

Filial Churches as a Sustainable Development Constituent

Kościół filialne jako element zrównoważonego rozwoju

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Abstract

The catholic social sciences have always been associated with the idea of sustainable development. This is affirmed by the numerous writings of John Paul II and nowadays, emphasised in the speeches of Pope Francis. The paper considers the environmental aspects of the filial churches functioning. It investigates whether they fit with the idea of sustainable development. Considerations are carried with particular reference to the thirteen filial churches in Zawierciański pastoral district of the Archdiocese of Częstochowa, Poland.

Key words: filial churches, sacral buildings, sustainable development

Streszczenie

W nauczaniu społecznym kościoła katolickiego zawsze można było zauważyć silne powiązania z ideą zrównoważonego rozwoju. Dowodem na to jest wiele pism Jana Pawła II, a obecnie szczególnie liczne wypowiedzi na ten temat papieża Franciszka. Biorąc za punkt wyjścia te rozważania teoretyczne autorka analizuje ekologiczne aspekty funkcjonowania kościołów filialnych, badając jak obiekty te pasują do idei zrównoważonego rozwoju. Zagadnienie zostało omówione na przykładzie trzynastu kościołów filialnych zawierciańskiego okręgu duszpasterskiego archidiecezji częstochowskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: kościoły filialne, budynki sakralne, zrównoważony rozwój

Introduction

There are 310 parishes in the archdiocese of Częstochowa, some of which have filial churches within their boundaries. These are objects situated within the parish but which are not the main church building. The functional design of filial churches is generally poorer than that of parish churches, and the buildings are smaller. Filial churches were erected, especially in territorially large parishes, to shorten the travel time for the faithful to worship. Long distances from church cause particular difficulty for elderly parishioners, children and adolescents. The expectations of believers have changed, compared to the past, and nowadays people expect the journey to the church to be both comfortable and short.

The Archdiocese of Częstochowa is divided into four pastoral districts: Częstochowski, Radomszczański, Wieluński and Zawierciański. Across the four districts, the author has documented 74 filial churches and chapels. These studies focused on

churches built after 1945, as previously filial churches practically did not exist.

In the Częstochowski region of the Archdiocese of Częstochowa, 85 new church buildings have been erected since 1945, of which 76 are parish churches and 9 (12%) are filial churches. There are many more filial churches in the three other, less urbanized pastoral districts of the Archdiocese. The greatest number have been erected in the Wieluński region, where agricultural land predominates. Here, there are 51 new church buildings in total, including 26 parish churches and 25 (49%) filial churches.

The Radomszczański region comprises 61 church buildings erected since World War II. Of these 33 are parish churches and 28 (46%) are filial churches. The Zawierciański pastoral region has the least number of churches built since 1945 – only 37. Of these 24 are parish churches and 13 (35%) are filial churches.

The social teaching of the Catholic Church has always been tied in with the issue of sustainable

Table 1. Filial churches of Zawierciański pastoral district: data concerning the construction of the walls and roofs, source: author's own research

No.	Church	Location	Kind of external walls	Coef. $U_{c(max)}$	Roof construction	Years of construction
1.	Filial church of St. John Vianney	Mzyki (par. Gniazdów)	hollow cinder blocks 51 cm + external plaster	0.753	wooden	1989-1994
2.	Filial church of St. Francis of Assisi	Gęzyn (par. Koziegłowy)	hollow cinder blocks 51cm (part of walls) and silica brick 51 cm; No external plaster	0.753 and 1.396	reinforced concrete structure	1984-1987
3.	Filial church of Our Lady of the Rosary	Zdów (par. Góra Włodowska)	limestone 60 cm + external plaster	2,090	wooden	1987-1999
4.	Filial church of the Ascension	Pomrożyce (district of Zawiercie, par. of St. Nicholas)	hollow cinder blocks 38 cm + external plaster	0.951	wooden	1991-1993
5.	Filial church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary	Zerkowice (district of Zawiercie, par. of Holy Trinity)	ceramic bricks 51 cm, no external plaster	1.151	wooden	1987-1990
6.	Filial church of St. Stanislaus	Piasek (par. Janów)	hollow maxi bricks 60 cm + external plaster	0.826	wooden	1986-1990
7.	Filial church of St. John the Baptist	Hucisko (par. Niegowa)	hollow cinder blocks 42 cm + external plaster	0.880	wooden	1991-1993
8.	Filial church of St. Stanislaus	Mirów (par. Niegowa)	hollow cinder blocks 20 cm + gas concrete 24 cm + external plaster	0.738	wooden	1997-2007
9.	Filial church of Our Lady of Czestochowa	Trzebnów (par. Niegowa)	hollow maxi bricks 40 cm + external plaster	1.126	wooden	1981-1992
10.	Filial church of Maximilian Maria Kolbe	Gorzów Nowy (par. Złoty Potok)	limestones 40 cm + Styrofoam 5 cm + Max hollows 19 cm	0.540	wooden	1984-1986
11.	Filial church of Our Lady Mother of the Church	Pabianice (par. Złoty Potok)	hollow maxi bricks 49 cm + external plaster	0.968	wooden	1989-1994
12.	Filial church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help	Siedlec (par. Złoty Potok)	hollow maxi bricks 29 cm + sawdust concrete 10 cm + limestone 25 cm	0.726	wooden	1982-1986
13.	Filial church of the Pentecost	Czatachowa (par. Żarki)	limestones 60 cm + external plaster	2.090	wooden	1994 -1998

