

EX VOTO TEXTS

WRITTEN DEVOTION IN THE CULT OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

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In this paper I am going to introduce a popular Catholic movement of the 19–20th century, namely the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I intend to analyse a special part of the written sources connected to this devotion and try to reveal its representational capacity.*

The cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was one of the most popular devotions among Catholics between 1850 and 1950. However it became widespread during the last century, it is often said to have its origin in early Christianity. In the Middle Ages there was already a wave of devotion exclusively among the clergy.¹ Hereby I am speaking neither about this early cult, nor about the theology of the cult. Both are widely studied unlike its cultural and social history.²

The devotion set off on its unrivalling career at the end of the 17th century encouraged by a French nun's, Margaret Alacoque's, visions and promises she got from Jesus. Margaret Alacoque had her three most significant visions between 1673–1675. According to sacred tradition Jesus lamented to her on the lovelessness of people. Therefore appeasement became the centre characteristic feature of the modern veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. According to sacred tradition Jesus gave special promises to those venerating his Heart. These promises have been acting as a driving force of this successful career of the cult.

The most efficient promise was connected to First Friday. According to the promise Jesus declared to Margaret Alacoque, those confessing and receiving Holy Communion on the First Friday of nine consecutive months would not die without sacraments. In fact this means the grace of the so-called 'good death', thus escaping from damnation. Celebration of First Fridays is still very popular among the older generation of Catholics in Hungary. Promises, especially the mentioned one made this cult very popular and widespread.

In order to propagate the cult religious communities, confraternities were laid al-

* I would like to say thank for the generous support of the Faludi Ferenc Akadémia.

¹ CORETH, Anna 1986: 224.

² On the early cult e.g. CORETH 1986: 224–227.; In case of the Premonstratensian order, about the pre-Alacoque cult: SCHREIBER, Georg 1940: 181–201.; RICHSTÄTTER, K. 1924. All with further bibliography. About the theology of the cult e.g. GRILLMEIER, 1948.; DELP, 1948: 81–84.; MARTELET, 1995: 79–86.

ready in the 17th century. Most significant were the confraternities of the Sacred Heart of Jesus appearing in Hungary already in the baroque age.³ Though the cult gained its real popularity in the middle of the 19th century when local organisations were formed in almost every parish. This was already a modern mass movement with numerous participants from different parts and social strata of the country.

The Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was most efficient to propagate the cult from the mid-19th century with a widespread press activity. Today we hardly estimate the size of the religious literature formed as a part of the cult. Hereby I only refer to the Jesuit Béla Bangha's work entitled "The great promise of Jesus' Heart", which had ten editions between 1914–1942, occasionally in 20, 35 and 50 000 issues. (Fig. 1.) The most active propagators of the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus stressed the importance of cult propagation through press. The apologetic, combative Christianity of the age struggling against the "immoral" world approved of using quantitative means against the bad influence of non-Catholic press. The Jesuit monk Mike Tóth wrote in 1913: "Will the press allow itself everything, then the state should not dare protect its subjects' most valuable worth: their reputation? Will the press support the band of dishonest criminals?"⁴

To popularise the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1861 a newsletter was published in France, called the Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This developed into a group of publications: the national edition of the Messenger firstly appeared in Hungarian in 1867. Before World War II Catholics all over the world were informed by similar Messengers on more than 60 languages about the improvement of the veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Messenger, the most efficient propagator of the cult in Hungary was active between 1867 and 1944. The paper published pious literature and moral stories, also the intention that the believers could pray together with other readers of the Messenger all over the world. It also gave information about the consecration of new churches, altars, sculptures and church flags dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. A very good source for the investigation of the cult is the extremely informative Messenger. (Figs 2, 3.)

From now on I consider a permanent column of the Messenger as a source. The final column in every issue was the so-called 'thanksgiving texts'.⁵ Here the believers gave thank publicly for a grace which happened to them and they assigned to the help of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. (Fig. 4.) In each issue 20–30 announcements were published in a length of 2–20 lines. During over 70 years, 12 times a year! As a demonstration of the size of this source-material: these texts together would make almost 2000 printed pages. On the basis of their size I consider these letter fragments as suitable for investigation.⁶

³ TŰSKÉS-KNAPP 1992: 8–37.

⁴ TÓTH, Mike 1913: 124–125.

