

**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*)

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IV.4.1 The Situation of the Greek Catholics from Socialism to the Foundation of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate

Tamás Véghseő

In the autumn of 1944, with the onslaught of the Red Army invading Hungary, the new political elite of the country also arrived. Hard-liner communists fleeing to the Soviet Union after the failure of the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic and surviving the Stalinian cleansing campaigns were supplied with clear and straightforward instructions: to create a Soviet-type political regime in Hungary with the help of the Red Army's weaponry. Events unfolded accordingly. Although, at the first parliamentary elections in the autumn of 1945, the Communist Party headed by Mátyás Rákosi suffered a humiliating defeat, the Soviet military leadership coerced the Small Holders' Party winning 57 per cent of the votes into forming a grand-coalition government. Deportations started in the winter of 1944 – the carrying away of members of the population able to work to the Soviet Union for forced labour (known as *málenkij robot*) – provided a sufficiently depressing and intimidating backdrop to all this. The murder of Vilmos Apor, Bishop of Győr, followed by the expulsion of Nuncio Angelo Rotta in April 1945, sent menacing messages to the Churches.¹

The Greek Catholic population living in the eastern territories of the country were the first to become acquainted with the suffering entailed by 'liberation'. In the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog, four churches perished in military actions, and a further eight sustained grave damage. Once the front had passed though, Diocesan Bishop Miklós Dudás immediately went on a tour to offer consolation to his much-afflicted faithful.² Following the death of Archbishop Antal Papp, Apostolic Exarch of Miskolc, at Christmas 1945, Pope Pius XII appointed Miklós Dudás as Apostolic Exarch on 14 October 1946, putting the onus of leading all the Greek Catholics of the country on his shoulders as the only hierarch. As his Vicar-General, Bishop Dudás also appointed István Szántay-Szémán.³

In the circular beginning with the line 'A megpróbáltatások nehéz napjaiban' [in the difficult days of trials and tribulations], the Bishop announced the festivities of the dual jubilee of the Hungarian Greek Catholic community: the 300th anniversary of the Union of Uzhhorod (*Ungvár*)

and the 250th anniversary of the first Máriapócs weeping.⁴ The central celebrations took place in Máriapócs, at the pilgrimage on the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary on 7 and 8 September. Due to the increasingly intensifying attacks on the Catholic Church and its schools, as well as against religious education, the festivities were not only conducive to grateful commemoration but became manifestations of testimony, fidelity to the Church and togetherness as well. The Basilian fathers had prepared for the anniversary with renovations for years. Thus, the miraculous icon could welcome the immense crowd of nearly a quarter of a million pilgrims from the new devotional altar. The guest preacher of the pilgrimage was Prince-Primate József Mindszenty, Archbishop of Esztergom, who had been obliged to defend Catholic schools and religious education in a pastoral letter in May the same year. In his festive speech, the Cardinal recalled the events of the weeping and stressed the value of adherence to the miraculous icon. Before the enormous crowd, he noted that celebrators at the 250th jubilee would have been considerably more numerous, had they not been forced by external powers to stay away. He remembered the Hungarians left outside the post-Trianon borders and announced that the Catholics would appeal against the verdict of the 'Parisian judges' to the Holy Virgin. In the prevailing predicament, he pointed to signs of hope: churches, Catholic schools, Christian families and graveyards becoming symbols of faithfulness to the native land. In the light of his later individual fate, his admonishments must have felt prophetic: 'No Hungarian shall cause another Hungarian to be locked up! 'No Hungarian shall report on another Hungarian!' (translated from the Hungarian original)⁵

At that time, the coalition Government's communist Minister of the Interior, László Rajk, engaged in organising intimidating actions against the Catholic Church. Religious associations were disbanded, and an anti-church scandal-mongering campaign was launched in the press. In April, on charges of 'anti-Soviet instigation', Franciscan father Szaléz Kiss was arrested and, in December, he was sentenced to death and executed.⁶

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¹ Balogh, Margit. Szentszéki magyar kapcsolatok a koalíció (1945–1949) éveiben, in: Tusor, Péter (Ed.). *Magyarország és a római Szentszék – Források és távlatok: Tanulmányok Erdő bíboros tiszteletére*, Budapest–Róma, 2012, 367–368.

² Török, 2005, 10.

³ Janka, 2013, 28.

⁴ *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye Körlevelei*, III (1946), 1701/1946, NYEL, I–1–b.

⁵ *Máriapócsi Naptár*, 1947, 37–44.

⁶ For more detail, see: Kálmán, Peregrin. Hét magyar ferences vértanú tanúságtétele a totalitárius rendszerek üldöztetései közepette, *Acta Pintériana*, 4(2018), 51–53.

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A prominent task of the State Defence Department established in 1946 was to fight against 'clerical reaction' and intimidate ecclesiastical persons.⁷

As to the future ideas of the communists coming into power by fraud at the 1947 elections – based on the acts of the Ministry of the Interior managed by Rajk – Christian Churches could be in no doubt. Hungarian Greek Catholics were particularly concerned by the shocking news from the Eparchy of Mukacheve (*Munkács*) in Transcarpathia, annexed to the Soviet Union. The brutal murder of Theodore Romzha, Bishop of Mukacheve, (1 November 1947)⁸ and the subsequent ban on the operation of the Greek Catholic Church⁹ adumbrated that Stalin's followers in Hungary would also prepare to take similar steps.

The planned nationalisation of faith schools prompted protests across the country. In Pócspetri, a policeman was fatally wounded by a gun fired accidentally in the turmoil of a protest rally. By indicting and convicting the local parish priest, the Communist Party intended to exploit the incident to intimidate the Catholic Church: its bishops, priests and faithful alike. At the session of the Council of Ministers on 4 June 1948, during which Minister of the Interior László Rajk gave an account of the events in Pócspetri, outlining the schedule of an all-out war on 'clerical reaction' seen as an enemy, Rákosi determined the position of Bishop Dudás, who supported Cardinal Mindszenty's orientation: 'Greek Catholic Bishop Dudás is also one of the arch-enemies of democracy' (translated from the Hungarian original).¹⁰ The communist ministers discussed the scenario of retaliation when Rákosi's sinister words were spoken.

In those days, a document from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs clearly formulated the communist reading of the Greek Catholic question: 'In political terms, the influence of the Vatican materialises not only through the Roman Catholic but, as a matter of course, through the Greek Catholic Church as well. In case a viable Hungarian Greek Orthodox Church were to be established in Hungary, it could function as a battering

ram against the Greek Catholic Church and would enable the raising of the possibility that the Greek Catholic Church might return to the fold of the Old Believers' Church and the Union might be dissolved. (This has happened in Western Ukraine, and it is under way in Poland and Carpatho-Ukraine.) People's democracies must by all means support those Churches whose ecclesiastical supreme authorities are situated not outside the country or at least not in hostile foreign countries'¹¹ (translated from the Hungarian original).

Thus, the abolition of the Greek Catholic Church was primarily meant to mitigate the influence of the Vatican, regarded as an ideological arch-enemy, on the faithful. For this reason, incorporation into the Patriarchate of Moscow, operating 'not in a hostile foreign country' and kept under total Soviet control, was identified as an objective. To promote implementation, requesting the help of his Soviet comrades, Rákosi proposed that a Hungarian-speaking Russian priest be dispatched to Hungary. He was first to unite Hungary's Orthodox communities found under different jurisdictions, totalling a few tens of thousands, and, subsequently, to provide assistance with the abolition of the Greek Catholic Church.¹² Complying with the Hungarian party leader's request, in October 1949, Moscow sent Protoiereus Ivan Kopolovich, who would soon be confronted with the difficulties of the execution of the task he was charged with. Even despite substantial help from the Hungarian State, he was unable to accomplish the goal of bringing Hungary's Orthodox communities under a single jurisdiction, a minimal precondition for the assimilation of the Greek Catholic Church numbering 250 thousand faithful. Although, during his Budapest visit in 1950, Jelevferij, Metropolitan of Prague, expressed his hope that, similarly to what he had done in Czechoslovakia, Kopolovich would succeed in abolishing the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church, the chances of doing so grew ever slimmer.

