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THE CENTRAL CELEBRATION FOR THE CANONISATION OF MARGARET OF HUNGARY IN JANUARY 1944

Abstract: After numerous unsuccessful attempts over 700 years, on 23 July 1943 Pope Pius XII signed the canonisation bulla of Margaret of Anjou of the mediæval Hungarian royal dynasty (1242-1271), a nun of the Dominican Order. The liturgical feast of Margaret, who was beatified in the 17th century falls on January 18. This was the reason why the Hungarian Catholic Church chose January 1944 for the official and national celebration of her canonisation. It ordered that a three-day celebration (triduum) be held in all Catholic churches of the country at that time, and also specified the liturgy. The central celebration was held within the frame of an eight-day commemoration (octava) in the Queen of the Rosary church of the Dominican Order in Budapest. The celebration provided a good example of the cohesion of the Catholic Church, the cooperation between the Catholic Church and the political sphere, and the broad social support for the cause. The article analyses this central celebration and some of the sermons preached on the occasion.

No similar celebrations were held in later years or decades. The Eastern front of the Second World War reached Hungary in the summer and autumn of 1944, and after the war the atheist-communist-socialist regime that came to power prevented similar aspirations. As a result, the veneration of Saint Margaret that reached a peak in early 1944, subsequently gradually faded away.

Keywords: Saint Margaret of Hungary, Dominican Order, church and state, celebration, ritual dynamic, identity

On 23 July 1943 Pope Pius XII signed the canonisation bulla of Blessed Margaret of Hungary and issued it on the feast day of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary.¹ She was canonised on the basis of the veneration that had existed for centuries and the Dominican nun, Blessed Margaret of Hungary was raised to sainthood. Since the 17th century Margaret had been officially venerated as a Blessed in the territory of a few Hungarian bishoprics. Under the conditions of the war – there was

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1 BEKE 1992. Vol. 2, 429.

already fighting in the streets of Rome at that time – it was a week before the news reached the Hungarian public. There was rejoicing within the Dominican Order and in the Hungarian Catholic Church and also a great sense of satisfaction throughout the country as the act marked the conclusion of a process that had lasted seven centuries. The canonisation bulla was proclaimed by the pope on 19 November 1943, the feast day of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, another Hungarian saint and Margaret's aunt.

Brief history of the canonisation

Who was this Hungarian saint raised to the altar in the mid-20th century? Saint Margaret of Hungary (1242–1271) was the eighth child of the Hungarian king Béla IV and Maria Laskarina; she was born on 27 January 1242 at the time of the Mongol Invasion (1241–1242) in the castle of Klissza². The Mongol incursion in 1241–42 almost completely devastated the Kingdom of Hungary. In this crisis the parents dedicated their unborn daughter to a cloistered life as a sacrifice of propitiation for the liberation of the country.³ Already as a child Margaret consciously accepted her fate. Throughout her short life she appeased and did penance. She resisted her father's marriage plans for her.⁴ She lived in the monastery on the Isle of Rabbits⁵ built for her, close to the royal seat, Buda Castle. She died here at the age of 28.⁶ The piety of her life met the social and religious expectations of the period, the new religiosity of the 13th century launched by the Premonstratensian Order, the Franciscan and Dominican Orders.⁷ Its main focus was *humanitas Christi* (cross, passion, Eucharist).⁸ She died at an early age in the monastery on 18 January 1270 and was buried there in the monastery on the island that was later named after her. Her feast day is 18 January.

After her death the process of canonisation began in 1271. However, the cause came to a halt. In 1340 the Hungarian king Charles Robert and a century later

2 Dalmatia, today Klis, Croatia. According to another tradition Margaret was born in Znióvárálja (today Kláštor pod Znievom, Slovakia) in Northern Hungary where her mother fled from the Mongols.

3 BÓLE 1937. 17; KLANICZAY 1994. 112.

4 In his policy of alliances sealed with marriages her father, Béla IV, king of Hungary first wanted to marry her to Boleslav of Poland, then to Leo of Halych and finally to the Czech Přemysl Ottokar. In her place her sisters Jolánta, Konstanca and Kunigunda were given in marriage. These marital alliances later helped to spread the veneration of Margaret, and of other Arpadian saints.

5 Today it is Margaret Island in Budapest.

6 For a literary biography, see: BÓLE 1944. On the veneration of Margaret and contamination of the veneration of Margaret of Antioch and Margaret of Hungary, see: KLANICZAY 1994. 113.

7 MÁLYUSZ 1933; MEZEY 1971; KLANICZAY 1994. 95–96.

8 MEZEY 1971. 293. In the 13th century the female monasteries of the mendicant orders were influenced by the spirit of Beguinitism, the female religious movement that spread from Flanders; in addition to voluntarily accepted poverty it regarded an active life of work in the service of others as one of the means of religious justification. BÁLINT 1977. 157.

King Matthias Corvin tried to hasten it but neither attempts were successful. The procedure was renewed in 1638 by the Dominican Order, but again without success. But despite the protracted and unsuccessful procedure, the veneration of Margaret remained alive in the Dominican Order. In 1789 Pope Pius VI authorised her veneration and the holding of her feast in Transylvania and in several other Hungarian dioceses.

Although Hungarian society was denominationally divided in the 20th century, the majority Roman Catholic Church practically functioned as “state religion”. It was so successful in reviving religious life that social history refers to the two interwar decades as a “Catholic renaissance”.⁹ Numerous anniversary events in the 1930s and the early 1940s commemorating outstanding figures of Hungarian history and the Hungarian Catholic past were symbolic representations of its aspirations and achievements. These were known as the “Hungarian holy years”.¹⁰

Increasing efforts were made from the 1920s to hasten Margaret’s canonisation. The reason for this was that people at that time judged the country’s situation to be similar to the time of the Mongol Invasion: a country that had been defeated in a war, had lost much of its territory and population, was economically ruined, socially polarised and ideologically divided.¹¹ In this situation Margaret appeared to be a suitable candidate to hold up as a model – principally for the younger generations, as she had lived in a devastated country, did penance, achieved peace and sacrificed herself in penance. And the situation in the 20th century called for a similar life of self-sacrifice.

