

VISTULA UNIVERSITY

PhD Thesis

The History of the Churches and the Parish
of St. Joseph in Maków Mazowiecki until
the End of the Twentieth Century

Daria Zarodkiewicz, MA

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Supervisor

dr hab. Radosław Lolo prof. AFiB Vistula

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral dissertation constitutes the first comprehensive study of the history of the Parish of St. Joseph in Maków Mazowiecki, covering the period from the origins of ecclesiastical organisation in the area to the end of the twentieth century. The dissertation goes beyond the traditional model of a parish monograph by integrating perspectives from Church history, archaeology, art history, social history, and historical demography. This interdisciplinary approach makes it possible to present the parish not merely as a unit of ecclesiastical administration but, above all, as an institution that contributed to the development of the town, organised the religious and social life of its inhabitants, and reflected the transformations that took place in the region over the course of nearly eight centuries.

Rather than treating the parish solely as a religious institution, the dissertation interprets it as a complex social organism whose development was closely intertwined with the political, economic, cultural, and demographic history of the region. This perspective makes it possible to examine the parish as a centre of local administration, education, charity, and community life, thereby demonstrating the multifaceted role played by ecclesiastical institutions in the historical development of small urban communities in Mazovia. The study therefore contributes not only to the history of a single parish but also to broader discussions concerning the role of the Church in shaping local societies in pre-modern and modern Poland.

The research was undertaken in response to a significant gap in the existing scholarship. Although several studies have addressed the history of Maków Mazowiecki and selected aspects of the local Church, no comprehensive work had previously examined the parish from the perspective of its organisational, spatial, architectural, social, and demographic development. Nor had any attempt been made to combine archaeological evidence, conservation documentation, archival sources, and parish registers in order to reconstruct both the history of the parish and the functioning of the local community. The dissertation therefore seeks to fill this gap through a critical examination of a diverse body of primary sources and by integrating the findings of research conducted across several historical disciplines.

The originality of the dissertation lies not only in the breadth of the chronological scope but also in the integration of source materials that have rarely been analysed together within a single study. The combination of archaeological evidence, archival documentation, architectural analysis, cartographic sources, and parish registers has made it possible to verify

earlier interpretations and formulate new conclusions concerning the origins, institutional development, and historical significance of the parish. Consequently, the study demonstrates the considerable research potential of interdisciplinary parish studies and proposes a methodological model that may also be applied to investigations of other historical communities.

The principal objective of the dissertation was to provide a comprehensive reconstruction of the history of the churches and the Parish of St. Joseph in Maków Mazowiecki from the Middle Ages to the end of the twentieth century, while also examining the role of the parish in the religious, social, and cultural life of the town. An equally important aim was to investigate the relationships between the development of the parish organisation and the political, economic, and demographic transformations that took place in the Mazovia region. The study addressed questions concerning the origins of the parish, the location and function of successive churches, changes in parish boundaries, the activities of the clergy, the organisation of parish education, the role of religious confraternities, and the impact of historical events on the life of the parish community. Particular emphasis was placed on historical demographic research aimed at identifying changes in natural population change, the seasonality of baptisms and marriages, patterns of personal naming (anthroponymy), and the evolution of causes of death within the parish community.

In pursuing these objectives, the dissertation sought not only to reconstruct historical events but also to identify long-term processes that shaped the development of the parish over several centuries. Particular attention was therefore devoted to the interaction between institutional continuity and historical change, allowing the evolution of the parish to be examined within the broader context of regional and national history. This long-term perspective provides a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that influenced both the functioning of the parish and the everyday lives of its inhabitants across successive historical periods.

The chronological scope of the study extends from the thirteenth century to the year 2000. The opening date is defined by the earliest evidence of settlement and the first records relating to the organisation of religious life in the area of Maków Mazowiecki, while the closing date marks the end of the historical development of the Parish of St. Joseph prior to the establishment of the Parish of St. Brother Albert. This broad chronological framework made it possible to trace the evolution of the parish against the background of political and social transformations within the Polish state and to demonstrate the continuity of the local religious community despite changing political and social circumstances. Adopting such a long

chronological perspective also enabled the identification of long-term institutional, social, and demographic processes that would have remained difficult to recognise within a more narrowly defined period of study. It further allowed changes in the organisation and functioning of the parish to be interpreted within the wider context of the historical development of Mazovia and the Polish state.

