

# THESIS

## FEMALE SPIRITUALITY IN THE SACRED SPACE OF THE CHURCH IN CSÍKMENASÁG

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After presenting a detailed iconographic description of the sacred inner space of the church in Csíkmenaság, exploring the related problems and dilemmas of interpretation and putting forward proposals for the resolution thereof in sections 6-9 of the dissertation, the symbols of the inner sacred space of the church are to be analysed primarily in sections 10-13. The method of this analysis is based on the aspects and considerations in sections 1-4. Following the analysis, a female development model based on Christian tradition is to be set up in section 14.

### **Keywords:**

**Initiation, female tradition, individuation, archetypical female patterns, sacred works of art, reflexivity, iconographic program, psychological model, personality development of women**

### **Research Approach and Methodology**

My preliminary hypothesis is that there is a female tradition of ancient roots in Christian iconography which can serve as a point of reference for women to find their way in the labyrinth of life and this tradition is readily available also in the field of research I have chosen. I also believe that symbols represented visually in Christian sacred space play an initiatory role. Getting to know things by contemplating sacred works of art can make you understand revealed truth more profoundly, and it is revealed truth that includes the teaching fostering the development and salvation of the sexually conditioned personality.

In my research, the Christian female spiritual tradition is approached based on works of art. Female spirituality is to be detected based on the sacred works of art with a strong focus on women in the church in Csíkmenaság dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, because I believe that female spirituality exists, manifests itself and works through these works of arts. The Christian sacred representation system under examination, that is, the iconographic program of the church, is able to initiate viewers into the spiritual female knowledge, which can serve as a reference point for their own personal development.

As I think that this development or individuation process is of crucial importance for everybody because in a way it is this that determines whether a person experiences his/her life history as a success or a failure, I also approach works of art in sacred space in the conviction that they can strongly help the person or the community develop or be healed based on their inherent archetypal and thus universal spiritual human knowledge, that is, they can initiate them into the basic truths that will help the person mature.

The term 'initiation' is to be used in two distinct senses: one is related to a focused turning point of maturation while the other refers to the permanent development process of our own sexually conditioned personality.

Based on my research, I claim that female tradition and experience can be and are in fact transmitted through the lives of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the persons and stories of other holy women represented in sacred space.

The research method is a reflective approach, which characterizes supervisory assistance, too. Supervision is focused on the present as recognition, decision and change, that is, the supervision targets can only be realised in the present. The supervision process is not merely a number of consecutive events either but the widening of the present moment into a process: many-many moments are realised simultaneously when you understand something or a truth manifests itself. It will, however, always be process. Thinking takes time but understanding takes place in the present or rather it is a widening of the present moment, with a special focus on the present, that is, on **what is**.

This approach was adapted in order to open the iconographically interpreted sacred space as intensely as possible. Conversation in the present: the sacred works of art in the church of Csíkmenaság are to be approached based on the 'here and now' of the relationship between the viewer and the sacred works of art.

## **Connections between the iconography of the church and the internal development story of women**

Women's psychological and spiritual personality development of Christian roots is to be modelled based on an iconographic analysis of the church in Csíkmenaság. This model consists of several elements based on a detailed analysis of the sacred works of art in the church.

To sum it up, the conclusions of the analysis are as follows:

1. The legend of Saint Ladislaus in the nave of the church, known only in Hungary, strongly presents the main character, a woman with a development story equivalent to her story of being rescued, leading to her becoming more and more autonomous, creative and active. From this point of view, the initiation story of women is their road to increasing freedom, and the purpose of this history/process is the development of the capacity for love, intimacy and relationship. The Christian development story of women is characterized by this approach.
2. Entering the chancel, you will see the ten virgins from the Gospel on the triumphal arch, reminding us that decisions cannot be avoided and of their consequences. Considering the importance of decisions in terms of female initiation, the basic decision underlying the development of your own life is focused on: the decision for development or – in Jungian terms – individuation. Failing that will have major consequences on women's personality or – more broadly – her whole life.
3. Through three prominent sacred works of art, the sacred teaching of the chancel focuses on the immaculately conceived Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom the church is dedicated: they are the fresco of the Golden Gate icon on the wall, the sculptures of the existing high altar and the iconographic program of the former Renaissance altar. The mystery of the Immaculate Conception presents the woman as an intermediary between God and man. On the other hand, chaste and blessed femininity represents female power that gives and transmits life in close connection with God, the Creator.
4. The current high altar presents Mary between her parents as imbedded in the history of her family. In terms of female development story, the transmission of traditions and the power of your roots are highlighted.

