

RELIGIOUS TOURISM ON THE EXAMPLE OF NATION PILGRIM PLACES IN SLOVAKIA (PATRONAGES OF THE VIRGIN MARY)

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ABSTRACT

Aim. Pilgrimage belongs to the oldest non-economic forms of migration and is a phenomenon that has intertwined throughout the history of religions. The aim of the article is to emphasise the important position of religious tourism as one of its forms, based on the deep-rooted tradition of wandering in Slovakia, characterising important places of pilgrimage of national and perhaps partly international significance.

Method. Terrain reconnaissance together with analysis of archival and parish documents.

Results. Numerous Marian temples and chapels testify to the Marian veneration in Slovakia. Of the 5925 known patronages of churches and chapels (even those that have disappeared) in Slovakia, 1762 are dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Of these Marian patrons, 329 are consecrated to the Seven Sorrows of Our Virgin Mary. The



result of field research is an analysis of six pilgrimage sites of national importance in Slovakia.

Conclusion. Slovakia is a strongly Christian country with a tradition of wandering, as evidenced by many local and regional pilgrimage sites. Pilgrimage sites are understood as contact points that God has marked, they are the intersections where the ways of God meet the ways of people. There are mostly Marian pilgrimage sites in Slovakia and six of them (Marianka, Staré Hory, Levoča, Šaštín, Nitra, Ľutina) are of national importance.

Keywords: pilgrimage, pilgrimage route, religious tourism, wandering, basilica minor

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of Christianity, especially after year 313, a dense network of pilgrimage routes led through Europe, through which Christians travelled from east to west and from north to south. Numerous groups of pilgrims visited places that commemorated the life and death of Jesus Christ (Egeria, 2006). Their goal was also the tombs of the apostles St. Peter and Paul and other early Christian martyrs, as evidenced by St. Hieronym (Gordini, 1995). Large groups of pilgrims reached the most extreme place in Europe *Finis terrae* – Santiago de Compostela, the tomb of the Apostle St. James the Elder. Also the French city – Tours, where St. Martin died in 397, was a much-visited place in Christian antiquity and the early Middle Ages. They also wandered to the tomb of St. Patrick, St. Boniface, St. Olaf (Ohler, 2000). Pilgrimage sites are the sites of the spiritual source of a believing man of all times, who seeks the appropriate means to make his faith alive, firm, and steadfast. It is supposed to be a faith that gives a person a new life and a view of the whole eternity into which he has already entered and is living (Maturkanič, Tomanová Čerget'ová, Majda et al., 2022; Murgáš et al., 2022, Shimko, 2021). Pilgrimage routes have always been associated with effort and sacrifice. Sometimes they lasted not only for days but also for weeks. Nevertheless, they were always eagerly awaited. It was not only an opportunity for mutual encounter and rapprochement, but it was an opportunity to deepen faith, spiritual purification and strength. The eschatological dimension, the dimension of repentance, the cult dimension, the apostolic dimension and the community dimension must be seen here (Judák, 2020). The places of pilgrimage were later understood by believers as contact points, which God himself marked. Pilgrimage sites are the intersections where the ways of God met the ways of the people (Gilles, 1994). In the territory of Hungary, where Slovakia also belonged, there are numerous places of pilgrimage, mostly Marian, which testify to the living faith of its inhabitants in the past and in the present. The main features of Catholic mariology are unquestionable, as they are rooted in Scripture and survival in liturgy, prayer, poetry, singing and art, and are found in the writings of theologians and saints as well as in the teachings of the popes.

PILGRIMAGE SITES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO CULTURE

Not only did the faith in God and the love of the Mother of God deepen in the places of pilgrimage, but also the relationship to the land on which man lived and to the people who created the culture in this place. The pilgrim expressed his faith in God, but also in his faith, through the cultural customs of the country (Maturkanič et al., 2021). As the pilgrims travelled from one pilgrimage site to another, they transferred the customs and cultural facts from the individual pilgrimage sites to another. They did this in such a way that the individual cultural customs did not suppress the others, but enriched each other (Alaverdov & Bari, 2021; Jaworska-Woloszyn & Klementowicz, 2020; Kocev et al., 2017; Kondrla & Kralik, 2016; Pavlíková & Žalec, 2019; Žalec & Pavlíková, 2019). Thus, with the passage of time, we can observe a certain multicultural value of this transfer of one culture to another, and by research we can find out which cultural elements are in a given place of travel and which were transferred there under the influence of the way.