The dissertation is based primarily on archival materials preserved in the Diocesan Archives in Płock, the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, the State Archives, and the Archives of the Parish of St. Joseph in Maków Mazowiecki. The source base includes episcopal visitations, consistory records, parish registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials, conservation documentation, archaeological evidence, cartographic sources, local newspapers, and iconographic materials. Of particular importance were the surviving parish registers, which made it possible to analyse several centuries of the parish community's development and served as the principal source base for the historical demographic analyses presented in the dissertation. The exceptional diversity of the source material made it possible to compare information derived from different categories of evidence and to verify previous interpretations through interdisciplinary analysis. In numerous cases, archaeological discoveries complemented written records, while archival documentation and parish registers provided an opportunity to reconstruct both institutional developments and the everyday lives of the parish's inhabitants. This comprehensive source base constitutes one of the principal strengths of the dissertation and significantly enhances the reliability of the conclusions presented.

The achievement of the research objectives required the application of a wide range of research methods. The principal methodological approach was the critical analysis of historical sources, complemented by archaeological methods, historical-geographical analysis, formal and stylistic analysis, and the comparative method. In the section devoted to historical demography, statistical methods were employed to analyse natural population change, the seasonality of baptisms and marriages, naming patterns, and changes in causes of death. The application of quantitative methods made it possible not only to present numerical data but, more importantly, to identify long-term demographic trends and assess the impact of historical events on the functioning of the local community. Furthermore, the application of Abdel Omran's Epidemiological Transition Theory enabled the interpretation of changes in mortality patterns within the broader context of the transformation of public health in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Poland. The combination of qualitative historical analysis with quantitative demographic methods significantly broadened the interpretative possibilities of the research. Rather than treating historical sources solely as narrative evidence, the

dissertation employs them to identify measurable long-term processes, thereby integrating traditional historical methodology with approaches commonly applied in historical demography and social history.

The adopted research framework made it possible to present the parish as a multidimensional institution whose history reflects not only the development of the Church in Mazovia but also the social, cultural, and demographic transformations experienced by the local community. The interdisciplinary character of the dissertation, combined with its extensive and diverse source base, led to new findings concerning the origins of the parish, the development of its organisational structures, the evolution of its sacred landscape, and changes in the lives of the inhabitants of Maków Mazowiecki. This interdisciplinary perspective also demonstrates the value of parish history as a field of research capable of linking institutional history with the study of everyday life, material culture, settlement development, and demographic change. Consequently, the dissertation contributes to several branches of historical scholarship simultaneously rather than remaining confined to a single area of research.

The research made it possible to re-evaluate the origins of ecclesiastical organisation in Maków Mazowiecki and to verify a number of earlier interpretations concerning the development of the local parish network. By integrating archaeological evidence with archival materials, cartographic sources, and historical accounts, it was possible to reconstruct the formation of the town's sacred landscape and to demonstrate its close relationship with the development of settlement along the Orzyc River. The findings indicate that the development of the parish constituted an integral element in the emergence of Maków Mazowiecki as an administrative, commercial, and religious centre of northern Mazovia. Consequently, the history of the parish should be regarded not as an isolated aspect of the town's past but as one of the principal factors shaping its historical development. The study therefore demonstrates that the history of the parish cannot be separated from the history of the town itself, since both developed through closely interconnected institutional, economic, and social processes over the course of several centuries.

One of the dissertation's major achievements is the systematic reassessment of the history of the three churches associated with the parish: the Church of St. Bartholomew, the Church of St. Peter, and the Corpus Christi Church. A critical analysis of written sources combined with archaeological evidence made it possible to reassess previous interpretations concerning their location, chronology, and significance for the development of the town. The study demonstrated that these churches should not be regarded as separate stages in history but

rather as successive elements within a continuous process of development of the town's sacred landscape, reflecting broader changes in the settlement pattern and administrative organisation of Maków Mazowiecki. Particular importance was attached to the Corpus Christi Church, which gradually assumed the role of the principal religious, administrative, and social centre of the parish and retained this position until the end of the twentieth century. The dissertation also reconstructs the successive stages in the architectural development of the church and analyses the evolution of its furnishings, demonstrating that the building represents not only an important monument of regional architectural heritage but also a material testimony to the continuity of religious life and the historical identity of the local community.