5. The old Renaissance high altar<sup>1</sup> shows Mary as the mother of God and a queen, with her life's story framed around her. Each station of her life on the wings of the triptych makes you contemplate each major step of the development story of women and the initiation into womanhood.
6. The Golden Gate icon behind the altar on the wall of the chancel calls your attention to the mystery itself, that is, the Immaculate Conception. This mystery is the chastest and the most powerful female vocation possible, that is, giving birth to our Saviour and chastity, which is a condition precedent thereof: it is the blessed divine manifestation of the female numinosity, that is, women's role of intermediating between God and man.
7. The mystery of the title of the church is surrounded by eight different female saints on the arch of the chancel: they help women on their internal road from eight distinct aspects and represent the mystery of womanhood in eight ways. They stand for eight types, that is, the eight gates and roads of the mystery of womanhood.

The development model of women concurs with the overall sacred iconography of the church in Csíkmenaság.

The legend of Saint Ladislaus, which you see in front of you when entering the church or on the left-hand northern side if you arrive through the western portal, which may have existed formerly, represents the essence of the whole development story of women. Approaching the chancel, this teaching requires or prepares personal commitment and decision, which becomes urgent with the representation of the wise and foolish virgins on the triumphal arch. The iconography of the triumphal arch confronts you with choices that cannot be avoided and the consequences.

The chancel represents the essence of the ideal model of initiation into the destiny of women, that is, the mystery of the immaculately conceived Blessed Virgin Mary, the female numinosity, the saintly womanhood. This is surrounded by female saints: eight strong types representing eight archetypical female figures.

This is presented for viewers within a fine network represented by the net vault of the chancel: the prophets on the thread of time prophesying about Mary, the evangelists embedded in the Salvation History, the persons of the Holy Trinity and the angels referring to the Creator, the Saviour and Life-Giving God as well as the Sun and the

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<sup>1</sup> It is exhibited in the Hungarian National Gallery

Moon standing for the whole universe or cosmos. The special ornaments and the Renaissance decoration with patterns of plants show the flora or vegetation of the created world, linking it to the chancel.

## **Sacred symbols of the church in Csíkmenaság as elements carrying on female spiritual tradition**

### **Title of the church: connection between female sacrality and the teaching of the Immaculate Conception**

This may be one of the first churches in Hungary and also in the world to be dedicated to the Immaculate Conception: examining it we may gain insight into the deep layers of Hungarian Christian faith. I have found three ways of this mystery of our faith which express the essence of female spirituality powerfully.

Sin, darkness, the lack of hope, disturbance in the world and human life, in individual and collective history on the one hand and purity, light, hope and order which can conquer them on the other hand as well as opposition and struggle between these two opposing forces which want to be manifested and articulated when they – along with other content of our faith – are expressed in the mystery of the Immaculate Conception. This form, however, is expressly linked to the female principle, thus it is to be examined as a top priority.

Conception without sin means that something entirely different appears in this world subjected to sin and in the body groaning under the yoke of sin – something which is against the laws of this world: the redeemed, innocent and pure mode of existence of the kingdom of God, which is free from sin and the law of sin. Chastity conquers darkness or – figuratively – the snake, which represents sin.

And this chaste being is a woman, who is free from sin and – based on God's grace – protected against the power of darkness from the very first moment of her conception. It is not because of her own power or through her own merits and not for her own sake but for the sake of the whole mankind.

Her conception is something absolutely new to the table. Whatever God created was good anyway as the Book of Genesis says (Gen 1,25b) but the world was also



afflicted by curse due to the original sin as a punishment of not only man but the whole Nature, which 'groans and travails in pain until now' (Rom 8,22).

Redemption can only come from outside: the system cannot save itself.

The first step of God entering the history of mankind from outside or – to put it in theological terms – of the Incarnation and salvation during Salvation History – is the birth of the Saviour's mother, Mary.

When the faithful contemplate this mystery, they automatically turn to the ancestors. Mary's parents, grandparents, generation and her whole origin are focused on. Mary's mother, Saint Anne, represents female power as well as support and guidance provided for generations: she is a strong woman shouldering redemption with not only Mary but also Jesus, the Saviour in her lap (Mettercia – on paintings). This female, motherly and grandmotherly lap symbolically stands for ancient motherly security, which reminds us of generations of women who all contributed to the birth of the Saviour based on their strength and lives.

