Kristina Potuckova

VIRGINITY, SANCTITY, AND IMAGE:

THE *VIRGINES CAPITALES* IN UPPER HUNGARIAN

ALTARPIECES OF THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH

CENTURIES

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

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May 2007

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Kristina Potuckova

(Slovakia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

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Chair, Examination Committee

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Thesis Supervisor

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I, the undersigned, **Kristina Potuckova**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 25 May 2007

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Signature

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Gotika   **Buran, Dušan, ed. *Gotika*. Bratislava: Slovenská Národná Galéria, 2003.**

LCI   **Kirschbaum, Engelbert, ed. *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie, 8 Vols.* Rome: Herder, 1994.**

KME   **Keresztény Múzeum Esztergom, Hungary**

MNG   **Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Budapest, Hungary**

SNG   **Slovenská Národná Galéria Bratislava, Slovakia**

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Burnt with torches, flogged, pieces of flesh torn out – women's bodies tormented in ingenious ways appear on many an altarpiece from the fifteenth and sixteenth century Upper Hungary. With a placid smile, these women saints bear their fate of triumph and victory of Christian faith. Sometimes they just quietly stand in the center of the panel alloted to them: St. Catherine of Alexandria with a wheel at her feet or cradling it in her hand, St. Margaret of Antioch looming over the dragon she defeated, St. Barbara with her tower, and St. Dorothea holding up a basket full of flowers or fruit.

Four early Christian virgin martyrs, grouped together under the term *virgines capitales*, testify to the truth of Christian faith. Centuries away yet present they at first seem a bit of an anachronism in the town and village churches of the northern part of the medieval kingdom of Hungary. Christians who could have viewed the altarpieces during the mass could hardly expect to suffer martyrdom for their faith. Rather, good deeds and fervent devotion would be commended to them as models for a good Christian life. At the first sight, their other main identifying attribute, that of virginity, also seems to have had little to do with the busy lives of lay women of these communities, presumably comfortable in their roles as mothers and wives. Nonetheless, the Capital Virgins and other virgin martyrs do pose with some degree of self-confidence on the late medieval altarpieces. They invoked the two interrelated questions at the heart of this study: what could virgin martyrs have stood for in these communities and how can the visual material help us to understand their roles?

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The present study is divided into two parts. In the first chapter, the roles virginity in its manifold incarnations could have played in the lives of late medieval women and how then the virgin martyr saints could have been related to by these women. I shall briefly discuss the fluid nature of the concept of virginity will be discussed and its implications on the role of virginity in women's lives. The potential of virgin martyrs to perform the function of exemplary role models for women creates a basis for the interpretation of visual material in the second chapter. In the second chapter, the focus of this study shifts towards the visual representation. The iconographic analysis of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century altarpieces from Upper Hungary facilitates a basis for identification and interpretation of patterns or stereotypes, i.e. specific combinations in which the Capital Virgins regularly occur. The assumption that such patterns can contribute to our understanding of the world of the beholder of an image underlies this interpretation. The repetitive occurrence of certain models reinforces the model of behavior presented by these saints.

The concept, or rather the concepts, of virginity have been subject to much scholarly discussion in the recent years. Originally an area largely developed within the women's studies, the scholarly discourse on virginity has now moved towards the gender studies in order to provide a more complex understanding of this concept.[1] This tendency resulted in more vigorous discussion of virginity encompassing its constructs for both females *and* males, including its ability to transgress the gender boundaries and create a category of its own. Several scholars working in the field of "virginity studies" have largely contributed to our understanding of this concept and its place and representations

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[1] For a brief overview of the development of "virginity studies" see Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans, and Sarah Salih, "Introduction," in *Medieval Virginities* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 1-13.

in medieval culture. The inherent complexity of virginity has been studied from a number of different angles – each has produced its share to the deeper understanding of not only what virginity is (or can be) but also what it can signify. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne's work has been instrumental in elucidating some of the issues concerning the interplay between virginity and female literacies in England.[2] Two collections of essays, *Medieval Virginities*[3] and *Gender and Holiness,*[4] address a wide range of issues from virginity in legal documents to its role in male and female sainthood. The definitions of virginity are explored in Kelly's *Performing virginity.*[5] The virgin martyrs, their cult and hagiography, have become the subjects of several compelling studies and collections[6].

The primary source material consists of altarpieces and fragments of altarpieces from Upper Hungary (now Slovakia) dated to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For a complete list of altarpieces used in this study the reader can consult the catalogue in Appendix 2. Libuše Cidlinská's catalogue of gothic winged altarpieces from Slovakia[7] served as a point of departure for the present catalogue. Dénes Radocsay's work on

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[2] Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture ca. 1150-1300: Virginity and Its Authorizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) (henceforth: Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives*); Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Glyn Sheridan Burgess, *Virgin Lives and Holy Deaths: Two Exemplary Biographies for Anglo-Norman Women* (London: Dent, 1996) (henceforth: Wogan-Browne – Burgess, *Virgin Lives*); Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "Virginity Now and Then: A Response to Medieval Virginities," in *Medieval Virginities*, ed. Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans, and Sarah Salih (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 234-253.

[3] Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans, and Sarah Salih, eds., *Medieval Virginities* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003).

[4] Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih, eds., *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[5] Kathleen Coyne Kelly, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2000) (henceforth: Kelly, *Virginity*).

[6] Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as a Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991) (henceforth: Cazelles, *The Lady as a* Saint); Jacqueline Jenkins and Katherine J. Lewis, eds., *St Katherine of Alexandria: Texts and Contexts in Western Medieval Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003); Karen Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997) (henceforth: Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*).

[7] Libuše Cidlinská, *Gotické krídlové oltáre na Slovensku* (Gothic winged altarpieces in Slovakia) (Bratislava: Tatran, 1989). (henceforth: Cidlinská, *Oltáre*).

medieval panel painting from Hungary remains a standard reference book and so does Antong Glatz catalogue of Gothic art in the Slovak National Gallery.[8] Results of much of the recent research on Slovak gothic art are present in *Gotika* (Gothic art), an exhibition catalogue, edited by Dušan Buran.[9] Concerning the iconography of medieval art in Slovakia, Ivan Gerát's works are an excellent point of departure.[10] The REALonline Database of the Austrian Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit has been most helpful as the source for images.[11]

The territory of medieval Upper Hungary roughly corresponds to the present-day Slovakia. My decision to limit the sources to this region was directed by the desire to create a relatively coherent and manageable body of material. All place names used in the text have a Hungarian alternative, and in some cases also a German one. Slovak place names will be used throughout the text. The Hungarian and German alternatives can be found in Appendix 1.

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[8] Dénes Radocsay, *A közepkori Magyarország táblaképei* (Panel painting from medieval Hungary) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1955) (henceforth: Radocsay, *Táblaképei*); Anton Glatz, *Gotické umenie v zbierkach Slovenskej národnej galérie* (Gothic art in the collections of Slovak national gallery) (Bratislava: Tatran, 1983) (henceforth: Glatz, *Gotické umenie*). Gyöngyi Török's guide to the collection of the Hungarian National Gallery has been of much help too: Gyöngyi Török, *Gotische Tafelbilder und Holzskulpturen in Ungarn – Führer durch die Dauerausstellung der Ungarischen Nationalgalerie* (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Galériá, 2005). (henceforth: Török, *Gotische Tafelbilder*).

[9] Dušan Buran, ed., *Gotika* (Gothic art) (Bratislava: Slovenská Národná Galéria, 2003). The catalogue entries of the volume are referred to by the abbreviation *Gotika*.

[10] I found Gerát's article on stereotypes in medieval pictorial hagiographic cycles especially inspiring. Ivan Gerát, "Konvencie obrazovej hagiografie. Kľúčové scény hagiografických obrazových cyklov: otázka stereotypov" (Conventions of pictorial hagiography. The key scenes of hagiographic pictorial cycles: the question of stereotypes), in *Problémy dejín výtvarného umenia Slovenska* (Problems of the history of visual arts in Slovakia) (Bratislava: Veda, 2002), 79-119 (henceforth: Gerát, "Konvencie"). On methodology of comparison of late Gothic painting see Ivan Gerát, "O porovnávaní neskorogotickej maľby," in *Pocta Vladimírovi Wagnerovi: Zborník štúdií k otázkam interpretácie stredoeurópskeho umenia 2* (In honor of Vladimír Wagner: A collection of studies on interpretation of Central European art 2), ed. Štefan Oriško (Bratislava: Filozofická fakult Univerzity Komenského, 2004), 79-94. Ivan Gerát, *Stredoveké obrazové témy na Slovensku: osoby a príbehy* (Medieval pictorial themes in Slovakia: figures and stories) (Bratislava: Veda, 2001) provides a comprehensive survey of iconographic themes present in Slovak medieval art. (henceforth: Gerát, *Obrazové témy*).

[11] REALonline Datenbank, www.imareal.oeawx.ac.at/realonline, Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit (Last accessed May, 10 2007).

CHAPTER I:

THE VIRGIN'S VOCATION:
FEMALE VIRGIN MARTYRS AND WOMEN'S LIVES

In an attempt to disentangle the iconography of late medieval panel paintings from Upper Hungary, one frequently comes across a group of four female saints, among the most popular in Central Europe. The *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* calls St. Catherine of Alexandria, St. Margaret of Antioch, St. Barbara and St. Dorothea of Caesarea the *virgines capitales,* or the Capital Virgins. This term is justified through the numerous visual representations that depict these four saints as a distinct group. It would be misleading, however, to offer just this simple terminological explanation. Although the four saints indeed frequently come together as a group, *virgines capitales* are probably a later development created through adding St. Dorothea to the already existing group composed of Catherine, Margaret and Barbara, or *die heilige Madl'n.[12]* Other saints regularly appear on the side of one (or more) of the Capital Virgins, but most frequently these saints also belong to the group of the female virgin martyrs.[13]

In terms of hagiography, the term virgin martyr frequently denotes a group of female saints. Whereas such a categorization is supported by the sheer number of the female saints that fulfill the requirements for this category, it has been pointed out that the term can also refer to male saints whose *vitae* share the same preoccupation with the two defining characteristics of this group of saints: virginity[14] and martyrdom.[15] The

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[12] For the terms *virgines capitales* and *die heilige Madl'n* see LCI, Volume 8, 573.

[13] St. Agatha, St. Agnes, St. Apollonia, St. Lucy, St. Ursula, etc. For further discussion see Chapter II.

[14] It should be noted that the virginity discussed her is not the same as the virginity of the Virgin Mary, which has its own problems and interpretations.

[15] Samantha J. E. Riches, "St George as a Male Virgin Martyr," in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. by Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (London: Routledge,

nuances of gender in this group ought to be acknowledged, however, for the purpose of this analysis I shall focus on the female virgin martyrs. Even though the *vitae* of these saints have individual features that set them apart from each other in more or less distinct ways, the basic structure of the narrative is the same.[16] This structure has been outlined a number of times and I refer to the summary I consider most comprehensive, formulated by Samantha J. E. Riches:

> The written legends of those individuals routinely described as virgin martyrs tend to indicate that several factors are relatively constant. First, there is an explicit definition of the woman as a beautiful, virginal creature, a trope which seems to encode ideas of nobility – moral, as well as social – and innocence. She is also defined as a Christian, in opposition to a non-Christian environment. This dramatic encounter encodes opposition to the martyr's religious beliefs in a human antagonist, who sometimes appears in the guise of an explicitly heathen father (as in the case of St. Barbara), and/or as a heathen ruler who threatens the saint's virginity, often through an offer of marriage. The saint invariably refuses to co-operate, a decision which clearly brings together ideas of sexual purity and Christianity, in opposition to heathen belief and a lack of chastity. This opposition is encoded in the trial before the heathen ruler, a process which often includes the threat of a sexual assault. The trial culminates in a litany of physical tortures; often graphically described…The virgin martyr patiently endures her suffering, and is ultimately executed by beheading. The martyr's soul is then often described being received into heaven.[17]
>
> The hagiographic legends of the four *virgines capitales* follow the pattern Riches

outlined but each female virgin martyr of the group acquired a story of her own.

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[16] The legends also influenced each other. Occasionally, some legends became conflated or borrowed some essential events from each other. For example, St. Margaret of Antioch and St. Marina share practically the same *vita* and are often regarded as the same saint, but there were differences in the development of their cult in the Western church (St. Margaret) and the Eastern church (St. Marina). On this development see Wendy R. Larson, "The Role of Patronage and Audience in the cults of Sts Margaret and Marina of Antioch," in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (London: Routledge, 2002), 23-35. To make the issue even more interesting, there is also a second St. Margaret (or Pelagius) and a second Marina as well. Sometimes, the *vita* of one saint was re-used for a different saint. The *vita* of St. Reine, venerated in Alise-Ste-Reine in Burgundy, virtually copies the *vita* of St. Margaret of Antioch, including the name of her persecutor, Olibrius. McInerney, *Eloquent Virgins,* 2-3.

[17] Riches, "St George," 65-67.

2002), 65-67. (henceforth: Riches, "St George"). Riches argues for blurring the boundaries of this hagiographic category.

Familiarity with the narrative specific to each virgin martyr is indispensable not only for the examination of the various accounts of each virgin's tale, but also for the study of their visual representations inspired by these accounts. Therefore it is necessary to introduce a brief (or as brief as possible) summary of the lives of each Capital Virgin.[18]

The life of St. Catherine of Alexandria is probably the most elaborate and eventful of the four. Catherine, the daughter of the king Costus, was reputed for beautiful but also uncommonly well educated in all liberal arts. After the death of Costus she became the queen and her mother and counselors entreated her to marry, which she was only willing to do if they found a husband to her liking. Describing the imaginary spouse, she listed such qualities that all were persuaded such a man did not exist. She, however, found her ideal husband in Christ after the hermit Adrian, dispatched by Virgin Mary herself, had converted her to Christianity. Catherine was then married to Christ in the presence of the Virgin and retained a ring as the sign of this marriage (this part of the legend is referred to as the mystical marriage of St. Catherine). Upon her return to Alexandria she heard that the emperor Maxentius was persecuting Christians trying to force them to sacrifice to pagan idols. She reproached the emperor Maxentius for worshipping pagan idols. Maxentius was impressed by her beauty and wisdom and since he was not capable of overturning her arguments, he sent for the fifty best philosophers to dispute with her.[19] Catherine won the debate and the philosophers were converted to Christianity. Enraged

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[18] These summaries are based on the versions of the legends as they are presented in the Golden Legend and translated by William Granger Ryan: Jacobus Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, Vol. 1. and 2., tr. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) (henceforth: Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*). All references to the *Golden Legend*'s version of the lives of St. Catherine and St. Margaret are made to this edition, unless otherwise indicated (St. Catherine – Vol. 2., 334-341; St. Margaret – Vol 1., 368-370).

