

**THE LIGHT OF  
THY COUNTENANCE  
GREEK CATHOLICS  
IN HUNGARY**

METROPOLITAN  
CHURCH  
SUI IURIS OF  
HUNGARY

DEBRECEN  
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Cover images: wall-painting of the Pantocrator (by Zsolt Maklár) in the Nyíregyháza Seminary Chapel and a fragment of the icon *Christ the Great High Priest* from the iconostasis of Velyki Kom'yaty (*Magyarkomját*)

Edited by: Szilveszter Terdik (Greek Catholic Heritage Research Group under the Joint Programme *Lendület/Momentum* of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and St Athanasius Greek Catholic Theological College)

Associate editor: Irén Szabó

Assistant: Lilla Nagy

Specimen descriptions were written by: Péter Borbás (P. B.), András Dobos (A. D.), Xénia Golub (X. G.), Mátyás Gödölle (M. G.), Hedvig Harmati (H. H.), György Janka (Gy. J.), Etele Kiss (E. K.), Annamária Tóth-Kollár (A. T. K.), András Koltai (A. K.), Bertalan Láda (B. L.), Zsuzsanna Ujteleki-Majchrics (Zs. U. M.), Imri Ozsvári (I. O.), Márta Pallag (M. P.), Anikó Pataki (A. P.), Gábor Prodán (G. P.), Bernadett Puskás (B. P.), Gruber H. Reinhard (G. H. R.), Krisztina Sedlmayer (K. S.), Irén Szabó (I. Sz.) and Szilveszter Terdik (Sz. T.).

Editor of the English text: David Veljanovszki

Translators: David Veljanovszki (the main text with notes in all chapters, foreword and epilogue – except IV.2.2), Dénes Neumayer (Cat. II.01–II.33), Aliz Tóka (Cat. II.34–II.66; Cat. III.01–III.30; Cat. III.37–59), Romulus Varga (Cat. III.31–36) and Péter Veres (Cat. IV.1–63; Chapter IV.2.2; Glossary)

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Index compiled by: Lilla Nagy

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## IV.1.1 Máriapócs – Our National Shrine *Szilveszter Terdik*

The significance of Máriapócs transcends Hungary's borders, for numerous replicas of the icon of the Theotokos kept in the pilgrimage church are highly venerated not only in the neighbouring countries but in a number of locations in Western Europe as well.<sup>1</sup> The importance of the cult site connecting countries, nations and various Christian communities was recognised by the Hungarian Episcopacy granting it the prominent title National Shrine in 2005.

The name of the village of Máriapócs situated on the edge of historic Szabolcs County is first mentioned in written records in the 13<sup>th</sup> century as *Pócs*. Despite a series of reconstructions, the medieval Roman Catholic church dedicated to the Virgin Mary in the centre of the settlement, once surrounded by a graveyard, retains a number of features of its original form even today.<sup>2</sup> In *Pócs*, the Greek Catholics are mentioned for the first time in 1666. It is noted that they intended to gain possession of the church, which had become Calvinist at the time of the Reformation – a step that was conclusively countered by the Calvinists then.<sup>3</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was most probably the landowners of the village who settled the Rusyn families from their estates in the Carpathian Mountains who would build a wooden church for themselves.

### The first weeping

On Sunday, 4 November 1696, in that wooden church, Mihály Eöry, a local farmer, noticed during the Divine Liturgy that tears profusely flowed from both eyes of the icon of the Theotokos, which was probably part of the iconostasis. News of the extraordinary event would soon spread not only in the village but in the area as well. With brief interruptions, the miracle would continue until 8 December (although, according to the local parish priest, only until 3 December, which was the feast of the Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple by the Julian Calendar). On that day, General Johann Andreas von

Corbelli, the Košice (*Kassa*) Commander-in-Chief of the imperial troops stationed in North-Eastern Hungary, accompanied by a number of soldiers and officials from Nagykálló, went there in person in order to ascertain the genuineness of the miracle. According to his letter written in Tokaj on 1 January 1697, he removed the picture from its place in the presence of many Catholics and non-Catholics in *Pócs* and, subsequently, had it examined. As no sign of fraud was detected, he regarded the miracle as authentic. As described by contemporary records, on the last day of the weeping, it was so cold that even the wine and water in the chalice would freeze, Mary's tears continued to be shed in profusion though. An official inquiry was ordered by György Fenessy, Roman Catholic Bishop of Eger (1687–1699); witnesses were heard by Csethe József, Canon of Eger and Archdean of Szabolcs, as well as by András Damján, parish priest of Tokaj, on the scene on 26 December 1696 and on the following days. Fourteen of the thirty-six witnesses were locals, including some Protestant noblemen; the rest were mainly from the ranks of the German army stationed in Nagykálló. The weeping was attested by all; several of them even claimed that the cloth on which the tears were collected had been taken by a soldier. The validity of the minutes was verified by András Petes, Provost of Eger and elected Bishop of Ansaria (1696–1713), in Košice on 2 January 1698.<sup>4</sup>

The testimony of the eighth witness, László Csigrí, a 45-year old magistrate, reveals that he had had the weeping icon painted in honour of a pledge or a simple decision – he would refuse to specify – 21 years earlier (i.e. in 1675), by István Papp, brother of Dániel Papp, the local parish priest, for 6 Hungarian forints. Pressured by his parents, he failed to pay for the image. Two weeks later, he fell gravely ill, and the school master reminded him of his vow, which he delivered on later and even made a recovery.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Aurenhammer, 1956, 84–87; Ivancsó – Betz – Imfeld, 1997, 73–86; Terdik, Szilveszter. *A pócsi Szűzanya kegyképének másolatai*, in: Ivancsó, István (Ed.). *A máriapócsi kegykép harmadik könnyezésének centenáriuma alkalmából rendezett nemzetközi konferencia anyaga*, Nyíregyháza, 2005, 49–61. Also see Katalina Földvári's study in the present volume. On the replicas in Transylvania: Mihály, Ferenc (Ed.). *Mária-tisztelet Erdélyben: Mária-ábrázolások az erdélyi templomokban*, Székelyudvarhely, 2010, 26–27. Terdik, Szilveszter. [A pócsi kegykép két erdélyi másolata], *Görögkatolikus Szemle*, 21(2010), 8. szám, 4. Replicas of the icon of Máriapócs may also emerge in rather unexpected places: For instance, in the background of an 1888 group photograph of the staff of the Steindl Office designing the Hungarian Parliament building, a copy of the Máriapócs icon hangs on the studio wall. The photograph was published in: Sisa, József. *Steindl Imre (Az Építészet Mesterei)*, Budapest, 2005, 121. Unfortunately, the origins and subsequent history of the replica are hitherto unknown.