**A major element of female sacrality related to the Immaculate Conception is the elementary female power giving, upholding and nourishing life and inherited from generation to generation, based on which new lives are born and developed.**

Another aspect is the chaste condition of innocence and Paradise-like freedom from sin as manifested in a woman: human nature *protected from sin through the merits of Mary's Son in advance* (as the doctrine teaches) is borne into the world as a woman in the person of Mary. As a new Eve before the Fall, an innocent being created by God and not accessible to sin.

It is she who prepares and allows the Saviour to enter the world, which is called Incarnation. Archetypically, it is through the eternal, pure and innocent female condition protected from sin that the Conqueror of Sin is brought into the world and God's presence is manifested among us. It is based on chaste womanhood that the world's order can be restored and the kingdom of God is realised against the power of sin.

Based on this, womanhood has chances and a calling with unsurpassable prospects in the service of the whole human family.

But in what way can this chaste womanhood, the possibility of God's appearance realised?

To begin with, it is eminently clear that this takes place by the grace of God, not by our own efforts or merits. Thus the first and foremost characteristic is reliance on God

and an elementary relationship with him. As if it was directly from God's hands and a manifestation of Him in every way: this lack of merits, gratuitousness, dependence, this palpability of origin and yet it is uniquely accompanied by the dignity of the person and individuality in the immaculately conceived Mary.

**This pure appearance of female sacrality: an elementary and organic relationship with God, who creates her in a way continuously experienced by her, practically without any pretence or hindrance, and uniqueness, originality and liveliness full of life, potential and creativity.**

The mystery of the Immaculate Conception, which expresses the intermediary role of women, is of special importance in the sacred space examined: it is a **Christian expression of female numinosity**. This is expressed by the current high altar solemnly.

The veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who conquers the power of sin, is exempt from it and has lived in the world of God's grace ever since her conception is closely linked to God: the Immaculata can only be approached in the power of the Holy Spirit through and for her Son through the providential love of the Father.

God, the Holy Trinity incarnated through Mary, who was full of grace and achieved special prominence, not only as the Son but Mary is also spouse of the Holy Spirit as taught by Eastern Christianity: she carries the Holy Spirit and is an image of the Holy Spirit and – according to the Russian Eastern Christians, who venerate the Mother of God as the Blessed Perpetual Virgin Mary – is Wisdom Incarnate. As a result, Mary, the Knower of Wisdom, who was initiated into the « mysterious plans of God », Sophia, is contemplated as the person who has the female characteristics of the Divine Being. **Thus, the mystery of the Immaculate Conception reveals the female/motherly face of God.**

### **Female life-path – Mary's life as a model**

Mary's life as shown on the panels of the 'old' Renaissance triptych in Csíkmenaság and her blessed personality consecrated by God as represented on the new high altar are an archetypical model for every woman.

This model role was recognized by medieval iconography based on patristic theology where the events of Mary's life are presented as the story of a woman, in fact, of *the woman*, based on the gospels and apocryphal traditions.

Representations of Mary in churches generally show scenes which present the universal via Mary's story symbolically or visually, telling what happened once in history and the general lessons of the story, and – in line with medieval thought – the symbolic meaning of all this is also revealed with regard to Salvation History and the spiritual history of mankind.

These scenes are Mary's conception, birth, appearance in the temple, engagement to Joseph, then the Annunciation, Mary's visit to Elizabeth, birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, presentation of Jesus in the temple, flight to Egypt with the child, the child murder in Bethlehem, finding Jesus in the temple, the wedding feast at Cana, Mary standing under the cross of Jesus, the Crucified, Mary holding her dead Son across her lap, the Pieta, Mary meeting the resurrected Jesus and Mary praying with the apostles at Pentecost, finally the death and the assumption of Mary into heaven, the crowning of Mary in heaven and the anticipation of the last scene of the history of mankind: the appearance of the woman clothed with the sun and Mary interceding for the sinners on Judgement Day.

Eight of the above scenes can be identified in the church in Csikmenaság: the Immaculate Conception of Mary in the Golden Gate scene (the fresco in the chancel, the current altar), the Annunciation, the Visitation, the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, the adoration of the three kings, the scene of Mettercia and Pieta and the crowning of Mary by angels (Renaissance altar).

Contemplating the representation of Mary, the faithful woman can more easily approach her by considering her as a woman here below and a fellow woman rather than a sacred sign. She can associate herself with Mary and perceive the related transcendent aspects at the same time. Of course, because of her religious faith, awareness and the power of sacrality are always present and open new horizons for the related feelings of identification.