Another important achievement of the research was the use of archaeological evidence to reinterpret the earliest history of the parish. An analysis of materials recovered during archaeological investigations conducted in the historic town centre, together with the results of earlier excavations at the Bazar cemetery site, provided new evidence concerning the organisation of the earliest sacred space in Maków Mazowiecki. The findings confirm that the development of the first religious centre was closely connected with the pre-charter settlement and the network of medieval trade and communication routes. The archaeological evidence also made it possible to reassess the spatial relationship between the earliest places of worship and the developing urban settlement, demonstrating that the evolution of the sacred landscape formed an integral part of the broader process of urbanisation. By correlating archaeological discoveries with documentary evidence, the dissertation offers a more comprehensive interpretation of the origins of ecclesiastical organisation in the region than has previously been available. At the same time, the research demonstrated that several issues concerning the location of the earliest church remain unresolved and require further archaeological investigation, highlighting the need for continued research into the origins of both the town and its parish.

Analysis of medieval and early modern sources also made it possible to reconstruct the development of the parish organisation and trace changes in its territorial extent. The study demonstrated that the parish boundaries evolved gradually in response to the expansion of the settlement network, changes in ecclesiastical administration, and population growth. The analysis of episcopal visitations and administrative records enabled the reconstruction of changes not only in the number of settlements belonging to the parish but also in the organisation of religious life within its territory. The findings indicate that this was a dynamic process closely linked to the economic development of the region and the political transformations taking place in Mazovia. The reconstruction of these territorial changes also

provides valuable insight into the relationship between ecclesiastical administration and the evolving settlement structure of northern Mazovia, illustrating how demographic growth and administrative reforms influenced the organisation of parish life over several centuries.

The research further demonstrated that, from the Middle Ages onwards, the parish fulfilled functions extending well beyond the celebration of religious worship. It served as an administrative, educational, and social centre around which the lives of the inhabitants of the town and neighbouring settlements were organised. The operation of the parish school, pastoral ministry, and the organisation of religious life fostered social cohesion and strengthened the identity of the local community. The findings confirm that the development of the parish remained one of the principal factors shaping the growth of Maków Mazowiecki from the Middle Ages until the end of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The evidence therefore demonstrates that the parish functioned not only as an ecclesiastical institution but also as one of the principal mechanisms through which local social organisation, education, and communal identity were maintained and transmitted across successive generations.

An important aspect of the research was the analysis of the activities of the parish clergy. The study demonstrated that parish priests were responsible not only for organising religious life but also for administering parish property, managing the parish school, providing assistance to the poor, and maintaining relations with both ecclesiastical and secular authorities. Extensive archival research made it possible to reconstruct the scope of their responsibilities and to assess the contribution of individual parish priests to the development of both the parish and the town. Consequently, the history of the parish is presented not only through historical events and processes but also through the activities of those individuals who played a decisive role in shaping the local community. The research also highlights the continuity of pastoral leadership and demonstrates how successive parish priests responded to changing political, economic, and social circumstances while preserving the institutional stability of the parish. Their activities reveal the important role of individual agency in the long-term development of local ecclesiastical communities.

The findings concerning the earliest history of the parish demonstrate that its development was a continuous process closely connected with the history of both the town and the surrounding region. By integrating archaeological evidence, written sources, and spatial analyses, the dissertation has brought together previously dispersed information and reassessed a number of earlier historiographical interpretations. These findings make it possible to regard the parish as an institution that actively contributed to the historical development of Maków Mazowiecki from its earliest beginnings while providing a foundation for future research into

the organisation of religious life in northern Mazovia. More broadly, the study illustrates the value of combining archaeological and documentary evidence in reconstructing the historical development of medieval parishes, demonstrating that local case studies can make a significant contribution to broader debates concerning ecclesiastical organisation and settlement history in Central Europe.