<sup>2</sup> Németh, Péter. *A középkori Szabolcs megye települései*, Nyíregyháza, 1997, 155–156.

<sup>3</sup> Terdik, Szilveszter. Középkori eredetű görög katolikus templomok a történeti Szatmár vármegyében, *Athanasiana*, 32(2010), 119. Finally, in 1767, the medieval church was given to the Roman Catholics. Soós, Imre. *Az egri egyházmegyei plébániák történetének áttekintése*, Budapest, 1985, 462–463.

<sup>4</sup> For an account of the first weeping with previous literature, see: Magyar, 1996, 85–96. Minutes of the inquiry are held in the Library of Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest: Hevenesi Collection, XLI, 401–414. First published and translated in: Uriel, 1907, 50–74. For a critical edition of the Latin text, see: Janka, 1996, 138–147.

<sup>5</sup> Janka, 1996, 141.

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The votive picture found its way to the church; allegedly, it was purchased and presented to the Church by Lőrinc Hurta<sup>6</sup> (Picture 1). The icon was painted in tempera on a 50 × 70 cm (19.68 × 27.55") maple-wood board. The half-figure Theotokos points at the Infant sitting on her left arm, blessing with His right and holding a red three-branched flower reminiscent of a rose or rather of a lily in His left hand. The composition exemplifies the *Hodigitria* ('Our Lady of the Way') icon type. Its iconographic properties were recognised as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and, in a sermon on the first weeping delivered in Hungarian, it was associated with the ancient Marian icon of the Roman Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore attributed to Luke the Evangelist, representing the same type: 'Ez a Csudálatos Kép (ti. a pócsi), melyről itt szólnunk, csekély móddal rajzoltatott-le egy fa táblára; hasonlít magában azon Képhez, melly Romában tartatik, és *Maria Major* névvel Deákul neveztetik' [The miraculous icon (i.e. that of Pócs) which is spoken of herein was drawn on a wooden board by modest means; it is *per se* akin to the picture which is kept in Rome, in a church called *Maria Major* in the Latin tongue].<sup>7</sup> The flower appearing in the hand of Mary or Jesus is known in eastern and western art alike from the Middle Ages; in Byzantine iconography, it must have been inspired by the poetic imagery of the *Akathist Hymn*, describing Mary as 'unfading bloom'.<sup>8</sup> In line with tradition, Mary's robe is crimson, adorned on her forehead and shoulders by stars symbolising perpetual virginity; her undergarment is green. Albeit uncommon in icons, Mary wears two strings of pearls, just as the infant Jesus does, with a Greek cross hanging from a chain around His neck, placed over His ochre attire. Perhaps, the painted jewellery may be interpreted as an influence of western art, but they might just as well be an indication of the fact that the painter knew icons that the faithful decorated with real jewellery. The cross worn around Jesus' neck could also have a symbolic meaning as a reference to the forthcoming



passion of the Divine Child. The halos of the Theotokos and of the infant Jesus, as well as the picture frame were fitted with raised decoration. Above Mary's right shoulder, the abbreviated version of 'Mother of God' in Greek is displayed, while, above her Child, that of His Greek name ('Jesus Christ') is inscribed. In the upper corners of the picture, in the areas flanked by an inner arched frame, two-winged angels hover,<sup>9</sup> with the following 'Russian' text written at its bottom: 'This image was erected by servant of God, ..., for the forgiveness of his sins'. The person's name is illegible.

<sup>6</sup> Lőrinc Hurta's name does not appear in the first inquiry minutes; from an 18<sup>th</sup>-century work in German discussing the history of the miraculous icon, cited by: Uriel, 1907, 43–44.

<sup>7</sup> [No Author]. *Nyirpocs nevű helységben könyvező Boldogságos Szűz Maria első képének eredetiről, és annak Bécs-veló viteléről, rövid summába foglalt Igaz Beszéd*, [n. p., n. d.], National Széchényi Library, Budapest, 326.296. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, even an engraving showing a replica of the Roman icon with the inscription 'The Blessed Virgin of Pócs' was issued. Terdik, 2011a, 60; Terdik, Szilveszter. Egy római kegykép sajátos ökömenizmus: A római Lukács-ikon példája. *Görögkatolikus Szemlélet*, 6(2019), 3–4. szám, 114–115. Cf. also: Tüskés, 2010, 275, Picture 13.

<sup>8</sup> Its iconographic tradition was treated extensively in: Puskás, 1996a, 97–117. Stylistic parallels of the painting are found among the icons of Maramureş (*Máramaros*): See: *ibid.* Of late, an icon of the Theotokos of a similar style, presumably from Maramureş, has recently been discovered in a Swiss collection. Cf. *Heilige, Wunder und Visionen: Ikonen aus der Schenkung Gürtler Kunstmuseum St. Gallen*, Berlin, 2016, 62, kat. 35.

<sup>9</sup> The painter must have been inspired by similar cherubim in the engravings of Slavic liturgical books: Cf. Гусева, А. А. – Каменева, Т.Н. – Полонская, И.М. *Украинские книги кирилловской печати XVI–XVIII вв., Каталог изданий, хранящихся в Г. Б. СССР имени Ленина, Вып. II, Том 1, Киевские издания 2-й пол. XVII в.*, Москва, 1981, kat. 1167, 1569, 1674; Стасенко, 2003, 138–139.

