

VALE, PATER OPTIME, ET VENI.
THE CULT OF ST. JOHN OF CAPISTRANO IN THE TERRITORY
OF PRESENT-DAY SLOVAKIA IN THE MIDDLE AGES¹

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In spite of the fact that no locality now in the territory of Slovakia but then a part of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, appears in the itinerary of the Franciscan, Church lawyer and reformer of the order John of Capistrano, news of the “miracle working preacher” reached here and motivated people to travel to him in the hope of being healed of various illnesses, to write letters to him, to support observant foundations, or to join monasteries founded or reformed by him. The present study based on sources such as documents on acceptance into the Confraternity of Observant Franciscans, collections of miracles at the Collegio San Isidoro in Rome, medieval charters and chronicles, is devoted to the veneration of Capistrano and its spread in our territory. However, the aim of the study is not to take developments connected with Capistrano out of the context of the history of the Kingdom of Hungary or to place them in isolation, but to point out that this theme deserves attention from present-day Slovak historiography. Key words: John of Capistrano. Middle Ages. Franciscan Order. Kingdom of Hungary. Bratriks. Liber miraculorum.

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John of Capistrano, the most important Franciscan of the 15th century and reformer of the order, came from the small town of Capestrano in the Abruzzi region of central Italy. He continually attracts the attention of historians, art historians and novelists, although, surprisingly, his adventurous life has not become the subject of a film up to now. When writing a biography of a medieval personality, medievalists usually point to the inadequacy of the sources, but Capistrano is an exception: His itineraries and activities can be mapped unusually closely.² The main sources for reconstruction of the saint’s life are the

1 The study originated in the framework of the project APVV-19-0131 *Ars moriendi. Fenomén smrti v stredovekom Uhorsku* [The Art of Dying. The phenomenon of death in medieval Hungary].

2 CHIAPPINI, Aniceto. Prospetto cronologico della vita di S. Giovanni da Capestrano. In *Studi*

hagiographies and information compiled by the Franciscans in closest contact with him,³ presented in the still valuable works of Capistrano's biographers J. Hofer and O. Bonmann, as well as his largely surviving correspondence.⁴ At present, we know of more than seven hundred letters, scattered throughout Europe, but never published in a consistent collection that would enable wider academic discussion.⁵ For the extent and state of preservation of the documents, we can thank Capistrano himself. He was educated as a canon lawyer and he took great care of his documents, even knowing the number of the confraternity letters he had produced, giving a total of 1400 of them during a sermon in Vienna in 1451.⁶ His last fears before his death also related to his books and documents, which had to be taken to Italy by his brothers in the order.⁷ Records were also

francescani, Vol. 53, 1956, p. 203–220. For older biographies see BANFI, Florio. Le fonti per la storia di S. Giovanni da Capestrano. In *Studi Francescani*, Vol. 53, 1956, p. 299–343. Source materials on the history of Capistrano were collected by the Irish Franciscan and historian WADDING, Luca. *Annales Minorum seu trium Ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum*. Editio secunda. FONSECA DE EVORA, Josè Maria (ed.). IX–XIII. Romae: typis Rochi Bernabò 1734–1735 (hereinafter WADDING).

- 3 Reports from Nicolaus de Fara, Hieronymus de Udine, Christophorus and Varisio see HECKE, Joseph Van (ed.). *Acta sanctorum*, Tom. X. Bruxellis: Typis Henrici Goemaere, 1864, p. 439–546; TAGLIACCOZZO, Giovanni di. *Victoriae mirabilis divinitus de Turcis habitae duce vener. beato Ioanne de Capistrano series descripta*. Ad claras aquas: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1906; FESTA, Giovanni Battista (ed.). Cinque lettere intorno alla vita e alla morte di s. Giovanni da Capestrano, In *Bullettino della Regia Deputazione abruzzese di storia patria*, II/3, 1911, p. 18–37; HOFER, Johannes. Gabriel von Verona O.F.M. als Biograph Kapistrans. In *Franziskanische Studien*, Vol. 25, 1938, p. 89–93.
- 4 HOFER, Johannes. *Kapistran. Ein Leben im Kampfum die Reform der Kirche*. 2nd ed. revised by Ottokar Bonmann, 2 vols. Heidelberg-Romae: Kerle, 1964–1965 (hereinafter HOFER I. – II.). BONMANN Ottokar. La personalità di San Giovanni da Capestrano. In *Bullettino della Deputazione Abruzzese di storia patria*, LXXVI, 1986, p. 5–20.
- 5 For a systematic catalogue of Capistrano's correspondence see Ottokar BONMANN – Gedeon GÁL – Jason M. MISKULY (eds.). A Provisional Calendar of St. John Capistran's Correspondence I–III. In *Franciscan studies*, Vol. 27, Nr. 49, 1989, p. 255–345; Vol. 28, Nr. 50, 1990, p. 323–403; Vol. 30, Nr. 52, 1992, p. 283–327. For correspondence relating to Capistrano's activity in the Kingdom of Hungary see PETTKÓ, Béla. *Kapisztrán János levelezése a magyarokkal* [John of Capistran in his Hungarian Correspondence]. In *Történelmi Tár*, 24, 1901, p. 161–222. For Registry of letters see also BÖLCSKEY, Ödön. *Capistránói János élete és kora* [The life and times of St John Capistran], III. Székesfehérvár: Debreczenyi István Könyvnyomdájában 1924, p. 359–511; BENEŠ, Petr. *Regalát. Počátky františkánské observance* [The beginnings of Franciscan Observance] 3. Skripta pro Institut františkánských studií, 12, 2011, p. 17.
- 6 HOFER II, p. 416. HOFER, Johannes. Bruderschaftsbriebe des heil. Johannes Kapistran. In *Franziskanische Studien*, 22, 1935, p. 326; DRÍMAL, Jaroslav. K brněnskému pobytu a filiačním listům Jana Kapistrána [The stay in Brno and certificates of brotherhood of John of Capistrano]. In *Časopis Matice moravské*, Vol. 63, Nr. 3–4, 1940, p. 374–387.
- 7 BONMANN – GÁL – MISKULY III, ref. 5, p. 326, Nr. 665 (1456-10-21).

kept of the testimony of people about the miracles associated with Capistrano's intercession either during his life or after his death (*miracula post mortem*).⁸ These collections of miracles from the 1460s and from the beginning of the 16th century, preserved today in libraries in Naples, Paris and Rome, are rich sources for the history of everyday life, medicine, society and culture. It is surprising that only a few historians have devoted attention to them up to now. One of the exceptions is the outstanding work of the Croatian historian Stanko Andrić *The Miracles of St. John Capistran* (2000), which subjects these witness statements to critical historical and philological analysis.⁹ Various aspects of Capistrano's life are covered by a multitude of partial works, which cannot be summarized here.¹⁰ Research devoted to Capistrano's works or sermons are also fragmented, although they deserve a comprehensive critical edition.¹¹ At the same time, it is necessary to say that Capistrano and his activities have been subjected to ideologically coloured interpretation by historians, whether apologetic or

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- 8 The manuscript known as the Liber miraculorum (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouv. Acq. Lat., 1763), which was partly edited by DELORME, Ferdinand M. (ed.). Ex libro miraculorum ss. Bernardini Senensis et Ioannis a Capistrano auctore fr. Conrado de Freyenstat. In *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, Vol. 11, 1918, p. 399–441, has 2507 of reports of healing, about 1500 cases relate to Capistrano's missionary journeys starting in 1451. The reports are divided into seven groups: on raising the dead, protecting from danger of death, healing the crippled, blind, deaf and mute, lepers and illnesses of various kinds.
- 9 ANDRIĆ, Stanko. *The Miracles of St. John Capistran*. New York: Central European University Press, 2000, 454 p. ISBN 963-9116-68-8.
- 10 A selection: ELBEL, Martin. Kult sv. Jana Kapistrána v českých zemích [The cult of St. John of Capistrano in the Czech Lands]. In *Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis. Philosophica – Aesthetica*, Vol. 16, 1998, p. 81–99; GALAMB, György J. (ed.). *Franciscan Observance Between Italy and Central Europe. Chronica: Annual of the Institute of History University of Szeged*, Vol. 15, 2017, 286 p.; GECSER, Ottó. Giovanni of Capestrano on the Plague and the Doctors. In *Franciscan Studies*, Vol. 75, 2017, p. 27–48; GECSER, Ottó. Preaching and publicness: St John of Capestrano and the making of his charisma North of the Alps. In JANSEN L., Katherine – RUBIN, Miri (eds.). *Charisma and religious authority. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim preaching, 1200 – 1500*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010, p. 145–159. ISBN 978-2-503-52859-5; KLANICZAY Gábor. Disciplining Society through Dress: John of Capistrano, the “Bonfire of Vanities” and Sumptuary Law. In KRAS, Pawel – MIXSON, James D. (eds.). *The Grand Tour of John of Capistrano in Central and Eastern Europe (1451–1456). Transfer of Ideas and Strategies of Communication in the Late Middle Ages*. Warsaw; Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2018, p. 99–115. ISBN 978-83-8061-614-1. DAMIAN, Iulian Mihai. *Ioan de Capestrano și Cruciada Târzie*. Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română (Centrul de Studii Transilvane), 2011, 320 p. ISBN 978-973-7784-65-0.
- 11 BÖLCSKEY, ref. 5, published the most important but still incomplete catalogue of the works of Capistrano. Other themes not evaluated in relation to Capistrano's activities include his influence on the secular Third Order, MORE, Alison. Dynamics of Regulation, Innovation, and Invention. In MIXSON, James D. – ROEST, Bert (eds.). *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015, p. 95. ISBN 978-90-04-22627-2.