A sort of double presence materializes: mediating the picture and accepting the scene as an external reality, the faithful woman pays attention to the depicted holy person, sees, and is open to, the sacred world of her while the connotations of the saint's own life and the related peculiarities such as fertile womanhood, blessedness appear to her as a result of her inner identification. These aspects in the sacred space open new horizons, finding their place in a complete, well-ordered and transcendent world and can be healed, developed and grow.

**The panels of the Renaissance altar in Csíkmenaság show the stations of this road from girlhood to fertile motherhood, exploring the major steps of female initiation.**

The figure of Mary in the centre of this altar shows the image of fertile and blessed motherhood. The images of the altar wings represent the road from the self-contained girlhood at preparation stage like a bud through the scene of calling/vocation to commitment, devotion-acceptance, reflection and letting things go.

The above is characterized by special depth because the external panel paintings of the triptych represent the suffering of Jesus. Even if regular church goers do not see them, they are aware of the paintings of the closed wings, too. Contemplating the female destiny of Mary, we also see her suffering Son, the destiny of a suffering man, which indicates the basic connection of the life of women, that is, the peculiarity that women live their own identity in a network of personal relationships.

### **Stations of Mary's life as a development model for women**

Based on our model, the individuation process of women can be divided into two basic units: the integration of anima and animus. This breakdown is highly simplified and stands for the four steps of the Neumann model. The outstanding events of Mary's life can also be considered as the steps of initiation into womanhood although no chronological order can be established based on the following model.

#### ***Integration steps of anima – integration of the female part of the spirit***

ANNUNCIATION - ANNUNTIATIO - acceptance, opening, commitment, devotion, trust

VISITATION WITH ELIZABETH – intimacy, relationship, encounter, helpfulness, love, (female) friendship

BIRTH OF JESUS IN BETHLEHEM - NATIVITAS DEI – giving life, sacrifice, nourishing love, tenderness

BRINGING UP THE CHILD/LOSING AND FINDING JESUS – caring, attention, selfless love, presence, upbringing

PIETA - loss, separation, letting things go, ability to endure suffering, strength, tenderness,

***Animus – integration steps – integration of the male part of the spirit***

WEDDING FEAST IN CANA (Jn 2, 1-12) - attention, consciousness, responsibility, courage, willingness to confront

MARY STANDING UNDER THE CROSS - STABAT MATER – strength, providing safety, faith, ability to endure suffering, stability, perseverance

PENTECOST - PENTEKOSTES – enthusiasm, missionary zeal, sharing, perseverance, establishing relationships

WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN (Rev 12, 1-2) - order, radiance, light, triumph of good, power, victory

MARY CROWNED IN HEAVEN – power, strength, willingness to intercede, righteousness

***Condensed symbols***

The two major steps of initiation are condensed in two other scenes. The lunette of the Renaissance altar in Csíkmenaság shows the representation of Mettercia and the central figure of the Renaissance altar, the Queen crowned by angels.

METTERCIA – The Blessed Virgin Mary with her child is shown in the lap of her mother, Saint Anne. The picture suggests female continuity, tradition, an unbroken chain of life-giving, female strength and a homelike atmosphere of female roots providing safety. It represents integrated and harmonious female power. This picture expresses the integration of the anima most powerfully.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, THE QUEEN AND THE MOTHER OF GOD: it is the central figure of the Renaissance altar. There stands the statue of the glorified Woman with power, strength and kingly dignity holding her Son in her arms, representing positive male power, safety, caring, strength and victory and expressing the integration of animus effectively.

## **A large number of female models – the example of holy women**

### ***The wise and foolish virgins: decisions and consequences***

The wise and foolish virgins on the triumphal arch on the gate leading into the chancel confront viewers with the gravity of the consequences of choices and decisions and – more importantly – with the option of choice.

As they are of two kinds, they symbolize two options, arranged as a group in two directions, with the foolish virgins on the one side (probably on the southern side) and the wise on the other (the northern). When the faithful pass through them or the viewers look forward between them, they are to make a choice in a spiritual direction which leads to the Holy of Holies, that is, the altar and the most holy sacrifice offered there.