(2)



The weeping icon could not stay in Pócs for long. By 1 March 1697, it had been taken to the Roman Catholic church of the more centrally located Kálló (today's Nagykálló) and was subsequently transported to the Imperial City soon at the Monarch's command. *En route*, copies were made of it; as tradition has it, two of these were commissioned by the Jesuits in Barca (*Bárca*) near Košice (today part of Košice). These pieces are identical to the replicas found in St Elisabeth's Cathedral in Košice and in the church of the nearby village of Malá Vieska (*Sároskisfalu*).<sup>10</sup> With stopovers in Pest, Buda and Győr, the icon arrived in Vienna on 4 July 1697 to find its ultimate home in the Cathedral of St Stephen.<sup>11</sup>

At the time of the first weeping, the tears falling from the icon were collected by the local parish priest onto a silk

cloth. He would present that cloth to the Bishop of Eger, who would in turn entrust it to the care of the Jesuits. At last, it reverted to the Bishops of Eger, who, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, exposed it for public veneration in the Chapel of the Virgin Mary in the new Cathedral, along with a replica of the miraculous icon, as it is still seen today.<sup>12</sup>

### The second and the third weeping

The people of Pócs refused to resign themselves to the removal of the miraculous icon. Although the original picture would never return to the village, in 1698, the copy said to be bound for Pócs was received in Buda with great respect. However, it seems that this piece did not reach its destination, either, as in January 1715, István Telekessy, Bishop of Eger (1699–1715), notes in a letter of his that, eight years ago (i.e. in 1707), he dispatched a replica made in Vienna to Pócs, adding that it is not held in great esteem in the village, and therefore he is considering having it moved to the more centrally positioned Nagykálló. His imminent death did not permit further transportation though<sup>13</sup> (Picture 2).

One Thursday, on 1 August 1715, cantor János Molnár noticed the weeping of the replica made after the first miraculous icon, while Mihály Papp, the young parish priest, conducted the morning service in the wooden church of Pócs. The miracle was first reported to Vicar Gennadius Bizánczy, residing in Nagykálló, who did not happen to be at home at the time. The miracle would recur on the next day and then on 5 (25 July by the Old Calendar, i.e. the feast of Saint Anne). In addition to local individuals, eyewitnesses included the soldiers of the garrison of Nagykálló, Imperial High Commissioner Paul Siess and the postmaster of Nagykálló. In the days following the weeping, authorised by the Bishop of Eger, János Kiss, Provost and Titular Bishop of Ansaria, and Canon János Antal Kiss, investigated the event officially, interrogating, on one occasion, eleven and, on another, six witnesses, some of whom were Protestants. The picture was removed from its place and subjected to close inspection. The minutes were concluded on 25 August 1715, with the statements of the local parish priest and the cantor recorded in Rusyn appended.<sup>14</sup> The validity of the second weeping was

<sup>10</sup> Jordánszky, 1836, 116–117. Barna, Gábor. *Görög katolikus búcsújáró helyek az egykori Északkelet-Magyarországon*, in: Barna, Gábor (Ed.), *Vallási néprajzi tanulmányok* (Szegedi Vallási Néprajzi Könyvtár, 46; A Vallási Kultúrakutatás Könyvei, 14), Szeged, 2014, 69.

<sup>11</sup> On the transfer, with related previous literature, see: Terdik, 2001, 123–131. Also see Katalina Földvári's study in the present volume.

<sup>12</sup> Jordánszky, 1836, 108–109.

<sup>13</sup> Uriel, 1907, 109; Puskás, 1995a, 169.

<sup>14</sup> The minutes are kept in the Archiepiscopal Archives of Eger, Archivum Vetus 1800. For their description, also see in the present volume, Cat. IV.14. The Latin original was published: *Vera relatio super fletu, et lachrymatione secundae sacrae Imaginis Pocsensis Beatae Mariae Virginis, Cassoviae, ex Typographia Landereriana, 1776, 2–34*. At that time, a German and Hungarian translation were also published; for a presentation of the latter, see in the present volume, Cat. IV.15. The Hungarian translation was republished: Lupis, I. Sylvester. *Mária-Pócsi Nefejejts vagyis*

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acknowledged by Gábor Antal Erdődy, Bishop of Eger (1715–1744), on 19 September, and, in his letter to Vicar Bizánczy, he proclaimed Pócs a place of pilgrimage of the Virgin Mary.<sup>15</sup> It was afterwards that the village could adopt the name of Mary.

Another weeping of the second miraculous icon began on 3 December 1905. Leading a group of pilgrims into the church, Basilian monk Kelemen Gávrís, guardian of the miraculous icon – upon opening the picture frame of the icon – noticed that the face of the Virgin Mary was darker than usual, the white of her right eye was reddish, and tears trickled down from it across the cheek terminating in a lentil-size teardrop. The monk used a pink cloth to collect the teardrops. The weeping would continue until 19 December uninterrupted and would resume on the last two days of December as well, lasting altogether eighteen days. The authorities of the Eparchy of Mukacheve had the incidents investigated officially on this occasion as well, with the involvement of ecclesiastical and secular individuals. The minutes of the witness interviews were published in print as well.<sup>16</sup> The event was also treated in the press of the time. A later statement of one of the eyewitnesses on the weeping is recorded on audiotape.

