



**The Holly Cross Church in Jelenia Góra  
Formerly known as – the Church of Grace  
– the Christ's Cross Church**



On 1st September 1709, the Austrian emperor Joseph I from the Habsburg dynasty, in the face of war and the Swedish intervention, during the convention in Altranstädt, had to grant Protestants freedom of religion again. In addition, he also promised the King of Sweden Karol XII to build six new churches in the Lower Silesia region, including Jelenia Góra as well. These temples were called "the churches of Grace", because they could be built only when accepted by the emperor. To diminish the importance of evangelical communities, all new churches could be located only at the outskirts of towns.

The Jelenia Góra Lutherans made the decision about building of a new church quickly. However, they had to pay through the nose. Together with five other Silesian towns, they gave 3000 ducats in cash to the emperor as a gift as well as a non-returnable loan in the amount of 100 000 guildens. At the same time, the King of Sweden Karol XII, for his intercession, received 200 000 guildens. The baron Henning von Strahlenheim, who represented the King in the Lower Silesia and who was an adviser in the court of Vienna, received 20 000 guildens.

On 22nd April 1709, the count Hans Anton von Schaffgotsch (the foreman of the Świdnica-Jawor duchy and the envoy of the emperor Joseph I) and the count Ludwig von Zinzendorff (the envoy of the emperor at the Swedish court) chose the garden owned by the Kämmerer family as a location for a new church. As an expression of the emperor's favour, a halberd with the eagle of Habsburg dynasty was driven into the ground. The cornerstone was laid on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1709. Then, on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1715, a golden knob was put up on the dome as a symbol of completion of the church. Actually, all decoration works were completed within the next three years and finally the consecration of the church took place on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1718.

Martin Frantz ("the Swede man from Reval" – nowadays Tallinn in Estonia) became a main architect of the new temple. He designed the Jelenia Góra church according to wishes of his employers on the model and resemblance of the Saint Catharine church in Stockholm. The structure of the new church was based on the Greek cross, with five towers. It was covered by the

octagonal dome placed on a square base. The Saint Catharine church, designed by the French man Jean de la Vallée, was built between 1656 and 1670.

The Jelenia Góra church was solid and thanks to that it resisted fire on 16th October 1806. The fact is the dome was destroyed and all bells melted however the vault protected the inside of the church effectively.

In 1909, on the occasion of 200-year anniversary of the temple, a major overhaul took place. At that time, an annexe to the church, called "The History room", was built. There were documents connected with the 200-year old garrison of Jelenia Góra. In addition, all wooden staircases were rebuilt as well (from that



moment on, they were made of stone) and ornamented with elements typical for Neobaroque and Art Nouveau.

At the same time, over portals of four entrances to annexes of the church, animal bas-reliefs as follows: an eagle, a lion, a deer and a pelican feeding her little baby pelicans were placed. The eagle and the lion are royal symbols. They are conquerors of dragons and snakes and represent the idea of triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. The deer is the symbol of desire for God (from the psalm: "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants after you, God"). The pelican is the symbol of self-giving love.

Up to 1947, the Grace church was the evangelic, later on, the catholic temple. In 1957, it became a garrison church of the Polish army and also a heart of the downtown parish. In 2000 it received the status of a jubilee church. Two years later, on 14th September 2002, the act of location of the Holly Cross Wood Relic took place.

