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The Iconography of Medieval Passion Cycles in Spiš and Gemer Counties

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by

Celina Berill Félix

(Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University Private University, Vienna, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the Master of Arts degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern
Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

Chair, Examination Committee

Thesis Supervisor

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Author's declaration

I, the undersigned, **Celina Berill Félix**, candidate for the MA degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern 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.

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Abstract

The thesis discusses the iconography of Christological cycles, which have Passion scenes in their focus, and which are painted in the chancels of medieval churches, located in Spiš and Gemer Counties of the Kingdom of Hungary (today Slovakia) between the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century. The examined decorations are in the churches of Žehra, Stará Ľubovňa, Podolíneč, and Slatvina from Spiš, and in Štítňik, Kocel'ovce, Ochtiná and Plešivec from Gemer. The aim of the research is to analyze the iconographic program of the wall paintings in the above-mentioned churches, to identify the focus of the iconographical program, moreover, to study the scenes individually to see what influence can be traced in each scene and in the narrative program of the chancel as a whole. Furthermore, the study intends to reveal the sources of these influences, which are found through the comparative iconographical analysis, by considering the impact of the popular religious, contemplative, and devotional writings and religious practices.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The aims of my research and the structure of the thesis

My research focuses on Christological cycles painted in the chancels of medieval churches in Spiš (Szepes) and Gemer (Gömör) Counties of the Kingdom of Hungary (today in Slovakia) from the 14th and the beginning of the 15th centuries; cycles that have Passion scenes in their focus. I analyze the iconography and the narrative of these wall paintings and compare their differences and similarities.

In the 14th and in the first half of the 15th century, numerous churches were decorated with wall paintings in all areas of the former Kingdom of Hungary. Many churches, mostly village churches in Upper Hungary (present-day Slovakia) endured, preserving their interior medieval decorations. The greatest number of wall paintings from this period are to be found in the counties of Spiš and Gemer.¹ In the medieval churches of the area, one of the most common iconographic themes in the chancels are the Life and Passion of Christ.

In my thesis I analyze the wall painting of chancels, which are depicting the Passion of Christ. I based my selection of churches on the potential for a relevant iconographic analysis. The chosen churches are in sufficiently good condition to get a whole understanding in the largest extent possible, they are not too fragmentary for the analysis of the individual scenes, and, furthermore, the cycles are the closest to the original medieval appearance concerning the arrangement of the scenes and the visibility of the images. The eight churches that I focus on are in Žehra (Zsegra), Stará Ľubovňa (Ólubló), Podolíneec (Podolin), Slatvina (Szlátvin) from

¹ János Vég, "Német és cseh stíluskapcsolatok" *Magyarországi művészet 1300-1470 körül*. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987.) p. 479; Plekanec, Vladimír, and Haviar, Tomáš, *Gotický Gemer a Malohont: italianizmy v stredovekej nástennej maľbe*. (Martin: Matice slovenskej, 2010.) p. 11

Spiš County and Štítnik (Csetnek), Kocel'ovce (Gecelfalva), Ochtiná (Martonháza) and Plešivec (Pelsőc) from Gemer County.

The eight Passion cycles were made in the same period in the same kingdom; however, they are all different in their arrangement, in their way of narrating the story, conveying different messages. The decoration of the churches is different, the scenes are arranged in various ways to convey an individual message. The aim of my research is to study the iconographic program of the wall paintings in the above-mentioned churches, decorated with a depiction of the Passion of Christ to identify the focus of the program, moreover, to analyze the scenes individually to see what influence can be traced in their narration and to reveal the sources of this influence by comparative iconography.

To support my research, I visited and examined the churches in person, except for Stará Ľubovňa, which is under restoration. However, I consulted the restorer, Peter Koreň about the ongoing restoration of Stará Ľubovňa and Plešivec, which I had the possibility to see during my research. Furthermore, I also looked at the copies of the wall paintings from the 20th century and the restoration documents of the churches in the Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument Protection Documentation Center.

In the following, after the notes on the scholarship of Spiš and Gemer, I discuss the historical context of the wall paintings, then I briefly summarize the painting styles and stylistic influences of Spiš and Gemer in the 14th and 15th centuries. The last subchapter of the introduction is on the discovery of the wall paintings and their earlier and ongoing restorations. In the second chapter I describe and analyze the arrangement of the depicted scenes of the side walls, the triumphal arch, and the vault of the eight churches. Thereafter I make a comparative iconographical analysis of the churches and after a summary of the characteristics I conclude my thesis. Among the appendices I include a catalogue of all the eight churches, which contains

the essential historical data, a short description of the buildings, the systematic description of the wall paintings and sketches of the arrangement of the cycles.

The wall paintings of Spiš and Gemer are frequently discussed. However, scholars mostly focus on the analysis of the stylistic connections, the question of commissioners and the incorporation of the cycles into the scholarly discussion on the mural painting of the counties or the Kingdom. Works with an iconographical approach are less frequent. Some of the wall paintings of Spiš and Gemer were already discussed in 1874, in the book on Hungarian murals by Flóris Rómer.² Some of the works, which mentions the wall paintings of Slovakia, includes the list of monuments of Slovakia from 1969 and the work of Dvořáková, Krása, and Stejskal, published in 1978, which summarizes the art history of medieval wall paintings in Slovakia and describes the churches individually in its catalog.³ I also need to mention a book which was published in 1987, edited by Ernő Marosi, which gives broad art historical synthesis of the art of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary and the comprehensive catalogue edited by Dušan Buran, and a recent publication from 2018, which presents an up-to-date view on the medieval art of Hungary.⁴ Finally, the book of Iván Gerát has to be mention on the medieval pictorial themes in Slovakia, in which he mentions the most important iconographical themes of medieval art of Slovakia.⁵ The scholarly works concentration on the two counties are also present from the early 20th century.⁶ The most important works on the wall painting of Spiš

² Flóris Rómer, *Régi falképek Magyarországon*. (Budapest, Eggenberger, 1874.)

³ Alžbeta Güntherová-Mayerová, *Súpis pamiatok na Slovensku*. (Bratislava, Slovenský Ústav Pamiatkovej Starostlivosti a Ochrany Prírody, 1969).; Dvořáková, Vlasta, Krása, Josef, and Stejskal, Karel, *Středověká Nastěnná Malba Na Slovensku*. (Praha: Odeon, 1978.)

⁴ Ernő Marosi (ed.), *Magyarországi művészet 1300-1470 körül, vol 1*, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987.); Dušan Buran, *Gotika*. [Exhibition catalog]. (Bratislava: Slovenská národná galéria a Vydavateľstvo Slovart spol. s r. o., 2003) Xavier Barral i Altet, Pál Lővei, Vinni Lucherini, Imre Takács, *The Art of Medieval Hungary*. (Roma: Viella, 2018.)

⁵ Ivan Gerát, *Stredoveké obrazové témy na Slovensku*. (Bratislava: Veda vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied, 2001.)

⁶ Kornél Divald, *Szepes vármegye művészeti emlékei. 2. kötet*. (Budapest, Stephaneum, 1906.); Borbála Jendrassik, *Szepes vármegye középkori falképei*. Ph.D Dissertation, A Budapesti Kir. Magyar Pázmány Péter Tudományegyetem Művészettörténeti és Keresztényrégészeti Intézetének dolgozatai. 1938.

are the book of Mária Prokopp, which contains the description of most important fresco cycles of the county, and the comprehensive work and catalogue of Vladimír Plekanec and Milan Togner, which is published both in Slovak and English in 2012, containing the description of the images and large reproductions of the frescoes.⁷ While for Gemer I need to mention the 1989 monograph of Milan Togner, a writing of Mária Prokopp published in 2002, which contains large reproductions of the wall painting with a short description, moreover the work of Vladimír Plekanec and Tomáš Haviar, published in 2010, which includes the description of the wall painting and the history of commissioner families as well with large reproductions of the frescoes.⁸

1.2. History and the Landowners

In the late 13th century, the Kingdom of Hungary started to take an increasing role in the economy of Europe thanks to its gold, silver, and copper ore mines. In the area of today's Slovakia, several mines were used to extract the valuable ores, these mines and the privileged mining towns were owned by the king and the smaller ones by nobles. Until the Age of Exploration the Kingdom of Hungary provided the major percent of the silver and gold production in Europe. The regions of mining towns therefore had a great importance and gained a striking wealth.⁹ In the first half of the 14th century, a huge development started in Gemer and the Spiš counties, thanks to their rich precious metal ores and iron ore mines.¹⁰ Furthermore, free royal towns, and regional market towns were established, or already existing settlements got town privileges. Consequently, an intense construction took place. By the end

⁷ Mária Prokopp, *Középkori falképek a Szepességben*. (Budapest: Méry Ratio, 2009).; Milan Togner and Vladimír Plekanec, *Medieval Wall Paintings in Spiš*. (Bratislava: Arte Libris, 2012.)

⁸ Milan Togner, *Stredoveká nástenná maľba v Gemeri*. (Bratislava: Tatran, 1989.); Mária Prokopp, *Középkori freskók Gömörben*. (Budapest: Méry Ratio, 2002.), Plekanec, and Haviar, *Gotický Gemer a Malohont: italianizmy v stredovekej nástennej maľbe*.

⁹ Katalin Szende, "Towns and Urban Networks in the Carpathian Basin between the Eleventh and the Early Sixteenth Centuries" *The Art of Medieval Hungary*. pp. 73-74

¹⁰ Prokopp, *Középkori freskók Gömörben*. p. 9

of the 14th, century more than twenty settlements attained the town status.¹¹ The establishment and the emergence of towns brought the need of constructing new churches or reconstructing and decorating them, most of them were made for noble commissions.¹² Most of the churches I analyze are parish and village churches, these churches played a central role in the time of feasts and at the important events of the life of the faithful, such as the baptism, confirmation, matrimony.¹³ The economic boom in the period played a huge part in the rise of cultural life and art, thus it contributed to the occurrence of the numerous commissions of painted decorations in medieval churches.¹⁴

Both Gemer and Spiš counties belonged to the diocese of Esztergom, therefore these areas had a direct connection with the center of the Kingdom and the court.¹⁵ Apart from the close connection to the king caused by the church, the areas enjoyed the closeness to the court by the noble families, who were the owners of more towns of the area.

The commissioners of the decoration of the churches in Gemer were landowners, who typically bore titles in the royal court of Buda.¹⁶ Plešivec was the center of the powerful Bebek family's estate. Plešivec along with Štítník and other areas were granted to the Bebek family by Béla IV. Later, between 1318 and 1320, the family split in two branches, the Bebek family of Plešivec and the Csetneki family. In the time of the execution of the wall paintings in Plešivec, György Bebek was the owner of the town and probably also the commissioner of the decoration. György Bebek was a prominent figure of his family, who bore important titles in the Kingdom, he had international relations and took frequent excursions to *Italia*, where the

¹¹ Pál Lővei and Imre Takács, „Hungarian Trecento” Art in the Angevin Era” *The Art of Medieval Hungary*. p. 182

¹² Zsombor Jékely, “Expansion to the Countryside: Rural Architecture in Medieval Hungary” *The Art of Medieval Hungary*. p. 104

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Plekanec and Haviar, *Gotický Gemer a Malohont: italianizmy v stredovekej nástennej malbe*. p. 8

¹⁵ Mária Prokopp, “Az itáliai festészeti kapcsolatok és hagyományok továbbélése” *Magyarországi művészet 1300-1470 körül*. p. 600

¹⁶ Prokopp, *Középkori freskók Gömörben*. p. 9

art and culture of the Italian trecento made a great impact on him, and consequently on his commission, the frescoes of Plešivec.¹⁷

Štítník (in Hungarian Csetnek) became the center for the new branch of the Bebek family, who named themselves Csetneki after the town.¹⁸ The Csetneki family gained wealth and importance from the iron ore mining and metallurgy of their estate. Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce, two mining settlements, were established after 1243 and from the 14th century they also became the property of the Csetneki family.¹⁹

The four churches from Spiš can be divided into two groups by their ownership. Žehra and Slatvina were the property of the Zsigrai family. The land, including the town of Žehra and Slatvina was granted to the Zsigrai family around the middle of the 13th century.²⁰ Similarly to the Bebek family, the Zsigrai family also split in the Zsigrai branch, who owned Žehra and the Széki or later called Pócs branch, who owned Slatvina.²¹

Podolíneč and Stará Ľubovňa were free royal towns. Podolíneč was located in an important trading area and received the Magdeburg staple right in the 13th century. In the middle of 14th century, when the church was built, the town had an international importance due to the trade.²² Stará Ľubovňa as a free royal town close to the borders of the Kingdom of

¹⁷ Monika Tihányiová, *A Pelsőci Bebek: Egy nemesi család felemelkedése és bukása*. (Rozsnyó: Georgius Bebek Polgári Társulás, 2019.) pp. 97-98; Éva Szakálos, "A pelsőci templom 14. századi falképei". *Ars Hungarica* 39, no. 2 (2013): 212-219.

¹⁸ Tihányiová, *A Pelsőci Bebek: Egy nemesi család felemelkedése és bukása*. pp. 10-14

¹⁹ Mária Prokopp, "Az itáliai festészeti kapcsolatok és hagyományok továbbélése" *Magyarországi művészet 1300-1470 körül*. p. 604

²⁰ The land was granted to the family before receiving a charter became a common practice at the grants. Antal Fekete Nagy, *A Szepesség területi és társadalmi kialakulása*. (Budapest: 1934.) pp. 139, 142.; Celina Berill Félix, "A szlatvini Angyali Üdvözlet templom története és az épületen végzett műemléki kutatások, beavatkozások". *Fiatal Műemlékvédők Fóruma* (Budapest: ICOMOS Magyar Nemzeti Bizottság Egyesület, 2021.) p. 77

²¹ Fekete Nagy, *A Szepesség területi és társadalmi kialakulása*. pp. 142-143

²² Prokopp, *Középkori falképek a Szepességben*. p. 70

Hungary gained several privileges. From 1342, the town was exempt from paying customs for the imported products but for taking a product out of the town it was obliged to pay.²³

1.3. Painting styles and stylistic influence of the period

Through the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century, when the wall paintings were made, Louis the Great (1342-1382), and Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387-1437) reigned in the Kingdom of Hungary. The art of these years was very diverse and complex, in which a lot of influences can be observed. In the period of Louis, the Great, the country had strong art connections with the culture of the Italian trecento. The influence of the Italian trecento is the strongest in Plešivec, where the scenes can be traced back to exact Italian models. The same period was also influenced by the art of the Alpine areas, which features can also be found in the closer Silesian and Czech art.²⁴ Furthermore, a unique local style was also developed, which characterizes the frescoes in Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce. Moreover, the last decades of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century are the time of the flourishing International Gothic style. International Gothic, mixed with the influence of Czech wall painting practice, which is the so-called "Beautiful style" can be seen in the chancel of Slatvina.²⁵

1.4. The discovery and the restoration of the wall paintings

The frescoes of the chancel of Kocel'ovce were covered with plaster from the Renaissance and they got discovered in 1894.²⁶ After doing a survey and making watercolor

²³ Erik Fügedi, "Középkori magyar városprivilegiumok" *Tanulmányok Budapest múltjából: 14.* Budapest várostörténeti monográfiái 22. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1961.) p. 39

²⁴ János Végh, "Német és cseh stíluskapcsolatok" *Magyarországi művészet 1300-1470 körül.* pp. 479-480
The frescoes of Podolíneč seem to have Silesian and Czech influences, but a certain and correct stylistic analysis cannot be done, due to the heavy restoration and "repainting" made by Lajos Tary in 1910.

²⁵ Zsombor Jékely, "Pónik" *Falfestészeti emlékek a középkori Zólyom vármegye területén.* (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2021.) p. 323.; Celina Berill Félix, "A szlatvini Angyali üdvözlés templom szentélyének középkori falképei" MA Thesis, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2020, pp. 45-48.

²⁶ Dvořáková, Krása, and Stejskal, *Středověká Nastěnná Malba Na Slovensku*, p. 99

copies of the original images, István Gróh restored the wall paintings in 1906.²⁷ The chancel of Ochtiná was also uncovered by István Gróh. He started to uncover only a part of the wall paintings and making watercolor copies of the images in 1901, then in 1907 he uncovered and restored all the images.²⁸ The interior renovation of Štítník is also connected to István Gróh. He made an interior survey and painted watercolor copies of the scenes in 1918 after uncovering them between 1908 and 1909.²⁹

The wall paintings of the chancel of Podolíneč were discovered in 1910 and they were uncovered and restored in 1912 by Lajos Tary.³⁰ The restoration made by Tary was partly an artistic completion of the fragmented and faded scenes, therefore the style of the frescoes cannot be analyzed with a full certainty. However, the elements and the compositions still reflect the original intentions, making the cycle is worthy of iconographic analysis. After I compared the restored wall paintings with the photos that were made before the restoration, I could observe that the main figures and elements were present already before Tary repainted the frescoes, leastwise it can be seen on those scenes which have been preserved in their original state by the photographs.³¹

The wall paintings of Žehra were covered with plaster in the 17th century, then they were discovered by Béla Klimkovics. The frescoes were uncovered in 1872 and Lajos Tary

²⁷ Peter Buday, “K dokumentácii a ochrane pamiatok na Gemeri pred rokom 1918.” *Najnovšie poznatky z výskumov stredovekých pamiatok na Gotickej ceste - Zborník Gotická cesta 2 / 2016*. (Bratislava: Pamiatkový úrad Slovenskej republiky. 2018.), p. 11

²⁸ Dénes Radocsay, *A középkori Magyarország falképei*. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1954.), p. 175

²⁹ Peter Buday, “K dokumentácii a ochrane pamiatok na Gemeri pred rokom 1918.” p. 14; Mária Prokopp, “Gömöri falképek a XIV. században” *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 18. 1969. p. 130

³⁰ Radocsay, *A középkori Magyarország falképei*. p. 197; Jendrassik, “Szepes vármegye középkori falképei.” pp. 39-40

³¹ The photos of the wall paintings are in the collection of the Photographic Archives of the Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument Protection Documentation Center (Magyar Építészeti Múzeum és Műemlékvédelmi Dokumentációs Központ). The inventory numbers of the relevant photos and I have seen are from 9927 to 9933.

made watercolor copies of them in 1913.³² The wall paintings were restored again before 1940 by Peter Kern and today the church and the cycle are in the UNESCO world heritage list.³³

In the last three churches, the uncovering of the wall paintings was done recently, or the restoration is still ongoing. The chancel of Slatvina got covered with plaster in the 19th century. The first survey of the wall paintings was made in 1967, when a few scenes were uncovered. However, they were covered with plaster once again in 1970s. The full uncovering of the wall paintings was done between 2006 and 2007, along with the restoration made by Vladimír Plekanec.³⁴ A part of the fresco cycle in the chancel of Plešivec was uncovered and restored between 1977 and 1978. The images which remained under plaster were uncovered in 2012 by Peter Koreň, who is currently still working on the uncovering of the whole chancel and restores the images, which I have been able to see during the restoration.³⁵ The restoration of the church in Stará Ľubovňa started in 2016, and the restoration of its wall paintings began in 2020.³⁶ The medieval frescoes on the north wall of the chancel are currently under restoration by Peter Koreň and Juraj Gregorek.

2. Arrangement of the wall paintings

The Passion of Christ is a crucial theme referring to the liturgy of the Mass and the Communion, but it does not implicate a canonical arrangement or narrative concerning the wall paintings. The Passion cycle is the most appropriate and fitting theme to be depicted in a

³² Jendrassik, “Szepes vármegye középkori falképei.” pp. 10-11

³³ Radocsay, *A középkori Magyarország falképei*. pp. 240-241; Togner and Plekanec, *Medieval Wall Paintings in Spiš*. p. 226

³⁴ Félix, “A szlatvini Angyali Üdvözlés templom története és az épületen végzett műemléki kutatások, beavatkozások”; Vladimír Plekanec, “Restaurátorský výskum stredovekých nástenných malieb kostola nanebovzatia Panny Márie v Slatvine.” *Umenie na Slovensku v historických a kultúrnych súvislostiach 2007*. Turčianske Teplice: Tlačiareň BEN, 2008

³⁵ Szakálos, “A pelsőci templom 14. századi falképei”.

³⁶ Michaela Haviarová, “Barokové nástenné maľby v južnej kaplnke Kostola sv. Mikuláša v Starej Ľubovni” *Pamiatky a múzeá 3/2021*. Bratislava: 2021. p. 3

chancel in relation to the Christian liturgy; however, it does not usually stand on its own. Apart from the scenes, which tell the story of the suffering of Christ, the Passion cycles are tend to be surrounded by various images and figures.

