



Pensive Christ
Klemens Janicki (1516-1543)

THE CONQUEROR OF DEATH

The figure of Christ Victorious is present in every catholic church. The one form Młodojewo is special because it is almost 400 years old. Not very big, just around 70 cm tall, the figure of Christ was shown with the right hand raised while giving blessings. The Savior is wearing a red cloak, which used to symbolize slander, and after the victorious resurrection became the symbol of Christ's martyrdom. Additional element which emphasizes the divine reign is the crown of Christ's head and which indicates the rule of God on earth.

*"The Lord is resurrected, the heaven sounds with victorious glory.
Who like Him shines so majestically"*

Easter song



THE RICHNESS OF DETAILS

The main altar was made in the Late-baroque style in the first half of the 18th century. This period of art is characterized by enormous grandeur of the altar, the excess of forms and overabundance of details. Especially intriguing are two of them, sculptured in the form of elaborate vases and put on the altar's frames. Presumably these are reliquaries used to keep holy relics because they have a small window in the wall. The place where they were put is untypical because they were exposed in the altar's crowning, on the sides of God's Providence. The symbol of God's intercession surrounded by gold flames and clouds is the symbol of faith, it highlights the fact that God watches over the faithful. The divine "sight" exposes the presence of the All-seer where the man finds safety and support. There are statues on sides: St. Nicholas with gold orbs and St. Stanislaus with resurrected Piotrowin.



CHRIST WHO SUFFERS

Wooden historical artworks as elements of furnishings are also found in churches made of stone. A beautiful processional cross attracts attention in the church of St. Nicholas in Łądek.

The sculpture which presents the dramatic moment of Christ's death was created 500 years ago. Unknown artist focused on the details of the crucified body. The hands which carry the body's weight are very stretched: muscles and tendons are depicted in great detail. Maybe by referring to the viewers' imagination, the artist wanted to emphasize Christ's suffering? He poured his own emotions into the sculpture by devoting himself to hard work with chisel and wood.

The figure of Christ, which has been saved from oblivion recently, is today a part of the processional cross that accompanies the citizens of Łądek during many ceremonies, eg. it leads Resurrection and Corpus Christi processions.

The acronym INRI put of the cross means: Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum – Jesus of Nazareth Jewish King.

Christ's tunic (so called perizonium) was presented in different ways during ages. In the Middle Ages, it was very short, draped with a knot on the side.



A TWIN SET

In the span between the chancel and the nave twin objects were put next to each other – a pulpit and a baptismal font. Made in the second half of the 18th century, they represent the Rococo style and are adorned with subtle rocaille (subtle ornaments in a shape of a shell or sea flora) with blue marblization (a kind of painting on wood, a form of delicate venation which imitates marble, adding nobility).

The two objects were decorated with a backrest crowned with pelmets (decorated with a wooden curtain covered with silver). Above it there are figures: of John the Baptist on the baptismal font and Christ giving blessings on the pulpit, and canopies of both objects were topped with a beautiful silver bunch of grapes. Special attention should be put to the font which stands out by a closed canopy where a basin with holy water was placed. It is an extremely rare solution. Its form imitates the shape of the pulpit and only during the baptism ceremony does it reveal its purpose.



THE LEGEND OF ST. NICHOLAS

One of the most common patron saints of churches is St. Nicholas – we can find his image also on a feretory (a portable religious painting painted on both sides, in decorative frames which is held during processions) from Łądek. The oldest record of St. Nicholas says that he lived in the turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries and that he was a bishop of Myra. He became famous for his miracles and help for the poor. His parents were noble, rich and religious. When he grew up, he renounced women, entertainments, politics and trade and he devoted himself to piety.

St. Nicholas is thought to be the saint who helps in every need – that's why so many churches are dedicated to him.

After his parents death Nicholas gave his money away. He advocated for victims, and aided the poor. He is presented with three orbs which can be attributed to a legend of the the neighbour's three daughters. The neighbour was punished by God for his greed and he lost his wealth so he didn't have a dowry for the daughters. He wanted to sell them to a brothel. Then St. Nicholas decided to save the girls and he threw bags with money through windows. Only when the third daughter collected the money, did the neighbour decide to learn who was so generous and when he discovered the truth, ashamed he thanked Nicholas.



CONFESSIO MEANS 'I CONFESS'

Another element of the furnishings is not associated with a work of art. A confessional (from Latin *confessio* – 'I confess') is an object designed for a private confession. A confessional is a mute witness of confessions which men make for God; it witnesses humility, confessions of guilt, the need for the remission of sins and hope. The form in which priest listens to the faithful ensures anonymity of the sinner. Man who decides to take confession has to be sure that their sins will not get out of the wooden confessional through which they confide their weaknesses to God in hope of redemption.