### The pilgrimage church

The site of the first weeping, the wooden church, was in such a poor state of repair by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century that, in 1701, Leopold I granted permission to Mátyás Mészáros, a resident of Pócs, who had been heard as the seventh witness in the inquiry into the weeping, to collect donations for the construction of a new church. In the authorisation, the Emperor Leopold made a separate mention of the Triumph at Senta (*Zenta*) (1697). However, the construction plans came to nothing, probably owing to the wars of the ensuing years. In 1714, József Hoder márszky, Bishop of Mukacheve (1707–1715), submitted a proposal to the

Sovereign for the construction of a new church and Basilian monastery in Pócs, but the plan could not come to fruition because the Bishop of Eger preferred to see the Franciscans attend to the pilgrimage place.<sup>17</sup>

Eventually, the building of the new stone church was commenced by Bishop Bizánczy, with the approval of the Bishop of Eger; the plans were prepared by Nikodémus Liczky, a master builder from Košice, and the solemn foundation stone laying ceremony took place on 8 September 1731. Following the death of Bishop Bizánczy in 1733, the construction of the church slowed down. Although his successors, Simon Olsavszky (1733–1737) and György Blazsovszky (1738–1742), also endeavoured to continue the project, the construction activities only gathered a new momentum from 1742, the year of Mánuel Olsavszky's (1742–1767) episcopal appointment. Due to the changes of bishops, the original plans were modified, yet Liczky would continue to supervise the construction and draw new plans.<sup>18</sup> While the construction was under way, the church continued to be in use, so much so that, when, in October 1740, coming as a pilgrim, János Szent-Iványi, Lord Lieutenant of Bereg County, passed away in his son-in-law's house in Máriapócs, he was to be buried in the wooden church, in a walled tomb created in front of the miraculous icon as he could not be transported to Vranov nad Topľou (*Varannó*) due to the plague scare.<sup>19</sup> During the construction, the old church was encircled by the walls of the new church, and, when the latter was complete, the former would be simply dismantled. The memory of the old church has only been preserved in its title feast as the new church was also commended to the protection of the Archangel Saint Michael (Picture 3).

The pilgrimage church was consecrated on 8 September 1749 for the first time, but its ceremonial consecration was held in 1756. The completion of the construction and the *ktetors* are also commemorated in

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*a Pócsi Boldogasszony csodatevő, könnyező képének hiteles története, csodái, búcsui imák és énekek füzére*, Ungvár, 1899, 26–53. Uriel, 1907, 113–149. A new edition of the Košice booklet with modernised spelling was published: *Igaz beszéd a második pócsi Szűz Szent Mária képének sírása és könnyezése felől*, Budapest, 2015. The text of the statements of the parish priest and the cantor in Ruthenian was published and translated into Hungarian by: Удвари, Іштван. Два найстарши руски язиково памяткиу Маряповчу у Мадярскей зоз 1715 року (Походзене Плачущей Богородици), *Нова думка*, XIX, ч. 84, 1990, 15–19. Udvari, 1992, 136.

<sup>15</sup> The original of the letter was in the archives of the Bishopric of Mukacheve; an attested copy was printed in 1775; the certification was appended by Diocesan Chancellor Elek Ilkovic. The text and translations of the letter were included in the booklet published in Košice in the late 1770s. A Latin version printed separately is available in the Archives of the Monastery of Máriapócs, while the printed Hungarian version is displayed in a frame on the wall of the pilgrimage church. The two letters were reproduced in: Gánicz, Tamás – Legeza, László – Terdik, Szilveszter. *Nemzeti szentélyünk, Máriapócs*, [Budapest], 2009, 36–37.

<sup>16</sup> *Adatok a Boldogságos Szűz Anya mária-pócsi kegyképének 1905. évi december havában történt könnyezéséről*, Ungvár, 1906.

<sup>17</sup> Dudás, Bertalan. *A baziliták szerepe a hajdúdorogi egyházmegye életében*, in: Timkó, Imre (Ed.). *A Hajdúdorogi Bizánci Katolikus Egyházmegye jubileumi emlékkönyve, 1912–1987*, Nyíregyháza, 1987, 103.

<sup>18</sup> Terdik, Szilveszter. *A máriapócsi kegytemplom építésére és belső díszítésére vonatkozó, eddig ismeretlen források*, *A Nyíregyházi Jósza András Múzeum Évkönyve*, 50(2008), 525–529. Terdik, 2014a, 31–36.

<sup>19</sup> Mészáros, Kálmán. *Szent-Iványi János beregi főispán halála: Adalék az 1740. évi szabolcsi pestisjárvány és a máriapócsi kegyhely történetéhez*, *Szabolcs-Szatmár-Beregi Szemle*, 2016, 3, 75–79.

(3)



the Latin inscription on the stone frame of the main entrance decorated with the coat-of-arms of Bishop Mánuel Olsavszky. Nonetheless, work was not fully finished even at this point, for the construction of the steeples would continue in the following year as well.<sup>20</sup>

At the time of its building, the pilgrimage church was regarded as the most impressive Greek Catholic church in Hungary; at that time, there were barely a few stone churches in the Eparchy of Mukacheve. In accordance with ancient traditions, its elongated sanctuary closing in a semicircle is arranged *ad orientem*. On the north and south sides of the nave, lateral apses with three-centred-arch base plans were built; with a view to facilitating the movement of pilgrims, in the west section of the nave, two side doors were opened. The west façade is dominated by two monumental steeples, which were raised by one level between 1856 and 1861, for the centenary of the consecration. The onion-shaped design

of the new spires with roof lanterns was modelled on the spires of the church of the Conventual Franciscans in Miskolc.<sup>21</sup> The main gate is surrounded by an ornate stone frame; the bronze door wings were made in memory of the 1991 papal visit by Sándor Tóth (1933–2019), a sculptor working in Nyíregyháza. In the central axis, the upper level of the main façade features a niche, with a mosaic of the Teaching Christ fitted into it in 2014, based on Ádám Kisléghi Nagy's design.<sup>22</sup>

A signature feature of the church exterior is the finely segmented roof design, with gracefully proportioned turrets composed of onion-shaped elements, which rise over the sanctuary and the lateral apses, lending the whole building an elegant silhouette. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the former shingle roof was replaced by metal plates, which in turn were substituted by a copper cover in 1990. The first sacristy was built on the south side of the sanctuary in 1896; its place was taken by a new one in the 1940s.