The arrangement of the Passion scenes, even in the closest churches with the same owner and made by painters from the same workshop, appears to be somewhat different. Apart from the architecture, which certainly has a great impact on the arrangement of the wall paintings, even the intention of the iconographic program modifies the placing of the scenes too. The most important themes appear in bigger scale painted scenes, which can also cause changes in the order of the narrative, so that, instead of following a chronological order, the narrative of the scenes is mixed. Moreover, other iconic depictions get inserted into the scenes of the narrative, that can reflect new religious ideas. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries new themes appear, and figures get separated from a traditional narrative depiction to become an independent images.³⁷

The foremost images are painted on the prominent areas of the chancel, which can be best seen by the laity and not only by the clergy. This area is the east wall of the chancel, which in the 14th and the beginning of the 15th centuries was still visible, because the altars were usually simple; thus, it did not cover the wall paintings of the most visible area of the chancel. The winged altarpieces started to appear regularly after the mid-fifteen century.³⁸

In this chapter I discuss the arrangement of the depicted scenes of the side walls of the chancels of the eight churches from Spiš and Gemer, starting with the images painted on the side walls of the chancel, then the triumphal arch and the vaulting. I describe the wall paintings from a farther viewpoint first. I look at the arrangement in a general way to figure out which

³⁷ Tünde Wehli, "Tematikai és ikonográfiai jelenségek" *Magyarországi művészet 1300-1470 körül*.

³⁸ Gábor Endrődi, "Winged Altarpieces in Medieval Hungary" *The Art of Medieval Hungary*. p. 195

scenes are emphasized and highlighted in the cycle. Moreover, I name what are the main narratives and individual images that are accompanying the Passion cycle and how it changes or enriches its meaning and conveyed message. I also try to figure out if the modification of the arrangement was the result of the iconographical program or if it is rather a modification because of the architectural structure.

2.1. Side walls of the chancels

The architecture of the churches is varied, which can be one of the factors which causes changes in the placement. The chancels of Žehra, Slatvina, and Stará Ľubovňa are rectangular. The church of Plešivec, as well as the elongated chancel of the larger church of Štítnik have a chancel with a polygonal ending. The churches of Podolíneč, Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce have a two-bay chancel with a polygonal ending (5/8 closure).

Among the eight churches, in Žehra, Podolíneč, Slatvina, Kocel'ovce, Ochtiná and Plešivec the Passion cycle covers the majority of the chancel's walls; in two churches, in Stará Ľubovňa and Štítnik, the story of Christ's suffering and glorification is represented exclusively on the north wall of the chancel.

In both churches, in which the cycle covers only one of the walls of the chancel, the scenes of the Passion were arranged in chronological order. The wall paintings in the chancel of Štítnik are still not uncovered entirely and some details of the scene are faded (Fig.1.).³⁹ Eight Passion scenes start on the north wall from the *Entry into Jerusalem* to the *Christ carrying the Cross*, the next image of the cycle is almost totally covered, only one figure can be seen, wearing a pointed Jewish hat. Above the short cycle a sitting apostle under a niche is painted. The large Passion scenes are arranged in one register, following each other in chronological

³⁹ The scenes are listed in the Catalogue on page 71. In the thesis, the sketch of the arrangement is on page 72.; Plekanec, and Haviar. *Gotický Gemer a Malohont: italianizmy v stredovekej nástennej maľbe..* p.12

order, focusing on the main events of the Passion. The images contain only a few components, portraying solely the essential figures and elements of the story.

The other cycle that only covers the north wall is in Stará Ľubovňa, which is a more detailed cycle with its ten uncovered images (Fig.2.).⁴⁰ The north wall is the only one that survived among the side walls of the original 13th century chancel, the church was rebuilt in the 17th century and the side walls, except the north wall, have been demolished.⁴¹ Despite the lost walls, the Passion scenes of the north wall make up a complete cycle from the *Entry into Jerusalem* until the *Crucifixion*. The sequence of the ten Passion scenes start in the second register with the *Entry into Jerusalem* and the story can be read from left to right in all registers.⁴² The scenes of the Passion are uninterruptedly depicted after each other in chronological order. The last image of the cycle, which is uncovered is the *Crucifixion*, the second image of the fourth register. The depiction on its left is destroyed by the later opening for the door to the pulpit and the image on the right, that is the original scene which ends the cycle is covered by a younger layer of wall painting.⁴³ The image in the first register is not the part of the story of the *Passion of Christ*, it depicts the *Crowning of the Virgin Mary*.

Due to the simple chronological arrangement, in these churches no further analysis can be made concerning the communication of images in a general level, only after the detailed analysis of the individual scenes and their inner relations. In the following I will describe

⁴⁰ The Catalogue contains the sketch of the cycle on page 68.

⁴¹ Zuzana Kasenčáková, "Objavené krypty v Kostole sv. Mikuláša v Starej Ľubovni". *Pamiatky a múzeá*, 1 (2020). p.6

⁴² The scenes in chronological order: Entry into Jerusalem, Last Supper, Christ on the Mount of Olives, Arrest of Christ, Christ before Pilate, Flagellation, Crowning with Thorns, Christ carrying the Cross (with Saint Veronica), a damaged image, Crucifixion, an image covered by a later wall painting.

⁴³ Directly on the right of the Crucifixion, the opening of the sacristy door can be found. The sacristy was already part of the original 13th century building, but the door opening, that we see today is a later product, probably larger than the original opening, thus it damaged the wall painting of that area. Above the door we can see the continuation of the painted frame of the wall paintings and a layer of dark blue paint that is identical with the background of the Passion scenes, however no traces of figural depiction can be found on this area today.

churches where, unlike in the previous two, the analysis of the communication of the arrangement is relevant.

In the church of Plešivec, the once fully painted chancel is strongly damaged and fragmentary by today (Fig.3.).⁴⁴ The Christological scenes are a major part of the surviving depictions in the chancel, which are also in a bad condition.⁴⁵ The large narrative scenes of the side walls are showing the key scenes of the Life and Passion of Christ. The sequence of the wall paintings starts with scenes from the early life of Christ. The surviving Passion scenes are on the north and the south walls of the chancel, on the eastern walls figures of saints are painted. The story of the suffering of Christ starts in the middle register of the north wall with the *Entry into Jerusalem*, the next images are on the south wall, which are the *Last Supper* and next to it the *Washing of the Feet* then the narrative returns to the north wall into the second register and the images from the Passion of Christ follow each other in chronological order from the north wall to the south.⁴⁶ The interruption between narration of the two walls is made by the depiction of saints on the east wall. An additional image is also present in the chancel, which is the *Annunciation* depicted above the narrative scenes of the Life and Passion of Christ on the north wall.⁴⁷

Mariological depictions accompany the Passion cycle of Žehra, too (Fig.4).⁴⁸ The chancel is fully covered with wall paintings, but instead of a detailed, complex narrative cycle, the most important images of the Passion of Christ and the life of Mary are depicted in large individual narrative scenes. In the first register, the *Coronation of Mary* can be seen on the

⁴⁴ The sketch of the arrangement is on page 79.

⁴⁵ Szakálos. "A pelsőci templom 14. századi falképei".

⁴⁶ The restoration of the wall paintings by Peter Koren is currently in progress. They recently uncovered more fragments and started the restoration, which made it clear that the left scene in the lower register of the north wall is the *Arrest of Christ* and the two upper images of the south wall are the *Last Supper* and the *Washing of the Feet* in a changed order, which I have happened to see in April 2022.

⁴⁷ Other images at the height of the *Annunciation* have not been preserved.

⁴⁸ Togner and Plekanec, *Medieval Wall Paintings in Spiš*. The sketch of the cycle is on page 63.

north wall and the *Annunciation* on the east wall, above the six Passion scenes.⁴⁹ The large images depicting the suffering of Christ are arranged in chronological order in the same register on the three walls of the chancel starting with the *Last Supper*. The cycle is broken up by the insertion of the *Vir Dolorum* and the depiction of a kneeling donor is also portrayed on the east wall. Furthermore, on a younger layer of plaster, an indulgence inscription can be seen on the south wall between two Passion scenes.⁵⁰

Chronological order also characterizes the scenes of the Ochtiná's church (Fig.5).⁵¹ The fifteen images, which represent the Passion of Christ are starting from the north wall and going along to the south wall, then continues in the lower register in the same order.⁵² The longest scene is the arrest of Christ which starts on the east wall and ends on the south wall. The narrative cycle is interrupted under the windows of the south-east wall and the south wall by a *Vir Dolorum* and the figures of two bishop saints. Moreover, the images on the splays of the windows further enrich the cycle. A three-faced personification of the *Holy Trinity* and two saints are depicted on the splays of the east wall's window and on the splays of the south-east and south window an angel and saints can be seen. The cycle is accompanied in the first register with the depictions from the Infancy of Christ and Mariological scenes. The eastern wall of the chancel contains the adoration of the Magi, where we can see the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus in her hand being adorned by a kneeling figure. Above them, the angel points to Jesus, under them the Trifacial Holy Trinity, and in the lower register the *Descent from the cross*.

⁴⁹ Passion scenes: *Last Supper, Arrest of Christ, Flagellation, Crucifixion, Descent from the Cross*.

⁵⁰ The Gothic minuscule inscription refers to the 20 days of indulgences that the church received from antipope John XXIII, and it glorifies the Eucharist. Dvořáková, Krása, and Stejskal. *Středověká Nástěnná Malba na Slovensku*. p. 174

⁵¹ Prokopp, *Középkori falképek a Szepességben..* The sketch of the arrangement of the cycle is on page 77.

⁵² The scenes: *Entry into Jerusalem, Last Supper, Christ on the Mount of Olives, Arrest of Christ, Christ before Pilate, Flagellation, Crowning with Thorns, Christ carrying the Cross, Crucifixion, Descent from the Cross, Pietà, Entombment, Resurrection, Harrowing of Hell*.

The main wall in the church of Ochtiná, which is the east wall, is visually framed by the north-east and the south-east walls. The depictions of the north-east are in conversation with the central depictions and leading the viewer's eye to the middle images. The upper image shows two of the kings arriving to the Virgin and Jesus. In the *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, the figure of the praying Jesus looks toward the east, from where the figure of God appears, which is in the direction of the next wall, where the depiction of the Holy Trinity was painted.

The last image of the north-east wall is the *Crucifixion*, which is the climax of the Passion cycle and which, together with the *Descent from the Cross*, on the east wall fulfils the sacrifice of Christ. Furthermore, the *Christ on the Mount of Olives* with a dominant representation of the chalice, the suffering, and the bleeding wound of Christ on the *Cross of the Crucifixion*, the shroud on the *Descent from the Cross* and the *Vir Dolorum* on the south-east wall all refer to the Eucharist. The transubstantiation of the bread and wine for the Eucharist was performed by the celebrant on the altar in this area of the chancel.

The chancel of the church of Kocel'ovce is built with a similar two-bay structure and a polygonal ending and it is decorated by the same workshop (Fig.6.).⁵³ Opposed to the previously mentioned cycles, the one in Kocel'ovce does not follow the chronological order of the narrative in the arrangement of the images. The story of the Passion starts with the *Entry into Jerusalem* in the middle register of the south wall of the west bay and continues on the north wall with the *Last Supper* and the *Christ on the mount of Olives*. The *Arrest* is on the east and the south-east wall, followed by the *Christ before Pilate* on the south wall of the east bay. The narrative goes on in the lower register until the north-east wall, where the large scene of *Crucifixion* covers both registers. After the *Crucifixion* the story is broken by the depictions of the twelve apostles. The next events of the Passion are on the south walls of the chancel. In the

⁵³ Dvořáková, Krása, and Stejskal. *Středověká Nastěnná Malba na Slovensku*. pp.99-102. The sketch of the cycle is on page 75.

first register depictions from the Infancy of Christ and the Mariological scenes can be seen, starting with the *Annunciation* on the triumphal arch, followed by two scenes changed in order, first the *Nativity*, then the *Visitation*, then after the images from Christ's childhood, the *Coronation of the Virgin Mary* ends the cycle on the south wall of the west bay.

The most emphasized image of the chancel is the *Crucifixion*, which is the largest scene of the chancel. It is placed on the north-east wall, which is one of the most well seen areas of the church of Kocel'ovce. Moreover, this wall receives the majority of the sunlight, that comes from the windows on the eastern and southern walls.⁵⁴ The *Crucifixion* is the peak of the Passion of Christ, thus it got the most prominent and highlighted place of this church.

The chancel of the church of Podolíneč is also built with a similar architectural structure to Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce, but the system of the wall paintings is completely different (Fig.7.).⁵⁵ The Passion of Christ starts with three large images in the first register of the north wall of the western bay which goes on until the north-east wall of the east bay, then continues in the second register with seven smaller images until the scene of *Christ Carrying the Cross* in the north-east wall of the east bay. The next two events are in the lower register of the north-east wall followed by the scenes of Christ's Passion in chronological order in the lower register and ending on the south wall of the western bay with the *Pentecost*. An additional image to the Passion cycle, the *Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, is depicted on the right side of the west wall of the triumphal arch. The lower register of both north walls is covered with the elongated depiction of the Procession and Adoration of the Magi, accompanied by the depiction of Saint Dorothy and the errand boy.

⁵⁴ It is probably depicted rather on the north-east wall than on the most "central" wall, due to the difficulties caused by the gothic window of the east wall.

⁵⁵ The sketch of the cycle is on page 66.

The frescoes in the chancel of the church represent the stages of the suffering of Christ very meticulously, showing multiple stages of the Passion in detailed images. The narrative of the suffering enriched with the *Disrobing of Christ*, the *Washing of the Feet* and the *Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, which are rarely depicted in this region, furthermore with another rare image, the *Nailing to the Cross*, which can also be seen in Slatvina.

The Passion scenes of the northern walls are depicting the suffering of Christ until the *Crucifixion*. These images put a stress on his suffering, therefore they show and emphasize his humanity. *The Descent from the Cross* connects the narrative of the northern walls to the southern walls, where the scenes are portraying Christ's glorification after his sacrifice, and they put on emphasis on his divinity. The depiction on the northern side of the Magi, who are acknowledging the divinity of Christ with the adoration, foretells and refers to the meaning conveyed by the images of the southern walls, which the scene faces.⁵⁶

In Slatvina the order of the scenes does not reflect the chronology of Christ's Passion (Fig.8.).⁵⁷ The scenes of the suffering and glorification of Christ covers all the three walls of the chancel.⁵⁸ The narrative starts with the *Entry into Jerusalem*, which covers the first register of the north wall, then it continues in the second register of the same wall. The third image covers the first register of the east wall and then the story jumps back to the second register of the north wall, then two images are on the top of the south wall. From the seventh image the Passion scenes follow each other in chronological order in the second register, starting from the north wall and ending on the south wall. The depiction of the *Veil of Veronica* is inserted into the cycle, above the window of the south wall. In lower register of the chancel an apostle

⁵⁶ Edit Újvári. "A „háromkirályok imádása" ikonográfiai téma hatalomlegitimációs szerepe a középkorban." *A hatalom jelei, képei és terei. Jel-Kép-Tér sorozat 2.* (Szeged: Szegedi Egyetemi Kiadó, 2016); Caroline Wistar. *Adoration of the Magi.* (La Salle University Art Museum. 1982.)

⁵⁷ The sketch of the arrangement of the cycle in on page 71.

⁵⁸ On the west wall, on the triumphal arch only ornamental decoration was painted.

gallery can be seen and a *Vir Dolorum* on the north wall, moreover on the east wall Saint Dorothy is depicted with kneeling donors.

The narrative of the Passion of Christ in Slatvina is mixed to emphasize certain scenes as the *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, the *Nailing to the Cross*, the *Crucifixion*, and the Saint Dorothy with the donors, furthermore due to its size, the *Last Supper* is a slightly more highlighted amongst the Passion scenes.

In most of these churches — in Stará Ľubovňa, Plešivec, Žehra, Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce and Podolíneč — the Passion cycle is depicted together with the scenes from the Infancy of Christ and Mariological themes, constructing a more or less complete representation of the life of Jesus. However, in the church of Stítňik and Slatvina the narrative depictions on the side walls of the chancel are solely from the Passion of Christ, accompanied by figures of apostles.

In Plešivec the most important events from the life of Christ are depicted in a continuation, starting from the *Annunciation*, through images of his childhood and his baptism, then the longer sequence of the Passion scenes can be seen. The Passion is presented in the context of the story of Christ's life. Similarly, in Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce the extensive narrative cycle depicts various events from the life of Christ, that are thoroughly portraying numerous figures and situations.

In Žehra, the Passion cycle does not get incorporated into the narrative of the life of Christ, the Mariological scenes appear more independently, with a different dialog with the Passion, that is rather theoretical. Similarly, on the north wall of Stará Ľubovňa the *Crowning of the Virgin Mary* appears more independently, above the Passion cycle. The Mariological scene is larger and visually separated from the narrative scenes.

In Podolínec, only one image from the Infancy of Christ is depicted in the chancel, which is the *Procession and Adoration of the Magi*. The event is presented in a notably long scene under the scenes showing the suffering of Christ and refers to both the humanity of Christ, with testifying his incarnation and birth, and the divinity of Christ with the act of adoration and the symbolic meaning of the gifts.⁵⁹ Thus, the long scene constructs a bridge between the humanity of Christ represented on the northern walls, and the divinity of Christ, which is demonstrated with the images of the southern walls.⁶⁰

From the middle of the 14th century the cult and celebrations regarded to the Virgin Mary became popular. The Mariological themes were usually depicted together with the events from Christ's childhood.⁶¹ Only her death and the crowning appeared in independent scenes. Mary was also portrayed as a companion of Christ in his suffering, and she was portrayed in the Passion cycles showing her compassion.⁶²

2.2. Triumphal arch

The triumphal arch connects the area of the chancel and the nave, which is the place of the laity. Therefore, on the triumphal arch the images mediate between the sacral and the lay. Usually, the Old Testament Prophets, wise and foolish virgins or saints are depicted in this area.⁶³

⁵⁹ André Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins*. (Princeton University Press, 1968.) pp. 12-13

⁶⁰ Mária Prokopp interprets the image as an allusion to royal visits in Podolin in the 13th and 14th century. Mária Prokopp, "Podolin plébániatemplomának 14. századi falkép-ciklusai a kortárs misztériumjátékok emlékéét őrzik". *Szín-Játék-Költészet*. (Budapest: Partium Kiadó, 2013.) p.37

⁶¹ It is because of the lack of individual descriptions of Mary's life.

⁶² Tünde Wehli. "Tematikai és ikonográfiai jelenségek", *Magyarországi művészet 1300-1470 körül*.

⁶³ Dragos Gheorghe Nastasoiu, "The "Pillars" of the Medieval Hungarian State and Church" *Matérialité et immatérialité dans l'Église au Moyen Âge*. (Bucarest, 2012.) p.463. Tünde Wehli. "Tematikai és ikonográfiai jelenségek" *Magyarországi művészet 1300-1470 körül*.

Out of the eight churches, the wall paintings of the triumphal arch cannot be studied in relation to the wall paintings of the side walls in Štítník, Stará Ľubovňa and Plešivec, because these triumphal arches lack contemporary depictions, which could be seen as the part of the original iconographic program. The triumphal arch of Štítník is covered by a younger layer of decoration and the triumphal arches in Plešivec and Stará Ľubovňa were rebuilt in the 17th century.⁶⁴

On the intrados of all the five churches that still have the original late medieval depictions, half-portraits of the Old Testament Prophets can be seen in medallions with scrolls. Under the arch, on the two pillars one saint is portrayed on each side.

Under the depiction of the Prophets various figures of saints are painted. In Podolíneč, on the south pillar a Holy Bishop is depicted, on the north pillar of Ochtiná Saint Erasmus can be identified and in Kocel'ovce Saint Catherine can be seen on the south pillar and a yet unidentified saint on the north pillar.

In Žehra and Slatvina the two holy Hungarian kings, Saint Ladislav and Saint Stephen are depicted (Fig.9).⁶⁵ The two holy kings together with the images of the Prophets make Saint Ladislav and Saint Stephen appear in parallel with the Old Testament kings, regarding the qualities of an ideal ruler (spiritual and physical).⁶⁶ In the church of Slatvina the vestments of the two kings makes reference to each quality that the kings represent even clearer. Saint Ladislav is depicted in an armor, a coat of mail and a sword. He is dressed as a knight, while Saint Stephen wears a court costume, made of a short tunic with a long mantle and tight pants.