blackening. Just as during his life he confronted flattery on one side, but slander and even attempted assassination on the other, after his death some works did not avoid these extremes. This makes it more necessary to appreciate the recent efforts of historians to consider his activities and works objectively, accepting the complexity of developments in the 15th century, especially in the framework of the series of academic undertakings and publication projects coordinated by the Italian historian Letizia Pellegrini.¹²

In the countries of the former Kingdom of Hungary, John of Capistrano is perceived especially as a participant in the exceptional victory over the armies of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II at Belgrade in August 1456.¹³ In contrast to the secular dignitaries, who were rather inactive in organizing the campaign against the Turks, with “*one waiting for the next*” according to a letter from the Papal Legate Carvajal to the Duke of Milan (17 April), the 70 year old Capistrano with fiery zeal called on and assembled crusading forces that enabled Duke Hunyady to achieve his legendary victory over stronger Turkish forces.¹⁴ According to the sequence of events in June and July 1456, it is possible to agree with Capistrano’s biographer, that without him there would not even have been an attempt to defend Belgrade. The fortress would have fallen into the hands of the Turks and this would have opened the way for their penetration further into Hungary.¹⁵

However, the personality of John of Capistrano cannot be narrowed down to this dimension. In the complex spiritual situation in Europe, in a time with two or even three popes, he had an aim that he pursued with immense dedication: that of re-uniting the Catholic Church. It is in this context that we can place his many-sided activities: He engaged in the reform of religious life and the rehabilitation of the Papacy, which had fallen into political dependence and intervened in

12 PELLEGRINI, Letizia – VIALLET, Ludovic. Between christianitas and Europe: Giovanni of Capistrano as an historical issue. In *Franciscan Studies*, Vol. 75, 2017, p. 5, note 1. PELLEGRINI, Letizia. More on John Capistrano’s Correspondence: A Report on an Open Forum. In *Franciscan Studies*, Vol. 68, 2010, p. 187–197; KALOUS, Antonín – STEJSKAL, Jan. The Image of John of Capistrano in Bohemia and Moravia. In PELLEGRINI, Letizia (ed.). *The Mission of John Capistrano and the Process of Europe Making in the 15th Century. State of the Art*. Rome: Viella (in print); KRAS, Paweł – MANIKOWSKA, Halina – STARZYŃSKI Marcin – ZAJCHOWSKA-BOLTROMIUK, Anna (eds.). *The Correspondence of John of Capistrano, vol. 1: Letters Related to the History of Poland and Silesia (1451–1456)*. Warsaw; Lublin: Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History, Polish Academy of Science – Wydawnictwo KUL, 2018, p. 325. ISBN 9788380616158.

13 For more information BARTL, Július. Ján Kapistrán a Uhorsko. In *Historica, Zborník FFUK, XLV*, 2002, p. 23–25.

14 HOFER II, p. 363.

15 Ibidem, p. 421. Concerning the Belgrade events PÁLOSFALVI, Tamás. *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare 1389–1526*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018, especially chapter 8. ISBN 9789004365841.

secular affairs, he served as a legate at the Council of Basel, as an inquisitor against heretics on the doctrinal level, and from the position of Vicar General of the Cismontane Observants, he promoted strict reform.¹⁶ An important mission of Capistrano and of the Franciscans in general was to apply the main Franciscan weapon: preaching, to the task of bringing Husites, Orthodox and Jews, then tendentiously seen as enemies of the Church, into unity with Rome.

In spite of the fact that Capistrano's itinerary as known up to now, does not include any place now in the territory of Slovakia, which formed part of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, news of the "miracle-working preacher" reached here and motivated people to travel to him, in the hope of being healed of illness, to write letters to him, to support observant foundations or to enter monasteries founded or reformed by him. However, our aim is not to take events and destinies connected with Capistrano out of the historical context of the Kingdom of Hungary and to consider them in isolation, but to point out that they deserve the attention of present-day Slovak historiography.

Before we devote attention to the cult of Capistrano, let us briefly look at his basic life story. He was born on 24 June 1386 to into an aristocratic family, but lost his father while he was still a child. It is not clear whether his father's early death was connected with the tragedy in which twelve of Capistrano's relations apparently fell victim to disturbances in a succession dispute.¹⁷ After getting a degree in Roman and Church law from the University of Perugia, he entered the service of King Ladislav of Naples. He served as a legal adviser to King Ladislav's court in Naples, then became a judge and governor in Perugia.¹⁸ He reached a high position and married a woman from the important family of the Counts of San Valentino in 1415, but then war intervened in his successful career. It broke out after the death of King Ladislav of Naples, when the Lord of Rimini Carlo Malatesta attempted to gain control of Perugia. The city sent Capistrano to Malatesta to start peace talks. However, at Brufa Castle, Capistrano fell into the hands of the leader of noblemen, who had been expelled from Perugia, and they imprisoned him in inhuman condition. According to the hagiographic sources, during his imprisonment he had two visions of St. Francis, who called on Capistrano to follow him. The conversion that Capistrano experienced in

16 For details see ELM, Kaspar. Die Bedeutung Johannes Kapistrans und der Franziskanerobservanz für die Kirche des 15. Jahrhunderts. In PÁSZTOR, Edith – PÁSZTOR, Lajos (eds.). *San Giovanni da Capestrano nella Chiesa e nella società del suo tempo, Atti del Convegno storico internazionale, Capestrano – L'Aquila, 8–12 Ottobre 1986*. L'Aquila: Arti Grafiche Aquilane 1990, p. 375–390.

17 HOFER I, p. 35.

18 He matriculated at the Faculty of Arts in 1400, and studied civil and Church law for about 10 years. Ref. 17, p. 47.

prison on 22 July 1415 made him realize the transience of earthly happiness and completely change his hierarchy of values. This is the key to understanding Capistrano's further steps. After being ransomed from imprisonment, he sought reconciliation with his enemies, and agreed with his wife on annulment of their marriage, which had not been consummated, perhaps because of the unexpected course of events.¹⁹ He became a novice in the Observant Franciscan monastery of Monteripido outside the walls of Perugia in 1415, and three years later, he was ordained to the priesthood. It may appear paradoxical that after joining the order, he was more in the world than in the monastery, but the founders of the mendicant orders did not require the principle of *stabilitas loci*, so members were more part of a spiritually defined community than of a specific monastery. For the purpose of preaching or study, as determined by their superior, they could move from monastery to monastery and from province to province. However, over time, various interpretations of Franciscan ideals led to a split in the order. For St. Francis, poverty had been a way to come closer to Christ, but for his followers, it became a source of unclearness. Disputes on the correct degree of poverty led to a current within the Minorite order presenting themselves as Observants (from the Latin verb *observare*), who considered themselves the bearers of the original message of their founder St. Francis, especially on the question of the poverty of monasteries. The other, more moderate group was the so-called Conventuals, named from their ownership of convents or monasteries. Among the personalities who significantly influenced the last phase of the reformist Observant movement, it is possible to name especially St. Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444) and his pupil and successor John of Capistrano. In his preaching, St. Bernardino intensively propagated the cult of the Holy Name of Jesus: In the course of his sermons, he used a table with the inscription IHS, a Latinized Greek abbreviation of the name ΙΗΣΟΥΣ – Jesus, explained as *Jesus Hominum Salvator* (*Jesus People's Saviour*), painted in the centre of a sun with twelve rays, which symbolized the twelve articles of faith spread by the twelve apostles. This trigram or shield of the Franciscan Observants, which shone from the facades of churches and town palaces, paintings in church interiors, chambers in town halls and objects in everyday use, was intensively spread especially by Capistrano.²⁰ This symbol is preserved until today in some places, and we will give it further attention.

