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Iconography of the Virgin Mary in Medieval Wall Paintings in Ludrová–Kút in Slovakia

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This paper analyses the role of the Virgin Mary in the largest Christological cycle in Slovakia (the medieval Upper Hungary). The All Saint's Church is well-known thanks to complex interior medieval wall paintings that are dated to the period from 1420 to 1430. Decoration of the presbytery walls contains examples of Marian iconography. On the vault of the presbytery are painted eschatological scenes - *Last Judgement (Deesis)* and the *Coronation of Virgin Mary*. In the Christological cycle The Virgin Mary occupies an important position primarily in the scenes depicting the childhood and passion of the Christ. In decoration of the vault the Virgin Mary is represented as *Mediatrix* and *Ecclesia*, but in the narrative scenes from the life of Jesus Christ she participates actively in a work of salvation. In the nave, on the northern wall, there is a figurative triptych containing the picture of *Virgin of Loving Mercy*. This layer is dated to the end of the 14th century. In this mural there is an unusually illustrated woman hanging on the lace of the Virgin Mary. This woman is trying to save herself from an attacking devil, which is depicted in the bottom left corner. This picture is a visual form of the prayer *Sub tuum praesidium*, which is the oldest preserved extant hymn to the Blessed Virgin Mary as *Theotokos*.

Keywords: Middle Ages, wall painting, Virgin Mary, iconography, narrative cycle, Ludrová, Slovakia

All Saints Church is located in Liptov (fig. 1), a region in northern Slovakia (formerly Upper Hungary). The oldest parts of the church (quadratic presbytery, sacristy and main nave) are dated to the second half of the 13th century (fig. 2). In the sanctuary, complex fresco decorations are preserved, dated to the period around 1420-1430. On the central nave's northern wall is situated a triptych from the end of the 14th century or around the year 1400. In this article I would like to address the topic of Marian iconography, depicted in some of the pictorial scenes in this church; and specifically, to add new perspectives to the overall iconographic research of the church.

The historiography of medieval murals in Ludrová–Kút dates back to the second half of the 19th century. In 1873, the Catholic priest Štefan Nikolaj Hýroš, performing pastoral activity in Liptovský Michal, wrote an unpublished work about the medieval churches in the Liptov region. Very important for contemporary art historians are his detailed descriptions of the churches and their equipment (altars, pews, vestments, etc.). Hýroš was a pioneer in defining the style of the murals in the sanctuary. He called it the “Prague school” (orig. *škola pražská*).¹ Ferencz Flóris Rómer published a book concerning old medieval wall paintings in Hungary in 1874.² In the second half of the 20th century Hungarian and Czech art historians dealt with the medieval murals in Ludrová, specifically these art historians were Dénes Radocsay³, Vlasta Dvořáková, Josef Krása and Karel Stejskal.⁴ The latter three scholars made important progress in the research of medieval wall paintings in Slovakia. In 1983, Katarína Biathová published a monograph concerning medieval murals and panel paintings in the Liptov region.⁵ Medieval wall paintings in Ludrová–Kút were marginally mentioned in the catalogue of the exhibition entitled *Gothic* (orig. *Gotika*) in 2003, edited by Dušan Buran.⁶ It must be noted that an absence of a proper iconographic analysis was the common problem within the discussed historiography. Zdzisław Kliś dealt with the iconography of medieval murals in Ludrová in the context of the narrative passion cycles in Central Europe.⁷ The last monograph of medieval wall paintings in Liptov along with some short articles in Polish, Czech and Slovak journals brought new perspectives

to the iconographical research of Ludrová wall paintings.⁸ This paper also intends to add new perspectives to the iconographical research of All Saints Church, particularly in the context of Marian iconography.

The Virgin Mary is illustrated in the church in two iconographic programs: on the sanctuary vault and on the northern wall of the main nave she is depicted in eschatological scenes while on the three walls of the sanctuary she is depicted within the narrative, Christological cycle.