⁶⁴ Plekanec, and Haviar. *Gotický Gemer a Malohont: italianizmy v stredovekej nástennej maľbe*. p.12.; Szakálos. "A pelsőci templom 14. századi falképei" p.215; Kasenčáková, "Objavené krypty v Kostole sv. Mikuláša v Starej Ľubovni". p.6.

⁶⁵ The placement of the kings is interchanged. Other churches, where the two saint kings are depicted on the triumphal arch: Žehra, Čečejovce, Poprad, and Tornaszentandrás.

⁶⁶ The iconographic analysis of the two holy Hungarian kings on the pillars of the triumphal arches is done by Dragos Gheorghe Nastasoiu, "The "Pillars" of the Medieval Hungarian State and Church". pp. 453-466.

The depiction of the holy kings, who are equally earthly, secular rulers and saints, smoothly connects the most sacred area of the church and the nave.⁶⁷

2.3. Vaults

The vaults of Plešivec, Štítník and Stará Ľubovňa cannot be studied due to the loss of the images. The decoration of the other five churches can be divided to two types. Traditionally the depictions on the vaults of the chancel represent the heavenly sphere.⁶⁸ In Žehra, Slatvina and in the western bay of Podolíneč the vaults contain the *Maiestas Domini*, the *Holy Trinity*, *Abraham's bosom*, and the Virgin Mary with Jesus. The four main images are surrounded by angels and the symbols of the four Evangelist. The vaults of the eastern bay of the chancel in the church of Podolíneč are decorated with angels, holding musical instruments. Angels can be seen also on the vaults of Ochtiná, where the decoration of the vaults is very fragmentary, only three angel figures and one man figure survived, who is probably one of the Church Fathers, similarly to Kocel'ovce. The wall paintings on the vaults of Kocel'ovce are well preserved. Eight Church Fathers, the symbols of the four Evangelists and angels are all depicted on the vaults of the chancel.

3. The iconographical analysis of the wall paintings of the chancels

These smaller parish churches and churches in the rural environment tell the story of Christ's life by using and merging different sources. Besides of the Gospels, apocryphal text and legends were also used to understand Christ more. However written sources were not the only way to think about Christ. The theological literature, sermons visions and drama all

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Prokopp, *Középkori falképek a Szepességben*. p.46

formed the perception on Christ. These thoughts were portrayed on the walls of the churches but with different focus. People with different interests and intention had a different will on what they want to see on the walls of the church in cases of the various commissions.⁶⁹ There are programs with more elaborate thought showing the theological disputes and religious, dogmatic issues, others are more about to narrate the story of Christ and the Redemption, or to make the believer feel different emotions and compassion.

In this chapter I list the most frequently appearing Passion scenes in chronological order and analyze their iconography, then I analyze the rarely depicted Passion scenes. In the second subchapter I discuss the Mariological scenes and the depictions from the Life of Christ. The last subchapter is dedicated to the individual depictions of saints and devotional images. Throughout the analysis I focus on the recurring and atypical elements of the scenes and their differences.

3.1. Passion scenes

The desire for the imitation of Christ body and his suffering emerged from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In the twelfth century the focus in the imitation of his sufferings was on His blood and wounds, which focus became a special devotion in the later Middle Ages, which became accompanied by the veneration of the instruments of the passion. The medieval depictions of Christ in the thirteenth century churches and on the images for private devotion made his suffering more visible to the people and spoke to their sympathy. The realistic and strong visual elements showing the wounded, bleeding, suffering body of Christ made an even stronger impact on the thought of the faithful and caused an intense urge in the soul for deep devotion and compassion.

⁶⁹ Ivan Gerát, “Narratívne nástenné cykly vo vidieckom prostredí”. *Gotika*. [Exhibition catalog]. (Bratislava: Slovenská národná galéria a Vydavateľstvo Slovart spol. s r. o., 2003) pp.149-150

Due to the keen interest from the second half of the 13th century on the Life and the Passion of Christ a large number of writings were made to contemplate on event of Christ's Life. The *Meditationes Vitae Christi* written by a Franciscan author was one of the most influential works on the perception of Christ's Life and Passion.⁷⁰ The *Meditationes Vitae Christi* retells the life of the Virgin and most importantly, the life of Christ with the episodes, which can also be found in the Gospels along with motives from the apocryphal texts, moral teachings, and quotes from Saint Bernard of Clairvaux.⁷¹

The story of the Passion of Christ starts with the event of the Arrest, but the narrative cycles on the suffering of Christ start with the events which are leading to the Passion; thus, they usually begin with the *Entry into Jerusalem*, hence I start the analysis with that scene.

3.1.1. Entry into Jerusalem

The *Entry into Jerusalem* represents the first event, which eventually leads to the Passion of Christ. The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is commemorated on Palm Sunday, the Sunday of the Holy week, preceding Easter, and it was celebrated with large processions.⁷²

The entry is told in the Bible by all the four Gospels.⁷³ In the event Jesus is riding on the back of an ass towards Jerusalem while the habitants of the city gather to greet him. The

⁷⁰ James Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*. (Van Ghemmert Publishing Company, 1979.) p. 234; the latest edition of the *Meditationes* in Italian can be found in: Diego Dotto, Dávid Falvay and Antonio Montefusco, *Le Meditationes Vitae Christi in volgare secondo il codice Paris, BnF, it. 115*. (Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2021.). Péter Tóth and Dávid Falvay suggest a new dating and authorship of the text. They write that the earliest version of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* was written in Latin by the Franciscan Jacobus de Sancto Geminiano, who was the leader of the revolt of the Tuscan spirituals in 1312. Péter Tóth and Dávid Falvay, "New Light on the Date and Authorship of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*." *Devotional Culture in Late Medieval England and Europe: Diverse Imaginations on Christ's Life*. (Brepols Publishers, Turnhout, 2014.) pp. 17-105

⁷¹ Dávid Falvay, "Le version volgari delle MVC e il ruolo del manoscritto parigino" *Le Meditationes Vitae Christi in volgare secondo il codice Paris, BnF, it. 115*. p. 27

⁷² Gertrud Schiller, *Ikongrafie der Christlichen Kunst*. vol. 2. p. 29

⁷³ Matthew 21: 6-9; Mark 11: 7-11; Luke: 19: 35-45; John 12: 12-16.

crowd throws branches before him and they spread their garments on the road where he may step on. Seven of the eight churches start the Passion cycle the *Entry into Jerusalem*, the cycle of Žehra does not include the scene, however as I already described in the previous chapter, the start of the story of the passion do not correspond to the arrangement of scenes. All the Entry of Jerusalem scenes show Christ arriving from left on the back of an ass and giving blessing towards the people of Jerusalem, which is represented at least in figure, who greets the King of Israel.

The simplest image of the churches is in Štítník, it portrays the Christ in the moment of the arrival. With one hand he is giving blessings, with the other hand he is holding an open book. The people of Jerusalem are represented by a figure in Jewish hat, who is taking off his clothes to throw it on the ground before Christ.⁷⁴ Likewise the wall painting of Štítník, the image in Plešivec portrays the event using a few elements. The blessing Christ is heading towards Jerusalem, this time without holding the book. The city is surrounded by the walls and towers and before the depiction of the city the crowd of at least six figures welcomes the arriving Christ.⁷⁵ Behind the Savior one figure can be seen with a halo, who is probably one of his disciples. The images in the other churches are more richly detailed. In these images a bigger crowd appears before the gates of Jerusalem, on the right side of the scene. The people greet Christ various ways, with throwing their garments, which is the treatment towards an anointed king and spreading palm branches at his feet, which is the sign of victory.⁷⁶ In Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce, Slatvina, Podolínec amongst the greeters we can see a smaller figure climbed upon a tree throwing branches before Christ. The man refers to the story of Zacchaeus,

⁷⁴ The fading of the image makes it uncertain whether the red paint around the leaves of the tree, on the right side of the image is another figure climbed on the tree to greet Christ by throwing branches on the ground or something else.

The Jewish hat is also present on some figures from the crowd of Jerusalem on the images in Ochtiná and Podolínec and missing from the other frescoes.

⁷⁵ The exact number of people in the crowd cannot be seen due to the damages of the wall painting. A big surface is missing from both sides of the scene.

⁷⁶ Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonographie der Christlichen Kunst*. vol. 2. p. 28

tax collector, whose representation is often merged into the *Entry into Jerusalem* scenes. His story can be found in the Gospel of Luke, in which the short man climbed upon a sycamore tree to see the arriving Jesus better.⁷⁷ On the scenes of the above mentioned four churches, behind Christ another crowd appears, who are marching with the Savior. The people arriving in a group are the disciples, depicted with halo. In these churches at least one figure carries a book which refers to them being the apostles. On some scenes two figures can be identified amongst the apostles. Paul is carrying a sword on the frescoes of Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce and Podolíneč, moreover Peter is also portrayed with his attribute, an enormous key on the wall paintings of Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce.

The placement of the scene indicates the traditional starter function in the Passion cycle of Štítník, Stará Ľubovňa, Plešivec, Ochtiná, Slatvina and Podolíneč.⁷⁸ However, by placing the scene together with the *Crowning of the Virgin Mary*, the *Descent from the Cross* and the *Entombment*, as in Kocel'ovce, the event of the triumphal entry celebrated with palm branches and spread garments by the crowd, could be understood as the symbol of Christ's triumphal victory over death and thus sin. (Fig.10.)

3.1.2. Last Supper

The Last Supper is commemorated on the Holy Thursday, and it shows the event when Jesus instituted the most important rite of the church, the Eucharist.⁷⁹ During the supper Christ identifies the traitor as well, furthermore the act of the washing of the feet is also connected to the event, as the preparation for the feast of the Pesach, which I discuss later in this chapter.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Zsombor Jékely, "Krisztus Passiója a gelencei Szent Imre-templom középkori freskóciklusán". *Tanulmányok Tóth Sándor 60. születésnapjára*. (Budapest: ELTE BTK Hallgatói Önkormányzat, 2000.) p. 136

⁷⁸ Anna Kónya, "Eucharistic Imagery in the Late Gothic Wall Paintings of Transylvania (c. 1440-1530)." Ph.D. dissertation. (Budapest: Central European University, 2020.) p. 97

⁷⁹ Gerát, *Stredoveké obrazové témy na Slovensku*. p. 214

⁸⁰ Gertrud Schiller, *Ikongraphie der Christlichen Kunst*. vol. 2. p. 35

As one of the most significant events in the Christianity, the *Last Supper* is a key image in the Christological cycles, thus it is depicted in all the eight churches. The chancel as a placement for the Last Supper is the most suitable, due to the liturgy. The consecration of the host and wine needed for the Holy Communion is done by the celebrant in the chancel. Referring to this liturgical act, the Last Supper in the chancel shows the moment of the foundation of the Eucharist and where Jesus first blesses the bread and give it to the disciples saying that it is his body, and the wine is his blood.⁸¹ The bread is depicted on all the scenes, where the depiction of the table can be still seen today.⁸² In Žehra only the bread can be seen, however in addition to the bread, hosts appear on the table marked with a cross. The host appears also on the images of Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce, where Christ holds it in his left hand and blesses with his right hand; possibly Christ shows the host similarly in Stará L'ubovňa as well. (Fig. 11) The gesture of showing the host refers to the crucial moment of the liturgy when the priest elevates the host to show it to the believers after the consecration.⁸³ The presence of the host on the image emphasizes the Eucharistic reference of the scenes even more. The other substance of the Eucharist, the wine is missing from the images of Štítník and Podolíneč, which can be the sign of the influence of the practice of the liturgy, during which the laity usually did not receive both elements during of the Holy Communion, only the host.⁸⁴

In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ foretells that the person who betrays him unveils himself by putting his finger into the dish in the same moment with Christ, after he talks all the disciples start to ask him whether they are the one who will betray him.⁸⁵ The moment of

⁸¹ Matthew 26: 26-28

⁸² The scene of the Last Supper in Plešivec is too damaged to see the plates, the depiction of the table is mostly lost, there is only one fragment of a food, which I think is a piece of a bread. It is also hard to identify the exact food on the table of Stará L'ubovňa, because of the fading and the loss of the painting, which will be probably more visible after the restoration.

⁸³ The gesture of elevating the host was developed in the 12th late century. Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991. p. 55

⁸⁴ By the 12th century the reception of the element of wine was removed from lay communion. Rubin, *Corpus Christi*. pp. 48, 70-71

⁸⁵ Matthew 26: 23

questioning can be seen represented in Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce and Žehra. The most obvious gesture of questioning is made by figure of Judas of Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce. The man depicted with a black halo is looking at Christ and pointing to himself. In Žehra the figure of Judas cannot be identified, the disciples are all depicted with a yellow halo, however the discussion between the figure is intense. The figures are pointing at and touching each other while clearly talking.

In the Gospel of John Christ gives a dipped morsel to Judas Iscariot revealing that he is the traitor.⁸⁶ This can be seen on the wall paintings of Slatvina and Podolíneć. (Fig. 12.) Christ hands a host to Judas, who is kneeling on the other side of the table and puts his hands together for a prayer.⁸⁷ This gesture shared between Christ and Judas emphasizes that Judas, the traitor and sinner accepted and took the most holy sacramentum from Christ. On both images Judas is depicted without a halo. There is one more fresco where Judas does not have a halo, which is in Stará Ľubovňa. Comparably to the previous examples he is kneeling on the other side of the table, but in this image, he is not the only person on the that side and Christ does not hand him the Eucharist. Another figure can also be easily identified on the *Last Supper*, John, Christ's most beloved disciple. In Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce, Žehra, Stará Ľubovňa, Slatvina and Podolíneć John calmly reclines on Christ's chest.

3.1.3. Christ on the Mount of Olives

The prayer of Christ on the Mount of Olives is described in the Synoptic Gospels.⁸⁸ In the Gospels Christ is in the Garden of Gethsemane with three of the apostles, Peter, John and James. In the garden the disciples fell asleep, while Jesus started praying. In the garden he is

⁸⁶ John 13:26

⁸⁷ This type of depiction of the Last Supper can be found already in the 12th century Zdzisław Kliś, "North-Alpine art. Gestures in Passion Cycles in Central European Mural Painting" *Folia Historica Cracoviensia*, Vol. 13. 2007. p. 82

⁸⁸ Matthew 26: 36-46, Mark 14: 32-42, Luke 22: 39-46

asking God in the fear of death to take the cup away from him, but eventually he accepted his fate. He prayed in agony and sweat blood, when according to the description of Luke, an angel appeared to strengthen him.⁸⁹

The *Christ on the Mount of Olives* is depicted in Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce, Štítník, Stará Lubovňa and Slatvina. The most distinct scene is the lyrical depiction in Štítník.⁹⁰ (Fig.13.) Christ is depicted in a frontal position; his hands are clasped for the prayer. He is surrounded by the mountains and trees. Originally, above Christ presumably a figure is painted, who represents either an angel described in the Bible, or it could have been also the figure of God, like in Kocel'ovce and Ochtiná, where God appears above a chalice. (Fig.14.) The chalice represents the cup, mentioned in the Gospels, which based on the text of Luke bears two meaning. Firstly, the chalice can be understood as the symbol of accepting and obeying God's will, as Christ accepted his fate of sacrificing himself. Secondly, it carries the meaning of the Blood of Christ, considering that it is the liturgical vessel used for keeping the Blood of Christ, the consecrated wine. In the chancel of Slatvina the scene of the prayer is divided into three framed images. Christ, who is depicted on the right side image, is kneeling and looking at the chalice, which is in the middle image, above the gothic window. The chalice is adorned by an angel, who clasps his hands and faces the chalice. The composition of the Slatvina image makes the chalice be the most highlighted element of this event, thus it shows a strong emphasis on the sacrifice and the Blood of Christ, therefore the Eucharist. (Fig.15.)

3.1.4. The Arrest

The arrest of Christ usually contains several events, not only the capture. The images often include the betrayal of Judas, the group of Peter and Malchus, and sometimes even the

⁸⁹ Luke 22: 43

⁹⁰ The fresco is in a bad condition and it's the lower part of the image is covered by the liturgical furniture of the church, which makes the analysis more difficult.

denial of Peter.⁹¹ All the sections of the arrest are described in the Bible.⁹² The center of the scene is usually the kiss of Judas, which is the act how Judas reveals the identity of Jesus Christ.⁹³ After Judas' betrayal Peter draws his sword and cuts off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest to defend Jesus, however he miraculously heals the ear of Malchus and reproach Peter.

In the center of the scenes of all the eight churches Judas' betrayal was painted. In Kocel'ovce, Ochtiná, Štítník, Žehra and Stará Lúbovňa Christ is strongly embraced by the traitor, in Podolíneec and Slatvina he leans close to give the kiss, but he does not hold Christ, he intensely points to the Savior instead.⁹⁴ The armed crowd recognizes the identification Judas, and they gather around Christ and Judas. In Kocel'ovce, Stará Lúbovňa (Fig.16.), and Podolíneec the guards are already holding Christ's shoulder to capture him. On the violent Arrest scene in Žehra one of the guards strongly wraps his arms around Christ to capture him, moreover, one of the soldiers and a Jew raise their knives to stab him. (Fig.17.)

These scenes all share a common thing, while the figures around the Savior move vividly, the face of Christ is calm, not any defensive gestures or pain gets shown on his face, he endures all in tranquility.⁹⁵ The image of the passive Christ appears in the influential work of an anonymous Tuscan Franciscan, in the *Meditationes vitae Christi*: "Pay careful attention and follow the Lord as He patiently and benignly receives the treacherous embraces and kisses of that wretch..."⁹⁶

⁹¹ Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonographie der Christlichen Kunst*. vol. 2. p. 62

⁹² Matthew 26: 47-57, Mark 14: 43-54, Luke 22: 47-62, John 18: 1-11

⁹³ Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonographie der Christlichen Kunst*. vol. 2. p. 62

⁹⁴ In Plešivec due to the fragmentary state of the wall painting I can only assume that the central group of the scene is the Jesus-Judas group, based on the posture of Christ' body.

⁹⁵ The face of Jesus cannot be seen on the scenes in Štítník and Plešivec due to the damage of the wall paintings.

⁹⁶ Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in the Late Medieval Italy*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp. 68-69; I used the quote from the cited text of Anna Derbes. The original source: Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green, *Meditations on the Life of Christ, An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1961) p. 325

The *Arrest* involves the interaction of Malchus and Peter in Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce, Žehra, Stará Ľubovňa, Slatvina. In Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce the scene is divided by the gothic windows of the chancels; therefore, the different figures of the *Arrest* are also separated. In Ochtiná the *Arrest* starts on the east wall connecting the narrative between the *Christ on Mount of Olives* and the *Arrest* (Fig.18.). Surrounded by guard two men can be seen in discussion, looking at each other, while the guards look and listen to them attentively. These two men can be the two false witnesses, who are mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew.⁹⁷ The crowd goes on to the south-east wall, where the figure of Peter can be seen, he is holding his sword and seemingly he is either takes it out or puts it back into its sheath. In Ochtiná it is probably the latter, based on the next section of the image on the south wall, where Jesus blesses a small figure, who is undoubtedly Malchus, the servant to heal his ear, thus Peter have already cut his ear. Peter is turning to his right towards the guards, to the opposite direction from Christ, which can refer to his denial.

The scene is divided into four parts even in the chancel of Kocel'ovce by the gothic windows. The two sides of the scene are filled with the crowd of armed guards, on the east wall, similarly to Ochtiná two figures are explaining something with lively hand gestures, probably the false witnesses also here. The moment after the defense of Peter is also represented, however in this scene Peter looks at the direction of the blessing Christ and listens to his reproach.

Three other images show Peter and Malchus right after the cut. In Stará Ľubovňa and Slatvina Peter puts his sword back into his sheath. In Stará Ľubovňa the face of the servant is contorted, showing he is in pain, while in Slatvina Malchus is kneeling calmly, his hands are clasped together, he is probably healed already by the miracle of Christ. In Žehra, the figure of

⁹⁷ Matthew 26: 60

Peter appears two times. On the left side of the image, he is holding his sword and watching how Christ heals Malchus, meanwhile on the right side he is depicted after the moment of the denial, in front of a fire, together with a questioning figure and a rooster on his left. (Fig.19.)