In 1930 the Catholic Church and the country were preparing to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the death of Saint Emmerich, the son of our first holy king Stephen, who was canonised in 1083. The expectation and wish that the Pope would canonise Blessed Margaret on this anniversary had already appeared in 1929 in the Catholic press, in society, in the Hungarian Catholic Bench of Bishops and within the Dominican Order that most strongly supported the canonisation

9 A similar religious revival could be observed in the Protestant churches, especially in the Calvinist church.

10 1930: 900th anniversary of the death of Saint Emmerich, the son of our first king, Saint Stephen; 1938: 900th anniversary of the death of the first Hungarian king, Saint Stephen; 1942: 700th anniversary of the birth of Margaret of Hungary; 1943: 750th anniversary of the canonisation of Saint Ladislav. They provided the opportunity for very intensive pastoral work with a strongly patriotic spirit, especially from the late 1930s, when Hungary organised the World Eucharistic Congress in Budapest in 1938; in the same year a part of former Upper Hungary with an absolute Hungarian majority population was liberated from 20 years of Czech occupation, in March 1939 Hungary reoccupied its territory in Subcarpathia that is today part of Ukraine, in the summer of 1940 the territory of Northern Transylvania with a majority Hungarian population was returned to Hungary, and in 1941 following the disintegration of Yugoslavia the Muraköz, the Baranya triangle and Bácska were returned.

11 As part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Hungary lost the First World War. Then with the peace dictate following the war it lost two-thirds of its territory, half of its population, and a good third of the Hungarian-speaking population came under foreign rule. Its economy was on the brink of collapse. And social peace was disrupted by foreign occupation and internal socialist and Bolshevik revolutions. *BŐLE* 1944. 373; 383.

of Blessed Margaret.¹² But they waited in vain. The disappointment also brought a decline in organisation. It was not until 1937 that nation-wide enthusiasm could be felt again, aroused by the preparations for the 1938 Saint Stephen year and the International Eucharistic Congress. In the wake of this activity preparations continued for the canonisation of Margaret, even though they were somewhat eclipsed by the events of the double jubilee. But on the other hand they also helped the cause, as they directed the attention of the country, the universal Catholic Church and the outside world to the Arpadian saints. The Hungarian Catholic Church was able to win many supporters for the cause among the cardinals and bishops attending the Eucharistic Congress. The delegate of Pius XI, the reigning pope at the time, was Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, who in the following year, 1939 became pope himself as Pius XII.¹³ His good connections with the Hungarian Catholic Church hierarchy obviously helped the cause of the canonisation of Margaret. A great step forward was taken in widening the social basis for canonisation when *Actio Catholica* that already had a well-established network also joined the process in 1937.¹⁴ But the 1938 Saint Stephen year and the Eucharistic Congress also passed without the canonisation of Margaret.

1942 – 700th anniversary year of the birth of Blessed Margaret of Hungary

1942 marked the 700th anniversary of the birth of Blessed Margaret. On the basis of the events of the previous decade, high hopes were again placed in the jubilee year. P. Kornél Bóle O.P. – from 1930 the Hungarian postulator in the canonisation process¹⁵ – had been working since 1930 to broaden the social background of the cause:¹⁶ the number of prayer actions increased,¹⁷ as did the number of reported answered prayers¹⁸. Through the prayer actions the organisers involved all strata

12 BÓLE 1944. 32. Index 4 Jan. 1930. Bóle 1944. 51; BÓLE 1944. 29–30.

13 Reign of Pope Pius XII: 2 March 1939 – 9 Oct. 1958. KATLEX X. 2005. 995–997.

14 *Actio Catholica* = the active participation of lay believers in pastoral work. Its roots reach back to the 19th century. In Hungary it was officially established in 1932. Its basic units were formed at the level of local congregations, deaneries and dioceses. At all levels it had 5 sections: 1. devotions and the protection of morals, 2. culture, 3. press, 4. social and charitable activity, 5. organisation. It was directed at national level by a national board composed of the chairman (Prince Primate), executive episcopal chairman, lay co-chairman, a deputy chairman from each of the five sections, national director and general secretary. KATLEX I. 1993. 36–38.

15 P. Kornél Viktor Kálmán Bóle O.P. (1887–1961) member of the Dominican Order, preacher, spiritual writer. He entered the Dominican Order in 1904. He studied theology in Graz and was ordained priest in 1910. – P. Kornél Bóle O.P. was first appointed postulator by the Austro-Hungarian Provincial Bertalan Badalik, then by Cardinal-Primate Justinian Serédi.

16 BARNA 2014a.

17 BARNA 2014b.

18 BARNA 2014c.

of Hungarian society. They reached middle-class women through the Catholic Women's Federation, men through the Credo Association linked to the Dominican Order, the widest strata of Catholic society through the religious publications (*Rózsafüzér Királynéja*,¹⁹ *Boldog Margit*²⁰), as well as the non-Catholic groups within society through the newspapers with a Christian (Catholic) bent (*Nemzeti Újság*, *Új Nemzet*, *Magyarság*, etc.). P. Kornél Bóle personally approached the country's leading institutions (universities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, government). Actio Catholica covered the entire territory of the country. Although 1942 also came and went without canonisation, by the early 1940s all strata of Hungarian Catholic society and the political decision-makers wished to see the canonisation.

1944 – year of the Princess²¹

It was in this situation that news of the canonisation reached the Hungarian Catholic Church and the country in July 1943. Since the feast day of Margaret (18 January) was chosen for the celebration of this event, the Catholic Church had six months to prepare.

The Hungarian Catholic Church, the Hungarian Catholic Bench of Bishops, the Dominican Order, Actio Catholica and numerous Catholic institutions, organisations, schools, associations and societies, countless Saint Margaret circles throughout the country prepared to celebrate the newest Hungarian saint. The frames were set by Actio Catholica following guidance received from the Vatican Sacred Congregation of Rites. It was recommended that, given the circumstances of the war, the celebrations should be restrained and held within the frame of the church.