However, Capistrano was not responsible only for spreading the trigram, but also for popularizing St. Bernardino, canonized in 1450. Capistrano dedicated

19 HOFER I, p. 59–60.

20 On the trigram in the history of art CHLÍBEC, Jan. *Bernardinské slunce nad českými zeměmi* [The Bernardine Sun over the Czech Lands]. Praha: Academia, 2016, p. 7. ISBN 9788020025562.

churches, convents and chapels to St. Bernardino and used his relics to bless the sick, attributing their recovery to him. Capistrano's ascetic way of life also resembled that of his teacher. His diet was very modest and without meat. He slept only very briefly.²¹ Aeneas Piccolomini, later Pope Pius II, described the 65 year old Capistrano as thinned down to skin and bone, but always joyful and ready to work. He preached tirelessly day after day, often to twenty or thirty thousand people. He could answer the most complex questions to the satisfaction of both the simple people and the learned.²² On the basis of abundant written testimonies, we can see him as a dynamic, zealous, eloquent man, good at arguing, and with admirable physical ability, as is shown not only by his contribution to the defence of Belgrade, but also by his almost daily open air sermons, which sometimes made even longer by translation from Latin. The critical themes of his sermons were mostly connected with the demands of St. Bernardino of Siena in Italy for systematic struggle against ignorance, including moral failings: usury, gambling, pride, luxury, as well as injustices in society: indebtedness, fraud, unrest in political life and schisms in the Church.²³

Capistrano spent the last six years of his life, 1451–1456, as a travelling preacher. In 1451 he crossed the Alps, and travelled through Austria, Moravia, Silesia, Bavaria, Thuringia, Saxony, Lusatia and Poland. He spent the last part of his life, a period of about 17 months in the Kingdom of Hungary.²⁴ It is possible to say that veneration of Capistrano began with personal contacts. During his life, he already has a reputation as a holy man, exceptional speaker and worker of miracles. News spread quickly of the Franciscan, who wanted to do everything possible to defend Christendom against the Turkish threat, and who had “*great authority in proclaiming sacred teachings, and great strength of virtue for healing the blind, the sick and those possessed by unclean spirits...*”, as the chronicler John of Turiec put it.²⁵ Wherever he and his companions came,

21 ELM, Kaspar. Johannes Kapistrans Predigtreise diesseits der Alpen (1451–1456). In BOOCK-MANN, Hartmut – MOELLER, Bernd – STACKMANN, Karl (eds.). *Lebenslehren und Weltentwürfe im Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Phil-hist. Klasse, 3. Folge, Nr. 179)*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989, p. 500–519. ISBN 978-3-525-82463-4; BIHL, Michael (ed.). *Duae epistulae S. Johannis a Capistrano, altera ad Ladislaum Regem, altera de Victoria Belgradensi (1453 et 1456)*. In *Archivum Franciscanum historicum*, Vol. 19, Nr. 1, 1926, p. 73.

22 HECKE, ref. 3, p. 329.

23 ELM, ref. 21, p. 510.

24 MIXSON, James D. John of Capistrano's Preaching Tour North of the Alps (1451 – 1456). In ELM, Kaspar – MIXSON, James D. (eds.). *Religious Life between Jerusalem, the Desert, and the World. Selected Essays by Kaspar Elm*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015, p. 255–276. ISBN 9789004307780.

25 THUROCZ de, Johannes. *Chronica Hungarorum 1488 / Kronika Jána z Turca 1488. Z latinského originálu prel. SOPKO, Július*. (The Chronicle of the Hungarians 1488 / The Chroni-

he received numerous invitations and requests from monarchs, ecclesiastical and secular dignitaries, town authorities and monasteries to honour them with a visit.²⁶ At the beginning of his mission, during his stay in Vienna from 7 June to 27 July 1451, crowds of people flocked to him especially from the neighbouring countries of Hungary, Moravia and Bavaria, to such an extent that one of his brother Franciscans compared them to the pilgrims to Rome in a Jubilee Year.²⁷ Since the Kingdom of Hungary had no university, many young men from the territory now belonging to Slovakia studied at Vienna University. There were also lively family and commercial contacts between the cities of Vienna and Bratislava with associated spread of influences in art, architecture, music and book decoration.²⁸ Therefore, it is no accident that during Capistrano's activity there, various people from Bratislava were healed as a result of his intercession. They included George Chancellor of the Curia,²⁹ the originally deaf Catherine Thomas' daughter, Margaret wife of the merchant Matthew, who had to be carried in great pain on stretcher, Catherine wife of the Bratislava Mayor Stephen (= S. Raneis, author's note), neither of whom could walk before they were healed.³⁰ The 60 year old inert and trembling suffering Catherine wife of Stephen (*Ungari*) and 40 year old lame Anna wife of Praiton, who could walk only with the help of sticks, also came to Capistrano from Bratislava.³¹ The inhabitants of Trnava were also not far from Vienna: thanks to Capistrano, Anna Thomas' daughter from

cle of John of Turiec 1488. Translated from the Latin original by SOPKO, Július.). Bratislava: Perfekt, p. 566. ISBN 978-80-8046-692-3.

- 26 "*Vale, pater optime, et veni,*" said the invitation to Capistrano from Cardinal Dionysius Szécsi and the magnates of the Kingdom of Hungary sent from Buda (1455-05-21). PETTKÓ, ref. 5, p. 176, Nr. 20.
- 27 HOFER II, p. 14. See also WADDING XII, p. 81n.
- 28 ŠEDIVÝ, Juraj. *Mittelalterliche Schriftkultur im Pressburger Kollegiatkapitel*. Bratislava: Chronos, 2007. 283 p. ISBN 978-80-89027-22-4; BURAN, Dušan. Zu den künstlerischen Beziehungen zwischen Wien und Preßburg/Bratislava im späten 15. Jahrhundert. Beispiel der illuminierten Handschriften der Preßburger Kapitelsbibliothek. In WETTER, Evelin (ed.). *Die Länder der Böhmisches Krone und ihre Nachbarn zur Zeit der Jagiellonenkönige*. Stuttgart/Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke, 2004, p. 307 – 321. ISBN 3799584021; VESELOVSKÁ, Eva. Hudobná kultúra v stredovekom meste. (Musical culture in a medieval town.). In *Hudobné dejiny Bratislavy: od stredoveku po rok 1918*. Bratislava: Ars Musica: Katedra muzikológie FFUK, 2019, p. 19–64. ISBN 978-80-971672-4-0.
- 29 Roma, Collegio San Isidoro, Codex chartaceus: Miracula S. Ioannis a Capistrano (hereinafter Cod.) 1/6/2, fol. 80r (the most widespread version of the testimony). HECKE, ref. 3, p. 518: "*Unus cancellarius curiae Possonii totus inflatus a medio valde monstruose, satim pristinae sanitati restituitur.*"
- 30 Roma, Collegio San Isidoro, Cod. 1/6/2, fol. 47v, 60v, 61r. The healed people, who recovered their hearing included the nobleman Nicholas from Kremnica. Roma, Collegio San Isidoro, Cod. 1/6, fol. 126r.
- 31 Roma, Collegio San Isidoro, Cod. 1/6/2, fol. 62v, 73v

Trnava was cured of an eye illness, while 50 year old Stephen regained control of his arms and legs.³² Finally, in the course of Capistrano's last stay in Vienna, he healed Catherine Panesin from Bratislava, who suffered for twelve weeks from pains in her stomach and shoulders, which prevented her moving (13 January 1455).³³ At that time, miracles were explained as signs of divine intervention, which had to strengthen faith and the Christian way of life. However, this did not mean that the Church hierarchy accepted every extraordinary event or report as valid proof of God's grace. There was an understandable conflict between the faithful and the educated clergy, who had to take into account exaggeration and gullibility.³⁴ Healings were verified by a commission, and confirmed by notaries and trustworthy witnesses, as shown, for example, by a notary's document from Nuremberg (1452),³⁵ but in some cases the long-term nature of a healing was questionable.³⁶

Capistrano founded the Franciscan Observant Monastery of St. Theobald outside the walls of Vienna. It was joined by a large number of young men from

32 Roma, Collegio San Isidoro, Cod. 1/6/2, fol. 38v, 62r.

33 DELORME, ref. 8, p. 439, Nr. 2495.

34 In recent times, historiography has analysed and interpreted miracles from various points of view in cooperation with historians of medicine. For example, they explain healing with the help of the findings of psycho-immunology. WITTMER-BUSCH, Maria – RENDTEL, Constanze. *Miracula – Wunderheilungen im Mittelalter. Eine historisch-psychologische Annäherung*. Köln; Wiemar; Wien: Böhlau, 2003, p. 106n. ISBN 9783412158026; MUZUR, Amir – RINČIĆ, Iva. Miraculous Healings of Paralysis: A Preliminary Study on Sources. In *Collegium Antropologicum*, Vol. 37, Nr. 1, 2013, p. 23–27; ANGENENDT, Arnold. Das Wunder – religionsgeschichtlich und christlich. In HEINZELMANN, Martin – HERBERS, Klaus (eds.). *Mirakel im Mittelalter: Konzeptionen, Erscheinungsformen, Deutungen*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002, p. 95. ISBN 3-515-08061-9.

35 The imperial notary John Parders de Kemnat produced a document on healings in Nuremberg, edited in the framework of SCHÜRSTAB, Erhard. *Beschreibung des ersten markgräflichen Krieges gegen Nürnberg*. Ed. BADER, Joseph. München: Georg Franz, 1860, p.135: "... devotus pater Johannes de Capistrano ...intravit opidum Nurembergense Bambergensis diocesis, ac inibi diebus multis predicavit, ac in nomine Jesu Cristi nazareni crucifixi et sancti Bernhardini signa infrascripta fecit et operatus fuit diebus et in mei notarii publici infrascripti et testibus fidedignis infrascriptis presentibus et atestantibus. Inprimis in die sancte Braxedis virginis, que fuit vicesima prima mensis supradicti, Agnes filia Knorleins de Abenbergens Eystetensis dyocesis iuvenula annorum sedecim caruit auditu a iuventute et incepit audire bene ad multa quesita directe respondendo..."