Through the eyes of a woman, the virgins stand for two kinds of life-paths even more markedly. The conscious, watchful, self-reflected virgin that finds her place, can serve others and celebrate is the wise one. The inattentive, languid, distracted, confused woman that is never really present, cannot serve others and thus always misses everything and is late everywhere is the foolish virgin. Strikingly, malice on the part of the foolish virgins is not mentioned in Jesus' parable – simply, they are not prepared although based on their status they should exactly know their duty. That's why they are not punished either: they simply miss what they desire and what their calling is, which, however, is of great symbolic significance. Therefore, missing her life potential, not being present in her own situation, not being able to serve others, that is, not answering her call is tragically foolish for a woman.

### ***Holy women on the chancel arch***

Each holy woman stands for a type, expressing the essence of what is primarily linked to them. They become female models related to situations (e.g. birth, dying) or indicate values or internal directions (e.g. self-sacrifice, devotion, perseverance, loyalty, ability to endure suffering, love). They are to be summarized in the following table, in which the holy women in Csíkmenaság are also compared to the well-known typology of J. Bolen.

<b>1. category</b>	<b>martyr and religious virgins in Csíkmenaság</b>	<b>virgin goddesses (figures of the Bolen model)</b>	<b>personal/individual/special characteristics of holy Christian women</b>	<b>shared characteristics of the holy Christian woman and the ancient goddess</b>
	Saint Barbara	Hestia-Vesta	she triumphs over her father: she is locked up in a tower, which she converts symbolically	an autonomous and free woman who can fight for her own values and is not limited by being locked up in her home
	Saint Catherine of Alexandria	Athena-Minerva	a clever, strong and wise woman conquers superstition, ignorance and many men	she represents womanly wisdom and strength, surpassing and conquering men based on her spiritual power and courage
	Saint Margaret	Artemis-Diana	she overcomes the dragon, the tempter	fighting and overcoming evil and falseness (devil)
	Saint Clare	Hestia-Vesta	a woman religious and an ascetic, living gospel poverty	she lives detached from the world as a hermit, creating values and radiating life
<b>1. category</b>	<b>the saint cleansed from sexual sins</b>	<b>the goddess of love and beauty</b>		
	Saint Mary Magdalene	Aphrodite-Venus	a woman living an unchaste life, repenting her sins and becoming the disciple of Jesus and then a hermit, who cares for the suffering and dying Jesus and follows him loyally, turning the dark side of sexuality into life and love and promiscuity into loyalty	a woman freed from corrupted sexuality and sins, who knows the dark side and transforming power of sexuality, too
<b>3. category</b>	<b>women: spouses, mothers, grandmothers</b>	<b>Vulnerable goddesses</b>		
	Saint Anne	Demeter- Ceres	grandmother, mother, spouse	a strong woman and ancient mother providing safety and support for her daughter as an authority that is a reference point and provides protection
	Saint Susanna	Persephone- (Kore) Proserpina	martyr and woman (virgin)	a woman or a defenceless girl that suffers innocently

	Saint Helena	Hera-Juno	she is a queen and the mother of the first Christian emperor, finding and venerating the cross	she knows the mystery of suffering and redemption, providing the power and safety of legitimate female power
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### **Interdependency between the two genders – the Saint Ladislaus cycle**

An analysis of the Saint Ladislaus legend through the eyes of a woman reveals not only the personality development of women but also the development of men. In fact they go hand in hand and are interdependent, affecting and inspiring each other.

With regard to the research of female spirituality, it is to be noted that the development of women does not take place in itself but is always closely linked to the people living in their environment in general and men in particular. It is largely relationship-centred and predominantly takes place in this system, that is, within a network of relationships. It is also important that the development of women also affects, inspires, supports and controls the development of men, and mature womanhood is vital for men and vica versa.

Another possible interpretation of the story is that each character is an element of the female spirit teaching a lesson about the integration of them. Thus they can provide a model which is explicitly Christian and clearly originates from Hungarian tradition.

### **The Hungarian Christian model of the personality development of women: a woman to be freed**

Interpreting the Saint Ladislaus legend through the eyes of a woman, a development process of women can be modelled. The model consists of the following three main elements, which correspond to the major development phases:

1. abductedness
2. freeing
3. capacity for intimacy and love
- 4.



## *1. Abductedness*

The Saint Ladislaus cycle presents a woman already abducted: she is being taken in the saddle of the abductor, a Cuman soldier. According to Neumann, a Jungian, this period characterizes the early stage of the personality development story of women. The girl breaks with the safe and undisturbed world of her mother, a system only including women, the 'Uroboros-Ancient mother unity', and is confronted with the world of men. This confrontation is accompanied by some kind of exaltation: the young woman has a peak experience which deconstructs her personality and fills her with the feeling of being conquered and lost. She in fact experiences the unconscious as an overwhelming and destructive male power. The woman feels very small, which is frightening.