[19] St. Catherine's exceptional erudition and the dispute with the philosophers is already recorded in the earliest known text of the legend (c. 1000) in the *Menologion* of Basil II. Bruce A. Beatie, "Saint Katharine

Maxentius promptly ordered the philosophers to be burnt. She was subsequently imprisoned, where an angel fed her and Christ appeared to her. Maxentius's wife, the empress Faustina, visited her in prison and was likewise converted to Christianity together with a soldier Porphyrius. Still unyielding, an cruel torture device was prepared to put her to death: four wheels studded with saws and nails, each pair revolving in the opposite direction. Responding to St. Catherine's prayer, an angel destroyed the wheel and several thousand pagans were killed. Faustina, watching the scene, rebuked the emperor for his cruelty and refused to sacrifice to the idols. Maxentius responded by giving the order to have her breasts torn off (with iron spikes) and be beheaded. Faustina willingly suffered martyrdom and her body was buried by Porphyrius. When Porphyrius and his soldiers declared their Christian faith, maddened Maxentius ordered them to be beheaded as well. Beheading also awaited Catherine and she died after her prayer for the benefit of her future devotees had been heard. Miraculously, milk spilled out of the wound. Her body was then carried by angels to Mount Sinai.[20]

St. Margaret of Antioch, a daughter of the pagan Theodosius, was brought up by her nurse, who introduced her to the Christian religion. As she herded the sheep of her nurse, prefect Olibrius noticed her and was taken by the beauty of the girl. Prompted by desires of the flesh he summoned Margaret, only to be disappointed in her adherence to Christianity. Olibrius put her into prison and next day called upon Margaret to worship the pagan gods. She refused and a series of tortures and imprisonment ensued. She was beaten with rods and lacerated with iron rakes. She endured all patiently, unwavering in

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of Alexandria: Traditional Themes and the Development of a Medieval German Hagiographic Narrative," *Speculum* 52 (1977): 788-789.

[20] Jacobus Jacobus de Voragine also mentions that a relic of St. Catherine was acquired by a monk from Rouen. For Rouen as a cult place see Christine Walsh, "The Role of the Normans in the Development of

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her faith. In prison again Margaret prayed to the Lord to see her enemy and a dragon appeared but Margaret made the sign of the cross and the dragon vanished.[21] The devil then took upon the form of a man but Margaret recognized him and pushed him to the ground and, having stepped on his neck, forced him to disclose to her why he tempted Christians. Margaret's tortures continued the following day: persistent in her faith and bearing the pain, she was burned with torches and put in a tub of water (so as to increase the pain by varying it). The earth shook, the virgin came out unscathed and a great number of people were converted to Christianity (and therefore sentenced to death). Olibrius then ordered her to be beheaded – however, before the order was executed, she prayed for her persecutors and for all who would invoke her, especially for women who did so in childbirth so that they would delivered with a healthy child. A voice from heaven affirmed the fulfilling of her prayers and Margaret was beheaded.

In the case of virgin Barbara[22] the villain figure was her pagan father Dioscuros. He put his daughter into a tower. Stubbornly rejecting all marriage proposals, Barbara, a Christian convert, ordered a third window to be built in the tower (as a symbol of the trinity), and destroyed the pagan idols left in the tower by her father. When Dioscuros returned from his journeys, he discovered the third window and the destroyed idols and learnt about her conversion. Instigated by his anger, he intended to kill Barbara

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the cult of St Katherine," in *St Katherine of Alexandria: texts and contexts in Western medieval Europe*, ed. Jacqueline Jenkins and Katherine J. Lewis (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 19-36.

[21] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, Vol. 1., 369.

[22] The original Jacobus de Voragine's collection (and Granger Ryan's translation) does not include St. Barbara and St. Dorothea. These are included in Jacobus Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea, vulgo historia lombardica dicta*, ed. Th. Graesse (Breslau: Koebner, 1890; St. Barbara – 898-902, St. Dorothea - 910-912). Lives of Dorothea and Barbara are available in English on Internet Medieval Sourcebook, based on an older English translation of William Caxton (Barbara: Vol. 6; Dorothea: Vol. 7). William Caxton, tr., *The Golden Legend (Aurea Legenda) Compiled by Jacobus Jacobus de Voragine, 1275, Englished by William Caxton, 1483,* www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/goldenlegend/, Medieval Sourcebook, Fordham University Center for Medieval Studies (Last accessed January, 16, 2007).

but she miraculously escaped. Arriving at a mountain she hid in a cave. Two shepherds witnessed this incident and when Dioscuros appeared one of the shepherds betrayed her (his sheep turned into locusts). Barbara's father delivered her to a judge, who ordered torture (stripping, scourging, and burning with torches among others), eventually her breasts were cut off and she was beheaded on a mountain by her father.

St. Dorothea came from a Christian family that fled from Rome during persecutions of Christians and settled in Caesarea. The imperial official Fabricius, infatuated by Dorothea's beauty, proposed to her but the maiden rejected him, naming Jesus Christ as her spouse. On Fabricius's orders she was put into a barrel of hot oil, but this did not harm her. Upon seeing this, many pagans converted. She was imprisoned for nine days without food or drink, but she reappeared unharmed. Fabricius attempted to impel her to worship pagan idols but angels cast the idols down (and many pagans were converted again). More torture followed: hot iron, scourging. She was put back to prison but was miraculously healed.[23] She restored her two sisters to Christian faith after these had discarded it out of fear. Christians again, they were promptly thrown into fire. Dorothea's tortures resumed and she was eventually beheaded. Before she was beheaded, the scribe Theophilus scorned her saying she should send him some roses and apples gathered in the garden of her spouse. Dorothea prayed on the behalf of those who would worship her. Just before her beheading a child appeared bearing a basket of apples and roses (even though it was winter) and took it to Theophilus, who was consequently converted and also received the crown of martyrdom.

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[23] This is a common enough part of the virgin martyr stories. The body of the virgin is repeatedly restored to it`s unspoiled state.

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These summaries are drawn from the wide-spread *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine. The presence of this work in different editions is also attested in medieval Hungary. [24] In many a case, art historians trace the textual reference to a particular scene or detail in a panel painting or fresco back to Jacobus de Voragine's collection. However, the reader should be aware that there are a high number of versions of the legends in both vernacular and Latin. These versions might differ in details or in the episodes included in the narrative (or selection between alternative accounts or interpretations). Each version is a legend in its own right since even translations show often remarkable processes of selection, emphasis or suppression of certain motifs or episodes. Such differences might be helpful in revealing what the author of the particular legend chose to promote.

The episode of St. Margaret's fight with the dragon comes to mind immediately as an example of two alternative accounts for the same episode. Jacobus de Voragine prefers to see the fight as a relatively unproblematic encounter between a saint and a devil in the form of the dragon that is won entirely through the power of the cross.[25] Nevertheless, he acknowledges the existence of an alternative account, retells it, but proceeds to call it 'apocryphal':

> Or, as we read elsewhere, the dragon opened its maw over her head, put out its tongue under her feet, and swallowed her in one gulp. But when it was trying to digest her, she shielded herself with the sign of the cross, and by the power of the cross the dragon burst open and the virgin emerged unscathed. What is said her, however, about the beast swallowing the

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[24] For the content of extant manuscripts in Slovakia and of Slovak provenance see the following titles: Július Sopko, *Kódexy a neúplne zachované rukopisy v slovenských knižniciach* (Codices and fragmentary extant manuscripts in Slovak libraries) (Martin: Matica slovenská, 1986); Július Sopko, *Stredoveké latinské kódexy slovenskej proveniencie v Maďarsku a Rumunsku* (Medieval Latin codices of Slovak provenance in Hungary and Romania) (Martin: Matica slovenská, 1982). For an overview of hagiography in Hungary, including the *Golden Legend*, see Gábor Klaniczay and Edit Madas, "La Hongrie," in *Hagiographies II.*, ed. Guy Philippart (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), 103-160.

[25] "There [in jail] she prayed to the Lord to let her see the enemy who was fighting her, and a hideous dragon appeared, but when the beast came at her to devour her, she made the sign of the cross and it vanished." Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, Vol. 1., 369.

maiden and bursting asunder is considered apocryphal and not to be taken seriously.[26]

This 'apocryphal' fight with the dragon[27] nevertheless effectively stirred up the imagination of medieval artists. As the most distinctive feature of St. Margaret's legend, the figure of the dragon became the attribute of the saint, taking various shapes ranging from downright devilish to pet dog-like. The episode was frequently depicted and in many a case the preference was given to the more picturesque version of the story with the saint emerging from the dragon's mouth or belly.

The hagiographic texts of female virgin martyrs' lives have received considerable scholarly attention. The past two decades of research have turned towards issues ranging from the capability of these saints to act as empowering models for female behavior to the tortured female bodies in the narratives, as well as to the way the saints' virginity is constructed and treated. In order to set the stage for an informed discussion of virginity in the lives of saints as well as in the lives of female recipients of their cult some of the observations regarding the power-, body-, and martyrdom-related issues in the legends ought to be mentioned.

The commonplace notion that the legends of the saints aim at emphasizing the likeness between the life and passion of the saint (in this case a virgin martyr) and Christ, the *imitatio Christi*, needs to be mentioned in this context. Especially the passion of the

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[26] Ibid.

[27] McInerney draws attention to this scene as one that could induce certain anxiety since the feat St. Margaret actually accomplishes is summoning up the devil, albeit through prayer. McInerney, *Eloquent Virgins,* 174. In general, St. Margaret's encounter with the devil kept causing uneasiness among the authors of different legends, especially the version with the swallowing of the saint. For example, the author of the thirteenth-century *South English Legendary* comments on the yet another difficulty – the impossibility of actually killing a devil. Wendy R. Larson, ed. and tr., "Three Thirteenth-Century *Lives* of St. Margaret of Antioch," in *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, ed. Thomas Head (New York: Garland, 2000), 675-676 (henceforth: Larson, "*Lives* of St. Margaret").

martyr, a stable component of the saints' lives, bears out the saint's imitation of the

passion of Christ, graphically rendered in scenes of torture and violence. Thus, a major

part of the female virgin martyr life revolves around her body. Such scenes cradle two-

fold potential: they are emotionally engaging and enable the beholder (listener or reader)

to immerse in the story but at the same time they also have entertainment value. Indeed,

the scenes of violence are indeed partly held responsible for the popularity of these

accounts. Extending this argument, it is often argued that since the bodies tortured are

female, the violence itself has sexual overtones.[28] The series of tortures unveil the body

of the virgin and present the beholder with an image of naked purity, which could have

tickled imagination of the not so innocent minds of its audience.[29] For a female virgin

martyr's life the body is indeed of pivotal importance. These saintly bodies thus do not

succumb to pain and suffering as readily as any 'ordinary' body would – they bear the

pain courageously and triumphantly, often remain unscathed through various tortures, or

have their body restored.[30] This indestructible quality of the martyrs' bodies can be also

linked to the ultimate victorious body of the resurrection.[31] As a female virgin martyr, a

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[28] A considerable number of studies elaborate on this topic, especially analyzing the textual sources. Here I will only refer to Winstead's *Virgin Martyrs*. Most of the collective works quoted in this chapter do include essays dealing with this problem.

[29] Eamon Duffy comments on this aspect in his analysis of the representation of virgin martyrs on screens in late medieval England: "…this is an aspect of the cult of the virgin-martyrs which cannot altogether be evaded. The violent juxtaposition of purity and defilement might seem suggest a profound, if unacknowledged, ambivalence and tension about the relationship between holiness and sexuality in the minds of the married men and women who paid for the screens, and who proposed the saints on them to themselves as exemplars and intercessors." Eamon Duffy, "Holy Maydens, Holy Wyfes: The Cult of Women Saints in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century England," in D. Wood and W. J. Sheils, ed., *Women in the Church* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 188 (henceforth: Duffy, "Holy Maydens").

[30] "Saints' lives are also concerned in distinctive ways with the body, as one might expect in a genre so largely founded on the martyrs' imitation of Christ's passion…Saintly bodies remain unharmed or are triumphantly reconstituted after torture, an so they function as powerful signs of integrity and wholeness, of triumph over dismemberment and death...The more beaten and dismembered the martyr, the more powerful the triumph over death, and the more insistently the permanent, glorious body of the resurrection is signaled." Wogan-Browne – Burgess, *Virgin Lives*, XIII.

[31] Ibid.

saint could have been even more drawn into this concept exactly because of the physical integrity of her virginal body as well as because of the spiritual integrity of her soul.

However, the prevalence of the body as a concern in these saints' lives has led some scholars to interpret this aspect as possibly undermining the strength of the female character. The link between the female sex and the weakness of the flesh was sustained and cherished by many a medieval writer[32]. Therefore the state of their bodies was both a potential source of strength and weakness. Transferred onto the female virgin martyrs' lives, the preoccupation with the body could have been interpreted as limiting the saint's ability to act. Brigitte Cazelles argues that the process, in which the female virgin martyrs acquires visibility, results in the heroine's transformation into a mute and passive victim precisely due to the inherent link between the feminine and the weak, gaining male attributes in the process of defending her body.[33] Gail Ashton's interpretation curbs the virgin martyr's potential for independent speech by demonstrating the ways, in which the male authors sought to regulate the seemingly empowering but transgressive nature of the virgin martyr.[34] Such a restrictive interpretation of the powers of the virgin martyrs is not shared by all scholars and convincing arguments have been made in support of the capability of these figures to act as positive and authorizing role models for women in

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[32] "There were intellectual traditions that conditioned women *and men* to certain expectations of women's bodies. Medieval thinkers associated *body* with *wo*man; they therefore expected women's expressivness to be more physical and physiological than men's. They also associated body with God, through the doctrine of the Incarnation, and eschewed sharp soul/body dichotomies more than did either patristic theologians or those of the early modern period. They could therfore give to the bodily experience of members of both sexes a deeply spiritual significance." Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages," in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 200-202.

[33] Cazelles, *The Lady as a Saint*, 44-48.

[34] Gail Ashton, *Generating Identity in Late Medieval Hagiography: Speaking the Saint* (London: Routledge, 2000).

different spheres of life[35]. If attempting to generalize the nature of this extensive hagiographic category, scholars can only claim with certainty that the female virgin martyrs were clearly identified as virgins, a part of their life involved defending their virginity (the emphasis on this aspect varies), and their passions, the tortures their bodies go through, are of great significance for their legends.

Furthermore, even though the virginity of the female virgin martyrs stands for both bodily and spiritual integrity it should not be taken for granted that this definition of virginity is the single one in existence throughout the Middle Ages, applicable to all situations. To study the meaning of virginity in fact means to study virginities and thus face the question: what *is* virginity in the Middle Ages?

To put it shortly, there is no simple, straightforward answer to this question. Kathleen Coyne Kelly identifies four groups of sources in which the concept of virginity is developed: medical and scientific treatises with their classical antecedents, patristic writings and their medieval commentaries,[36] legal records and documents, and literary texts[37]. Emerging from these sources is the realization that, rather than one unified concept of virginity, a number of "virginities" were in existence, often simultaneously, throughout the Middle Ages. The virginity of hagiographic romances differs from the virginity of medical treatises, or from the premarital virginity of young women of

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[35] Wogan-Brown, *Women's Literary Culture*. For the discussion of virgin martyrs as models in upbringing of young women see Katherine J. Lewis, "Model Girls? Virgin-Martyrs and the Training of Young Women in Late Medieval England," in *Young Medieval Women*, ed. Katherine J. Lewis, Noel James Menuge and Kim M. Phillips (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 25-46, henceforth: Lewis, "Model Girls."

[36] For an engaging analysis of the notion of virginity see Peter Brown, "The Notion of Virginity in the Early Church," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century,* ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1985), 427-443. Any discussion of the roots of medieval concepts of virginity inevitably turns to the writings of the Church fathers and the attitudes toward sexuality in late antiquity but the problems of such complexity cannot be discussed here. The seminal work of Peter Brown is a starting point for any inquiry into late ancient sexualities: Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). For the feminist readings of these issues consult the works of Elizabeth A. Clark.

marriageable age. In its most comprehensive form, virginity stands for both physical intactness and spiritual purity but changes form depending on the context[38]. For example, the lost virginity of a woman who was raped would refer to the physical integrity of the female body. Neither does it necessarily refer to women only, although more often than not it bears greater significance in the life of a woman. It also need not be simply the state of physical intactness but this does not mean physical intactness can never be equated with virginity or be one of the requirements for the state. The spiritual purity also plays a significant role and can under certain circumstances replace lost physical virginity or restore it.