⁵ The original Hungarian term is 'hála nyilatkozatok'. According to English parallels, 'thanksgiving' is the term used in pious literature. See parallels in *English Catholic papers*: e.g. *The Universe* (April 5 1998, 45) and *Catholic Times* (April 5 1998, 15). In these papers even a printed form is included where you are allowed to say thanks to heavenly powers in less than 20 words.

⁶ Here we have to mention the parallelism of this section with the newspapers 'Letter to the Editor' section. A study in case of political press: TUNSTALL 1977: 205–248.



Fig 1. The cover page of Béla Bangha's work ('The great promise of Jesus' Heart') which was published ten times between the two world wars.



Hírnök.

Fig. 2. Cover page of the Messenger in January 1893.

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* Kiváló figyelmébe ajánljuk olvasóinknak dr. Nogáll J. püspök úr örök becsű könyvét «Keresztény vezérczikkek», mely Nagyváradon dr. Vucskics Gyula theol. tanár úrnál megrendelhető. — Az említett gyönyörű könyvből mutatványul ime egy czikk!



Hirnök.

Fig. 3. Cover page of the Messenger in April 1905.

Jézus szents. Szívének áldásai.

S. — A csapás gyakran istenhez vezet, az öröm többször elbódít. Engem is csapások által vezetett az Úr magához. Öt hónapja volt már, hogy kimondhatatlanokat szenvedtem, mindenfélét próbáltak velem az orvosok, míg végre kimondták, hogy gyógyíthatatlan. — Én nem csüggedtem: a bold. Szűz pártfogását kérve, Jézus sz. Szívéhez folyamodtam és három sz. kilenczedet tartottam . . . Alázatos kérésem meghallgatást nyert. — *M. F.*

S. J. — Egy a «Szens. Megváltóról» nevezett zárdaszűz a legforróbb háláját fejezi ki Jézus isteni Szívének, a bold. Szűz és szent Ligori Alfonznak közbenjárására nyert meghallgattatásért.

S. A. — Egy másik, ugyanazon kongregatióból, növendékeit ajánlja Jézus szents. Szívének ájtatos imáiba.

Ó.-B. — Igéretünkhöz híven, nyilván mondunk hálát és köszönetet a legszentebb Szívnek, hogy sz. Flórián könyörgésére házunkat nagy tűzveszély alkalmával megoltalmazni kegyeskedett s még számtalan más ügyben meghallgatni méltóztatott.

Sz. — A hála őszinte érzelmével mondom hálát a nyilvánosság terén is Jézus szents. Szívének azon nagy kegyeért, hogy alázatos imádságomat meghallgatni méltóztatott. Egy igen nagy jótévőm súlyos betegen feküdvén, ő érette Jézus sz. Szíve tiszteletére kilenczedet tartottam. A sz. Szív meghallgatta könyörgésemet; a ki súlyos beteg volt, az most egészséges s jól érzi magát. — *Cs. M.*

E. — Legszentebb kötelességemnek teszek eleget, midőn ígéremhez híven a «Hirnök»-ben nyilvánosan forró hálámat fejezem ki a legszentebb, legjóságosabb és legirgalmasabb Szív, valamint édes Anyám a bold. Szűz iránt azon nagy kegyelemért, melynél fogva engem egy nehéz bajból kiségiteni méltóztatott. — . . . *a.*

P. — Dicsőség és hála legyen Jézus szent Szívének, a lurdi szentséges Szűznek, sz. Józsefnek és sz. Antalnak, hogy súlyos betegségeből minden utóbaj nélkül felgyógyultam. Ezt csakis az imameghallgatásnak tulajdoníthatom. Ezerszeres hála, imádat, szeretet legyen mindörökké Jézus szents. Szívének e kegyelemért. — *A. n.*

Sz. — Legmélyebb hála és köszönet az édes Jézus szent Szívének azon kegyelemért, hogy bennünket nehéz vizsgálatainkon reményünk felett megsegített. — *S. J.; L. J.; P. M.*

Miháli. — A legmélyebb hálával eltelve, nagy örömmel vágyik szívünk, igéretünkhöz képest, nyilvános köszönetet mondani Jézus

In this paper I volunteer to present my preliminary results, though I intend to analyse the whole material in the future. Hereby I pay attention to a few particular years. I have chosen the thanksgiving texts of the years 1889, 1909 and 1925 for deeper analysis. I accepted them as analysable samples. I take one text as a unit of analysis.