It is not difficult to see how many tales are about this exaltation. According to Antalfai, tales with dragons are the third largest category of all Hungarian tales. The weak girl is abducted and held captive by the dragon. The girl cannot escape by her own strength.

For the woman, the story in the Saint Ladislaus legend starts with this situation: she is abducted by the Cuman soldier riding his horse. We meet the woman at this stage when her 'initiation' has already started, she has left the safety of her home and – in terms of the initiation model of the sociology of knowledge – has reached the phase of 'separation death'. Separated from her loved ones, with no freedom of movement or decision responsibility and exposed to a stranger who is stronger than her: this condition is to be considered as a kind of death.

Spiritually, this is the position in which a woman is not redeemed: a hopeless situation that is like a trap, from which she can only escape by outside help. The representations of the Saint Ladislaus legend tell the plain truth: the girl herself insists on the abductor, holding on to the Cuman warrior, in fact sitting on the horse behind him, thus being abducted is apparently not against her will. What's more, she catches the weapons directed against the Cuman abductor in order to protect him.

This picture presents the girl as a captive, who accepts being captive but does not insist on it. This also indicates that she has reconciled herself to it and sees no way out. Royal princesses abducted by dragons also face the same situation: although they do not love their abductors, they have learned how to live with them or – as daughters of an old king – cooperate with their father in alienating suitors at their own expense.

## *2. Freeing*

At this stage, which consists of subparts, there is an increasing and conscious struggle for freedom.

Based on Neumann's model, this is the third stage where the Other, the Male appears in a new form as a hero for the exalted woman. For her, he thus represents activity, consciousness, development, the mobilisation of will power and the chance of being freed. According to Neumann, it is a 'monumental' step for the woman when she shoulders responsibility for decisions about her own destiny. That's what takes place at this phase of development.

To demonstrate the outstanding significance of this phase, the stagnations to be faced by a woman based on Neumann's research if she does not manage to get through this phase are to be summarised as follows.

1. In terms of social history, Neumann identifies this period with the era of patriarchy in general and its regressive features in particular: the phenomenon of the aggressive man who oppresses the woman but in fact is only infantile, depends on the woman and thus considers her as evil incarnate. This may be of interest for us because the immaturity of animus is thus linked to aggressivity, oppression and fanaticism on the one hand and infantilism to dependence on the other. Secondly, this comparison is of interest because it presents the success of the development story of women in a broader context and also associates it with men's failure in case of any stagnation.
2. Disappointed, embittered, inclined to murder: it will be a woman inclined to destroy herself and the community, who does not encounter a hero to free her because she is too narrow-minded and only wants to meet the requirements of her environment or was disappointed at the emerging hero, that is, she did not meet the person she yearned for, and responds regressively.
3. Predominance of negative male characteristics is indicated by promiscuity, the inability to make a commitment, aggressivity: if a woman is predominantly characterised by these features, the animus has not been properly integrated.
4. Infantilism, that is, the inner condition of a girl that will never grow up is accompanied by various kinds of hysteria and the intention to escape: the woman will always be a victim and martyr.

5. As an anima of a man, she serves him to make him successful and develop, fully absorbed in him, or serves a cause or idea: she will be left with her own personality deflated and futile.

This is represented visually in the Saint Ladislaus legend: with the appearance of the liberator hero also comes the chance of being freed. The girl, encouraged by the hero, throws herself on the ground from the Cuman soldier's saddle, dragging her abductor down with herself: she will be active and courageous as never before, but this is only possible due to the presence and encouragement of a hero liberating her. Neumann even goes on to say that the hero is a projection only: the woman finds her own internal strength and then is able to take steps towards freedom.

The legend emphasizes three major steps taken by the girl towards freedom: first she throws herself from the saddle; secondly, she chooses from among the competing parties neither of whom can conquer the other and determines the victory; thirdly, she must execute her abductor.

The above steps can also be termed as follows:

- the first step is confrontation
- the second one is decision
- the third one is separation and becoming independent

### ***Confrontation***

The first major condition of this phase of the personality development of women is that the woman must face the situation in which she is and see it as it is. The word 'confrontation' is a compound of '**con**' meaning '*together*' and '**frons-tis**' meaning '*front*', which means *forehead*, *frontage* and *front line*. Thus the connotation of the word 'confrontation' is two foreheads, frontages or front lines meeting where the two opposing beings start, that is, on their outermost part where they experience the outside world and have their limits.