The virginity of St. Catherine, St. Barbara, St. Dorothea and St. Margaret represents the perfected spiritual and physical state. The number of extant legends as well as visual material supports decidedly the claim that the Capital Virgins belong to the most popular saints of high and late Middle Ages. This perfected virginity has reached a wide audience but what appeal could it have held for the various groups within this audience? If these saints are models to be followed, their stories induce us to link them with the social group for which the ideals of virginity (or chastity) were highly relevant: monks, nuns, and clergy in general. Here the model makes sense, so much so even that one almost forgets that their popularity was of more universal kind and that their cult was popular among the laity as well. The connection seems natural: a nun, for example, is after all supposed to emulate such models and both a monk and a nun would be described as *sponsae Christi*. This simple relationship of a religious devotee and his or her saint, a role model for virginity, appears to be straightforward enough and undoubtedly

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[37] Kelly, *Virginity*, 1.

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constitutes a significant part of what could be called functions of the saint and reception of her cult. It should be noted that different qualities might be perceived as attractive in St. Catherine or St. Margaret if the recipient is a male member of the clergy (who might venerate her as an exemplary Christian scholar), an aristocratic lady, or a young unmarried woman. It might seem superfluous to remind at this point that there is not just one single meaning or one single function these saints perform – to claim so would limit significantly what little one can infer from the text and the image in order to understand the role, or rather roles, of the Capital Virgins in late medieval society.

However appropriate the images and legends of the *virgines capitales* might appear in a monastic setting an overview of the images depicting a figure or scene from the life of one of the Capital Virgins reveals that a large number of these images come from urban churches and served most probably the laity. We are thus challenged to grasp the problem that Karen A. Winstead succinctly outlines in her *Virgin Martyrs*[39]:

> …because late medieval hagiographers were, to an increasing extent, addressing a lay audience, we might look for them to promote stories of holy parents and spouses, whose lives could provide more direct models than those of the virgin martyrs, who, after all, spurned marriage, family, laws, and property. What could their lives mean to lawyers, merchants, and craftspeople, householders and parents, immersed in the very world the saints rejected?[40]

As a matter of fact, the hagiographers did indeed promote the stories of holy parents and spouses, the pious and charitable. The popularity of saints such as St. Anne

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[38] The lost virginity of a woman who was raped would refer more to the physical integrity of the female body than to any spiritual state.

[39] Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*.

[40] Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, 10. It should be noted that Winstead's list of potential recipients (lawyers, merchants, householders etc.) mixes two categories, occupations and roles, since merchants can be be parents and householders at the same time.

(and her Holy Kinship group)[41] and St. Elizabeth of Thuringia is well attested in both textual and visual sources from the late Middle Ages. Nonetheless, what Winstead implies is that the virginity, as central focus of these lives (not necessarily, as will be developed below, the central focus of the imagery), should not hold the same appeal to laity as it does to the clergy, whose lives are to some degree subjected to a similar ideal. If virginity is understood as a model to be emulated, then at first glance there was little appeal in such a model for the active lives of women (and men) of late medieval towns. Did other aspects of the cult or the saint's character prevail? What in these stories of bodies at the same time untouched and tortured, of Christian women rejecting marriage proposals and with it the chance to become mothers and wives, accounts for their popularity? Or was this virginity open to more flexible appropriation representing chastity rather than the ultimate ideal of an unpolluted body and soul?

Among the audience of these images, one group can be discerned that is supposed to uphold the ideal of virginity in their life without committing to a religious vocation. The image, literary as well as visual, of the virgin martyrs could have had special significance for young women finding themselves in a particular transitory stage of a woman's life, between reaching maturity (whatever its legal definition) and, through marriage and motherhood, becoming a "fully fledged" woman. From this point of view Kim M. Phillips's observation, based on the analysis of late medieval English textual and visual material,[42] that a young woman, described as a maiden, is "at once sexually and psychologically mature (as the legal codes recognize), but she must also hold onto the

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[41] For a seminal study of the cult of St. Anne in late medieval Europe see Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, eds., *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990).

virginity required by her premarital state."[43] She emphasizes that the virgin martyrs were depicted as "maidenly," even in the rare cases where the legend did not describe them in that way.[44] As these female figures are the ideals of womanhood, she advances the argument that maidenhood could be considered as the perfect age of woman's life. At once attractively youthful and virginal, maidens can be both subjects of desire and of reverence.

Katherine J. Lewis concentrates on the appeal the cult of virgin saints might have held for young women, or women in general, and her observations bring yet another piece to the mosaic of the reception of the virgin martyrs cult (including, naturally the four virgins under discussion here), especially its functions among the laity.[45] Lewis focuses her attention on the functions the cult of a virgin martyr could have performed in women's lives. These functions could differ depending on the social status of the woman. Women as members of the lesser nobility, gentry and urban elites were offered models for conduct, forms of ideal femininity[46] in the shape of virgin martyrs. Lewis suggests that women were responsible for the edification of their children, at least up to a certain age, and that the virgin martyr stories could be used for this purpose. In the case of St.

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[42] Kim M. Phillips, "Maidenhood as the Perfect Age of Woman's Life," in *Young Medieval Women*, ed. Katherine J. Lewis, Noel James Menuge and Kim M. Phillips (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 1-24.(henceforth: Phillips, "Maidenhood")

[43] Phillips defines "maidenly" as "tender delicate young woman of marriageable age." Phillips, "Maidenhood," 1.

[44] Youthful beauty seems to have become a stable part of ideal femininity in late medieval England. Phillips points out that, for example, St. Apollonia, a deaconess well past her youth in the description of Jacobus Jacobus de Voragine, is represented visually as a young maiden. However, her argument that the maidenly look of the Virgin Mary at the Assumption, when she was strictly speaking past her maiden age, does not seem persuasive, precisely due to the equation of "virgin" and "maiden." Phillips, "Maidenhood," 11.

[45] See Katherine J. Lewis, "Pilgrimage and the Cult of St Katherine in Late Medieval England," in *St Katherine of Alexandria: Texts and Contexts in Western Medieval Europe*, ed. Katherine J. Lewis and Jacqueline Jenkins (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 37-52 (henceforth: Lewis, "Pilgrimage"); Lewis, "Model Girls."

Catherine, for example, a woman is described who achieved her learned status through studies. She could perform an "authorizing cultural function,"[47] even though the realities of women's education were likely to have been far from the type St. Catherine's *vita* describes. Apart from education, household skills also fit nicely into the legend, as Catherine was responsible for the management of her royal household. [48] As to the young women of lower social class, St. Catherine could have acted as a marriage broker. She was, after all, the bride of Christ and the part of her legend referring to her mystical marriage, in the English version of the legend resembles more an actual wedding ceremony. The records of Catherine's role as a provider of husbands, however, are relatively late (the earliest coming from the late sixteenth century).[49] Most of the comments on the popular practice of going on a pilgrimage to one of the hill-top shrines dedicated to St. Catherine in England come from a much later period and cannot be sufficiently supported by the medieval material.[50] This interpretation is directly related only to females, and moreover, to females of a limited age group. Nevertheless, the significance of virginity for this particular group should not be underestimated. The young women at this stage of life were supposed to comply with the society's (as well as community's and kinship's or family's) expectation that their bodies entering the marital bed on the wedding night still preserved their virginal purity and intactness (and later issued an heir).[51]

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[46] For an interpretation of the legends as actually representing how women should *not* behave see Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, 65-70.
[47] Lewis, "Model Girls," 35.
[48] Lewis, "Model Girls," especially 33-36.
[49] Lewis, "Pilgrimage," 49.
[50] Ibid.
[51] On the pivotal importance of virginity in medieval society see Jane Carthwright, "Virginity and Chastity Tests in Medieval Welsh Prose," in *Medieval Virginities,* ed. Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans, and Sarah Salih (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 56-79. On tests of virginity and chastity in different types of

This line of interpretation could be extended, if one does not insist on taking virginity in an absolute way and not allowing room for this ideal state to transform into something closer to everyday experience. I would suggest that virginity could have been appropriated in terms of its more "practical" forms, such as chastity. Chastity, a vital part of Christian morals, could have been alluded to through the example of virginity, using the ultimate example of the saint in order to entice the believers (possibly male as well as female) to follow the recommendations of the church in the field of sexual relations. Continence, rather than virginity in its absolute meaning, could have been more easily approachable by the lay audience. This, I would presume, is much more likely to have functioned as a model of behavior. Not as constrained, chastity (or some form of moderating sexual behavior) is not so much in discord with the marital state and very appropriate for a proper Christian widowhood.

Embedded in this discussion is the question: did virginity ever cease to matter as an ideal for women? Deeply ingrained in Christianity and backed up by many authorities did it retreat in the background to make place for a different, perhaps less demanding, model of behavior? When Margery de Kempe, an ardent lover of Christ, a wife and mother of fourteen children, expresses her anxiety about losing her virginity through wedlock is it an unusual or extreme stance?

Based on sermon material, Katherine Jansen suggests that the loss of virginity was indeed distressing for many a married woman of the late Middle Ages.[52] Jansen argues that St. Mary Magdalene, the *beata peccatrix*, the Holy Sinner, could perform the

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textual material also see Kelly, *Virginity*, especially 17-39. The fundamental value of premarital virginity as it emerges from English law cases is discussed by Kim M. Phillips, "Four Virgin's Tales: Sex and Power in Medieval Law," in *Medieval Virginities,* ed. Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans, and Sarah Salih (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 80-101.

role of a mediator between the married and widowed women and the ideal state of virginity. The depth and extent of Mary Magdalene's penance eventually earned her the place *before* the choir of virgins in heaven, only second to the impeccable virgin Virgin Mary.[53] Her virginity was in fact restored to her. Such a notion might provoke a small smile on our faces but the possibility of such a restoration ties in with the double-sided definition of virginity as physical and spiritual intactness. Thus a road is open even for those women who lost their physical integrity in marriage to achieve the highest award reserved for the virgins - through penance, asceticism and devotion.[54] The cultural value of virginity, especially relevant for lay women, stemmed from its firm place in the Christian view on proper sexual behavior and mode of life. It could be argued that such anxieties, apart from prompting the female believers to turn to penitent saints such as St. Mary Magdalene, could also have enhanced the attraction of the female virgin martyr's cult.

Moreover, the identification of the saints as young maidens also need not be interpreted so strictly. The ability of the cult to create space for many varying appropriations of the cult's content can be illustrated with the example of the mystical marriage of St. Catherine. When one takes into consideration that Catherine is united with Christ in a marriage (however mystical), she is suddenly not so far from a married lay woman. St. Margaret, for instance, is invoked in order to assist women in childbirth. The identity of the Capital Virgins as *virgins* should by no means be excluded from our considerations. Still, virgin martyrs were capable of reacting to needs that are not

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[52] Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 286-294. (henceforth: Jansen, *Magdalen*)..
[53] Jansen, *Magdalen*, 287.

necessarily tied down to this one attribute. This ability to interact with the surrounding culture, being recreated or reinterpreted for different purposes, most probably contributed to the popularity of St. Catherine, St. Margaret, St. Dorothea and St. Barbara.

The virginity of the *virgines capitales* could also be read as a source of their power as intercessor. The wide range of intercessory to these virgins is often overlooked – the problems of gender and sanctity sometimes eclipse this aspect of the virgin martyrs' cult. The inclusion of our four virgins into the group of fourteen Holy Helpers (saints most useful in assisting their human devotees) manifested how integral the role of patrons against various vicissitudes of life was. St. Catherine was the patron saint of philosophers, theologians, students and teachers, universities, lawyers, all occupations involving wheels or knives (millers, bakers, barbers, potters etc.). St. Barbara was approached with pleas for a good death and was also the patron saint of miners and builders. St. Margaret took under her protection shepherds and peasants, virgins, infertile wives and was also invoked in childbirth. St. Dorothea protected against poverty and false accusations, lightning, fire, and sudden death and was a patron saint of brides, newly married couples, gardeners, and miners.[55] This list is by no means complete but suffices to emphasize the number of practical roles these saints could play. Because of their virginity these saints enjoyed a privileged status and special power. As Eamon Duffy – I think rightly – emphasizes, "what it [virginity of the saints] gave to the ordinary Christian man and woman was not so much a model to imitate, something most of them

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[54] Jocelyn Wogan-Browne also points to this aspect of virginity (already in the thirteenth century): through "honorary virginities" women could, by the means of penance and asceticism, reclaim the power of virginity. Wogan-Browne, *Saint's Lives,* 124-125.
[55] The patronage is usually based on events from the legends, especially the prayers saints made just before their deaths.

never dreamt of doing, but rather a source of power to be tapped."[56] Duffy's interpretation then dismisses the idea that virginity would have played a significant role in the popularity of the cult of virgin martyrs. Their role as intercessors opens much wider opportunities in terms of devotion of both men and women. It also raises an important issue: to what extent, if any, were these saints viewed as examples to be imitated?

The opening recommendation of the fourth part of Giovanni Dominici's *Rule for the Management of Family Care,* written in 1403, does not only offer a piece of advice on what images should be placed in one's house but also comments on the function the images should exercise:

> [one should have] paintings in the house, of holy boys, or young virgins, in which your child when still in swaddling clothes may delight as being like himself, and may be seized upon by the like thing, with actions and signs attractive to infancy...And so too little girls should be brought up in the sight of the eleven thousand virgins, discussing, fighting and praying. I would like them to see Agnes with the fat lamb, Cecilia crowned with roses; Elizabeth with many roses, Catherine on the wheel, with other figures that would give them love of virginity with their mother's milk, desire for Christ, hatred of sins, disgust at vanity, shrinking from bad companions, and a beginning through considering the saints, of contemplating the supreme Saint of saints.[57]

Dominici's words illustrate the edifying functions an image of a female virgin martyr could have in upbringing girls, which would among other positive effects also implant love for virginity into the character of the daughters of the house. As Jocelyn Wogan-Browne suggest we should perhaps distinguish between "exemplary" and

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[56] Duffy, "Holy Mayden," 189.
[57] Cited after David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 4.

"imitable" as well as keep in mind that not being imitable does not necessarily imply that these saints could not have acted as role models[58].

Dominici's words apply in the domestic sphere that shelters the family life, and by extension to private devotion as well but could they say anything about the solemn virgins of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century altarpieces from Upper Hungary, entangled in the liturgy, immersed in church space? Do these Catherines on the wheels and Agneses with the fat lambs "speak" to the beholder about their virginity or do the images remain mute, resisting our efforts to gain insight into the way their late medieval beholders perceived them?

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[58] Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives*, XIII.

