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The Renewal of the Franciscan Education in the 20th century in Hungary

Thesis

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Keywords: Franciscan order, education, public education, the relation of state and church, school reform, middle class, nationalisation, starting and restarting, types of school, boarding school, state controll, religious upbringing, Christian values, stressed educational fields.

Reason for the choice of subject

A person's life who is brought up in a Christian family unwittingly is influenced by those teachings which come from Jesus Christ. The influence of the Christian faith and its value system becomes even stronger, when the child pursues his school studies in schools with a spirituality like this. Although it is not possible to make generalizations, but this was so once and that is how it is today. My personal experience has played a big role in the choice of subject of the doctoral treatise, since I went to a Franciscan high school, into a monastic school whose members have been present for more hundred years in the history of our homeland. Despite of their long past, today it is still timely to know what kind of principles, circumstances they used, and how successfully their work was on this area.

The presence of the Christianity is equal to the statehood of Hungary, the education was linked tightly to the Christian Churches through more hundred years. Long centuries in the Hungarian upbringing story passed in such a way that the schools with a different character did not get organized into the uniform organization expanding onto the whole country. Before Charles the III.'s reign the schools were integrated into the church organization and constituted the parts of the church hierarchy.¹

The schools' development was heavily influenced by the country's state in the XVI. and the XVII. centuries.² Schools led by the monks at this time were already functioning at their height.³

The school became rather a political affair at the time of the enlightened absolutism. Charles the III. already recognised its significance, and he ordered a royal supervisory right above schools. The educational order drawn up by József Ürményi and his companion brought a radical change in the public education, and it can be connected to Maria Theresa's name.⁴

The Franciscans maintained a number of high schools in the centuries of early new age, they took over for example the dissolved high schools of the Jesuit order. The enlightenment, as a result of

¹ Balint Homan - Julius Szekfű: Hungarian History Volume IV. Budapest, 1935. p.380. and p.529.

² Imre Gonda - Emil Niederhauser: The Habsburgs, Budapest, 1998. p.49.

³ Andrew Benedict - Julius Field-Eve Tornyosi Nagy: Public education system and educational organizations Budapest, 2009. p.53.

⁴ Balint Homan - Julius Szekfű: Volume IV. Budapest, 1935. p.530.

the new ideas and as the consequence of the growing state intervention, they started to loose their schools gradually. In the beginning of the XX. century there is no school in their hands, but onto the century's end the order manages to get two high schools and a primary school. In the present doctoral treatise we recognise a monastic school's life outlining its educational and ecclesiastical political background in the selected eras.

The structure and the results of the treatise

It is necessary to examine the monastic order through which school I wish to negotiate the Hungarian monastic education in the first half of the XX. century. We will see the construction of the Franciscan order, its settling, then its working class in the area of the Hungarian Kingdom. The Franciscan identity and the education of the previous centuries serve as a good example to recognise the examined eras and the monastic education in Esztergom.

The question may be brought up contemplating the construction of the treatise, for what I wish to present these two periods. The reason is the following: the most considerable Franciscan school of the XX. century is the one in Esztergom, the start of which did not take the order a little effort. I do not think of the material conditions primarily here. Opening the gates of the Franciscan grammar school took serious organization, „using” the existing connection systems.⁵ Their school is given back after the 1948 nationalisation and they had to struggle for the success of the restart. These two periods were the most determining in the examined monastic school's life.

In the first part of the treatise (1-5. chapters), I wish to present this hard work. In parallel with this it is necessary to get to know the contemporary education and the ecclesiastical political situation.

This has more reasons. On the one hand, because the school is opened in the period between the two world wars, we will see it in the fourth chapter that when the Christian Churches and the state move on an identical road, still serious difficulties exist between them after all, despite the good contact. If there is not an ideological adversary, tenseness may take shape between standing ones inside the single camp, even if it does not happen rudely and it is less open.⁶

We may recognise the main activity of the two determining Ministers of Education of the era between the world wars, in the third chapter. It is allowed to argue on the efficiency of Kunó Klebelsberg's work, but it is doubtless that series of reforms pervaded the Hungarian public

⁵ MOL K. 592.550/1931. f. 25. and 28.