Writing about the Greek Catholics, Kopolovich himself made the following remark: 'They will be a hard

⁷ For more detail, see: Müller, Rolf. A Magyar Államrendőrség Államvédelmi Osztályának szervezettörténete (1946. október – 1948. Szeptember), *Betekintő*, 3(2013), 1–27.

⁸ For a biography of Bishop Theodore Romzha, see: Puskás, László. *Romzsa Tódor püspök élete és halála*, Budapest, 1998.

⁹ For more detail, see: Bendász, István. *Helytállás és tanúságtétel: A Munkácsi Görög Katolikus Egyházmegye hitvalló és meghurcolt papjai*, Budapest, 2014.

¹⁰ MNL OL, XIX–A–83–a–239/5, 10.

¹¹ Quoted in: *Balogh, Margit*. Elvetélt fordulatok az egyházpolitikában: Kísérletek a nemzeti katolikus egyház megteremtésére, in: Standeisky, Éva–Rainer, M. János (Eds.). *Magyarország a jelenkorban, Az 1956-os Magyar Forradalom Történetének Dokumentációs és Kutatóintézete évkönyve*, 7(1999), Budapest, 237.

¹² For the documents of the attempt, see: Волокитина, Т. В. (et al Eds.). *Власть и церковь в Восточной Европе, 1944–1953, документы российских архивов*, I–II, Москва, 2009.

nut to crack' (translated from the Hungarian original). He noted that the Greek Catholic clergy showed no sign of interest in Orthodoxy. He also hinted that, in the event of dissolution, the majority of the Greek Catholics would rather choose the Latin Church or even one of the Protestant Churches. Simultaneously with (or even prior to) Kopolovich's first-hand experience, Rákosi also realised that a weapon much more effective than actual dissolution was a rhetoric using dissolution as a constant menace. Dissolution would have been a one-time blow, with an extremely dubious outcome – in the worst-case scenario from the perspective of the state authorities, even bringing about the possibility of creating an underground Church, the control and persecution of which could require considerable state security resources. By contrast, threatening with the abolition of the Greek Catholic Church was an applicable device in each and every contentious instance to blackmail the Bishop of Hajdúdorog. It also seems likely that, reviewing the experience from the abolition of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, over time, the Soviets would not insist on destroying the Hungarian Greek Catholic community, either. In fact, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church continued to operate underground, and maintaining control over it was a challenging task for the KGB. The Soviet Secret Service was especially interested in instructions from the Holy See, as well as in the ideas of the Roman Curia and the views propounded by the leading Cardinals concerned. In intelligence gathering, the fact that Hungary had a Greek Catholic bishop who was in contact with the Holy See and who could be surrounded by agents proved to be a definite asset.

This way, the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church avoided dissolution, and its fate became intertwined with that of the Roman Catholic Church. Legal operation was in principle guaranteed by the state authorities, though imposing extremely strict limitations on its possibilities and subjecting the episcopal office to total control.

At the end of 1948, following Bishop Mindszenty's arrest, Rákosi's minatory words became reality. In the evening of 30 December, Bishop Dudás was also taken to Budapest for interrogation, straight to the office of Minister of the Interior János Kádár. Kádár showed him a large bundle of documents. As he claimed, they contained evidence based on which they could easily secure a conviction for the Bishop. He also noted that

Cardinal Mindszenty had given damning testimony against him. He called on him to resign and, in that case, the charge would be dropped. The aim of the interrogation was intimidation, and their intention was to 'prepare' the Bishop for the Conference of the Episcopacy scheduled to begin on 4 January. From the minutes of the bishops' discussion, as well as from the report of a secret agent, it may clearly be established that the satanic tactics of intimidation were indeed at work. The tormented Bishop remained reticent all along. Gyula Czapiak, Archbishop of Eger, was of the opinion that Bishop Dudás had been arraigned at the suggestion of János Varjú, an Orthodox priest, who had prepared the ground for Kopolovich's activities before his arrival. In the recess of the meeting, Bishop Dudás shared his fears with a lay person close to the Episcopacy. He was unaware that the individual had for some time been active as a secret agent around the bishops, and he would at once give a report on the confidential conversation... The Bishop told him that, since his meeting with Kádár, he had been unable to sleep. He knew that, as a Greek Catholic, he was to expect harsher treatment from the communists as the brutality of the Soviets with which they persecuted the Churches of Ukraine and Transcarpathia was widely known. He was also apprehensive that the Hungarian communists might hand him over to the Russians. The agent advised him that 'he should not expose himself in favour of the Primate's line of policies and then he could certainly stay out of harm's way' (translated from the Hungarian original). Bishop Dudás was pleased that he had been able to share his fears with someone and felt somewhat reassured by the exchange. However, this relief lasted only a few hours. In the evening of the same day, the bishops met Rákosi and Kádár, who would behave in an extremely aggressive manner. Kádár's target was Bishop Dudás again: He was waving a letter in his hand (with its content remaining unknown) said by the Minister of the Interior to prove the Greek Catholic Bishop's guilt. The agent reporting from the discussions of the Episcopacy the next day made the following statement: 'Dudás, who was relatively composed yesterday, became utterly alarmed again following the denunciation delivered by Minister of the Interior Kádár' (translated from the Hungarian original).¹³

The events of 30 December and 4 January foreshadowed everything that awaited Bishop Dudás

¹³ For the minutes of the session of the Episcopacy and the agent's report, see: Balogh, Margit. *A Magyar Katolikus Püspöki Kar tanácskozásai 1949–1965 között, Dokumentumok*, I–II, Budapest, 2008; therein: I, 37–48.

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in the next nearly one and a half decades: intimidation, blackmail and betrayal by agents.

After the nationalisation of faith schools and as part of the process of a forced pact between the state and the Catholic Church, in 1950, a law terminating the operation licence of religious orders was passed, stating that all male and female monastics were to vacate religious houses by 5 December that year.¹⁴ Thus, the eviction and dispersal of the religious began. In accordance with the law, 34 Basilian monks (16 ordained priest, 14 novices and 4 brethren) and 28 nuns (including four novices) had to leave their religious houses. Their monasteries and the institutions they had maintained were nationalised. The Basilian fathers had no choice but to leave their Hajdúdorog Religious House, as well as their home in Kispest established in 1948. The Province of St Stephen founded in 1947 and led by Father Bertalan Dudás ceased to exist.¹⁵

At the beginning of the new struggle, when external circumstances were perhaps more unfavourable than ever before, Hungarian Greek Catholics could be consoled by the fulfilment of their old wish. Relinquishing part of the Episcopal Residence, Bishop Miklós Dudás established a seminary and theological college in Nyíregyháza.¹⁶ In his letter dated 6 September 1950, he reported the foundation to the Ministry of Religion and Education, which acknowledge it in its response. Albeit, as before, lacking the necessary financial background, Bishop Dudás's unexpected decision was also motivated by the fact that, this way, it was possible to accommodate the novices of the dissolved Basilian Order. The permissive position of the state authorities may seem surprising at first sight since this period was characterised by a systematic deconstruction and closure of Catholic institutions. At the same time, in a sense, Bishop Dudás's step yielded benefits for the communists' designs as well. The official objective in 1950 was still to separate the Greek Catholics from the Catholic Church. From this perspective, it must have appeared to be a positively desirable development to remove

Greek Catholic seminarians from the Central Seminary and thus from the sphere of influence of the Latin Church. On the other hand, total control over the Greek Catholic Church was also facilitated by the circumstance that ordinands were accommodated in a single location – in fact, in the same building as the episcopal office. It was obvious that the institution could only work in complete subjection to the state authorities, providing opportunity to integrate faculty members who accepted to operate as agents. Surviving and hitherto revealed agents' reports prove that the state authorities were able to implement this form of control as well.¹⁷ The communists were also cognisant of the importance of the Seminary: They were well aware of its role in supplying new generations of priests, as well as in the very operation of the Greek Catholic Church. This fact increased the blackmail potential of the state authorities vis-à-vis an even otherwise intimidated bishop.