<sup>20</sup> Terdik, 2014a, 35–37, 41.

<sup>21</sup> Terdik, 2014a, 43–44.

<sup>22</sup> Estivill, Daniel. *Kisléghi Nagy Ádám*, Budapest, 2014, 102–103.

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The interior arrangement of the pilgrimage church is also monumental. The entire church is vaulted; the space between the steeples is spanned by a gallery. The archivolts segmenting the groined vaults issue from plain capitalled wall pillars; brightness inside is provided by a double row of windows. Pilgrims of the present may also appreciate the effect this 37-meter (121.39-foot) long, 18-meter (59.06-foot) wide and 16-meter (52.49-foot) tall church could produce on masses of the faithful accustomed to small village churches mainly built of wood.

The overall appearance of the church interior is defined by the iconostasis. (Picture 4) From December 1748 to August the next year, for 550 Rhenish guilders, the lavishly carved structure was carved by

Konstantinos Thaliodoros, a sculptor claiming Constantinopolitan heritage, who had probably been recommended to Bishop Olsavszky by Balkan Christian ('Greek') merchants settling in the country. In that period, the master also worked in two other Greek Catholic cathedrals, in Oradea (*Nagyvárad*) and Blaj (*Balázsfalva*), Transylvania.<sup>23</sup>

The distribution of the icons is in accordance with the traditions: the four sovereign-tier icons in the bottom row with three doors, twelve feasts in the second row with the *Last Supper* in the centre, followed by Christ as the Great High Priest along with the Twelve Apostles. The pediment of the iconostasis is unique, with prophets painted in nine picture areas among floral motives with rich fretwork carving. In its central axis, an enormous pedimental cross rises, with the figures of the mourners, the Theotokos and Saint John. Below the cross, two carved flying angels hold a crown above the icon of the dead Christ resting in the tomb, with the reliefs of two dragons twisting in opposite directions appearing underneath. The feebleness of their scaly bodies, formidable looks and sharp teeth is conveyed by their drooping pointed tongues because, by His death on the cross and resurrection, Christ also triumphed over the dragons symbolising Evil, hiding in the nether regions of the earth. In fact, as the Church Fathers explain, Hades swallowed the crucified Christ like a bait as it were, not suspecting that this dead One was not only Man but also God, who was capable of destroying its power.<sup>24</sup>

For the painting of the structure of the iconostasis, as well as possibly of some of the icons, 925 Rhenish guilders were paid to anonymous painters from Košice in August 1756.<sup>25</sup> The original painting of the carved sections imitating blue, red and pink marble was explored and partly restored during the 2010 conservation.<sup>26</sup> Under the prophet icons of the pediment, fragmentary but restorable depictions dated to the time of the first painting were uncovered. Péter Csongrádi, a 'Rascian' painter from Eger, was contracted for the painting of the icon screen for 500 guilders on 20 January 1752. The images of the Prophets were painted by him. In the course of conservation, the original icons of the two mourners, works by a different unknown painter, probably active in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, were also discovered.<sup>27</sup> As testified

<sup>23</sup> Terdik, 2014a, 57–68.

<sup>24</sup> Terdik, 2014a, 61.

<sup>25</sup> Terdik, 2014a, 59.

<sup>26</sup> For a presentation of the conservation, see: Szentkirályi, Miklós. *Gránátalma a szárnyasoltáron: Egy restaurátorművész műhelytitkai*, Budapest, 2012, 196–297. For a list of the conservators involved in the project, see: *ibid.*, 216.

<sup>27</sup> Csongrádi completed the work in January 1755. For his contract, see: DAZO fond 151, opis 1, no. 1351, fol. 1. Terdik, 2020, 9–11, Terdik, 2014a, 64–67.

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by a contract from 1783, the first pictures of the iconostasis were replaced with icons of the painter Mihály Spalinszky.<sup>28</sup> In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Spalinszky was the most prominent artist of the Eparchy of Mukacheve. His first signed work may be dated to 1756;<sup>29</sup> as of the 1760s, he would regularly receive commissions from the Greek Catholic bishops.<sup>30</sup> His most important work was the painting of the monumental iconostasis of the Cathedral of Uzhhorod (*Ungvár*), for which he was contracted by Bishop András Bacsinszky (1772–1809) for 500 Rhenish guilders on 30 April 1778;<sup>31</sup> he completed the assignment as early as 1780. It is understandable that, a few years later, he was commissioned to paint the new icons of the pilgrimage church. Spalinszky's pictures were extracted in 1896; now only five compositions survive: the icons of four Apostles and of Christ as the Great High Priest.<sup>32</sup>

In 1896, to honour Hungary's Millennium, at the request of the Basilian fathers, large-scale activities were also started in the interior of the church of Máriapócs, under the leadership of the brothers Gyula and Imre Spisák, painters and carvers from Budapest. The walls, the altars and the iconostasis were repainted, its pictures were replaced again and three new doors were made on it. The four new sovereign-tier icons of the iconostasis are approximately twice as large as the original ones, upsetting the equilibrium of carvings and painted surfaces in the bottom row. From the conservation of 2010, the only extant work by the two brothers is the image of the crucified Christ, which is a faithful replica of the original baroque composition. (The latter is preserved in an extremely fragmented condition under the current composition painted on canvas). At that time, the iconostasis was also richly gilded, and the original marmoration was repainted.<sup>33</sup>

The miraculous icon was originally placed in the centre of the church, in the iconostasis above the Royal Doors. In 1912, the icon was encased in a fire-resistant metal cabinet;<sup>34</sup> it may have been then that the carvings adorning the gateway arch above the Royal Doors and the cornice were mutilated. In 2010, the incomplete parts were restored, making the two-headed eagle holding a sceptre



(5)

and a sword in its claws – a popular imperial and subsequently ecclesiastical symbol in Byzantium as well – in the arch above the Royal Doors visible again. In the reconstructed central picture area of the cornice, the so-called Not-Made-By-Hands Icon of Christ (the *Mandylion*) (feast: 16 August) was placed, in line with the ancient practice of the Byzantine communities of the Carpathian Basin, according to which this is the distinguished place for the face of Christ in the interior decoration of churches.<sup>35</sup>

The high altar carved from black and pink marble in the centre of the sanctuary was donated by Count Pál Forgách, Roman Catholic Bishop of Oradea (1747–1757), in 1750, as attested by the Latin inscription on the sides of the

<sup>28</sup> He accepted to paint the iconostasis for 130 German Guldens in 1783. Puskás, 2008, 187, Picture 153; Terdik, 2014a, 65–66.