The administrative preparations for the celebration were carried out in November and December 1943. The principal organiser was the Dominican Order (the Provincial, Bertalan Badalik²²), and the organisation section of Actio Catholica.²³

19 *Queen of the Rosary*, popular journal of the largest Hungarian prayer confraternity, published by the Dominican Order from 1885–1947. The journal also played an important role in spreading and reinforcing the veneration of Margaret. Cf.: BARNA 2011. 177–205.

20 *Blessed Margaret*, a monthly paper published by the Dominican Sisters between 1940–1944. Kocsis 2012; SCHIPEK 2014.

21 BÓLE 1944. 65.

22 Bertalan Sándor Badalik, O.P. (Hódmezővásárhely, 1890–Budapest, 1965) entered the Dominican Order in 1908. He was ordained a priest in 1914. In 1915 he was made national director of the Rosary Confraternities. From 1934 to 1938 he was Austro-Hungarian Provincial of the order. In 1938 he became the first provincial of the restored old Hungarian Dominican province. From 1945 he was head of the AC Devotions Department, and in 1946 the church president of the radio committee, and national chairman of Actio Catholica. In 1949 Pius XII appointed him diocesan bishop of Veszprém. He was interned in Hejce by the socialist authorities in 1957. He was allowed to move to Budapest in 1964. He was buried in Hódmezővásárhely.

23 BÓLE 1944. 63; BÓLE 1944. 66.

The government, the capital city, police, and the radio that broadcast the celebrations, masses and sermons all joined in.

Accordingly on 16–18 January 1944 three days of devotions (*triduum*²⁴) were held in every Catholic church in the country to commemorate Saint Margaret, and the liturgical frame for the celebration was prescribed. The Dominican Order prepared with an *octava*, an eight-day celebration²⁵ in its Queen of the Rosary church in Thököly Street and in the Saint Margaret of Hungary parish church from 16–23 January. The Bench of Bishops requested that no social celebrations be organised, they were to be left for the time when “the canonisation can be announced ceremoniously in Rome and in Hungary”. On the feast days masses and vespers were also to be celebrated in honour of Saint Margaret.²⁶



Fig. 1 Poster for the three-day celebration in January 1944

24 Triduum (from Lat. tres and dies): a period of three days before the church feast, during Lent or Advent, a series of homilies and devotions. KATLEX XIV. 2009. 341–342.

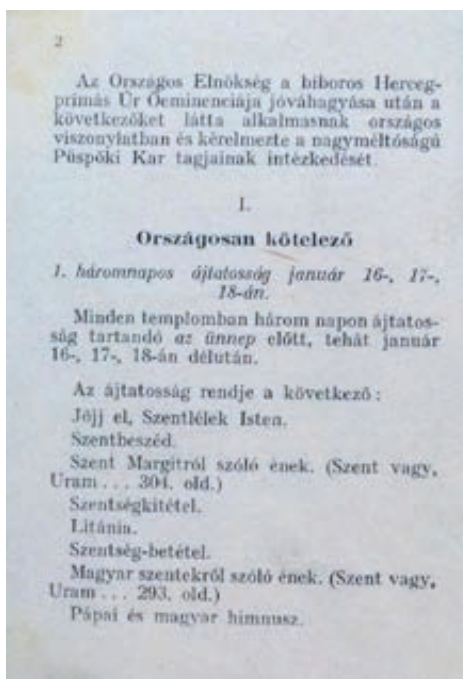
25 Octava (Lat. octava): eight consecutive days in the liturgy. – One variant: commemoration of a saint on the 8th day of his feast (St Agnes, 21 and 28 Jan.). – By the 20th century a large number of ovtavas had been established, creating the need to classify them, and set precise rules for what other feasts and commemorations could be celebrated during which octava. KATLEX IX. 2004. 911.

26 From the circular letter of Actio Catholica, BŐLE 1944. 393–395.

Spiritual benefit, 100 days of indulgence, was promised for participants in the celebration, that could be offered for the living or the dead, for souls suffering in Purgatory if they “visit the designated church on the days of the devotions”.²⁷

The organisers recommended that “the church be decorated for the occasion”. If possible, an image or statue of the new saint should be placed on the altar for this occasion.²⁸ In the Dominican church on the occasion of the celebrations “the relics of Saint Margaret were placed on the marble altar standing in front of the giant fresco”.²⁹ An important part of the liturgy here was that in the morning and afternoon “after the end of mass, the relics can be kissed at the Saint Margaret altar”.³⁰

All this is an important indication that memory and the cult must be linked not only to time but also to space, and in our case the space must be a sacred place connected to the person of the saint.



Figs. 2-3 Prescribed order of the celebrations

²⁷ 100 days of indulgence. BÖLE 1944. 393–394.

²⁸ BÖLE 1944. 395. – Kornél Bőle carefully collected the homilies pronounced during the series of celebrations and published them in full in the book mentioned. All of these sermons can be found among the documents preserved among his papers on the process of canonisation. MNL Vas County Archive, Papers of the Dominican Monastery in Szombathely, 1739–1947. Documents on the canonisation of Blessed Margaret.

²⁹ Newsletter of the Dominican church in Budapest, January 1944, cited in: BÖLE 1944. 397–398.

³⁰ BÖLE 1944. 400.

The central celebration

The basic tone of the celebration was set by an article in the 1 January 1944 issue of *Nemzeti Újság* written by Bertalan Badalik, “provincial of the order of the holy Hungarian princess”.³¹ Its main thread was a comparison of the mid-13th and mid-20th centuries. “Because we do not need to use investigative historical methods,” he wrote “to discover the striking similarity between the 1240s, the time of the birth and glorification of the new Saint, and the 1940s.”³² “The parallel really is amazing! [...] But amazement leads us to humility and self-examination. Precisely for this reason there could not have been a better time for the nation to receive this necessary example, the new saint whose name is inseparable from the concept of propitiation.”³³ Badalik had a premonition that “The coming new year will be the year of the Nation’s Sacrifice.”³⁴ In her time Margaret’s “acceptance of propitiation renewed the nation’s moral strength [...] it taught the decent sons of the nation that the only successful stand is one that is consistent and does not sacrifice eternal values for the interests of the present moment. She taught her contemporaries that only loyal and unwavering service to God can be a truly valuable service to the nation.”³⁵ The other speakers during the days of celebration also drew attention to the similarity in the situation of great danger.