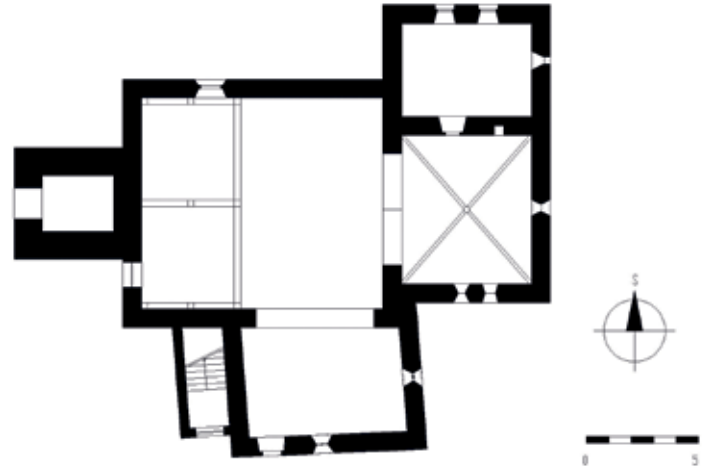
Virgin Mary as Mediatrix and Virgin of Mercy

On the eastern part of the presbytery vault *Maiestas Domini* is depicted in the form of *Deesis* (fig. 3). The mandorla, in which we observe a seated *Pantocrator*, is flanked on the right by Saint John the Baptist and on the left by the Virgin Mary. The Mother of Jesus is standing with her hands set in the gesture for prayer. She intercedes for sinful mankind together with St John the Baptist. Portraying the standing Virgin Mary in the scene of *Deesis* has a longstanding Byzantine tradition. There are many examples of such an iconographical type, such as the one from the end of the 13th century in the church of Saint Lawrence in Svetvinčenat in Istria.⁹ With faith in intercession and mercy from God, the Virgin Mary and the accompanying saints are evident in the figural triptych in the main nave of All Saints Church (fig. 4). In the center of the triptych the Man of Sorrows is depicted in the gesture of showing his wounds (*ostentatio vulnerum*). The *Virgin of Mercy* is depicted in the left part of the triptych and under her mantle are shown all social classes – from noblemen and clergy to peasants. She is shown here as *Mater Omnium*. In the lower left corner of the frame is the devil, illustrated in a standing position, who tries to drag to himself the soul of a young woman who holds the lace that hangs from the clothes of the Virgin Mary (fig. 5). In reference to the presence of the devil and the reaction of the young woman in the iconographical theme of *Virgin of Mercy*, a new ideological sense was added – the motif of protection and security in situations such as seduction from evil. The hanging lace from the clothes of the Virgin Mary is probably a girdle which was around her waist, but the contemporary state of preservation prevents us from drawing definitive conclusions. This legend, originating in Italy around the year 1300, mentions the event when the Virgin Mary appeared personally to the Apostle Thomas, dropping her girdle to him¹⁰ and was also reported in *Legenda Aurea*.¹¹ Searching for defense during the temptation is the main idea of the prayer *Sub tuum praesidium*, one of the oldest Marian prayers. Some scholars date this prayer to the 3rd century, others to the 4th or 5th. Latin European texts of this prayer were also sung as an antiphon. The oldest examples of such an antiphons come from the 9th century (e.g. antiphonary from Compiègne).¹² Within the text of this prayer an appeal for protection against “all dangers” is accentuated: “We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers. O glorious and blessed Virgin”. Danger is embodied in the devil standing in the frame of the wall triptych. Mantle and lace of the Virgin Mary serve as the shelter. This manner of depicting the Virgin of Mercy is unique to the region of Central Europe. From the devil comes a scroll with the text in latin *maiuscule*. In recent literature we find only one transcription of this phylactery: *HANC ANIMAM VESTO QUAM PLE...ME*.¹³