<sup>29</sup> Terdik, Szilveszter. Az egykori jezsuita templom székesegyházzá alakítása Ungváron, Bacsinszky András püspök (1772–1809) idejében, in: Véghseő, Tamás (Ed.). *Bacsinszky András (1732–1809) munkácsi püspök, A Bacsinszky András munkácsi püspök halálának 200. évfordulóján rendezett konferencia tanulmányai* (Collectanea Athanasiana, I/6), Nyíregyháza, 2014, 215, 278, Picture 14; Terdik, 2014a, 99.

<sup>30</sup> Puskás, 2008, 186–187.

<sup>31</sup> Terdik, 2014a, 100–101.

<sup>32</sup> For descriptions of the icons of *John, Mark, Bartholomew, Matthew* and *Christ the High Priest*, see in the present volume, Cat. III.31–35.

<sup>33</sup> Terdik, 2011, 80–81, 135–137. The iconostasis was conserved in 1957 as well; the pictures were partially repainted: Terdik, 2014a, 24, Majchricsné Ujteleki – Nyírán, 2019, 301–303.

<sup>34</sup> Majchricsné Ujteleki – Nyírán, 2019, 45–47, 57–58.

<sup>35</sup> The carvings were reconstructed by restorer Péter Szathmáry; the icon was painted by painter Ádám Kisléggyi Nagy.

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altar table. It acquired its present form in 1896, when its tabernacle was also made. Its baroque baldachin, along with the eclectic additions, some of which have been lost, was dismantled in 1944.<sup>36</sup>

In the two lateral apses of the nave, side altars were added, the costs of which were covered in the 1750s by Countess Rozália Gersei Petheő living as a widow in neighbouring Ófehértó, as indicated by the coats-of-arms attached to them. Data on the baroque altars or the carvers of the pulpit have not been found to date; based on clues pertinent to criticism of style, it may be surmised that they were made in the workshop of Josef Hartmann working in Košice.<sup>37</sup>

The former altar of the Holy Cross on the north side was transformed into a devotional altar by Franciscan woodcarvers from Pécs in 1944 and 1945, on the basis of the plans of József Boksay (1891–1975), a painter from Uzhorod: In place of the former altarpiece, the miraculous icon in an ornate frame was accommodated.<sup>38</sup> The altar table was moved forward, a pair of stairs was built behind it, and even two side doors were opened on the apse, affording access to the miraculous icon from the interior of the church and the churchyard alike. The cloth used to soak up the tears at the time of the third weeping was also placed directly under the icon, in an ornate frame. The picture of God the Father and the dove of the Holy Spirit above the miraculous icon is Gyula Spisák's work, probably a copy of the original baroque painting. The two lateral compositions representing angels playing music were painted by Manó Petrasovszky (1902–1976); they were completed by 1948. The ceremonial transfer of the miraculous icon took place on 8 September 1945.<sup>39</sup> Towards the end of World War II, when news of the front approaching was received, the miraculous icon was hidden in the cellar of the monastery in October 1944 and was returned only on 30 May 1945, that time still to its original place on the iconostasis.<sup>40</sup> To replace the original picture, Manó Petrasovszky painted a replica, which was later kept by Bishop Miklós Dudás in his private chapel; currently, it is held in the Nyíregyháza Seminary<sup>41</sup> (Picture 5).

Even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there were choir stalls, i.e. *kliroses*, reserved for monks in the foreground of the iconostasis, nowadays evoked by new oak seats with elbow rests (*stasidia*).

The vaults and side walls of the pilgrimage church richly decorated with baroque illusionistic domes and other architectural elements were painted in the 1750s by István Izbéghy Veres, an artist living in Košice, by drawing on the engravings of Andrea Pozzo, a famous Italian Jesuit.<sup>42</sup> The murals were painted over in 1896, but the ceiling frescoes of the nave and the sanctuary were cleaned and repainted by József Boksay in 1943. The row of angels adorning the cornices of the lateral apses was also made by him. He painted Eastern Church Fathers in the upper dummy windows in the sanctuary, the Virgin Mary assumed into heaven on the vault in front of the iconostasis, the Four Evangelists under the illusionistic dome on the central vault and the apotheosis of Saint Basil the Great on the final vault section of the nave.<sup>43</sup> It was suggested that he should be commissioned to make new pictures for the iconostasis as well, but eventually this proposal failed to materialise.<sup>44</sup>

The murals of the sanctuary were made by painter Manó Petrasovszky in 1944 and 1945: In the centre of the grandiose scene of the apse, the Virgin Mary with the Child Jesus receives the offering of the country by King Saint Stephen, surrounded by Saint Stephen the Protomartyr, patron saint of the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog, and Hungarian saints, who are joined by pilgrims of different nationalities, with historic figures connected to the place of pilgrimage appearing in their midst. Count Ferenc Károlyi (1705–1758), who, as local tradition has it, was healed here, leans on a crutch. The Calvinist man from Nagykálló who vowed to give a hive of bees to the church if he was healed is depicted with a beehive in his hands. Once healed, he refused to fulfil his pledge, causing the bees to make the journey by themselves and settle in the crack on the north apse created during the Érmellék Region earthquake, where their distant descendants continue to live to this day. Two other murals by Petrasovszky present the 'birth' of the Species of the Eucharist: bread and wine.<sup>45</sup> From 1946 for

<sup>36</sup> Terdik, 2014a, 55–57. Its altarpiece depicting the Assumption of the Virgin Mary was transferred to the new church of Érpatak.