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In the course of my analysis I used the content analysis methodology developed by the Anneberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania and by its Professor, Klaus Krippendorf.⁷ In this paper I would like to explore the systems of the texts, the trends and analyse the communication created by these texts.

I. STRUCTURE OF THE TEXTS

First I would like to explore the system in the studied texts. I am going to identify the units of analysis at the very beginning. Then I am going to investigate the organisation of the texts and determine its subtypes.

1. In fact the studied texts are incomplete letters without names and places put into one group at the end of each issue of the Messenger. We can find three fundamental structural parts. This is a kind of basic structure:

Basic structure

1. place of origin (initial, sometimes the whole name) [– marked with spacing]
2. main text [– marked as italic]
3. name (initial, rarely the whole name) or status, occupation [– marked as bold]

“A r a d – Thanks, honour and adoration forever to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for answering the prayer of his unworthy child. – L. M.”⁸

2. As the second step of system-level analysis I am going to investigate the main text.⁹ With the analysis of its patterns we can determine a logical basic structure.

Basic structure – main text

- a) thanksgiving [spacing]
- b) to a heavenly power [italic]
- c) for grace [bold]

⁷ KRIPPENDORF 1995.

⁸ Jézus Szíve Hírnöke (Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) 1909: 158/4.

⁹ KRIPPENDORF 1995: 37.

“Arad – Thanks, honour and adoration forever to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for answering the prayer of his unworthy child. – L. M.”

In longer and complex texts the parts of this basic structure act as an argumentation to prove the effect of heavenly grace.

3. As a third step I would like to create communicational standards. According to the detailment we can define basic types. I have separated three basic types of the texts:

Basic types

- a) short, inscription-like
- b) stereotypical
- c) everyday miracle narratives

a) short, inscription-like

“H. – Thanks, honour to Jesus for his help in danger. – Mrs. K.”¹⁰

“P. – I think, one of my male relatives was encouraged to surmount the difficulties of life with the mediation of Blessed Mary. – K. A.”¹¹

These are thanksgiving texts, quite often praising not the Sacred Heart of Jesus or even not Jesus. In such texts the writer uses the possibility of saying thanks publicly. The first text is especially very close to the so called thanksgiving-plaques put into church walls. The most important feature in these texts is that they are unfinished sentences without any details.

b) stereotypical

“T. – My pleasant duty according to my old promise is to say thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and praise him openly/publicly, as he heard me in my great necessity. – K. M.”¹²

This group of texts, named as stereotypical is the greatest. This is the most important part of the two–threehundred texts a year. We can analyse some quantitative trends, but the writer, the place of origin and the intention all remain in secret. We can find all basic structural elements of the main text but the analysation possibilities are very limited.

c) everyday miracle narratives¹³

One fifth to one tenth of the texts belong to the third group. These narratives are more detailed; the intention is clearly stressed. These are the most important texts for further research, as they are suitable for further structural analysis. We can reveal the textualisation process.

¹⁰ *Jézus Szíve Hírmöke* (Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) 1909: 158/8.

¹¹ *Jézus Szíve Hírmöke* (Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) 1905: 125/7.

¹² *Jézus Szíve Hírmöke* (Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) 1909: 158/5.

¹³ We can refer to these texts as ‘personal experience stories’. BENNETT, 1985: 87–97.

The subject of my analysis now is the main text, where I would like to introduce the clearly separable patterns. As we will see the order is changeable, and in spite of this, the logical relation remains.

In the following text I would like to exemplify the structure of the everyday miracles which is a flexibly expanding variant of the basic structure:

Basic structure

1. when earthly powers are not able to help [spacing]
2. one prays to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and makes a vow [italic]
3. when the problem is solved [bold]
4. one gives thanks and redeems the promise: publishes their thanks [normal]

“Jb. – One of my students became so ill, that there was not any hope for her recovery. But as I was losing my faith in human knowledge my hope was growing, that the Sacred Heart of Jesus would recover my little daughter. *I encouraged my pupils to devout prayer and trust and started a novena to the pious Heart and I promised that I would going publish the acceptance of our request and thanks in the Messenger.* Now I joyfully redeem my vow and say warm gratitude and thanks also in the name of my little pupils to the charitable Heart, as he heard our request. **My little pupil recovered quickly.** – A teacher”¹⁴

This structure is again only a basic scheme of these detailed texts.¹⁵ There are a number of different patterns which can vary this architecture. I would like to mention some. The most interesting additional element is the so-called Revenge of God pattern. In these cases the person not keeping his vow recognises the warning of God in some everyday problems and quickly redeems his promise, which usually means to publish thanksgiving. As if God would notice that somebody had broken the agreement.