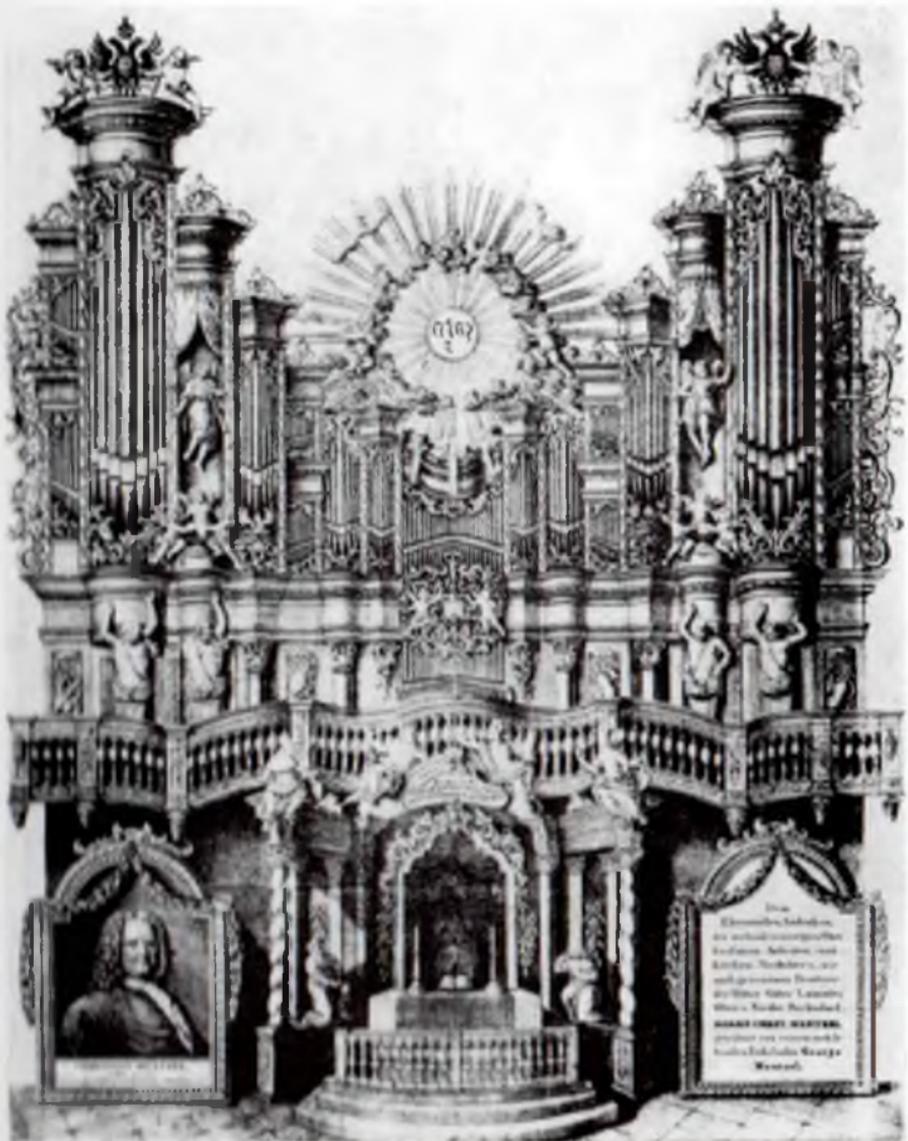
The entire building is of the impressive size. The length of the nave is 74 meters, the aisle is 47 meters and the height measured from the floor up to the cross (situated in the dome) is 57 meters. The church seats almost 10 000 of the faithful and at the same time 4 000 of them may sit. It was calculated that 1 278 people may sit on the benches located on the ground floor, 2 202 on galleries and in the past 540 noble men could sit in the boxes.

The three storey-galleries are slightly shifted, what cause, on the one hand, narrowing of the interior of the church, whereas on the other hand the extension of the area. As a result, significant number of the faithful may participate in masses. The galleries are supported by wooden columns ornamented with golden capitals – on the first storey – ionic and on the second – corinthian.

The outside elevation of the church is not decorated richly however unique epitaphs can be found there. To mention the one dedicated to memory of the local rector Gottlob Adolph who was killed during preaching a sermon on the pulpit on 1st August 1745. During the storm, a lightning hit the dome and as the consequence electric charges lid down along the line fastening a canopy of a pulpit and killed the priest.