DEFINITION OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM AND ITS POSITION

Religious tourism is from the point of view of its existence, a specific phenomenon of tourism. It consists of several components of tourism. Pilgrim tourism is of major importance among them. In the case of attendance of pilgrimage centres, e.g. with national significance, there is not as significant a time constraint as with other components of religious tourism (e.g. feasts, congress tourism). It clearly belongs to the oldest forms of tourism. The components of religious tourism also include events organised by the church/parish and religious communities (spiritual exercises, youth camps, mission holidays, etc.). The term spiritual and recreational tourism best corresponds to the mentioned events (Krogmann, 2007). According to Rinschede (1992) religious tourism is any type of tourism, the participants of which are during their travels and especially at the place of temporary residence exclusively, strongly religiously motivated. There are two categories of participants, the first is the dominant arrivals of believers to the sites of religious holidays (visits to religious centres by pilgrims), this includes participation in festivities such as the occasion of church consecration, spiritual exercises, etc. The second category is the arrival of a narrowly specified professional public (priests) for religiously motivated, often closed conferences. Puszta (2004) mentions religious tourism in the centre, between pilgrimage and tourism, which means that religious tourism also means the arrival of an unbelieving person in church buildings, which is motivated by the cultural and historical value of the building. Thus, there is a clear need to define other terms such as travel and pilgrim tourism. Several authors have devoted themselves to the definition of pilgrimage (Ambrósio

et al., 2019; Ambrósio et al., 2020; Krogmann et al., 2017; Krogmann et al., 2020; Matlovičová et al., 2015; Mróz et al., 2019). We can classify pilgrimage tourism as a new form of tourism, because people are currently looking for another form of rest and relaxation, because they need to calm down. Pilgrimage sites as well as other objects of a sacral nature serve for this form of relaxation.

THE TRADITION OF MARIAN PILGRIMAGE

The Mother of God was initially venerated with the title of Mother of God. "Mary is truly 'Mother of God' since she is the mother of the eternal Son of God made man, who is God himself" (Hlad, 2016, p. 143) and the title "Mother of God" points to the sublime truth of the Incarnation, that Jesus Christ is true God and true man (Hlad, 2016). But already in the Middle Ages, this basic Mariological patronage spread to several patronages. Hungary, of which Slovakia was a part, has been since the time of St. Stephen referred to as *Regnum Marianum*. In the 17th century, the patronage of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary prevailed, which already existed in the Eastern Churches. In this century, the national patronage of Slovakia was formed, the Virgin Mary of the Seven Sorrows, which in the 18th and first half of the 19th century acquired the character of popularity (it is the most common patronage of chapels). The patronage of the Virgin Mary of the Snows, the Virgin Mary of Carmel-Scapular and the Virgin Mary of Loreto was spread to a lesser extent. In the second half of the 19th century, the patronage of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary came to the fore (Hlad, 2016) as a consequence of the proclamation of the dogma in 1854, the revival of which in the more popular position became the patronage of the Virgin Mary of the Rosary, at the chapels in turn the Virgin Mary of Lourdes. At the end of the 19th century, the patronage of the Virgin Mary, the Queen of Angels, which the origin goes back to the end of the Middle Ages, expanded to a lesser extent, and the new Ugrophilic patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Hungary became strong. In the 20th century, the Virgin Mary of Fatima was the most widely used of the mariological patronages, and, like the soteriological Sacred Heart of Jesus, the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Judák & Poláčik, 2009).

The Marian cult has played a very important role in the history of our nation. Many pilgrims from Slovakia also came to the Marian shrine in Austria (Mariazell), especially from western Slovakia and from the northern part it was Calvary Zebrydowska. The journey took several days and required many sacrifices. Going on a pilgrimage meant a big change in a stable way of life for a person of every period (Piatrová, 2010). For centuries, our ancestors came to Marianka (early 13th century), Levoča (13th century), Nitra (mid 13th century; regular votive pilgrimages from the 18th century), to Staré Hory (15th century), Trstená (15th century), Šaštín, Kláštor pod

Znievom and Frivald (16th century), Gablotov, Topoľčany, Dubnica and Višňové (17th century), Trnava (18th century), Ľutina, Klokočov (19th century) (Judák & Poláčik, 2009).