Thus confrontation also means experiencing your own limits. Only she who has a front line can be confronted or – to put it the other way round – the existence of limits can only be experienced based on confrontation.

For an enchanted woman who has just lost the outlines of her personality, confrontation makes her have this feeling of identity. Experiencing her limits will strengthen her hope that her personality is not without outlines and is independent.

This experience is the condition of liberation during the development of women. Without this, the woman has no support to fight her own war of independence. With this, she can rely on the experience of her increasing strength.

It is a general misunderstanding that the prince on a white horse rescues the heroine from her captivity and loneliness. The pictures of the legend say that he doesn't and cannot do so. He arrives but cannot reach the Cuman soldier that has abducted the woman. He has simply no power to do so. He can sharpen the situation, encourage the woman but cannot act in her stead. His presence is of special importance: he provides the basic feeling of safety but the story reveals that each major step must be taken by the woman herself.

His appearance and word addressed to the woman are crucial in other ways, too. He provides an external aspect for the abducted woman: the tragedy of abduction is clear to the rescuer, thus she also realises the gravity of it and the hopeless situation in which she has been so far however much she has tried to conceal this from herself, adapting to the situation or shocked by it. The words of Saint Ladislaus addressed to her in the text of the chronicle, suggesting how she could escape make liberation a real option. The words and the appearance of the rescuer create a distance needed by the woman to see her own situation and inner condition and stop identifying herself with her own position and be able to reflect on it.

The male hero that appears to rescue the woman provides safety and an external eye necessary for reflection, creates a distance needed for the decisive step to be taken by the captive woman to face her situation and free herself by her own strength. The positive animus, that is, the male energy appears to provide the power and insight needed for confrontation.

### ***Decision***

The Hungarian world implies changing the current position.

This step is of great importance: the woman takes a stand all by herself in a situation that is clear after the confrontation. Based on the teaching of the paintings of the legend, the struggle is not decided when the Cuman soldier falls off his horse but the unequal struggle continues on the ground without weapons – something we have already seen during the persecution. The two heroes could not be wounded by the

arrows shot at each other, the spears or the weapons. It is the fighting and the confrontation that are represented by the paintings. Neither man can conquer the other. It is the girl that determines the victory: he whom she supports will triumph over the other.

The legend strongly expresses visually that it is a real choice. Although abducted, the girl is clinging to the Cuman warrior on the back part of the horse, even embracing him, catching the arrow shot at him and the spear directed against him. She does not really seem to be against this situation. According to the text of the chronicle, too, the girl is begging for the Cuman man's life. Based on each source, the girl is affected by the Cuman warrior.

Thus she must choose either of the men and the two directions.

If she does not make a choice, the situation will not change because the arguments, viewpoints and interests weigh equally. Apparently, none of the two equally strong fighters will triumph. She must make a decision and commit herself to either of them.

This part of the cycle of paintings has seemingly marginal but in fact important indications with regard to this scene: fire and smoke coming out of the Cuman warrior's mouth, a glory around Ladislaus' head, the Cuman surrounded by dark colour: his horse is dark, too. Horns are supposed to be under the Cuman's soldier's headwear, which often become visible in the scene when he is beheaded. Saint Ladislaus has an explicitly Christ-like face in many paintings. These minor signs help the girl perceive anything based on which she is to decide.

At this grave moment of decision, spiritual orientation is of special importance. That's the role of religions in human life: pointing to basic values and truths which can be points of reference for decisions. As religions approach transcendent reality from here below, they name the only sure and true existence that actually cannot be approached and translate it into human language.

Thus Christianity differentiates between good and evil, angel and devil, grace and temptation, virtue, good deeds and sins. One links you to God, while the other blocks your way to Him. Whatever blocks the way to God also blocks the way to ourselves and the others, preventing us from becoming ourselves in his image and likeness according to the Bible or – in psychological terms – the Selbst, who knows about this likeness and is akin to the transcendent world.

The Cuman soldier in the paintings of the Saint Ladislaus legend is clearly on the side of evil although he is an attractive and strong man, meeting his match in the king. His evil nature can only be perceived based on minor signs, which makes the girl devote full attention to him and use all her intuition: she must learn how to differentiate true from false however much they may resemble each other.