The research demonstrated that the functioning of the Parish of St. Joseph in Maków Mazowiecki was closely linked to the political and social transformations that took place in the Polish lands from the late eighteenth century to the end of the twentieth century. Despite successive administrative reforms, the partitions of Poland, two world wars, and the communist period, the parish community maintained the continuity of its activities, remaining the town's principal centre of religious and social life. The analysis of archival sources demonstrated that the parish's activities extended far beyond the celebration of religious worship, encompassing educational, charitable, and community-building initiatives. This continuity demonstrates the resilience of the parish as a local institution capable of adapting to changing political circumstances while maintaining its essential religious and social functions.

Research on the period of the partitions of Poland demonstrated that, despite the subordination of ecclesiastical structures to the administrations of the partitioning powers, the parish retained considerable autonomy in its pastoral ministry. Although new administrative regulations affected the operation of the parish office and the maintenance of parish registers, they did not undermine the parish's fundamental religious functions. The source material demonstrates that the Church remained a centre for preserving the Polish language, national traditions, and cultural identity, while the clergy played an essential role in maintaining social cohesion during the period of intensified Russification. These findings illustrate the broader significance of parish institutions as centres of cultural continuity during periods of political oppression and demonstrate the important contribution of local clergy to the preservation of national identity.

The restoration of Polish independence in 1918 created favourable conditions for the dynamic development of parish life. Ecclesiastical infrastructure was expanded, religious organisations flourished, and charitable and educational activities intensified. During this period, the parish became one of the principal institutions integrating the inhabitants of the newly re-established Polish state. Successive parish priests played a particularly important role, contributing not only to the development of religious life but also to the preservation of the local cultural heritage, the organisation of parish education, and the promotion of numerous community initiatives. The interwar period therefore represents one of the most dynamic phases

in the history of the parish, characterised by institutional growth, increased civic engagement, and the strengthening of its position within the social and cultural life of Maków Mazowiecki.

The Second World War constituted one of the most difficult periods in the history of the parish. Analysis of the available sources made it possible to reconstruct the impact of the German occupation on both the parish community and the everyday lives of the inhabitants of Maków Mazowiecki. Despite material losses and severe restrictions, pastoral ministry continued uninterrupted, and the Church remained a centre of religious practice and social solidarity. The surviving evidence confirms that the clergy fulfilled not only religious but also social and moral functions, providing support to the local population throughout the occupation. The study demonstrates that, under conditions of occupation, the parish became one of the few institutions capable of preserving social cohesion, offering spiritual guidance, and maintaining a sense of continuity within the local community despite the disruption of public life. The wartime experience also illustrates the resilience of local ecclesiastical structures in the face of political repression and military conflict.

The analysis of the communist period demonstrated that the parish operated under constant supervision by the communist authorities. Despite numerous restrictions imposed on the Church, the parish continued its pastoral ministry, expanded catechetical instruction, and carried out conservation and maintenance work on the historic parish church and the remaining parish buildings. The archival evidence demonstrates that the parish successfully adapted to changing political circumstances while preserving the continuity of its essential religious and social functions. The research further reveals that the preservation of religious practice and the continued maintenance of the historic church represented not only ecclesiastical activities but also important expressions of local identity and cultural continuity during the communist era.

An important aspect of the research was the reconstruction of the activities of successive parish priests and an assessment of their contribution to the development of the parish. Analysis of the archival sources demonstrated that the clergy played a pivotal role in the expansion of the parish infrastructure, the preservation of the historic church, the organisation of religious life, and the promotion of educational and charitable activities. Successive parish priests undertook numerous initiatives, including the restoration of the church, the expansion of parish facilities, the administration of the parish school, and the organisation of a wide range of religious and community initiatives. This approach made it possible to present the history of the parish not only through historical events and processes but also through the activities of the individuals who significantly shaped its development. The dissertation therefore

emphasises the importance of individual leadership in the long-term development of parish institutions and demonstrates how the initiatives undertaken by successive parish priests influenced both the material heritage of the parish and the social life of the local community.

The research also traced changes in the religious life of the inhabitants of Maków Mazowiecki. The analysis of religious confraternities, lay associations, and other forms of lay participation demonstrated the gradual evolution of the parish community. During the second half of the twentieth century, there was a marked increase in the involvement of lay people in parish life, the development of new forms of pastoral ministry, and the expansion of the Church's social mission. These developments reflected broader transformations within the Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council, while at the same time preserving the distinctive local character of the Maków parish community. The findings illustrate how global developments within the Catholic Church were adapted to local conditions, demonstrating the interaction between universal ecclesiastical reforms and the specific needs of an individual parish community.