CHAPTER II:

THE VIRGINS ON THE ALTAR

The aim of this chapter is two-fold. Firstly, it provides a description and examination of the visual representations of the female virgin martyrs, with special emphasis on the representation of St. Catherine of Alexandria, St. Barbara, St. Dorothea, and St. Margaret of Antioch[59]. I shall concentrate on the representations found in a particular type of work of art, the late medieval altarpiece. This choice limits the media to panel paintings and statues integrated in an altarpiece. As the restriction of the material to the region of Upper Hungary, the restriction to a particular type of work of art is partially necessitated by the need to create a body of material that could be analyzed in some depth within the scope of this thesis. Moreover, the number of extant altarpieces provides, in quantitative sense, a relatively reliable picture of the patterns that possibly occurred in late medieval art of Upper Hungary. Due to its liturgical function, an altarpiece is also particularly placed in the framework of late medieval art and allows us to draw some conclusions regarding its audience and functions. Altarpieces (with the exception of smaller portable altarpieces used for private devotion) are situated in the public space of the church interiors. The presence of the altarpieces in the public space or, more precisely, the presence of what is depicted in the altarpiece in such a space, supplies more clues as to the extent of the reception of the cult of these saints and its particular features, if any. Apart from altarpieces, mural paintings also belonged to the standard artistic "equipment" of a church. Mural paintings are not taken into consideration here as they have sustained more

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[59] A summary of their iconography is given in LCI: St. Barbara, Vol. 5, 304-312; St. Dorothea, Vol. 6, 89-92; St. Catherine, Vol. 7., 289-297; St. Margaret, Vol. 7., 494-500.

damage over the time and have been in many a case significantly altered or lost. It is not often the case that a complete iconographic program in mural painting has been preserved, which curtails the reliability of observations regarding the particular iconographic placement of the *virgines capitales*.[60] I also preferred an altarpiece to individual statues due to their small numbers and lack of context.

This study raises the question of the relevance and possible interpretation of virginity in the cult of the female virgin martyrs, especially the *virgines capitales*. In order to do so I have included all the altarpieces known to me that incorporate in its iconography a figure of (or a scene from the life of) a female virgin martyr. This amounts to sixty altarpieces from the fifteenth and sixteenth century from Upper Hungary. Even though St. Catherine, St. Barbara, St. Dorothea and St. Margaret are not always joined together as a group known as *virgines capitales*, the number of the altarpieces, thirteen[61], where they appear in this particular configuration justifies the usage of the term. Moreover, among the female virgin martyrs only these four can also pride in legends cycles or scenes from the life being present in the altarpieces.[62] Nevertheless, other female virgin martyrs (St. Ursula, St. Apollonia, St. Agnes, St. Agatha, and St. Lucy[63], to

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[60] Legend cycles of only five saints have been preserved in mural painting: St. Ladislas, St. Anthony the Hermit, St. Nicholas, St. Dorothea, and St. Margaret of Antioch. Apart from St. Ladislas, each saint can claim only one or two extant cycles (St. Margaret of Antioch in Šivetice and St. Dorothea in the Church of St. James in Levoča). Vlasta Dvořáková, Josef Krása, and Karel Stejskal, *Stredoveká nástenná maľba na Slovensku* (Medieval mural painting in Slovakia) (Bratislava: Tatran, 1978), 27. Based on the catalogue of this publication, the appearance of one or more of the Capital Virgins as individual figures is common enough (Banská Bystrica – parish church, Čerín, Gánovce, Chyžné, Koceľovce, Liptovský Ondrej, Ludrová, Očová, Poruba, Štítnik, Rákoš, Rimavská Baňa, Smrečany).

[61] This number only refers to the altarpieces where all four saints are clearly identifiable.

[62] St. Ursula often appears together with the eleven thousand virgins in the moment of their martyrdom even among panels where other saints are identified solely by their attributes, therefore I do not count the Martyrdom of St. Ursula among scenes from the saints' lives. It should be noted that she also appears just carrying her attribute, the arrow.

[63] For the iconography of these saints see LCI: St. Agatha, Vol. 5, 43-48; St. Agnes, Vol. 5, 58-63; St. Apollonia, Vol. 5, 231-236; St. Lucy, Vol. 7, 415-420; St. Ursula, Vol. 8, 521-527. Ocassionally, St. Christina also joins the ranks of virgin martyrs on an altarpiece. For St. Christina see LCI Vol. 5, 492-495.

name the most common ones) will be also discussed as they share in equal measure the attribute of "virginity" characteristic of the *virgines capitales*. They frequently join one or more of the capital virgins in the altarpieces, sometimes taking place of Dorothea or Margaret. This thesis intends to search for the patterns in which these saints occur and, if possible, to evaluate what interpretative possibilities would be supported by these patterns. Therefore I will not discuss all the altarpieces in detail. The issues of style, dating, and authorship are also put aside unless they are relevant for the research question. The reader is welcome to follow these issues in the referenced works.

The second aim of this chapter is to discuss the shades of meaning these particular works of art could have held for the medieval beholder. However, since the virginity of female saints is at the core of these inquiries, the meanings I am particularly interested in are very much gendered. I do not claim to outline all the possible interpretations but intend to concentrate only on those that in my opinion could reveal something about the role of virginity and the virgin female saints in general.

Apart from the aesthetic qualities, one is tempted to use the adjective "ingenious" when writing about the winged altarpieces. The wings of the altarpiece could be moved and at different times reveal a different iconographic scheme or, in other words, reveal a different message adjusted to the liturgy and to the particular time of the liturgical year. The altarpieces (or retables in the proper art historical terminology) put to use panel paintings as well as sculpture (usually made of wood), statues and reliefs. The figures of saints and the scenes from the life of Christ, Virgin Mary or the titular saint of the altar

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St. Odilia, an abbess-saint, can also appear alongside the virgin martyrs. Her attribute is reminiscent of St. Lucy as she holds a pair of eyes on a book (she was cured from blindness in childhood), LCI, Vol 8., 76-79. The virgin martyrs, including the *virgines capitales*, are frequently joined together with the Virgin Mary referred to by the term *virgo inter virgines*, LCI, Vol. 8, 573-575.

were often embellished by gilding and more or less elaborate ornaments, the rich polychromy reflecting both the beauty of the sacred world. The shrine was accompanied by the wings that could be divided into more panels, often crowned by gables, and completed though the predella beneath the central shrine, all components unified in the often elaborate architecture of the altarpiece. It is worth keeping in mind that a different set of images would appear to the viewer at different times of the year. Even though the altarpiece would generally be closed over the period of Lent, it seems that the practices for the rest of the liturgical year varied locally.[64] Furthermore, when interpreting the possible meaning of these images for a female audience, it is a lay audience that ought to be discussed. These altarpieces come mainly from urban and village churches, not one of them, to my knowledge, was placed in a female religious establishment.[65]

Different types of altarpieces were present in the region of Upper Hungary,[66] but one of them, the so-called *Viereraltar* (altar of the four), is particularly significant for the appearance of *virgines capitales* on late medieval altarpieces. The *Viereraltar* was most probably imported from Silesia and spread throughout Upper Hungary in late fourteenth and fifteenth century. The shrine of a *Viereraltar* is dominated by a statue or a painting of the main saint. The central image is flanked by figures of four saints, two vertically on each side. This composition of the shrine is characteristic for *Viereraltar*. In Silesia as well as in Upper Hungary, the main figure was frequently Virgin Mary, accompanied by

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[64] Végh, "O krídlových oltároch," 360.

[65] For reasons still disputed, the number of female monastic houses in medieval Hungary was significantly lower than the number of male monasteries. I am grateful to Jozsef Laszlovsky for pointing this out to me. Even though there are female convents of considerable importance, none of the altarpieces from Upper Hungary can be, to my knowledge, traced back to such a setting.

[66] For a recent summary see Végh, "O krídlových oltároch," 357-363.

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four figures of women; the four Capital Virgins enjoyed special popularity as the members of Virgin Mary's entourage.[67]

Before examining the specific works, some general observations on the iconography of the *virgines capitales* and other female virgin martyrs in Upper Hungary are due. When depicted as individual figures, the four capital virgins are usually easily recognizable by their attributes: St. Catherine with the wheel and sword, St. Barbara with the tower, St. Dorothea with the basket of roses, and St. Margaret with the dragon.[68] All these attributes stem from the legends of the saints.[69]

The four Capital Virgins are most commonly found on the altarpieces dedicated to Virgin Mary (twenty-five altarpieces).[70] Four altarpieces are dedicated to St. Catherine (Kežmarok, Levoča, Vyšné Repáše[71], Turany)[72], two to St. Barbara (Banská Bystrica, Bardejov, Jazernica[73]), and one to St. Margaret (Mlynica). Apart from the high altar of St. Anne and St. Barbara in Jazernica, five other altarpieces dedicated to St. Anne also include the images of members of the *virgines capitales* group (Bardejov,[74] Lipany,

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[67] Végh, "O krídlových oltároch," 358-359. Végh points out Cidlinská remarks that in Silesia St. Hedwig, a popular saint in the region, was one of the groups of the saints standing on the Virgin's side but was replaced by St. Catherine in Upper Hungary. Cidlinská, *Oltáre,* 11.

[68] Other attributes of more general nature could also be present, such as a book or a palm of martyrdom.

[69] See Chapter II.

[70] Arnutovce, Bardejov, Dúbrava, Hermanovce, Klčov, Krupina, Levoča, Liptovská Mara, Liptovský Mikuláš, Liptovský Ondrej, Lúčky (altar of Virgin Mary and St. Dorothea), Mlynica, Pukanec, Rakúsy, Sliače, Smrečany, Spišská Kapitula, Spišská Sobota, Spišské Podhradie, Strážky, Trenčín, Veľká, Veľká Lomnica, Veľký Slavkov, Vlková. Cidlinská mentions that the Altar of Virgin Mary in Spišské Podhradie was dedicated to St. Catherine up to the nineteenth century. Cidlinská, *Oltáre,* 83.

[71] The small altar of St. Catherine, now in Levoča.

[72] The dedication of the altar from Lúčky is unclear. Cidlinská refers to it as the altar of Virgin Mary and St. Dorothea, Cidlinská, *Oltáre,* 59. There are two equally sized statues in the shrine: one is clearly Virgin Mary with child, the other is a female saint with a crown but other attributes are missing (she probably held something in both hands). Török identifies her as St. Catherine. Török, *Gotische Tafelbilder,* 22, 52.

[73] The shrine of this altarpiece is composed of two equally sized statues of St. Anne *Selbdritt* and St. Barbara. It is listed as high altar of St. Anne *Selbdritt* and St. Barbara in *Gotika*, 764-765. The joint dedication of the altarpiece is based on the statues of the shrine. Cidlinská lists this altar as high altar of St. Anne. Cidlinská, *Oltáre,* 39-40.

[74] There is no statue of St. Anne in the altar of St. Anne in Bardejov. The statue of St. Anne *Selbdritt*, originally belonging to the shrine of this altarpiece, was moved to the Altar of St. Apollonia in the same

Ľubica, Sabinov, Spišská Sobota), as do the altarpieces dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene (Banská Bystrica, Rokycany), to St. Apollonia (Bardejov), to St. Elizabeth (Košice), and St. Sophia (Sásová). Nonetheless, the appearance of these saints is not limited to the altars dedicated to female saints. They are also present in the altarpieces dedicated to male saints (St. Andrew, St. Martin, and Holy Bishops)[75] or to various motifs from the life of Christ or Virgin Mary. The latter group includes dedications to *Vir dolorum* (Bardejov, Levoča)*,* to the Crucifixion (Pukanec, Sabinov, Spišská Sobota), to the Nativity of the Lord (Bardejov) and various Virgin Mary- related dedications.[76] Even if one takes into consideration possible changes in these dedications, it can be concluded that the members of the *virgines capitales* group mostly join in the iconographic programs of the altars dedicated to Virgin Mary and other female saints.[77]

church and replaced in the altar of St. Anne by a statue of Virgin Mary with Child (therefore it is also referred to as the small Marian altar). Cidlinská, *Oltáre,* 26-27 (altar of St. Anne), 31 (altar of St. Apollonia).

[75] altar of St. Andrew or of All Saints, Bardejov; high altar of St. Andrew, Liptovský Ondrej; high altar of St. Martin, Lipany; high altar of St. Martin, Spišská Kapitula; altar of Holy Bishops, Ľubica. Török remarks that the altarpiece in Ľubica was probably originally dedicated to two female saints that were replaced by the statues of two holy bishops. Török, *Gotische Tafelbilder,* 59.

[76] Altar of Annunciation to Virgin Mary, Sabinov; altar of Visitation, Košice; altar of the Adoration of the Magi, Palúdzka; altar of the Coronation of Virgin Mary, Ludrová; altar of the Dormition of Virgin Mary, Spišská Kapitula.

[77] Concerning church patronages of the Capital Virgins, Hudák lists twenty-five medieval churches dedicated to St. Catherine, fourteen to St. Margaret, and three to St. Barbara (patronage is still in existence). Some patronages disappeared over time (through change of patronage, destruction of the church): ten dedications to St. Margaret, four to St. Catherine, and one to Dorothea. In comparison, thirteen churches were dedicated to St. Elizabeth. I counted only churches clearly identified as medieval by Hudák (patronages still in existence) and patronages attested in the Middle Ages (disappeared patronages). Hudák mentions that the earliest female patronages apart from Virgin Mary appear between the tenth and the thirteenth century (first St. Margaret, in the thirteenth century St. Elizabeth and St. Catherine). The period from the second half of the thirteenth century to the second half of the sixteenth century marks the heyday of female patronages (Agnes, Anne, Barbara, Cecilia, Dorothea, Helen, Lucy, Mary Magdalene, Sophia, perhaps even Ursula), which Hudák links with the flourishing of knightly culture and its spread into the towns. Some of the patronages were connected to the arrival of German settlers (Agnes, Barbara, Dorothea, and Sophia). Ján Hudák, *Patrocíniá na Slovensku* (Church patronages in Slovakia) (Bratislava: Umenovedný ústav Slovenskej akadémie vied), 57-59. For example in England, from among the churches dedicated to women, St. Margaret ranks second after Virgin Mary and St. Catherine. Larson, "*Lives* of St. Margaret,"676.

The four Capital Virgins most frequently adorn the altarpieces dedicated to Virgin Mary. Most of these altarpieces belong to the *Vieraltarer* group. In terms of iconography they follow one scheme with some variations in certain elements. Some of the Virgin Mary altarpieces are representative of the conventional pattern usually identified as the most wide-spread scheme for the *Vieraltarer* altarpieces: the center of the shrine is occupied by the statue of Virgin Mary with Child, who is joined by the four Capital Virgins (either as statues or as paintings). The images on the open wings celebrate the life of Mary and through her the coming of the Savior in Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi while the closed wings enable the viewer to partake in the Passion of Christ (or other Christological scenes). This scheme can be enhanced by various elements: *Vir dolorum, Mater dolorosa*, Vera icon, or other saints (in the predella or in the pinnacles and gables or the altar architecture). Some altarpieces, such as the high altar of Virgin Mary in Vlková (around 1480), duly conform to this scheme[78] but there are some variations. The high altar of Virgin Mary in Klčov (1500-1510) only contains the statues of St. Catherine and St. Barbara. In the shrine of the altar of Virgin Mary from Spišská Sobota (around 1470) all four Capital Virgins stand on the Virgin's side but the closed wings turn the attention of the beholder towards the Virgin Mary's own conception, displaying the Annunciation to Joachim and the Meeting of Anne and Joachim at the Golden Gate.[79] The high altar of Virgin Mary in Smrečany (around 1480) replaces the *Vieraltarer* disposition of the shrine with a panel painting of Madonna

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[78] The altar of Our Lady of the Snows in Levoča (1494-1500), the altar of Virgin Mary in Liptovský Mikuláš (1470-1480) and the altar of Virgin Mary in Sliače (1510-1520) are further examples. According to Cidlinská the altar in Sliače duplicates the figure of St. Catherine, who appears both in the shrine and on the closed wings together with St. Apollonia. Cidlinská, *Oltáre,* 74—75. The shrine of the altar of Virgin Mary in Pukanec (1480-1490) also contains the *virgines capitales*, but the rest of the iconography departs from this scheme. One of the eigth panels with saints visible when the altarpiece is closed depict the beheading of St. Barbara.

enthroned, with St. Barbara and St. Catherine on her side, and moves the other two *virgines capitales,* St. Dorothea and St. Margaret to the panels of the closed wings (together with *Mater dolorosa* and *Vir dolorum*)[80].