There is no representation of the defense of Peter on the wall painting of Podolíneč. On the right of the Saviour, the guards are waiting for the sign to capture Jesus. One of the guards is already trying to grab him. On his left, two figures are arguing. Mária Prokopp identifies the man with halo as Peter, as well as Ivan Gerát, who even suggest that the group is the representation of Peter's denial.⁹⁸

3.1.5. The Trial of Christ

There are several trials of Christ before his torture starts. He appears before the Jewish high priest of the Sanhedrin, namely Caiaphas, before the Roman procurator, Pilate, and before the tetrarch, Herod Antipas. Two of the trials are represented in Ochtiná and Podolíneč. In Ochtiná Christ depicted in an identical position and surrounding, his hands are tied together with a rope, and he is held by guards on two sides (Fig.20.). The strongly tied hands of Christ may recall the emphasis in Franciscan ideology on the ropes, which tied Christ during his Passion.⁹⁹ On the first image of Ochtiná the judge is Pilate, dressed in secular medieval clothing, in a tunic with a belt and tight-fitting hose, and the judge on the other painting is Caiaphas, who wears a long robe and a bishop's mitre.¹⁰⁰ Likewise to Ochtiná, Christ's hand are tied also on the fresco of Kocel'ovce, Slatvina and the second trial depiction of Podolíneč.

⁹⁸ Prokopp. "Podolin plébániatemplomának 14. századi falkép-ciklusai a kortárs misztériumjátékok emlékéért őrzik". p. 36; Gerát, *Stredoveké obrazové témy na Slovensku*. p. 218

⁹⁹ To illustrate this connection Derbes brings the example of Bonaventure's writing, the *Vitis mystica* and Bonaventure's *Expositio in Regulam Fratrum Minorum*, in which he associates the cord of the Franciscan monks with the ropes of Christ. Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in the Late Medieval Italy*. p. 92.

¹⁰⁰ Pilate usually wears the fashion of the period, and the Jewish high priest is dressed in the attire of the contemporary clergy. Gertrud Schiller, *Ikongraphie der Christlichen Kunst*. vol. 2. p. 73

In Podolíneč the two trials are not arrayed next to each other, the Disrobing of Christ and the Flagellation separates them. On the first image, on the north wall of the western bay, Christ is lead before the judge by a Jew and followed by armed guards. He is holding a book in his hand. The judge is dressed in royal mantle and wears a lily crown, which indicates him being Herod. On the other image the hands of Christ are tied with a rope, which is held by the Jew, who is leading Christ (Fig.21.). This judge is dressed in a robe with long, hanging down sleeves and he also wears a lily crown vehemently points to Jesus. The gesture is duplicated by the Jew, which can represent the moment, when the populace decided on the fate of Christ and consequently Pilate sentenced him to be crucified. This representation of the final trial put the burden of responsibility for the death of Christ on the Jews. The Christian literature was full of anti-Jewish themes and expressions, which appear even in various genres from Passion treaties to poetry.¹⁰¹ Jew figures are portrayed as active contributors of the trial also in Stará Ľubovňa and Žehra. On the fresco of Stará Ľubovňa Christ is standing nearly in the center of the image surrounded by a group of people made of guards and Jews. On the left side of the image the judge in lily crown is point to at him, while he is being grabbed by one of the members of the crowd, whose right arm is violently raised, seemingly ready to beat him. Furthermore, the wall painting of Žehra also demonstrates the active role of the public in the trial (Fig.22.). Christ is on the right side of the image surrounded by soldiers, waiting for the decision, meanwhile Pilate on the lefts side washing his hands. Pilate is encircled by common people, who are intensely talking and deciding of Christ's fate.

On the wall paintings in Slatvina and Kocel'ovce the public does not have a great importance. In Slatvina it is represented by two talking figures in the background of the scene. In the foreground Pilate sits on a throne and points to Christ, his hands are tied, and armed

¹⁰¹More about this topic in: Thomas H. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.) pp. 69-110; Sara Lipton, "Christianity and Its Others: Jews, Muslims, and Pagans." *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.) pp. 414-420

guards are standing on his two side. In Kocel'ovce solely Christ, the soldiers and the judges are present. Two of the judges are wearing a mitre, thus they probably represent Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.¹⁰²

In Štítnik, Kocel'ovce, Plešivec, Žehra, Stará Ľubovňa and Slatvina one image portrays the trial. The damage of the frescoes in Štítnik and Plešivec makes them hard to analyze. The Štítnik representation, similarly to the other scenes of the church, depicts the event in a very compact way in strong frontality; the scene of the Trial is depicting only Christ and the judge.¹⁰³ Compared to the scene of Štítnik, the depiction of the trial aligns many figures around the protagonists, especially the scene in Plešivec, where several spears are raised to the sky by the crowd of guards between Christ and the judge.

3.1.6. Flagellation

The scourging of Christ is described by three of the Gospels.¹⁰⁴ With the event of the *Flagellation* the physical suffering of Christ in the Passion begins. The scene of *Flagellation* appears in all the eight churches. In Štítnik, Stará Ľubovňa, Žehra, Slatvina and Podolíneč Christ is scourged by two figures. The torturers wound Christ with two different kind scourges, whips containing attached weights or even birches. In Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce multiple figures beat Christ with rods and wound him with scourge. The depiction of rough and brutal torture on the *Flagellation*, caused by multiple tormentors denote the influence of the Passion plays.¹⁰⁵

The ripped skin of the suffering Christ covered with blood drops, and he bends in pain and the wounds caused by the torment on the images of Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce and Žehra

¹⁰² The scene is described as Christ before Herod and Caiaphas in Plekanec, and Haviar, *Gotický Gemer a Malohont: italianizmy v stredovekej nástennej malbe*. p. 94; and named to be Christ before Caiaphas in: Dvořáková, Krása, and Stejskal. *Středověká Nástěnná Malba na Slovensku*. p. 100

¹⁰³ The survived lower part of the fresco indicates the number of only two people in Stará Ľubovňa.

¹⁰⁴ Matthew 27: 26, Mark 15:15, John 19: 1

¹⁰⁵ Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonographie der Christlichen Kunst*. vol. 2. p.

(Fig.23.). His posture shows his suffering also in Podolíneć; however, the wounds of the torture do not appear on his skin. In Plešivec, Stará Ľubovňa and Slatvina the pain caused by the torture is not stressed heavily, he appears to be calm, and signs of the scourging cannot be seen on his skin.

The details of scourging are taken from the Old Testament, for instance there is a significant quote of Isaiah that Christian authors used in a new narrative and applied it to the flagellation of Christ; moreover, the theme of the flagellation was richly described in Passion tracts as well.¹⁰⁶

3.1.7. Crowning with Thorns

The *Crowning with Thorns* is the second event of the physical suffering of Christ. According to the narrative of the Gospels Christ gets seated on a throne, dressed in a purple mantle, then they put the crown of thorns on his head and mocked him by kneeling and bowing before him.¹⁰⁷ The event is depicted in Štítnik, Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce, Stará Ľubovňa, Slatvina and Podolíneć. Christ is in the center of these compositions, he is sitting on the throne with tied hands, except for Stará Ľubovňa, where his hands are free. In Štítnik and Podolíneć the tranquil Savior is crowned by two figures, the tormentors on the Štítnik image are wearing pointed hats. In Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce Christ is tortured by four men with great force, his face is still and resigned. The face of Christ on the wall paintings Štítnik and Stará Ľubovňa is comparable to the formerly mentioned images, however the Savior of the Slatvina image leans forward and he puts his arms on his knees to support himself, which gesture shows suffering and

¹⁰⁶ „From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.” Isaiah 1:6; James Marrow, “Inventing the Passion in the Late Middle Ages” *The Passion Story. From Visual Representation to Social Drama*. (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008.) pp. 46-47

¹⁰⁷ Matthew 27: 27-30, Mark 15: 16-19, John 19: 2-3

consequently his exhaustion (Fig.24).¹⁰⁸ Apart from the two tormentors of the scene, a soldier is watching the torture on the left side of Christ, furthermore, on Christ's left a kneeling man is depicted, who is mocking him. The man points to Christ and makes fun of him with intense gestures. Likewise, a small figure appears on the right of Christ on the *Crowning with Thorns* in Stará Ľubovňa (Fig.25.). The face and hands of the Jewish man cannot be seen well due to the damage of the fresco, however, presumably he is mocking Christ.

3.1.8. Christ carrying the Cross

All Gospels narrate the Christ's way to the Calvary, which is one of the most important scenes in late Medieval Passion cycles.¹⁰⁹ The *Christ carrying the Cross* is solely missing from the chancel of Žehra. The most condensed image containing the essence of the story is in Štítník, on which Christ can be seen bearing the weight of the cross alone, a soldier follows him, and the procession is led by a Jew. The only Gospel in which Christ carries the cross without any help is in the Gospel of John.¹¹⁰ In the other six churches the figure of Simon of Cyrene holds the end or the beam of the cross, referring to the description of the Synoptic Gospels, in which Simon of Cyrene carries the cross.¹¹¹ In Slatvina and Podolíneč Christ is leaning forward, bends under the weight of the cross due to the tortures and fatigue.

In Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce, and Podolíneč the motif of the rope is emphasized again, Christ is led by a man with a rope. In Podolíneč the rope seems to be tied around his neck and it is

¹⁰⁸ Anca Gogâltan, *Passion Iconography and Narrative Strategies in the Medieval Frescoes Decorating the Church in Mălâncrav (Almakerék, Malmkrog) in Transylvania*. New Europe College GE-NEC Program 2004-2005 2005-2006 2006-2007. p. 118

¹⁰⁹ Matthew 27: 31; Mark 15: 20-1, Luke 23: 26, John 19:16; Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in the Late Medieval Italy*. p. 113

¹¹⁰ John 19:17. The shift from Simon carrying the cross to Christ himself in the 13th century depictions is lengthy discussed in: Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in the Late Medieval Italy*. p. 128 and following.

¹¹¹ Matthew 27:32, Mark 15:21, Luke 23:26. The large scene of Plešivec is very fragmentary, it is hard to identify the details, therefore it could be better analyzed in the future when the restoration of the scene will be completed. On the fragment today a multi-figured depiction can be seen. In the background the crowd of armed men and the populace are standing. Szakálos. "A pelsőci templom 14. századi falképei" p. 218

held by a Jew, the procession is controlled by the guards in front of Christ (Fig. 26.). In Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce the rope is tied around the waist of Christ, furthermore the two thieves, who are crucified with Christ, also appear on the way. The thieves, a young man and a bearded elder are tied with rope around their neck and blindfolded. In Ochtiná the rope is held by a bald man, in Kocel'ovce the same bald figure leads the thieves and Christ is led by another figure. The presence of the thieves when Christ carried the cross and at the Crucifixion was a common element in many Franciscan writings.¹¹²

The thieves are not depicted on the *Christ carrying the Cross* in Stará Ľubovňa (Fig.27.). In the center of the scene Christ is helped by Simon of Cyrene to hold the cross. Christ turns his head back and talks, hence a soldier, a man wearing a pointed hat and another, in conical hat looks at him. The man with the pointed hat grabs him by his shoulder to urge him to move forward.¹¹³ Behind Simon, on the left side of the scene, Saint Veronica stands in a frontal position, which makes her appear to be separated from the main action of the image. She is holding a *sudarium* with the imprint of Christ's Holy Face. The legend of Saint Veronica was linked to the scene of the *Christ Carrying the Cross* from around 1300.¹¹⁴ Veronica felt compassion to Christ when she saw him on the way to the Calvary and she offered a cloth to him to dry his sweat. I write further accounts to the Veil of Veronica later in the chapter.

3.1.9. Crucifixion

The *Crucifixion* represents the climax of the Passion of Christ.¹¹⁵ The depiction of the Crucifixion cannot be analyzed in Štítňik, because the wall paintings in the chancel are

¹¹² The motif is especially stressed in Bonaventure's *De Perfectione Vitae ad Sorores* and in the *Meditationes vitae Christi*. Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in the Late Medieval Italy*. pp. 153-154

¹¹³ Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonographie der Christlichen Kunst*. vol. 2. p. 80

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 78, Gerát, *Stredoveké obrazové témy na Slovensku*. p. 225

¹¹⁵ In the Bible: Matthew 27: 33-50, Mark 15: 22-41, Luke 23: 33-49, John 19, 17-37

uncovered until the scene of *Christ carrying the Cross*.¹¹⁶ The Crucifixion scenes of the other seven churches can be classified into two groups, Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce and Plešivec presents the *Crucifixion* with three crosses, the Holy Cross of Christ and the crosses of the two thieves, while Žehra, Stará Ľubovňa, Slatvina and Podolíneec merely shows the cross of Christ.

The *Crucifixion* of Kocel'ovce occupies two registers in the chancel, which is the largest scene on the only unbroken wall of the eastern walls, visualizing the peak of the Passion, Christ's sacrifice nearby the altar, where the mass sacrifice was performed (Fig.28.).¹¹⁷ Besides the reference to the sacrifice, the scene emphasizes the Eucharist by portraying the moment when Longinus thrusts his lance into the chest of Christ, from which blood streams out, what is more, his skin is covered with the bloody wounds which he suffered during the torments. This moment is also portrayed in the church of Slatvina (Fig.29.). We can see the blood flowing out of the side wound and Stephaton with the sponge on a reed, which he lifts before Christ's face. Both are the instruments of the Passion, and they directly refer to the Blood of Christ, thus the Eucharist.¹¹⁸ One more image shows his physical suffering such emphasized, which is in Žehra (Fig.30.). The crucified Christ is covered with blood drops and from his side wound the blood is jetting out. Furthermore, there is an allusion to the Eucharist on the Crucifixion of Plešivec, however not through the visualization of Christ's wound and blood. Between the three crosses small angels gather with chalices in their hands (Fig.31.), who are flying around Christ to collect his Holy Blood.¹¹⁹

In Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce the two thieves crucified next to Christ are depicted with contorted bodies twirled around the crosses. The penitent thief is on the right of Christ on both

¹¹⁶ However, it can be seen that the cycle goes on.

¹¹⁷ Kónya, "Eucharistic Imagery in the Late Gothic Wall Paintings of Transylvania (c. 1440-1530)." p. 27

¹¹⁸ Gergely Kovács, "Megjegyzések a füzéri római katolikus templom középkori Arma Christi falképéhez, valamint további töredékeihez." *Ars Hungarica*, 43. 2017. p. 278

¹¹⁹ Prokopp, *Középkori freskók Gömörben*. p. 28

images and an angel comes for his soul in the form of a naked *homunculus*, likewise, the soul of the bad thief is also taken, which is emerging from his mouth, but for the latter a devil arrives.

On every scene, on the two sides of the dead Christ, the Virgin Mary and John, the Evangelist appears. The simplest composition is in Stará Ľubovňa, where Mary stands on Christ's right and John on his left, holding a book. However, on the other images the Virgin Mary is depicted in the group of the three Marys and together with John they show the various magnitudes of grief and compassion. The Virgin Mary is shedding tears in sorrow for her son's death and the saint women support her on the image of Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce, Plešivec and Slatvina. On the fresco of Žehra Mary collapses and she is held by one of the women. The greatest sorrow is shown on the *Crucifixion* of Podolíneč, where Mary collapses and falls to the ground, she cries and covers her face (Fig.32.). Her compassion with Christ is strongly emphasized. The collapsing of Mary at the cross is described in the *Meditationes vitae Christi*. According to the writing she fainted and fell into the hands of Mary Magdalene, and she nearly died, when Longinus thrust Christ's side.¹²⁰

3.1.10. Descent from the Cross

Depiction of the deposition can be seen in five of the churches. The concluding images of the Passion cycle in Stará Ľubovňa are covered with a younger layer of painted decoration, so it cannot be known whether the *Descent from the Cross* was depicted, however the Plešivec cycle ends with the *Crucifixion*.

The Descent from the Cross is described by all Gospels, but Nicodemus, who helps in the process of deposition to Joseph of Arimathea is only mentioned in John's Gospel, however they are both depicted in these Passion cycles.¹²¹ Joseph of Arimathea is holding a linen cloth

¹²⁰ Kliš, "North-Alpine art. Gestures in Passion Cycles in Central European Mural Painting" p. 90

¹²¹ Matthew 27: 57-66; Mark 15: 42-47, Luke 23: 50-55, John 19: 38-43

to cover the body of Christ after taking him off the cross on the wall painting of Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce, Nicodemus is standing on a ladder and holds the arm of Christ (Fig.33.). While Nicodemus is taking off Christ, the grieving Virgin Mary holds his son's body from below with a strong embrace on both images. A third figure – who is not Mary - helps the deposition in Podolínec and Slatvina, which occurs rarely in the traditional iconography.¹²² Even more figures participate in the deposition on the fresco of Žehra (Fig.34.). The three men, including Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, moreover Mary and John the Evangelist hold the falling, wounded body of Christ.

In Žehra, due to the active participation in the actions, the emotions, and the grief of the figure, apart from the sadness of the faces, could have not been shown expressively. In Slatvina Mary looks at Christ with grief and clasps her hands, while John holds her shoulder. Great emotion is shown in Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce. On the wall painting of Ochtiná three saintly women sheds tears for Christ. One of them is kneeling and holds the hand of the Virgin Mary, the woman behind her is Mary Magdalene, who holds a pot of oil in her hands, tilts her head in grief.¹²³ On the right side of the image John stands, tilts his head forward and clasps his hands in sorrow. In Kocel'ovce John holds a book, thus he rests his head only on his right hand. A woman behind the Virgin Mary, probably Mary Magdalene clasps her hands and raises her arms above her head, the gesture she makes is a meditative and an archaic form of gesture for expressing grief. This motif appears in more 14th century wall painting in the area of the Hungarian Kingdom both on scenes depicting the *Descent from the Cross* and the *Entombment*.¹²⁴

¹²² It also appears in another Medieval Hungarian fresco cycle in Zolna. Gergely Kovács, “Zolna” *Falfestészeti emlékek a középkori Zólyom vármegye területén*. (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2021.) p. 93

¹²³ Zombor Jékely, “Cserény” *Falfestészeti emlékek a középkori Zólyom vármegye területén*. (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2021.) p. 188

¹²⁴ The motif originates from a Byzantine type of depiction of a lamenting figure. Analogies can be found in: Füzér, Čečejevce (Csécs), Kocelovce, Kovács, “Zolna” *Falfestészeti emlékek a középkori Zólyom vármegye területén*. p 86

3.1.11. Entombment

The Entombment is depicted in Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce, Slatvina and Podolíneč. The cycle of Žehra ended with the *Descent from the cross*. All the four wall paintings present strong emotions with dynamic gestures. Compared to the others, the painting in Kocel'ovce portrays a slightly earlier moment from the others (Fig.35.). Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are still holding the body of Christ, which is only half covered by the linen cloth. On his bare chest we can see his bleeding side wound and the small bloody wounds, which once again reminds the audience to his physical suffering. His upper body is in the hands of Mary, who leans close to Christ until her cheek reaches his. The figure of Virgin Mary leans to his son identically in Ochtiná and Podolíneč. On the other three image Christ is completely covered by the linen cloth.

On all four images one of the saintly women mourns Christ with an exaggerated and expressive movement. She raises her hands above her head; in Slatvina (Fig.36.) and Podolíneč her posture is nearly straight, while the women of Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce are leaning over the tomb. On the two latter images even another woman grieves expressively, their hands are also raised but they clasp their hands and lean towards Christ. Their movement is similar to the grieving figure on the *Descent from the Cross* of Kocel'ovce.

3.1.12. Harrowing of Hell

Three of the churches, Ochtiná, Slatvina bear the image of the *Harrowing of Hell* and seeing the fragment of the fresco of the south wall I assume that it was also depicted in Podolíneč. In the order of the Passion's chronology the *Harrowing of Hell* is occurred after the entombment and before his resurrection. After his death, Christ descends to Limbo, where he saves the Adam and Eve, and the souls who are trapped there exclusively for the original sin. After saving the souls Christ ascends. The story of the three days between his death and

resurrection is briefly mentioned in the New Testament, however the topic gained popularity in the Middle Ages, thanks to the Apocrypha, which were the basis of the Medieval descriptions of the *Harrowing of Hell*, like the *Speculum Maius* written by Vincent of Beauvais, the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine and the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, in which the glory is emphasized.¹²⁵

In Ochtiná, Slatvina the gate of Hell is represented by the open-mouthed Leviathan (Fig.37-38.). The description of the underworld as the mouth of a monster can be found in the Book of Isaiah.¹²⁶ Christ is standing in front of the Leviathan; in Slatvina and Podolíneč he is holding a flag. In Ochtiná he is standing next to his cross, which reminds the audience of the fact that the triumph and redemption could have only happened because of his sacrifice by his suffering and death.