development. This is evidenced by the numerous writings of John Paul II (Ewertowski, 2013) and now, especially, by the speeches of Pope Francis. Against this background of theoretical considerations and the teaching of the church, this paper considers the environmental aspects of the functioning of filial churches and whether they fit with the idea of sustainable development. It has been tested how theoretical considerations fit into the reality of the smallest religious buildings – filial churches. Considerations are carried with particular reference to the churches in Zawierciański pastoral district.

The technical characteristics of filial church buildings

Most of the filial churches were erected in the 80s and 90s, when, after many years of great difficulty, it became easier to obtain building permits for the construction of religious facilities. Many of these

objects were originally designed as catechism buildings as it was easier to obtain planning permission for such teaching facilities. During construction, a number of changes to the building plans would be introduced to have a larger space for the sacral part. As a result, the architecture of such structures is often quite random and the functional design is far from optimum. However, there are also some very interesting buildings in terms of their form and functional solutions, especially those later realisations, erected around the turn of the century. The issue of the thermal insulation of churches was investigated with particular reference to contemporary sacral objects situated in Zawierciański pastoral district of the Archdiocese of Częstochowa. Church buildings in this district have been erected from the 1970s to the present day, with the majority of them built in the 80s. Data relating to these objects is presented in Table 1. The coefficient $U_{c(max)}$ [W/m²·K] was calculated by taking the average value of coefficient λ for a given type of material.

Table 1. Filial churches of Zawierciański pastoral district: data concerning the location of objects and the number of local residents.

No.	Church	Location	Number of local residents *	Distance to the parish***
1	Filial church of St. John Vianney	Mzyki (par. Gniazdów)	114	3 km
2	Filial church of St. Francis of Assisi	Gęzyn (par. Koziegłowy)	336	7 km
3	Filial church of Our Lady of the Rosary	Zdów (par. Góra Włodowska)	536	8 km
4	Filial church of the Ascension	Pomrożyce (district of Zawiercie, par. of St. Nicholas)	282**	4 km
5	Filial church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary	Żerkowice (district of Zawiercie, par. of Holy Trinity)	409**	3 km
6	Filial church of St. Stanislaus	Piasek (par. Janów)	330	3 km
7	Filial church of St. John the Baptist	Hucisko (par. Niegowa)	27	9 km
8	Filial church of St. Stanislaus	Mirów (par. Niegowa)	151	5 km
9	Filial church of Our Lady of Czestochowa	Trzebnów (par. Niegowa)	344	7 km
10	Filial church of Maximilian Maria Kolbe	Gorzków Nowy (par. Złoty Potok)	400	8 km
11	Filial church of Our Lady Mother of the Church	Pabianice (par. Złoty Potok)	233	8 km
12	Filial church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help	Siedlec (par. Złoty Potok)	506	8 km
13	Filial church of the Pentecost	Czatachowa (par. Żarki)	156	5 km

* (Rocznik Statystyczny, 2009), ** (information from Zawiercie city government), *** (<http://kuriaczestochowa.pl>)

A typical act of worship in church generally lasts no more than one hour and the faithful stay in outdoor clothing. Thus it may be sufficient to maintain an interior temperature in the range of 8°C to 16°C.

Technically a church is a public building and for public buildings, the current requirement for the thermal insulation of the walls is considered to be met if the heat transfer coefficient $W/(m^2K)$ for a temperature of $8^\circ < t_i \leq 16^\circ C$ $U_{(max)} \leq 0.45$.

Table 1 shows that the values of $U_{c(max)}$ are in the range of 2.090 to 0.540 ($W/m^2 \cdot K$). The walls of none of the churches have values $U_{c(max)}$ which meet the current requirement.

Two filial churches located in Zawierciański pastoral district (15%) have no external plaster yet (fig.1). The remaining 11 churches have external plaster or another kind of finishing on the exterior walls.