The Seminary began operating in the last days of September 1950, with five first-year and ten second-year seminarians, under extremely modest conditions. Its first Rector was János Imre Liki, a Basilian monk, who could hold his post until 1958.¹⁸ Vicar István Rojkovich acted as Vice Rector. From 1951, the Prefect was canon law expert János Hollós. A Basilian, Ágoston Orosz, was also installed as Director of Spiritual Life, though the state authorities would tolerate him for no longer than 14 months. His replacement, Gyula Kovács, was able to guide seminarians only for one year as well. After his removal, Jenő Palatitz and, subsequently, Ferenc Rohály, a liturgist of wide learning, could spend more time in this important seminary post. Under pressure from the state, the first few years were also marked by a fluctuation of faculty. In 1952, former Basilian novices also had to leave the Seminary. To ensure proper functioning of the institution, the unstinting work of Basilian sisters expelled from their religious houses was indispensable as well.¹⁹

'... now, upon opening our own Seminary, with a first and second year, in the centre of the Diocese

¹⁴ Law-Decree 1950/34 of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic.

¹⁵ For more detail, see: Végheő, Tamás. Magyar baziliták a kommunista rendszerben, in: Bohač, Vojtech (red.). *Reflexia jednoty v diele a posobení blahoslaveného biskupa Vasil'a Hopka (1904–1976) v kontexte eurointegracneho procesu*, Prešov, 2009, 128–137.

¹⁶ Janka, 2001, 227–228.

¹⁷ For the related documents, see: Kahler, Frigyes. *Az „Ibolya” dosszié: Hiányzó lapok „A magyarországi görögkatolikusok történeté”-ből*, Budapest, 2005.

¹⁸ For more detail on János Liki, see: Török, István Izsák. „Bátraké a föld és az ég”: *Dr. Liki Imre János bazilita szerzetes emlékére*, Máriapócs, 2008.

¹⁹ Janka, 2001, 229–230.

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under modest circumstances, I humbly pray to the Lord and ask for your steadfast prayer as well: May the opening of our Institute be indeed an act of torch lighting for our Eparchy! May this Seminary become the hearth and home of the Greek Rite on Hungarian soil! And may it be a furnace, which forges the souls of the Bishop, as a father, of his priests and seminarians and of his faithful in faith, love and fidelity to the Church' – wrote the hierarch to his priests in his circular dated 15 September 1950.²⁰ It was particularly the last of the sentences cited that was significant in the light of the events that had transpired over the preceding month. To disintegrate the unity between the priests and bishops, as well as to break the resistance of the latter, in August 1950, representatives of the communist state authorities created the National Peace Commission of Catholic Priests, winning over priests ready to oppose their bishops for its leadership.²¹ The cover activity of the movement was the promotion of peace, but, in reality, it functioned as a parallel authority within the Church. Through the State Ecclesiastical Office established in 1951, the state authorities ensured that the priests joining the movement and accepting leadership functions in it would receive various benefits. The dilemma of the 'broad path' and 'narrow way' faced Greek Catholic priests with a decision, too. All who, opting for active engagement in the peace movement, chose the 'broad path', were already given their reward in the following year under pressure from the State Ecclesiastical Office: They would be eligible for appointment as the new Vicar-General, office manager or archdeacons and deans. Soon, 'peace priests' would be sent to major parishes. Conversely, those shunning the peace movement could expect transfer and sidelining.²² Another instrument of intimidation was the deportation of particular priests: The State Defence Department carried away and held captive Dénes Regős, a Basilian monk,²³ Géza Békés, a priest from Vértes (1950),²⁴ and Miklós Véghseő, a chaplain from Hajdúböszörmény (1952), while their families were unable to find out even about the place of their captivity.²⁵

The state authorities exercised control over the Greek Catholic Church not only via the State Ecclesiastical Office and the 'peace priest' movement but by developing a network of agents as well. Recruitment attempts by the state security services among the clergy were successful in several instances. The motivation for accepting and completing assignments as an agent (intelligence gathering and reporting) varied across individual cases. Some were persuaded into collaborating by means of intimidation or blackmail, while others expected their individual ambitions to be fulfilled and their careers to progress as a result of executing the tasks. There were even priests who performed their work as agents in the conviction that, by doing so, they contributed to the survival of their Church. Priests accepting to be enlisted perceived the communist system so strong and unshakable that they did not take the possibility of its failure into account. The suppression of the 1956 Revolution, as well as the ensuing reprisal and the subsequent consolidation under Kádár would further strengthen this conviction of theirs, leading them in mistaken directions and into dead ends.

Successive adversities undermined Bishop Miklós Dudás's health. Even when the Revolution of 1956 erupted, he was treated in hospital. Taking advantage of transient freedom, he travelled from Budapest to Nyíregyháza in order to remove badly compromised 'peace priests' from key offices. In the spring of the following year, major medical treatment could no longer be deferred: Through the help of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, he was treated in Arosa, Switzerland, from April 1957 to March 1958.²⁶ The related state permission must have been motivated by the state security organs' hunger for information. Once they allowed Bishop Dudás to build foreign relations, it was more likely that, through the informants planted in his surroundings, they could collect valuable information on the Holy See for the whole of the Socialist Bloc.

In April 1959, the Bishop was confronted with a severe crisis. Miklós Beresztóczy, President of the

²⁰ *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye Körlevelei*, 1950/VIII, 2784/1950, NYEL, I–1–b.

²¹ On the history of the 'peace priest' movement, see: Orbán, Gyula József. *Katolikus papok békemozgalma Magyarországon, 1950–1956*, Budapest, 2001.

²² *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye Körlevelei*, 1951/XIII–XIV and XIX, NYEL, I–1–b.

²³ For more detail on Dénes Regős: Török, István Izsák. „*Maradjunk meg mindnyájan a szeretetben*”: P. Regős Dénes bazilita atya emlékére, Máriaapócs, 2005.

²⁴ Békés, Géza. *Jobb jövőnkért! Emlékirataim*, Nagykáta, 132–146.

²⁵ The unpublished memoirs of his father, Dániel Véghseő (1883–1971), are the author's property.

²⁶ Török, 2005, 47–48.

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nationwide peace movement of priests, intended to give a talk to the students of the Seminary. As the Holy See had excommunicated Beresztóczy and his associates, Bishop Dudás refused to give permission for the talk. He was aware that his deed might entail the most serious consequences. One month earlier, superiors and seminarians had been removed from the Central Seminary for a similar case of defiance. Preparing for every eventuality, on 17 April, he summoned the clergy of Nyíregyháza and the seminarians to the Seminary Chapel and read out his statement to them. In it, he asserted that he was in no position to meet the demand to ignore the act of the Holy See with a public action (i.e. by permitting the suspended Beresztóczy to deliver his lecture). Should the price of his conduct be the dissolution of the Seminary, he would be ready to do that himself. He appealed to the seminarians to be good civilians in such an event. He anticipated so severe possible consequences that, in those days, he even made a will. In the end, Beresztóczy did not come, and the retribution was lighter as well. The Bishop was not allowed to leave the territory of Nyíregyháza for a while, his brother was deprived of his licence, and *congrua* were withheld from the ten priests working around the Bishop.²⁷