36 As noted by the author of the Anals of the Franciscan Monastery in Lwówek Śląski: "Anno 1453 kam gen Lewenbergk Johannes Capistranus der wyrdige vatter genant,(...), wirt geredt, daß er eynen blynden edelman sehende gemacht aber wie, derselbe ist widder uber die bruck kommen ist widder blindt worden." GRÜNHAGEN, Colmar. Kurze Annalen der Franziskaner zu Löwenberg. In *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte und Altertumskunde Schlesiens*, Vol. 11, 1871, p. 209–210.

the ranks “of the students and other men from respectable circles” (1451).³⁷ Since the members of the order included men, who knew Capistrano personally, they preserved his memory and spread veneration of him in later years, as is shown by statements in the collection of Capistrano’s posthumous miracles. Bernardino *de Posonio* (of Bratislava), a guardian in this monastery, gave testimony at Capistrano’s grave at Ilok, now in Croatia on the border with Serbia, most probably in the 1480s.³⁸ Bernardino was once seized by a sudden severe illness during lunch. He could not move and dropped to the ground as if half-dead. The brothers quickly carried him to the infirmary, where he spent many days tormented by pain. The doctors could not help him. They diagnosed an untreatable illness called *apoplexia* or stroke, from which his brother Franciscan Sensus also suffered. A male nurse from Hungary (*Hungarus*) advised him to turn with hope to Capistrano, who he had known and accompanied on journeys.³⁹ Since Sensus was healed after praying to their “blessed father”, Bernardino also began to beg Capistrano for help, promising to visit his grave if he was healed. He soon recovered, and after getting permission from his superiors, Bernardino aged almost 70 went to distant Ilok to fulfil his vow to give thanks for his miraculous healing. Texts on miraculous events are usually formulated as legal documents of testimony given under oath, and giving the name, place of residence, profession, age, type and length of illness, sometimes also the methods of treatment, date and place of healing, as well as the witnesses of this event. However, the testimony from Sensus, in contrast to Bernardino’s dated to 1483,⁴⁰ significantly differs from others, not only in extent, but also in the lively spontaneous style in which he described his vision of John Capistrano, including a “familiar conversation” with him, in the course of which the saint described himself as the founder of the Monastery of St. Theobald.⁴¹ Today, the manuscript containing these testimonies

37 Capistrano informed a brother Franciscan Jakub de Marchia about it in a letter. HOFER II, p. 19. Nuns were transferred from the monastery to a place within the city, and Observants took their place. A. Hermann gives the date 22 July 1451 for the take over of the monastery by Capistrano. HERMANN, Amandus. *Capistranus triumphans seu historiae fundamentalis de S. Johanne Capistrano ordinis minorum regularis observantiae propagatore (etc.)*. Coloniae: Endter, 1700, p. 325.

38 Roma, Collegio San Isidoro, Cod. 1/6, fol. 174rv, Cod. 1/6/2, fol. 38, no. 116 (shortened version of the testimony). ANDRIĆ, ref. 9, p. 392–393.

39 “*Frater quippe predictus Hungarus multo tempore ambulans cum beato patre, illius sanctitatem expertus fuerat.*” ANDRIĆ, ref. 9, p. 391.

40 It is possible that the year 1483 was deduced by the author of the text. ANDRIĆ, ref. 9, p. 180.

41 Roma, Collegio San Isidoro, Cod. 1/6, fol. 172v, 173rv, 174r, Cod. 1/6/2, fol. 38, no. 115 (shorter version of the testimony). ANDRIĆ, ref. 9, p. 391: “*Et ecce mira res, non multo post emissum votum pater beatus immenso cum lumine nocte eadem apparuit fratri egrotanti non dormienti, sed pene vigilant, illumque dulciter ac familiariter allocutus est dicens: ‘Quod vis, frater? Et quid optas a me?’ Et illo respondente: ‘Sanitatem consequi opto a vestra beatu-*

is located in Rome at Saint Isidore's College, together with the manuscript of the Burley's Commentary on Porphyrios' work *Isagoge*, which was apparently copied by the above mentioned Bernardino de Posonio (Bratislava) according to a note in the last folio: "*per me fratrum Bernardinum de Posonio O.M.*"⁴²

The Franciscan Longinus of Bratislava also died in the Vienna Monastery of St. Theobald in 1495, as we learn from the *Necrologium fratrum minorum observantium provinciae Austriacae* produced thanks to Capistrano's interest in records.⁴³

During Capistrano's stay in Germany, his charisma addressed another Bratislavan, Alexander *de Posonio*, Master of Liberal Arts from the University of Cologne. When he learnt about the Franciscan's activity in Germany, "*he hurried to him, received the order's habit from him, and was assigned to the Austrian province*".⁴⁴ According to the order's chronicle, he taught philosophy and theology for some time, became a zealous follower of John of Capistrano's virtues, a famous preacher, man of exceptional wisdom and experience, great piety, exemplary life, and a defender of the Catholic faith against the Hussites.⁴⁵ Alexander was also the first guardian of the Monastery of St. Leonard in Graz (1463).⁴⁶ The Central Library of the Vienna Franciscan Province in Graz still has a copy of the early printed *Confessionale* by Antonino Florentino (Köln 1470) containing a handwritten note by Alexander from 1478 indicating that this book was intended for the Graz monastery, "*where it has to remain forever and never by alienated*".⁴⁷ In 1468, the Apostolic Legate Lorenzo Roverella appointed

dine', conquestus est beatus pater de fratrum ingratitude 'O', inquires, 'quam cito oblivioni datus sum vobis! Nonne ego vos plantavi, nonne ipse vestram familiam fundavi, et quare sic mei immemores estis?'"

42 Roma, Collegio San Isidoro, Cod. 1/98 cart. XV. KRISTELLER, Paul O. *Iter Italicum: a finding list of uncatalogued or incompletely catalogued humanistic manuscripts of the Renaissance in Italian and other libraries*. Italy: Orvieto to Volterra, Vatican City, 2. Leiden: Brill, 1998, p. 134–135. ISBN 9004012559.

43 FUCHS, A. Franciscus (ed.). *Necrologia Germaniae: Dioecesis Pataviensis, pars altera. Austria inferior*. Berolini: Weidmann, 1913, p. 282.

44 FUCHS, ref. 43, p. 154, 158, 282. According to Guggenbichler he was a professor at Cologne University: GUGGENBICHLER, Gaudentius. *Beiträge zur Kirchengeschichte des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts*. Bozen 1880, p. 452.

45 GREIDERER, Vigil. *Germania franciscana, seu Chronicon geographo-historicum Ordinis S.P. Francisci (etc.)*, Tom. I. Innsbruck: Typis Joannis Thomae nobilis de Trattnern, 1777, p. 436. HUEBER, Fortunatus. *Menologium Franciscanum (etc.)*. München: Straub, 1698, p. 731 (Martyrologium: 19. Mart.).

46 In 1463 the Emperor Frederick III gave the Franciscans the Church of St. Leonard outside the walls of Graz and authorized them to build a monastery there. STRACHWITZ, Sigismund. *500 Jahre Franziskaner der Österreichischen Ordensprovinz*. Wien 1950, p. 98.

47 Graz, Central Library of the Vienna Franciscan Province in Graz, Inkunabel A 60/15, fol. 3v.

him to be papal commissioner and apostolic preacher authorized to preach a crusade in Styria, Carniola (now Slovenia) and the Archdiocese of Salzburg against the “*usurper of the Czech crown and supporter of the Hussites*” George of Poděbrady.⁴⁸ On the basis of the papal authorization, Alexander found some brothers from the order to assist the mission, and they went through the above mentioned provinces achieving “*great success and gain of souls*”. He was vicar of the province twice, became a commissioner to the vicar general of the order in 1484, and served as a guardian several times.⁴⁹ When the Monastery of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Ljubljana (Labaci in Carniola) was transferred from the Conventuals to the Observants, Alexander and ten brothers were sent there on 2 September 1491, and he held the office of guardian there.⁵⁰ He died in the monastery in 1496.⁵¹

Capistrano’s visits to Wrocław, Krakow and other towns in the period 1452–1454 stimulated the rapid development of the Observants in Poland, where they were named Bernardyni after St. Bernardino of Siena. Another follower of John of Capistrano, Alexius de Scepusio (*vulgo Zips, natione Hungarus*) came from the Hungarian County of Spiš (Scepusius in Latin, Zips in German), now mostly in Slovakia, but partly in Poland.⁵² This “*most holy man, who excelled in miracles and strict way of life*”, originally entered a monastery in Wrocław, but later moved to the Monastery of St. Nicholas at Bytom in the Diocese of Krakow. Little information has survived about Alexius de Scepusio, who died in 1489, but the Franciscan Martyrology assigns 27 July to him. In harmony with the faith of the time that a saint’s power (*virtus*) remains present at his grave, crowds of pilgrims flocked to his grave in the chapel of the Holy Cross, and eye witnesses testified to 98 miracles happening there.⁵³ On his journey from Krakow

LACKNER, Franz. *Katalog der mittelalterlichen Handschriften bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts in der Zentralbibliothek der Wiener Franziskanerprovinz in Graz*. Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2006, p. 28. ISBN 978-3-7001-3614-9.