“E. – I have promised somebody to publish thanksgiving as he was heard by the Sacred Heart of Jesus after a novena. It was two months ago and I postponed to redeem my promise. Now I am in the same trouble from which the mentioned person had escaped. I feel this is a deserved punishment for my inattention. So I proclaim the mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and I hope I will feel his godly mercy. – M.”¹⁶

It is worth of special attention that we can find information on the cult of saints from the studied years. The part in which saints as mediators are asked to help is another structural pattern in the texts. One example from the end of the last century:

¹⁴ Jézus Szíve Hírnöke (Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) 1889: 28/3.

¹⁵ For further analysis of the inner structure of narratives: BENNETT: 79–87.

¹⁶ Jézus Szíve Hírnöke (Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) 1909: 269/5.

“... Warm gratitude and thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to Blessed Virgin Mary, to the glorious Saint Joseph, to St. Ann and St. Joachim, to the apostles of St. Peter and Paul, to St. Alphons of Liguori, to St. Charles of Borromäus, to archangel Gabriel, to my numerous patron saints, to my St. guardian angels and to every St. Angel, to the suffering spirits in Purgatory and lastly to St. Longinus...”

In most cases these texts are addressed to the other readers and that is why they were written as testimonies: telling the story of a miracle. Though a small portion is direct communication with Jesus:

“Gy. Be blessed and admired thousands of times Sacred Heart of Jesus because you heard me and helped me with my children. Trusting you, please, keep my little son and I will make the servant of you. – Sz. F.”

II. TRENDS

The second part of the analysis is the oldest approach of system-level analysis, the extrapolation of trends.¹⁷ At this early stage in the analysis of the large material this is the most important method to be used.

1. Number of texts (Fig. 5)

Firstly I am going to investigate the numbers of texts. This chart indicates that there was a continuous decrease in the number of texts. Though I have not had statistical data yet, according to my observations the length considered to be ideal is decreasing as well during the studied period. Parallel with that, the size of the Messenger itself became smaller. From the leading newspaper of the cult, step by step it became only one among the others. Yet another periodical, The Heart, turned to be the most important.

2. Trends of saints

The investigation of the trends of mediator saints yields the most interesting result. We can find fundamental changes here as well. I consider this an indicative variable, which means that from the changes we can come to a further conclusion. If we think on the secularisation tendencies of the studied period it is not surprising, that there is a decrease either in the total numbers of saints mentioned or in the number of different saints asked to help.

As we can see, after the large amount of requests at the end of last century, around the turn of this century there is a strong decrease and there is some growing in the 20s (Fig. 6).

Further analysis can result in such a correlation which gives us a more detailed picture about this shallow theory of general secularisation. This seems to be correct if we

¹⁷ KRIPPENDORF 1995: 38.

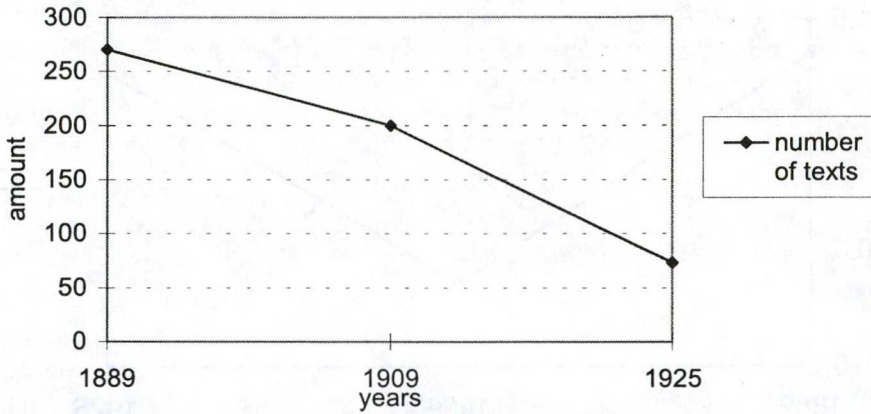


Fig. 5. Decreasing tendencies in the number of texts.