The final stage of the research focused on the transformations that took place after 1989. The findings indicate that the political transition created new opportunities for pastoral, investment, and community activities. The intensification of conservation work, the development of new religious initiatives, and the reorganisation of the parish's administrative structures led to the establishment of the Parish of St. Brother Albert, bringing to a close the centuries-long history of the Parish of St. Joseph within its historical boundaries. This event constitutes the natural chronological endpoint of the dissertation and marks the conclusion of an important chapter in the history of the Maków parish community. The creation of the new parish also reflects wider demographic, pastoral, and administrative changes that affected the Catholic Church in Poland during the final decades of the twentieth century, illustrating the continuing evolution of ecclesiastical structures in response to the needs of growing local communities.

The findings demonstrate that the Parish of St. Joseph displayed a remarkable capacity to adapt to changing political and social circumstances. While maintaining the continuity of its activities, it remained an institution that integrated the local community, shaped its religious identity, and participated actively in the most significant events in the town's history. The history of the parish may therefore be interpreted as reflecting the broader political, social, and cultural transformations that took place in Polish society from the late eighteenth century to the end of the twentieth century. The dissertation thus demonstrates that the history of a single parish may serve as an effective lens through which wider historical processes can be examined

at the local level, revealing the interaction between national events and the everyday experiences of individual communities.

One of the dissertation's most significant achievements is the comprehensive analysis of parish registers covering the period from the seventeenth century to the end of the twentieth century. Registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials were examined in order to reconstruct changes in the demographic structure of the parish and to assess the impact of historical events on the local community. Covering nearly four centuries, this body of source material enabled the identification of long-term demographic processes and their interpretation within the broader context of the social, economic, and political transformations that occurred in the Mazovia region. The exceptional chronological continuity of the parish registers provides a unique opportunity to observe demographic processes over an extended period and constitutes one of the most valuable source bases employed in the dissertation.

The analysis of the baptismal registers demonstrated that birth patterns were closely associated with the political and economic circumstances of the region. During the first years of the twentieth century, the annual number of baptisms remained relatively stable, ranging from 176 to 233. A pronounced decline occurred during the First World War, when the number of baptisms fell from 173 in 1914 to 89 in 1917, before increasing to 115 in 1918 following the end of hostilities. These findings clearly demonstrate the direct impact of armed conflict on the demographic development of the parish and illustrate the influence of historical events on the local community. They further confirm the sensitivity of demographic indicators to periods of political instability and illustrate how parish registers can be used to reconstruct the demographic consequences of major historical events at the local level.

The analysis of the parish registers also made it possible to reconstruct the seasonality of baptisms. The study demonstrated that the preferred months for administering the sacrament changed over successive historical periods, reflecting both religious traditions and broader social transformations within the parish community. By the end of the twentieth century, baptisms performed during the summer months and in December had become noticeably more frequent, indicating a gradual departure from earlier patterns associated with the liturgical calendar and the traditional rhythm of rural life. These changes illustrate the gradual transformation of traditional religious practices under the influence of urbanisation, changing family patterns, and evolving social customs, demonstrating that parish registers may also serve as valuable sources for the study of cultural and behavioural change.

An important component of the demographic analysis was the examination of the sex ratio among newborn children. The findings indicate a relatively balanced distribution between

male and female births, with only a slight predominance of boys during some of the periods under investigation. These results are consistent with observations from other historical populations and confirm the representativeness of the analysed source material. The consistency of these demographic indicators further confirms the reliability of the parish registers as a source for quantitative historical research and supports comparisons with other populations examined in historical demographic studies.

Particularly valuable findings emerged from the anthroponymic analysis. Covering several centuries, the study made it possible to trace changes in naming practices and to assess the influence of religious tradition and cultural change on parental choices. The research demonstrated the long-term predominance of names derived from the Christian tradition. Among girls, the most frequently given name remained Marianna (Marianne), while the most common male names included Jan (John), Józef (Joseph), and, in the twentieth century, Stanisław (Stanislaus). At the same time, the second half of the twentieth century witnessed a gradual increase in anthroponymic diversity, reflecting a departure from the traditional model of name selection based primarily on the cult of saints and the liturgical calendar. The observed evolution of naming practices provides valuable evidence of changing cultural influences, the gradual individualisation of parental choices, and the declining dominance of traditional religious naming conventions.