In some cases the present state of the altars does not allow for an entirely conclusive evaluation of the iconographic program[81]. The attributes of the virgin saints may get lost over the centuries. This is the case in the altar of Virgin Mary from Veľký Slavkov (now in MNG, 1483): only two out of four female saints accompanying Virgin Mary in the shrine can be identified as St. Catherine and St. Dorothea.[82] It may seem that the frequency with which the *virgines capitales* mount their places next to Virgin Mary would justify the identification of the missing saints with the members of the same group. However, some other, usually female, saints occasionally replace one of the Capital Virgins: St. Elizabeth (the high altar of Virgin Mary, Rakúsy),[83] St. Helen (the altar of Virgin Mary, Spišská Nová Ves),[84] or St. Mary Magdalene (the altar of Virgin Mary, Mlynica).[85] Other female virgin martyrs also appear in the shrine combined with one or two of the Capital Virgins. In the altar of Virgin Mary from Dúbrava (1510-1520, now in SNG) Virgin Mary's entourage consists of St. Dorothea, St. Agnes, St. Ursula, and St. Lucy while in Hermanovce (first quarter of the sixteenth century) the statues of Virgin

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[79] The open wings skip the Visitation scene in favor of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple.

[80] A similar composition can be observed in the panel painting from Jánovce, but with St. Catherine and St. Elizabeth accompanying the Virgin. Glatz, *Gotické umenie*, 107-9.

[81] In general, some caution is advisable. Many an altarpiece was dismantled and reassembled in the nineteenth century or earlier, which could affect the present iconography of the altar. Nevertheless, the existence of certain typical patterns enables us to draw conclusions from this material.

[82] Similarly, in Veľká (around 1480, now in KME) one female saint lacks any attributes (the others are St. Catherine, St. Barbara, and St. Dorothea).

[83] Around 1500. St. Dorothea is missing.

[84] Around 1480.

[85] Around 1480, now in KME. St. Mary Magdalene appears instead of St. Margaret.

Mary with Child, St. Dorothea and St. Barbara are accompanied by St. Catherine, St. Ursula, St. Agnes, and St. Barbara.[86]

The dedication to St. Anne also seemed to attract the presence of the *virgines capitales.* The altarpieces of St. Anne demonstrate two tendencies: either the virgin female martyrs prevail, flanking the mother of the Virgin, or the members of the extensive, and very holy, family of Anne take their posts by her side. If this could by any means reflect the debate revolving around the virginity of Anne and Mary's immaculate conception is hard to establish without further evidence of the presence of a similar debate (or residues thereof) in this region. Moreover, there exist combinations when the altarpiece is adorned with both the virgin female martyrs and the members of the holy kinship group (or other saints). Whereas in the shrine of the altar of St. Anne in Lipany (St. Anne: 1500-1520, paintings: 1526) only the statue of St. Anne is present, female virgin martyrs (St. Lucy, St. Barbara, St. Dorothea, St. Ursula, St. Catherine, St. Apollonia, St. Agnes, and St. Margaret) seized the panels of the closed wings. An all-embracing combination of female saints flanks the figure of St. Anne *Selbdritt* in Spišská Sobota where the penitent St. Mary Magdalene, the empress St. Helen, the virgin St. Apollonia and the charitable laywoman St. Elizabeth illustrate four different types of female sainthood. On the closed wings of the altar of St. Anne in Ľubica[87] the members of the Holy Kinship group pose to clarify the rather complicated structure of St. Anne's family but the open wings reveal the figures of St. Ursula, St. Apollonia and St. Barbara, joined by the popular St. Elizabeth. In Sabinov St. Ursula and St. Apollonia appear among the saints (both male and female) on the closed wings and do not seem to have a

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[86] Cidlinská, *Oltáre,* 36. Radocsay mentions that the paintings are damaged. Radocsay, *Táblaképei*, 453-454.

prominent position in the iconography, the places closest to the titular saint are taken by the members of St. Anne family.

Not all the altarpieces of St. Anne include the figures of the female virgin martyrs.[88] The iconographic program of the altar of St. Anne from Radačov (around 1500, now in MNG)[89], although dominated by female saints (St. Helen, St. Elizabeth, St. Sophia) with Anne *Selbdritt* in the center accompanied by Mary Magdalene and Martha, does not include any virgin martyrs. Yet another scheme appears in Strážky at the high altar of St. Anne (around 1520)[90] that concentrates on the life of Anne and Joachim on the open wings, whereas the closed wings depict scenes from the passion of Christ.

The representations of the virgin martyrs together with St. Mary Magdalene are rarer (Banská Bystrica, Rokycany). In medieval tradition, St. Mary Magdalene came to epitomize the penitent sinner. She sinned greatly but her penance was so effective that she was forgiven and granted a special place in Christ's favor. In fact, this penance was thought to be as effective as to secure her the place *before* the female virgins of the early Christianity.[91] The altar of St. Mary Magdalene from Jakub (1500-1510, now in the Church of the Assumption of Virgin Mary in Banská Bystrica)[92] reflects this hierarchy. In the central panel painting St. Mary Magdalene grasps in both hands her customary attribute, the box of ointment. Four female virgin martyrs accompany her: on her left, St. Agnes and St. Barbara, on her right St. Catherine and St. Dorothea (Fig. 1). In the altar of

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[87] 1510-1520, now in MNG.
[88] The statue of St. Anne is older. Cidlinská, *Oltáre,* 53. The scenes on the open wings – Annunciation, Nativity, Adoration of the Magi, and Dormition of the Virgin – and the presence of the female virgin martyrs might suggest that the altar could have been dedicated to Virgin Mary, rather than St. Anne.
[89] Cidlinská, *Oltáre*, 66.
[90] Cidlinská, *Oltáre*, 85.
[91] Gerát, *Obrazové témy*, 139.
[92] Cidlinská, *Oltáre*, 26; *Gotika*, 718 (for the precise current location of the altarpiece).

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the Assumption of Mary Magdalene from Rokycany[93] the martyrdom of St. Ursula is placed over its common attendant image of Ten Thousand Martyrs (here with an integrated Crucifixion). St. Barbara, St. Catherine and St. Margaret mingle with other saints on the closed wings.

Figure 1 St. Agnes, St. Barbara, St. Catherine, and St. Dorothea, Altar of St. Mary Magdalene, Banská Bystrica.

I have already mentioned some altarpieces where the female virgin martyrs dominate the iconographic program. The altar of St. Catherine in Kežmarok (1493)[94] also bears out such focus: in the central panel St. Catherine with sword and wheel is joined by her two typical companions, St. Barbara with the tower on her right, and St. Margaret with a cross in her hand and a dragon under her foot on Catherine's left. St. Dorothea, St. Apollonia, St. Agnes and St. Ursula stand solemnly in the panels of the open wings. Female virgin martyrs also prevail, for example, in the high altar of St. Margaret, to which I shall return. The prominent position that the *virgines capitales,* and female virgin martyrs in general, take would support the argument that the two basic attributes of their sanctity – the virginity and martyrdom – still held considerable appeal for a late medieval

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[93] 1480-1490, now in MNG.

audience. Their claim of being one of the ideals of female sanctity does not seem to be weakened through the presence of such popular saintly role models, as St. Elizabeth, whose action were imitable in urban society. Rather the female saints whom the beholder could encounter on the late gothic altarpieces often represent much of the spectrum of the ideal femininity within the Christian context – from the unattainable Virgin Mary, the ultimate virgin and mother, through St. Elizabeth of Thuringia, the ideal of charitable life, joined by St. Mary Magdalene, the penitent, to – last but not least - the female virgin martyrs, the epitomes of Christian virginity.

Based on the extant altarpieces from Upper Hungary, all the saints of the *virgines capitales* group, with the exception of St. Dorothea,[95] have been accorded the right to demonstrate the virtues and acts of an ideal Christian life in narrative episodes on the panels of the altarpieces from Upper Hungary. Among the altarpieces depicting episodes from the life of St. Catherine of Alexandria two are dedicated to her: in Levoča (Church of St. James) and Turany (originally from Spišský Štvrtok).[96] Another altarpiece from Bardejov (Church of St. Aegidius) carries the joint dedication to St. Catherine and St. Barbara. Two episodes from her life can be also found on the altar of Virgin Mary in Poniky. The two panels from Bátovce are most likely remnants of an altarpiece dedicated to St. Catherine with a rich iconographic program. Her legend also appears in the panels of the altar of *Vir dolorum* in Bardejov (Church of St. Aegidius). The legend of St. Barbara is recounted in several altarpieces dedicated to this virgin martyr: in Banská Bystrica and the already mentioned altarpiece in Bardejov (together with St. Catherine),

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[94] Cidlinská, *Oltáre*, 40.
[95] St. Dorothea can, however, boast of a remarkably extensive cycle in mural painting that adorns the northern wall of the Church of St. James in Levoča. *Gotika,* 680; Buran, *Studien,* especially 70-86. The altar in Lúčky is dedicated to Virgin Mary and St. Dorothea.

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in the high altar of St. Anne *Selbdritt* and St. Barbara in Jazernica[97] and in the altar of Virgin Mary in Pukanec. The high altar of St. Margaret in Mlynica (1510-1520) contains episodes from the life of St. Margaret.

St. Catherine with a sword in her hand mounted upon the small figure of Maxentius at her feet claims her victory over the emperor, his idols, and death in the shrine of the altar of St. Catherine in Turany (1490-1500). She is accompanied by the statues of four fellow virgin martyrs, St. Barbara, St. Margaret, St. Dorothea, and St. Ursula.[98] During the church feasts, when the wings of the altar were open, the believers had the opportunity to witness the four most important events in Catherine's life. She first disputes with the philosophers (Fig. I.), enthroned in the center amidst those called to persuade her. In the next scene she is already tortured, her half-naked body suspended from a wooden structure (Fig. II.). Two torturers inflict pain on her by tearing out pieces of flesh with pincers and flogging her (with two different instruments) while the third fastens the cords binding Catherine's wrists. The next scene again emphasizes the passion – the wheel with knives, made to crush the saint's tender flesh, falls apart, killing the torturers (Fig.III.). In both torture scenes Maxentius is watching as his empress entreats him to spare Catherine. The story closes under the first panel, with the beheading of St. Catherine under the watchful eye of Maxentius and his advisors (Fig. IV.).

The wings of the altar of St. Catherine in the church of St. James in Levoča (1469) illustrate the same four scenes in the same sequence. The differences between this cycle[99] and that in Turany are minor. The empress Faustina only appears when Catherine

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[96] A third one in Kežmarok is also dedicated to St. Catherine but does not include scenes from her life.
[97] *Gotika,* 764-765.
[98] So identified by Cidlinská, *Oltáre*, 87.
[99] There are, of course, differences in the composition and style of the paintings.

is about to be tortured on the wheel and there is a small figure of an angel present in all scenes, actively intervening by crushing the wheel with a hammer. The panel paintings with Catherine's passion bear out the notion that the evil and the ugly go hand in hand. Especially in the first torture scene and in the beheading the face of the torturer is truly twisted, almost pig-like. The shrine is a combination of the statue of St. Catherine with a wheel and painted images of St. Margaret on the right and St. Barbara on the left with their standard attributes.

Maxentius is absent from the four scenes visible on the closed wings of the altar of *Vir dolorum* in Bardejov. The selection of scenes from the saint's life also differs from the previous examples. In the opening scene St. Catherine again disputes with the philosophers seated on the benches around her, books open, while St. Catherine towers over them in the middle, a gesture of explanation or enumerating arguments moving her hands. The next scene is closely related to the disputation and depicts the already converted philosophers burning in the pyre, two onlookers turning away from the spectacle. An angel with white cloth hovers over the soon-to-be martyrs. The scene with the wheel is a stable part of the legend cycles and a distinctive feature of St. Catherine's legend and remains in its place. The last panel is occupied solely by the executioner just about to bring down the sword, grasping St. Catherine's hair (the angel reappears with the cloth). Violence seems to be the most striking component of this beheading. The figure of St. Catherine does not leave the altarpiece even when the wings are open – she is depicted in the predella, together with St. Elizabeth, St. Cunigunda, St. Ursula, St. Apollonia, and St. Barbara.

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In Poniky, two customary scenes – the dispute with the philosophers and the beheading – recur. The Bardejov altar of St. Barbara and St. Catherine does not include any scene from the life of St. Catherine in its present state.

The two panels from Bátovce expand the range of episodes in the legend cycles discussed so far by two remarkable episodes. In the second panel the viewer witnesses St. Catherine's conversion, with the saint kneeling in front of the hermit who holds an image of the Virgin with child. The other extant panel takes us even further back, to an episode of Catherine's life that rarely finds expression in the pictorial cycles. St. Catherine in the foreground holds a mirror in her hand, probably pondering her own reflected image while another woman, possibly a servant, sits behind her, her hands folded in front of her, observing the saint. Whereas the conversion appears regularly in the versions of the *Legenda aurea,* the latter episode does not come from this popular source. As the textual parallel for this scene a Hungarian poem with the legend of St. Catherine is cited.[100] This poem, which originated in the fifteenth century, is preserved in the Codex of Érsekújvár from the sixteenth century.[101] The two panels are considered to have been parts of a more extensive legend cycle of an altarpiece dedicated to St. Catherine.[102] The context of this image, however, points towards a positive interpretation. Even though the precise

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[100] Imre Takács, ed., *Sigismundus Rex et Imperator: Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg 1387-1437* (Mainz am Rhein: Philip von Zabern, 2006), 623.

[101] Ibid. The relevant lines from the poem are cited on the website of the Museum of Christian Art in Esztergom: "The girl looking at herself in the mirror and searching for her betrothed heeds her father's last advice: "...never marry other / than one as beautiful, / As rich and as wise /... as you yourself are beautiful, rich, and wise," Catherine is then converted to Christian faith by a hermit who holds up to her an icon: "Lo, my child, a panel / that I give you not in vain / This is the image of the king' son whom you wish to see / And this is his mother's image." Catherine departs from her own image – that is, her own soul – in the first scene, and reaches profound faith with the help of the miraculous image in the second." "Master of Bát: Two Scenes from the Life of St. Catherine of Alexandria," www.keresztenymuzeum.hu/collections.php, Keresztény Múzeum Esztergom (Last accessed March, 15 2007).