The Hungarian postulator of the canonisation, Kornél Bőle speaks of Margaret’s canonisation as a “rainbow of God’s mercy arousing in us the trust and hope that we will not be destroyed in the brutal danger of our times.”³⁶ The same hope is expressed in the circular letter of the Hungarian Bench of Bishops, issued on 16 January 1944. “We would like to hope,” wrote the Catholic bishops, “that just as Blessed Margaret [...] saved our Hungarian homeland seven hundred years ago [...], she will be able to save it now too...”³⁷ The bishops encouraged all strata of Hungarian society to follow the example of Margaret in heroic self-denial, a life of prayer and actions to match the prayers.³⁸

Many heads of the feudal and church hierarchy appeared among the celebrants and preachers at the central celebrations held in the church in Thököly Street. They

31 BŐLE 1944. 373.

32 BADALIK, Bertalan: A királyleány éve [Year of the Princess]. BŐLE 1944. 373.

33 BŐLE 1944. 374.

34 BADALIK, Bertalan: A királyleány éve [Year of the Princess]. BŐLE 1944. 379.

35 BADALIK, Bertalan: A királyleány éve [Year of the Princess]. BŐLE 1944. 376.

36 BŐLE, Kornél: Megkondultak a harangok [The Bells Rang]. BŐLE 1944. 404.

37 Circular letter of the Bench of Bishops on the Canonisation of Blessed Margaret of Hungary. BŐLE 1944. 413.

38 Circular letter of the Bench of Bishops on the Canonisation of Blessed Margaret of Hungary. BŐLE 1944. 412–419.

included Gyula Czapik³⁹ archbishop of Eger, Endre Hamvas⁴⁰ canon, archiepiscopal vicar, and István Zadravec⁴¹ army bishop who delivered a week-long series of sermons. Many of the monastic orders were represented by their provincials: the Benedictines, Minorites, Carmelites, Piarists, Paulines, Servites, Jesuits, Capuchins, Franciscans and Salesians. Also present was the Cistercian abbot of Zirc, Zsigmond Mihalovich⁴², the director of Actio Catholica. The Papal Nuncio Angelo Rotta⁴³ was the chief celebrant at the feast of Saint Margaret, while Cardinal-Prince Primate Jusztinián Serédi presided and preached at the final mass⁴⁴.

It was probably because of the war that the army bishop István Zadravec was invited to preach the series of sermons. The other high-ranking priests represented the entire hierarchy, as well as the places that had played a key role in the life of Margaret (Buda, Veszprém).

Large crowds that filled the church every day heard the series of sermons preached during the masses of the celebratory octava by army bishop István Zadravec.⁴⁵ Zadravec based his sermons on the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit⁴⁶, as they applied to Margaret. The following thoughts can be mentioned in particular: "To become a victim for the homeland"⁴⁷, and it was Margaret's heavenly mission "balancing on the knife-edge of being-non-being, to become the Patron of poor Hungary now in Heaven"⁴⁸, "to act, to be a victim and in this way to miraculously save our country"⁴⁹. She relied on God, she avoided sin, she heroically lived the way of life she had accepted, let us too live the Gospel, venerate the saints, the Holy Cross, the means of our salvation, and the Saviour hanging on it, the Eucharist, and the Virgin Mary. Margaret "prayed to the suffering Christ for the exhausted country, and to the infant Jesus for the birth of many Hungarian children to bring about the revival of the homeland". Children are the guarantee of renewal. Margaret's girdle relic was often taken to women in difficult childbirth for this reason,⁵⁰ the bishop therefore recommended that images or statues of her should be placed in maternity homes and kindergartens.⁵¹

39 Gyula Czapik (1887–1956) archbishop, led the Catholic Church after the Communist takeover (1948), adapting to the circumstances. KATLEX II. 1993. 306-307.

40 Endre Hamvas (1890–1970) diocesan bishop of Csanád (1944), archbishop of Kalocsa (1964). KATLEX IV. 1998. 567–568.

41 István Zadravec (1884–1965) Franciscan, from 1920 army bishop. KATLEX XIV. 2009. 603–604.

42 Zsigmond Mihalovich (1889–1959) Cistercian, canon, director of Actio Catholica (1933), in 1948 he fled from the Communists to the USA. KATLEX IX. 2004. 116–117.

43 Angelo Rotta (1872–1965) papal envoy, Papal Nuncio in Hungary (1930–1945), opposed Nazi Germany, the Hungarian Arrow Cross and Hungarian Communist dictatorship. KATLEX XI. 2006. 720.

44 Jusztinián Serédi (1884–1945) Benedictine, archbishop, Prince-Primate, cardinal, canon lawyer. KATLEX XII. 2007. 91–93; BÓLE 1944. 393.

45 BÓLE 1944. 590–591.

46 The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord. Jn 15, 14–15.

47 BÓLE 1944. 435.

48 BÓLE 1944. 435.

49 BÓLE 1944. 437.

50 BÓLE 1944. 459–460.

51 BÓLE 1944. 460.

Január 16. Vasárnap. D. e. 10 órakor *dr. Czapik Gyula* egri érsek, veszprémi apostoli kormányzó főpapi nagymisét pontifikál. — Szentbeszédet mond: *dr. Hamvas Endre* protonotárius kanonok, érseki ált. helytartó. — D. u. fél 6 órakor közös szentolvasó. — 6 órakor szentbeszédet mond *uzdóczy Zadravecz István* püspök, utána litániát tart: *dr. Horváth Kándi* bencés házfőnök igazgató.

Január 17. Hétfő. D. e. 9 órakor csendes orgonás szentmise: *P. Pálvolgyi Ignác* kármelita tartományfőnök. — Szentbeszéd: *dr. Bárdos István* érseki főbiztos. — D. u. 6 órakor közös szentolvasó. — Fél 7 órakor szentbeszéd: *uzdóczy Zadravecz István* püspök. — Litánia: *Zimányi Gyula* piarista tartományfőnök.