Bishop Dudás celebrated the twentieth anniversary of his ordination as bishop in May the same year. On account of such antecedents, he wished for a quiet thanksgiving. In his commemorative speech, viewing the past in retrospect, he appraised his present situation and, looking to the future, he spoke thus: 'Today, twenty years on, on the ruins of great expectations and sacred plans, I keep saying with Job: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.' Still, something may be left in my crushed soul twenty years on. First of all, my faith – at least in God. But not only that! I also have faith in my Eparchy. Amid all the comprising and balancing, I can still see signs suggesting that there are and – out of the grace of God – there will be people to whom the Catholic faith and the Church are more precious than anything.' Concerning his personal path and hopes, he said: 'There were times when there were masses around me, too. I was also surrounded by tens of thousands when I proclaimed the Kingdom of God in Máriapócs, Budapest, Hajdúdorog and elsewhere. And now, when I have reached the slope of Calvary, I feel as

if I have been left on my own. At times, I am literally cast down by loneliness as though I was clambering up towards the top by myself, to the final scene. Yet it is not like that! I know this perception is deceptive. I am certain that, on the Greek Catholic Hungarians' long road to Calvary, our priests and faithful of good will do not waver on the slope. For we already know that only up on the top do redemption and salvation await us. For there is the cross, and only in it is our salvation. *In cruce salus*' (translated from the Hungarian original).²⁸

The third decade of the episcopacy of the hierarchy, with a 'crushed soul', wearied by the trials and tribulations of the fifties, brought some relief and two important results. The *Ostpolitik* of the Holy See resulted in the conclusion of a partial agreement with the Hungarian State in 1964, without fundamentally changing the situation of the Catholic Church or relaxing strict control, yet producing some concessions.²⁹ Of the concessions given by the state, the most important one for the Greek Catholics was the fact that Bishop Dudás was granted permission to attend the final session of the Second Vatican Council. Even the first session (1962) had been attended by a delegation representing the Hungarian Catholic Church, with Canon Imre Timkó, a professor of the Theological Academy of Budapest, as one of its members. Prior to his departure, the outstanding expert of Eastern disciplines visited his Bishop to ask for his blessing for his journey and request instructions. Bishop Dudás, who had not received an exit permit as yet, did not authorise him to represent the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church, telling him that he would leave it to his discretion to decide with whom the professor would talk and what he would say. Professor Timkó had experienced the Bishop's lack of confidence in him even before. It could well be the case that Bishop Dudás knew or at least suspected that the erudite professor had worked as an agent for the state security services since 1955.³⁰ As the Congregation for the Oriental Churches had for a long time been unable to acquire information about the Hungarian Greek Catholics, arriving in Rome, Imre Timkó was asked to make first an oral and then a written report. In his detailed report, the professor pointed out one of the most acute problems of the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church – the unregulated situation of the diaspora – to the Congregation. As he had done pastoral work in

²⁷ Janka, 2001, 230.

²⁸ Török, 2005, 67–71.

²⁹ For more on the agreement, see: Szabó, Csaba. *A Szentzsék és a Magyar Népköztársaság kapcsolatai a hatvanas években*, Budapest, 2005.

³⁰ For his reports, see: Historical Archives of the State Security Services (ÁBTL), 3.1.2, M–30613/1.

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Budapest himself, he could report practical difficulties by drawing on his own experience and enumerating specific examples, in particular the nearly hostile attitude of the Bishop of Vác, as well as manifestations of the antipathy of the Latin-rite clergy. Although the situation of the diaspora would be resolved only years later, Imre Timkó's report was instrumental in directing the attention of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches to the problem.³¹

Bishop Dudás was able to travel to Rome for the last session of the Council, held from 14 September to 8 December 1965. Following his arrival, he submitted a request to the Secretariat of the Council to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in St Peter's Basilica in the presence of the conciliar fathers.³² His request was by no means extraordinary as each day of the session would begin

with Holy Mass said by a particular conciliar father. The Secretariat of the Council designated 19 November, the memorial day of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, for the liturgy of the Hungarian Greek Catholic Bishop. Bishop Dudás celebrated the Divine Liturgy entirely in Hungarian. This circumstance may have had no particular relevance to the participants of the Council, but, for Hungarian Greek Catholics, it symbolised the closure of a century of struggle. The countless disappointments of the battle for the Hungarian liturgy and the embitterment caused by repeated prohibitions by the Holy See were once and for all consigned to history with the liturgy in St Peter's Basilica. After his return, the hierarch expressed his pleasure with the following words: 'What our ancestors longed for for centuries has just come true. Their and our best hopes have just borne fruit' (translated from the Hungarian original)³³ (Picture 1).

1968 also saw the fulfilment of another old wish: the regulation of the canonical situation of the Greek Catholic diaspora. The resolution of the Second Vatican Council on the Eastern Churches calls on everyone to preserve, cherish and observe their own rite. Greek Catholics in the diaspora were prevented from doing so by jurisdictional limitations. To eliminate these, in conjunction with his trip to Rome in 1968, Bishop Miklós Dudás requested that his jurisdiction be extended to all the Greek Catholic faithful living in Hungary. Tentatively, Pope Paul VI ordered this initially for a period of three years,³⁴ and, once it expired, he prolonged it for an additional three years. Following the extension of jurisdiction, the Bishop appointed Canon Imre Timkó as Episcopal Vicar with authorisation for the Greek Catholic diaspora areas.³⁵ The Hungarian Catholic Episcopacy issued a separate circular containing practical guidelines for both the Latin- and Byzantine-rite clergy.

The establishment of the Diaspora Vicariate was the last major event in Miklós Dudás's episcopacy. The hierarch battling rapidly deteriorating illnesses tendered his resignation to the Pope, but Paul VI refused to accept it. He raised the possibility of

³¹ A contemporary copy of the report is found in the collection of the Research Group 'Greek Catholic Heritage' under the Joint Programme 'Lendület' (Momentum) of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and St Athanasius Greek Catholic Theological College.

³² On the conciliar Hungarian liturgy, see: Véghseő, Tamás. Magyar nyelvű bizánci szertartású Szent Liturgia a Szent Péter-bazilikában 1965. november 19-én: A történelmi háttér, in: Ivancsó, István (Ed.). *Liturgikus örökségünk V: A vatikáni magyar nyelvű Szent Liturgia 40. évfordulója alkalmából 2005. november 17-én rendezett szimpozium anyaga*, Nyíregyháza, 2005, 13–19; as well as Janka, György. A zsinati magyar görögkatolikus liturgia titkos háttere, *Athanasiana*, 37(2013), 155–163.

³³ *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye Körlevelei*, 1965/VII, NYEL, I–1–b.

³⁴ *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye Körlevelei*, 1968/VI, NYEL, I–1–b.

³⁵ *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye Körlevelei*, 1969/III, 1098/1969, NYEL, I–1–b.

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appointing an auxiliary bishop for his aid and, as a sign of his appreciation, he appointed the gravely ill Bishop member of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and, subsequently, of the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Oriental Code of Canons. In his final circular issued on 21 June 1972, the Bishop notified his priests and the faithful of this and said farewell to them using the words of the Divine Liturgy: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you' (translated from the Hungarian original).³⁶ On 15 July, his life was extinguished by the third heart attack. The obituary commemorating his episcopal service includes the achievements of his activities captured in numbers. In 33 years, he ordained 166 priests. Thus, in the year of his death, the majority of the active clergy received the Sacrament of Priesthood from him. Many of them regarded and still regard him as a model for the priestly service. He founded 31 new parishes and built 44 churches, chapels and places for celebrating Mass or created such in existing buildings. Numbers are inadequate to reflect the sacrifice he made for his Church.³⁷

Bishop Dudás's funeral was conducted in the church of Nyíregyháza on 21 July by Canon Imre Timkó, who was elected Exarch Vicar by both the Diocesan Chapter and the Consultory Body of the Exarchate. Naturally, the funeral was attended by almost all the members of the Episcopacy. Bishop Miklós Dudás was laid to rest in the crypt of the pilgrimage church of Máriapócs.