Based on current research of medieval murals in All Saints Church in Ludrová–Kút, I disagree with this transcription. In the Cistercian abbey of Koprzywnica (Lesser Poland) a wall painting of the Virgin of Mercy is preserved, dated to the period around the mid-14th century.¹⁴ Under the figure of the Virgin Mary, a monk is depicted lying on his deathbed. Behind his head stands an angel and behind his feet stands the devil. Both hold a written scroll containing the texts: *hic si peccavit nece pressus open rogavit* and: *hanc animam posco quam plenam crimine nosco*. These texts can be found in the *Miraculum beatae Mariae* from Eton College (MS 34, fol. 88r-v, copied 1443).¹⁵ In the medieval wall paintings of Upper Hungary (today's Slovakia), we find this text in the illustrated pictorial scenes *ars moriendi* in Poniky (fig. 6) and Želiezovce.¹⁶ In all of these examples a dying man (monk or layman) is situated close to the scenes of the Virgin of Mercy and *Imago Pietatis*. Intercession of the Virgin Mary and mercy of *Man of Sorrows* were the main ideas of *ars moriendi*. In the Middle Ages contemplation on the good death (*meditatio mortis*) was widespread mainly in the monastic environment. All of the life of the human being



1 All Saints Church, Ludrová-Kút, Slovakia



2 All Saints Church in Ludrová-Kút, ground plan (drawing: K. Vandáková)



3 *Maiestas Domini - Deesis*, Ludrová-Kút, east part of presbytery vault, c. 1420-1430



4 Triptych in the main nave, northern wall, c. 1400



5 Triptych, detail



6 *Ars moriendi scene*, Poniky, Church of Saint Francis of Assisi, eastern wall of the nave, 1415

in the Middle Ages was seen as a preparation for death. Meditation about the art of the good death was widespread mainly in mendicants – Saint Bonaventure, Master Eckhart and Henry Suso, who wrote *Horologium Sapientiae* (c. 1334).¹⁷ An unusual and interesting aspect is that the young woman is standing alive in a triptych in All Saints Church in Ludrová – Kút; she is not shown in a lying position but rather fighting consciously with the devil. The lace, which she holds firmly, may symbolize the above mentioned prayer *Sub tuum praesidium*. Every soul can be saved from the temptations and dangers when she or he flees to the protection of Virgin Mary and prays to her. Through prayer, it was conceivable that not only the mother of Jesus heard the mortal's words but also the entire heavenly court, subject and obedient to her and from whom she received due honor.¹⁸ In the language of metaphor, care symbolizes wings, in which a bird – being a parent – protects its chicks. Evangelists and the biblical writers often referred to this metaphor. Man, writing about God's mercy, anthropomorphized and presented Him in a kind of theatre, in which the role of Mary *Mediatrix* is defined between the Judge, the Redeemer and believers. Such awareness has grown from the Franciscan spirit that drew God to people, showing clearly His "human" face.¹⁹ Based on the visions of Saint Brigitte of Sweden (1303-1373), *Revelationes coelestes*, the mantle of the Virgin Mary symbolizes mercy. She says: "My wide mantle is mercy, come therefore, my daughter, and hide under my mantle."²⁰ The Virgin of Mercy in medieval art is shown with or without the crown on her head. In Ludrová, the crown is put on Mary's head by two flying angels. Therefore, the Virgin Mary is shown here as *Regina Coeli*.

