

## Summary

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### THE SACRED OF SPACETIME – REINTERPRETATION – CONTROVERSIES – THE WORLD OF VALUES

**T**he purpose of this publication is to remind and sensitize. We need to be reminded that in the surrounding world (*saeculum*), not only are we accompanied by the profane (*profanum*), but also by the sacred (*sacrum*). Moreover, this state of affairs is not exclusively specific to the church sphere. In fact, all the three above-mentioned realities constitute our daily and festive life in the midst of our landscapes, charms of nature, as well as the architecture and urban planning of our villages, towns and large cities.

The book begins with an overview of the main views and phenomena and of our multi-layered daily experiences of the reality that surrounds us – which Mieczysław Porębski calls the iconsphere. This reality is extremely diverse. It may be attractive, touching and enchanting with order and harmony, but it is also chaotic, disorganised, noisy, or even repulsive at times. What about church spheres? They are also different – both in size and prestige. They include: chapels, subsidiary churches, parish churches, cathedrals, basilicas, monasteries and sanctuaries. They differ in terms of art, aesthetic sensitivity, the distinctiveness of theological message or in the integral and clear iconographic interior layout. It is the spaces, places and spheres that I put particular emphasis on in this book.

What I pay special attention to is the hierarchy of values and importance. I also warn against ordinariness, or even kitschiness forcing its way into the iconsphere. We are obviously aware of the fact that churches are inhabited by living and real God, i.e. the Lord in the Eucharist (tabernacle, monstrance). We also remember that the whole building, including the altar, is ceremonially consecrated (*delicatio ecclesiae et altaris*), which indicates its special status and the purpose it serves (liturgy and prayer). These spheres are abundant in biblical, symbolic or hagiographic content. We are aware of this content, but we need to have a deeper insight into its nature. This is where the main problem appears: what should we do to make believers and other people, often religiously neutral or even atheistic, perceive the things that are holy and consecrated by name and purpose as such. How to maintain, conserve and use our churches so that they will not lose what is really important and is the value in itself, i.e. their sacred atmosphere, the foretaste of heaven and closeness to God?

Conducting liturgy without mystery authenticity, with no mystagogical awareness and abandoning engagement in celebration art (*ars celebrandi*) is equivalent to the violation or even profanation of church *sacrum*. This holiest activity is often conducted in an untidy, disorganised environment which is devoid of artistic merits. Holy and ceremonially consecrated spaces sometimes become venues of commercial, advertising, exhibition or entertainment activities, which may even have the blasphemous or idolatrous character. It is a common occurrence in the West that Christian communities, together with their hierarchs, dispose of sacral buildings. Before they do so, however, they gain financial benefits thanks to their contribution to the secularization or profanation of those buildings.

This book is not just a theoretical reflection. It clearly and distinctly confronts the man and the sacred with time and space. I put special emphasis on the significance of the context, circumstances and something that is called *genius loci*. First of all, however, I defend the personalistic approach. It refers to the ties that people constituting a given church, and those who attend it, have with their personal

God. This is the state of spirit and individual manners of the people who take care of and make decisions concerning a given building that determine the quality and status of our historic and contemporary churches. The sagacity and openness of priests will ensure a high artistic level of our churches, as well as they will help to preserve their sacral status and their liturgical, prayer and adoration function. Such approach will save these spaces from ordinariness, chaos and disorder. It will protect them against – as Benedict XVI expressed it – the blackmail of absurdity and the terror of relativism.

What makes this publication so relevant is the fact that it makes readers sensitive to a number of factors that have often been neglected. They include the external appearance (mass) of a church, its near and distant surrounding, its introductory part and its interior layout as a consistent whole, in which one may experience the atmosphere of the House of God, as well as the house of the divine community. It is of the utmost importance that the message of a given church – as well as its specific nature and uniqueness – is appropriately communicated. First of all, however, the building should not only be watched and admired (*vide* gallery), but it should also serve as a place of calm reflection, meditation, or even contemplation. This will become possible only if we return to the above-mentioned “personalistic” approach and do not confine ourselves to the material, technical and technological views. Therefore, we should educate young artists (architects, visual artists, builders), as well as church administrators and investors (parish priests, custodians). They should all safeguard the primacy of sacredness, which should take this *hic et nunc* into consideration, while respecting the legacy of past generations and maintain a truly creative attitude. It is of particular importance in the contemporary world, now that Europe is becoming secularized and is losing its identity. I hope this book will raise spirits and help to shape a better tomorrow through beauty and *sacrum*. Thus, *sursum corda*.