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The Marian Sodalties of St. Ignatius Church in Prague. Contribution to the understanding of the original appearance of the Chapel of Marian Sodalties

ANNOTATION

Remarkable space above the sacristy in the church of St. Ignatius, interpreted in the Baroque period as an order oratory, became a suitable place for a common liturgy of renewed activity of The Marian sodality of men and youth at this church. The chapel was newly modified for this purpose by decorating and a setting in a gallery with a staircase together with a new main altar decorated by paintings and sculpture. The chapel was consecrated on the 15th May 1904. Sometime after 1990 the altar was dismantled and only few fragments are preserved today. The author aims at the reconstruction of the original appearance of the altar based on sources, literature, historic photo documentation and the preserved parts, and to contribute to coherent recognition of the original movable equipment of the chapel (mainly the banners and other art decoration) from the turn of the 20th century with a relation to historically documented Marian sodalties acting in this liturgical space.

SUMMARY

Shortly after the church of St. Ignatius was returned to the Society of Jesus (1866) activity of laic Catholic fellowships, Marian Sodalties within the Jesuits order was gradually renewed in the 4th quarter of the 19th century. The first documented sodality at St. Ignatius was renewed in 1880 as Marian Sodality of men and youth (Marian congregation) following the legacy of St. Edmund Campion and The Marian Sodality of Immaculate Conception of Virgin Mary at the church of St. Clement in Old Town of Prague from 1575. Afterwards the Marian Sodality of women teachers was founded (1893), then Czech senior academics (1895), Sodality of girls (1901), of ladies (1909), priests, students and junior academics (all until the end of the 1st decade of the 20th century). At the turn of the century St. Ignatius church quickly became a key site for common liturgy of Marian sodalties within the Jesuits order in Prague. Every sodality required to use its own chapel with an altar and appropriate liturgical furnishing. After several replacements the Marian Sodality of men and young men selected in 1904, the year of an important Marian jubilee, the space of the former order oratory above the sacristy at the south side of the church presbytery, which was adapted to their needs. The Marian Sodality chapel, consecrated on the 15th May 1904 was provided with new Neo-baroque paintings, a gallery with a staircase and mainly with new, Neo-Romanesque furniture dominated by an altar decorated with paintings and statues. An organ with a pneumatic system, financed by the Magistrate and gifts by the members of the sodalties, was installed into the chapel in 1909 as the final modification. The altar has not survived and has been reconstructed from photographic and literature evidence, together with few fragments preserved at the church attic. The altar of Neo-Romanesque character composed of an altar stone with a recumbent figure of St. John of Nepomuk dating from the 2nd half of the 18th century. The predella was painted with motives of the four Evangelists. The main altar painting traditionally depicted Virgin Mary Immaculata by an unidentified painter Múler (or Müller). A statue of St. Stanislav Kostka was set on the left side of the altar and one of St. Jan Sarkander on the right side. On cantilevers on the sides of the altar, busts of St. Wenceslaus and St. Ludmila, were situated in the 1940s. Banners, also an important part of the movable furnishing of Marian Sodalties, were used in liturgical ceremonial parades and processions. Altogether five historic banners including accessories (original ribbons, poles, sodality sashes and carry belts for banner pole bearers) are preserved in the Sodality chapel (belonging to the Marian Sodality of men and youth, Marian Sodalties of women teachers and girls, Sodality of ladies, Sodality of students). The banners are reversible with embroidery stitched on a monochromatic underlying fabric without pattern. In the central area of each banner there is an oval medallion with the figural motif of a saint, the patron of the sodality. The origins of banners go back to the first three decades of the 20th century. Regarding the relation of the altar of the Marian Sodality chapel at St. Ignatius to the altar of the Marian Sodality of youth at the basilica of Resurrection of Virgin Mary and of St. Cyril and Methodius at Velehrad conformity can be seen only in the elementary historic style of the morphology of both items despite the mutual relation and documented contact of both sodalties and despite the activity of identical clergymen in the period around the turn of the 20th century, i.e. the period of both altars origin. Art decoration of the Sodality chapel at St. Ignatius, original form of the altar and the preserved assemblage of banners, contribute with a great deal to the

knowledge of neglected, lesser known and underrated, social aspects of the period and the liturgy and visual expression of sodalities in Prague before the mid 20th century.

Fig. 1. Prague 2-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. General view into the chapel of the Marian Sodalities.

Fig. 2. Prague 2-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Groundplan of the church with the chapel of the Marian Sodalities highlighted. Passport SÚRPMO of St. Ignatius' church in Prague-New Town from 1976. Copy NPÚ ÚOP in the Capital of Prague.

Fig. 3. Prague 2-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Stained glass window in the east front of the chapel of the Marian Sodalities (editing for print 2015).

Fig. 4. Prague 2-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Memorial plaque at the staircase in front of the entrance into the chapel of the Marian Sodalities.

Fig. 5. Prague 2-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. View of the east wall of the chapel of the Marian Sodalities with the original form of the altar (black&white photo from 1946-1947 donated by Ing. Věnceslava Škáblová).

Fig. 6. Prague 2-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. View of the east wall of the chapel of the Marian Sodalities with the altar (black&white photo, archive of NPÚ ÚOP in the Capital of Prague, inv. no. 470 A, state: III.1990).

Fig. 7. Prague 2-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Photograph of the painting of Virgin Mary Immaculata on the altar in the chapel of the Marian Sodalities. In: sine 1908–1935, 26, 1933/7–8, 108 (photo Moravian Land Library in Brno, sign. 3-0270.384).

Fig. 8. Prague-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Bust of St. Ludmila.

Fig. 9. Prague-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Bust of St. Wenceslaus.

Fig. 10. Prague-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. General view of the organ prospect.

Fig. 11. Prague-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Obverse of the banner of the Marian congregation with the depiction of St. John of Nepomuk from 1911.

Fig. 12. Prague-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Detail of the reverse of the banner of the Marian congregation with the depiction of St. Edmund Campion from 1911.

Fig. 13. Prague-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Detail of the obverse of the banner of the Marian congregation with the depiction of St. Edmund Campion with Angel from 1933.

Fig. 14. Prague-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Reverse of the banner of the Marian congregation with the depiction of St. John of Nepomuk from 1933.

Fig. 15. Prague-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Ribbon to the banner of the Marian congregation probably from 1933.

Fig. 16. Prague-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Obverse of the banner of the Marian Sodality of female teachers and girls with the depiction of Virgin Mary from 1935.

Fig. 17. Prague-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Detail of the obverse of the banner of the Marian Sodality of ladies with the depiction of St. Ludmila from 1935.

Fig. 18. Prague-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Reverse of the banner of the Marian Sodality of ladies with the depiction of Virgin Mary.

Fig. 19. Prague-New Town, church of St. Ignatius. Ribbon to the banner of the Marian Sodality of ladies from 1935.

Fig. 20. Velehrad, basilica of The Assumption of Virgin Mary and of St. Cyril and Methodius. Altar of the chapel of Marian Sodalities at the west wall of the oratory, situated along the north side of the presbytery.

Translated by Patrick and Linda Foster