48 HERZOG, Placidus. *Cosmographia Austriaco-Franciscana, seu exacta descriptio provinciae Austriae ordinis minoris S. Francisci strictioris observantiae*. Köln: Haeredes Metternich 1740, p. 86, 131, p. 272–277.

49 Accessible on the internet: https://www.monasterium.net/mom/AT-StiAA/Urkunden/1484_VII_06/charter; https://www.monasterium.net/mom/AT-StaLois/A/StaLois_I.A.141/charter [cit. 2021-04-10]. FUCHS, ref. 43, p. 154.

50 GREIDERER, ref. 45, p. 85, 283, 322, 518.

51 FUCHS, ref. 43, p. 282.

52 WADDING XIII, p. 384. KOPIEC, Jan, Der gottgefällige Alexius von Beuthen — ein unbekannter Heiliger, In KÖHLER, Joachim – KEIL, Gundolf (eds.). *Heilige und Heiligenverehrung in Schlesien: Verhandlungen des IX. Symposiums in Würzburg von 28 bis 30 Oktober 1991*. Sigmaringen: Thoerbecke, 1997, p. 217–221.

53 The memory of Alexius is mentioned in the record of a visitation to the Church of St. Nicholas in Bytom (1598): “*in ambitu monasterii unicum altare habens, ante quod sepultura*

to Wrocław in 1454, Capistrano also stopped in Bytom, and introduced there the radical rules of poverty of the Observant movement, among other things banning the keeping of domestic animals, allowing the brothers only one ass to carry their alms.⁵⁴

In Poland, as in other countries, Capistrano was welcomed with ceremonies, in the case of Krakow on 28 August 1453, and his activities were recorded in town chronicles.⁵⁵ He received 130 members into the Observant Franciscan order in Krakow. At Poznan in 1455, his associate Peter *de Cremnicza* (Kremnica) became the first guardian of a newly established monastery.⁵⁶ According to the records of the order, he was notable for peace and moderation. He was buried in the Monastery of St. Leonard at Graz in 1469.⁵⁷

Capistrano and his companions travelled from Austria to the Kingdom in Hungary in mid May 1455.⁵⁸ The journey was certainly very demanding, considering the state of the roads, the mountainous terrain, and unfavourable weather for people who almost all came from the sunny south. According to the itinerary, between 30 May 1455 and 2 July 1456 they travelled almost 600 km on bad road in all seasons of the year.⁵⁹ From the first days of activity in the Kingdom of Hungary blessing of the sick is not lacking: On 24 May, when Capistrano passed through Pápa, 14 year old Elizabeth daughter of Peter *de Praga* (*in metis Hungarie*), now Praha a village founded by Hussites in the

ostenditur fratris beati Alexii". JAN KOPIEC, Nekropolia książęca w Bytomiu [The Princely Necropolis at Bytom]. In QUIRINI-POPLAWSKA, Danuta – BURKIEWICZ, Łukasz (eds.). *Sacrum w mieście I. Średniowiecze i wczesna epoka nowożytna. Wymiar religijny, kulturalny i społeczny*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM; Akademia Ignatianum, 2017, p. 185. ISBN 978-83-7614-276-0. SANNIG, Bernhard. *Der Cronicken Der drey Orden deß Heiligen Francisci Seraphici (etc.)*, V., lib. 1. Prag: Johann Nicolaus Hampel, 1689, p. 64.

54 The monastery at Bytom originated about 1258 as a Conventual Minorite monastery. TEICHMANN, Lucius. *Die Franziskanerklöster in Mittel- und Ostdeutschland 1223–1993: ehemaliges Ostdeutschland in den Reichsgrenzen von 1938 (Studien zur katholischen Bistums- und Klostergeschichte, 37)*. Leipzig: Benno, 1995, p. 52. ISBN 3895430218.

55 RUSECKI, Innocenty Marek. Z dziejów ojców bernardynów w Polsce 1453–2003 [From the history of the Bernardine Fathers in Poland, 1453–2003]. In *Łódzkie Studia Teologiczne*, Vol. 11–12, 2002–2003, p. 191.

56 LISKE, Xawery – LORKIEWICZ, Antoni (eds.). *Memoriale Ordinis Fratrum Minorum a fr. Ioanne de Komorowo compilatum*. Lwów: Typis Instituti Nationalis Ossolinsciani, 1888, p. 176: "*frater Petrus de Cremnicza, primus gwardianus*".

57 HERZOG, ref. 48, p. 294, 295; GUGGENBICHLER, ref. 44, p. 458; FUCHS, ref. 43, p. 279.

58 HOFER I, p. 527.

59 HELD, Joseph. The defense of Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade) in 1456: a discussion of controversial issues. In VARDY, Steven B. – VARDY, Agnes H. (eds.). *Society in Change: Studies in Honor of Béla K. Király*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, p. 36–37, note 20. ISBN 0-88033-21-X; ANDRIĆ, ref. 9, p. 26.

Lučenec district of Slovakia.⁶⁰ Elizabeth's left leg was shorter than her right, and she had always been lame, but after Capistrano's intervention, she could walk normally. Four days later, Capistrano visited the Benedictine Abbey of Pannonhalma, and in the following days, he participated in an assembly at Raab (Győr), where numerous Hungarian religious and secular dignitaries discussed a campaign against the Turks.⁶¹ In the first half of July, he left Raab to travel to Buda, where the governor of Hungary John Hunyady was expecting him. On the way, he spent a few days with the Archbishop of Esztergom Dionysius *de Szech/Szécsi* (now Rimavská Seč), who did all he could to get Capistrano to stay in Esztergom longer.⁶² The reason was the number of people pouring in from various directions, and especially from the "*terra Matthiae et de partibus Trempiricien.*", where "*heretical perversion*" was gaining strength.⁶³ At the cardinal's request, Hunyady agreed on 15 July that Capistrano could delay his arrival in Buda until at the latest 19 July. Under "*terra Matthiae et de partibus Trempiricien.*", it is possible to understand the territory of present-day Slovakia and the Trenčín region, named after the nobleman Matthew Csak of Trenčín, who took advantage of the feudal anarchy of around 1300 to gain control of a large part of present-day Slovakia, and be recorded in literature as the "*Lord of the Váh and the Tatras*". Sources from the 1380s call the land he had ruled "*Matthew's land*" or "*terra Mathaei*".⁶⁴ The heresy increasing in this region was especially the activity of the Bratriks, former Hussite warriors, who came to Slovakia after the defeat of the Hussites. When Queen Elizabeth took the Czech nobleman John Jiskra of Brandýs into her service in 1440 to defend the claim to the throne of her still underage son Ladislav the Posthumous, the core of his army comprised mercenaries, many of them former Hussite fighters. After Jiskra left Hungary in 1453, many of his armed men remained. Many of them still held originally Hussite ideas and called themselves "Bratriks", that is "Brothers". As John of Turiec stated, in "*Matthew's land*" their "*armed units acted violently, and*

60 DELORME, ref. 8, p. 440, no. 2508.

61 HOFER II, p. 350; WADDING XII, p. 252.

62 HOFER II, p. 354; WADDING XII, p. 259n.; DVOŘÁKOVÁ, Daniela. Ostrihomský arcibiskup Dionýz zo Seče, významný prelát, politik a diplomat 15. storočia [Dionysius Szécsi Archbishop of Esztergom, an important prelate, politician and diplomat of the 15th century]. In *Studia Historica Nitriensia*, 2020, Vol. 24, Nr. 2, p. 294–307.

63 WADDING VI, p. 156; WADDING XII, p. 259.

64 We encounter territorial definition of the region now forming Slovakia in the framework of the Kingdom of Hungary already in the oldest surviving chronicles, and from the 14th century also in diplomatic sources (*Nitriensis territorium*, *Windeschen landen*, *partes superiores*, *terra Mathei* etc.). TIHÁNYIOVÁ, Monika. Terra Mathei. In LETZ, Róbert a kol. (eds.). *Slovenské územie v historickom kontexte*. Martin: Matica slovenská, 2017, p. 67, 69. ISBN 9788081281914.