⁶ *Historia Domus* p.191.

education. Maybe one of the most considerable results is that, according to the statistics in 1930 the proportion of the illiterate people fell from 15% to 10%.⁷ I expound in this chapter, what was the consequence of the policy, that not only Klebelsberg and Hóman, but the rest of the Education Ministers of the era pursued.

Parallel with this, in the fifth chapter I examine how the Esztergom Franciscan school adapts to this. We will see how important was for the order the Hungarian upbringing case, the Christian values, the spreading of ideas, we will know the outstanding educators for whom this school can thank its existence. We examine the steps of the formation of the school mentioned earlier, we may get the hang of the institute's life, the contemporary tutorial substance among other things, with the study order, the stressed educational areas. We receive a picture of the requirements for a high school, and how the supervisory system looked like in those days. I negotiate about the story and significance of the Military Museum, which received placement in the institute, in the second part of the 5. chapter and it became tightly interwoven with the school. I speak shortly about the life in Esztergom during the war, in which the champing was exemplary between the Franciscan fathers and Benedictine monks.⁸ The grammar school expanded continuously in the 1930-s, the pupils' number exalted,⁹ so the fruit of the work ripened.

In the second part of the treatise (6-9. chapters) – similarly to the first one – I present the contemporary educational policy and the school's life in Esztergom. I negotiate shortly about the Hungarian situation after the world war in the 6. chapter. It is known the state of the fundamental political significance of the contrast between the two eras: Hungary suffered a defeat in the World War two, and got into the Soviet sphere of interest already before the end of it.¹⁰ Than we know, this defined the political system of the country in the following 45 years.

A political community gets the power that is known by an atheist and anticlerical ideology.¹¹

I explain what kind of manner and devices the communist dictatorship's development began with after the short-lived democracy. In the next chapter we will see those educational ideas, then the reforms, which defined the establishment of the Hungarian public education in the next decades.

The 8+4 school system is introduced among other things, which is typical to the Hungarian public education until today.¹²

⁷ Solomon Conrad: Hungarian History 1914-1990 Budapest, 1998. p.87.

⁸ *Historia Domus* p.305.

⁹ *The Blessed Virgin Mary, called the Order of St. Francis of Esztergom of St. Anthony High School Bulletin*, published by P. J. Weiss Director Rikard, Esztergom, 1939. p.75.

¹⁰ *On the edge ... The MTI confidential reports 1943rd July 22 - 1944th March 10* Edited by Margaret Balogh-Andreides Gabor- Z. Karvalics Laszlo- Tatrai Gabor , Budapest, 2006. p.204.

¹¹ Solomon Conrad 1998. p.163.

¹² Matthias Unger - Szabolcs Otto: *History of Budapest Hungary*, 1979. p.390-391.

The school reform following the war influenced the Franciscan school's life. I present the process of the schools' nationalisation in detail, since the year 1948. statute XXXIII.¹³ It made a radical alteration to schools' life.

As a result of the law the state took over the maintenance of 5437 primary schools, 98 teacher-training colleges and 113 grammar schools. The educators' number who got into the state maintenance approached 18000 people.¹⁴ We will see what kind of preparatory work accompanied this process, based on which it is deductible the consequence towards the system. It is necessary to see these happenings in order to value adequately in what kind of circumstances St. Francis followers worked for the Hungarian youth in this period. I expound the establishment of the state and the Christian Churches' relation in the eighth chapter. It becomes clear, what kind of devices the communist power used to break into the churches. We will see where the resistance drove. It is unambiguous, based on facts presented in the treatise, that the church leaders in this period were put in front of the largest tests.¹⁵ So 1948 was a determining year in the Hungarian history. The centenary of the Hungarian revolution is considered the beginning of the communist dictatorship, which was raging impetuously in the following years. Among their measures firstly - as I mentioned - the schools were nationalized. During the presentation of bringing the Christian Churches to their knees I negotiate shortly about the steps of agreeing with the Catholic Church, the road leading to it (for example the monks' resettlement, the sections of the negotiations). I consider important to mention the so-called peace priest movement, concerning the State Church Case Office's task. With all this knowledge I wish to present the post-war years of the examined school, the nationalisation, then the circumstances of restart in the ninth chapter. The Esztergom Franciscan school's period between 1945 and 1950 shows an exceptionally eventful picture. Everything changed compared to the old times after the conclusion of the fights.