The study also employed statistical measures to assess the concentration of the most frequently occurring given names. The application of the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI) made it possible to quantify the degree of anthroponymic diversity and to demonstrate the gradual decline in the concentration of the most common names across successive historical periods. Consequently, quantitative methods not only facilitated the description of changes in naming practices but also provided an objective basis for interpreting the long-term trends observed in the analysed material. The application of the HHI, a method rarely employed in parish studies, constitutes one of the methodological innovations of the dissertation and demonstrates the potential of quantitative approaches in historical onomastic research.

The analysis of the marriage registers made it possible to reconstruct the seasonality of marriages. The findings confirmed the dominant influence of the liturgical calendar and the agricultural cycle on the timing of marriages throughout the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. The highest numbers of marriages were recorded during the months traditionally regarded as the most favourable for weddings, whereas the periods of Lent and Advent were characterised by a marked decline in the number of marriage ceremonies. During the second half of the twentieth century, this relationship gradually weakened, reflecting

increasing urbanisation and broader social and cultural change. These findings illustrate the gradual decline in the influence of the traditional agricultural calendar on family life and demonstrate how demographic behaviour responded to wider processes of economic modernisation and social transformation.

One of the dissertation's most original contributions is its analysis of the burial registers. The examination of mortality records made it possible to reconstruct changes in mortality patterns, age at death, and causes of death over several decades. A detailed analysis of 995 deaths recorded between 1930 and 1939, compared with data from 1980–2000, revealed a profound epidemiological transition within the parish community. During the interwar period, infectious diseases—particularly tuberculosis, pneumonia, childhood infectious diseases, and other communicable illnesses—were the leading causes of death. By the end of the twentieth century, however, mortality was increasingly dominated by cardiovascular diseases, malignant neoplasms, and other chronic conditions characteristic of developed societies. The comparison of these two chronological periods clearly demonstrates the transition from a mortality regime dominated by infectious diseases to one characterised primarily by chronic degenerative conditions, mirroring changes observed throughout twentieth-century Europe.

The interpretation of these findings using Abdel Omran's Epidemiological Transition Theory demonstrated that the transformations observed within the Parish of St. Joseph closely reflected broader trends in Polish society. The decline of infectious diseases, accompanied by the growing prevalence of chronic non-communicable diseases, illustrates improvements in sanitary conditions, advances in medical care, and increasing life expectancy. Consequently, the local findings may be interpreted within the wider context of historical demography and the history of public health. The study therefore demonstrates that local parish registers constitute a valuable source for investigating long-term epidemiological change and for assessing how global demographic processes were reflected within individual local communities.

The demographic analyses constitute one of the dissertation's principal original contributions. Extending beyond the traditional descriptive study of parish registers, they identify long-term demographic trends, demonstrate the impact of historical events on population dynamics, and provide new insights into changes in family formation, religious practice, naming patterns, and mortality within the parish community. By combining traditional historical methods with statistical analysis and demographic theory, the dissertation illustrates the considerable research potential of parish registers and confirms their value as a source for interdisciplinary historical research.

The dissertation is based on a comprehensive analysis of parish registers covering the period from the seventeenth century to the end of the twentieth century, representing one of the most extensive historical demographic studies of a single parish undertaken in northern Mazovia. The exceptional chronological continuity of this source material makes it possible to observe demographic developments across nearly four centuries and provides a unique opportunity to analyse long-term processes that are rarely accessible through other categories of historical evidence.

Between 1900 and 1918, a total of 3,489 baptisms were recorded, including 1,785 boys and 1,704 girls. During peacetime, annual baptisms remained relatively stable, ranging from 176 to 233, whereas the First World War caused a dramatic decline—from 173 baptisms in 1914 to only 89 in 1917, followed by a partial recovery to 115 in 1918. These figures clearly demonstrate the direct impact of armed conflict on demographic processes within the parish. They also illustrate the sensitivity of demographic indicators to political instability and confirm the usefulness of parish registers in reconstructing the demographic consequences of war at the local level.