Január 18. Kedd. D. e. 9 órakor csendes orgonás szentmise: *P. Besnyő Gyula* pálos h. tartományfőnök. — Szentbeszéd: *vitnyédi Németh István* plébános. — D. u. 6 órakor közös szentolvasó. — Fél 7 órakor szentbeszéd: *uzdóczy Zadravecz István* püspök. — Litánia: *dr. Gerinczy Pál* prépost-prelátus.

Január 19. Szerda. D. e. 9 órakor csendes orgonás szentmise: *Rotta Angelo* c. érsek, pápai nuncius. — Szentbeszéd: *Mihalovitch Zsigmond* pápai prelátus, az Actio Catholica orsz. igazgatója. — D. u. 6 órakor közös szentolvasó. — Fél 7 órakor szentbeszéd: *uzdóczy Zadravecz István* püspök. — Litánia: *Endrédi Vendel* zirel apát.

Január 20. Csütörtök. D. e. 9 órakor csendes orgonás szentmise: *P. Héder M. László* szervita tartományfőnök. — Szentbeszéd: *dr. Pfeiffer János* p. kamarás. — D. u. 6 órakor közös szentolvasó. — Fél 7 órakor szentbeszéd: *uzdóczy Zadravecz István* püspök. Litánia: *P. Borbély István* jezsuita tartományfőnök.

Január 21. Péntek. D. e. 9 órakor csendes orgonás szentmise: *P. Medgyesi Dezső* kapucinus tartományfőnök. — Szentbeszéd: *dr. Merényi Vince* minorita házfőnök. — D. u. 6 órakor közös szentolvasó. — Fél 7 órakor szentbeszéd: *uzdóczy Zadravecz István* püspök. — Litánia: *P. Schrotty Pál* ferences tartományfőnök, rendfőnöki megbízott.

Január 22. Szombat. D. e. 9 órakor csendes orgonás szentmise: *P. Antal János* szalézi tartományfőnök. — Szentbeszéd: *Nyírszor Zoltán* pápai prelátus. — D. u. 6 órakor közös szentolvasó. — Fél 7 órakor szentbeszéd: *uzdóczy Zadravecz István* püspök. — Litánia: *dr. P. Vargha Theodorich* ferences tartományfőnök.

Január 23. Vasárnap. D. e. 10 órakor ünnepélyes főpapi misét pontifikál *dr. Serédi Jusztinián* bíboros-hercegprímás. (Az istentiszteletet a rádió is közvetíti.)

Figs. 4-5 Programme for the central eight-day celebrations



Fig. 6 Entry pass to the final mass

The other sermons were in a similar tone. Endre Hamvas, the later Bishop of Csanád stressed the example of the Hungarian saints: Stephen, Emmerich, Ladislas and Elizabeth, and Margaret's life sacrifice that fits in well with the others.⁵² István Bárdos, the church's chief commissioner of educational affairs particularly emphasised the examples held up for young people.⁵³ Parish priest István Vitnyédi Németh⁵⁴ focused on the helping humanitarian love of Margaret, the saint of prayer and sacrifice. After an analysis of 13th century history, János Pfeiffer, a Catholic priest and church historian again addressed young people in the hope that they would follow her sacred example.⁵⁵ Vince Merényi, Minorite prior in Szeged, emphasised the sufferings Margaret accepted for Hungary. But the idea of a sense of danger appeared in almost all the sermons: "the nation is headed for another catastrophe".⁵⁶

In his sermon Primate Jusztinián Serédi stressed that Margaret had become a saint of the Hungarians from whom "we can learn to love our Hungarian homeland in a way that is selfless, sacrificing, if necessary to the point of self-sacrifice that bears with patience the privations that come [with family life, everyday

52 Endre HAMVAS: Saint Margaret, pride of our church, pledge of our nation. *BŐLE* 1944. 471–476.

53 István BÁRDOS: Saint Margaret of Hungary, supernatural ideal and Hungarian example. *BŐLE* 1944. 477–483.

54 István Vitnyédi Németh (1894–1948) Catholic priest, parish priest, canon lawyer, writer, journalist. *KATLEX IX.* 2004. 682–683.

55 János Pfeiffer (1897–1983) Catholic priest, Grand Provost, church historian, member of the Academy of Saint Stephen. *KATLEX X.* 2005. 925. János PFEIFFER: Let us evoke the memory of Saint Margaret with grateful reverence – with sacred pride – and with acceptance. *BŐLE* 1944. 497–508.

56 Vince Merényi (1907–?) Franciscan, founder of the monthly paper Blessed Margaret. Vince MERÉNYI: Saint Margaret on the path of perfection. *BŐLE* 1944. 507–511.

work], with the war [...] [and strives to reconcile the individuals and groups in conflict]."⁵⁷

The fact that many representatives of political and public life appeared at the primate's final mass held in the central venue, the Dominican church in Budapest, clearly reflects not only the intertwining of the church and secular power, but also the aspiration of the Dominicans and of Kornél Bóle to make the canonisation procedure a cause of the whole nation. The mass and the sermon were broadcast over the radio, enabling the organisers to involve the whole of society in the celebration and commemoration.