3.1.13. Resurrection

The *Resurrection* ends the narrative of the Passion of Christ and correspondingly ends the Holy Week of Easter. The *Resurrection* is depicted in Ochtiná, Slatvina and Podolíneč. In Slatvina the lid of the sarcophagus of Christ is taken off by two angels (Fig.39.).¹²⁷ Christ is stepping out of his tomb and holds a flag of triumph in his left hand, while he is blessing with his right hand. The figure of Christ is analogous on the image of Podolíneč with Slatvina, however, in Podolíneč the lid is already taken off and no angels appear, as well as in Ochtiná. The guards – equally three on all scenes – are sleeping deeply around the tomb.

According to the chronology of the Passion the *Harrowing of Hell* precedes the *Resurrection*, still the traditional arrangement changes the order, and the *Resurrection* is

¹²⁵ Kata Hári: „Alászállt a poklokra”. A pokolraszállás ikonográfiája különös tekintettel az itáliai ábrázolásokra.” *Adsumus XV.* (Budapest, ELTE Eötvös József Collegium, 2017.) pp. 123-128

¹²⁶ Isaiah 5:14

¹²⁷ The angels are mentioned in the Gospels: Matthew 28:1-7, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-8, John 20:1-10

usually depicted after the *Harrowing of Hell*. This change of order made it happen in Ochtiná to have the scenes of the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection* next to each other. These two themes together emphasize the triumph of Christ over death.¹²⁸

3.1.14. Rarely depicted additional Passion scenes

In Plešivec and Podolíneč, next to the *Last Supper* the *Washing of the Feet* is depicted.¹²⁹ The unusual act of Christ was a duty of the slaves, thus washing the feet of the disciples intended to show special respect to the disciples and a model for an extraordinary humility. The liturgical feet washing was also a way of purification. The rite became the part of the liturgy of Holy Thursday.¹³⁰ On the image of Plešivec, in an illusionistic architectural space, the twelve Apostles line up, while Christ is kneeling before one of them to wash the feet of the disciple (Fig.40.).¹³¹ On the wall painting of Podolíneč a number of apostles stand on the left side of the image, also in an architectural space and Christ kneels before them.¹³²

The *Disrobing of Christ* enriches the Passion cycle of Podolíneč (Fig.41.). The scene adds on more image to the narrative which shows the mocking of Christ and serve as a preparation for the sufferings. In the Bible, the disrobing was only mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew.¹³³ The story became well known during the Late Middle Ages and emerged with the popularity of the meditations on the Passion. The scene was described in the *Meditationes vitae Christi* and amongst the visions of Saint Bridget of Sweden.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Jékely, "Pónik" *Falfestészeti emlékek a középkori Zólyom vármegye területén*. p. 283

¹²⁹ The scene is also depicted in Ludrová

¹³⁰ Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian art. vol. 2*, London: Lund Humphries, 1972. pp. 42-43 Gerát, *Stredoveké obrazové témy na Slovensku*. p. 215

¹³¹ The lower part of the scene is too fragmented for more analysis.

¹³² The right side of the image is lost.

¹³³ Matthew 27: 28

¹³⁴ Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in the Late Medieval Italy*. pp.154-155, Ragusa and Green, *Meditations on the Life of Christ, An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*. p. 333

In the center of the image of Podolínec Christ leans forward, while a Jew takes his robe off. Behind him another man stands with birches and grabs Christ. Besides the meaning of the scene, in the narrative, the stripping of Christ in the Middle Ages was perceived as a parallel to the practice of baring the altar, since the altar is the symbol of Christ.¹³⁵

In Slatvina and in Podolínec the scenes of Christ suffering are enhanced by an image of a brutal torture, the *Nailing to the Cross* (Fig.42-43.). In the Kingdom of Hungary at the end of the 14th century, apart from Slatvina and Podolínec, the *Nailing to the Cross* was depicted in Liptovské Sliache (Háromszlécs) and in Vyshkovo (Visk). However, it is more often represented in manuscripts, like the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, which can be a possible source of the image.¹³⁶

In the center of the image the figure of Christ can be seen tied to the diagonally positioned cross in both images. The cross is surrounded by the men who hammer the large nails into Christ's body. The image prepares the *Crucifixion* and emphasizes the tortures of the process of being crucified, his sufferings and his humanity.

One more image is added to the Passion scenes in Ochtiná (Fig.44.). The fresco depicts the *Pietà* or *Lamentation*. In the foreground of the image the Virgin Mary can be seen holding the dead body of her son on her lap. Behind them we see the sepulcher of Christ and even Christ's cross, around which four lamenting figures can be seen, one of the women, probably Mary Magdalene even holds the arm of Christ.¹³⁷ The remarkably emotional image shows a moment between the *Descent from the Cross* and the *Entombment*. The theme surpasses the biblical narrative by reaching a similar affect and function as a devotional image for meditative

¹³⁵ Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian art. vol. 2*, p. 83

¹³⁶ Henk van Os, "Devotional Themes" *The Art of Devotion in the Later Middle Ages in Europe 1300-1500*. (London: Merrel Holberton, 1994.) p. 104

¹³⁷ Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian art. vol. 2*, p. 175

piety.¹³⁸ An expressive description of the deep sorrow and mourning of Virgin Mary was written in the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, also mentioning Mary Magdalene, who holds the feet of Christ in the text.¹³⁹

3.1.15. Completing the “Resurrection cycle”

In Podolíneč, the story of the Passion was continued with Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension. The scenes are usually depicted after the image of the Resurrection, as it can be seen also in Podolíneč.¹⁴⁰ On the *Noli me tangere* Christ appears to Mary Magdalene in a garden (Fig.45.). First Mary Magdalene thinks he is the gardener, then he recognizes the Savior in him. After Mary Magdalene recognizes him, Christ says to her not to touch him and to spread the news of his forthcoming ascension to Heaven.¹⁴¹ Interestingly in Podolíneč Mary Magdalene leans forward on the ground to bow to Christ’s blessing and touches the feet of Christ. According to Ivan Gerát it is the sign of the visual influence of the representation of the theme of *Christ in the House of Simon the Leper*.¹⁴²

Furthermore, the cycle is enriched with the *Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, which is mentioned in the Gospel of John. On the image of Podolíneč, the glorified Christ is standing with the flag of triumph in his hand, while the doubting Thomas puts his finger in Christ’s side wound to see if Christ truly resurrected. Emphasizing the side wound is a demonstration of his sacrifice, death, and the redemption (Fig.46.).¹⁴³

The *Pentecost*, which depicts the Ascension of Christ into Heaven can be also seen in Podolíneč (Fig.47.). The image of the church shows the western type of depiction, where Christ

¹³⁸ Ibidem. p. 174

¹³⁹ Ibidem. p. 175

¹⁴⁰ Some other examples from the Kingdom of Hungary is in Poniky (Pónik), Zolná (Zolna), Ludrová (Nemesludrova). Jékely, “Pónik” *Falfestészeti emlékek a középkori Zólyom vármegye területén*. p. 296

¹⁴¹ Ibidem.

¹⁴² Gerát, *Stredoveké obrazové témy na Slovensku*. p. 232-233

¹⁴³ Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian art. vol. 2*, p. 203

ascends to the Heaven without any visible help.¹⁴⁴ On the upper part of the scene the feet of Christ can be seen with the wounds made by the nails of the crucifixion. He disappears in the clouds while some rays of light come down and reach each Apostle and the Virgin Mary, which probably represent the Holy Spirit descending. In the center of the image the Virgin Mary is sitting, and she is surrounded by the eleven Apostles.

3.2. Mariological themes and the images from the Life of Christ

The Virgin Mary is the most important female figure of the medieval Christianity and therefore became a central figure of the art. The biggest impact on Mary's importance, which made her highly venerated, was made by works of the Cistercian abbot, Bernard of Clairvaux from the 12th century. The thought of Bernard was that Mary is a perfect mediatrix between the human and the divine, who is a pure earthly woman who reached the heaven. Furthermore, the only way to possibly reach God is through Mary. He also made Mary seen as an active participant in the initiation of the Redemption by accepting the Annunciation with her free will.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, she became a popular figure as an ideal woman in the 13th century chivalric literature and in the related depictions. However, her image in Central Europe was more dependent on the religious thought and mysticism.¹⁴⁶

In the art of the 14th and 15th century the stories of Virgin Mary were represented in connection to Christ, for instance when a Christological cycle portrays the Infancy of Christ from the Annunciation or the Nativity. She barely has any independent representation of her life, what are usually the Dormition and the Crowning of the Virgin Mary. In the following I

¹⁴⁴ Gerát, *Stredoveké obrazové témy na Slovensku*. p. 233

¹⁴⁵ Edit Újvári, "A középkori Mária-ikonográfia kultikus háttere. A Mária megkoronázása-téma komplexitása." *Kép, képmás, kultusz*. (Szeged. 2006.) pp. 41-42

¹⁴⁶ Tünde Wehli, "Tematikai és ikonográfiai jelenségek" *Magyarországi művészet 1300-1470 körül*, p. 184

will discuss the scenes from the Infancy of Christ and from his life before the Passion, which are accompanying the Passion cycles of the six churches which contain these themes.¹⁴⁷

3.2.1. Annunciation

The *Annunciation* and additionally the *Nativity* presents the incarnation of Christ and testifies that Christ is fully human and fully God. The moment of the *Annunciation* is also the moment of incarnation as she received the words of the Archangel Gabriel.¹⁴⁸ The direct visual representation of the incarnation in the moment of the *Annunciation* can be the best observed in the church of Kocel'ovce (Fig.48.). The Virgin Mary is sitting on a reading seat with the open Scripture in front of her and receives the words of Gabriel, which is written on the scroll in his hand "*Ave Maria gratia plena*". Above Mary and the angel, the figure of the blessing God appears at the sky, who brings a small nimbed, naked figure to the Virgin. Between the child and the Virgin, the Dove of the Holy Spirit arrives.¹⁴⁹

In Ochtiná, the scene is depicted above the triumphal arch, thus above the depiction of the Old Testament Prophets (Fig.49.). On the left side of the image Gabriel is blessing Mary and holds the scroll with the appropriate inscription, mentioned before. On the right of the image Mary receives his words by the reading table. At the sky, the Dove of the Holy Spirit flies out of the hands of God. The placement of the scene above the Prophets, together with Mary in the company of books puts the image into a dogmatic context and refers to the wisdom and truth of God.¹⁵⁰ The *Annunciation* of Žehra portrays the conception with simpler elements, the scene is divided by the window. On the left side of the image Gabriel kneels without holding

¹⁴⁷ The description of the occurrence of these scenes is in the first chapter of the thesis.

¹⁴⁸ Luke 1:26–38, Gerát, *Stredoveké obrazové témy na Slovensku*. p. 188

¹⁴⁹ This thought is represented also in Kraskovo (Karaszó) and in Liptovský Ondrej (Szentandrás). Ibidem.

¹⁵⁰ Ibidem. p. 189

an inscription, on the left side the Dove of the Holy Spirit is sent by God to the praying Virgin Mary.¹⁵¹

3.2.2. Visitation

The joyful meeting of the pregnant Mary and Elizabeth is described in the Gospel of Luke. After meeting with Mary and Jesus, the child in Elizabeth's womb, John the Baptist were filled with the Holy Spirit. The Visitation is presented in the church of *Ochtiná* and *Kocel'ovce*. In *Ochtiná* the two women are followed probably by their servants, who are standing on each side of the image.¹⁵² In the center Mary and Elizabeth can be seen, as they hold the hands of each other. The peculiarity of the image is the two babies depicted on the scene. The two fetuses are portrayed outside of the two mothers' womb. In the *Kocel'ovce* image the event is better preserved, therefore the figures and the babies can be seen clearer, as well (Fig.50.). The *Kocel'ovce* image does not include the servants, the two women meet alone. On both images, the figure of Christ raises his hands for blessing, while the unborn John the Baptist is kneeling in the womb of her mother and clasps his hands for prayer, receiving the Holy Spirit.¹⁵³

As it was pointed out by Ivan Gerát and Peter Megyeši, in *Ochtiná Visitation* scene was placed above the *Entry into Jerusalem*, which created a parallel between the two images of arrival and the parallel is further emphasized by the placement of the figures. Under the unborn Christ, on the *Entry into Jerusalem* we see the figure of Christ arriving on the back of the donkey. Under the figure of the bowing John the Baptist, a group of people greet Christ.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ The *Annunciation* is presented even in Plešivec, but only a fragment of the scene can be seen, therefore the analysis of the image is not possible.

¹⁵² Peter Megyeši, „Et benedictus fructus ventris tui“: K ikonografii Navštívení na středověkých nástěnných malbách v Ochtíně a Kocel'ovcích.” *Umění /Art* LXV, 2017. p. 262-268

¹⁵³ The unusual iconographical type is mostly connected with the Franciscan spirituality. Ibidem.

¹⁵⁴ Ibidem., Gerát, *Středověké obrazové témy na Slovensku*. p. 194,

3.2.3. Nativity

The *Nativity* is depicted in Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce (Fig.51.). The scene shows the birth of Christ, therefore the incarnation of the Savior. The scenes of Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce are nearly identical. In the center of the images, the Virgin Mary rests and watches Joseph. Joseph is sleeping and leans on his staff; an angel is touching his head to tell him that he will become the father of Jesus.¹⁵⁵ Behind Mary the newborn Christ is laying in manger next to an ass and an ox. On the right side of both images a smaller figure clasps his hands in adoration, who is probably a shepherd. The ass and ox appeared in the description of the *Legenda Aurea*, in which even they recognized the Savior, thus they knelt before him.¹⁵⁶

3.2.4. Adoration of the Magi

The *Adoration of the Magi* is painted in the church of Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce and Podolíneč. The Epiphany image both in Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce is divided into two scenes; on one the first image two Magi approaching, on the second image the third king has already arrived and kneels in front of Mary and the Child. The angel, who showed the way until the son of God, looks down from the sky to the Holy Mother and Christ. The nimbed Mary is seated on a throne and holds the cross-nimbed child Christ, who blesses the first arrived king. On the first image of the *Adoration of the Magi* in Ochtiná the two kings behind are arriving on the back of their horses, they are in intense discussion. Likewise, in Kocel'ovce, but here they arrive on foot.

The image in Podolíneč depicted in a uniquely long scene, which occupies both north walls of the chancel (Fig.52.). The Holy Family is seated on the right side of the image. One of the kings is already arrived, he kneels in front of the child Christ and hands him his gift. The

¹⁵⁵ Matthew 1:20–21

¹⁵⁶ Gerát, *Stredoveké obrazové témy na Slovensku*. p. 196

kneeling king is depicted without his crown, which is held by his servant, which gesture shows his humility before Christ and stresses the divinity of Christ. The two other Magi is still on the way, galloping on horseback. The left side of the image shows the depiction of a town, in which the people celebrate the news.¹⁵⁷

The scene refers to the humanity of Christ with testifying his incarnation and birth, furthermore the divinity of Christ with the act of adoration. Moreover, even the gifts of the kings carry symbolical meaning.¹⁵⁸ The myrrh, which is an herb used in embalming, refers to the coming death of Christ's, while the frankincense is the symbol of divinity and the gold symbolizing royalty.¹⁵⁹

3.2.5. Presentation in the Temple

Fulfilling the Jewish tradition, Jesus was presented to God, and they also offered a sacrifice on the fortieth day following the birth of the child.¹⁶⁰ The event is depicted in Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce and Plešivec. The scene in Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce analogous once again. The *Presentation in the Temple* is divided to two scenes in both churches.

In Ochtiná and in Kocel'ovce as well, the first image shows the arrival of the Virgin Mary, Christ and their company. In Ochtiná (Fig.53.) the Virgin Mary is on the left side of the image, she holds Christ, their faces touch, next to her a woman can be seen with a dove in her hand for the sacrifice, who is presumably Anna the prophetess. There are two more figures, the one with the staff is probably Saint Joseph. In Kocel'ovce Mary and Christ is in the center of the image, on Mary's each side a woman is depicted with one-one doves in their hands. The

¹⁵⁷ Mária Prokopp interprets the image of Podolíneć as an allusion to royal visits in Podolin in the 13th and 14th century. Prokopp, "Podolin plébániatemplomának 14. századi falkép-ciklusai a kortárs misztériumjátékok emlékéét őrzik". p.37

¹⁵⁸ André Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins*. pp. 12-13

¹⁵⁹ Újvári. "A „háromkirályok imádása" ikonográfiai téma hatalomlegitimációs szerepe a középkorban."; Caroline Wistar, *Adoration of the Magi*.

¹⁶⁰ Luke 2: 22-40, Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian art. vol. 1*. p. 90.

second image of both churches contains the essential part of the event. The second images are nearly identical; the child Christ is standing on an altar between the Virgin Mary and Simeon, the high priest; Christ blesses with his right hand.

In the center of the image in Plešivec a large altar is placed. Behind the altar Simeon stands with the child Christ in his hands. On priest's right Mary reaches out her hands to take the child from Simeon. On the left side of the composition Saint Joseph stands with two doves in his hands, on the right side a young woman stands with an inscription scroll, who is probably Anne.¹⁶¹

3.2.6. Baptism of Christ

The Baptism of Christ is a scene from the Savior's life before going to Jerusalem and before his Passion. On the scene of Plešivec Christ is standing in the river Jordan (Fig.54.). John the Baptist is standing on his right, he wears his camel's hair garment and a red robe above it and performs the baptism. On the right side of the image two figures are standing in white cloth, due to the damages of the fresco their body and face cannot be seen. Above Christ the Dove of the Holy Spirit appears.

3.2.7. Coronation of the Virgin Mary

The *Coronation of the Virgin Mary* occurs after her Dormition and Ascension in the Heaven. The *Coronation of the Virgin Mary* appears in Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce, Žehra and Stará Lubovňa. The image of Stará Lubovňa is damaged and partly covered by a later layer of paint. The survived fragment shows the Virgin Mary on a throne with angels on her right. Analogous the depiction of Ochtiná and Žehra (Fig.55.). The images show Mary and Christ on the same

¹⁶¹ The inscription of the scroll cannot be seen today due to the damages of the wall paintings. Szakálos. "A pelsőci templom 14. századi falképei" p. 217

throne. On their two sides angels play on musical instruments. Mary clasps her hands, while Christ blesses her. She already wears the crown of glory. In Kocel'ovce the angels are omitted. Mary is wearing the crown and blessed by Christ.

3.3. Individual depiction of saints and devotional scenes

One of the most important segments of the Medieval Christianity was the veneration of saints. The saints helped the faithful to satisfy their emotional needs, their stories helped them understand the religious thoughts, dogmas and they were models to live the right way morally.¹⁶² In the churches of my focus the number of the depiction of saints appearing individually, besides the narrative cycles are diverse. The largest quantity of saintly figures appears in Ochtiná, Kocel'ovce and Plešivec, however, sadly most of them are not identifiable. In the following I discuss those individual depictions of saints which can be identified and those devotional images, which are not narrative images.