Virgin Mary as *Ecclesia*, *Sponsa Christi* and *Queen of Angels*

In a triangle shaped western part of the sanctuary vault is shown the *Coronation of the Virgin Mary* (fig. 7). Jesus Christ and his Mother are seated in the half-mandorla, which was painted in the shape of the letter "A". Jesus Christ is depicted placing the crown on the head of the Virgin Mary. The delicate bow of the head of the Virgin Mary in the direction to her Son is explained as a reflection of the *Song of Songs: Quae est ista, quae ascendit de deserto, deliciis affluens, innixa super dilectum suum?* (Song 8, 5).²¹ The Mother of God is illustrated in an idealistic manner with long, curved hair and a young face. These external signs of the Virgin Mary accented and symbolized her virginity and humility. Here, the Virgin Mary also represents the young, newly-established church, the bride of Christ. The idea of the Virgin Mary as a second Eve and the Church developed in the teachings of the early church fathers – Irenaeus of Lyons, Justin, and Ephrem the Syrian.²² The crown on the head of Mary acts not as an insignia of power, but as a crown of glory, which is attached by Christ on the head of his bride - *Sponsa Mistica*. Here, Mary symbolizes the Church (*Ecclesia*) and the bride of Christ, who uses the sacraments and lives from her Creator, identified with the community of the faithful as is stated in the *Song of Songs*.²³ The quotation "veni de libano coronaberis", originating from the *Song of Songs*, is written on the scroll, which is held by a female under the Coronation scene (fig. 8). On the phylactery the words "sponsa mea," which are integral parts of Old Testament texts, are missing. This is probably because the receiver of these words, the Virgin Mary, is depicted above the woman holding the phylactery. The Virgin Mary is also the symbol of the triumphant church, which is glorified in heavenly Jerusalem. An integral part of the Coronation scene are eight angels – two of them holding the half-mandorla from both sides; the remaining six are playing different musical instruments. The presence of these angels highlights the place of the coronation, in heaven – outside of time and space. Angels surrounding the Coronation scene can be found around the year 1300 in Northern France, Italy and in the Rhineland.²⁴

Marian typology

The figures of six prophets in the triangular shaped lower parts of the presbytery vault are holding in their hands scrolls with Latin texts in gothic minuscule. Under the Coronation scene is the previously mentioned female person with the text "veni de libano coronaberis" and on the other side of the western part of the presbytery vault a prophet is depicted with the text: "rore mades vellus sed permanent arida tell(us)" (fig. 9). It is a text from

the book of Judges. In typological literature, like *Speculum humanae salvationis*, *Biblia pauperum* or *Concordantiae caritatis*, it is the scene of the *Fleece of Gedeon* depicted on the same folio together with the scene of the *Annunciation*. The prophet points with his finger horizontally in the direction of the first pictorial scene of the Christological cycle, the *Annunciation*. The Old Testament theme *Fleece of Gideon* is a prelude to the conception of Christ, which happened as a miracle and one that the human mind cannot comprehend. Pointing to the courage of Gideon also implies the courage of Mary who accepted the unexplained will of God; Gideon asked God for a miracle, Mary simply accepted His will. Dry soil symbolizes not only the sterility of a world without Christ before the Incarnation, but also the miraculously preserved virginity of Mary.²⁵ The remaining prophets hold in their hands the texts: “egrediet(ur) v(ir)ga dei radice yesse e(t) flos eius” (fig. 10), “ecce virgo concipiet et pariet filium” (fig. 11). Based on archival photos we know that the prophets in the southern part of the presbytery vault held in their hands scrolls with texts: “tota pulchra es et macula non est in te” and “beatam me dicent omnes generationes”. Since in 1905-1906 this part of the presbytery vault was newly painted by Jozef Hanula, it can be said that these texts are not medieval ones. The words “beatam me dicent omnes generationes” were spoken by the Virgin Mary during the visitation of Elizabeth. Therefore it should work as an accompanying text to this pictorial scene in the Christological cycle. The prophets in the triangle shaped lower parts of the sanctuary vault explain the meaning of the Coronation scene and also the scenes from the childhood of Christ in which the Virgin Mary takes part.

The Virgin Mary in the Christological cycle

The role of the Virgin Mary in Jesus’s childhood is accentuated in the upper register on the northern and eastern walls of the presbytery.²⁶ *The Annunciation* is the first scene in the Christological cycle in Ludrová-Kút (fig. 12). The composition is simple – on the right is situated a sitting figure of the Virgin Mary, on the left side the kneeling archangel Gabriel. The discussion between the archangel and the Virgin Mary is underscored not only by the gestures and poses, but also by a written text in gothic minuscule on the two scrolls. In front of Mary an open book is depicted featuring the text of prophet Isaiah which mentions the coming of Christ: “Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.” (Iz 7, 14).²⁷ The book does not lie on a reading desk, but hovers in the air.