For the occasion the Dominican Queen of the Rosary church in Thököly Street was decorated with banners: the yellow and white paper banners, the red, white and green Hungarian national colours and the red, yellow and blue colours of Budapest hung side by side.⁵⁸ The white of the marguerites of the altars stood out among all the green foliage.⁵⁹ Young people of Budapest, boys and girls, and scouts formed the guard of honour at the Saint Margaret altar.⁶⁰

Bishops Vilmos Apor⁶¹ of Győr, József Pétery⁶² of Vác, Mihály Bubnics⁶³ of Rozsnyó, army bishop István Hász⁶⁴ and János Mikes c. archbishop⁶⁵ were present at the final ceremony together with many other high-ranking priests. The church guests were received by the Dominican Provincial P. Bertalan Badalik, and the secular guests on behalf of Actio Catholica by Miklós Esty⁶⁶, head of the organisation department. Among the secular guests were Prime Minister Miklós Kállay⁶⁷ representing the governor, Mrs Miklós Horthy, Mrs István Horthy, Archduke Albrecht Joseph, Augusta wife of the Archduke, Archduchesses Gabriella and Magdolna, numerous ministers and Catholic secretaries of state, Tivadar Homonnay⁶⁸ Mayor of Budapest, mayors, aristocratic families, members of male and female orders, representatives of Catholic institutions and associations, the Maltese Knights and the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre.⁶⁹

57 BÓLE 1944. 528.

58 BÓLE 1944. 589.

59 BÓLE 1944. 589. The name of the flower marguerite, is the same as the name of Saint Margaret.

60 BÓLE 1944. 590.

61 Vilmos Apor (1892–1945) bishop of Győr, was shot by a Russian soldier on Easter Friday 30 March 1945. He was beatified on the basis of his martyrdom. KATLEX I. 1993. 345–346.

62 József Pétery (1890–1967) diocesan bishop of Vác. From 1953 the communist authorities kept him under house arrest in Hejce. KATLEX X. 2005. 906.

63 Mihály Bubnics (1877–1945) apostolic governor of the diocese of Rozsnyó (1925), later diocesan bishop (1939). KATLEX II. 1993. 57.

64 István Hász (1884–1973) army bishop (1929). Died in emigration in Switzerland. KATLEX IV. 1998. 636.

65 János Mikes (1876–1945) diocesan bishop. KATLEX IX. 2004. 133.

66 Miklós Esty (1895–1973) bank official, then vice-chairman of Actio Catholica, an important figure in Hungarian Catholic public life. KATLEX III. 1997. 315.

67 Miklós Kállay (1887–1967) Prime Minister (1942–1944), he sought contact with the Anglo-Saxon powers with the aim of taking Hungary out of the war. KATLEX VI. 2001. 52.

68 Tivadar Homonnay (1888–1964) Mayor of Budapest (1942–1944), he resigned after the German occupation (19 March 1944). KATLEX V. 2000. 6.

69 BÓLE 1944. 591.

After the celebrations – reception and impact

In addition to the liturgical celebration, an important part was also played by scholarly lectures and publications, and cultural events. Bishop Prince-Primate Jusztinián Serédi commissioned the archbishop of Esztergom and church historian Antal Meszlényi⁷⁰ to write a biography of Margaret by the time of the celebrations in 1944. The last two chapters of that book trace the history of the canonisation and the 20th century process leading to its culmination.⁷¹ However, scholarly research had played an important part already from the turn of the 19th to 20th century in preserving and reviving the memory of Margaret: literary historians found her mediaeval legends, subjected them to critical analysis and published them.⁷² During the First World War excavations were begun at the ruins of the former Dominican convent on Margaret Island. Margaret's grave was found here in 1937. Making use of the reconstruction drawings by archaeologist Kálmán Lux,⁷³ Henrik Horváth wrote a study on the tomb of Saint Margaret, that was a high quality creation of the period.⁷⁴ The text of the Margaret legend was translated into 20th century vernacular Hungarian by Gyula Baros and published.⁷⁵ At the January meeting of the Saint Stephen Academy,⁷⁶ Antal Meszlényi gave a lecture on the history of the cult of Saint Margaret.

There were also a number of volumes of devotional literature based on historical research, thanks to the work of Dominican scholars.⁷⁷ In his 1944 Lent circular letter, army bishop István Hász held up the figure of Saint Margaret as an example of heroes for the Hungarian army.⁷⁸ After long years of vain efforts and

70 Antal Meszlényi (1894–1984) canon, art historian. *KATLEX* VIII. 2003. 1007.

71 *MESZLÉNYI* 1944.

72 *BARNA* 2014a. – Elemér Lovas OSB did a great deal to reveal the life of the saint. Already in 1913, then in 1916 he published an analytical study of the Margaret legend, his doctoral dissertation also dealt with Margaret and her age. *LOVAS* 1913; 1916. Elemér Lovas Benedictine (1889–1949), history and Latin teacher. *KatLex* VIII. 2003. 123–124. Especially instructive among these is the biography of Saint Margaret by the Lutheran Elemér Mályusz. *MÁLYUSZ* 1933.

73 Kálmán Lux (1880–1961) architect, a major figure in Hungarian monuments protection. *KATLEX* VIII. 2003. 208.

74 *HORVÁTH* 1944.

75 This first edition in 1923 faithful to the original text appeared with a foreword by Sándor Sík (1889–1963) Piarist, literary historian and poet. *BAROS* 1944.

76 The Saint Stephen Academy grouping Catholic scholars was established in 1915. It revived its operation in 1998.

77 P. FEHÉR, Mátyás: *Árpádházi Szent Margit lelke* [The Soul of Saint Margaret of Hungary]. Budapest, 1944; P. FEHÉR, Mátyás: *Szent Margit élete* [The Life of Saint Margaret]. In: *Magyar fények* [Hungarian Lights]. Budapest, 1944. 66–112; NÉMETH, Imre: *Elmélkedések Szent Margit érényeiről* [Meditations on the Virtues of Saint Margaret] Budapest, 1944; TEMEL, M. Amata O.P.: *Gyöngy a kagyló ölében. Árpádházi Boldog Margit a domonkosrendben* [Pearl in the Shell. Blessed Margaret of Hungary in the Dominican Order]. Rákospalota, Szalézi Művek, 1942.

78 *BŐLE* 1944. 67.