Figure 1. Filial church of St. Francis of Assisi in Gęzyn

Almost all (92%) the examined filial churches have a wooden roof truss structure. Owing to the difficulty in accessing the structural elements of the roof, data on the thickness of the layer of roof insulation is unknown for most of the objects. However partial data, established during research, shows that the insulation layer (usually mineral wool) is not thicker than 14 cm, and often even less. Research also showed that in the churches built in the 80s, Supra with a thickness of 5 cm was often used for roof insulation. Due to a lack of exact data on all the filial churches, it is not possible to come to a definitive conclusion on the roof structure insulation. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that for the vast majority of these churches insulation is inadequate and does not meet the current heat insulation requirements.

The windows in the studied buildings are not energy efficient as they often have steel frames and no double glazing (Repelewicz, 2014).

The data obtained in the Zawierciański pastoral district is representative of filial churches across the whole Archdiocese of Czestochowa. After the difficult years of communism, the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Czestochowa and throughout Poland inherited a large number of filial churches buildings with very low energy efficiency. It seems that in the past this issue had been completely

ignored during the investment process. This can probably be explained in part by the centuries old tradition of not having heating in churches and consequently there being no need to take energy efficiency into consideration in the design process. It can therefore be concluded that filial churches are not ecological objects.

Ecological aspects of the considered filial churches

The thirteen filial churches in Zawierciański pastoral district are located at distances of between 3 to 9 kilometers from the main parish church. These are journeys which if made on foot (one-way) would take an adult on average from 36 minutes to almost two hours. For the elderly and young children, these distances too long, especially as they need to made in both directions. Public transport in rural areas is poor especially on Sundays when services are infrequent. Therefore, the faithful would have little choice but to use their cars.

Sunday and Christmas Masses as well as some First Friday devotions are celebrated by the priests of the parish in all the considered filial churches. In addition, the faithful often congregate there to say the rosary and to celebrate devotions in May, when a priest is not present.

Given the number of inhabitants in the villages where filial churches are located (27 to 536), and taking into consideration the percentage of people participating in holy Mass, so-called *dominicantes*, which is 40% on average in Poland (Kościół katolicki..., 1991-2011, 2014) then it follows that from 11 to over 214 church-goers would have to travel by road from their homes to their main parish church. In fact, this number is almost certainly higher, not only because rural populations are traditionally more religious when compared to urban residents, but also due to the fact that filial churches are used by the inhabitants of neighbouring villages, for whom these churches are closer than their parish church.

The overall population in the villages where the filial churches of Zawierciański pastoral district are located is 3824, and 40% of that number is 1530 people. Multiplying the number of dominicantes by the distance, they would have to get the parish church, gives the result of 9450 km for one congregation. Assuming that one car delivers average 3 people to the church, about 3150 km would have to be driven every week in Zawierciański pastoral district. It gives about 163800 unnecessary driven kilometers a year. An amount of fuel needed to support this journeys is saved thanks to the existence of filial churches.

It can be concluded that due to the existence of filial churches that at least 1530 faithful have no trouble getting to church on Sundays and holy days. This results in the saving of fuel and time as well as providing great psychological comfort.

What are, in turn, the financial costs associated with

such facilities? Undoubtedly, the greatest of them is the cost of construction and fitting out the building. A study conducted by the author showed that all the considered filial churches were erected at low cost. Generally these objects are small (fig. 1,2). The building plots were commonly donated by one of the faithful or were municipal areas. Building materials were also donated or purchased with money collected from the faithful, and the construction work was done by volunteers from the local community.



Figure 2. Filial church of St. Stanislaus in Mirów

The furnishings and fittings of filial churches are usually very simple (fig. 3,4). Sometimes there is no heating. This is for both financial and practical reasons as these churches are used occasionally and for short periods of time because the main celebrations take place in parish churches.



Figure 3. Interior of the filial church of Our Lady of the Rosary in Zdów



Figure 4. Interior of the filial church of St. John the Baptist in Hucisko

These objects are relatively new and therefore do not require much in the way of repairs. However,

ongoing maintenance works are usually carried out by members of the congregation free of charge. Additionally, cleaning and decorating the church is organized on a voluntary basis. One of the few regular charges are electricity bills, but as the facilities are used for relatively short periods of time these are not high.

It follows from the above analysis that the benefits arising from the existence of filial churches in the territorially large parishes of Zawierciański pastoral district are enjoyed by many – not less than 1530 people. In the less urbanized districts of the Archdiocese, where there are 61 more filial churches, the number of beneficiaries can be estimated in the thousands.

Survey among users of selected churches

The survey was conducted among inhabitants of selected representative villages, in which filial churches are located (Pabianice, Siedlec, Hucisko, Mirow). In total, 38 questionnaires from active filial churches parishioners were collected. The study involved 24 women and 14 men aged 29 to 79, of which 24 were over 60. The majority (20 respondents) completed basic education level, 10 reported secondary and 8 tertiary education level. The survey included 9 questions, 7 close-ended and 2 open-ended.

