



Cathedral Church Of St. Wenceslas and St. Stanislaus

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The oldest cathedral church was most likely erected at the beginning of the 11th century after the establishment of the Kraków bishopric in 1000. The remains of foundations of this pre-Romanesque basilica are preserved in the church's basement. The next Herman's Romanesque cathedral was founded by Prince Władysław Herman (ruling in the years 1079-1102). Construction works were continued by his son Bolesław Wrymouth. The church was consecrated in 1142. It was a three-aisle, two-gallery basilica with rectangular presbytery, two crypts (on the east and west) and two towers on the west. Considerable parts of the Romanesque building are preserved till today, e.g. St. Leonard's Crypt, the lower part of the Silver Bells tower, and the foot of the Clock Tower. The cathedral was destroyed by the great fire of 1305. Construction of the new Gothic church started at the initiative of Władysław Elbow-high around 1320 with the participation of Bishop Nanker. The church was consecrated in 1364 in the form of three-aisle basilica with a transept, rectangular presbytery and yard. In the 14th and 15th centuries the cathedral was built around with 19 chapels most of which were later reconstructed.

On the west the church has two towers: the higher Clock Tower and the lower Vicar's Tower, also known as the Silver Bells Tower (constructed in the 14th century). The lower storey of the Clock Tower is adorned with stone tracery from the 2nd quarter of the 15th century; the higher brick part is crowned with the Baroque frieze with the Pomian coat of arms and the cupola with the figures of St. Stanislaus, St. Adalbert, Wenceslas and Casimir (1715-1716, designed by Kacper Bażanka).

At the northern elevation of the cathedral there is the Sigismund Tower which initially was a defensive structure erected in the 2nd half of the 14th century and in 1412 was turned into the cathedral belfry. In 1521 the Sigismund Bell (largest in Poland) was hanged there after its foundation by King Sigismund I the Old. It was cast by Hans Beham of Nuremberg, a bell founder. Next to the Sigismund Tower there is the Gothic building of the cathedral treasury (1481-1500) with the coats of arms of its founders: Bishop Jan of Rzeszów (Półkocz coat of arms) and Cardinal Frederick Jagiellon (White Eagle). It houses valuable works of art (liturgical items, reliquaries, dishes, attires, fabrics and embroideries), regalia and historical souvenirs.

The facade of the church is topped with a triangular pinnacle with the figure of St. Stanislaus (copy of the 14th century sculpture made in 1899), shield with an eagle and a rosette window below (14th century). On both sides of the entrances there are two Gothic chapels (15th century) decorated with tracery: Chapel of the Holy Trinity in the north and Chapel of the Holy Cross in the south. The entrance portal features iron doors (3rd quarter of the 14th century) with the monogram of Casimir III the Great, and bas-reliefs of St. Margaret and Archangel Michael (1320-22) on the sides. The presbytery has preserved the elements of Gothic sculptures: vault keystones (from before 1346), traceries in blends next to the windows and fragments of St. John the Evangelist polychrome. In the aisle between the windows there are the statues of the Church Fathers: St. Ambrose, St. Gregory and St. Jerome (workshop of Veit Stoss, end of the 15th century), St. Augustine (Zygmunt Langman, 1900). The transept and aisle have secessionist stained glass windows completed according to the design by Józef Mehoffer (1909-12 and 1917). The main Baroque altar with the Crucified Christ painting was funded by Bishop Piotr Gembicki (design of Giovanni Battista Gisleni, circa 1650).

In the centre of the cathedral is the *confessio* of St. Stanislaus, the Bishop of Kraków and the chief patron saint of Poland. The mausoleum was erected in the years 1626-29 according to the design of Giovanni Trevano or Matteo Castelli. At the socle under the canopy there rests the silver coffin with the remains of St. Stanislaus made in the workshops of Piotr van der Rennen, a goldsmith from Gdańsk (1669-1671) and funded by Bishop Piotr Gembicki. It is the third reliquary of the Bishop: the first was funded in 1254 by St. Kinga, and the second in 1633 by Sigismund III Vasa (robbed by the Swedes in 1657). St. Stanislaus's altar is one of the most remarkable early Baroque works in Poland. It performed the function of the Homeland Altar where people thanked for the Poles' triumphs and offered military trophies like the Teutonic standards won at Grunwald and the Turkish flag from Vienna. In the ambulatory one should note the altar of the Crucified Christ with the crucifix of King Jadwiga (end of the 14th century) and her reliquary.

Among the many epitaphs and tombstones there stand out the royal monuments in the form of tomb covered with a canopy and with the sculpted lying figure of the deceased: the Gothic tombs of Władysław the Elbow-high (neo-Gothic canopy, 1901-1903), Casimir III the Great, Władysław II Jagiełło (Renaissance canopy according the design of B. Berrecci, 1524), the neo-Gothic tomb of Władysław III of Varna (Antoni Madeyski, 1906); the Baroque tombs of Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki and his wife Eleonora, and Jan III Sobieski and his wife Maria Kazimiera, erected in the years 1753-1760 according to the design of Francesco Placidi (multi-figure compositions with sarcophagi carried by the Turkish prisoners); and sarcophagus of St. Queen Jadwiga of white marble with the lying figure of the deceased (A. Madeyski, 1902)