Bishop Miklós Dudás's successor was appointed after two and a half years of negotiations. The protraction of the process did not come as a surprise since this was the first time in the communist era that a Greek Catholic episcopal seat had needed to be filled. Proclaiming the separation of state and church in theory and even affirming it in the Constitution, the communist regime acted in fact contrary to this in practice, insisting on competences previously called right of patronage.³⁸ It was evident that the Government would only approve the appointment of a priest as Diocesan Bishop who demonstrated appropriate loyalty to the Government and the social order of the People's Republic. Following long talks, on 10 January 1975,

Pope Paul VI appointed Chapter Vicar Imre Timkó as Diocesan Bishop of the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog and Exarch of the Apostolic Exarchate of Miskolc, as well as Canon Szilárd Keresztes as Auxiliary Bishop to the Diocesan Bishop, with the title 'Bishop of Chunavia'. Contemporaries interpreted the dual appointment as the result of a compromise between the Holy See and the Hungarian State and viewed the Diocesan Bishop as the candidate of the state and the Auxiliary Bishop as that of the Holy See. No doubt, the Holy See must have known Auxiliary Bishop Szilárd Keresztes better because, as a student of the Pontifical Hungarian Institute and of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, he studied theology in Rome between 1966 and 1969. During that time, he was in contact with the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. Moreover, it became a widespread rumour that, during his 1968 visit to Rome, Bishop Miklós Dudás introduced him as his potential Auxiliary Bishop and successor to the Congregation. At the same time, nowadays, it is also a well-known fact that Szilárd Keresztes's Roman studies and subsequent career had a heavy price. He succumbed to the recruitment attempts of the state security services 'hesitantly and after lengthy reasoning and persuasion', and, as of 1966, he would undertake and complete assignments as an agent.³⁹ The idea common in the Greek Catholic Church that the Diocesan Bishop was the 'pick' of the state, while the Auxiliary Bishop was the 'man' of the Holy See was typical of the 70s in Hungary but, by now, it seems utterly naïve. By contrast, in reality, the state authorities continued to hold everything under total control and kept everyone they had singled out – or let the Holy See select – for leadership positions in the Church under their thumb in the strictest possible way. The behaviour and thinking of those selected were substantially affected by the development of the *Ostpolitik* of the Holy See. The signing of the partial agreement of 1964, the declaration of the See of Esztergom vacant, along with the shunting aside of Cardinal Mindszenty, the subsequent appointment of László Lékai (1974) and the endorsement of the policy of 'small steps' by the Holy See meant that even Rome did not expect belligerent resistance against the communist regime.

³⁶ *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye Körlevelei*, 1972/IV, 1332/1972, NYEL, I–1–b.

³⁷ *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye Körlevelei*, 1972/IV, NYEL, I–1–b.

³⁸ Law-Decree No. 1957/22 extensively regulated the filling of ecclesiastical positions and the procedure for state approval.

³⁹ Szabó, Csaba. „Nyíri” és „Keleti” – Keresztes: Adalékok a görög katolikusok 20. századi történetéhez, *Egyháztörténeti Szemle*, VIII/1(2007), 189–205.

Website: <https://www.uni-miskolc.hu/~egyhtort/cikkek/szabocsaba-nyiri.htm> (accessed: 11 May 2020).

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The new Bishops were consecrated in Nyíregyháza on 8 February 1975. During the morning Divine Liturgy, Imre Timkó was consecrated by Joachim Szegedi, Auxiliary Bishop of Križevci (*Kőrös*), with József Ijjas, Archbishop of Kalocsa, and József Bánk, Archbishop of Eger, as co-consecrators. In the afternoon, Szilárd Keresztes's episcopal ordination was already performed by the new Diocesan Bishop, with the participation of Joachim Szegedi and József Cserháti, Diocesan Bishop of Pécs. In his enthronement speech, the new Diocesan Bishop announced the programme of liturgical renewal, with Eastern traditions, Hungarian peculiarities and the requirements of the age forming a synthesis. Among his chief plans, he highlighted the enhancement of the standards of priest education and the implementation of the related infrastructural developments.⁴⁰

An important element in the programme of Diocesan Bishop Imre Timkó was the improvement of the infrastructural conditions of priest training. The concessions offered by the state authorities did not allow for the construction of a new seminary building; only the reconstruction of the Episcopal Residence and the utilisation of the free spaces in the grounds could be considered. The financial background of the work was provided by the redemption of the property in Sóstói út, built by Bishop Dudás and expropriated by the state, well below the actual price. 'Out of the grace of God and the good will of our Government' – as the Bishop put it in his account of the event – talks between the Bishop and the City Council concluded as early as December 1975.⁴¹ The amount supplied by the state proved insufficient to execute the plans. Therefore, the Diocesan Bishop was granted permission to travel to the United States and seek the help of the Greek Catholics living there. The first phase of the work commencing in the autumn of 1977 targeted the completion of an eight-apartment complex to be built in the grounds of the Episcopal Residence for the housing of seminary superiors and the priests serving in the eparchial centre. It was inaugurated in the middle of 1978. This was followed by the transformation of the building section used by the Seminary and the Theological College, the blessing of which could take place in 1980. In August the next year, the Byzantine-style Seminary Chapel, seen as unparalleled at the time, was consecrated. It is

typical that it received a building permit as a liturgical 'drill ground'.⁴² The buildings packed into an extremely narrow space aptly symbolised the situation of the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church in the Kádár Regime: Small improvements and advances were allowed but only within high walls, in isolation from society and the inhabitants of the city.

Apart from the betterment of the external conditions of priest training, Bishop Imre Timkó devoted special attention to raising the standards of education as well. In this endeavour of his, he primarily relied on two significant documents of the Second Vatican Council: the resolutions on the Eastern Catholic Churches and on priest training. In priest education, signs reinforcing a return to Eastern traditions (e.g. the Eastern-style cassock) also appeared, and, with a view to modernising the curriculum, the use of central theological textbooks – edited by Auxiliary Bishop Szilárd Keresztes – was introduced, and they have been published continuously since 1972. Reducing the duration of military service to a year and a half in 1982 represented some relief. From 1965, the state had obliged seminarians as well to do the two-year military service standard at the time, designating the infamous, so-called 'first-rate' barracks of Lenti, Nagyatád and Marcali for the purpose. In addition to defence training, time in the army was also meant to foster ideological transformation and identify potential church agents. Political officers working in the military barracks were successful in diverting several seminarians from the priestly vocation; two of them – György Legeza and János Járási Jnr – suffered such long-term damage to their health as a consequence of the atrocities endured during military service that would prevent them from continuing their theological studies.⁴³ Thanks to the reduction of the duration of military service in 1982, a half-a-year long preparatory course could be introduced for seminarians.

The widely-read Diocesan Bishop was mindful to have the artistic treasures and books found in the parishes – surviving in a precarious condition in a number of instances – identified and collected.⁴⁴ In 1983, he established the Collection of Ecclesiastical Art⁴⁵ and lent his support to the efforts of the experts of Kossuth Lajos University, Debrecen, to investigate old

⁴⁰ *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye és a Miskolci Apostoli Exarchátus Körlevelei*, 1975/I, NYEL, I–1–b.

⁴¹ *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye és a Miskolci Apostoli Exarchátus Körlevelei*, 1976/I, NYEL, I–1–b.

⁴² Janka, 2013, 38.

⁴³ Janka, 2013, 35.

⁴⁴ *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye és a Miskolci Apostoli Exarchátus Körlevelei*, 1980/II, 666/1980, NYEL, I–1–b.

⁴⁵ For more detail, see: Puskás, 2012.

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ecclesiastical books.⁴⁶ Additionally, he also ensured that the Eparchial Library and Archives would be given state-of-the-art accommodation.