The analysis of the interwar period revealed a demographic recovery. Between 1922 and 1938, 2,877 baptisms were recorded (1,435 girls and 1,442 boys), confirming both population stabilisation and a balanced sex ratio among newborn children during the Second Polish Republic. The recovery observed after the First World War demonstrates the resilience of the local population and reflects broader demographic trends associated with the political and economic stabilisation of interwar Poland.

The study also demonstrated changing patterns in the seasonality of baptisms. By the end of the twentieth century, baptisms performed during the summer months and in December had become increasingly common, reflecting a gradual departure from earlier practices determined by the liturgical calendar and the traditional rhythm of rural life. These observations illustrate the gradual transformation of religious customs under the influence of broader social and cultural change and demonstrate how parish registers may serve as valuable evidence for the study of changing patterns of everyday life and religious practice.

One of the most innovative aspects of the dissertation is the anthroponymic analysis covering the period from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. It documents long-term changes in naming practices and demonstrates the persistence of Christian naming traditions within the parish community.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the most frequently given male name was Stanisław (Stanislaus), recorded 199 times, while Marianna (Marianne) predominated

among female names, with 239 recorded instances. Other common female names included Zofia (Sophia) (130) and Helena (Helen) (99), whereas the most frequently recorded male names were Piotr (Peter) (115), Marcin (Martin) (110), and Michał (Michael) (105). Although names derived from the Christian tradition continued to predominate, the second half of the twentieth century witnessed a steady increase in anthroponymic diversity. The observed changes indicate a gradual shift from highly traditional naming conventions towards a more diversified model reflecting broader cultural influences and increasing individualisation in parental choice.

The application of the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI) provided a quantitative measure of naming diversity and confirmed a gradual decline in the concentration of the most common names across successive historical periods. These findings demonstrate that naming practices became progressively more diverse, reflecting wider social and cultural transformations during the twentieth century. The incorporation of this statistical indicator represents one of the methodological innovations of the dissertation and demonstrates the potential of quantitative methods for analysing historical naming patterns.

The analysis of the marriage registers likewise confirmed a clear pattern of seasonal variation. Marriage ceremonies were concentrated in the autumn months and after the completion of the principal agricultural activities, whereas markedly fewer marriages were celebrated during Lent and Advent. This relationship gradually weakened during the second half of the twentieth century, reflecting increasing urbanisation and changing social norms. The results therefore illustrate the gradual decline in the influence of the traditional agricultural calendar and religious discipline on family formation and matrimonial behaviour.

The interpretation of these findings using Abdel Omran's Epidemiological Transition Theory demonstrated that the transformations observed within the parish closely reflected broader developments in Polish society. The declining importance of infectious diseases, accompanied by the growing prevalence of chronic non-communicable diseases, illustrates improvements in sanitary conditions, advances in medical care, and increasing life expectancy. Applying this interpretative framework placed the local findings within the broader context of historical demography and the history of public health. The successful application of Omran's model demonstrates that demographic processes observed at the local level closely corresponded to national and European epidemiological trends, thereby confirming the wider significance of the parish material analysed in this study.

The dissertation provides the first comprehensive study of the churches and the Parish of St. Joseph in Maków Mazowiecki from the Middle Ages to the end of the twentieth century.

Drawing upon a broad range of archaeological, archival, conservation, cartographic, and parish sources, it presents the parish from a perspective that extends beyond the traditional framework of a parish monograph. The study demonstrates that the parish played a fundamental role in the religious, social, educational, and cultural life of the town while reflecting the wider historical transformations that took place in northern Mazovia. By integrating evidence from several historical disciplines, the dissertation offers a substantially broader interpretation of parish history than has previously been available for this region.

One of the dissertation's principal contributions is its critical reassessment of previous scholarship concerning the origins of ecclesiastical organisation in Maków Mazowiecki. By integrating archaeological evidence with written sources, the research has refined current knowledge of the development of the town's sacred landscape and offered new interpretations regarding the location and function of its earliest churches. It further reconstructs the architectural history and furnishings of the Corpus Christi Church, highlighting the significance of its preserved material heritage within the historical development of the region. The study therefore contributes both to regional ecclesiastical history and to wider discussions concerning the evolution of medieval and early modern sacred landscapes in Poland.