CIENIN KOŚCIELNY: CHURCH OF ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA

Date of construction:
1748-1802

DEBATE WON

There is an image of the patron saint of the church, St. Catherine, in the side altar. The saint was born in Alexandria in the 3rd century and she came from a wealthy family. She was famous for her beauty and intelligence, and she was also well educated and, being a Christian, she took a vow of celibacy. During persecutions of Christians she was captured and forced to make an offering to idols. When she denied, the emperor ordered a religious dispute between Catherine and fifty philosophers. Catherine managed to defeat her opponents by showing the righteousness of Christianity which led many of them to convert to Christian faith. Angry emperor convicted her for torture by a means of a breaking wheel among others, which became her attribute. She died by beheading with sword when she was 18.



MUSIC IS PRAYER



According to St. Augustine, “who sings, prays twice”, the complement to the Word of God proclaimed from the pulpit was liturgical singing in which all faithful should participate. Pipe-organs, organ cases and music gallery are indispensable elements of church. They are on the opposite side of the main altar which allows the sound of the organs to “float” above the heads of the faithful, to fill the space and complete celebrations. Organs create a sublime and solemn atmosphere and they enhance the mystery of the mass.

AMBO MEANS 'ELEVATION'

Not many elements in church have lost their function in the process of technical development and which are completely abandoned in modern churches – such an element is a pulpit (Polish *ambona* from Latin *ambo* – 'elevation'). It served to proclaim the word of God and to deliver sermons. It was put on a pillar or the rood screen, in a place between *sacrum* (chancel) and *profanum* (nave) considerably high above the floor so that the voice of priest reached the farthest corners of the church. A priest on in a pulpit delivered sermons in mother tongues, he interpreted the Bible and explained it for the faithful (the official language of the holy mass was Latin). The pulpit in the parish church in Cienin Kościelny had an unusual form. The doors in the rood screen lead to the pulpit, inside hidden steps go up to the elevation.



The basket of the pulpit have been decorated with bas-reliefs of images of the four Evangelists with their attributes (Mark with a lion, Matthew with a man, Luke with an ox and John with an eagle) and the image of Jesus Christ – with an open book with Greek letter alpha and omega which symbolize a beginning and an end.

Attributes with whom the Evangelists are presented are symbols of Christ: "As man he suffered, as lion he conquered, as eagle he flew, as ox sacrificed"

CREDENCE TABLE IN THE VESTRY

An object which is little known – because it is hidden from the faithful who take part in the holy mass liturgy – is a credence table. The one from Cienin was made in the beginning of the 20th century in the eclectic style and represents a piece of work of an outstanding carpentering workshop. It is used to store liturgical vessels, books, table cloths and other objects necessary during the mass. Despite the fact that this particular piece of furniture has a practical function, it is not deprived of sophistication and aesthetic value. Rounded corners, wavy lines, precise key locks and the final shine are evidences that even object which are not exhibited publicly were also beautiful and carefully made.





INOWROCŁAW:
PARISH CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS



CIENIN KOŚCIELNY:
CHURCH OF ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA



ŁADEK:
CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS



ŁUBOWO:
CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS



MŁODOJEWO:
CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS



POPOWO KOŚCIELNE:
CHURCH OF ANNUNCIATION TO THE BLESSED
VIRGIN MARY



SOKOLNIKI:
CHURCH OF ST. STANISLAUS
THE BISHOP MARTYR



WALISZEWO:
CHURCH OF ST. CATHERINE



WRZEŚNIA:
CHURCH OF HOLY CROSS



WOODEN HERITAGE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF GNIEZNO

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- check the website: www.zabytkizdrewna.pl or www.bozaiskra.pl/bydgoszcz
- download the book-guide from the website: tab **Download materials**
- download the application on your mobile phone (android/iOS): **Historical Wooden Buildings – the Archdiocese of Gniezno or The Divine Spark** (you will also find historical objects from the Dioceses of Bydgoszcz and Kalisz).

Use materials for people who are blind or visually impaired (texts in the braille alphabet and tactile pictures).

WANT TO SEE MORE?



Enter the website www.bozaiskra.pl and plan your trip around the Archdioceses of Gniezno and the Dioceses of Kalisz and Bydgoszcz.

The Divine Spark is a project for tourists which presents wooden historical buildings and objects from the perspective of the artists' and artisans' talent and the faithful for whom the works of art were intermediaries for their pleas and prayers as well as witnesses of human emotion.