<sup>37</sup> On the side altars and the history of the pulpit, see: Terdik, 2014a, 72–75.

<sup>38</sup> For the correspondence on the arrangement of the altar, see: Majchricsné Ujteleki – Nyirán, 2019, 171–172, 183–197.

<sup>39</sup> Majchricsné Ujteleki – Nyirán, 2019, 220–22.

<sup>40</sup> Majchricsné Ujteleki – Nyirán, 2019, 212–214, 218–219. In 1947, the icon was secreted again, but it is not known when it was returned: Majchricsné Ujteleki – Nyirán, 2019, 240–241.

<sup>41</sup> Wooden board, oil painting, 76 × 55 cm (29.92 × 21.65”).

<sup>42</sup> Terdik, 2014a, 44–54.

<sup>43</sup> Majchricsné Ujteleki – Nyirán, 2019, 168–169.

<sup>44</sup> Terdik, Szilveszter. Boksay József festőművész (1891–1975), *Görögkatolikus Szemlélet*, 5(2018), 3. szám, 65–67.

<sup>45</sup> For more detail on the picture, with previous literature, see: Terdik, 2013b, 195–197.

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over a decade, ten stained-glass windows would be made on the basis of Petrasovszky's design, in the Budapest workshop of József Palka.<sup>46</sup>

Under the central section of the church nave, even a crypt was constructed. In 1767, the embalmed body of Bishop Olsavszky, who died in Mukacheve, was buried here, and, in 1757, Rozália Gersei Petheő, the great benefactor of the church, also found her final resting place here. It also serves as the burial place of the Bishops of the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog. Miklós Dudás, a native of the place, who had been a Basilian monk before he became bishop in 1938, rests here, too. He and his brother, Bertalan, who was also a Basilian and even Provincial of the Order, made a tremendous contribution to the restoration of the pilgrimage place of Máriapócs.

### Basilian presence

The Bishops of Mukacheve sought to entrust the place of pilgrimage to the Basilian fathers' spiritual care very soon. On 18 May 1749, Demeter Rácz (1706–1782), the Greek Catholic farm bailiff of Count Ferenc Károlyi, proprietor of the village, laid the foundation stone of the new monastery. The construction of the two-storey monastery with a rectangular floor plan, complete with a closed courtyard, connected to the church through a passage set on arcade arches, began south of the church, on the basis of Nikodémus Liczky's plans. In consequence of the protest of the Bishop of Eger and the Conventual Franciscans of Nyírbátor, construction work was intermittent, but Bishop Olsavszky eventually obtained even Maria Theresa's approval for the building of the monastery. The stability of the religious house was enabled by Count Ferenc Károlyi's noble gesture in 1757, whereby he presented nearly the whole village to the Basilians.<sup>47</sup>

The monastery was an important location for Greek Catholic culture and education as it also housed a school.<sup>48</sup> Thus, Bishop András Bacsinszky was able to ensure that it would not be afflicted by Joseph II's measures aimed at the dissolution of religious orders. In 1950, however, the operation of the Order was banned, monastics were

forced to leave the monastery, and they could return only in 1990, though they would regain the buildings only later. The history of the place of pilgrimage is presented by an exquisitely organised exhibition on the ground-floor of the south wing.

On the northern side of the square outside the pilgrimage church, Basilian sisters also settled prior to World War II. Their new monastery, which would function as a pilgrims' house as well, was built at that time. They were also dispersed but would return, and now they operate a social welfare home in an expanded and refurbished building.

### Summary

From the time of the first weeping, the pilgrimage church of Máriapócs attracts pilgrims, visiting this sacred place in the hope of spiritual and physical healing. The pilgrimage site obtained several indulgence privileges from the Popes in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Benedict XIV (1740–1758) granted indulgence for seven Marian feast days, which the Basilians would interpret as applying to the corresponding feasts in the Gregorian Calendar and the Feast of Assumption and the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary by the Julian Calendar.<sup>49</sup> The bishops building the church emphasised on a number of occasions that the new church would cater for the spiritual needs of both rites, i.e. of the Greek- and Latin-rite faithful. Until the calendar harmonisation in 1916, major Marian feasts would be celebrated according to both calendars; feasts by the Gregorian Calendar would primarily be attended by Roman Catholic, while those by the Julian Calendar by Greek Catholic pilgrims. Prominent pilgrimages included the Feast of Saint Elijah (20 July), formerly linked to 'marriage market' – as was the pilgrimage of the Latin-rite faithful on the Feast of the Nativity of Mary.<sup>50</sup>

The past half a century has seen several historic pilgrimages to the site. In 1946, at the pilgrimage on the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, on the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first weeping and the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Union of Uzhhorod, the guest preacher was

<sup>46</sup> For documents on the windows, see: Olbert, 2010, 64–65, Majchricsné Ujteleki – Nyírán, 2019, 227–229.

<sup>47</sup> Puskás, 1995a, 172–176. Terdik, Szilveszter. Rácz Demeter, egy XVIII. századi görög katolikus mecénás, *A Nyíregyházi Jósa András Múzeum Évkönyve*, 49(2007), 368–370.

<sup>48</sup> Udvari, István. Adatok a máriapócsi iskoláról, in: Udvari, 1994, 134–143.

<sup>49</sup> The correspondence between Bishop András Bacsinszky and Basilian Prior Szilveszter Kovacsák on the matter: DAZO, fond 151, opis 1, no. 2817.