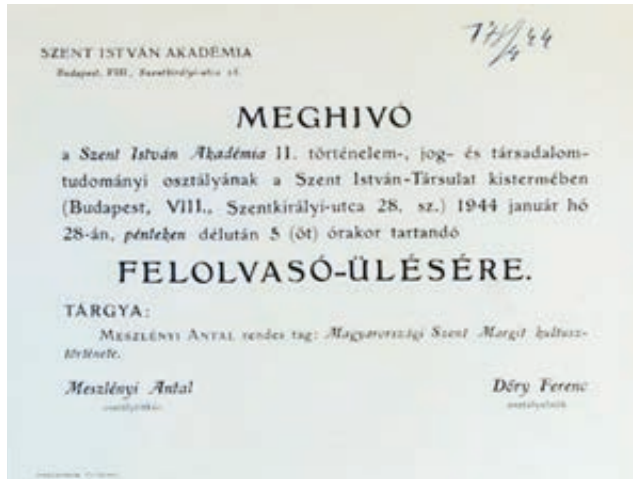


Fig. 7 Invitation issued by the Saint Stephen Academy

debates, at the end of February 1944 the Public Works Council of the Municipality of Budapest finally gave its approval for the construction of a convent of Dominican nuns in the vicinity of the ruins of the Dominican monastery on Margaret Island.⁷⁹ From March 1944 devotional prayers were said at the grave of Saint Margaret and the monastery ruins.⁸⁰

A whole series of works of art portraying Saint Margaret commemorated the “princess of lilies”, although most of these were not made for the canonisation but were produced throughout the 1930s. A monumental example is the giant secco on the wall behind the Saint Margaret altar in the Dominican church of the Queen of the Rosary in Budapest, the work of Béla Kontuly,⁸¹ portraying episodes in the life of the saint.⁸² The Margaret iconography was summed up by the art

79 This plan was swept aside by the socialist/communist anti-church and anti-religion political regime in the years and decades after the war.

80 BÓLE 1944. 67.

81 Béla Kontuly (1904–1983), much-employed painter in the mid-20th century, creator of monumental church frescoes and secco. KATLEX VII. 2002. 179–180.

82 At the top of the picture we see the symbol of the Holy Trinity, Saint Margaret stands in the centre, in the black and white habit of her order, holding a lily symbolising virginity. On the upper left is King Béla IV in the days when he was fleeing from the Mongols. In Spalato he holds up his sword and vows that if God has mercy on his unfortunate country he will dedicate his unborn child to God. And this happens, below him we see Margaret as a child in the Dominican monastery in Veszprém. In the next scene she distributes gifts. The mounted men symbolise the renewed Mongol threat, while Saint Margaret prays for peace. At the bottom of the painting Saint Margaret refuses the royal crown and all earthly glory. The Czech king Ottokar sought her hand in a marriage that would have brought many benefits for the country, but she rejects his offer. Instead, in 1261 she takes her permanent, solemn vow in the Dominican convent on the Isle of Rabbits. In the upper right corner of the painting we see Margaret transfigured. She died at an early age after much spiritual and physical suffering. The image below this shows her on her bier. Beside her are nuns and priests and in the background the symbolical figures of other Hungarian saints. In the bottom



Fig. 8 Secco by Béla Kontuly in the Budapest Dominican church

historian János Jajczay.⁸³ All this raised the aesthetic side of the ritual event. The many works of art – paintings, statues, films, novels, small devotional images – served the same purpose.

right corner Saint Margaret reconciles her father, the king with her younger brother Stephen who has taken up arms against his father.

83 In the 1920s–1930s portrayals of Saint Margaret were collected throughout Europe; especially valuable among them are works from Italy, frescoes and stained glass windows in Siena, Florence, Assisi, Perugia, Bologna, Milan, Rome, indicating that Margaret had already been venerated as a saint in earlier centuries. JAJCZAY 1944.

P. Jeromos Fenyvessy O.P. collected works of literature immortalising the life of the saint in two volumes under the title *Liliomos Királylány* [Lily Princess]. The compilation shows how the figure of Margaret and the procedure encouraged our writers and poets to express their opinions regarding the figure of the saint. In its title and invocation, the book chimes with the title *Lily Prince* accorded a decade earlier to Prince Saint Emmerich. The poems and writings in the anthology really do give a cross-section not only of the 1944 year of the saint, but also of her practice in earlier years.⁸⁴ They indicated that the canonisation procedure that had been set in motion had had an influence on literary life, while the works of writers and poets strengthened the social presence of the saint and urged the accomplishment of canonisation. All the material symbols that are attributes of Margaret appeared on the title-page of the book: lily, crown, coats-of-arms, and the saint herself wearing the habit of the Dominican Order kneeling in prayer, her gaze lifted to heaven. The many tiny crosses that appear in the letters of the book's title could be references to her deep religiosity, perhaps to her penance and voluntarily undertaken suffering. The journal *Blessed Margaret* that had earlier been edited in Szeged, in the Dominican convent, from 1944 changed its title to *Saint Margaret* and the editing was transferred to Budapest.⁸⁵ Here too similar symbols appear on the title-page to those on the title-page of the volume edited by Fenyvessy. The periodicals of other orders, such as the Jesuit *Szívújáság* [*Heart News*], as well as the German-language *Pester Lloyd*⁸⁶ and *Katholisches Kirchenblatt*⁸⁷ published many writings by the Dominican P. Ödön Prantner.⁸⁸ These studies were also important sources for the volume compiled by P. Kornél Bóle under the title *Gyöngyvirágok és margaréták Szent Margit oltárán* [*Lilies of the Valley and Marguerites on the Altar of Saint Margaret*], that brought together all the different publications of the holy year, and summed up the full 20th century process of the canonisation.⁸⁹ The best known and most popular were and still are the novels about Margaret written by major writers of the period.⁹⁰

The first overall evaluation of the series of events was made in a speech by the Dominican Provincial P. Bertalan Badalik broadcast over the radio on 31 January. He stressed that the past days had shown that the Hungarian people were able to celebrate with child-like pleasure. There was a touch of wonder mingled in the celebration over the fact that the canonisation of Margaret had finally been achieved after a wait of 700 years. The Hungarian people were

84 BÓLE 1944. 68.

85 BÓLE 1944. 68.

86 *Pester Lloyd* a German-language paper published from 1854–1945 was mainly read by the German-reading bourgeoisie of Budapest.

87 *Katholisches Kirchenblatt* a German-language paper published fortnightly from 1939–1944. Its predecessor, *Pfarrbote* appeared from 1934–1938.