The figure of Saint Dorothy is portrayed in Slatvina and Podolíneč (Fig.56-57.). Saint Dorothy is a virgin martyr, who suffered martyrdom during the reign of Diocletian. Saint Dorothy was significantly popular in the Spiš County, her cult reached the area in the second half of the fourteenth century, which is even attested by numerous churches where her depiction appears.¹⁶³ The figure of Saint Dorothy in Slatvina is depicted with her attribute, the casket and she is adorned by two figures. The Saint Dorothy of Podolíneč is portrayed together with the errand boy, who bring the basket to her. The casket is connected to a miracle of hers before her execution, which is described in the *Legenda Aurea*. Theophilus mocked Dorothy before her beheading. He asked the woman to send him roses and apples in the wintertime. She prayed to

¹⁶² Tünde Wehli, "Tematikai és ikonográfiai jelenségek" *Magyarországi művészet 1300-1470 körül*, p. 203

¹⁶³ Dorottya Uhrin, "The Cult of Saint Dorothy in Medieval Hungary" MA Thesis, Central European University, 2018. p. 27-29

God and heard the voice of Christ, then a child appeared with a casket full of apples and roses.¹⁶⁴

Another virgin martyr appears in one of the churches, who is Saint Catherine. In Kocel'ovce, the saint woman is portrayed with her traditional attribute, the wheel (Fig.58.). Saint Catherine of Alexandria was one of the most celebrated saints in the Middle Ages. Her cult became important in the 14th century mining towns, and she seems to be venerated together with Saint Barbara as a patron saint of miners.¹⁶⁵

We can also find images of doctor saints and helpers. In Žehra Saint Cosmas and Saint Damian are depicted on the south wall of the chancel (Fig.59.).¹⁶⁶ Saint Cosmas and Damian are the patron saints of doctors and pharmacists. The wall paintings portraying the two saints in Žehra are damaged, therefore the attributes of the figures cannot be seen, however on the left side painting an inscription, “*Medicus*” can be read, while on the other side of the window, next to the other saint a small figure seated, whose chest is entirely covered with red rash. One of the Fourteen Holy Helpers can be seen on the triumphal arch of Ochtiná. Saint Erasmus, a martyr bishop is depicted with arrows under his fingernail and also under his toenails (Fig.60.).¹⁶⁷

The veil of Saint Veronica appears in two cycles. The *sudarium* held by Veronica - which I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter already – is depicted in Stará Ľubovňa as the part of the Passion narrative. However the *Vera Icon* does not appear in the cycles only as a part of an event, in Slatvina the true image of Christ is represented individually between two

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem. pp. 15-16

¹⁶⁵ Dorottya Uhrin, “The Cult of Saint Katherine of Alexandria in Medieval Upper Hungarian Towns” *Hungarian Historical Review* 5, no. 3 (2016). pp. 557-558, 566

¹⁶⁶ Gerát, *Stredoveké obrazové témy na Slovensku*. p. 152

¹⁶⁷ Béla Zsolt Szakács, “Palatine Lackfi and His Saints” *Promoting the Saints*. Budapest, Central European University Press, 2011. p. 214

scenes from the Passion (Fig.61). The veil of Veronica contains the imprint of Christ's face, the image is created without hands, it is made by the sweat and blood of Christ. Therefore, it evokes the suffering and sacrifice of Christ. Emphasizes his humanity, his blood and consequently the Eucharist.

Lastly, I would like to mention depictions of the *Vir Dolorum* or *Imago Pietatis*, which is present in Ochtiná, Žehra and Slatvina (Fig.62-63.). The *Vir Dolorum* theme presented without the instruments of the Passion - except for the chalice - appears in the middle of the 14th century and it became a uniquely Central-European imagery.¹⁶⁸ This heavily Eucharistic type of image can be found in the church of Slatvina. On the depiction, Christ opens his side wound and pours his blood into the chalice. The frescoes of Ochtiná and Žehra represent a different Christ. The figures of the latter churches are exhausted, tortured and full of sorrow. On both images Christ stands in a sepulcher, covered with blood drops and wounds, his head is tilted, and his arms are crossing. This variant emphasizes the suffering and the humanity of Christ and concentrates on the emotions.

4. Characteristics of the Passion cycles

The Passion cycle of Žehra contains a few crucial scenes from the Passion of Christ, however these images are showing complex actions. The figures of the images are in lively discussion with each other. The suffering Christ is emphasized emotionally and evokes compassion through the emotions of the figures, like through the compassion of the Virgin Mary and the expressive depiction of Christ's wounds. Instead of showing a wide range of narrative scenes to illustrate the story, the cycle focuses on the emotional and moral aspects of

¹⁶⁸ Gergely Kovács, "Megjegyzések a füzéri római katolikus templom középkori Arma Christi falképéhez, valamint további töredékeihez" p. 280; Dóra Sallay, "The Eucharistic Man of Sorrows in Late Medieval Art." *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU Vol. 6*. Budapest: Central European University, 2000. p. 55

each image, like for instance with the denial of Peter. The large individual scenes, both the images from the Life of Mary and the ones depicting the Passion carry the essential dogmas of Christianity but represent them on a level which helps the personal understanding of the audience. The images of the most important wall, the east wall, combining the *Annunciation* with the trial of Christ, a *Vir Dolorum* and the *Flagellation* emphasizes his humanity by portraying the incarnation and the bodily sufferings and his pain which once again arouse the compassion of the faithful.

The cycle of the church Plešivec also contains only the crucial moments of the Life and Passion of Christ. The cycle is presenting some additional scenes from the Life giving an overview of Christ's life until the Redemption. His glorification is not portrayed in the church and the chosen scenes make him appear as the model of a humble man bearing burdens with grace. Furthermore, the wall paintings of Štítník presents dominantly iconic scenes as well, rather than detailed narrative images. The chosen themes of lyrical images are referring to the Eucharist in a meditative manner.

The last four cycles are containing numerous narrative images. The Passion cycle in Stará Lúbovňa is a detailed descriptive narrative Passion cycle to illustrate the stories which lead to Redemption. The cycle includes a large number of images of the suffering of Christ with the focus on his tortures. Seeing each image, the tormentors of Christ are noticeably violent, however Christ calmly endures all these sufferings. The appearance of the Jews as torturers is dominant which can be the sign of the anti-Jewish ideas of the time.¹⁶⁹ The Passion cycle of Slatvina also depicts the detailed narrative scenes exclusively from the Passion. The cycle focuses on the physical suffering of Christ and portraying many stages of the Passion, which is emphasized by his wounds and the Holy Blood. The narrative scenes are completed

¹⁶⁹ I mention the anti-Jewish literature in the previous chapter (3.1.5. The Trial of Christ).

with the *Vir Dolorum* and the *Vera Icon*, which are also referring to the Eucharist. The scenes of the cycle are chosen to stress the mystery of the Eucharist, which might show an apologetic role of the images. In the time of the execution of the wall paintings the Hussites denied the transubstantiation in the Eucharist, that is, the conversion of the bread into Christ's body and the wine into his blood.¹⁷⁰

The complex narrative cycles of Ochtiná and Kocel'ovce present the Life of Christ from the moment of his incarnation with an accent on the Passion scenes. The cycles of both churches emphasize the bodily tortures of Christ and the compassion of Mary. The scenes of suffering carry strong Eucharistic references and stress the humanity of Christ. Seeing the earthy Christ suffer evokes the emotions and the compassion of the believers. Moreover, the various elements of the scenes show the influence of Franciscan spirituality.

The most detailed cycle, concerning the Passion scenes, is in Podolíneč. It shows a wide range of events from Christ's life through the suffering, the death and the resurrection and glorification with adding the image of the *Adoration*, which connects the message of the two sides of the chancel.¹⁷¹ The cycle both highlights the humanity of Christ with his detailed suffering and even his divinity by the scenes of the "Resurrection cycle".¹⁷² Due to the damage of the wall painting and the heavy restoration the emotions on the faces of the figures could not have been analyzed, however the gestures and movements of the figures show deep emotions. Christ is suffering under the burden of the torture with exhaustion and Mary in compassion to him collapse in grief at the cross of Christ, show the influence of mystical and devotional writings.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Wehli, Tünde: "Képciklusok." *Magyarországi művészet 1300-1470 körül*. p. 191.

¹⁷¹ See: 2.1. Side walls of the chancel

¹⁷² Description in the previous chapter: 3.1.15. Completing the "Resurrection cycle".

¹⁷³ See: 3.1.9. Crucifixion in the previous chapter.

5. Conclusion

After analyzing the iconographical program of the chancels in the churches of Žehra, Podolíneč, Stará Lubovňa, Slatvina, Štítnik, Kocel'ovce, Ochtiná and Plešivec we can see a wide range of thought and ideologies, which are reflected by the scenes individually and by using the arrangement to form the conveyed messages. The Passion cycles of the chancels in the counties of Spiš and Gemer represent an extensive number of images from the Life of Christ, which eventually lead to the Salvation of the humankind. The various elements of the images emphasize the most important aspects of Christianity from the mystery of the Eucharist, the Incarnation, the message of Salvation. Furthermore, the cycles are portraying the popular contemporary thoughts on the religion using the texts of various devotional and contemplative writings. On the paintings we can see the impact of the popular cults, for instance the veneration of the Virgin Mary or the Corpus Christi, and in connection of the latter, the appearance of the compassion of Mary. The scenes mirror the thoughts of the society in regards of the humble models for a correct pious life, and even the hatred towards minorities, like Jews. The choice of scenes and the way of the depiction of different elements stimulates the emotions of the faithful, makes them contemplate and make them feel compassion, which helps them in their individual devotion.

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Catalogue

The sketches, which are showing the arrangement of the cycles are numbered chronologically where it is possible. The Passion scenes are colored with purple, the Mariological themes and the scenes from the Life of Christ are colored with green, the scenes depicting the events from the Life of Christ after Resurrection are colored with yellow.

Spiš (Szepes, Zips)

1, Žehra (Zsegra)

Dedication of the church: Holy Spirit

History of the village and the ownership:

1245: Mathias, the provost of Spiš, gives permission to János Zsigrai (Ioannem Comitem de Sygra,) to construct a church dedicated to the Holy Spirit in Žehra (Sygra).

1274: János Zsigrai asks for permission once more to build the church, the construction probably started thereafter.

Architecture: The church was built in the end of the 13th century. The building was originally aisleless that had a straight ended chancel with quadripartite vaulting and a west tower. In the end of the 14th century, it was transformed into the present form, which is a two-aisled church with a central pillar decorated with the coat of arms of Zsigrai family, that supports the Gothic quadripartite vaulting of the nave. The gallery was also built in this period. During later constructions new enlarged windows were put in the chancel, which damaged the wall paintings of the south wall.

Wall Paintings: The chancel of the church in Žehra is completely covered by wall paintings. The depictions are made with fresco technique and arranged into two registers. On the north wall, in the upper register the *Coronation of Virgin Mary* can be seen, under which the *Last supper*, the *Arrest of Jesus* and the *Denial of Peter* are depicted. The painted scenes on the east wall are the *Annunciation* in the upper register and the *Christ before Pilate*, a *Vir Dolorum* and the *Flagellation* in the second register, next to which a kneeling donor can be seen with tonsure, wearing a canon regular. On the south wall the figures of Saint Cosmas and Saint Damian can be seen. In the lower register the *Crucifixion* and the *Descent from the cross* is depicted, and between the two scenes, on a younger layer of plaster, a Gothic minuscule inscription is painted, which refers to the 20 days of indulgences that the church received from antipope John XXIII, and it glorifies the Eucharist. On the triumphal arch half-portraits of the prophets are depicted in circular medallions and the standing figures of the two holy Hungarian kings, Saint Ladislav and Saint Stephen.

Dating of the Passion scenes: 1360-1370

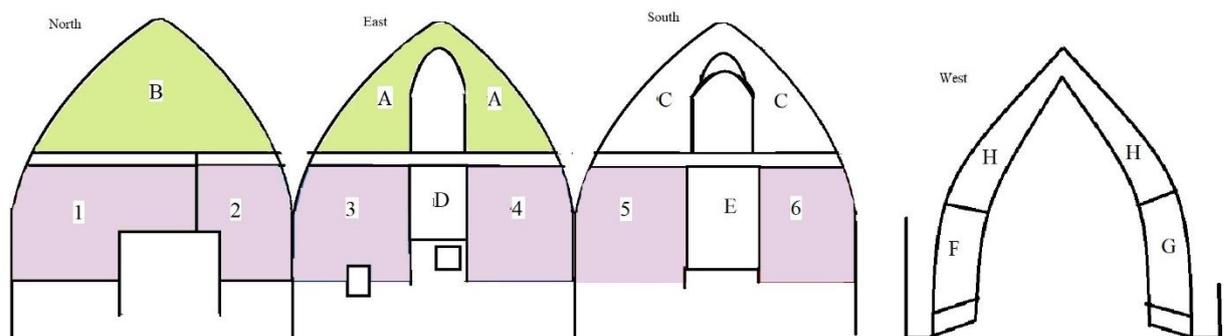
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Togner and Plekanec. *Medieval Wall Paintings in Spiš*. pp. 226-245



1: Last Supper, 2: Arrest, 3: Christ before Pilate, 4: Flagellation, 5: Crucifixion, 6: Descent from the Cross, A: Annunciation, B: Coronation of the Virgin Mary, C: Saint Cosmas and Saint Damian, D: Vir Dolorum, E: Indulgence, F: Saint Ladislav, G: Saint Stephen, H: Prophets.

2, Podolíneč (Podolin)

Dedication of the church: Assumption of the Virgin Mary

History of the village and the ownership:

1239: Béla IV granted Podolíneč and the surrounding lands to her firstborn daughter, Kinga of Poland as a marriage gift.

1292: The village received the Magdeburg staple right.

1293: After the death of Kinga the village became the possession of the Kingdom of Hungary again.

1298: The first mentioning of the parish church of Podolíneč.

1343: Louis the Great granted privileges to Podolíneč, in this period, the parish priest of the Virgin Mary church of Podolíneč was Peter.

Architecture: The church of Podolíneč was built in the second half of the 14th century. The two-bay chancel of the church has a polygonal ending (5/8 closure) with ribbed groin vaults and a rectangular western area with quadripartite vaulting which connects to the nave with a pointed triumphal arch. To the north wall of the chancel a sacristy attached. The building also has a western tower attached to the nave. The gothic windows were filled up and on the three southern walls new, wider windows were opened.

Wall Paintings: The whole chancel is covered with wall paintings. On the vaulting of eastern bay of the chancel angels are depicted with musical instruments. On each cell of the western bay's quadripartite vaulting is decorated with three medallions. In the central medallion of the north cell Mary and Jesus, in the two smaller medallions angels are depicted. In the central medallion of the east cell *Christ Pantocrator* can be seen with the symbols of the evangelists, Matthew and John in medallions are depicted in the smaller medallions on each of his side. The south cell contains the image of the *Holy Trinity* surrounded by two angels in smaller medallions. In the central medallion of the west cell *Abraham's bosom* is depicted with an angel on two sides. The winged lion and ox, the symbols of Mark and Luke are depicted on the side walls of the chancel, right under the vaults; the symbol of Luke is in a medallion on the north wall and the symbol of Mark in medallion is on the south wall. The wall paintings are arranged into three registers, on the side walls of the chancel and are separated by red frames. The upper scene of the north wall of the western bay of the chancel is the *Entry into Jerusalem*. The middle register starts with the *Arrest of Christ*, then the *Christ before Herod*, the *Disrobing of Christ* can be seen. The lower register contains an image that also covers the lower register of north wall of the eastern bay, which is the *Procession and Adoration of the Magi*. In the upper register of the north wall eastern bay, the *Last Supper* is depicted, under which the *Flagellation*, and the *Christ before Pilate* can be seen. In the lowest register, next to the *Procession and Adoration of the Magi* Saint Dorothy is depicted with the child Jesus with a basket. On the north-east wall, in the upper register the *Washing of the feet*, below that, the *Crowning with Thorns* and the *Christ carrying the Cross* is painted. In the lower register the *Nailing to the Cross* and the *Crucifixion* is depicted. On the east wall two fragmented images remained in a very bad condition. In the upper register figures of saints are depicted, under which the *Descent from the Cross* can be seen. The south-east wall is also strongly damaged, only the scene of the *Lamentation* is preserved, that is partially covers the south wall, as well.

Carrying the Cross, 11: Nailing to the Cross, 12: Crucifixion, 13: Descent from the Cross, 14: Lamentation, 15: (Harrowing of Hell?), 16: Resurrection, 17: Noli me tangere, 18: Incredulity of Saint Thomas, 19: Ascension of Christ, A: Adoration of the Magi, B: Saint Dorothy, C: Bishop Saint

3, Stará Ľubovňa (Ólubló)

Dedication of the church: Saint Nicholas

History of the village and the ownership:

1222: Construction of a church according to a *canonica visitatio*.

1342: The town had exempt from paying customs for the imported products but for taking a product out of the town it was obliged to pay.

1352: Stará Ľubovňa became a free royal town.

1412: King Sigismund pledged the Stará Ľubovňa to Wladislas of Poland

Architecture: The late 13th century church, including the chancel was almost fully rebuilt in the 17th century. The north wall is the only one that survived among the side walls of the original 13th century chancel, the side walls except the north wall and the pointed triumphal arch have been demolished. The walls of the chancel were built to be taller, and it got a new vaulting, thus the gothic vaulting is also lost. A rectangular window, moreover, a door leading to the pulpit was opened on the north wall of the chancel and the door to the sacristy was also modified, which therefore ruined a part of the wall paintings around the door.

Wall Paintings: The recently uncovered wall paintings of the chancel are arranged in four registers on the north wall of the chancel. The images are damaged and some of them is partly

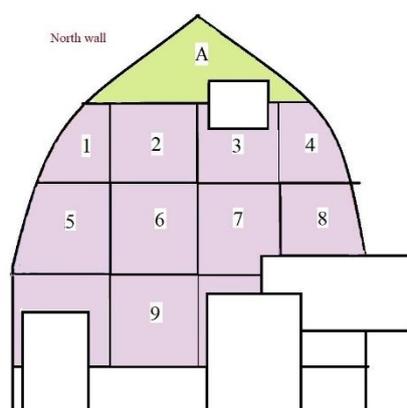
covered by later painted layers. The fragmented upper scene is the *Coronation of the Virgin Mary*, under which the four scenes are depicted. From left to right the scenes are the following: *Entry into Jerusalem*, *Last Supper*, *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, *Arrest of Christ*. The third register starts with the fragments of the *Christ before Pilate*, after which the *Flagellation*, the *Crowning with Thorns* and the *Christ carrying the Cross* with the figure of Saint Veronica can be seen. The lowest register is partly covered by a later image of the *Adoration of the Magi*; from the earlier Passion Cycle the only scene that survived is the *Crucifixion*. The paintings of the triumphal arch are also uncovered. On the arch half-portraits of the prophets can be seen and on the inner walls of the triumphal arch two holy Hungarian kings are depicted, Saint Ladislav on the north wall and Saint Stephen on the south wall.

Dating of the Passion scenes: 14th century.

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1: Entry into Jerusalem, 2: Last Supper, 3: Christ on the Mount of Olives, 4: Arrest, 5: Christ before Pilate, 6: Flagellation, 7: Crowning with Thorns, 8: Carrying the Cross, 9: Crucifixion, A: Crowning of the Virgin Mary

4, Slatvina (Szlatvin)

Dedication of the church:

Annunciation

History of the village and the ownership:

1300: The first mention of the settlement Zeek (Szék, later Szlatvin). In this charter, one member of the Zsigrai family was named/called/mentioned after the town, as “Zeek-i”.

1410: Mihály Zsigrai Pócs (Poch) and his wife, Ilona Tarkó (Tarkeu) lived in their land, in the town of Szék.

1410-1415: The painting of the frescoes in the chancel of the church of Slatvina.

1415: Sigismund of Luxemburg grants the lands of „Sygra, Zeek, Dobra, Zenthmargytha ... Olsua” to Mihály Zsigrai Pócs, with this act the king strengthened the right of possession of the ancestral lands.

1525: By this year the land of Slatvina was included in the Lordship of Spis Castle.

Architecture: The Slatvina church is a single-nave church with a straight ended chancel, to which a two-floor sacristy is attached. The church has a west tower, where today’s entrance can be found. The original entrance, the gothic portal of south wall of the nave, is built in the wall. In the chancel, that has gothic ribbed groin vaults, one complete lancet window and a fragment of the south window can be seen. A pointed triumphal arch connects the nave and the chancel.

Wall Paintings: The whole chancel is decorated with wall paintings. The frescoes in the chancel are arranged in three registers. In the two upper register scenes from the Passion of

Christ are depicted, in the third. In the lower register sitting apostles can be seen, as well as a *Vir Dolorum* and the image of Saint Dorothea with donors. Under the lower register the wall is decorated with illusionistic painted curtain. In the four individual fields of the vaults the *Holy Trinity*, *Abraham's bosom*, *Mary with Jesus* and probably *Jesus Christ* depicted, which is lost today. On the triumphal arch half-portraits of the prophets can be seen in circular medallions and the standing figure of the two holy Hungarian kings, Saint Ladislav and Saint Stephen.

The scenes from the Passion of Christ on the north wall, from left to right are the following: *Entry into Jerusalem*, *Last Supper*, *Arrest of Jesus*, *Crowning with Thorns* and the *Christ carrying the Cross*. On the east wall the *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, the *Nailing to the Cross* and the *Crucifixion* can be seen. On the south wall the *Christ before Pilate*, the *Veronica's Veil*, the *Flagellation*, the *Descent from the Cross*, the *Entombment*, the *Resurrection of Christ* and the *Harrowing of Hell* is depicted.