<sup>50</sup> On the ethnography of Greek Catholic pilgrimages, see: Bálint – Barna, 1994, 105–117. The popularity of the pilgrimage site of Máriapócs is illustrated by the fact that numerous printed booklets containing prayers and piety practices associated with the wonder-working icon were published as of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, with their nationwide dissemination also demonstrated by Sándor Bálint's collection: N. Szabó, Magdolna – Zombori, István (Eds.). *Vallásos ponyvanyomtatványok Bálint Sándor hagyatékában* (Devotio Hungarorum, 14), Szeged, 2010, 163–167, kat. 432–448.

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Prince-Primate József Mindszenty.<sup>51</sup> In commemoration of the double anniversary, Pope Pius XII conferred the title *Basilica Minor* on the pilgrimage church in 1948.<sup>52</sup> A salient day in the history of Máriapócs was 18 August 1991, when, as part of his visit to Hungary, Pope John Paul II celebrated Byzantine liturgy in Hungarian before the miraculous icon, with immense crowds of believers from Hungary and abroad in attendance.

In 2005, the miraculous icon was cleaned and conserved by conservator Szilvia Hernády in the Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.<sup>53</sup> On 3 December, in the presence of the members of the Hungarian Episcopacy, Primate Péter Erdő, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, crowned the icon anew with a golden halo blessed by Pope Benedict XVI in Rome. It was then that Máriapócs was proclaimed a National Sacred Site of Hungary.

In the course of 2009 and 2010, the exterior of the pilgrimage church was fully renewed, its environs were neatly arranged, the church interior was fitted with underfloor heating and new flooring, and the furnishings were conserved completely, while the murals partially. Ceremonial consecration attended by a number of Greek and Roman Catholic bishops took place on 11 September 2010. The guest preacher of the festival was Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna.<sup>54</sup>

At that time, as a civil initiative, supported by various organisations, a wooden church was also built in the courtyard of the Basilian monastery to evoke the atmosphere and context of the first weeping. In its size and structure, the small church is patterned on the wooden church of Mándok. The sponsor of the construction, Miklós Szunai, even purchased a fine replica of the miraculous icon, which was placed in the wooden church.<sup>55</sup> The pictures of the iconostasis were painted from public funding in Transcarpathia in 2011.<sup>56</sup> The structurally complete building was blessed on

1 October 2010, and its ceremonial consecration was conducted two years later, on 17 May, on the Feast of the Ascension – declared to be the title feast of the wooden church – by Diocesan Bishop Fülöp Kocsis.<sup>57</sup>

2015 was pronounced the Tricentennial Year of the Second Weeping. Commemorations were not confined to Máriapócs, but, as in 2005, the miraculous icon went on a nationwide tour.<sup>58</sup> The central event of the Tercentenary was the 16 August grand pilgrimage in Máriapócs. On that occasion, a new church bell cast from the donations of the faithful ('The Bell of Peace', weighing 1.65 tonnes (32.48 cwt), tuned C sharp, made in Poland)<sup>59</sup>, blessed by Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Major Archbishop of Kiev, was hoisted into place in the south steeple, which had been vacant since World War I; the principal celebrant of the festive liturgy was Archbishop Cyril Vasyľ, Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches from Rome.

2019 saw the enrichment of the interior of the Basilica with the addition of the mosaic pictures of Greek Catholic Bishops and Martyrs Blessed Theodore Romzha (*Tódor Romzsa*) and Blessed Pavol Gojdič (*Pál Gojdiics*) in the niches next to the side doors.<sup>60</sup>

Thanks to countless development projects, the environment of the pilgrimage site has improved aesthetically over the past decade. Outward growth will certainly foster the growth of numerous spiritual fruits in the souls of open-hearted pilgrims and visitors to Máriapócs.

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4. The iconostasis of the pilgrimage church about 1900
5. Replica of the miraculous icon by Manó Petrasovszky, 1944

<sup>51</sup> Majchricsné Ujteleki – Nyirán, 2019, 232–239.

<sup>52</sup> Majchricsné Ujteleki – Nyirán, 2019, 242–246.

<sup>53</sup> GKPL, I–1–a, 175/2005.

<sup>54</sup> Feczkó, Ágnes – Szabó, Sándor (Eds.). *A felújított máriapócsi kegytemplom megáldása: 2010. szeptember 11.*, Nyíregyháza, 2010.

<sup>55</sup> The picture emerged at an auction of Nagyházi Gallery and Auction House, Budapest, in 2008. Cf. Tüskés, 2014, 154, 179, Fig. 2.

<sup>56</sup> Website: <https://hd.gorogkatolikus.hu/hirek-archiv-kiir&hir=1042> (accessed: 30 March 2020).

<sup>57</sup> Website: <https://hd.gorogkatolikus.hu/hirek-archiv-kiir&hir=695>, <https://hd.gorogkatolikus.hu/hirek-archiv-kiir&hir=1753> (accessed: 30 March 2020).

<sup>58</sup> For reports on the events of the Tricentennial Year, see: *Görögkatolikus Szemlélet*, 2(2015), 2. szám

<sup>59</sup> In 1915, the pilgrimage church had eight bells, the largest being the one in the south steeple (weight: 3.3 tonnes [64.96 cwt] incl. crown); see: Majchricsné Ujteleki – Nyirán, 2019, 97. Seven of these, including this large bell, were requisitioned during World War I; see: Szemán, László. *Első világháborús harangrekvirálás Szabolcsban és Szatmárban: A görögkatolikusok harangjainak háborús célokra való fordítása, A Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei Levéltár Évkönyve*, 21(2019), 190. See also: Id. Harangrekvirálások a második világháború idején a Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegyében, *Athanasiana*, 40(2015), 63–84. During World War II, another one of the four bells left was removed; see: Majchricsné Ujteleki – Nyirán, 2019, 200.

<sup>60</sup> The mosaics were made in the workshop of Josif Droboniku (1952–2020) in Lungro, Southern Italy, where the Albanian Orthodox artist had founded his Arberart Studio in the centre of the local Greek Catholic Eparchy.