Pilgrimage sites played an important role in the resistance against the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in the period 1948-1989 and showed the spiritual convictions and attitudes of Catholics. The pilgrimage involved a number of people who expressed the depth of their faith, despite various obstacles on the part of the state leadership, which tried to break the pilgrimage, destroy it, but Catholics, despite all the difficulties, did not lose hope. Pilgrimages were the most massive Christian activity and at the same time the strongest resistance against state power. Interestingly, the communist regime did not find the courage to ban the pilgrimages completely because it feared riots and protests (Dlugoš, 2003). Therefore, the atheist regime sought to obtain places of pilgrimage for cultural purposes and thus to exclude any religious manifestations such as pilgrimages. After the change of the political system (1989), the tradition of pilgrimage, pilgrimage tourism has resumed.

NATIONAL MARIAN PILGRIMAGE SITES

Marian pilgrimage sites can be divided into several types: the first are pilgrimage sites, where there are icons or other holy objects associated with the veneration of the Virgin Mary. The second type are places of pilgrimage associated with the tradition of revelations or miracles that took place through the Virgin Mary. The third type of Marian holy sites are characterised primarily by their locality, but especially by the fact that since the end of the 17th century, many regional pilgrimage sites have been marked by a relationship with the domestic (national-regional) tradition or the local church.

Numerous Marian temples and chapels testify to the Marian veneration in Slovakia. Of the 5925 known patronages of churches and chapels (even those that have disappeared) in Slovakia, 1762 are dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Of the listed Marian patronages, 329 are dedicated to Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, including the titles of churches and chapels: The Mother of Sorrows, The Sorrowful Mother of God, The Co-suffering and the Suffering Mother of God. In the individual Slovak dioceses, the status of the Patronage of the Seven Sorrows is as follows: Bratislava (30), Trnava (32), Banská Bystrica (52), Nitra (58), Žilina (41), Košice (43), Rožňava (21), Spiš diocese (39), Prešov archieparchy (11), Military Ordinariate (2) (Judák & Poláčik, 2009).

Some of these ancient, especially Marian pilgrimage sites in Slovakia have won the honorary title of *basilica minor* in recent decades or years. There are 12 temples in Slovakia marked with this title, of which 8 are Marian, 7 Latin and 1 Byzantine rite. Basilica minor is a papal honorary title for particularly important churches in the church around the world since the 18th century (Vragaš, 2006).

Levoča

Levoča is the place where the largest number of pilgrims (around half a million) gather around the Mother of God on the pilgrimage on the Sunday after July 2nd (Feast of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary). In addition to the main pilgrimage, other events are organised every year, such as the children's missionary pilgrimage, the Scout Way to the Marianska hill, the National Marriage Week, and the Diocesan Ascent of Youth.

The tradition of veneration of the Virgin Mary in Levoča dates back to the time of the Tartar invasions in the 13th century, when the inhabitants took refuge from danger to the hill, where they more easily defended themselves against the hordes of Tatars. Thanks to the Virgin Mary, a small chapel was built here, the ancestor of today's pilgrimage Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, where devotions were held every year in the presence of locals and believers from the surrounding area (Chalupecký, 2006).

According to tradition, Mariánska hill entered history as early as 1247, when there was a chapel at the hospital for lepers. It is certain that Levoča was already an important city at that time. It is mentioned directly in the documents as early as 1249, while in 1271 it became the capital of the Community of Spiš Saxons, originally Germans, who settled in Spiš in the 12th-13th century. Since 1405, Levoča has been a free royal town, which has strengthened its position among the towns of Spiš. According to the no longer existing chronicle of the town of Levoča (Štefan Meyer's), it is stated in connection with the statue that the statue of the Virgin Mary has been venerated on Mariánská hill since 1311 one can estimate the number of people as thousands. Regular pilgrimages have been held here since the 14th century.

Pope John Paul II on January 26, 1995 elevated the church on Mariánská hill to be a Basilica Minor. In recent years, the basilica has been incorporated into the community of international Marian shrines. This most precious pilgrim in the history of Mariánská hill - St. John Paul II personally visited this shrine on July 7, 1995, when more than 650,000 pilgrims came not only from Slovakia, but also from Poland, Ukraine, Czechia, Hungary and also Slovaks living in Romania (Dlugoš, 2000, 2008, 2010). Every year a large number of pilgrims come to Mariánská hora. For decades, even during the period of socialist building, Levoča's pilgrimages have been the most visited pilgrimage site in Slovakia at the beginning of July. Approximately 400,000 pilgrims visit this place every year during the July pilgrimage (the first weekend of July after the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary). In addition to the Marian Way, Levoča is also a part of the Way of St. Jacob.