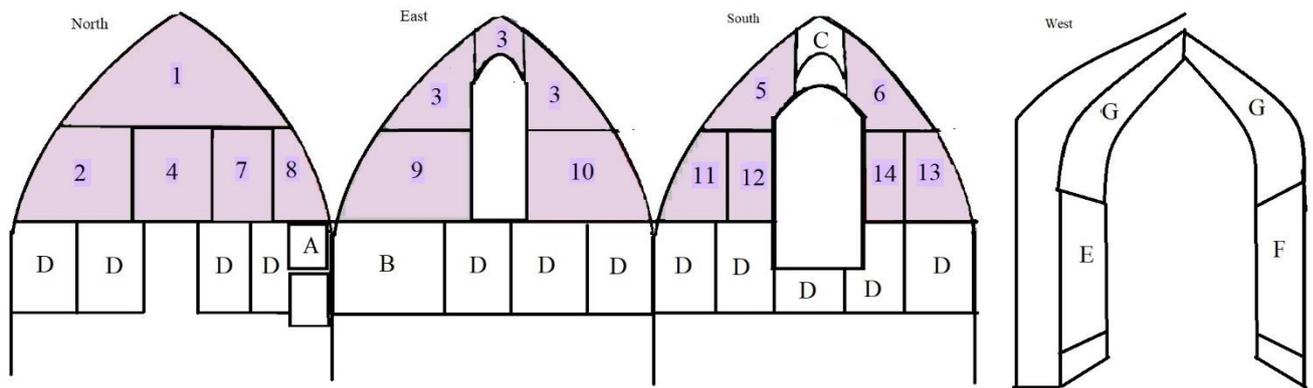
Dating of the Passion scenes: 1415-1420

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1: Entry into Jerusalem, 2: Last Supper, 3: Christ on the Mount of Olives, 4: Arrest, 5: Christ before Pilate, 6: Flagellation, 7: Crowning with Thorns, 8: Carrying the Cross, 9: Nailing to the Cross, 10: Crucifixion, 11: Descent from the Cross, 12: Entombment, 13: Harrowing of Hell, 14: Resurrection, A: Vir Dolorum, B: Saint Dorothy with Donators, C: Veronica's Veil, D: Apostles, E: Saint Stephen, F: Saint Ladislav, G: Prophets

Gemer (Gömör)

1, Štítnik (Csetnek)

Dedication of the church: Virgin Mary

History of the village and the ownership:

1243: Štítnik, along with several other settlements was granted to the Bebek family.

1302: The church was already under construction commissioned by the Csetneki family, which family was the branch of the split Bebek family.

1328: Štítnik received town rights and privileges.

1343: The mention of the church of Štítnik, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin.

Architecture: The church is a three-aisled building with a western tower. The Passion cycle from the 14th century is on the north wall of the 20 meters long chancel, which was completed by 1460.

Wall Paintings: In Štítňik a Passion cycle can be seen on the north wall of the chancel. These frescoes are the oldest painted images in the church. The scenes of the Passion are arranged in one register. On the western side it starts with the *Entry into Jerusalem*, after which we see the *Last Supper*, the *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, the *Arrest of Christ*. The next scenes are the *Christ before Pilate* and the *Flagellation* which are strongly damaged, only the lower parts of the images are preserved. The last two uncovered images are the *Crowning with Thorns* and the *Christ carrying the Cross*. Above the Passion cycle one additional image is uncovered, the figure of a sitting apostle under niche. Under the narrative scenes illusionistic painted architectural elements frame the images.

Dating of the Passion scenes: The end of the 14th century.

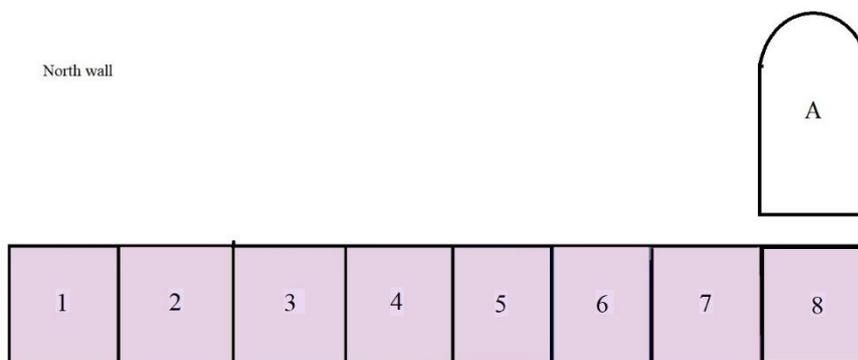
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Prokopp, . *Középkori freskók Gömörben*. pp. 32-33



1: Entry into Jerusalem, 2: Last Supper, 3: Christ on the Mount of Olives, 4: Arrest, 5: Christ before Pilate, 6: Flagellation, 7: Crowning with Thorns, 8: Carrying the Cross, A: Apostle

2, Kocel'ovce (Gecelfalva)

Dedication of the church: ?

History of the village and the ownership:

14th century: from the beginning of the 14th century Kocelovce is the property of the Csetneki family.

1328: Kocel'ovce received town rights and privileges.

Architecture: The church is a single-nave building with a polygonal ended chancel which has two bays. On the west side of the church, a tower is built.

Wall Paintings: The whole chancel of the church is covered with wall paintings that are arranged into three registers, except the north-east wall of the eastern bay, which consists of two images. On the north wall of the western bay of the chancel, in the upper register the *Nativity* is depicted, under which the *Last Supper* can be seen. The lower images are the *Flagellation* and the *Crowning of Christ*. The north wall of the eastern bay contains the *Visitation* in the upper register and the *Christ on the Mount of Olives* underneath. In the lower register the *Christ carrying the Cross* is painted. The largest image of the chancel is the *Crucifixion* on the north-east wall, above which the first half of the *Adoration of the Magi* is depicted. The continuation of the *Adoration of the Magi* containing the representation of Mary and the Child is shown in the upper register of the east wall. In the middle register, on each side of the gothic window the story of the arrest of Christ can be see, which also covers the two sides of the gothic window of the south-east wall and the splays of the window of the east wall.

In the lower register standing figures of apostles are depicted in the splays and on each side of the windows on both the east and south-east wall and even on the left side of the south wall and on both splays of the window. In the upper register of the south-east wall the *Presentation of Jesus in the Temple* is painted and on the splays of the window in the middle register a female and a male saint can be seen. On the south wall, in the upper register the *Twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple* is depicted, under which the depiction of the trial of Christ can be seen. In the lower register, apart from the apostles a part of the *Descent from the Cross* is painted here that is mainly belongs to the lower register of the south wall. On the upper register of the south wall, we can see the *Coronation of the Virgin Mary* and below it the *Entry into Jerusalem*. In the lower register the major part of the *Descent from the Cross* is painted and next to it the *Entombment of Christ* is depicted. On the triumphal arch, in the upper register the *Annunciation* can be seen, under it two bearded saints are holding inscription scrolls. On the arch six prophets are depicted with inscription scrolls and under them, on the inner walls of the triumphal arch Saint Catherine of Alexandria and a other saint can be seen. On the vaults of the chancel the eight Church Fathers are depicted with the four symbols of the Evangelists, surrounded by angels holding inscriptions and musical instruments.

Dating of the Passion scenes: Between 1377 and 1400.

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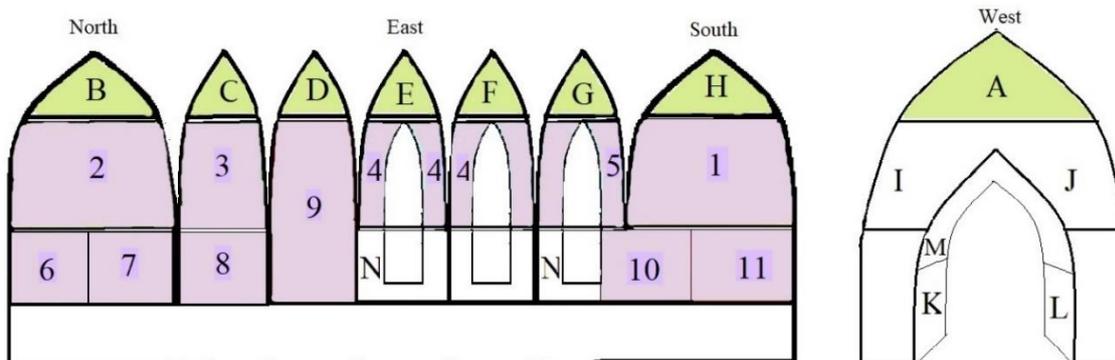
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Prokopp. *Középkori freskók Gömörben*. pp. 42-43



1: Entry into Jerusalem, 2: Last Supper, 3: Christ on the Mount of Olives, 4: Arrest, 5: Trial of Christ, 6: Flagellation, 7: Crowning with Thorns, 8: Carrying the Cross, 9: Crucifixion, 10: Descent from the Cross, 11: Entombment, A: Annunciation, B: Nativity, C: Visitation, D-E: Adoration of the Magi, F-G: Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, H: Coronation of the Virgin Mary, I-J: Kneeling saints, K: Saint Catherine, L: Saint, M: Prophets

3, Ochtiná (Martonháza)

Dedication of the church: ?

History of the village and the ownership:

1318: The first mention of the village “Ohtina”. The charter mentions it along with other Gemer villages, when they got distributed among the sons of Benedek from the Bebek family.

1320: In 1320 they are redistributing the lands, furthermore the Bebek family split into Pelsóci and the Csetneki branch.

1346: The sons of Benedek Csetneki distribute the land of Stítnik and the connecting areas, including Ochtiná.

Architecture: The church in Ochtiná is single-nave building with a polygonal ended chancel with ribbed vaults. A pointed triumphal arch separates the nave from the chancel. The church

has a west tower, moreover to the chancel, a north sacristy is attached. In the 15th century a side aisle was added to the nave and connected to it by two arcades.

Wall Paintings: In the chancel the images that are depicting the Life of Christ and his Passion are arranged into three registers. On the north wall of the chancel there are seven scenes. The scenes on the north wall, in the two upper registers are divided by a pillar. In the upper register, from left to right the *Visitation* and the *Birth of Christ* is depicted. Under these scenes the *Entry into Jerusalem* and the *Last Supper* can be seen. In the lower register of the north wall the scenes of the *Flagellation*, the *Crowning with Thorns* and the *Christ carrying the Cross* are painted. On the north-east wall, in the upper register the *Adoration of the Magi* can be seen, that continues the upper register of the east wall. Under this scene, on the north-east wall the *Christ on the Mount of Olives* is depicted and in the lower register the *Crucifixion* can be seen. On the east wall, under the other half of the *Adoration of the Magi* we can see the *Holy Trinity* with three faces in the coping of the east window. Next to the window there is the standing figure of Saint Peter surrounded by soldiers – this image is the part of the divided scene of the *Arrest of Christ* that can be seen on the south-east wall, and also on the south wall. In the lower register of the east wall the *Descent from the Cross* is depicted. In the upper register of the south-east wall the *Presentation of Jesus at the Temple* can be seen – divided to two scenes and continues on the south wall. Under it, in the second register, *Peter's denial* and *St. Peter with a sword drawn against Malchus* are painted. In the lower register of the south-east wall, a part of the *Descent from the Cross* can be seen, under the gothic window the *Vir Dolorum* is depicted, and the register ends with a part of the *Pietà*, that goes on the south wall. The scenes of the two upper registers on the south wall, similarly to the images of north wall are divided by the pillar of the vault. In the upper register the *Presentation of Jesus at the Temple* and the *Coronation of the Virgin Mary*, under these two scenes we can see the *Kiss of Judas*, as the continuation of the Arrest, and the *Trial of Christ before Pilate* and the *Trial of Christ before*

Caiaphas. In the lower register of the south wall the continuation of the *Pietà*, two bishop saints, the *Lamentation* or *Entombment*, the *Resurrection* and the *Harrowing of Hell* is depicted.

On the triumphal arch from the chancel side, in the first register the *Annunciation* can be seen, under which, on the south side soldiers, on the north side apostles are depicted. In the lower register, on the south side the continuation of the *Harrowing of Hell* and on the north side the three Marys are painted. On the jamb of the triumphal arch, the half-portraits of Old Testament Prophets can be seen.

Dating: After 1377. The wall paintings were mostly dated to the 1360s and the 1380s, but after a dendrochronological analysis made on the church roof truss, it can be known that the murals had to be painted after 1377.

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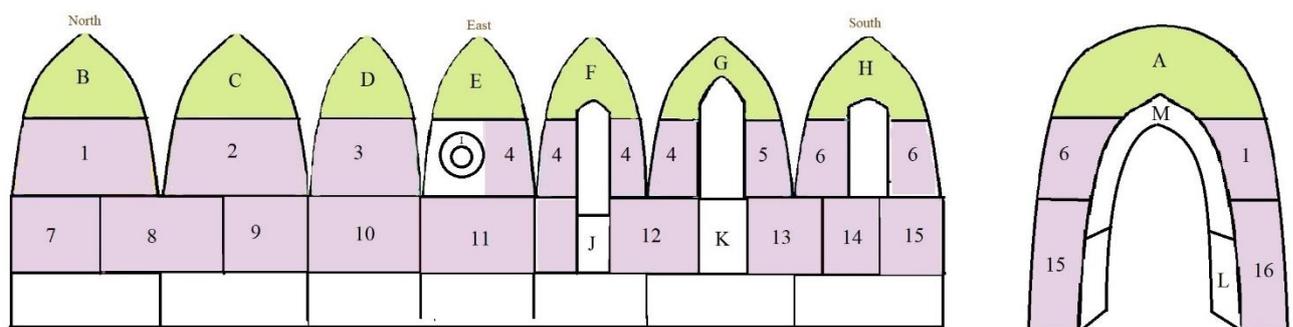
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Prokopp. *Középkori freskók Gömörben*. pp. 42-43



1: Entry into Jerusalem, 2: Last Supper, 3: Christ on the Mount of Olives, 4: Arrest, 5: Christ before Pilate, 6: Christ before Caiaphas and soldiers, 7: Flagellation, 8: Crowning with Thorns, 9: Christ Carrying the Cross, 10, Crucifixion, 11: Descent from the Cross, 12: Pietà, 13: Entombment, 14: Resurrection, 15: Harrowing of Hell, 16: Three Marys, A: Annunciation, B: Visitation, C: Nativity, D-E: Adoration of the Magi, F-G: Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, H: Coronation of the Virgin Mary, J: Vir Dolorum, K: Bishop saints, L: Saint Erasmus, M: Prophets

4, Plešivec (Pelsőc)

Dedication of the church: Saint George

History of the village and the ownership:

1243: Plešivec, along with several other settlements was granted to the Bebek family.

1320: The first mention of the church in Plešivec, which was the centre of the Bebek's family estate.

1328: Plešivec received town rights and privileges.

1333: Disagreement in the rights of ownership of the town.

1349: The church is under rebuilding in the year when it receives indulgencies from Pope Clement VI.

Architecture: The church of Plešivec is a single-nave building which has a chancel with a polygonal ending. Three original gothic windows survived in the chancel, the window on the south wall is a later opening that partially destroyed the frescoes of the south wall.

Wall Paintings: The wall paintings of the church are very fragmentary. On the north wall of the chancel the scenes are arranged into three registers. In the first register the Annunciation is depicted, today only the lower part of the image can be seen. In the middle register from left to right the *Presentation of Jesus in the Temple*, the *Baptism of Christ* and the *Entry into Jerusalem* is painted. The lower register portrays the *Arrest of Christ*, the *Christ before Pilate*, and the *Flagellation*. On the eastern walls saint figures are depicted, once there were probably eighteen figures. On the south wall two registers of frescoes survived from the three-register arrangement. The left scene in the middle register is the *Last Supper* and next to it the *Washing of the Feet* can be seen. Under these scenes the *Christ Carrying the Cross* and the *Crucifixion* is depicted.

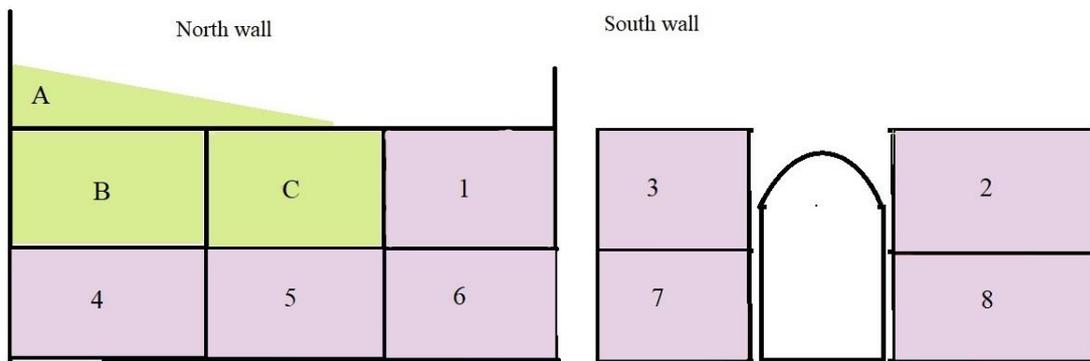
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1: Entry into Jerusalem, 2: Washing of the Feet, 3: Last Supper, 4: Arrest, 5: Christ before Pilate, 6: Flagellation, 7: Carrying the Cross, 8: Crucifixion, A: Annunciation, B: Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, C: Baptism of Christ

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2. Figure - Stará Lubovňa, north wall of the chancel (Photo: Peter Koren)



3. Figure - Plešivec, north wall of the chancel



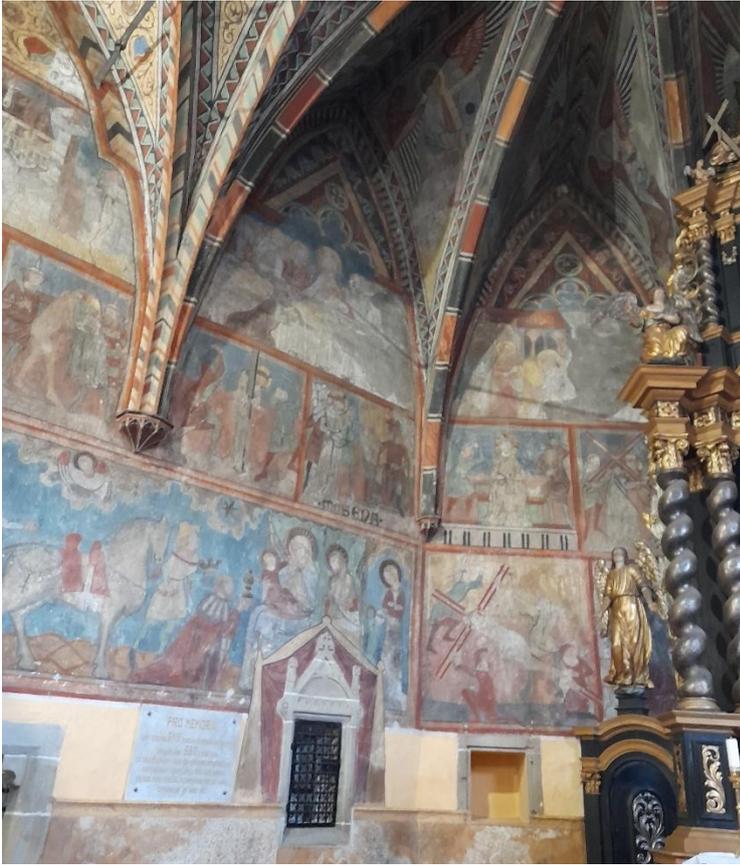
4. Figure - Žehra, north wall of the chancel



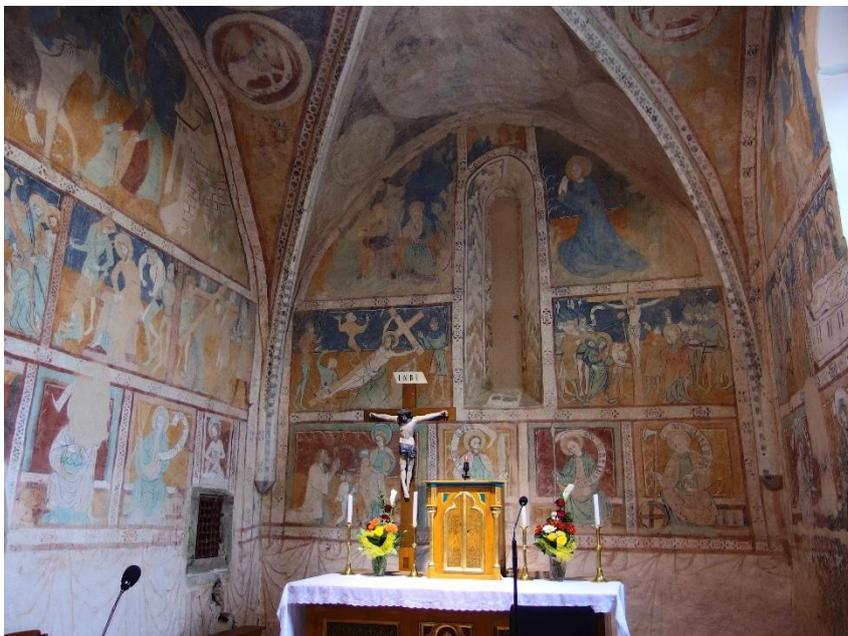
5. Figure - Ochtiná, northern walls of the chancel