## The Main Altar with the Organ

The main altar of the church was built in 1733 and was founded by a senior guild and, at the same time, a merchant Christian Gottfried Mentzel. From among a few creators of the altar, only one name is known – the Jelenia Góra master guild David Hielscher. There is Otto Mangelber's painting entitled "Jesus Christ in the Garden of Getsemane" which is surrounded by fancy columns and sculptures. On the left, there is a king from



the bible Ezekiel presented as a young man who is holding a book. On the right, there is a sculpture of Jesus Christ who is trampling earthly goods and carrying the cross. After the Second World War, under the painting, other sculptures were added – penance Saint Peter and penance Mary Magdalena with the crucifix.

From many sculptures located on the altar, especially women wearing imperial laces draw the attention. One of them is holding the sceptre; another one is supporting the broken column. The first one symbolizes the power, however also love of a sovereign to his/her subjects. The second one, personifies bravery. In the past, basing on existing coats of arms, people claimed that the first sculpture of woman personifies Silesia, whereas the second - Jelenia Góra.

The Organ – one of few baroque instruments preserved without major changes. It was built between 1724 and 1727 and then erected within two following years. The organ was founded by generous Ch. G. Mentol and was designed by Michael Röder from Berlin. Jan Jerzy Urbański from Wrocław (probably born in Czech Republic) is the author of the sculptures. Four half-naked athletes are holding the largest pipe towers. Other figures symbolize Fame and Peace. There are also political accents in the decoration of the prospect of the organ. In finials of both right and left pipe towers, over beams, there are cartouches ornamented with imperial crowns and double-headed eagles of emperors from the Habsburg dynasty.

The Pulpit – made of sandstone, is partly gold-plated. The canopy is made of chromium-plated wood. The pulpit was founded in 1717 by a Zgorzelec merchant Melchior Berthold (who was born in Jelenia Góra). It was probably built by Franz Ferdinand Bechert from Jelenia Góra. Three angles support the octagonal base of the pulpit. There is an anchor which may symbolize Hope. The cartouche at the top of the pulpit, presents Fortune – a naked woman who is standing on the sphere and is holding a piece of cloth resembling a sail. There are four evangelists, Jesus Christ and personifications of two virtues – Faith (holding a cross) and Love (with a baby) on oval fields. There are sculptures of apostles, the puttee and the dove of the Holy Spirit on the canopy.

The Font - a gift from Johann Martin Gottfried, built by the unknown sculptor between 1717 and 1718, made of blue marble from Przeworno and silicon alabaster. The font is supported by lion paws made of bronze. The cover is made of chromium-plated wood. Bas-reliefs present the baptism of Jesus Christ in Jordan.

The Clock - was installed under the dome in 1737, with the face of weight approximately 840 kg. The clock has been modernized several times - last time in 2000. At present, its mechanism weighs 150 kg. The wooden face of diameter 285 cm and thickness 8-9 cm hangs 25 m above the floor. The length of the hour hand is 130 cm, whereas the minute hand is 90 cm. The weight of the chandelier, which is situated in the centre of the clock, is approximately 450 kg.

## **Paintings**

Paintings of the vault. Frescos - located in the nave and the chancel - were created by Felix Anton Scheffler (1749-51) from Munich. Those located in the aisle, were painted by - Johann Franz Hoffmann (1734-35) from Głogów. The subject matter was taken from The Old and The New Testament.\_

Paintings on the galleries. The galleries are supported by columns ornamented with golden capitals - on the first storey - ionic and on the second - corinthian. Paintings were created by various artists including Michael Börnschlägel and others unknown. The paintings illustrate the history of life, torture and the death of Saviour in the chronological order - the herald, the birth and the circumcision.

## Tomb chapels

Between 1710 and 1770 around the church and then existing cemetery some rococo and baroque style chapels were built. Four of them – the most impressive of all - were owned by Glafey (built in 1716), Baumgarthen(1719), Winckler (1740) and Gottfried(1738) families.

The House of Cantors – built in 1737, in the past was a house for cantors, bell-ringers and church guards.





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