[102] The episode with the mirror presents an intriguing problem in terms of interpretation. Ivan Gerát points out the various contexts in which the image of the mirror played a role. The symbol of both pride and vanity in the context of virtues and vices, the mirror by its nature is ambiguous. Gerát, *Obrazové témy*, 257.

reference to a mirror in the Hungarian poem does not appear in *Legenda aurea* (and is rare in other versions of the legend), the situation, in which it is employed, is not unknown from other sources. St. Catherine's awareness of her own beauty and scholarly prowess and her decision to marry only a man truly worthy of her (the ideal bridegroom – Christ) is also a part of the *Legenda aurea.*

St. Barbara stands on the side of St. Anne *Selbdritt* in the central shrine of the high altar of St. Anne *Selbdritt* and St. Barbara (1517) in Jazernica (Fig. V-VI) , with a crown on her head, an open book in her right hand and a tower with three windows and an opening with the Host placed at her feet. Whereas the right wing depicts to scenes from the life of Joachim and Anne (Annunciation to Joachim and the meeting at the Golden Gate), the upper panel of the left wing shows St. Barbara splendidly dressed in discussion with a mason in front of the building of the tower (two other masons still work on the construction of the building, proportionally much smaller compared with the two main protagonists of the scene), the three windows in the tower already made (Fig. V.). The lower panel fast forwards to the end of the story: Dioscuros clutches at his daughter's throat while his other hand swings the sword, the beheading witnessed by two other figures talking in the background. The solemn figure of St. Barbara, awaiting her martyrdom with an impassive face (but presumably with joy in her heart), kneels on the ground, hands bound in prayer, a halo radiating around her head; the chalice with the Host is in front of her (Fig. VI.).

The iconography of the altar of St. Barbara and St. Catherine[103] in Bardejov must be approached with some caution. Illustrations of three scenes from the life of St. Barbara are visible on the open wings of the altar but one panel is occupied by the Adoration of the Magi. This extremely unusual combination suggests that the present structure of the altar might not be original but might be a result of the nineteenth-century reconstruction of the altarpiece.[104] The first in the sequence of the scenes from the life of St. Barbara represents the episode usually following Barbara's dispute with her father and her miraculous flight. In this panel she is discovered, betrayed by a shepherd (whose sheep turn into locusts. Praying, she is dragged out of her refuge by her hair, Dioscuros looming over her with a club in his hand. The other two scenes are standard – St. Barbara is tortured and then beheaded.

The most extensive legend cycle of St. Dorothea[105], comprising of twenty scenes from the life of the saint, is not found among the altarpieces, but among the murals of the Spiš region, in the church of St. James in Levoča[106]. Dušan Buran, who studied the cycle in great detail, also remarks on the cult of St. Dorothea in the Spiš region.[107] He points out that due to the prayer upon her death that includes a plea for pregnant women (the same as St. Margaret), she became a patroness and an "identification figure"[108] for many women in late medieval towns. She also protected from poverty and false accusations,

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[103] Cidlinská refers to this altar as the altar of St. Barbara only, Cidlinská, *Oltáre,* 28. In *Gotika,* the central statue in the shrine is identified as St. Catherine, based on the attributes – a book, a sword, and a man under the saint's feet. The tower over the right shoulder of the saints does not have a form typical for mid-fifteenth century and was probably made together with the neogothic architecture of the altarpiece, *Gotika,* 706-707.

[104] *Gotika,* 706.

[105] Dušan Buran, *Studien zur Wandmalerei um 1400 in der Slowakei. Die Pfarrkirche St. Jakob in Leutschau und die Pfarrkirche der St. Franziskus Seraphicus in Poniky* (Weimar: VDG, 2002), 71 (henceforth: Buran, *Studien*).

[106] For the cycle see Buran, *Studien,* 70-86.

[107] Ibid. 84-86.

[108] Ibid. 84.

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and against the dangers of fire and water. Again, the intercessory powers of the particular saint seem to be decisive for the popularity of the cult. Furthermore, St. Margaret enjoyed special popularity in the Spiš region of Upper Hungary: the king Andrew II. brought in 1217 a head relic of the saint from the crusade and donated it to the Spiš provostry.[109]

The high altar of St. Margaret in Mlynica, honoring the patron saint of the church, represents one of the most intriguing examples of iconography oriented on female saints. In the central alcove of the shrine the statue of St. Margaret, a cross in her hand, crushes the figure of Olibrius under her foot, with the dragon positioned close to the drapery of her dress. In a scheme already familiar to us, four female saints keep her company. Only two of them can be identified with certainty: St. Elizabeth of Thuringia, the paragon of Christian charity, gives food to the poor man at her feet, and St. Barbara points to the chalice with host in her hand. The two panel paintings above them are occupied by a widow saint with two rooks and a child and another female saint with child at her feet and the inscription *nid scripsi scripsi* on the inscription band she holds in her hand. When the wings are closed another eight panels become visible. In these St. Mary Magdalene, St. Christina, St. Lucy, St. Apollonia, St. Martha, Ten Thousand martyrs, St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins dying a martyr's death, and in the last panel, St. Genevieve,line up to manifest the indefatigable strength of Christianity. In the four panels of the open wings to legend of St. Margaret unfolds.

The cycle starts with St. Margaret tending the sheep of her nurse, dressed in period fashion, wearing a crown on her head (fig.2). Margaret is spotted by the pagan Olibrius who, infatuated by the beauty of the girl, decides to take her as his wife of conbubine.

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[109] Gerát, *Obrazové témy*, 159.

Fig. 2 St. Margaret tending the sheep
High altar of St. Margaret, Mlynica

Fig. 3 St. Margaret with the dragon,
High altar of St. Margaret, Mlynica

The legend continues on the other wing with the scene typical of Margaret who, after refusing the proposal, is imprisoned. The devil in the form of a dragon appears to her in prison and she defeats him with the sign of the cross (fig.3). A part of the saint's dress ensues from his mouth, indicating a preference for the ingestion version of the story.

Below the first scene, the viewer already becomes witness to the tortures inflicted on the virgin (fig. 4). Saint Margaret sits naked in a wooden barrel filled with liquid, covered by long flowing hair reminding us remotely of another saint, although technically not a virgin, Mary Magdalene. A closer look reveals the instruments of torture lying near the barrel. For a precise explanation of this scene, one has to turn to the legend that clarifies that the saint was put in a tub full of water so that the pain varies and suffering intensifies.[110] Olibrius is watching from the nearby wood with his entourage.

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[110] "Then the judge had her bound and put in a tub full of water, in order to increase the suffering by varying the pain; but suddenly the earth shook and the virgin came out unharmed," Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend,* Vol. 2, 370. This episode is sometimes read as a tub of *boiling* water.

An unexpected element in the panel is the appearance of stones falling from heaven in this scene, which could allude to de Voragine's "but suddenly the earth shook." [111]

Fig. 4 St. Margaret tortured
High altar of St. Margaret, Mlynica

Fig. 5 St. Margaret beheaded
High altar of St. Margaret, Mlynica

The last scene, situated below the fight with dragon, the audience is presented with a traditional part of the martyr's story, the beheading (Fig.5). Again Olibrius is watching as the executioner draws the sword, Margaret kneeling on the green ground, her face without expression, enclosed by a simple landscape against a golden background.

Next to St. Margaret about to sacrifice her life a donor figure - a widow is seen kneeling on the right side of the panel. The donor was first identified as Margaret Thurzo, a daughter from one of the prominent magnate families of Hungary. [112] Recently, it has been acknowledged that the previous identification was incorrect as the altar, dated to 1515-1520, falls into the period when Mlynica still belonged to the Zápoľský family. [113]

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[111] Ibid. The stones are reminiscent of the process of destroying the wheel in the legend of St. Catherine.
[112] Cidlinská, *Oltáre,* 62.
[113] For the recent identification of the donor see Fajt, "Between the court and the city," 421-422.

The widow devoutly praying next to the saint may be Hedwig of Teschen, the widow of Ján Zápoľský. The high altar of St. Margaret in Mlynica is the only example from this region I am aware of that depicts a female donor unaccompanied by male members of her family. At the time the altarpiece in Mlynica was executed, Hedwig's husband had already died. The gathering of female saints on the altarpiece would have provided Hedwig with practically a full range of saintly female role models from St. Mary Magdalene to St. Christina. Each of these saints could have been used as an example for this or that particular aspect of her life, from St. Mary Magdalene repenting her sins through St. Elizabeth (a widow, too) to St. Margaret and her fellow virgin martyrs. Apart from representing the admirable champions of Christianity, these virgin martyrs, victorious over flesh, the brides of Christ, could have been an inspiration for Hedwig in her life of chaste Christian widowhood.

Analyzing the Berlin Life of St. Lucy, Cynthia Hahn remarks:

Each narrative episode explores a virtue or a truth that adheres to, or more accurately, is essential to the saintly subject as a holy being, in effect working to build a representation of the saint and in the process changing or edifying the viewer.[114]

If one approaches the cycle of St. Margaret with this definition of the function of the narrative episodes in a pictorial hagiographic cycle of a saint's life, two major turning points of the story become apparent. The first one, in the case of St. Margaret, is the refusal of a marriage proposal implicit in the scene of Margaret as a shepherdess and Olibrius as a fascinated passer-by. A rejection of a marriage proposal (or other form of sexual relationship) hints at the saint's virginity. Virginity as such can hardly be depicted directly but can employ in its service a number of symbolic devices. Nevertheless, the

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rest of the cycle already concentrates on the torturing of St. Margaret brought about by both her professed religion and her defense of own virginity. Her martyrdom itself, staged in an atmosphere of solemnity, ends the Christ-imitating passion narrative. The martyrdom thread of the story and the constancy of faith are at the center of action arranged in iconic beauty. Virginity probably submerges deeper in the narrative but could subtly resurface with the scene of Margaret in the tub, her naked body covered by flowing hair, provoking and impenetrable at the same time.

Whereas St. Margaret regularly acts the role of a beautiful shepherdess who attracts the fancy of the pagan suitor Olibrius, the same cannot be claimed about St. Barbara or St. Catherine. Barbara's legend tends to open with the scene of the conflict with her father, the tower looming in the background. St. Catherine usually disputes with the philosophers in the first scene of the legend cycles. The two episodes are of crucial importance in the narratives of their legends, in the case of St. Barbara even supplying her attribute, the tower. Moreover, her legend concentrates on the conflict between her and her pagan father and does not introduce any concrete suitor while St. Catherine's legend elevates her erudition and rhetorical skills and, implicitly, the power of her faith and strength of Christian theology.

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[114] Cynthia Hahn, "Icon and Narrative in the Berlin Life of St. Lucy (Kupferstichkabinett MS. 78 A 4)," in *The Sacred Image East and West,* ed. Robert Ousterhout and Leslie Brubaker (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 73.

CONCLUSION:
The Image of Virginity

One scene on the open wings of the altar of St. Stephen and St. Emeric in Matejovce is bound to attract the attention of a scholar dealing with virginity studies. St. Emeric, the son of St. Stephen, kneels at the altar (in Verszprém) and an inscription band next to him reveals that he is just promising to remain a virgin: *Preclara est virginitas, virginitatem mentis et corporis a te exigo.*[115] This unique scene, showing a professed male virgin of the Arpadian dynasty, indicates both the potential and the ramifications of this work.

This present study was called into being by the elusive notion of female virginity particularly placed in the period of the late Middle Ages and in the space of the urban and village churches of Upper Hungary. On the altarpieces of these churches it took form of images of St. Catherine of Alexandria, St. Barbara, St. Dorothea of Caesarea, and St. Margaret of Antioch, known as the four Capital Virgins (*quattuor virgines capitales)*, frequently joined by their fellow female virgin martyrs. This group of saints, from the early period of the Christian church, at the first glance represents ideals and actions remote from the prosperous town communities and small village churches of Upper Hungary. Juxtaposed to the slender figures of brave Christian virgins different types of female saints appeared, St. Elizabeth of Thuringia or St. Anne, whose life and works seemingly fitted much better into the interconnected threads of these communities. I examined the iconographic programs of over sixty fifteenth- and sixteenth-century

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[115] After Gerát, "Konvencie," 89. The altar from Matejovce is discussed in *Gotika,* 702-703, which remarks on the uniqueness of the themes depicted on the altarpiece but also voices doubts about the extent of the paintings' medieval origins. As far as the legend is concerned, Klaniczay is inclined to accept the mid-twelfth century dating and links the leitmotif of the legend, Emeric's chastity, with the prescription of celibacy introduced at the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 416-417.

altarpieces from this region in order to establish whether virginity indeed faded out next to the models of charity, good works, and holy motherhood. The results of this examination support the conclusion that virginity retained its prominent status as one of the ideals of Christian female sanctity as well as Christian femininity.

In order to set these images into a broader cultural context I outlined the possible roles and functions that virginity could have exercised in both the intricate world of the female virgin martyrs' hagiography and in the world of late medieval women. Far from being outdated or removed from everyday experience, virginity seems to have kept its status as one of the premier ideals of femininity as well as female sanctity. The appeal of the cults of these saints as well as their images can be anchored not only in the edifying function of examples like St. Barbara or St. Catherine serving within the framework of girls' education, but also in the continuing importance of the premarital virginity for young women. The ideal of virginity and the heavenly reward awaiting them were deeply ingrained in medieval Christianity and could cause anxiety among women who lost this precious asset through marriage. These women could choose to attempt recovery of this state by devotion, asceticism and penance. Moreover, if understood in broader terms, the virginity of these saints could also allude to the notion of chastity and sexual continence propagated within marriage and widowhood.

The analysis of the iconographic programs of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century altarpieces from Upper Hungary indicates that the popularity of these saints equaled that of the mother saints, such as St. Anne, or newly canonized lay exemplars of charity, such as St. Elizabeth. The *virgines capitales* and their fellow virgin martyrs regularly join the ranks of female saints on the altars and together with St. Anne, St. Elizabeth, St. Mary

Magdalene, or St. Helen, created a mosaic of role models for female Christian behavior. Their pivotal role as the retinue saints of the Virgin Mary also points towards the importance of the idea of virginity in their cult, as do the specific, but not rare, cases when the female virgin martyrs dominate the iconography of the altarpiece.

However telling the analysis might be, to attain a truly complex and comprehensive picture of the functions female virgin martyrs and their virginity might have exercised in late medieval Upper Hungary several issues remain to be addressed. A considerable number of the altarpieces are still situated in the churches in order to trace their place in the decoration and liturgy of the church. It would also be advisable to develop insight into the textual material, including the extant versions of the legends and liturgical offices as well as donation charters, chronicles, and naming patterns. The sermons and exempla also could turn out to be a source for a better understanding of the concept of virginity in late medieval Upper Hungary. Lastly, even though virginity did have a strong affiliation with the female gender, investigation into the role of virginity in men's lives and male saints should provide useful information transcending a simple female/male dichotomy.