Again, a striking parallel with folk tales is to be noted with regard to this attention exercise: Cindarellas there are commanded by their stepmothers or witches, that is, by older women, to separate things that are very similar at first sight, e.g. poppy from dust: learning to separate them is a major step of initiation for the woman and a condition of moving on towards individuation.

To make a decision, the girl must be aware of the context of the decision, that is, for what she decides. This requires solid spiritual guidance: assessing feelings or power relations will not suffice to evaluate things properly. She must decide for what is GOOD – not what is relatively better but what is GOOD in transcendental terms because it is only this that works immanently, too. This provides an opportunity for her to develop further and become free.

As the struggle of men is drawn out, the girl has time to observe things and fight her own inner struggle to make a correct choice and a good decision.

The decision manifests itself through a drastic gesture: she cuts the Cuman soldier's feet, making him weak. It is an aggressive and unfair step: unwomanly, bloody and unexpected. It is, however, represented visually in a way that hits viewers: it is a struggle of life and death. The stakes are so high that the struggle must be brutal.

Due to the confrontation, the woman must face that she is to make a decision. Her decision is extremely important for her own life, thus she must learn how to discern the signs that can help her: signs of the transcendent world are transmitted and interpreted by religion. Christianity differentiates between two poles, between which choices can be made.

### ***3. Separation/becoming independent***

As the last step of liberation, the disabled Cuman soldier is held down by Saint Ladislaus and killed by the girl. It is an even more brutal scene than the previous one. It is an execution performed by the abducted maiden.

At this point, the painting eminently contradicts the text-tradition, which blames the girl for begging for her abductor's life probably on account of 'sinful love', bitterly condemning the female character. In the painting, however, she always kills the Cuman warrior dynamically at one fell swoop with no signs of hesitation or womanly shiver. In many paintings, the devil appears next to the executed Cuman soldier, and the Cuman man's hair in the execution scene often seems to be two-pronged horns. Also, Saint Ladislaus is holding the Cuman soldier's head as if he had captured the head of a deer.

These signs help us understand what can be interpreted as triumph over EVIL: the girl is held captive by the Cuman soldier, which will only end if she kills him. She is up to anything and is ready to cut the thread which prevents her being free and starting her own life unenchanted.

In the painting we see that no compromise can be reached if the stakes are high: the decision has consequences, which entails losses and separation. The woman would deceive herself thinking that she can actually become free without killing the power controlling her. Games would be played, with the manipulation of part-freedoms, taking or limiting the necessary strength, making the girl uncertain and preventing her shouldering responsibility for her own life.

This last, big effort is the peak of the woman's increasing struggle for freedom. Evil power stops affecting her and the nightmare is over.

### **Capacity for intimacy**

According to Neumann, the fourth phase of the development process is relationship, devotion, individuation and finally the woman finds herself. In fact this is a period of a closer relationship with the anima again but at an entirely different level than at the first phase: finding her way back she becomes much stronger after living her life, encountering animus and experiencing being lost. The freedom acquired by the woman also reveals her maturity, responsibility and inner strength: that's how she can turn to another person. With the man and woman finding each other, a connection is established in which the two persons can enter into a real relationship with each other as two individuals.

Struggling to develop her consciousness is difficult for the woman because she must first become alienated from herself but it is this inner road, which is more difficult

than that of men, that makes the tired hero pillow his head on her lap, finding safety, peace and home with her, as shown by the last painting of the Saint Ladislaus legend. In this scene, the female and male roles appear strikingly and are balanced based on complementation rather than compromise.

Generally, the female figure in the paintings is growing: first she is usually the size of a child but is already an adult in the last scene. She has grown up clearly, which is the goal of her road, too: developed and mature womanhood or – in other words – salvation.

## **Summary**

The teaching of the iconography of the sacred space in the church in Csíkmenaság is as follows: first the liberation story of a woman in the Saint Ladislaus legend as a model of the archetypical development story of women represents the essence of the individuation path of a woman. The Renaissance high altar shows this road presenting the main stations of Mary's life. Various phases and typical characteristics of this road are highlighted by female saints: they stand for archetypical female models related to the major stations and values of the inner development story of women. The wise and foolish virgins on the triumphal arch indicate the decisions to be taken on the initiation/development road of women and the consequences.

This female knowledge/tradition appears in connection with Christian teaching within the symbol system thereof, with all its elements related to transcendent reality and all its strength and safety originating therefrom. The development of female personality and the initiation into the mystery of womanhood are explored in agreement and close connection with the spiritual/transcendent aspects.