*gained control of many places by treachery, armed force or new construction.*⁶⁵ The Hussites and after them the Bratrik armed groups in Slovakia founded their operating centres named by the Biblical name “Tábor” or garrison. Although Czechs formed the core of the Bratriks, they were later joined by Poles, Austrians and men from the Kingdom of Hungary. The Bratriks are often described as “outlaws” because they occupied various castles and fortresses, from which they undertook raids, burning villages and looting monasteries.⁶⁶ We also find an echo of these events in the collection of Capistrano’s miracles: The butcher Damian de villa Berneceze, 40 miles from Ilok,⁶⁷ testified under oath that he and others were captured and imprisoned by “*the faith-breaking destroyers and plunderers of kingdoms from Bohemia*” in Čabrad’ Castle (castrum Chabrad).⁶⁸ They bound them with “*the heaviest and most painful shackles*”, tortured them like “*cruel beasts*” to extract money from them. While he and his companion were suffering, Damian “*did not stop appealing for help from the Lord*”, vowing that if he and his companion were freed thanks to the merits of John of Capistrano, he would visit Capistrano’s grave. And behold, one day when they were praying, their shackles broke and loosened like “*straw hemp*”. They succeeded with a “*big jump*” in escaping from the castle and the hands of their enemies. After gaining his freedom, Damian “*entirely emaciated after great suffering*” travelled a great distance to the grave of the saint, where he gave his testimony in November 1461. The texts about miracles show that in this period, saints were already seen, theologically “correctly” as mediators between man and God, and not as givers of grace from their own power. Just as it was not possible in the hierarchical thought of the Middle Ages to imagine that a person of low estate could request something from the monarch, an individual could not direct his prayer directly to the highest heavenly ruler, but was dependant on the intercession of a saint.⁶⁹ Not only Capistrano, but also the Observants in the monasteries he founded or reformed were expected to contribute to the conversion of heretics and the

65 THUROCZ, ref. 25, p. 543, 563.

66 ŠPIRKO, Jozef. *Husiti, jiskrovci a bratříci v dejinách Spiša (1431 – 1462)* [Hussites, Jiskra’s men and Bratriks in the history of Spiš (1431–1462)]. LEVOČA: Spišský dejepisný spolok, 1937, p. 80; POLLA Belo – SLIVKA, Michal. Husiti, Jiskrovci a bratříci na východnom Slovensku vo svetle archeologického bádania [Hussites, Jiskra’s men and Bratriks in eastern Slovakia in the light of archaeological research]. In *Archaeologia historica*, 5, 1980, p. 69–103.

67 Roma, Collegio San Isidoro, Cod. 1/6, fol. 158r. According to ANDRIČ, ref. 9, p. 409 it could be Prenčov in Slovakia, but Bernecebaráti now in Hungary should also be taken into account, although neither of these localities is about 40 miles from Ilok.

68 On the occupation of Čabrad’ by the Bratriks see MALINIÁK, Pavol. *Čabradské panstvo v stredoveku* [The Lordship of Čabrad’ in the Middle Ages]. Banská Bystrica: Belianum – Univerzita Mateja Bela, Filozofická fakulta, 2019, p. 30n. ISBN 978-80-557-1625-1.

69 For further details see: WITTMER-BUSCH – RENDTEL, ref. 34, p. 17.

defence of the kingdom against Ottoman expansion. Secular and ecclesiastical dignitaries knew that Franciscans were highly mobile, which made them ideal not only for pastoral work, but also for missionary activity among Cumans, Hussites, schismatics, Bogomils, and in places where Christians were threatened by the Turks, that is especially in peripheral frontier regions. In territories where the majority of people were pagan or of other religions, vicariates with specific missionary assignments were established, for example, the Bosnian Vicariate founded in 1340.⁷⁰ The Observants representing the stricter branch of the reformists in the Franciscan order had great popularity not only as a result of strict observance of the vow of poverty or intensive preaching and pastoral activity, but also for their engagement in promoting crusades against the Ottomans and conversion of people from other religions. Support from the local nobility was important for the expansion of the Observant Franciscans. In the territory of present day Slovakia, it is possible to mention the Rozgonyis founders of the monastery at Vranov nad Topľou, the Drugeths at Humenné, the Perényis at Filákov, the Ujlakis in Hlohovec, the Okolicsanyis in Okoličné, or the Soós – patrons of the monasteries at Solivar and at Cejkov in the district of Trebišov.⁷¹ Nicholas Ujlaki Duke of Transylvania and later King of Bosnia (1471–1477) was the Hungarian dignitary most intensively connected with Capistrano. Nicholas appears in history with the predicate Ujlak derived from his ancestral lordship of Ilok (*Wylak*), or according to the name of one of his other estates, Hlohovec, in the Latin version *de Galgocz* and in German *Freistadt*, from which he becomes Frištacký especially in medieval Czech and Polish chronicles. That the inclination went both ways is shown by the fact that after the victory at Belgrade, Capistrano wrote in a letter to Pope Calixtus III (17 August 1456 from Slankamen) that after the death of John Hunyady, Nicholas was the only serious candidate for the succession as a man of praise-worthy qualities, from whom the country had great expectations.⁷²

70 HLAVÁČEK, Petr. *Čeští františkáni na přelomu středověku a novověku* [The Czech Franciscans during the transition from medieval to early modern]. Praha: Academia 2005, p. 119. ISBN 80-200-1212-5; HLAVÁČEK, Petr. Františkáni a jejich působení na periferiích Evropy/křesťanstva v pozdním středověku [The Franciscans and their activities on the peripheries of Europe or Christendom in the Late Middle Ages]. In BENEŠ, Petr Regalát – HLAVÁČEK, Petr – POSPÍŠIL, Ctirad Václav (eds.). *Františkánství v kontaktech s jiným a cizím*. Praha: Filozofická fakulta UK v Praze 2009, s. 127n. ISBN 9788073082833. MIXSON, James D. – ROEST, Bert (eds.). *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015, 436 p. ISBN 978-90-04-22627-2.

71 KARÁCSONYI János. *Szent Ferencz rendjének története Magyarországon 1711-ig* [The History of the Order of St. Francis in Hungary until 1711], Tom. II. Budapest, 1924, p. 34–35.

72 FEJÉR, György. *Genus, incunabula et virtus Joannis Corvini de Hunyad, regni Hungariae gubernatoris : argumentis criticis illustrata*. Budae: Typis Typogr. Regiae Universitatis Hungaricae, 1844, p. 227–228, no. 79.

Ujlaki founded Observant monasteries in his four most important lordships: Ilok, Várpalota, Hlohovec and Orahovica. Apart from religious motives, the foundation of monasteries played a part in the effort to eliminate the influence of Hussite ideas. Nicholas Ujlaki was engaged in struggle against the Bratriks not only in his Lordship of Hlohovec, but also in eastern Slovakia.⁷³

It was undoubtedly thanks to Ujlaki and his circle of familiares that the cult of Capistrano was very popular in Hlohovec and its surroundings. We also find a reflection in the sources. When a separate vicariate was established for the Czech Lands in 1469, Peter from Hlohovec a Franciscan and Master of Liberal Arts became the vicar of the province, a position he held until 1471. He preached against the heretics in Brno and elsewhere in Moravia.⁷⁴ The widow of Peter Soky from near Hlohovec (*prope Galgocz*) testified to a commission for recording miracles that her sight had been restored in Buda on the intercession of Capistrano. She also testified to witnessing the saint stopping rain while he was preaching to a large crowd in Buda.⁷⁵ As far as we know, Capistrano is supposed to have stopped rain twice: at the town of Morbegno in Lombardy and at Győr, Hungary, where he stayed in June and July 1455, so although the widow did not mention it, the event she mentioned apparently concerned Győr.⁷⁶

Apart from his personal presence, people wanted to own garments or other objects directly used or created by the saint – so-called secondary relics. Margaret

73 Roma, Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Registra Supplicationum, Vol. 477, fol. 115rv (1455-01-09): Nicholas Ujlaki asked the Pope for permission to establish an Observant Franciscan monastery at the Chapel of All Saints in Hlohovec, a region of “*scismaticorum et usistarum*”. On Ujlaki see FEDELES, Tamás. *Galgóc az Újlaki éraban (1349 – 1524)* [Hlohovec in the era of the Újlakis (1349–1524)]. In BÁRÁNY, Attila – PAPP, Klára – SZÁLKAI, Tamás (eds.). *Debrecen város 650 éves. Várostörténeti tanulmányok. (Speculum Historiae Debreceniense, 7)*. Debrecen: Alföldi Nyomda Zrt. Méliusz Műhelye, 2011, p. 195–222. ISBN 978-963-473-463-5. FEDELES, Tamás. *Bosniae [...] rex [...] apostolorum limina visit. Die Romwallfahrt von Nikolaus Újlaki im Jahre 1475*. In *Ungarn Jahrbuch*, Vol. 31, 2011–2013, p. 99–117.

74 Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [The National Archives of Hungary], Diplomatikai Levéltár/Diplomatikai Fényképgyűjtemény [Photo Collection of Medieval Chartres] (hereinafter MNL OL DL/DF), MNL OL DL 16820 (1469-03-17) The Franciscan Peter from Hlohovec granted an indulgence certificate to Imrich de Dolcz (now Dolaț in Romania) in return for contributing to the struggle against heresy. HLAVÁČEK, *Čeští františkáni*, ref. 70, p. 60, 90. Daniel from Prievidza and Sigismund from Veľké Bielice (now a part of the town of Partizánske) from the Nitra region were active in the Observant monastery at Znojmo in the 1480s, MINAŘÍK, Klemens. *Vikáři české františkánské provincie od r. 1451 až do r. 1517* [Vicars of the Czech Franciscan Province from 1451 to 1517]. In *Sborník Historického kroužku*, Vol. 15, Nr. 3–4, 1914, p. 211, 213, 214, 216. MINAŘÍK, Klemens. *Vikáři české františkánské provincie od r. 1451 až do r. 1517*. In *Sborník Historického kroužku*, Vol. 16, Nr. 1, 1915, p. 2–3.