Šaštín

The National Shrine of the Slovaks is the Basilica of the Virgin Mary of the Seven Sorrows. The history of the gracious statue of the Seven Sorrows dates back to 1564. Respect for the Virgin Mary of the Seven Sorrows, espe-

cially here, was visibly growing. There were also many miraculous healings, which were investigated by the commission on behalf of the Archbishop of Esztergom (Cardinal Imrich Esterházi). The number of pilgrims increased, especially when the archbishop in 1732 declared the statue of the Virgin Mary merciful, in which the faithful could ask for extraordinary gifts. The Šaštín Church, the current national shrine, with its size and character gives the impression that its builders already in the 18th century predicted that it would one day become a basilica. With a length of 62 meters, a width of 24.5 meters (with side chapels) and a height of 25.2 meters, it belongs to the large Baroque sacral buildings of the century (Macák, 2004). When the three-year anniversary of the pilgrimage site was celebrated in Šaštín in 1864, the gracious statue was crowned with crowns blessed by Pope Pius IX. The coronation was attended by the Archbishop of Esztergom Ján Scitovský, a venerator of the Virgin Mary of the Seven Sorrows, who since Pope Pius IX. he demanded compulsory indulgences for the Marian holidays. Emperor Francis I was also present. The coronation ceremony was attended by 120,000 believers from all over Hungary, Austria, Moravia, Bohemia, Silesia and Poland.

Pope Pius XI by decree of April 22, 1927, *Celebre apud gentem Slovacam* declared the Virgin Mary of the Seven Sorrows to be the patron saint of Slovakia. The Holy Congregation of Rites, which issued this decree, in its declaration refers to the ancient cult in Slovakia, the important Marian church in Šaštín, but also to the previous privilege of Pope Benedict XIII, who in 1727 allowed the Virgin Mary of the Seven Sorrows to be venerated as patron (Letz, 2014).

As respect for the Seven Sorrows in Slovakia deepened, Pope Paul VI. on November 23, 1964, in the Apostolic Letter *Quam Pulchram*, promoted the Marian shrine in Šaštín to the rank of basilica minor with all its privileges that belong to this designation, and in 1966 he confirmed Seven Sorrows as the main patroness of Slovakia. After the abolition of the Pauline order by Joseph II. in 1786, who had been active in Šaštín since 1733, the Salesians took over the decade after 1924, who worked there until the violent intervention of the atheist regime in 1950 and returned here after 1989. In 2017, the Paulines took over their activities again. Pope John Paul II visited this shrine on July 1, 1995 and crowned the gracious statue with new gilded crowns. The largest pilgrimages here are in Turice and the Feast of the Virgin Mary of the Seven Sorrows (Gavenda, 2011).

There are regularly 2 main pilgrimages: the national pilgrimage on the feast of the Virgin Mary of the Seven Sorrows and the Pentecostal (Turična) pilgrimage. In 2016, about 180,000 pilgrims visited the basilica (about 40,000 during the national pilgrimage - September 15, 2016). In addition to them, there are also thematic pilgrimages, which are in the context of Slovakia a kind of new trend in religious tourism: pilgrimage of lovers (weekend after St. Valentine's Day) - about 400 pilgrims, pilgrimage of men (Saturday after Easter Sunday) - 300-400 pilgrims, pilgrimage of ministers (May

Saturday) - 200-300 pilgrims, pilgrimage of mothers (second Sunday of May, Mother's Day) - 100 pilgrims, pilgrimage of firefighters (second Saturday in May) - 250 pilgrims, pilgrimage of Greek Catholics (Saturday for the Feast of the Holy Mother of God, June) - 150 pilgrims, pilgrimage of bikers (last Saturday, the number is determined by the number of bikes) - 300 pilgrims, pilgrimage rosary fraternities (first Saturday in October) - 1500-3000 pilgrims, pilgrimage for the light of joy (second Saturday in October) - hundreds of believers in the holy mass. In addition to the Marian Pilgrimage Route, Šaštín is also a part of Cyril and Methodius and St. Jacob's Route, which really testifies to its national, if not international significance (Basilica Šaštín, 2022).