The Franciscan fathers had to adapt to more new things since the school system was transformed. The primary school was short-lived, after all it can be said it was successful. One of the most important changes compared to the previous ones, was that the pupils of the primary school came from the families in Esztergom or the surrounding settlements.¹⁶ „Our seven-year-old first grade pupils (according to an entirely new regulation) did their first holy Communion on 6 May. These

¹³ Sandor Balogh - Eugene Gregory - Louis Isaac - Jacob Alexander - Paul Pritz - Romsics Ignatius: Hungary in the twentieth century, Budapest, 1986. p.333.

¹⁴ Balogh - Gregory - Isaac - Jacob - Pritz - Romsics: 1986. p.333

¹⁵ Ivan Bertenyi – Gabriel Gyapai: Brief history of Budapest, Hungary, 1992. p.585. and Solomon Conrad 1998. p.199.

¹⁶ The Esztergom Franciscan St. Anthony Catholic Elementary School Yearbook 1946-47. school year edited by P. Pócza Szalvátor Director Esztergom, 1947. p.4.

exceptionally were all from Esztergom.”¹⁷

The Esztergom Franciscan school did not want to become an institution training the elite, the children of the upper social groups. It is provable, that its students came from the middle class and among the families belonging to the poorer social groups.¹⁸ The Franciscans obtained the vocational and the objective conditions for operating the primary school under a short time, which exemplifies their good organizer skills.

However a large diversity of people and schools moved within the monastery and the institute's walls, in these danger-fraught times, they never made a reason to deserve to file a firm charge against them. It is right we will see that there was no need for this, since the communist power created for himself in the interest of achieving its aims. Father Ambrus P. Szólás's case exemplifies this well.¹⁹

I negotiate about it among other things, that not only for the children, but the help, the direction are needed for certain parents as well. This pedagogic notion is really valid for today's period, too. I process the rest of the new types of schools, which functioned in this period within the institute's walls, beside the primary school. In the autumn of 1946 the working class entered to study beside work - in abridged time – within the Franciscan grammar school's walls.²⁰ According to the reminiscence of one of the schoolgirls that I used as a source in the course of processing the class's story, it was an enormous experience for these adult people that they had teachers with authority like this. Not many schools throughout the country could flaunt the fact that workers studied sometime within their walls, who successful took the maturity exam.

The third school, the grammar school worked within the usual frameworks in these years until the nationalisation. It may be a good example to acknowledge their work, that father László Farkas was elected the leader of the Educators' Trade Union in the city of Esztergom: „Where we could do for the faith, without the violation of ecclesiastical law and church discipline, we did not remain aloof, than the secular priests and Benedictines did. A lot of us enrolled in the Hungarian-Soviet Cultural Assembly, we frequented their lectures, we undertook performing, we could study Russian cheaply, we did not hinder the faithful leftists' friendship. A lot of communists confess regularly, indeed they are frequent communicants and with a little exception, do their religious obligations on Sunday. May have happened so, that the first president of the Educators' Trade Union became László

¹⁷ Historia Domus p.342.

¹⁸ The Esztergom Franciscan St. Anthony Catholic Elementary School Yearbook 1947. p.24.

¹⁹ Free People 1946. April 30, Tuesday p.3.

²⁰ Historia Domus p.328.

Farkas.”²¹

The Franciscan lost their single school as a result of the nationalisation. Thanks to a convention duly between the state and the Catholic Church, they got back their religious house and their school. I present the legends of this existing in the Franciscan public consciousness in the 9. part of the chapter.