In the *Annunciation* scene in Ludrová the Virgin Mary is depicted in the moment of meditation, praying and reading the Old Testament, highlighted by the opened book. Depicting the Virgin Mary in prayer during the arrival of the Archangel Gabriel was common mainly in the area of Italy and transalpine regions.²⁸ In these cases, the text of the prophet Isaiah (Iz 7, 14) or the answer of the Virgin Mary to the archangel is illustrated in the open book. In the scene in Ludrová we can observe the absence of the deeper symbolical contents such as depicting objects that symbolize the virtues of the Virgin Mary - a lilly, a vase or a large scale of different flowers. There are no foregrounds, illusive architecture or additional objects. This is one of the characteristic formal signs of the wall paintings in the presbytery in Ludrová-Kút. The same can be found in the manuscripts, where the creation of the illuminator was limited by space.

The second pictorial scene of Christological cycle is the *Visitation* that is not divided by a frame from the previous one (fig. 13). In the canonical Gospels, only Luke mentioned this event (Lk 1, 39-56). According to this written source, the Virgin Mary came into the house of Elisabeth and Zacharias. However, artistic depictions predominantly show a scene in which Mary and Elisabeth meet and greet each other outdoors.²⁹ In Christian art, the figures of the Virgin Mary and Elisabeth were distinguished by different clothes – Mary is depicted as the young woman without a kerchief, and Elisabeth wears a shawl, which highlights her age. In the iconography, the gesture of greeting dominates – the hands of the Virgin Mary are placed on the hands of Elisabeth or *vice versa*. Not only is the meeting of the two women important in this event, but also the encounter of the non-conceived children – John the Baptist and Jesus.



7 Coronation of the Virgin Mary, Ludrová-Kút, western part of the presbytery vault, c. 1420-1430



8 A female prophet with a scroll that reads "veni de libano coronaberis", Ludrová-Kút, c. 1420-1430



9 A prophet with a scroll that reads "rore mades vellus sed permanent arida tell(us)", Ludrová-Kút, c. 1420-1430



10 A prophet with a scroll that reads "egrediet(ur) v(ir)ga dei radice yesse e(t) flos eius", Ludrová-Kút, c. 1420-1430



11 A prophet with a text that reads "ecce virgo concipiet et pariet filium", Ludrová-Kút, c. 1420-1430



12 Annunciation, Ludrová-Kút, northern wall of the presbytery, first register, c. 1420-1430



13 *Visitation*, Ludrová-Kút, northern wall of the presbytery, first register, c. 1420-1430



14 *Adoration of the Child*, Ludrová-Kút, northern wall of the presbytery, first register, c. 1420-1430



15 *Way to Calvary*, Ludrová-Kút, northern wall of presbytery, third register, c. 1420-1430



16 *Crucifixion*, Ludrová-Kút, northern wall of the presbytery, third register, c. 1420-1430, photo was taken after the latest restoration work



17 *Descent from the Cross*, Ludrová-Kút, eastern wall of the presbytery, third register, c. 1420-1430



18 *Pentecost*, Ludrová-Kút, southern wall of the presbytery, third register, c. 1420-1430

* All photos are by Š. Valášek

The Adoration of the Child is one of the innovative pictorial scenes of the Christological cycle in Ludrová (fig. 14). The iconographical type of the kneeling Virgin Mary over the Christ child appeared in western art at the beginning of the 14th century. The oldest examples arose probably under the strong influence of *Meditationes Vitae Christi* of Pseudo-Bonaventure.³⁰ It should be stressed that in the oldest example of this iconographical type, the Virgin Mary is kneeling close to the manger in which lies the Child Jesus wrapped in cloth. Examples of the naked Jesus surrounded by rays of light can be found in later art – from the end of the 14th century and in the first half of the 15th century.³¹ Here, the visions of Saint Brigitte of Sweden (*Revelationes coelestes*) are fundamental. The Dominican monk from Strassburg, Ludolph of Saxony, also wrote about the birth of Jesus Christ in his work *Vita Jesu Christi*, dated to the year 1340. He was inspired by earlier theologians – Bernard of Clairvaux, John de Caulibus (*Meditationes*) and Jacob de Voragine (*Legenda aurea*).³² The Adoration of the Child in Ludrová's Christological cycle is typical in the way it lacks the concretization of the place where the birth occurred. The figures are situated in a neutral space. Sermons from Gniezno, dated to the beginning of the 15th century, mentioned some details of the place where Jesus was born – the Holy family found the shelter under the roof between two houses, where the animals were bred.³³ In my opinion, iconography of the Adoration in Ludrová is a symbiosis of the older tradition (*Meditationes vitae Christi*) and the new one (*Revelationes coelestes*). I specifically refer to the way in which Joseph is depicted - he is turned away from the Virgin Mary and Child that we found in *Meditationes vitae Christi*,³⁴ and to the depiction of the naked Jesus with the rays of light and adoring the Virgin Mary rooted in the vision of Saint Brigitte of Sweden.