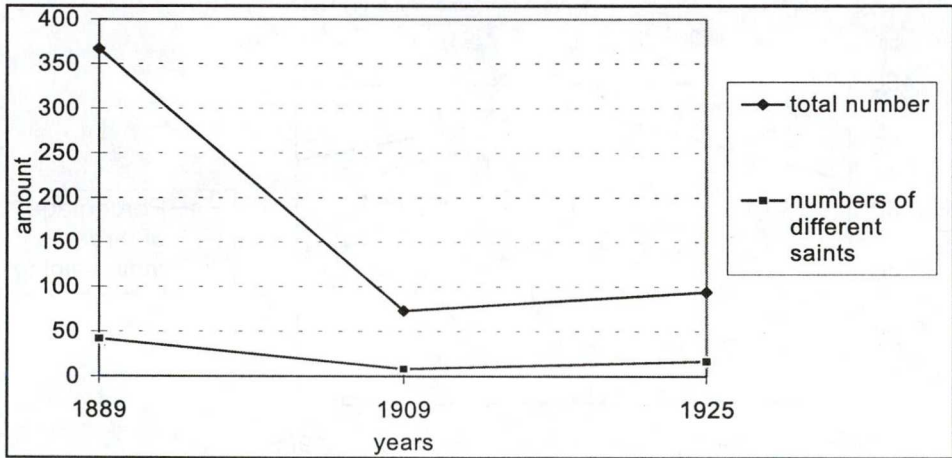


Fig. 6. Saints mentioned in the studied years

investigate how popular it was to give thanks in the Messenger. But if we count the amount of saints mentioned per texts, that is the relative frequency of the saints requested, we can have a surprising discovery shown on this chart. (Fig. 7.)

As we can see at the end of last century an average (but – of course – not existing) of 1.3 saints were mentioned in each text. In the years after the turn of the century this number decreased so much, that saints were mentioned as mediators in less than half of the texts. But in the 20s the importance of saints as mediators towards God increased to the level of the end of last century. So, the total number of texts is less than one third of the 1880s, but in this smaller amount the saints are represented at the same rate. At the turn of the century we could discover a kind of 'desanctification'.