75 Roma, Collegio di San Isidoro, Ms.1/6, fol. 67; ANDRIĆ, ref. 9, p. 222, note 63.

76 ANDRIĆ, ref. 9, p. 209.

wife of Silvester *de Thorna* of Turňa nad Bodvou Castle in eastern Slovakia sent a letter to Capistrano on 29 March 1456,⁷⁷ pleading for him to pray for her and send her a piece of his belt (*cingulum*) in order to use it as an aid for women in childbirth. Although Margaret did not write directly about her pregnancy, it is possible to suppose that this was the purpose of the part of a *cingulum*.⁷⁸ In the Middle Ages, special power was attributed to the belt called a *cingulum* that bound the habits of priests and religious who had a reputation for sanctity. A very widespread custom was for pregnant women and mothers to borrow the belt or other part of the clothing worn by a priest during the ordination. Women used such belts or other relics sewn into their birth belts to make childbirth easier and less painful.⁷⁹ It is clear that the de Thorna family cultivated great favour towards Capistrano and the Observants. Margaret's step-son Stephen de Thorna "*seeing the rich fruit the Observant brothers brought in the Kingdom of Hungary*", both by the example of their lives and their continual preaching activity, decided to establish an Observant monastery in his lordship in 1461.⁸⁰

Capistrano and his companions produced certificates of acceptance into the spiritual brotherhood of the Franciscans, the so-called confraternity letters (germ. *Bruderschaftsbriege, Filiationsbriege*), for supporters of the Franciscans' work. In this way, benefactors usually with their families and church institutions were brought into the community of the order, and given a share of its spiritual benefits. According to the text of the certificates, recipients shared in the spiritual benefits flowing from Holy Mass, prayers, good works, fasts, prayers of the canonical hours, pilgrimages, sermons, meditations, contemplations and other blessed activities of the brothers and sisters of the Order of St. Francis and the members of the Franciscan Third Order.⁸¹ The conclusion of the certificate

77 PETTKÓ, ref. 5, p. 197, no. 46.

78 Margaret was Silvester's new wife after the death of his previous wife Susannah. See e.g. MNL OL DL 81199 (1455-03-07).

79 MAGYARY-KOSSA, Gyula. *Magyar orvosi emlékek: értekezések a magyar orvostörténelem köréből* [Hungarian Medical Records: Treatises on Hungarian Medical History], Vol. II. Budapest: Magyar Orvosi Könyvkiadó Társulat, 1929, p. 9–10.

80 POU Y MARTÍ, Ioseph M. (ed.). *Bullarium Franciscanum*, Tom. 2, 1455–1471. Ad Claras Aquae (Quaracchi) prope Florentiam: ex typographia Collegii s. Bonaventurae, 1939, Nr. 923. The Lordship of Turňa did not escape looting by the Bratriks (1453), but they did not succeed in capturing Turňa Castle. TIHANYIOVÁ, Monika. Turňa. In DVOŘÁKOVÁ, Daniela (ed.). *Stredoveké hrady na Slovensku: život, kultúra, spoločnosť* [Medieval castles in Slovakia: life, culture, society]. Bratislava: Veda: Historický ústav SAV, 2017, p. 412. ISBN 9788022416085.

81 For example, MNL OL DL 14980. On the importance of confraternities in late medieval piety on the basis of the rich Hungarian sources see the precise monograph giving new and unburdened interpretations: CEVINS, Marie-Madeleine de. *Confraternity, Mendicant Orders, and Salvation in the Middle Ages The Contribution of the Hungarian Sources (c.1270–c. 1530)*.

of acceptance into the confraternity usually included a clause concerning the death of the named persons. If the recipient of the certificate informed a chapter of the order about the death of a family member, they have the privilege of holding services like those for dead members of the order. These certificates had an additional value lying in the signature from Capistrano's own hand, making them secondary relics to be carefully preserved by families. This is clear from a letter from the Count of Novohrad and Hont counties Ladislav Szécsényi to Capistrano from 16 July 1454 thanking him for a certificate of brotherhood, and begging him to send one signed with his own hand. He had learnt that other certificates contained his "cyrographum", and he is worried that in the document he got it is missing.⁸² According to the ideas of the time, all bodily or material remains of the saint, that is relics, contained his saving or healing power, so that the saint is present in them. In this case, the saint was embodied in his signature.

On 1 December 1453 while staying in Krakow, Capistrano produced a certificate of brotherhood for the parish priest Christian and members of the Fraternity of the Mother of Mercy at the church of St. Aegidius in Bardejov.⁸³ Father Christian was head of the fraternity and he used Capistrano's presence in Krakow in an effort to propagate it. We do not know whether Christian went to Poland in person, or made contact in a different way, but this act certainly led to a growth in the number of members of the fraternity and its later popularity. On 14 March 1454, while still in Krakow, Capistrano also accepted into the confraternity of the order the noblemen Sigismund of *Chychyr* (Čičarovce) and John of *Cheb* (Žbince) with their wives, sons and daughters.⁸⁴ An interesting document of these associated families from the neighbouring villages of Čičarovce and Žbince in eastern Slovakia also testifying to their religiosity is their joint complaint from 1447 against Achacius from Čop, now in Ukraine, into whose safekeeping they had put all their gold and silver objects "*in these troubled times*", apparently because of the Bratriks in eastern Slovakia. The named objects include a cross of pure gold and a cross of gilded silver, one of them containing a piece of

Turnhout: Brepols, 2018, p. xvii, 375. ISBN978-2-5035-7871-2.

82 PETTKÓ, ref. 5, p. 171–172, no. 13; CEVINS, Marie-Madeleine de: Le rayonnement des Franciscains de l'Observance en Hongrie à l'aune des entrées dans la confraternité de l'Ordre (1450–1530). In *Annual of the Institute of History, University of Szeged*, Vol. 15, 2017, p. 113.

83 Bardejov, State Archives in Prešov, Bardejov Branch, Collection of the Bardejov town authorities, nr. 720; MNL OL DF 213409; BÖLCSKEY, ref. 5, III, Nr. 301; HOFER, ref. 6, p. 335, Nr. 61.

84 MNL OL DL 31660. On Capistrano in Krakow STARZYŃSKI, Marcin. Il re, il vescovo ed il predicatore. Giovanni da Capestrano a Cracovia 1453–1454. In *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, Vol. 104, 2011, p. 517 he identifies the locality Cheb as Cselej – Čel'ovce, but in medieval sources it occurs under the name Chel, similarly HOFER, ref. 6, p. 335, Nr. 63 "Johann Csély".

the Holy Cross (*de lignis vivificae crucis in se habentem*). However, Achacius refused to give these objects back.⁸⁵ Sigismund of Čičarovce and John of Žbince were familiares of Ladislav of Palóczi (Pavlovce nad Uhom), and their close regional relations were also reflected in the spiritual sphere.⁸⁶ At a time when they were castellans of Ujhely Castle (now Sátoraljaújhely in Hungary) belonging to Ladislav of Palóczi, they supported the Pauline Order, with Sigismund of Čičarovce also joining the Pauline Confraternity in 1448.⁸⁷ Ladislav of Palóczi was also a great supporter of the Observant Franciscan Order. In 1448, he already asked the Papal Legate Cardinal John Juan Carvajal for permission to transfer the monastery in Sárospatak, a small town belonging to his family, from the Conventuals to the Observants.⁸⁸

On 7 August 1455, during his stay in Buda, Capistrano accepted into the confraternity the nobleman George Loranth's son (*egregio viro strenuoque militi Georgio Loranth*), his wife Anna and their children: John with wife Margaret, Thomas, Tobias, Michael, Catherine, Elizabeth and other relations.⁸⁹ In literature and published texts of certificates of brotherhood George Loranth's son is usually incorrectly named "Joranth", but his identification is helped by property documentation giving identical names for George's wife and children.⁹⁰ They were members of the Ratold family, and specifically of the branch that became lords of Širkovce (*de Serke*) in the Gemer region, also known as the Lorántffy family. The Lorántffys lived in Širkovce Castle, but for a long time it fell into the hands of the Bratriks, so they had to live at Hodejov, now in the district of Rimavská Sobota.⁹¹ On the same day as the certificate for George Loranth's son, Capistran also produced a certificate of brotherhood for Paul *de Balahth* or *Balathy*, his wife Margaret and children Nicholas, Thomas, Elizabeth, Catherine

