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Different Motives, Different Behaviour Franciscans and Clerics during the Feast

The work of this search-team concentrated mainly on the clergy, but also looked at the pilgrims and others while they were in the space which we were observing, namely the Church and its corridors, the cloisters of the monastery and the Sacristy.

One of the main things that we observed about the clergy, both priests and monks, was that they behaved differently depending whether or not they were in the public eye.

On Stage and Behind the Scenes

The public face showed a strong liturgical hierarchy, which was reflected in the dress and behaviour. This was strictly according to the function which the person was expected to perform. They had a very limited range of actions.

Both the dress and the actions were similar to a theatrical performance with a high degree of symbolism.

The private face, however, showed a much lower degree of hierarchy. In terms of dress, some hierarchy was maintained among the priests, but among the monks the dress was the same, with even the Provincial dressed in a habit identical to that of a novice.

The behaviour of the monks, which was highly standardised during the services, was much more individualistic in their private space; they felt more free to express their own personalities.

Another contrast was in the treatment of props, that is such items as bells, incense holders and collection plates. When in public, these items were treated with great reverence and respect, but in the private sphere this reverence was not shown. An exception to this was the Bible, which was treated with great respect at all times.

When not performing their duties in church, a different hierarchy was shown. This was stronger amongst priests than amongst monks. The structure amongst monks was much more flexible, with even the Guardian sharing such tasks as cleaning the rooms and cloisters of the monastery.

In conclusion, there is a system of dual hierarchies, depending on the amount of public exposure. The end of a service is a move from one to the other.

Interviews with the monks

During our investigation we conducted long interviews with four of the monks. One of the questions we asked them was:

What does this feast mean for you?

The monastery is a Franciscan spiritual community which has been linked with the local lay community whose church became a place of pilgrimage, but the monks felt that the pilgrimage did not reflect *their* spirituality. They felt that they were service providers, rather than participants. The feast was considered to be more for the local lay community, who were involved in preparing the church by arranging the flowers and cleaning the church buildings. The monks did not feel that the feast had any special religious significance for them.

Another question we asked the monks was: What is daily life like for you?

As the monastery is the study house of the Hungarian Franciscans, it contains a high percentage of young brothers.

The monastery works as a large extended family, with the Guardian having overall responsibility. Certain specific responsibilities are delegated to others by the Guardian. As the monks do not keep money of their own, they have to ask either the Treasurer or one of the assistant treasurers for funds for day-to-day expenses. Other delegated responsibilities include ordering food and other supplies, looking after the library and organising the distribution of food to the poor.

As most of the monks received their religious education after the implementation of the Second Vatican Council, which took place in Hungary in 1990, they find a kind of spirituality shown in the pilgrimage alien, and resent having to break off holidays to return at this time.

Attitudes to the feast

The pilgrims attending the feast and the clergy (including the monks) wished the event to be celebrated in different ways, resulting in a degree of tension between them. The monks would only participate when they were on duty, and would not join in with the songs of the pilgrims, while the pilgrims themselves felt that they were not given the opportunity to perform group and individual devotions. This was expressed strongly by a group of women from the village of Kiskanizsa.

So, there were conflicting ideas on the timing of events, the structure of the time-table. The pilgrims thought that there should be longer periods during in which spontaneous events could take place, while the Vicar and the other organisers wanted to fill out the time as much as possible with different kinds of service

and other events. The most extreme example of this was a recital of classical music on the organ on Sunday afternoon. This made the pilgrims feel that the church had become an alien space to them.

Monks' attitudes to the feast

The monks told us that they would not go out to the market or the fairground, some expressing strong disapproval of it. They were most upset about the closeness of the profane space to the church.

While the profane was attracted to the sacred space in order to attract custom from those attending the religious events, to make the selling of goods to them easier, the sacred was repelled from the profane, feeling that it was intruding. This set up yet another tension, a struggle between the two elements of the feast, the sacred and the profane.