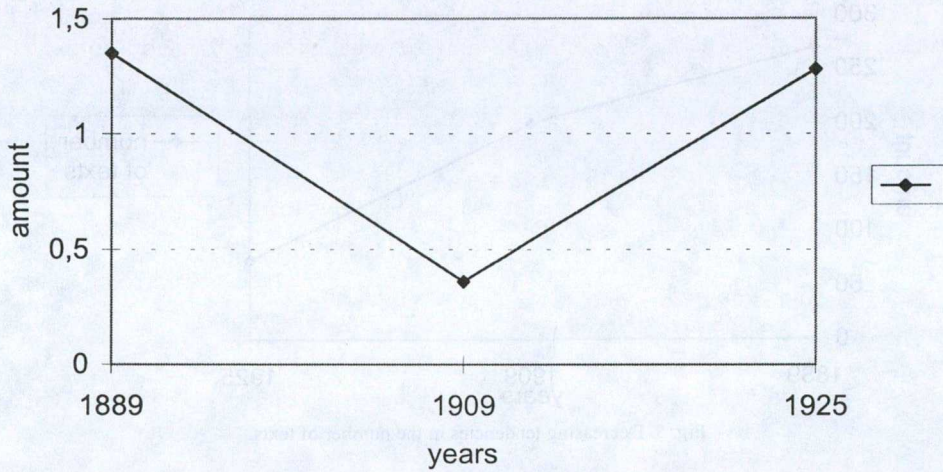


Fig. 7. Average number of saints per text

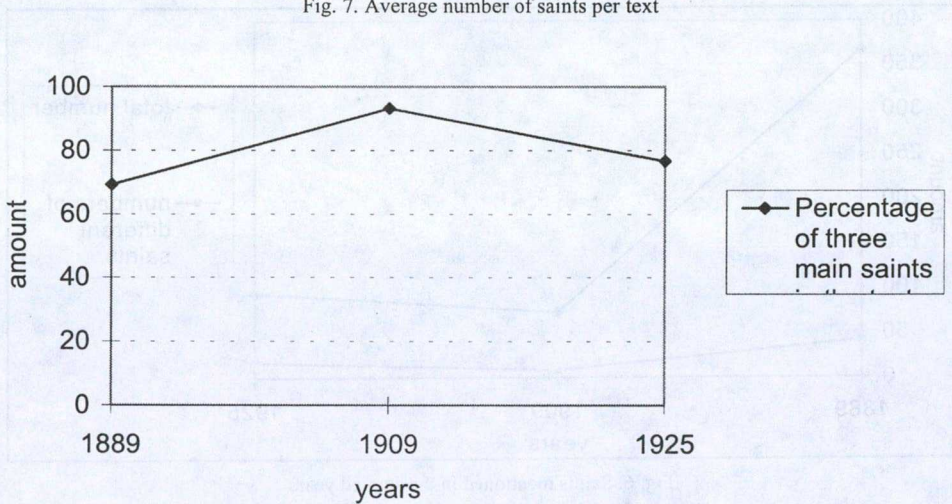


Fig. 8. Percentage of three main saints in the texts

The phenomenon was so surprising for me, that for safe analysis I decided to choose two so-called control years: the year before 1909 and the year after 1925. The investigation of the thanksgiving texts in these years yields the same result.

The investigation of the composition of the saints in each period can help us to an interpretation. The texts from the end of last century reflect a detailed cult of saints. The wide variety of the mentioned saints suggests us a regionally, socio-culturally articulated cult of saints. In the years after the turn of the century this detailed cult disappeared. Then in the 20s the vividness appeared again and in spite of the decrease of the numbers of the texts, the saints came back to use (Fig. 8).

The changes in the portion of the number of the three most important saints (Mary, Joseph and Anthony) among the mediators, indicate a change in the usage of saints. In the years after the turn of the century these main figures became useful for everything, they became helpers in any situation. This was a simplification, the earlier variety disappeared, and a kind of triviality appeared in the cult of the saints. But then what was that recovery in the 20s? What are the reasons of these changes?

We can get the answer after the analysing of the composition of saints at the two culminating points: in 1889 and in 1925. There is a restructuralisation between these two years. Only the most important saints remained in use from the end of last century in the 20s. These are mostly the same who were mentioned in the saint-less years after the turn of the century. In the 20s new, earlier unknown saints appear in the thanksgiving texts, like one of the most characteristic figures of modernity, St. Jude, the helper in impossible situations. And this century provided a number of impossible situations, so his quickly spreading cult is understandable. St. Clement Hofbauer, "apostle of Wien", appeared in the texts. He lived at the beginning of last century and had an effect on the Hungarian count, Ferenc Széchenyi. In the 20s we could follow the appearance of the cult of St. Magdalena Barat, who founded the Sacred Heart women's order/sisterhood last century. The cult of St. Theresa of Lisieux is also quickly growing. Her statues appeared in these decades in every Catholic church in Hungary. Among the disappearing mediators we can mention the guarding saints, guarding angels or the suffering spirits of Purgatory.

III. MOTIVATION

After analysing the trends we should concentrate on the intention of the texts. Through the analysis of intention we can reveal the reasons why people wrote these texts. Though we have a decreasing number of texts in the three analysed years, we have exact information about the motivation in more than half of the cases. In other cases we have only uncertain references, such as: "my request was granted", "my invocation was answered".

Sometimes it is obvious that the person thanks the Sacred Heart of Jesus for escaping from an unpleasant situation: helped "in two difficult cases", "in an embarrassing affair", "saved me for misfortune", "help in an unpleasant situation"; others thank for help: "I was given favour", "I was helped in so many cases", "my prayers through years were answered".

Among the known reasons recovering from an illness is the most frequent. Half of the texts giving concrete information were written because of that. Secondly comes thanksgiving for successful studies. Usually it is a successful exam, mainly a final exam. Rarely could we find texts thanking for the whole process of studies. Other significant reasons for gratitude are: gaining a job, solving financial problems, finding vocation or the conversion of a beloved one to Catholicism. Surprisingly only 2-4 per cent of the known intentions give thanks for "good death". As I mentioned this promise is the driving force of the movement but it is not reflected in the texts.

The Department of Ethnology has been working on the inventarisation of ex-voto pictures in the Romanian pilgrimage place, Máriaradna. After describing and photographing the pictures it is already obvious that the intention in the now analysed texts is more in connection with a secular desire, (such as gaining a job or winning an action) than that of the pictures. Is this due only to the difference in expression or to the modern form (press) and age? Do the believers expressing gratitude in the Messenger represent other socio-cultural strata than those offering a picture to a pilgrimage place giving thanks? The basic difference lies here. The two ways of expressing gratitude (traditional – modern) are used by different groups of people. As the readers of a central newspaper were different from the pilgrims visiting a pilgrimage place in the countryside, in Máriaradna.