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APPENDIX 1: Place Names

Abbreviations:
Counties

	Slovak/Hungarian
A	Abov/Abaúj-Torna
B	Tekov/Bars
G	Gemer-Malý Hont/Gömör és Kishont
H	Hont/Hont
S	Spiš/Szepes
SA	Šariš/Sáros
L	Liptov/Liptó
N	Nitra/Nyitra
Z	Zvolen/Zólyom
T	Turiec/Turóc
TR	Trenčín/Trencsén

Slovak	*Hungarian*	*German*
Arnutovce (S)	Arnótfalva	Höfchen
Banská Bystrica (Z)	Besztercéebanya	Neusohl
Banská Štiavnica (H)	Selmecbánya	Schemnitz
Bardejov (SA)	Bártfa	Bartfeld
Bátovce (H)	Bát/Asszonyvásár	Frauenmarkt
Čerín (Z)	Cserény	---
Dúbrava (L)	Dubrava	---
Fričovce (SA)	Frics	---
Gánovce (S)	Gánóc	Gansdorf
Hermanovce (SA)	Sztankahermány	---
Hlohovec (TR)	Galgóc	Freistadt
Hodkovce (A)	Hatkóc	---
Chyžné (G)	Hizsnyó	---
Jakub (Z)	Szentjakabfalva	---
Jánovce (S)	Szepesjánosfalva	Hensdorf
Jazernica (T)	Márkfalva	---
Kežmarok (S)	Késmárk	Käsmark
Klčov (S)	Kolcsó	---
Košice (A)	Kassa	Kaschau
Koceľovce (G)	Gecelfalva	---
Krupina (H)	Korpona	Karpfen
Levoča (S)	Lőcse	Leutschau
Lipany (SA)	Héthárs	Siebenlinden
Liptovská Mara (L)	Liptószentmária	---
Liptovský Mikuláš (L)	Liptószentmiklós	St. Nikolaus
Liptovský Ondrej (L)	Liptószentandrás	---
Ľubica (S)	Leibic	Leibitz
Lúčky (B)	Jánosrét	Honneshay/Horneshaj
Ludrová (L)	Nemesludrova	---
Mlynica (S)	Malompatak	Mühlenbach/Milenbach

Očová (Z)	Nagyócsa	---
Palúdzka (L)	Kispalugya	---
Poniky (Z)	Pónik	---
Poruba (N)	Mohos	---
Prešov ((SA)	Eperjes	Eperies (Preschau)
Pukanec (H)	Bakabánya	Pukantz
Rákoš (A)	Abaújrákos	---
Radačov (SA)	Radács	---
Rakúsy (S)	Rókus	Roks
Rimavská Baňa (G)	Rimabánya	---
Rokycany (SA)	Berki	---
Sabinov (SA)	Kisszeben	Zeben
Sásová (Z)	Zólyomszászfalu	Sachsendorf
Sliače (L)	Háromszlécs	---
Smrečany (L)	Szmrecsán	---
Spišská Kapitula (S)	Szepeshely	Zipser Kapitel
Spišská Sobota (S)	Szepesszombat	Georgenberg
Spišské Podhradie (S)	Szepesváralja	Kirchdorf
Spišský Štvrtok (S)	Csütörtökhely	Donnersmarkt
Strážky (S)	Nagyőr	Nehre
Šivetice (G)	Süvete	---
Štítnik (G)	Csetnek	---
Trenčín (TR)	Trencsén	Trentschin
Turany (T)	Nagyturány	---
Veľká (S)	Felka	Fölk
Veľká Lomnica (S)	Kakaslomnic	Gross-Lomnitz
Veľký Slavkov (S)	Nagyszalók	Gross-Schlagendorf
Vlková (S)	Farkasfalva	Farksdorf

APPENDIX 2: Catalogue of Altarpieces

Entry Format:
Name of the altar, Location, Museum holdings
Dating
Summary of Iconographic Program
* The asterisk indicates that images of the altarpiece are available in REALonline database.

1. Altar of Virgin Mary, Arnutovce*
   Around 1485
   Shrine: Madonna with Child enthroned between St. Elizabeth and St. Hedwig
   Open wings: St. Roch; St. Agnes; St. Sebastian; St. Lucy
   Closed wings: St. Martin; St. Stephen; St. Adalbert; St. Emeric

2. Altar of St. Barbara, Banská Bystrica*
   1509
   Shrine: Madonna with Child with angels, flanked by St. Jerome and St. Barbara
   Open wings: Crucifixion of St. Peter; Ten Thousand martyrs; St. Leonard freeing a prisoner; Martyr death of St. Ursula
   Closed wings: St. Paul, St. Andrew, St. Thomas; St. Barbara throwing down the idol; St. Helen, St. Longinus, and St. Elizabeth; Beheading of St. Barbara
   Predella: Christ with 14 Holy Helpers
   Upper Structure: Calvary: Christ with *Mater dolorosa* and St. John the Evangelist and the two villains; Above: St. Wolfgang and St. Lawrence

3. Altar of St. Mary Magdalene, Banská Bystrica (originally Jakub)*
   1500-1510
   Shrine: St. Mary Magdalene
   Open wings: St. Agnes, St. Barbara, St. Catherine, St. Dorothea
   Closed wings: Noli me tangere; St. Mary Magdalene washing the feet of Christ with her tears; St. Mary Magdalene is forgiven her sins; Assumption of St. Mary Magdalene; Four panels: posthumous miracles of St. Mary Magdalene (resurrection of wife and child of pilgrim; a knight resurrected in order to receive the last rites)

4. Altar of St. Anne (small altar of Virgin Mary), Bardejov*
   1390-1410 and around 1485
   Shrine: Madonna with Child; St. Apollonia, St. Dorothea, St. Elizabeth, St. Barbara
   Open wings: Annunciation to St. Joachim; Presentation of the Virgin at the temple; St. Joachim and the high priest; St. Joachim and St. Anne at the Golden Gate
   Closed wings: Angel from the Annunciation to Virgin Mary; St. Christina; Virgin Mary from the Annunciation; St. Apollonia
   Predella: Vera icon

5. Altar of St. Barbara, Bardejov*
    1450-1460; 1480-1490 (Throne of Mercy)
    Shrine: St. Barbara with a female saint; St. Hedwig; St. Catherine; St. Lucy
    Open wings: Adoration of the Magi; Tortures of St. Barbara; St. Dioscuros discovering the saint; Beheading of St. Barbara
    Closed wings: The angel from the Annunciation; Virgin Mary from the Annunciation
    Predella: Throne of Mercy
    Upper structure: Open wings: A female saint (lost); St. Agnes (lost); St. Catherine (lost); St. Ursula; Closed wings: A prophet (lost); Prophet Palan

6. Altar of St. Andrew or of All Saints, Bardejov*
    Around 1460
    Shrine: St. Andrew; Virgin Mary; St. Cosmas and St. Damian; St. Martin and St. Lawrence; Crucifixion; St. Bruno and St. John of Matha; St. Elizabeth and St. Agnes Lamentation
    Open wings: St. Anthony the Hermit and St. Barbara; St. Felix and St. Fortunatus; Christ on the Olive Mountain; St. Sebastian and St. Fabian; St. Christopher and St. Macarius; St. George
    Closed wings: The angel from the Annunciation; St. Catherine; St. Dorothea; Virgin Mary from the Annunciation; St. Margaret; St. Christina
    Upper Structure: Open wings: St. Ambrose; Christ the Good Shepherd; Adoration of the Magi; St. Augustine; Closed wings: Prophet Elias; Prophet Isaiah

7. Altar of *Vir dolorum*, Bardejov*
    1460-1470; 1500-1510
    Shrine: *Vir dolorum*
    Open wings: Christ on the Olive Mountain; Coronation with the Crown of Thorns; Flagellation; Crucifixion
    Closed wings: St. Catherine with the Philosophers; Wheel torture of St. Catherine; The Philosophers burnt; Beheading of St. Catherine
    Predella: St. Elizabeth and St. Cunigunde; St. Ursula and St. Catherine; St. Apollonia and St. Barbara

8. Altar of St. Apollonia or St. Anne *Selbdritt*
    1485; 1500-1510
    Shrine: St. Anne *Selbdritt*; St. George; St. Apollonia
    Open wings: Ten Thousand martyrs; A group of saints: St. Bibiana, St. Dionysius, St. Margaret, St. Pantaleon, St. Barbara, St. Catherine, and St. Christopher; The killing of the innocent; St. Sophia
    Closed wings: St. Fabian; St. Eligius; St. Sebastian; St. Urban
    Upper Structure: St. Catherine

9. Altar of the Nativity of the Lord, Bardejov*
    End of 15th Century

Shrine: Nativity; St. Catherine; St. Barbara; St. Margaret; St. Dorothea

Open wings: Dormition of Virgin Mary; Christ aged twelve in the temple; The killing of the innocent; Flight to Egypt

Closed wings: Christ on the Olive Mountain; Coronation with the Crown of Thorns; Christ captured; Christ in front of Caiphas; Christ in front of Pilate; Bearing of the Cross; Flagellation; Crucifixion

Predella: Visitation; Adoration of the Magi; Annunciation to Virgin Mary

Upper Structure: Center: St. Ladislaus flanked by St. Anne *Selbdritt*, and Virgin Mary; On the sides: St. Adalbert; St. Egidius

10. Altar of Virgin Mary (so called Veronika Mager's altar), Bardejov

1489

Shrine: Virgin Mary flanked by St. Peter, St. Hedwig, St. Paul, and St. John the Evangelist

Open wings: Annunciation; Nativity; Visitation; Adoration of the Magi

Closed wings: St. Barbara and St. Catherine; St. Cosmus and St. Damian; St. Ursula; St. Andrew and St. Erasmus

Upper Structure: Over the shrine: St. Sebastian

11. Altar of Virgin Mary, Dúbrava (now in SNG BA)

1510-1520

Shrine: Madonna with Child; St. Dorothea, St. Agnes, St. Ursula, and St. Lucy

Open wings: Annunciation; Nativity; Visitation; Adoration of the Magi

Closed wings: St. Cosmas; St. Damian

Predella: Christ and 14 Holy Helpers

12. High Altar of Virgin Mary, Hermanovce

First quarter of 16th century

Shrine: Virgin Mary; St. Dorothea; St. Barbara; St. Catherine; St. Ursula; St. Barbara; St. Agnes

Open wings: Resurrection of Christ; Nativity; Adoration of the Magi; Dormition of the Virgin

Closed wings: St. Eduard, St. Emeric, St. Louis; St. Florian, St. Sebastian, St. Erasmus; St. Martin, St. Wolfgang, St. George; St. Augustine, St. Nicholas, St. Lawrence

13. High Altar of St. Anne, Jazernica*

1517

Shrine: Equally standing: St. Anne *Selbdritt*; St. Barbara

Open wings: Annunciation on to St. Joachim; St. Joachim and St. Anne at the Golden Gate; St. Barbara discussing the building of the tower with a mason; Death of St. Barbara

Closed wings: St. Stephen and St. Ladislaus; St. Cosmas and St. Damian; St. John The Almsgiver and St. Martin; St. Emeric and St. Leopold

Predella: St. Anne, Jesus, and Virgin Mary between the donors (Cidlinská)/mystical marriage of St. Catherine (REALonline)

Upper Structure: Christ on the Cross in the center; Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist

14. Altar of St. Catherine, Kežmarok*
   1493
   Shrine: St. Barbara and St. Catherine and St. Margaret
   Open wings: St. Dorothea; St. Apollonia; St. Agnes; St. Ursula

15. High Altar of Virgin Mary, Klčov (originally from the vicinity of Kežmarok)*
   1500-1510
   Shrine: Madonna with Child s; St. Catherine s; St. Barbara s
   Open wings: Annunciation; Visitation; Nativity; Adoration of the Magi
   Closed wings: Flagellation; Coronation with the Crown of Thorns

16. Altar of St. Catherine, Levoča*
   1469
   Shrine: St. Catherine; with St. Margaret and St. Barbara
   Open wings: Dispute with the philosophers; Beheading of St. Catherine; Tortures of St. Catherine; Wheel martyrdom
   Closed wings: *Mater dolorosa*; *Vir dolorum*
   Upper Structure: Over right wing: Prophet Samuel; Over left wing: Prophet Isaiah

17. Altar of *Vir dolorum*, Levoča*
   1476-1490
   Shrine: *Vir dolorum*; On his left: St. John the Evangelist; On his right: Virgin Mary
   Open wings: St. Sebastian and St. Christopher; St. Barbara and St. Catherine; St. John the Baptist and St. James the Elder; St. Margaret and St. Dorothea
   Closed wings: Annunciation; Visitation, Nativity, Adoration of the Magi
   Predella: Prophet Jonas (check?)
   Upper Structure: Over the center of the shrine: St. Andrew

18. Altar of Our Lady of Snows, Levoča*
   1494-1500
   Shrine: Madonna with Jesus and angels; St. Barbara; St. Dorothea; St. Catherine; St. Margaret
   Open wings: Annunciation; Nativity; Visitation; Adoration of the Magi
   Closed wings: Christ being undressed; Twelve-year old Jesus in the temple; The killing of the innocent; Flight to Egypt; Christ bidding farewell to Virgin Mary; Assumption of the Lord; Dormition of the Virgin; Coronation of the Virgin
   Predella: Christ Enthroned
   Upper Structure: Christ and Man of Sorrows; Over him: St. James the Elder

19. Small Altar of St. Catherine, Levoča (originally Vyšné Repáše)
    1510-1520
    Shrine: St. Catherine
    Open wings: St. Barbara; St. Dorothea
    Closed wings: St. Apollonia; St. Odilia

20. Altar of St. Anne, Lipany*
    1500-1520 (statue); 1526 (paintings)
    Shrine: St. Anne *Selbdritt*
    Open wings: Annunciation; Nativity; Adoration of the Magi; Dormition of the
        Virgin
    Closed wings: St. Odilia, St. Barbara, St. Dorothea, St. Ursula; St. Catherine, St.
        Apollonia, St. Agnes, St. Margaret

21. High Altar of St. Martin, Lipany*
    Around 1520
    Shrine: Madonna with Child flanked by St. Martin (bishop) and St. Nicholas
        (bishop)
    Open wings: Annunciation; Nativity; Visitation; Dormition of the Virgin
    Closed wings: Christ before the high priest; Christ on the Olive Mountain; Arrest
        of Christ; Christ bidding farewell to his mother; Deposition; Carrying of the
        Cross; Crucifixion; Ecce homo
    Upper Structure: Coronation of Virgin Mary; St. Barbara; St. Catherine

22. Small Altar of Virgin Mary, Liptovská Mara, MNG
    Around 1450
    Shrine: Virgin Mary between St. Catherine and St. Margaret
    Open wings: St. Nicholas; St. John the Evangelist
    Closed wings: *Mater dolorosa*; *Vir dolorum*

23. Altar of Virgin Mary, Liptovský Mikuláš
    1470-1480
    Shrine: Virgin Mary in the center flanked by St. Catherine, St. Dorothea, St.
        Barbara, and St. Margaret
    Open wings: Annuciation, Nativity, Visitation, Adoration of the Magi
    Closed wings: *Vir dolorum*; *Mater dolorosa*; St. John the Baptist; St. John the
        Evangelist
    Predella: Vera icon carried by two angel between St. Peter and St. Paul

24. Altar of Virgin Mary, Liptovský Ondrej, MNG
    Around 1480
    Shrine: Enthroned Madonna with Jesus and angels
    Open wings: St. Barbara (?); St. Martin (pope); St. Dorothea; St. Leonard

Closed wings: Christ on Olive Mountain; Flagellation; Coronation with the Crown of Thorns; Crucifixion

Predella: Vera icon carried by angels

25. ## Altar of St. Andrew, Liptovský Ondrej, MNG

1512

Shrine: St. Andrew

Open wings: Crucifixion; Resurrection; Torture of St. Andrew; Crucifixion of St. Andrew

Closed wings: St. John the Evangelist and St. Peter; St. Barbara and St. Catherine; St. James the Younger, St. Simon, and St. Juda; St. Margaret and a female saint

Predella: Vera icon carried by two angels

Upper Structure: St. Bartholomew

26. ## Altar of St. Anne, Ľubica, MNG

1510-1520

Shrine: St. Anne *Selbdritt*

Open wings: St. Ursula; St. Elizabeth of Thuringia; St. Apollonia; St. Barbara

Closed wings: St. Mary Cleophas, St. Simon, St. James the Younger, St. Jude, St. Joseph, St. Alpheus; St. Anne, St. Salomas, St. Joachim, St. Cleophas; Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, little Jesus; Virgin Mary, St. Salomas, St. Zebede, St. John the Evagelist, St. James the Elder; St. Emerantia, St. Stollanus, St. Anne, St. Esmeria; St. Esmeria, St. Ephraim, St. Elizabeth; St. Eliud, St. Emerantia, St. Enim; St. Enim, St. Menelia, St. Servatius