In the area of pastoral work, he strove to improve the conditions of attending to the needs of the faithful in a seriously limited environment. In the territory of the Diaspora Vicariate, he created another four new parishes (Csepel, Rákoskeresztúr, Újpest and Pécs). The pastoral care of Greek Catholics living in the diaspora – with their number constantly increasing due to internal migration – was given a renewed impetus by the final, definitive extension of the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Hajdúdorog to the entire territory of the country (1980),⁴⁷ as well as by the creation of the Episcopal Vicariate of Budapest and the Deanery of Budapest.⁴⁸

The Bishop was a committed proponent of ecumenical dialogue. This was also enunciated in the episcopal motto (*Katholike – Oikumene*) he chose upon his appointment. A remarkable achievement of the ecumenical movement in Hungary, the first formal session of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, taking place in Ráday Hall of Residence in December 1987, was the outcome of his activities as well.⁴⁹

Bishop Imre Timkó died on Holy Wednesday, 30 March 1988. His death was unexpected for the clergy and the faithful of the Eparchy. His funeral was held in Máriapócs on 8 April, during the Bright Week of Easter, with numerous members of the Episcopacy in attendance.

The governance of the Eparchy was taken over by his Auxiliary Bishop, Szilárd Keresztes. This time, the *sede vacante* period and the selection of a successor did not take years for obvious reasons. Szilárd Keresztes, regarded by virtually all as the sole potential successor, was appointed bishop on 6 July 1988. The new Bishop was enthroned on 30 July 1988.⁵⁰

Bishop Szilárd Keresztes adopted the defining theme of his enthronement speech from the Gospel passage of the day: 'Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven' (Matt. 18:3).⁵¹ The processes seen in the country promised and called for changes. A few days after Bishop Szilárd Keresztes's enthronement, it was

announced that the Hungarian State invited Pope John Paul II for an official visit. In the coming months, the regime that, creating the impression of unshakability, had incited fear in so many would crumble at breakneck speed, like a house of cards. In Hungary, a process of democratic transformation began, with countless hurdles and disappointments, yet ushering in a new era in the life of society and the Church alike.

From the vantage point of the Church, one of the most important moments of democratic transformation was the dissolution of the State Ecclesiastical Office without a legal successor (30 June 1989). Law No. 1990/IV, *On Freedom of Conscience and Religion, and on the Churches*, passed in January the next year, made the liberation of the Churches complete and ensured their free operation.

The beginning of Bishop Szilárd Keresztes's tenure nearly coincided with the restoration of the freedom of the Church. New avenues that had been inconceivable and forbidden paths for decades opened to the Greek Catholic Church as well. Education, social services, youth formation, culture, the world of media, health care, prisons and the army were areas previously off-limits to the Churches. However, with the end of Communism in Hungary, barriers and obstructions disappeared, and these areas would all come to represent new settings for pastoral work. The circumstance that the serious prejudices leading to manifestations of negative discrimination against the Greek Catholics in the decades before World War II almost completely vanished from Hungarian society may also be described as a significant change. Moreover, on account of the beauty and uniqueness of the Byzantine Rite, captivating many contemporary Hungarians in search of directions and guidance, it is more appropriate to speak about a general sense of appreciation for Greek Catholics across society these days.

The extremely rapid social changes required church leaders who were quick to react and ready to take the initiative. It was soon clear that the world of democratic transformation, replete with challenges, was precisely the context in which Bishop Szilárd Keresztes could best put his abilities to use. A whole series of institution foundation and construction would ensue, becoming the most distinctive trait of his

⁴⁶ For more detail, see: Ojtozi, 1985.

⁴⁷ *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye és a Miskolci Apostoli Exarchátus Kőrlevelei*, 1980/III, NYEL, I–1–b.

⁴⁸ Janka, 2013, 38.

⁴⁹ For the joint declaration issued at the meeting, see: *Theologiai Szemle*, 1(1988), 11.

⁵⁰ *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye és a Miskolci Apostoli Exarchátus Kőrlevelei*, 1988/III, NYEL, I–1–b.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

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episcopacy. On the Bishop's initiative, a faith primary school was started in Hajdúdorog – the first of its kind in the country – as early as September 1990.⁵² One year later, the Greek Catholic Grammar School was also opened in the same place. The structural development of the educational institutions of Hajdúdorog came to be one of the prominent tasks of the following years. Currently, the institution called St Basil Educational Centre is home to a primary school, grammar school, vocational school and a student hostel, along with a kindergarten. In the city of the Episcopal See, St Nicholas Greek Catholic Kindergarten opened in 1996 and moved to a new building in 2004. The primary school was started in an obsolete building acquired through property restitution and compensation in September 1998. After several

years of construction demanding considerable financial sacrifices, the new building of the St Athanasius Greek Catholic Theological College of Nyíregyháza was blessed in 2003 (Picture 2). In the Exarchate, Bishop Szilárd Keresztes founded primary schools and kindergartens in Miskolc and Rakacaszend. To enable the pastoral care of the youth studying at secondary and tertiary levels, a university- and secondary-school chaplaincy was established in Debrecen, a university- and secondary-school chaplaincy, along with a university- and college hall of residence in Miskolc, a college- and secondary-school chaplaincy, as well as a female college hall of residence in Nyíregyháza, a college hall of residence in Sárospatak and a university hall of residence in Szeged. New parishes were created in the diaspora: Győr,

⁵² *A Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye és a Miskolci Apostoli Exarchátus Körlevelei*, 1990/II, 1985/1990, NYEL, I–1–b.

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Esztergom, Veszprém, Dunaújváros, Gödöllő, Vác, Pesterzsébet, Szigetszentmiklós, and Szolnok.

The development of the pilgrimage site of Máriapócs was an emphatic element of Szilárd Keresztes's hierarchal programme. The first steps, involving the renovation of the pilgrimage church, were taken in conjunction with the historic visit of Pope John Paul II, providing a new momentum for the development of the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church and, specifically, of the pilgrimage site of Máriapócs (Picture 3). To provide for the needs of pilgrims coming to the miraculous weeping icon of the Theotokos, a pilgrims' house was opened in 1999, regularly functioning as a venue for retreats and training schemes. As part of a project of the European Union, Bishop Szilárd Keresztes devoted several years of work to make preparations for the refurbishment of the interior of the pilgrimage church, as well as the reconstruction of its environs, though the implementation was left to his successor.

New fields of pastoral work necessitated the creation of the corresponding institutions in health care, the army and prisons. Hospital chaplaincies were established in Debrecen, Miskolc and Nyíregyháza, Greek Catholic priests also serve in the Military Ordinariate of Hungary, and prison chaplains work in Nyíregyháza and Miskolc. Institutions specialising in care for the elderly or supporting mothers in crisis were established in a number of Greek Catholic parishes.

In accordance with the law on freedom of religion, religious orders dissolved in 1950 could resume their activities. The Basilian fathers and sisters returned to Máriapócs. The whole monastery building reverted to the fathers only after considerable delay owing to the social welfare institution operating in it and the politics of procrastination of the General Assembly of Budapest maintaining the institution. Today, it is home to the religious in an almost fully renovated condition. In their Máriapócs and Sátoraljaújhely houses, the Basilian nuns operate care homes for the elderly. Playing pivotal roles in the life of the Greek Catholic Church, both traditional monastic communities must face the problem common to the whole of the Church, manifested in a decrease of monastic vocations. Founded by the Diocesan Bishop, the Community of Dámóc, named after the Resurrection, sought to walk on the new Hungarian roads of Eastern monasticism; its members prepared for their monastic lives in Chevetogne Abbey, Belgium. Atanáz Orosz took his monastic vow in 1996, followed by Fülöp Kocsis in 1998.