In the Christological cycle we can observe almost complete visualization of the seven sorrows of the Virgin Mary. Except for the Meeting of Mary and Jesus on the way to Calvary, every sorrow of Virgin Mary is pictured – *The Prophecy of Simeon, Flight into Egypt, the Loss of the Child Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, the Piercing of Jesus' Side and His Descent from the Cross* and finally *the Entombment*. In Ludrová-Kút's Christological cycle, we see that in the scene of the *Way to Calvary* the Virgin Mary is not depicted. In many other examples of this pictorial scene, which were produced around the year 1400, the presence of Mary is obvious. One such example are the painted tables of the Rajhrad altar (Moravia).³⁵ Here, the Virgin Mary, together with the other holy woman and Saint John, is situated in the left side of the composition, in front of the gate to the city of Jerusalem. For both art works, from Ludrová and Rajhrad, a hierarchical composition is typical – an unnatural proportion or scale depicts the relative importance of the figures in the scenes. We see this technique, for example, clearly in the case of the large scale figure of Jesus Christ in contrast to the small figure of the Simon of Cyrene (fig. 15). The words which Jesus addressed to the women from Jerusalem are depicted in gothic minuscule on the scroll: "Filiae Jerusalem nolite flere sup(er) me sed flete sup(er) filiis vestri" (Lk 23, 27-31).³⁶ The text on the scroll concerns mainly the sins the women from Jerusalem should weep over. The appeal is not addressed only to them, the historical persons, but also to believers who participate in the liturgy in parish church. The words "weep for yourselves" were accentuated mainly during Lent. The quotation from the gospel of Luke, which is depicted in the scene of the *Way to Calvary* in Ludrová-Kút, is also the text of the eighth antiphon sung during the morning prayer (*matutinum*) at the feast of *Mysteriorum Viae Crucis*. The above mentioned text appears also in the liturgy, and especially during Wednesday (fer. 4 Maj. Hebd.)³⁷ and Thursday of Holy Week (fer. 5 in Cena Dom.)³⁸

In the *Crucifixion* scene the Virgin Mary is depicted on the left side of the composition (fig. 16). The words, which Jesus addressed to his Mother and Saint John the Apostle, were explained by the Church Fathers. One of the oldest examples is found in the work of Saint Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who wrote that the description of the crucifixion written by the Evangelist John should be preferred over the rest of the canonical gospels because his was the only one which noted the words of Jesus Christ to His Mother.³⁹ Saint Brigitte of Sweden, in her work entitled *Revelationes coelestes*, wrote about the suffering of the Mother of God under the cross. According to her, Mary manifested consent to the suffering of Her Son already during the prophecy of Simeon in the Jerusalem temple. In this work Jesus Christ praised His Mother for Her obedience and absolute subordination to God's will: "[...] because my heart on the Cross rapid pain tore, your heart been wounded like the sharpest iron and you would be happy to let you break them, if that was to my will".⁴⁰ The words which Jesus Christ addressed to the Apostle