88 BÓLE 1944. 68.

89 BÓLE 1944.

90 Géza Gárdonyi's novel *Isten rabjai* [Slaves of God] appeared in 1906, János Kodolányi wrote his novel *Boldog Margit* [Blessed Margaret] in 1934 and the Catholic writer Lajos Harsányi published his novel *Égi és földi szerelem* [Heavenly and Earthly Love] in 1941. Cf.: BÓLE 1944. 68; BARNA 2014a.



Fig. 9 Fenyvessy's book Lily Princess, cover

filled with pride and noble self-esteem to see that they had given the universal church another saint. In the view of Badalik this was also a sign of the Hungarian people's will to live. In all the joy there was "a touch of reproach towards the West: [...] Will Europe realise that the shedding of Hungarian blood, the national sacrifice of the flower of the House of Árpád, the destruction of Hungarian values was the price paid for its protection?"⁹¹ "The miracle of the Hungarian will to live continued in the days of national joy. It was a continuation of the historical miracle that Europe's brotherless nation, this handful of people has stood firmly where a thousand years ago their ancestors laid the foundations of their existence as a state."⁹² The Dominicans are especially grateful to Providence that it gave Margaret to their order, the order that did "dynamic apostolic work" among the Eastern Cumanians, the Bogumils of Bosnia, and that also gave the world Frater Julianus.⁹³

The Dominican Order saw the influence of the Saint Margaret celebrations mainly in the appearance of spiritual publications, the publication of episcopal circular letters and the initiation of Acts of Adoration. More people attended mass and many people took communion. In other words, just as earlier in the

91 BÓLE 1944. 595.

92 BÓLE 1944. 595.

93 BÓLE 1944. 596.

anniversary years of Saint Emmerich and Saint Stephen, the celebrations had a big influence on the spiritual life of the population. Statistics on religious life also bear witness to an upswing.⁹⁴ József Mindszenty who was ordained a bishop in 1944 chose Margaret as the figure for his personal coat of arms.

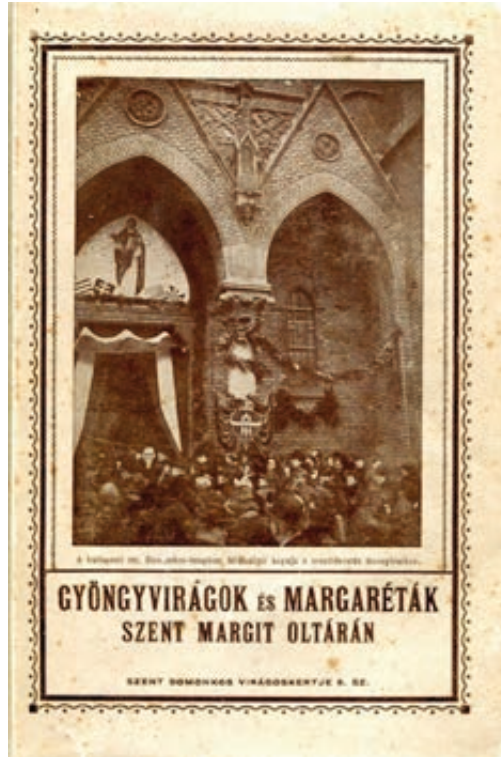


Fig. 10 Title-page of Kornél Bóle's general overview (1944)

Afterlife, interpretation and identity

The celebrations in Hungary in January 1944 for the canonisation of Margaret of Hungary can be said to have summed up the aspirations of the previous decades, the spiritual, artistic and scholarly results achieved. The interests and aspirations of the political power and its nature can be clearly detected in the festive order, that fixes memory in time. That is, political power itself is one of the stimulators of memory. The well-considered actions that were carefully planned and implemented step by step achieved their goal.⁹⁵ The events embraced all strata

⁹⁴ Csíky 2012. 151.

⁹⁵ BARNA 2013, 2014a.



Fig. 11 Géza Gárdonyi: *Isten rabjai* [Slaves of God], a novel (1906)



Fig. 12 János Kodolányi: *Boldog Margit* [Blessed Margaret], a novel (1934)



Fig. 13 Lajos Harsányi: *Égi és földi szerelem* [Heavenly and Earthly Love], a novel (1941)



Fig. 14 Coat of arms of József Mindszenty Bishop of Veszprém.

of Catholic society, as well as the political sphere irrespective of denomination, as the canonisation procedure, the internal church policy and the international political sphere strongly overlapped. This made possible the participation of the country's leaders, the political parties, a wide spectrum of associations and organisations from civil society, the centres of academic life: universities, colleges and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and representatives of the fine arts and the literary world.⁹⁶

Knowledge and feeling, will and action, anxiety and hope were condensed in the events of those days when everything that had been expressed as a value in the Dominican Order, the Catholic Church and the society in the course of cultivation of the cult of Margaret appeared in concentrated form. One such value was the new colour she brought into religious life in the spiritual field: the appearance of the ideas of penance, propitiation, self-sacrificing love, commitment, and peace-making, especially in pastoral care among young people. The thought of Christian hope can also be included here: that even under the conditions of the world war the country could hope for a better future through Margaret's propitiation. In situations of crisis the people always need symbolical expression of their historical greatness.⁹⁷ The Hungarian people found this greatness then in their heroes, especially in the Arpadian saints, among them Margaret.

The celebrations in 1944 were held in a very high ritual context.⁹⁸ The building stones of identity in the 20th century linked to Margaret were: the Hungarians and the country are the bastion protecting the West, a brotherless people and so they can obviously count only on themselves, but they have the will to live and the sacrifice of Saint Margaret of Hungary is a fine example of that will. The period saw in Margaret's story what they wanted to remember in their time from the past.

Half a year after the grand celebrations, the eastern front of the Second World War reached Hungary. From January 1945 in the shadow of the anti-religious socialist/communist power that was gaining in strength it was no longer possible to maintain the earlier interpretation of the veneration of Saint Margaret of Hungary. Under the radically changed circumstances neither the church nor the wider circles of society were able to maintain the cult of Saint Margaret. As a result, in both its externalities and its content it lost its colour and largely faded away.

96 CsÍKY 2012. 138.

97 CsÍKY 2012. 136.

98 SIMS–STEPHENS 2011. 102–103.

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