Youth pilgrimages to Máriapócs, *KÖZ (Keresztény Összejövetel Zemplénben* [Meeting of Christians in Zemplén]), the Youth Pilgrimage Walk and the Greek Fire Camp have become important settings for youth



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pastoral work, regularly addressing hundreds of young people of different age groups. The Carnival Ball has developed into a Greek Catholic event eagerly anticipated by many every year. Those seeking to experience growth in their prayer life are welcome to attend the Summer Divine Office Camp, while individuals wishing to provide assistance with the summer holiday of children with disabilities are encouraged to join St Damian's Camp.

In the years following the political changes of 1990, the tertiary educational institution of the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church, St Athanasius Greek Catholic Theological College, underwent not only infrastructural improvements but modifications with a profound impact on the structure of education as well. Provisions of *Sapientiana christiana* (1992), the document of the Holy See regulating the precepts of priest education, were gradually introduced. The duration of priest training was raised to six years, and the Seminary and the Theological College were separated organisationally as well. In the post-Transition era, priest training remained the primary responsibility of the College, though quality improvements would allow for the admission of lay students and the launch of new training programmes. A catechist training correspondence course was advertised as early as 1990, and the full-time version of the same programme was started in cooperation with Bessenyei György Teacher Training College one year later. In 1994, negotiations with the Pontifical Oriental Institute were commenced, as a result of which the College became one of its affiliated institutions on 26 May 1995. Ascending yet another step higher, as of the academic year 2006/2007, the College was declared an aggregated institution of the Pontifical Oriental Institute. This allows for the organisation of so-called licentiate courses, providing a higher level degree in oriental ecclesiastical disciplines than

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a university degree. Within Hungary's education structure, the licentiate course fits into the system of doctoral schools. Besides complying with church regulations, the operation of the Theological College is also in full harmony with state legislation. This is confirmed by the conclusions of accreditation visits repeated every five years, the adoption of the Bologna System and the recognition of the latest training programmes by the state. Apart from receiving students from dioceses outside Hungary's borders, the College also broadens its international network of relations by organising academic conferences and regularly releasing publications in foreign languages.

The fall of Communism opened new opportunities for the pastoral work of the Roma community looking back to a decades-long tradition in the Greek Catholic Church. From the early 1940s, in the village of Hodász, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, parish priest Miklós Sója had engaged in pastoral activities among the Roma of the village living in miserable conditions. Not only did he lead them to faith but he also taught them everything that could be conducive to their social advancement. At first, he would teach them by talking to them on the embankment, and later he moved to an adobe chapel built by the Roma. He learnt their language and even celebrated the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom in it. As the fruit of his persevering service of 40 years, he handed over a viable Roma Greek Catholic community to his successors.⁵³ In the years following the political changes of 1990, a new church, kindergarten, care home for the elderly and a crisis centre could be built for the Roma. The Roma had their own parishes created in Hodász and, subsequently, in Kántorjánosi. The accomplishments of Bishop Szilárd Keresztes and of his assistants in the pastoral work of the Roma people were acknowledged by both the competent offices at the Holy See and the non-governmental organisations of the Roma in Hungary.

Once censorship characteristic of the communist regime ceased to exist, to coordinate publication in printed and electronic media, an Eparchial Press Centre was established. The year 1990 saw the relaunch of *Görögkatolikus Szemle* [Greek Catholic review], which, by reaching every parish in the country, continues to function as a real link between Greek Catholics. In 2014, the Greek Catholic printed press offer was expanded by *Görögkatolikus Szemlélet*

[Greek Catholic view], a quarterly magazine. On national public-service television and radio, as well as on the channels of local media providers, Greek Catholic church programmes and liturgy broadcasts are regular.

During the twenty years of Szilárd Keresztes's tenure as Diocesan Bishop, the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church hosted a number of notable events and functions.

Even though not accompanied by great publicity, one of the most important of these was the pilgrimage of János Szemedi, Bishop of Mukacheve, and of his priests to Máriapócs in November 1989. Having operated underground for decades, bishop and priests could approach the weeping miraculous icon revealing their clerical identity for the first time. The much-afflicted Greek Catholics of Transcarpathia received substantial help from the Hungarian Greek Catholics with the re-organisation of their Church. From the academic year 1990/1991, some of their ordinands could prepare for the priestly vocation at the Nyíregyháza Seminary and College. The Greek Catholic eparchies of Romania and Slovakia also took advantage of this opportunity.

A prominent event in the years of 'restarting' was the first visit of Pope John Paul II to Hungary. Playing a central role in the collapse of the oppressive regimes of Eastern Europe, the Pope came to Hungary for a pastoral visit in the summer of 1991. As part of his visit, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy according to the Byzantine Rite in Máriapócs on 18 August, besides the Hungarian faithful, attended by Greek Catholics from Transcarpathia and Romania in large numbers, with their bishops and priests, freed from persecution not long before. From that moment, Máriapócs regained its international character. Byzantine- and Latin-rite Hungarians, Rusyns, Romanians, Roma, Slovaks and Germans had seen the pilgrimage site of the Theotokos in Máriapócs as their common spiritual home for centuries: After four decades of restrictions, pilgrim groups could travel again from all four corners of the globe.⁵⁴

Just as, in the year 1946, the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church had celebrated a double jubilee, the year 1996 marked the 300th and 350th anniversary of the first Máriapócs weeping and of the Union of Uzhhorod respectively. These were coupled with

⁵³ On Miklós Sója's activities, see: Szabó, Irén – Juhász, Éva – Nyíró, András (Eds.). *Útkeresők: Sója Miklós*, Nyíregyháza, 2010.

⁵⁴ An album memorialising the papal visit: Bacsóka, Pál – Puskás, László. *II. János Pál pápa máriapócsi zarándoklata, 1991. augusztus 18.*, Nyíregyháza, 1991.

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a significant celebration of the Hungarian nation, the *Millecentenary* of the Hungarian Conquest of the Carpathian Basin. In the jubilee year, the Hungarian Greek Catholics celebrated with an array of high-profile events. In April, a highly successful exhibition of Greek Catholic ecclesiastical art (curator: Bernadett Puskás) in the Jósa András Museum, Nyíregyháza, was opened by Archbishop Francesco Marchisano, secretary of the office at the Holy See overseeing the preservation of artistic and historical heritage.⁵⁵ At the central festivities, the Grand Pilgrimage of Máriapócs, the Holy Father was represented by Cardinal Roger Etchegeyay. Simultaneously, Máriapócs was also host to the International Festival of Greek Catholic Church Choirs, while Hajdúdorog served as a venue for a congress of the representatives of Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholic parishes. In September, the First European Congress for Directors of Pilgrimages and Rectors of Shrines was held in Máriapócs.⁵⁶ In October, an eparchial pilgrimage was made to Rome to commemorate the Union of Uzhorod, while, in November, venerators of the Virgin Mary made their way to Vienna, to the first miraculous icon of Máriapócs kept in the Cathedral of St Stephen.⁵⁷ An academic conference focused on describing the events of the first weeping was organised by St Athanasius Greek Catholic Theological College.⁵⁸

In the summers of 1997 and 1998, the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church undertook to implement two major international meetings: First, the bishops of Europe's Eastern Catholic Churches held talks in Nyíregyháza, followed by an in-service training scheme organised for the heads of the Eastern Catholic seminaries of the continent in the same location a year later.⁵⁹

In the Holy Year of 2000, an eparchial pilgrimage to Rome took place. During the Akathist prayed as part of the joint holy-year Roman pilgrimage of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, Szilárd Keresztes and the choir of the Hajdúdorog Grammar School sang one of the *ikoi* in Hungarian.⁶⁰

In the centenary year of the third Máriapócs weeping, the miraculous icon was conserved. As a closure to the centenary, during the festive Divine Liturgy headed by Cardinal Péter Erdő on 3 December 2005, the miraculous icon was given a new golden crown blessed by Pope Benedict XVI in the square outside St Peter's Basilica in Rome. Afterwards, the miraculous icon went on a two-week 'tour', with the faithful receiving it with prayer in the churches of major parishes. In the same year, the pilgrimage site of Máriapócs was declared 'National Shrine' by the Hungarian Catholic Episcopacy.⁶¹

In July 2007, Bishop Szilárd Keresztes reached the age of 75. In line with canonical regulations, he tendered his resignation, which Pope Benedict XVI accepted on 10 November and named the outgoing Bishop Apostolic Exarch until the appointment of a successor. The hierarch leading the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church as Diocesan Bishop for nearly two decades could work in a period the likes of would be hard to find in the history of this Church. Even the outgoing Bishop himself described these two decades as 'exceptionally favourable'. The title of the commemorative volume issued for his 70th birthday, *Ecclesiam aedificans* – 'Builder of the Church' – aptly epitomises the essence of the Bishop's activities. He guided the Greek Catholic Church on new paths confidently and strenuously towards exploiting arising opportunities. During his tenure as Diocesan Bishop, 28 new parishes and organising chaplaincies were created, and 22 churches and chapels were built.