Predella: Half figures: Virgin Mary, Christ, and St. John the Evangelist

Upper Structure: St. Christopher; St. John the Almsgiver; A male saint

27. ## Altar of Holy Bishops, Ľubica, MNG

1521

Shrine: St. Nicholas; A bishop saint of equal standing

Open wings: St. Lucy; St. Margaret; St. Apollonia; St. Ursula

Closed wings: Christ on Olive Mountain; Flagellation; Coronation with the Crown of Thorns; Pilate washing his hands; Ecce homo; Carrying of the Cross; Crucifixion; Resurrection of Christ

Predella: Lamentation

Upper Structure: St. Florian; St. James the Elder; A male saint

28. ## Altar of Virgin Mary and St. Dorothy, Lúčky, MNG

1470-1480

Shrine: Equal statues of Virgin Mary and St. Dorothea

Open wings: St. Peter and a bishop saint with a book; St. Bartholomew and St. John the Evangelist; St. Barbara and St. Elizabeth; St. Margaret and St. Apollonia

Closed wings: Angel from the Annunciation; Virgin Mary from the Annunciation; Half-figure of Christ; A male saint

29. Altar of Coronation of Virgin Mary, Ludrová, Liptovské Múzeum Ružomberok*

    1510-1520

    Shrine: Coronation of Virgin Mary

    Open wings: St. Stephen and St. Ladislaus; St. Leonard and St. Nicholas; Other two panels missing

    Closed wings: St. Erasmus, St. Blazej, and St. Egidius; St. Matthew, St. Andrew, and St. James the Elder; Missing panel; St. Achatius, St. Dionysius and St. Eustach; St. Vitus, St. Christopher, and St. Pantaleon; St. Simon, St. Zelates, and St. Bartholomew with St. Jude; St. Margaret, St. Catherine, St. Barbara

    Predella: *Vir dolorum* between *Mater dolorosa* and St. John the Evangelist; Angels with a cross and a column

30. Altar of Virgin Mary, Mlynica, KME

    Around 1480

    Shrine: Madonna with Child; St. Catherine; St. Dorothea; St. Mary Magdalene; St. Barbara

    Open wings: Visitation; Annunciation; Nativity; Adoration of the Magi

    Closed wings: *Mater dolorosa*; *Vir dolorum*; A male saint; St. Lawrence

    Predella: A group of male saints

    Upper Structure: A male saint

31. High Altar of St. Margaret, Mlynica*

    1515-1520

    Shrine: St. Margaret; A female saint with child; St. Elizabeth; A female saint with child; St. Barbara

    Open wings: St. Margaret tending the sheep; St. Margaret tortured; St. Margaret defeats the dragon with the sign of the Cross; Beheading of St. Margaret

    Closed wings: St. Mary Magdalene; St. Christina; St. Lucy; St. Apollonia; St. Martha; Ten Thousand martyrs; Death of St. Ursula; St. Genevieve

    Predella: Christ and ten female saints

    Upper Structure: St. Anthony the Hermit; St. Cosmas; St. Damian

32. Altar of the Adoration of the Magi, Palúdzka

    1510-1520

    Shrine: Adoration of the Magi (relief)

    Open wings: St. Barbara and St. Catherine; St. Anne *Selbdritt*, and St. Helen; St. Sebastian and St. Dionysius; St. Sophia

    Closed wings: St. Paul; St. Peter

33. Altar of Virgin Mary, Pukanec*

    1480-1490

    Shrine: Madonna with Child; St. Barbara; St. Margaret; St. Catherine; St. Dorothea

Open wings: Annunciation; Dormition of the Virgin; Circumcision of Christ; Coronation of Mary

Closed wings: St. Sebastian; Death of St. Barbara; Virgin Mary; St. Christopher; St. Egidius; St. George; Michael the Archangel; St. John the Baptist

34. High Altar of the Crucifixion, Pukanec

End of the 15th Century

Shrine: Christ of the Cross with the two villans; St. Longinus; *Mater dolorosa*; St. Mary Magdalene; St. John the Evangelist; a soldier

Open wings: Christ on the Olive Mountain; Flagellation; The arrest of Christ; Carrying of the Cross

Closed wings: St. Barbara and St. Catherine; St. Dorothea and St. Margaret; St. Sebastian and St. John the Evangelist; St. Wolfgang and St. Lawrence

Upper Structure: St. Nicholas, *Vir dolorum*; St. Egidius

35. High Altar of Virgin Mary, Rakúsy*

Around 1500

Shrine: Virgin with Child; St. Barbara; St. Margaret; ST. Catherine; St. Elizabeth

Open wings: Visitation; Adoration of the Magi; Anunciation; Nativity

Closed wings: St. Stephen (king); St. George; St. John the Baptist; St. Mary Magdalene

36. Altar of St. Mary Magdalene, Rokycany, MNG

1480-1490

Shrine: The Assumption of St. Mary Magdalene

Open wings: Assumption of Christ; Martyr's death of St. Ursula; Dormition of Virgin; Crucifixion and Ten Thousand martyrs

Closed wings: St. Wolfgang; St. Barbara; St. Catherine; St. Eugenie; St. Margaret; St. Elizabeth; Miraculous multiplication of bread

37. Altar of St. Anne, Sabinov, MNG

Around 1520

Shrine: St. Anne with Virgin with child Jesus; Over them an angel with a drapery

Open wings: St. Alpheus; St. Mary Cleophas; St. Zebede; St. Mary Salome

Closed wings: St. Oswald; A female saint with a house; A female saint with a house; St. Martin; St. Stephen (king); St. Ursula; St. Apollonia; St. Coloman

Predella: Tree of Jesse

Upper Structure: St. Mary Magdalene; a female saint; St. Luke

38. Altar of the Annunciation to Virgin Mary, Sabinov, MNG

Around 1520

Shrine: Angel and Virgin Mary from the Annunciation; God the Father; Angel with lute; Angel with violin

Open wings: St. Dorothea; St. Barbara; St. Margaret; St. Catherine

Closed wings: Visitation; Dormition; Coronation of Virgin Mary; Twelve-year old Jesus in the temple; Flight to Egypt; Nativity; Circumcision of Christ; Christ and the three women at his

Predella: Adoration of the Magi; Two kings on the right of the Magi; One king on the left of the Magi

Upper Structure: A female saint with a palm leaf; A female saint with a book; St. Agnes

39. Altar of Crucifixion, Sabinov*

Around 1520

Shrine: Christ on the Cross flanked by *Mater dolorosa* and St. John the Evagelist; below St. Mary Magdalene

Open wings: St. Helen with the scholars; The Holy Cross brings the dead back to life; St. Heraclius brings the Cross to Jerusalem for the second time

Closed wings: St. George and a bishop saint; St. Vitus and St. Christopher; St. Barbara and St. Margaret; St. Eustach and a bishop saint; St. Egidius and St. Erasmus; St. Dionysius and St. Catherine; St. Pantaleon and a saint with a sword; A saint with his arms and legs severed

Predella: Christ falling under the Cross, flanked by St. Peter and St. Paul on the sides

40. Altar of St. Sophia, Sásová, Stredoslovenské múzeum Banká Bystrica

Around 1440

Shrine: Sophia with her three daughters

Open wings: Martyr death of St. Agatha; Death of St. Susan; Torture of St. Dorothea; Martyrdom of St. Ursula

Closed wings: *Mater dolorosa*; *Vir dolorum*

41. Altar of Virgin Mary, Sliače*

1510-1520

Shrine: Virgin with Child flanked by St. Catherine, St. Margaret, St. Barbara, and St. Dorothea

Open wings: Annunciation; Adoration of the Magi; Visitation; Nativity

Closed wings: St. Apollonia; St. Catherine

Predella: Vera icon carried by two angels

42. High Altar of Virgin Mary, Smrečany*

Around 1480

Shrine: Madonna enthroned with child Jesus between St. Catherine and St. Barbara

Open wings: Visitation; Annunciation; Nativity; Adoration of the Magi

Closed wings: *Mater dolorosa*; *Vir dolorum* and arma christi; St. Dorothea; St. Margaret

Predella: *Vir dolorum* entombed; St. Christopher and a bishop saint; St. Sebastian (?) and St. George

43. High Altar of St. Martin, Spišská Kapitula*
     1470-1478
     Shrine: Madonna with Child flanked by St. Martion and St. Nicholas
     Open wings: St. Ladislaus, St. Emeric, and St. Stephen; St. Apollonia, St. Margaret, and St. Elizabeth; St. Edward (king), St. Louis of Toulouse, and St. Louis (king); St. Catherine, St. Barbara, and St. Ursula
     Closed wings: The Last Supper; Christ on the Olive Mountain; Christ in front of Pilate; Flagellation; Coronation with the Crown of Thorns; Carrying of the Cross; Crucifixion; Lamentation

44. Altar of the Dormition of the Virgin, Spišská Kapitula*
     1470-1478
     Shrine: Dormition of the Virgin with Christ above carrying the Virgin's soul to Heaven; Two flying angels on the sides
     Open wings: St. Stephen (king); St. Ladislaus; St. Emeric; St. John the Almsgiver
     Closed wings: St. Blaise; St. George; St. Barbara; St. Adalbert; Visitation; St. Christopher; St. Elizabeth; Annunciation
     Upper Structure: Coronation of the Virgin; St. John the Baptist; St. Sebastian; a bishop saint

45. Altar of Virgin Mary, Spišská Kapitula, MNG
     Around 1480
     Shrine: Virgin with Child flanked by St. Catherine, St. Dorothea, St. Barbara, and St. Helena
     Open wings: Nativity; Annunciation; Adoration of the Magi; Visitation
     Closed wings: *Mater dolorosa*; St. John the Evangelist; *Vir dolorum*; St. Mary Magdalene

46. Altar of Virgin Mary, Spišská Sobota*
     Around 1470
     Shrine: Virgin Mary flanked by St. Dorothea, St. Margaret, St. Catherine, and St. Barbara
     Open wings: Nativity; Annunciation; Adoration of the Magi; Sacrifice in the temple
     Closed wings: St. Anne and St. Joachim at the Golden Gate; Annunciation to Joachim
     Predella: The twelve apostles
     Upper Structure: St. Peter and St. Paul with Vera icon; Semi-figure of a prophet over left and right wings

47. The so called Small Altar of Crucifixion, Spišská Sobota
     1510-1520
     Shrine: View on Jerusalem flanked by The Arrest of Christ, The Coronation with the Crown of Thorns, Christ in front of Pilate, and Christ being nailed to the Cross

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Open wings: Christ tortured; Christ carrying the Cross; Flagellation; The sermon of Pope Gregory the Great

Closed wings: St. Barbara; St. Margaret; St. Catherine; St. Dorothea

48. Altar of St. Anne, Spišská Sobota

Around 1520

Shrine: St. Anne *Selbdritt*

Open wings: St. Mary Magdalene; St. Elizabeth; St. Apollonia; St. Helen

Closed wings: St. Mary Cleophas, St. Alfeus, St. Simon Zelotes, St. Jacob the Younger, St. Jude, and St. Joseph; St. Salomas, St. Joachim, and St. Cleophas; Virgin Mary with child Jesus and St. Joseph; St. Mary Salome, St. Zebedeus, St. John the Evangelist, and St. Jacob the Elder; St. Emerantiana, St. Stollanus, St. Anne, St. Esmeria; St. Esmeria, St. Afra, St. Elizabeth, St. Eliud, and St. John the Baptist; St. Eliud and his wife, St. Enim, and St. Servatius; St. Enim, St. Menelia, and St. Servatius

Predella: Semifigures of *Vir dolorum*, *Mater dolorosa*, and St. John the Evangelist

49. Altar of Virgin Mary, Spišské Podhradie*

1521

Shrine: Virgin Mary

Open wings: St. Barbara; St. Margaret; St. Ursula; St. Genovieve

Closed wings: St. Christina; St. Petronella; St. Dorothea; St. Juliana

50. Altar of Virgin Mary, Strážky, SNG

1450-1460

Shrine: Virgin Mary between St. Barbara and St. Catherine

Open wings: St. Nicholas (bishop) (?); St. Stanislaus (bishop) (?)

Closed wings: *Mater dolorosa*; *Vir dolorum*

51. Altar of Virgin Mary (private), Trenčín (originally Spišský Štvrtok, MNG)

1440-1450

Shrine: Virgin Mary with Child

Open wings: St. Catherine; St. Barbara

Closed wings: St. Ursula; St. Dorothea

52. High Altar of St. Catherine, Turany (originally Spišský Štvrtok)*

1490-1500

Shrine: St. Catherine; St. Barbara s; St. Margaret s; St. Dorothea s; St. Ursula s

Open wings: St. Catherine's disputation; Beheading of St. Catherine; Tortures of St. Catherine; St. Catherine and the wheel

Closed wings: Virgin Mary from the Annunciation; St. Stephen and St. Emeric; Angel from the Annunciation; St. Nicholas and St. Ladislaus

53. ## Altar of Virgin Mary, Veľká, KME
   Around 1480
   Shrine: Virgin Mary flanked by St. Catherine s, St. Barbara s, St. Dorothea s, and a female saint s
   Open wings: Visitation; Annunciation; Nativity; Adoration of the Magi
   Predella: Vera icon carried by angels

54. ## Altar of Virgin Mary, Veľká Lomnica
   1494
   Shrine: Madonna with Child flanked by St. Lucy, St. Elizabeth, St. Apollonia, and St. Agnes
   Open wings: St. Catherine; St. Barbara; St. Margaret; St. Dorothea
   Closed wings: Annunciation; Nativity; Visitation; Adoration of the Magi
   Predella: Acant foliage
   Upper Structure: *Vir dolorum*; *Mater dolorosa*; St. John the Evangelist

55. ## Altar of Virgin Mary, Veľký Slavkov, MNG
   1483
   Shrine: Madonna with Child flanked by St. Catherine, a female saint, St. Dorothea, and a female saint
   Open wings: Visitation; Annunciation; Nativity; Adoration of the Magi
   Closed wings: *Mater dolorosa*; Angel from the Annunciation; *Vir dolorum*; Mary from the Annunciation

56. ## High Altar of Virgin Mary, Vlková*
   Around 1480
   Shrine: Madonna with Child s flanked by St. Catherine s, St. Margaret s, St. Barbara s, St. Dorothea
   Open wings: Annunciation; Adoration of the Magi; Visitation; Nativity
   Closed wings: Capture of Christ; Christ in front of Pilate; Ecce Homo; The carrying of the Cross

Fig. I. St. Catherine's dispute with the philosophers,
High Altar of St. Catherine, Turany

Fig. II. St. Catherine tortured,
High altar of St. Catherine, Turany

Fig. III. The wheel martyrdom of St. Catherine,
High altar of St. Catherine, Turany

Fig. IV. St. Catherine beheaded,
High altar of St. Catherine, Turany

Fig. V. St. Barbara instructs the mason,
High altar of St. Anne *Selbdritt* and St. Barbara, Jazernica

Fig. VI. St Barbara beheaded,
High altar of St. Anne *Selbdritt* and St. Barbara, Jazernica

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Fig. VII. St. Barbara, St. Catherine, and St. Margaret,
Altar of St. Catherine, Kežmarok

Fig. VIII. St. Dorothea, St. Apollonia, and St. Ursula, Altar of St. Catherine, Kežmarok