Arisztid Nagy P. is an outstanding person of the Esztergom school. He has undying merits, not only in the 1931 departure, but in the restarting, too.

The many hundred graduated students, who emerged from the institute, whether in the public life, or as a plain labourer, as a family man, all undertook the tasks imposed by the creator god. I demonstrate in what proportion young men chose the different professions in the 1930-s, then after the war, finally following the political transformation.

It may be interesting as how these boys undertook life according to the religious teaching of the church, whether they were given good „bases” by their teachers. I wish to prove this *in the last part* of the treatise. Although the considerable part of the writing sketches the happenings in the first half of the XX. century, we may be driven by the curiosity after all, to what kind of life led those boys, who went to the Esztergom Franciscan school through years. Since I did not find any research results, statistics concerning this topic I looked for an answer to these questions with a questionnaire research, which was made on an alumnus meeting, in September 2011.

We may draw the conclusion from this, we may receive a uniform picture from that direction, onto how „efficiently” a monastic grammar school is. Participants' majority sat their school examinations between 1950 and 1990 in the survey, but there are students who finished their high-school studies only two-three years ago.

83 people took part in the survey, not calculating the fathers who graduated from the Franciscan grammar school, they recurred to be a teacher there. In the filling in of the questionnaire „civilian” students took part with 1 exception.

From these nearly a hundred questionnaires it is possible to receive a picture of how educational principles accompanied the row of the Esztergom Franciscan students' lives. From the asked nineteen questions it was possible to evaluate eighteen successfully, among which the most important ones are mentioned underneath:

²¹ Historia Domus p.335.

The questionnaire research data

The time of the questioning: September 2011.

The place of the questioning: Temesvár Pelbárt Franciscan Grammar School / alumnus meeting

The manner of the questioning: questionnaire, sampling (voluntary completion)

The number of published questionnaires: 100 sheets

The number of questionnaires arrived back: 83 sheets

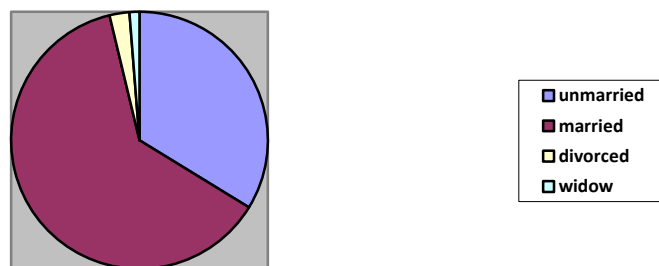
The sample - the composition of the respondents - in terms of the age group the alumni meeting chosen for the data collection and the location shows a successfully mixed picture.

The distribution according to the age group changes as follows:

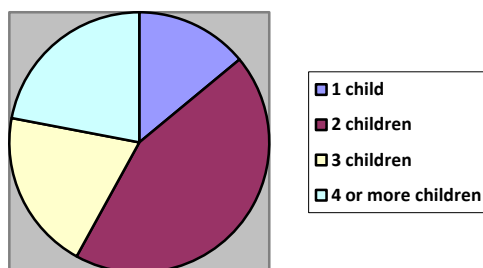


According to the alumnus account who graduated in 1958 he had gone to the Franciscan Primary School even before the nationalisation. He witnessed the period when more schools and types of schools were functioning in the institute and participated in the nationalisation, then in the restoration.

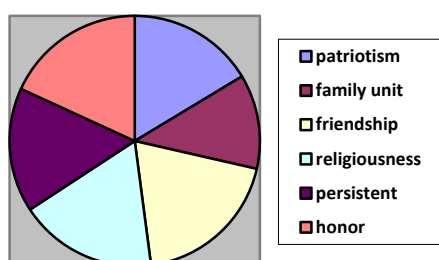
At the measurement of the marital status it is necessary to take into consideration the distribution according to the age group, since postponing the family founding is typical of the younger generations.