Pope Benedict XVI appointed the successor of Szilárd Keresztes, Diocesan Bishop and Apostolic Exarch, on 2 May 2008. This was the first time the Holy See had been able to select a candidate based exclusively on pastoral considerations, without the constraint of negotiating with the state authorities. Fülöp Kocsis, a monk from Dámóc, was chosen. He was ordained bishop in Hajdúdorog on 30 June 2008 by Bishop Szilárd Keresztes, Ján Babjak, Greek Catholic Archbishop of Prešov (*Eperjes*), and Milan Šašik, Greek Catholic Bishop of Mukacheve. His motto is: 'My Strength in Weakness'.

⁵⁵ A *Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye és a Miskolci Apostoli Exarchátus Körlevelei*, 1996/II, NYEL, I–1–b.

⁵⁶ A *Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye és a Miskolci Apostoli Exarchátus Körlevelei*, 1996/III, 1583/1996, NYEL, I–1–b.

⁵⁷ A *Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye és a Miskolci Apostoli Exarchátus Körlevelei*, 1996/III, 1588/1996, NYEL, I–1–b.

⁵⁸ The conference publication: [Török, József (Ed.)]. *Máriapócs, 1696 – Nyíregyháza, 1996: Történelmi konferencia a Máriapócsi Istenszüdő-ikon első könnyezésének 300. évfordulójára*, Nyíregyháza, 1996.

⁵⁹ A *Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye és a Miskolci Apostoli Exarchátus Körlevelei*, 1997/IV and 1998/II, 1302/1998, NYEL, I–1–b.

⁶⁰ A *Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye és a Miskolci Apostoli Exarchátus Körlevelei*, 2000/III, NYEL, I–1–b.

⁶¹ A *Hajdúdorogi Egyházmegye és a Miskolci Apostoli Exarchátus Körlevelei*, 2005/IV, 1661, NYEL, I–1–b.

(4)



Bishop Fülöp Kocsis continued the investments prepared by his predecessor and initiated further developments. He completed the reconstruction of the pilgrimage church of Máriapócs, in conjunction with which he advertised two pilgrimage walks involving masses in the thousands. In February 2009, the translation of the miraculous icon to Hajdúdorog was followed by hosts of pilgrims, and so was its return in September. The renovation of the pilgrimage church was completed in the summer of 2010. It was ceremonially re-consecrated by Archbishop Cyril Vasil', Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, on 11 September. In September 2009, the Greek Catholic Kindergarten of the Protection of the Theotokos in Újfehértó opened its gates.

In September 2010, the foundation stone of the new building of the Greek Catholic Primary School of Nyíregyháza was laid as well. In Szolnok, St Thomas Greek Catholic Primary School was founded by the Bishop on 1 September 2010. For the Greek Catholic youth studying at Budapest universities, a university chaplaincy and a hall of residence were established. University chaplaincies were organised in Pécs and Szeged as well. To provide coordination for the Eparchy's expanding social responsibilities, the Bishop created St Luke's Charity Service and subsequently developed a Greek Catholic network for the protection of children. New parishes were created in the diaspora: Kecskemét, Érd, Budaörs and Pomáz.

IV.4.1

By establishing the Territorial Vicariate of Zemplén in 2009, Diocesan Bishop Fülöp Kocsis determined a potential course of development for the Apostolic Exarchate of Miskolc for the future. Upon his initiative, on 5 March 2011, the Holy See expanded the territory of the Exarchate to include the whole of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, transferring 29 parishes from the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog to the Exarchate. On the same day, Pope Benedict XVI appointed Atanáz Orosz, Superior of the Budapest Central Seminary, a monk from Dámóc, as Bishop-Exarch of the Apostolic Exarchate of Miskolc, with the title 'Bishop of Panidos'. The new Bishop was consecrated in the Búza tér church of Miskolc, elevated to the rank of cathedral, on 21 May 2011. The consecration was performed by Archbishop Cyril Vasil', Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Ján Babjak, Archbishop-Metropolitan of Prešov, and Fülöp Kocsis, Diocesan Bishop of Hajdúdorog. The motto of the Bishop-Exarch is: 'I Love Thee, Lord'.

Preceded by two years of preparations, in 2012, the centenary of the foundation of the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog was celebrated with programmes throughout the year: a pilgrimage to Rome, a commemorative session in the Hungarian Parliament and the European Parliament, as well as various conferences and exhibitions.⁶²

On 19 March 2015, Pope Francis made a decision which was historic for Hungarian Greek Catholics, legally specified in five Apostolic Constitutions or Bulls. With the Apostolic Constitution *In hac suprema...*, the Holy Father created new ecclesiastical frameworks by founding the Greek Catholic Metropolitan Church *sui iuris* of Hungary (Greek Catholic Metropolitanate). The Apostolic Constitution *De spirituali itinere...* granted the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog, founded in 1912, the status of archeparchy (Picture 4). With the Apostolic Constitution *Qui successimus...*, the Apostolic Exarchate of Miskolc, established in 1924, was raised to the rank of eparchy. The Apostolic Constitution *Ad aptius consulendum...* founded the Eparchy of Nyíregyháza. On the same day, Pope Francis appointed Fülöp Kocsis, Bishop of Hajdúdorog, as Archbishop-Metropolitan. As Apostolic Exarch of the newly founded Eparchy of Nyíregyháza, Atanáz Orosz, Diocesan Bishop of Miskolc, was named, to be followed by Basilian hieromonk Ábel Szocska in October 2015. The latter was appointed Diocesan

Bishop of the Eparchy of Nyíregyháza by Pope Francis on 7 April 2018. His enthronement took place in St Nicholas' Greek Catholic Cathedral in Nyíregyháza on 10 May 2018. His motto is: 'With Thy Help'.

In decade between 2010 and 2020, the number of educational, social, health-care and child-welfare institutions maintained by the Greek Catholic Church grew spectacularly. The three Eparchies of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate have 26 kindergartens, 20 primary schools and 9 secondary schools in 2020. In six special schools, remedial classes are offered to disadvantaged children. In the field of social care, 25 institutions and 54 – mostly parish-run – charity services provide for those in need. The operation of foster homes and the process of raising the children living in them are coordinated by five child-welfare centres.⁶³

The series of measures undertaken as of 2011, altering ecclesiastical organisation in profound ways, created such structures and platforms for Hungarian Greek Catholics that not only follow from the steady development of the past thirty years but also enable further progress in the diverse areas of pastoral work.

List of pictures

1. *The portrait of Bishop Miklós Dudás* by Péter Prokop. Rome, 1967
2. *The Building of the Theological College* by Mihály Balázs, Nyíregyháza
3. Pope John Paul II in Máriapócs
4. The Metropolitan Cathedral of Debrecen

⁶² On the events of the commemorative year, see: Zadubenszki – Szabó, 2013.

⁶³ *Görögkatolikus név- és címtár*, 2020.