John- "Behold your mother!" - received a new meaning. Mary became a Mother of every believer and is also the actual and present Mother of the Church.⁴¹ Additionally, the words addressed by Jesus to His Mother and John the Apostle were explained by Rupert of Deutz as an act of the rise of the Virgin Mary's spiritual motherhood. This Benedictine theologian underscored the feeling of pain, which she experienced under the cross, as a suffering similar to that during childbirth. The point is that it was a spiritual birth – a realization of the true motherhood of Mary.⁴² One of the many mediums which popularized the words which Jesus Christ addressed to His Mother and Saint John the Apostle was, for example, a religious song in vernacular languages. For example, this phenomenon was documented by Old Polish religious songs, dating to the end of the 15th century.⁴³ The Virgin Mary not only sympathizes with Her Son, but she is also the *Mediatrix* between Him and the people. She intercedes with Him and thanks to that she assists the believers in fulfilling their prayers and intentions, which they address to God.⁴⁴

The motif *compassio Mariae* appears in the Ludrová Christological cycle in several narrative scenes such as the *Descent from the Cross* and the *Entombment*. In the first scene (fig. 17) the author of the mural achieved this thanks to the gestures of the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Apostle, who are situated in the left part of the composition. Directly under the cross, between the Virgin Mary and Saint John, is depicted Joseph of Arimathea. He holds the dead body of the Redeemer in his hands, which are covered in the white fabric or cloth. On the right side of the scene, the small figure of Nicodemus is standing on the ladder and he holds the left hand of Jesus Christ. Such a composition of the *Descent from the Cross* scene is derived from the Italian-byzantine tradition, which emerged and developed in the 10th and 11th centuries. The same can be seen in the motif of the gesture of the Virgin Mary. She holds the right hand of her Son and presses it to her cheek. The motif *compassio Mariae* was common in the art of Italy in the 13th and 14th centuries.⁴⁵ The same way of keeping Christ's body, his intensive curved shape and holding of Jesus's right hand by his Mother can be found in the so-called *Golden Panels* of Lüneburg (around 1431)⁴⁶, a retable from Pechüle in Brandenburg (the end of the 60-ies of the 14th century)⁴⁷ and also in *De spiegel der menscheliker behoudenisse* (early 15th Century, British Library, Add.Ms.11.575).⁴⁸ In descriptions of external, stylistic signs of the Ludrová wall paintings in the presbytery, we can use the words of Gerhard Schmidt, who described the Crucifixion scene in the Missal of Zbyněk Zajíc of Hasenburg:⁴⁹ "... neglect of the spatial dimension [...], a rich drapery system, and appreciable restraint when portraying dramatic scenes and strong emotions. Artists working in the Czech beautiful style adopted expressive gestures or chose to avoid them, pain and despair were thus transformed into quiet melancholy and a humble submission to God's will."⁵⁰ The above mentioned description of the typical signs of art influenced by the Beautiful Style are found in the scene of the *Descent from the Cross* in Ludrová. The Virgin Mary does not express her strong emotions but quietly keeps the hands of her Son and receives the will of God. The external signs, gestures and facial expressions, represent a deeper spiritual meaning. The gesture of the Virgin Mary and her facial expression in the analyzed scene from Ludrová signify not only her submission to God's will but also the unity with the passion of her Son. Saint Catherine of Siena wrote of Mary's active, conscious participation on the work of salvation. The Doctor of the Church wrote in letter number 30 that "the heart of Virgin Mary was so hot from the desire of salvation of mankind. The Mother of God consciously decided to lose her love to Son and she wanted to become a stairs to the cross. Her heart was injured by love to our redemption."⁵¹ At first glance we could say, that Saint John the Apostle is keeping his right hand in the gesture of melancholy, but that is not true. This gesture symbolizes a meditation, contemplation. The same gesture is typical of other iconographic themes. Therefore, in the *Pensive Christ* (or *Christ im Elend*), the gesture of contemplation had a concrete function – to foment believers to meditation over the passion of Christ and the salvation. Furthermore, I believe that the way in which Joseph of Arimathea holds Christ's dead body can be derived from liturgy. For example, when a priest holds the monstrance, he keeps it in his hands covered or wrapped in velum. This way of holding the Eucharist during the holy mass or holding Christ's dead body by Joseph of Arimathea exposes the holiness of the *corpus Christi*.