Marianka

It is the oldest Marian pilgrimage site in Slovakia. As early as 1691, the village of Marjanka was mentioned in the privilege of Emperor Leopold I, which was located near Mariatál, a pilgrimage site consisting of a church, a monastery and several houses for servants. The form of Mariatál is based on the German Mariathall, or Mary's Valley, which corresponds to the Hungarian name *Mária-völgy*. The Marian cult can be documented here from the 13th century. There is a small statue, only 42 cm high, which depicts the Virgin Mary with little Jesus in her arms (Lacika & Fiala, 2001).

The immediate impetus for the creation and spread of the tradition of this pilgrimage site was the laying of the foundation stone of the church by the Hungarian King Louis I of Anjou on the Pentecostal Vigil in 1377. In 1380, the construction of the church was completed and Louis I came to this gracious place to ceremoniously place a miraculous statue on the main altar of the new church (Piatrová, 2010). As reverence for the Virgin Mary was one of the pillars of the Habsburg dynasty's monarchy, many rulers flocked to it. Mariatál shared the title of Hungarian national shrine throughout the early modern period with a pilgrimage site in Mariazell. Ferdinand IV was the first monarch to travel to Marianka after his coronation in Bratislava under King of Hungary in 1647, accompanied by the Archbishop of Esztergom Juraj Lippay. After the victorious battle of Vienna over the Turks in 1683, Leopold I also came here in thanksgiving (Lacika & Fiala, 2001). The Pilgrimage Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary is a Gothic building at its core, which was enlarged in the 17th century and Baroque in the early 18th century. The presbytery was renovated in the neo-Gothic style in 1877. The pilgrimage area expanded, which underwent many reconstructions in the Middle Ages and then in the 16th and 17th centuries during the re-Catholicisation during the reign of Emperor Leopold I and the support of the Archbishops of Esztergom.

Marianka has long been considered one of the most visited pilgrimage sites in Central Europe. Not only the number of pilgrims was registered here, but also the places from which the pilgrims came and how many approached the holy communion were recorded. At the end of the 19th cen-

tury, on the day of the main pilgrimage (8th of September), up to 30.000 pilgrims came not only from Bratislava or Nitra County, but also from Žitný Ostrov, Moravia and Austria (Lacika & Fiala, 2001). The construction of the Way of the Cross above the pilgrimage site, which consists of thirteen chapels, also dates from the period (1930–1936) (Čičo et al, 2002).

Part of the pilgrimage area is the Lourdes Cave with a statue of the Virgin Mary. The main pilgrimages take place around the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary (8th of September) it also includes the celebration of the Greek Catholic liturgy. The spring pilgrimage takes place on the feast of the Holy Trinity. A pilgrimage of children takes place at the end of May. In addition, there is a regular walking pilgrimage from Bratislava Calvary to Marianka every first Saturday of the month. Like Šaštín, Marianka is part of the Marian, St. Jacob's and Cyril and Methodius pilgrimage routes, as evidenced by its important national significance.

Staré Hory

The heart of Staré Hory is the church dedicated to the mystery of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary. The church was built as a single-nave building with a polygonally finished presbytery vaulted with a rib vault from 1448–1499. The object of the cult is a gracious statue of the Virgin Mary placed on the main altar. The statue came out of the hands of the artist probably in the first half of the 15th century. The statue of the Madonna belongs to the late Gothic sculptures called "Beautiful style" (Piatrová, 2010).

Part of the pilgrimage site is the Well with a healing spring, which is related to a gracious statue, which according to legend was buried by believers in this place during the uprising of František Rákoci. After the end of the uprising in 1711, the statue was excavated and a spring erupted in its place, where in 1895 they built a chapel with a statue of the Virgin Mary. In the 20th century, a monumental cross made of black granite was placed in the chapel, and below it a statue of the Virgin Mary made of white Carrara marble. The restored area was blessed on July 29th, 1942.

From 1941, this merciful place was administered by Redemptorists, who, after a violent deportation in 1950, returned to Staré Hory in 1990, where they worked until 2008. In the years 2008–2010, this place was administered by a diocesan priest and since 2010 the Carmelites have come here, and who still work there today.