The dissertation's most original contribution lies in its historical demographic research based on parish registers spanning the period from the seventeenth century to the end of the twentieth century. These analyses made it possible to reconstruct long-term changes in natural population change, naming practices, the seasonality of marriages and baptisms, and patterns of mortality. The application of statistical methods, including the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI) and Abdel Omran's Epidemiological Transition Theory, enabled the identification of long-term demographic processes and provided an objective framework for interpreting the influence of historical events on the local community. Taken together, these analyses constitute one of the most comprehensive historical demographic investigations of a single parish undertaken in northern Mazovia and demonstrate the considerable analytical potential of parish registers as historical sources.

A particular strength of the dissertation is its interdisciplinary methodology. By combining approaches drawn from history, archaeology, art history, and historical demography, the study offers a multidimensional interpretation of the parish and moves beyond the descriptive model of a traditional historical monograph. The incorporation of quantitative methods further strengthens the analysis by grounding its conclusions in statistical evidence as well as qualitative historical interpretation. This methodological approach illustrates the

benefits of integrating qualitative and quantitative research strategies in order to produce a more comprehensive understanding of historical communities.

The dissertation also consolidates previously dispersed evidence relating to the history of the parish and introduces numerous archival materials that have not previously been examined in such a comprehensive manner. The integration of multiple categories of sources has made it possible to verify existing interpretations and formulate new conclusions regarding both the development of the parish and its significance for the historical evolution of Maków Mazowiecki. In doing so, the dissertation significantly expands the documentary basis for future research on the history of the region.

The findings contribute not only to the study of the history of Maków Mazowiecki but also to research on the history of the Church in northern Mazovia and the social history of the region. The extensive analysis of parish registers provides valuable comparative material for future studies in historical demography, while the reconstruction of the parish's sacred landscape and institutional development offers a useful point of reference for research on local communities elsewhere in Poland. The methodological solutions adopted in the dissertation may likewise prove applicable to comparative studies of other historical parishes in Central and Eastern Europe.

The research demonstrates that, over the course of several centuries, the Parish of St. Joseph remained a central institution in the religious, social, and cultural life of the local community, while its history reflected the broader political, social, and cultural transformations experienced by Polish society. By reconstructing the evolution of the parish's sacred landscape, demographic development, and institutional structures, the dissertation offers new insights into the role of the Church in shaping local communities over the long term. Overall, the study demonstrates that the history of a single parish may serve as a valuable microhistorical perspective through which wider historical processes can be examined. By integrating archaeological, documentary, architectural, and demographic evidence, the dissertation not only reconstructs the history of one ecclesiastical community but also contributes to a broader understanding of the interaction between religion, society, and demographic change in Poland from the Middle Ages to the close of the twentieth century.

In conclusion, the dissertation substantially expands current knowledge of the history of the churches and the Parish of St. Joseph in Maków Mazowiecki. Its principal achievements include a critical reassessment of the origins of ecclesiastical organisation in the town, a reinterpretation of the development of its sacred landscape based on archaeological and historical evidence, and a comprehensive historical demographic analysis covering the period

from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. The application of quantitative methods and modern demographic theory has provided new insights into long-term demographic change and confirmed the epidemiological transition described by Abdel Omran. By integrating evidence drawn from a wide range of historical sources, the dissertation presents the parish as an institution that shaped the religious, social, cultural, and demographic life of the local community.

Beyond reconstructing the history of a single parish, the dissertation demonstrates the analytical value of integrating archaeological, documentary, architectural, and demographic evidence within a single interdisciplinary research framework. It shows that parish history can provide an effective microhistorical perspective through which broader political, social, cultural, and demographic processes may be examined over the *longue durée*.

The findings constitute a significant contribution to research on Church history, historical demography, and the history of northern Mazovia, while the interdisciplinary methodology developed in this study may also serve as a model for future research on other parishes and local communities. The dissertation therefore not only fills an important gap in regional historiography but also offers a methodological framework that may be applied in comparative studies of ecclesiastical institutions and local communities elsewhere in Poland and Central Europe.