In summary, the interior decoration of All Saints Church in Ludrová-Kút, represents a complex and developed Marian iconography. The Virgin Mary is presented in many different roles and functions – her importance

as *Mediatrix* is accented in eschatological scenes on the presbytery vault and in the triptych. She is highlighted in the Coronation scene as *sponsa Christi* and in the *Pentecost* scene as *ecclesia* itself (fig. 18). The designer of the complex iconographical program in the presbytery was familiar with actual Marian theology and typological literature, which is confirmed through the prophets holding texts in their hands on the presbytery vault.

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- 2 F.F. RÓMER, *Régi falképek Magyarországon*, Budapest, Az Eggenberger-Féle Akadémiai Könyvker Edés, 1874.
- 3 D. RADOCSAY, *A középkori magyarországi falképei*, Budapest, 1954; D. RADOCSAY, *Wandgemälde in mittelalterlichen Ungarn*, Budapest, Corvina Verlag, 1977.
- 4 V. DVOŘÁKOVÁ-J. KRÁSA-K. STEJSKAL, *Stredoveká nástenná malba na Slovensku*, Bratislava, Odeon-Tatran, 1978.
- 5 K. BIATHOVÁ, *Maliarske prejavy stredovekého Liptova*, Bratislava, Tatran, 1983.
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„Zasmęconą Matkę swoją
 W trzecim słowie pocieszył ją,
 Miasto siebie Jana jej dał,
 Aby ją tam opatrzął.
 Nierówność, Chryste, przemieniał,
 Za krolaś jej rybitwa dał;
 Miecz boleści ją przenikał,
 Jak Symeon prorokował.

*Synom i dziewczkam przykład dał,
Gdy swej matki nie zapomniał,
By swą matkę, oćca czcili,
Zawždy jim dobrze czynili.“*

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Ikonografija Djevice Marije na srednjovjekovnim zidnim slikama crkve u Ludrovoj – Kúti u Slovačkoj

Ovaj rad analizira ulogu Djevice Marije u najvećem srednjovjekovnom kristološkom ciklusu u Slovačkoj, u crkvi Svih Svetih u Ludrovoj-Kúti (u srednjem vijeku u Gornjoj Ugarskoj), koje se datiraju u period od 1420. do 1430. Autor ovih fresaka je vrlo vjerojatno bio obrazovan u umjetničkom centru pod snažnim utjecajem češkog *Lijepog stila*. Dekoracija na zidu svetišta sadrži primjere marijanske ikonografije. Na svodu prezbiterija bile su naslikane eshatološke scene: *Sudnji dan (Deisi)* te *Krunidba Djevice Marije*. U dekoraciji svoda, Djevica Marija je prikazana kao *Mediatrix* i kao *Ecclesia*, dok u narativnim scenama iz života Isusa Krista ona aktivno sudjeluje u djelu spasenja. U ovom radu su prikazane neke od scena u narativnom ciklusu gdje Djevica Marija igra značajnu ulogu: Navještenje, Pohođenje, Klanjanje Djetetu, Obrezivanje Kristovo, Klanjanje Mudraca, Bijeg u Egipat, Prikazanje u Hramu, Pronalazak u Hramu, Raspeće, Skidanje s Križa, Sahranjivanje, Uznesenje na Nebo i Duhovi. Gotovo u svakom slikovnom prikazu prisutni su ilustrirani svitci s biblijskim tekstom ispisani u gotičkoj minuskuli, što predstavlja iznimni primjer povezanosti slike i teksta. U brodu na sjevernom zidu se nalazi figurativni triptih koji sadrži prikaz *Bogorodice zaštitnice*. Ovaj se sloj fresaka datira u kraj 14. stoljeća. Autor triptiha je bio jedan od mnogih putujućih umjetnika u središnjoj Europi, vjerojatno obučen u talijanskom umjetničkom okruženju. Na ovoj fresci je zanimljiv prikaz žene koja se čvrsto drži Marijinog pojasa u želji da izbjegne đavla koji joj prijete. Ova je freska vizualizacija molitve *Sub tuum praesidium* - najstarije sačuvane himne Blaženoj Djevici Mariji kao *Bogorodici*.

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