IV. INDICATORS

According to the method of content analysis the appearance of some linguistic phenomenon can refer to some non-linguistic – thus cultural – phenomenon.¹⁸ For example, most of the texts has a reference to the promise of public announcement:

“according to my promise I express my gratitude publicly”

“we fulfil our old promise, when we express our gratitude”

This kind of communication with the surrounding world has several functions, in my opinion. Firstly it is an intention of proof, similarly to the testimonies of Protestant Churches. An account put into shape is a proof of grace for the community. It has an important role also in the discourse.

“Hereby I call everybody, who are suffering physically or spiritually to turn to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.”

Holsti considers the analysis of the effects as a significant part of content-analysis. Here the effect is the continuation of the discourse:¹⁹

“... I had a great suffering in my heart. Then I suddenly thought of the cases published in the Messenger about how the Sacred Heart of Jesus helped those turning to him. I myself did make a promise to announce my prayer in the Mes-

¹⁸ KRIPPENDORF 1995: 43.

¹⁹ My short field investigation on the cult in Nottingham, England in April 1998 resulted in a surprising evidence on the public discourse and its vitality, driving forces. In St. Barnabas Cathedral I have found the following prayer in a piece of paper near the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. “Novena to the Sacred heart of Jesus. May the most Sacred heart of Jesus be loved, adored, praised, honoured and glorified throughout the whole world for ever and ever. Sacred heart of Jesus have mercy on us. Holy Mary mother of God pray for us. St. Theresa of the Child Jesus pray for us. St. Jude healer of the sick pray for us. St. Jude helper of the helpless pray for us. St. Jude worker of miracles hear my prayer and grant my request. Say this novena 9 times daily for 9 days leaving a copy on church every day. On the 7th day your request will be granted. IT NEVER FAILS.” And the discourse continued here as well, because there was a same piece of paper, but with a further comment on the last promise of ‘it never fails’: “NO, BUT YOU DO!”



Fig. 9. An ex voto picture from Măriaradna (Radna, Romania) painted at the end of the last century.

senger.”²⁰ “Among other visitors there was a woman, who introduced me the novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and brought me a Messenger to read, where I read how effective it was to make a novena for the Sacred Heart of Jesus.”²¹

The faithful sometimes made special vows. The most important pledge as I mentioned was the public announcement of thanksgiving. In some cases the writers promised to order the Messenger.

²⁰ Jézus Szíve Hírnöke (Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) 1889: 58/1.

²¹ Jézus Szíve Hírnöke (Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) 1889: 254/2.

“Some months ago I promised to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that if I was heard I would subscribe the Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.”²²

After analysis I think there is not only a formal similarity between ex voto pictures and thanksgiving texts, but the structure, inner logic is similar as well. The heavenly power helps the person in trouble, so he feels gratitude and would like to express, announce it.

“U.....r. – Be the Godly H of J loved everywhere, because he makes mercy with his servants! I, his unworthy servant, experienced his power: my son, had spit blood for more than a year, he recovered after I made a novena for him. – N-s.”²³

I have to turn back now to the title of this paper: so these are the ex-voto texts. It seems, its origins, superficial and hidden aims, structures are very similar to that of the ‘painted stories’, the ex-voto pictures. In both cases the very basic driving force is either request or thanksgiving (Fig. 9).

We have to agree with Krippendorf, who compared communication to a kind of an adhesive. For the existence of the society and its communities regular and standardised communication is needed. The existence of communication strengthens its norms. In an institutional contact, the act of telling is more important than the content.²³ This is reflected in the fact that we get to know the exact intention only in half of the texts. As the trouble in which God helped was not interesting.

I have to admit that it is impossible to analyse the religiosity of single individuals, as the texts give very limited information about the writer. Though in a number of cases we could reveal the social position of the writers. We can recognise the crisis situations of the age and how was it possible to escape from them. We can discover the structure of the thanksgiving texts as well.

At the very end I have to mention that it is possible that the original, whole letters written to the editors exist somewhere in a church archive with the life histories which provide a new analysis context. But to reveal this, is a part of future research.

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²² Jézus Szive Hírnöke (Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) 1889: 59/1.

²³ Jézus Szive Hírnöke (Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) 1889: 307/1.

²⁴ KRIPPENDORF 1995: 49.

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