The majority confirmed that the presence of filial churches influenced a greater bond between the priest and the faithful (34 persons), four people did not have any opinion on this subject, no one denied. Liquidation of filial church, would not change the frequency of worship among 26 faithful, while 12 people (mostly over 70) would be less likely to congregate.

24 interviewed people affirmed that the existence of filial church affects the feeling of being in touch with the local community. 14 persons did not have any opinion on it. No one answered negatively.

The existence of filial churches situated away from the parish church, was considered to be pro-ecological and to support the sustainable development. 30 respondents emphasized that the Catholic Church encourages faithful to work for the protection of the environment. Seven people have answered *hard to say* and one *no*.

The most interesting statements came in response to open-ended questions. As the greatest benefit of the filial church existence, respondents predominately mentioned the vicinity that eliminates inconvenient commuting, saving time and money. Older women emphasized the possibility of every Sunday worship. *The church is close and I do not have to worry about getting to the parish* one of the ladies wrote.

Driving license and car possession among elderly inhabitants of rural areas is rare, therefore getting to a parish can become a challenge.

Respondents mentioned also a number of other catholic services, they can attend on weekdays: May devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Lenten Lamentations, Way of the Cross, Rosary. These services are often carried out by the local rosary prayer circle.

In response to the question *How the filial church construction influenced interpersonal relations within the local community?* interesting opinions emerged. Recalling the construction time, one of the respondents wrote *It was a time of unity and collective decision-making*. Another wrote: *The work on the construction of the chapel was divided among all the inhabitants*.

As a current activities within the church, the respondents mentioned: *joint chores around the church, common altar decorating*. They also described in detail: *tidying up the chapel, subsoil scattering on the courtyard, lawn mowing, catechetical room painting*. One of the pollster emphasized: *The residents are more concerned about the church, they carry out the money collection willingly when bigger purchase or renovation are required and Residents are more focused on their filial church instead of the parish one*. The woman from Pabianice (67 years old) wrote: *My role is to collect money when the community has to buy something*, perhaps to emphasize her commitment and important social function. According to parishioners opinions, filial churches are the only regular meeting places for aging, lonely residents of villages.

72-year-old parishioner from Pabianice wrote: *On the way to church and back, I can meet my neighbors and talk*. Her 79-year-old borderer stated very similarly: *I have the opportunity to meet my friends and neighbors*. Pretty similar opinions occurred among other parishioners: *When I go to the church I meet others, we can talk and We butt with all the residents on the way to church, discussing the village affairs*. Young people are moving out, and as a result, old and lonely people stay alone in their countryside. Going out to church and meeting with other villagers, opportunity to led a conversations and sharing the service is often one of the few moments of social contact for this aging people.

It is of great importance to the villagers that *the masses are for the deceased of our village, you can pray and reminisce*. It further unites the local community.

There is also a pride of owning church, because *not all villages have their own churches*.

One of the respondents mentioned the advantage of the filial church presence for the holidaymakers coming to the village: *The summerhouses are also close to the church and we meet vacationists, we pray together*.

Great satisfaction of the filial church possession is visible in all the completed questionnaires. Respondents point out a number of measurable and impon-

derable benefits from the fact that such a facility is functioning in their village.

Summary

Local religious buildings, also known as filial churches, are of great benefit to the people in the small villages they serve as church-goers do not have to travel as far as the parish church for religious celebrations. The usefulness of the existence of such buildings is proven in practical terms. Moreover, they also bring some other, non-material benefits. These are sometimes the only place for collective meetings in the village, and as such have great importance in establishing and maintaining a sense of local community. The faithful often organize themselves around such a centre: forming various prayer groups. In small villages, filial churches fulfill, in a manner of speaking, the function of various associations for seniors in cities: universities of the third age, day care places or recently popular senior's movement activity squares. For older, lonely people they are a place to meet and share. It is also give them a feeling of importance and relevance.

Sustainable development involves not only environmental issues but also issues on a technical and social plane (Pawłowski, 2009). So, paradoxically, the least ecological religious buildings (parish churches were built with more care) fit perfectly with the issue of sustainable development.

Among the many positions and arguments the most evident is the need to protect the environment, as it is necessary for the preservation of human life both now and in the future (anthropocentric argument). Quality of life is obviously a highly relevant factor which needs to be taken into account. It is important to recognize that human biological, psychological and social needs as well as ecological concerns are factors which should be and can be satisfied through environmental protection (Pawłowski 2009). It can be concluded that the Catholic Church's social teaching, in its ecological aspect, is practically reflected in the functioning of filial churches.

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