The beginnings of the pilgrimage and the expansion of the veneration of the Virgin Mary are closely connected with the arrival of the Society of Jesus, which settled in the Špania Valley (Špania dolina) in 1652 as part of the recatholicisation. The pilgrimage of 1695 on the feast of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary is well known. The Jesuits restored a substantial part of the interior of the temple and built several chapels in the area. Calvary was also built here in 1726 (Čičo, et al., 2002).

The Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary was declared a Basilica minor on August 1, 1990. Pilgrims come here in Turice, on the

Sunday after the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In addition, Fatima Saturdays are celebrated here, which are attended by believers from all over Slovakia (Hlad, 2021a). From thematic pilgrimages is organised e.g. pilgrimage for seniors (May), pilgrimage for children of preschool and school age up to the 1st. communion, pilgrimage of the Holy Spirit (June), scapular pilgrimage (July), radio Lumen pilgrimage (September) (Staré Hory parish, 2022). The Staré Hory pilgrimage site is part of three pilgrimage routes of national and international significance: St. Jacob's, Marian's and Barbora's.

Lutina

The church in Lutina is one of the most important shrines of Greek Catholics. It is located in the Prešov eparchy. Extraordinary events here date from 1851. There is a gracious icon of the Virgin Mary. In 1855 Pope Pius IX. gave the pilgrims of the Lutina chapel complete indulgences. In 1893 they built a regular temple. It was promoted by Pope John Paul II. to the Basilica Minor on June 22, 1988. The first official pilgrimage took place in Lutina in 1855 after the issue of the Apostolic Brevie of Pope Pius IX. Even before that, pilgrims gathered on the Lutinská hôrka, who in 1854 built the Chapel of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin, as required by St. Nicholas. This was due to the dedication of the curators, who travelled through Vienna, Budín, Transylvania and Subcarpathia, raising funds to build the chapel. A great pilgrimage of believers from all over Hungary, Transylvania and Halíč began. Everyone brought stones with them, from which they then built a chapel and a retaining wall below it. The number of pilgrims in those times reached 55-60 thousand. Lutina thus became the most important pilgrimage place for Greek Catholics in Slovakia. The pilgrimage of the year called *forgiveness* takes place with the participation of the resident bishop on the occasion of the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin on the Sunday after August 15th.

To highlight the bond with the Peter's Cathedral in Rome, the following festivities and holidays are celebrated in a special ceremonial way in the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in Lutina every year: St. Peter (February 22th), the feast of St. Peter and Paul Apostles (June 29th), anniversary of the election of the High Priest, anniversary of the award of the title *basilicae minoris* (June 22nd - we celebrate June 24th), Feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist (June 24th - patron of the archbishop), anniversary of the Episcopal ordination of the archbishop and metropolitan. Lutinská hora (hill) is the place of the apparition of St. Nicholas to Zuzana Fekete. It is located about 800 meters from the basilica. It is a place where thousands of believers gather every year on the main pilgrimage, but also at various liturgical and prayer celebrations (Bazilika Lutina, 2022).

In 2010, the basilica was incorporated into the community of international Marian shrines. On June 9th in 2010, the Basilica of the Assumption

of the Blessed Virgin was affiliated with a special Way of Spirituality to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome with the privilege of full indulgences. August 20th in 2011 was significant due to the fact that the basilica was enriched with a reliquary with the relic (blood) of St. John Paul II, donated to the Prešov Archdiocese by the Archbishop of Kraków and Metropolitan Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz.

Pilgrimages are held in Ľutina all year round on the occasion of the Fatima Saturdays, and every second Sunday of the month a liturgy for liberation and healing is held. Of the thematic pilgrimages, it is appropriate to mention the pilgrimage of God's mercy, the pilgrimage of families, the pilgrimage of young people, the pilgrimage of mothers, but also the unique pilgrimage of Roma families. Ľutina is part of the Central European Marian route (Pútnické miesta, 2022).

Nitra

Pilgrimage site (Castle-Old Town) and organising a pilgrimage in honour of St. Cyril and Methodius is provided by the Bishop's Office in Nitra. The cult of adoration is tied to the relics of St. Cyril stored in the Romanesque part of the Nitra Cathedral. The main pilgrimage takes place every year on July 5th. This date was set in the encyclical *Grande Munus* from 1880 (Hetényi & Ivanič, 2018), in which Pope Leo XIII. exalted the merits of the saints and commanded the whole Church to celebrate them on that day. The centre of the sacred space is the Nitra Castle, the dominant part of which is the Cathedral of St. Emeram. The current appearance of the cathedral is the result of a combination of three buildings of different building styles. The oldest part is the Romanesque church of St. Emeram.