6. Figure - Kocel'ovce, northern walls of the chancel



7. Figure - Podolíneč, northern walls of the chancel



8. Figure - Slatvina, chancel



9. Figure - Slatvina, Saint Ladislav, Triumphal arch



10. Figure. Kocel'ovce, south wall, Image source: <https://medievalmuralgamer.com/en/localities/kocelovce-gecelfalva/285>



11. Figure - Kocel'ovce, Last Supper



12. Figure - Slatvina, Last Supper



13. Figure - Štítník, north wall of the chancel



14. Figure - Ochtiná, Mount of Olives



15. Figure - Slatvina, East wall



16. Figure - Stará Lubovňa, Arrest



17. Figure - Žehra, Arrest



18. Figure - Ochtiná, Arrest



19. Figure - Žehra, Arrest (Peter's denial)



20. Figure - Ochtiná, Trial of Christ



21. Figure - Podolínec, Christ before Pilate



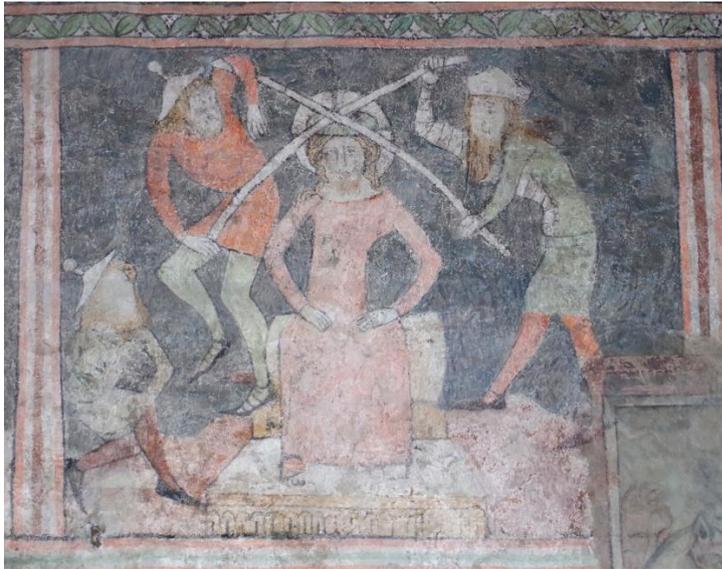
22. Figure - Žehra, Christ before Pilate



23. Figure - Žehra, Flagellation



24. Figure - Slatvina, Crowning with Thorns



25. Figure - Stará Lubovňa, Crowning with Thorns



26. Figure - Podolíneč, Christ Carrying the Cross (Photo: Béla Zsolt Szakács)



27. Figure - Stará Lubovňa, Christ Carrying the Cross (Photo: Peter Koren)



28. Figure - Kocel'ovce, Crucifixion



29. Figure - Slatvina, Crucifixion



30.

Figure - Žehra, Crucifixion



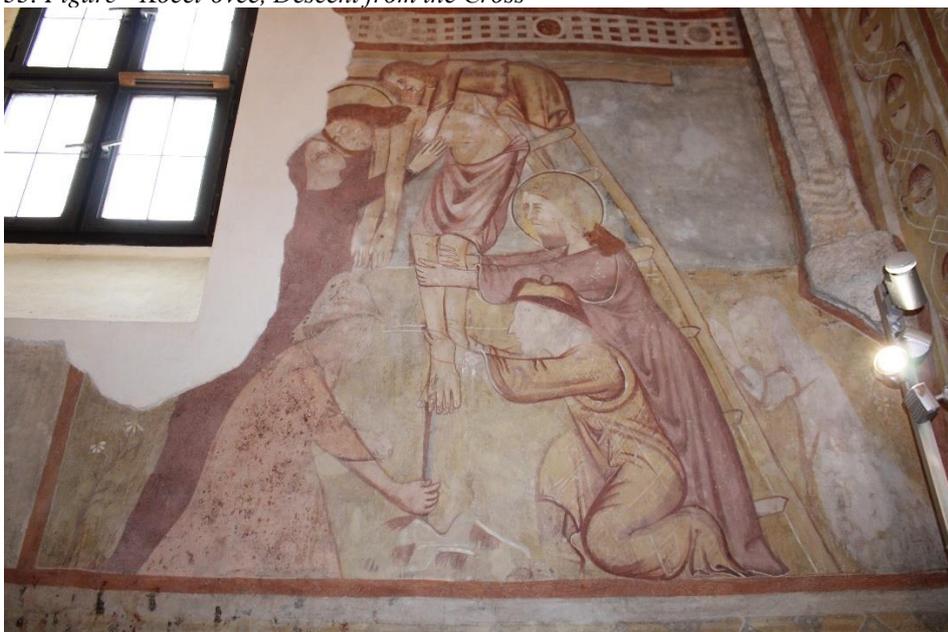
31. Figure - Plešivec, Crucifixion



32. Figure - Podolinec, Crucifixion



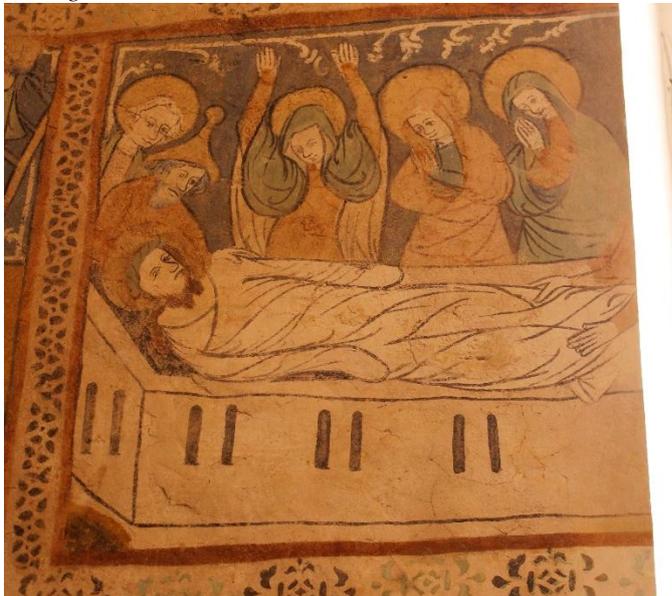
33. Figure - Kocel'ovce, Descent from the Cross



34. Figure - Žehra, Descent from the Cross



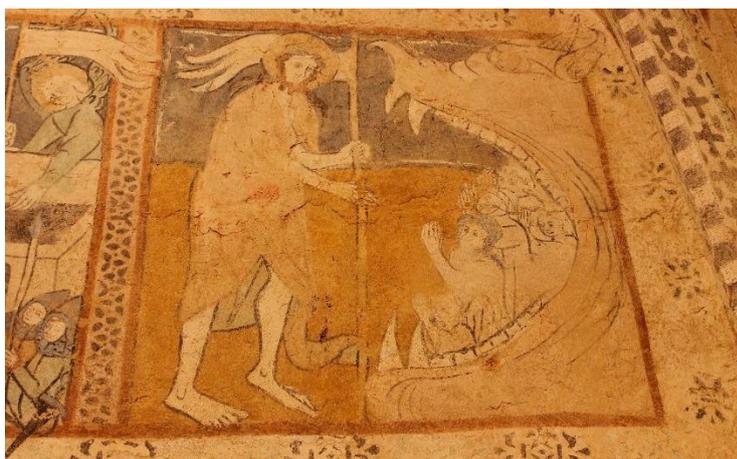
35. Figure - Kocel'ovce, Entombment



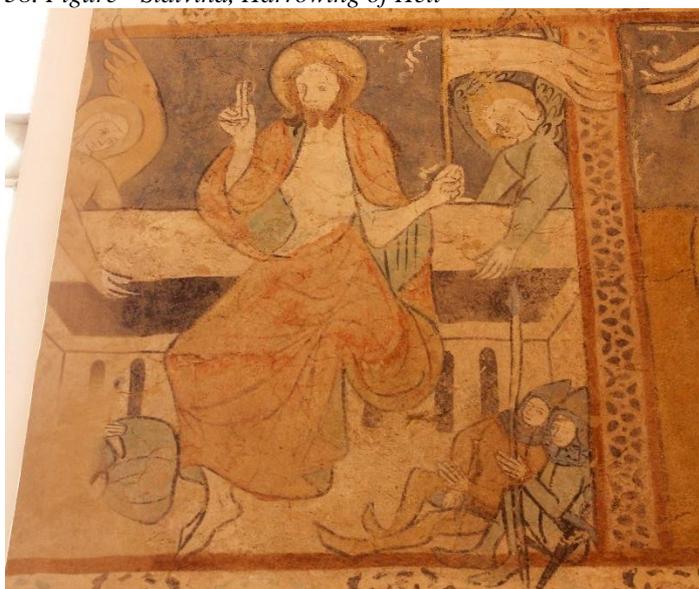
36. Figure - Slatvina, Entombment



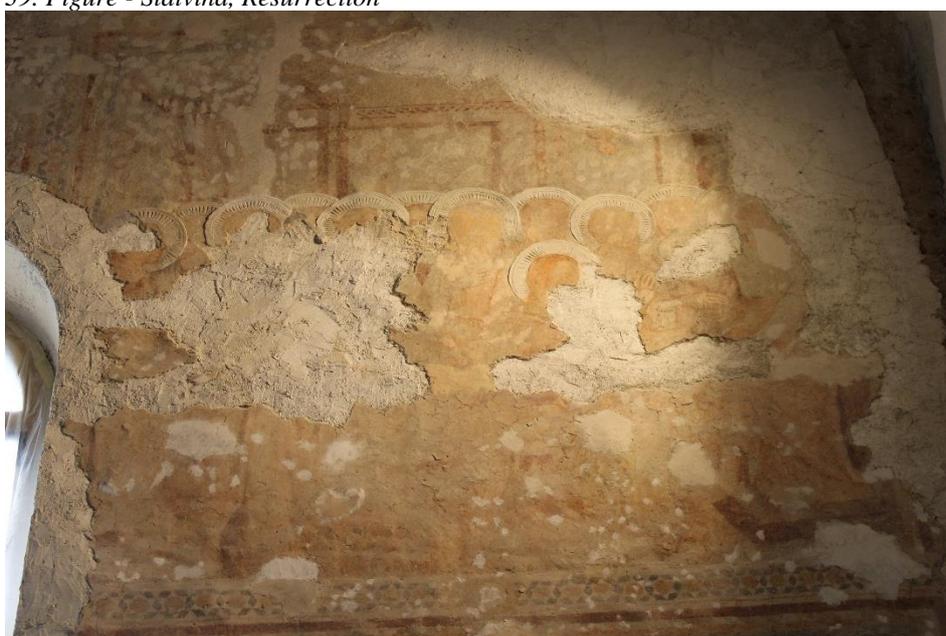
37. Figure - Ochtiná, Harrowing of Hell



38. Figure - Slatvina, Harrowing of Hell



39. Figure - Slatvina, Resurrection



40. Figure - Plešivec, Washing of the Feet



41. Figure - Podolinec, Disrobing of Christ



42. Figure - Slatvina, Nailing to the Cross



43. Figure - Podolinec, Nailing to the Cross



44. Figure - Ochtiná, Pietà



45. Figure - Podolíneč, Noli me Tangere



46. Figure - Podolinec, *Incredulity of Saint Thomas*



47. Figure - Podolinec, *Pentecost*



48. Figure - Kocel'ovce, *Annunciation*



49. Figure - Ochtiná., Annunciation



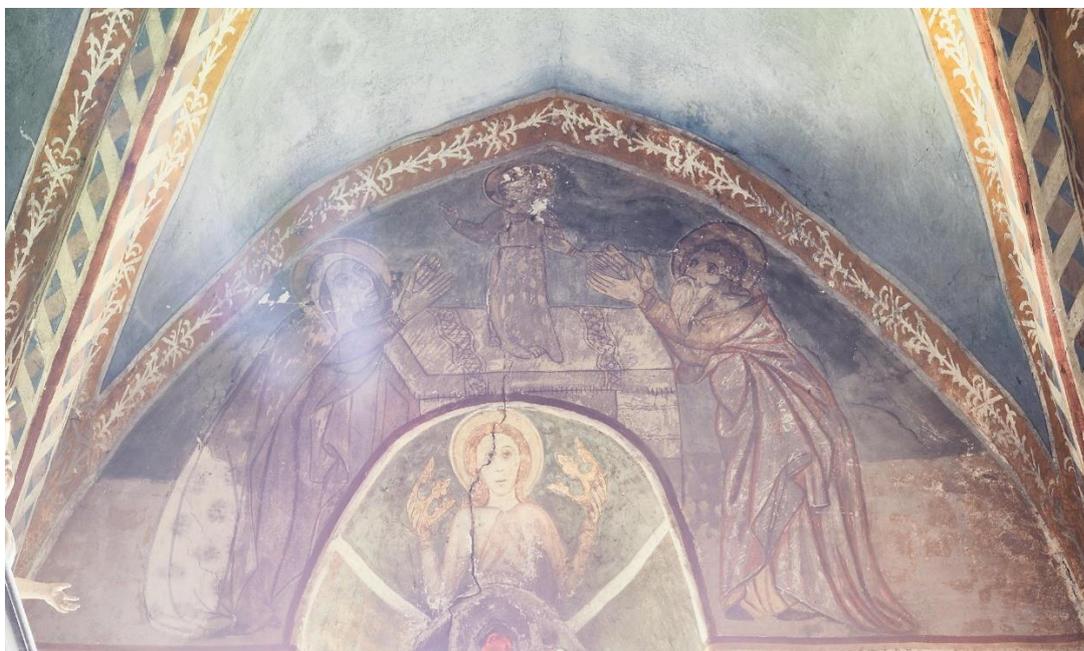
50. Figure - Kocel'ovce, Visitation



51. Figure - Ochtiná, Nativity



52. Figure - Podolinec, northern walls (Adoration of the Magi) (Photo: Béla Zsolt Szakács)



53. Figure - Ochtiná, Presentation in the Temple. Image source: <https://medievalmuralgemer.com/en/localities/ochtina-martonhaza>



54. Figure - Plešivec, Baptism of Christ



55. Figure - Žehra, Coronation of the Virgin Mary



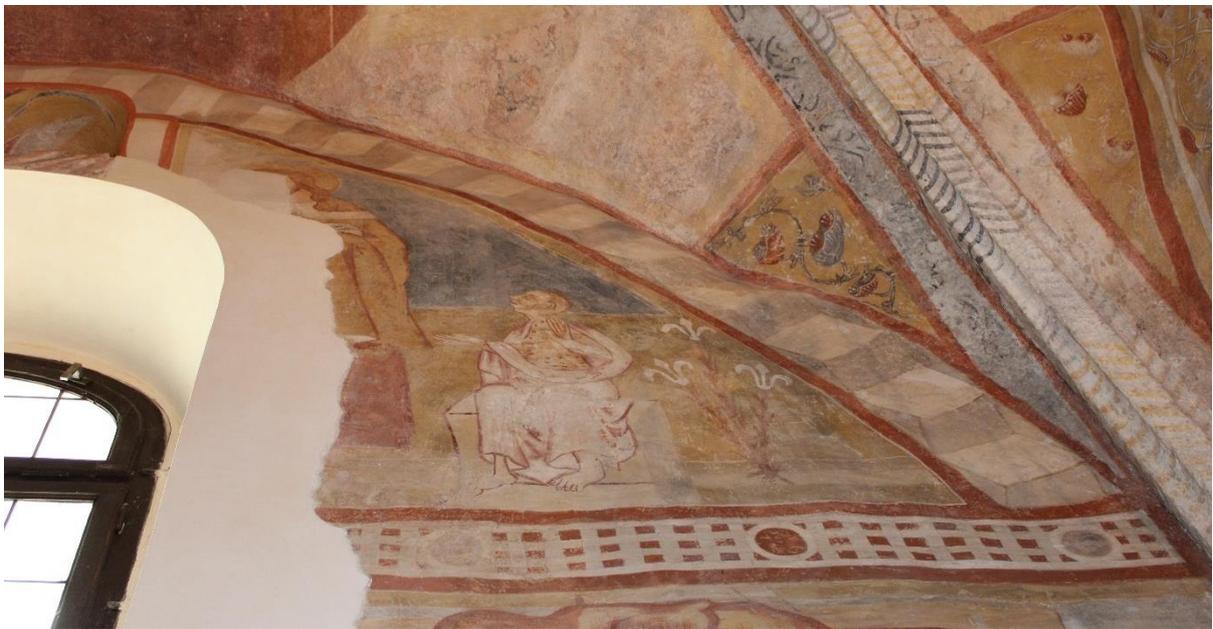
56. Figure - Slatvina, Saint Dorothy with donors



57. Figure - Podolinec, Saint Dorothy with the errand boy



58. Figure - Kocelovce, Saint Catherine



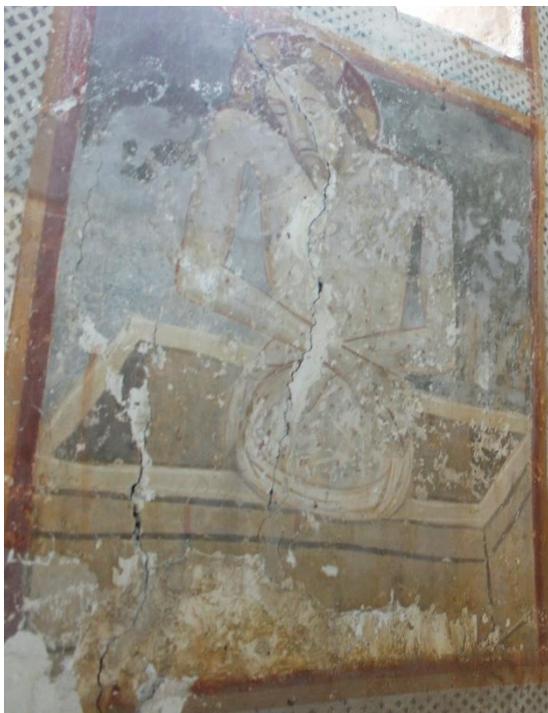
59. Figure - Žehra, Saint Cosmas or Saint Damian



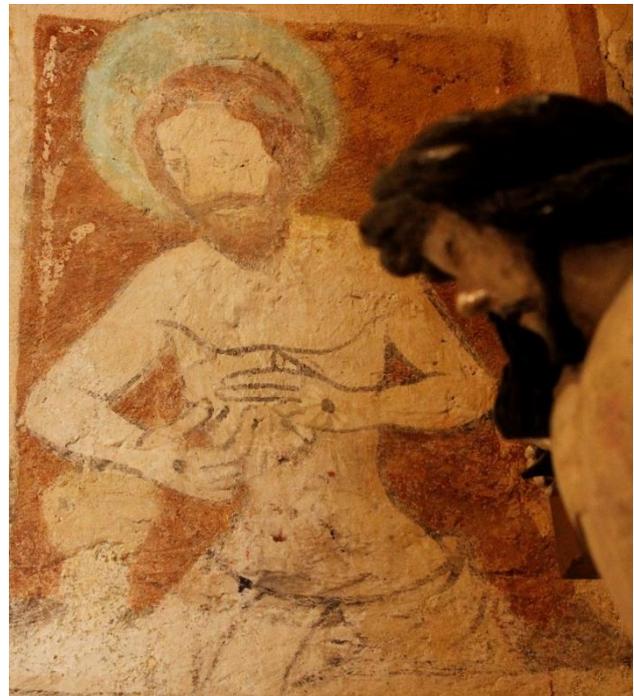
60. Figure - Ochtná, Saint Erasmus



61. Figure - Slatvina, Veil of Veronica



62. Figure - Ochtná, Vir Dolorum



63. Figure - Slatvina, Vir Dolorum