The cathedral is surrounded by a ring of chapels. One can name here the Chapel of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary also known as the Sigismund Chapel (Renaissance chapel erected in the years 1519-1533 at the site of the Gothic chapel of the 14th century at the commission of King Sigismund I the Old according to the design of Bartolommeo Berrecci. It is crowned with a dome covered on the outside with golden hull funded by Anne Jagiellon (1591-92). The workshop of Italian artists completed the rich bas relief decoration of the interiors (in the arabesque and grotesque style), and the statues of saints and tondos of red marble with the images of the Evangelists and Israeli kings in the niches. Next to the wall there is the multi-level marble tombstone of Sigismund I the Old (B. Berrecci ?) and Sigismund II Augustus (sculpted by Santi Gucci in the years 1574-75, funded by the ruler's sister, Anne Jagiellon). In the parapet of the royal stalls (1527-29) there is the tombstone of Anne Jagiellon (S.Gucci, 1574-75). Completed in Nuremberg in the years 1531-1538, the sliding altar (designed by Peter Flotner) depicts silver-forged scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary and the painted images of the history of salvation (Georg Pencz). The chapel became a model for many later tombstone chapels in Poland and played a huge part in the development of the Polish architecture.

Modelled after the Sigismund Chapel, the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception of Virgin Mary, also known as the Vasa Chapel, was funded by John II Casimir in the years 1664-1676 (at the site of a Romanesque chapel of the 13th century). It is adjacent to the southern aisle of the cathedral. It was built in the Baroque style with a dome, and architectural and sculptural decoration made of black and pink marble, alabaster, stucco and wood. The chapel features an early Baroque altar, marble epitaphs of the Vasas (Kings Sigismund III, Władysław IV and John II

Casimir) on the walls. According to the tradition, it was the first burial ground of St. Stanislaus (till 1254).

South of the main entrance to the cathedra there is the Chapel of the Holy Cross, the only medieval chapel of the cathedral that preserved most of its original décor. Gothic in style, it was erected in the 3rd quarter of the 15th century, covered with the star vault with the coats of arms of Poland, Lithuania and Hungary at the keystones. The walls and the vault are decorated with polychrome completed by the Russian artists of the Psków school (1470). The chapel includes two Gothic triptychs: of the Holy Trinity (1467) and of Our Lady of Sorrows (4th quarter of the 15th century), and Casimir Jagiellon's tomb by Veit Stoss (1492), a masterpiece of late-Gothic sculpture in Europe shaped as a tomb with a canopy with the lying figure of the king at the surface board.

At the southern part of the ambulatory, in the Chapel of Corpus Christi and St. Andrew also known as Olbracht's Chapel, there has been preserved Poland's oldest Renaissance tombstone. It is the tomb of King John Olbracht completed in the years 1502-1505 most likely by Jorg Huber of Passava (?) with the figure of the king lying on the tomb. The richly adorned niche with the monument was made by Francisco of Florence.

The best examples of late-Baroque architecture in Poland include the Chapel of St. Matthias and St. Matthew also known as the Lipski Chapel at the northern part of the ambulatory. Initially, it was Gothic in style (14th century) to be later reconstructed in the years 1631-1633 and 1743-1746 (designed by Francesco Placidi). The decor is dominated by black marble. One should note the altar of St. Matthew and the tombstone of Cardinal Aleksander Jan Lipski (circa 1746) in the form of expanded catafalque.

Initially Gothic Chapel of St. Cosmas and St. Damian, also known as the Zebrzydowski Chapel (at the northern part of the ambulatory) from the 2nd quarter of the 14th century was transformed in the years 1562-1563 into the Mannerist mausoleum of Bishop Andrzej Zebrzydowski. It houses the tombstone of this bishop completed by Jan Michałowicz of Urzędów (circa 1560) which is one of the most remarkable examples of Mannerism in Poland.

The Chapel of the Holy Trinity also known as the Chapel of Queen Sofia was funded by Sophia of Halshany, the fourth wife of Władysław Jagiełło, and constructed in the years 1431-1433. It was reconstructed in the neo-Gothic style in the 1st half of the 19th century and in the years 1899-1904 (design by Sławomir Odrzywolski). One should note the painted decoration of the chapel (1902-1904, design by Włodzimierz Tetmajer), an example of a work "to lift up the hearts" during the partitions that combined religious and national elements. At the entrance there is the statue of Count Włodzimierz Potocki chiselled by Bertel Thorvaldsen (1820-1830) which is considered to be one of the most remarkable works of classicist sculpture in Europe.

At the northern part of the ambulatory the National Bards' Crypt is the burial place of the pre-eminent Polish poets of the Romanticism: Adam Mickiewicz (buried in 1890) and Juliusz Słowacki (in 1927). Underneath the cathedral there are vaulted crypts built mostly in the 16th and 17th century that house the tombs of kings and national heroes (Prince Józef Poniatowski and Tadeusz Kościuszko), including St. Leonard's Crypt (11th/ 12th century) that used to belong to the Romanesque cathedral. In 1936 the lowest Romanesque part of the Vicar's Tower was



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adapted for the Crypt of Marshall Józef Piłsudski where the remains of the Chief of State rest in the brass sarcophagus.