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- 85 The state judge Ladislav Palóczi ordered the investigation of this complaint at the Leles Convent. MNL OL DL 31553 (1447-02-20).
- 86 ENGEL Pál. *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1301–1457* [Secular Archontology of Hungary 1301–1457], Vol. 1–2. Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 1996, p. 220, 451, 516. ISBN 963-8312-43-2.
- 87 MNL OL DL 31573 (1448-05-14), MNL OL DL 14453 (1451-02-09).
- 88 ERDÉLYI, Gabriella. *A Körmendi kolostorper jegyzőkönyve (1517–1518). X. Leó pápa, Bakócz bíboros, az ágostonosok és az obszerváns ferencesek vitája / The Register of a Convent Controversy (1517–1518). Pope Leo X, Cardinal Bakócz, the Augustinians, and the Observant Franciscans in contest*. Budapest; Rome: Research Institute of Church History at P. Pázmány Catholic University, 2006, p. XXVI. ISBN 9639206083; MNL OL DF 275504.
- 89 MNL OL DL 14980; CEVINS, ref. 81, p. 282–283, 313, 321: "Georgius Joranth".
- 90 For example MNL OL DL 14446 (1451-01-13).
- 91 TIHÁNYIOVÁ, Monika. Podoby života na hradoch stredovekého Gemera [Ways of life in castles of medieval Gemer]. In DVORÁKOVÁ, Daniela (ed.). *Stredoveké hrady na Slovensku: život, kultúra, spoločnosť*. Bratislava: Veda: Historický ústav SAV, 2017, p. 217. ISBN 9788022416085.

and Affra.⁹² This also involved a closely connected lineages. George Loranth's son granted Paul de Balahth property at Hostice (*Gezthethe*) and Gortva (*Kisfalud*) in the lordship of Hodejov Castle in return for many faithful services.⁹³ Albert son of Bán Dionysius of Lučenec (*Losonczy*) also corresponded with Capistrano. He also had property in Gemer and his wife Hedviga was daughter of the above mentioned Ladislav Szécsényi. It is not surprising that the cult of St. John of Capistrano spread intensively in that region.⁹⁴

It is clear that the founders of monasteries and supporters of the Franciscan Order from the ranks of the aristocracy combined family ties with religious, political and cultural interests. As patrons, they financed the building, equipping and maintenance of monasteries, and they influenced their artistic character. Since the founders of new monasteries usually planned that they and their families would be buried in them, they usually engaged the highest quality masters from the fields of architecture, sculpture and painting for the artistic work. The proclaimed Franciscan simplicity and poverty found themselves in contrast to the art work, and Observant churches gradually became comparable to those of the Conventuals, thanks to the artistic patronage of the founders.⁹⁵ Visualization of the cult of St. Bernardino of Siena, John of Capistrano and Franciscan ideas also appeared in frescoes and altar paintings in our territory. For example, we find St. Bernardino of Siena holding a tablet with the trigram on the retable of the high altar at Matejovce from after 1450, in the Parish Church of St. James at Levoča from 1493, and on the retable of a portable altar from 1515 in the Church of St. Francis at Hervartov near Bardejov. We find the trigram alone on a wooden pulpit at Bobrovce and on 15th century stalls at Štítnik, Poniky and elsewhere.⁹⁶ Restoration work is being done at present on Late Gothic wall paintings from the end of the 15th century in the Church of St. Peter of Alcantara (originally St. Mary Queen of the Angels) at Okoličné in Liptov, (re)discovered in 2018. In the Middle Ages, the Observant monastery at Okoličné was the largest religious building in the County of Liptov, and its church is one of the most impressive Late Gothic buildings in the whole of Slovakia. Four fields of the star vault of the central nave contain the Madonna in the Sun (the so-called Assumpta), the

92 MNL OL DF 275509.

93 MNL OL DL 38852 (1453-11-21), 38853 (1453-11-23).

94 PETTKÓ, ref. 5, (1455-10-07), p. 185, Nr. 31.

95 HLAVÁČEK, *Čeští františkáni*, ref. 70, p. 32n.; CHLÍBEC, ref. 20, p. 109.

96 CSÁNKY, Miklós. *A szepesi és sárosi táblaképfestészet 1460-ig* [Panel Painting before the 1460s in Szepes and Sáros Counties]. Budapest: Athenaeum, 1938, p. 13; BADAČ, Peter. Pulpit z Bobrovca, Stallum v Štítniku [The pulpit from Bobrovce, the stalls at Štítnik]. In BURAN, Dušan (ed.). *Gotika. Dejiny slovenského výtvarného umenia*. Bratislava: Slovart, 2003, p. 768–769. ISBN 808059080x.

trigram surrounded by solar rays, the stigmatization of St. Francis of Assisi, and the “typical” Franciscan saints: St. Bonaventure, St. Bernardino of Siena, Bishop Louis of Toulouse and obviously also St. John of Capistrano as the following research clarifies.⁹⁷

John of Capistrano was already venerated by many during his life, so it is not surprising that after his death on 23 October 1456, his resting place in the Observant monastery church at Ilok became a place of pilgrimage. Duke Nicholas Ujlaki was a zealous spreader of the Capistrano’s cult and initiator of his canonization process. These efforts were continued by Nicholas’ son Laurence.⁹⁸ However, King Mathias Corvinus, his mother Elizabeth, the Zápoľský family and others also engaged intensively in the question of canonization.⁹⁹ Nicholas Ujlaki described his relationship with Capistrano in a letter to the Italian princes of 30 March 1460, beginning with a paraphrase of St. Jerome’s Letter to Paula: “*If all the limbs of my body were changed into tongues,*” he still would not be able to describe the sanctity of the life or the perfection of the glory of the Most Holy John of Capistrano. Even in old age, John of Capistrano worked tirelessly for the Catholic faith, with his preaching he changed the thinking of the godless, bringing a multitude of schismatics to the united faith, with the help of the governor John Hunyady, he freed Christendom from the hands of the pagans, and so on.¹⁰⁰ The letter is interwoven with words about Ujlaki’s devotion and veneration towards Capistrano, which represented a tie of spiritual love. Ujlaki did not fail to mention miracles, an important element in a canonization process: “*We also heard how our most glorious king said before many barons and noblemen, that he was freed from prison and elected king after making a vow to this most blessed Father. Apart from this, we personally have repeatedly experienced the grace of this most blessed Father: When we suffered very strong dizziness of the head, we wrapped it in cloth used by this same Man of God and*

97 The original high altar, from which fragments survive, is an important Late Gothic work by the Master of Okoličné painter and the sculptor Master Paul of Levoča. BURAN, Dušan (ed.). *Majster z Okoličného a gotické umenie Spiša okolo roku 1500* [The Master of Okoličné and Gothic art in Spiš around 1500]. Bratislava: Slovenská národná galéria, 2017, 176 p. ISBN 978-80-8059-207-3.

98 CHIAPPINI, Aniceto. *Reliquie letterarie capestranesi : storia, codici, carte, documenti*. Aquila: Officina grafiche Vecchioni, 1927, p. 47 (1500-08-16).

99 WADDING XIV, p. 72; MIRCSE, János. *Adalék Capistránói Sz. János életéhez* [Supplement to the life of John of Capistrano]. Esztergom: Horák Egyéd, 1870, p. 41n.

100 MIRCSE, ref. 99, p. 37. Hieronymus, Epistulae, 4, 108, 1: Si cuncta corporis mei membra verterentur in linguas, et omnes artus humana voce resonarent, nihil dignum sanctae ac venerabilis Paulae virtutibus dicerem. CAIN, Andrew (ed.). *Jerome’s Epitaph on Paula. A Commentary on the Epitaphium Sanctae Paulae*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 99. ISBN 978-0199672608.

the illness entirely vanished."¹⁰¹ (He also turned to the events of March 1457, when the future King Mathias Corvinus and his older brother Ladislav were captured by King Ladislav the Posthumous. Ladislav Hunyady was executed for killing Ulrich of Celje, while Corvinus, interned in Prague, was freed after King Ladislav's early death, and elected king in January 1458.) However, it is also necessary to take into account secular motives for Ujlaki's efforts to get Capistrano canonized. The relics of a well-known saint increased the prestige of a ruler and his residence, so that thanks to frequent pilgrimages, Ujlaki's seat at Ilok also developed economically, as Ujlaki wrote in his above-mentioned letter: "*people stream to his most holy grave from all directions, as if it was the grave of an apostle*". When at the end of his life, already as King of Bosnia, Ujlaki went to Rome in the jubilee year 1475, one of his motives was to push for the canonization of Capistrano.

In spite of this, we can see today that Ujlaki and others were various European countries did not achieve their desired aim of canonization. Capistrano was beatified only in 1622 and canonized in 1690. The location of the saint's remains is unknown today. In the disturbed times of 1526, his brother Franciscans removed them and hid them in an unknown place.

John of Capistrano's reputation went before him. In all the countries he visited, people wanted to get to know him, to hear his sermons, to be encouraged in the offensive against the Turks, to be healed of illnesses of various kinds, to receive certificates of brotherhood with the Franciscan Order, or inspired by his charisma to join Observant monasteries themselves. The Kingdom of Hungary and the part of it that now forms Slovakia were no exceptions to this.

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101 The mention of being freed from captivity is mentioned in two letters from Corvinus to the Pope and cardinals, MIRCSE, ref. 99, p. 43–45.