One of the last discoveries in the cathedral is a Gothic fresco - the Death and Coronation of the Virgin Mary, discovered in 2012. It is a rare discovery that has been hidden from view for several centuries. Its origin dates back to the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries. The fresco was probably part of the Marian altar and depicts the Virgin Mary, who is dying, there are disciples standing around her, among them one can recognise Peter, who has papal insignia. The complex also includes a late Baroque bishop's palace from 1732 - 1739, built on the west side of the cathedral (Diecézne múzeum, 2022). At present, the pilgrimage takes place outside the sacred space, in the city centre on Svätopluk Square.

The Marian pilgrimage site is Calvary - the Old Town, where the tradition of organising a pilgrimage to the Mother of God (August 15th) dates back to 1776. The cult of adoration is tied to a wooden, 112 cm high statue of the Pieta from the second half of the 17th century. The tradition of pilgrimage was severely limited during the totalitarian regime, which saw the church as its great ideological enemy (in more detail e.g. Ambrósio et al., 2019, Krogmann et al., 2020). The restoration of pilgrimage on a traditional scale took place only after the political and social changes in 1989. The de

facto religious freedom gained after 1989 was also reflected in the fact that the pilgrimage tradition began to be created on Calvary in honour of St. Cyril and Methodius (5.7), which took place here until 2005. The centre of the sacred space is the Church of the Mother of God, which is mentioned as early as 1248 (Poláčik & Judák, 2005).

Nitra as a pilgrimage place is part of three important international pilgrimage routes: the Central European Marian Route, the St. Jacob's and the European Cultural Route of St. Cyril and Methodius (Hlad, 2021b; Maturkanič, Tomanová Čerget'ová & Příbylová, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Pilgrimage thus belongs to the oldest non-economic forms of migration and is a phenomenon that has permeated the entire history of religions worldwide. The book of the Old Testament Exodus already describes the journey of Jews through the desert from Egyptian captivity to the Promised Land. This pilgrimage is not a pilgrimage in the classical sense of the word, but a journey to a destination during which pilgrims not only experience hardships, but also form in their relationship with God. The journey to Jerusalem is also referred to in the book of Deuteronomy (Heriban, 2007, Dt. 16, 10; 13, 16–17). Believing people since ancient times, especially since the Council of Ephesus (in 431) showed special respect for the Virgin Mary. Gradually, shrines were created that were dedicated to the Virgin Mary on the basis of some mystery from the history of salvation, sometimes on the basis of revelations (accepted by the Church, as well as private ones, which the Church did not confirm). Through wandering/pilgrimage routes for religious tourism in the territory of Europe became more Christian. The pilgrims believed that these places were pardoned places where one could tangibly meet God and his grace even through the miraculous events that took place there. Pilgrimage sites were seen as points of contact identified by God himself. Pilgrimage sites are the intersections where the ways of God met the ways of the people.

On the pilgrimage routes, believers realised that the life journey of every human being is an event of one journey, the completion of which will be fulfilled in eternity.

Pilgrimage routes have always been associated with effort and sacrifice. They sometimes lasted not only for days, but also for weeks. It was not only an opportunity for mutual encounter and rapprochement, but it was an opportunity to deepen faith, spiritual purification, and gain strength. The eschatological dimension, the dimension of repentance, the cult dimension, the apostolic dimension, the community dimension and, last but not least, the geographical dimension must be seen here. In the territory of Hungary, where Slovakia also belonged, there are numerous pilgrimage sites, mostly Marian, which testify to the living faith of its inhabitants in the past and in the present.

Every place of pilgrimage is primarily a place of prayer and spiritual enrichment, so in addition to organising pilgrimages, most of these places hold daily services, spiritual renewals, but also regularly recurring events every year. All researched pilgrimage sites of national importance are also part of the international pilgrimage routes: Central European Marian Route (Levoča, Šaštín, Marianka, Staré Hory, Ľutina, Nitra), European Cultural Route St. Cyril and Methodius (Šaštín, Marianka, Nitra), St. Jacob's Route (Levoča, Šaštín, Marianka, Staré Hory, Nitra) and the Barbora's National Pilgrimage Route (Staré Hory).

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