The marriage (the holiness of which is one of the keystones of the religious upbringing) as a value appears in the respondents' community, although - through the young persons' numerical ratio – this is possible yet only on the level of the assumption. Shaping of the children's number:

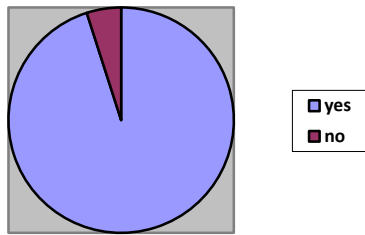


We may see that the sample is equal to the unwritten presupposition based on the answers, data, that the important support of the religious upbringing and its aim is the family. The family as a value appears unambiguously in our sample's way of thinking. Values, which were given by the church school:



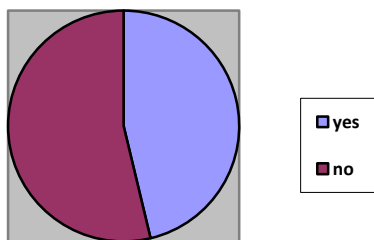
More answers could be given onto the question, the value broadcast was in the focus here: the passing of which values were present in the interviewees' grammar school life. The proportions show uniform strength, but not outstanding. Their distribution quasi identical, there is not an

edge datum. Do you declare yourself a Catholic Believer?



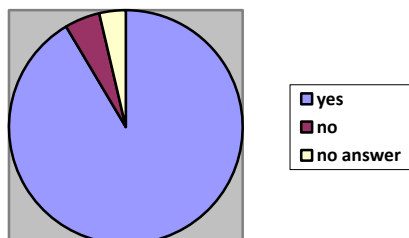
For a believer the spiritual piety is a daily need, in today's world there are very many obstructive factors may get in the way, but the 95% proportion is hope suggesting, that the Christian values – in the present case the Catholic values – can be built in a committed person's life.

Are you active in your local congregation?



Based on visible answers given to the latter questions, we can see that the man's external piety does not express itself in a measure than it would be needed. The active participative proportion shows this in the given parish. If we compare the piety, the keeping of the faith, going regularly to the mass with this question, the proportion here is the least.

Do you favour the ecumenism of the historical Christian Churches?



95% of the respondents favours the ecumenism, which creates harmony along the eternal Christian values for the Christianity in the modern era. It is necessary to mention how the ecumenical champing is clear for the historical Christian Churches' members, which is used for each other's protection. 5% of the respondents does not favour the ecumenism (all four declare themselves

believer Catholics).

The asked with their conscientious answers approved that we should receive a suitable picture about the bond to „Franka”, and we may say that they made a statement not only about a Franciscan grammar school but about the Christian Church upbringing: about the Christian values, the all-time fundamental human values (friendship, honour, piety, morals, patriotism...). Despite the diverse viewpoint the indication of the values put into focus in the research shows a unit: the grammar school value franchisor, traditionpassing sign is still present until today. The answers, reasons, opinions show signs that opposite the state schools quality, the school providing their children's protection is regarded as the church institute's most important feature, important role ascribe the religious upbringing. The institution preserves the important religious values that will make the school's reputation, and the task (function) started from the beginning. When judging the institutional rearing method, the image of it, we tend to believe that the era and age are determinant. This aspect was not usable at any of the survey questions. The reason for this can be defined in the end of the evaluation: the basic human values are more aligned with the Christian values and they are the same: love, honesty, perseverance, spirituality (religion), patriotism ... According to these research results they are independent of the political situation, age. Church schools are not stable, they have a difficult task, because they have to protect, transfer, transmit the eternal, constant values in a different way from time to time!

The theme chosen was intended to demonstrate the discussed era education policies through life in a monastic school. What teaching methods were used, and under what circumstances were raised and taught the children entrusted to the Franciscan Fathers. The last part of the thesis gives us an adequate picture of their success, in which the results of the questionnaire survey were analyzed. On this basis we can declare that they did not only deepen the Christian values in students, but also provided a high school education with the result that students were able to work in any area on their own. This makes clear the need for church secondary schools, religious education, because the fundamental moral norms, the corresponding values are given on a higher level to their students.

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