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**HONORING ST. ELISABETH OF HUNGARY IN THE
FRANCISCAN COMMUNITIES OF
CONTEMPORARY UMBRIA**

Arguments of the doctoral thesis (PhD)

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The precedents and the objectives of the research, and the motivation behind the choice of topic

The figure of St. Elizabeth of Hungary is an essential part of not only local but also international church history. Her cult has been traceable in several Catholic communities for the past 800 years. One of them is the franciscan order named after a saint of Assisi whose brothers - especially those following the rules created for seculars - hold her in high respect. As time passed, they have recognised her more and more as a role model and at one point in history - with the consent of the Holy See - they elected her as their official patron saint.

This paper's choice of topic has been greatly influenced by the fact that between 2003 and 2005, we have already conducted research on the Italian records of St. Elizabeth. At that time, while reconsidering Florio Banfi's volume published in 1941 discussing Hungarian relics, we have analysed the churches, monasteries and depictions of Florence connected to the saint. Since most of the founders and the procurers of these were members of the franciscan order, we have gathered more and more information through our research on how the followers of St. Francis' rules worship the Hungarian saint. Although it is traditionally believed - and also depicted in literature - that St. Elisabeth had been the patron saint of the third Franciscan order, the sources state that she has only been benefited with the tertiary attributive since the end of the 14th century, while the title of patron saint appears even later in the documents. One of the main goals of writing this paper was to further investigate this theme.

We have mostly examined the province now called Umbria, situated on the Italian peninsula, therefore the major part of collecting material took place within this well-marked area. It has been an integral fact in choosing the location of the field work that the city of Assisi - the spiritual center of the order - and Perugia - where Elisabeth was canonized in 1235 - are here. Various reform initiatives highly influencing the life of the order have also been started in the region within the boundaries of said province.

The demonstration and analysis of the visual and oral sources as well as the texts collected through the research are aimed to present the process of her becoming the emblematic figure of the third Franciscan order.

Research methods

The research began by familiarizing with the literature. Besides the texts concerning the saint's life and cult, we had to gather information on the history of the Franciscan order, especially the third branch. To achieve this, we mostly had to use volumes published in the

Italian language area. After that came the structuring of the logistics of material collection. Since we attempted to use longitudinal examinations in portraying the cult in its complexity, it seemed necessary to complete the analysis with the incorporation of as many visual, written and oral sources as possible. In addition to seeking out the province's most significant museums and Franciscan libraries, we have also methodically visited several monasteries and churches. We have conducted participant observation in the communities of the third order and we have interviewed numerous brothers.

During the analysis of the written sources, we have used the method of content analysis, and in the case of imagery, we have adopted the tenets of iconography.

Apart from the fact that the material collection served as a means to achieve the main objective of the research, we hope that recording data will prove to be useful in the future and may become the focus of new research.

Summary of the focal points of the dissertation

The paper consists of five units. After the first chapter elaborates on the road from formulating the topic to the realization of the research, the reader can get to know more about the figure of St. Elisabeth and her connection to the Franciscan order.

II. St. Elisabeth of Hungary and the Franciscan family

Before describing Elisabeth's biography, we review the connecting literature, the concept of sainthood as well as the basic manifestations of venerating saints. The biography of the third child of Andrew II and Gertrudis of Meran was summarized based on the earliest sources believed to be authentic in a manner that special emphasis is put on the facts that could later be connected to her correlation to the Franciscan order.

In the next subchapter we were investigating when and how the figure of St. Elisabeth had become a recognized tertiary saint by chronologically reviewing text sources created in Franciscan environments. Based on the displayed writings it seems that her accession to the third order had only been clearly articulated since the middle of the 14th century. After that, however, it is more and more common that her figure serves as a reference in the struggle for acknowledging the tertiary profession. It is probable that in the 17th century, she could have been called a patron with papal licence but this word choice only appears sporadically in the analyzed texts. The cult experienced an upswing in the last decades of the 19th century and in

the first decades of the 20th century which is evident in the written sources mentioning the saint.

The chapter's next subchapter discusses the history of the third order. While writing it, we have already taken into consideration the results of our material collection and data analysis and we attempted to shed light on the link between the internal development of the order and the cult. The reason that the figure of St. Elisabeth could have been set as an example for the tertiary since the second half of the 14th century is that the community lifestyle accepted in terms of the rules of the third order was established and later blessed by the Pope at that time. From then on, it could not have been problematic to interpret how could the widow of a Thuringian earl, living together with female companions without enclosure in her hospital, follow St. Francis' conduct. As the structure of the third order had become more and more solid, the promotion of St. Elisabeth's cult served in the education of the members as well as in building a unity between communities. This statement is valid above all for the era following the renewal of the rules by Pope Leo XIII in 1883.

III. The traces of St. Elizabeth of Hungary's cult in Umbria

This chapter showcases the results of the material collection in a way that it categorizes the findings into two bigger units. The exposition of the visual sources is done in chronological order to disambiguate the imagery of various eras as well as the intention of the clients. The deeper examination of the iconography of certain centuries gives us a chance to correlate the changes in the history of the third order in specific times with the appearance of the saint on depictions. Not all the approximately 70 works in the collection are unknown in literature but there are creations that have yet to be highlighted. We aimed to record all depictions strictly connected to the topic during the collecting period, artistic value of the given pieces were not among the criteria.

The written sources are reviewed in three more subgroups. First, we discuss Italian manuscripts mostly from the 19th and 20th centuries that were found in Franciscan libraries in Umbria. Although early publications of the issue type can be found from the 17th century, the use and popularity of these manuscripts had unequivocally increased after Pope Leo XIII's renewed rules. This flourishing era had continued all the way to 1978 when the order received its newest set of rules which altered the lives of brothers in several ways. The fundamental goal of these books was to aid the education of the members of the order. Besides the rules, the tertiary's obtainable spirituals possessions and the catalogue of the saints, there are various novena and triduum texts detailing St. Elisabeth's holiday in November, starting from

1883. The prayers without exception name the saint specifically as the patron of the third order and commemorate her as a role model realizing Franciscan virtues.

After the manuscripts, we can read about Italian publications elaborating on the biography of the saint, dating mostly after the highly influential work of Earl Montalembert issued in 1836. Most of these are connected to the Franciscan order either by the author or the publisher so it is not surprising that Elisabeth is sometimes mentioned even in the subtitle as a significant follower of St. Francis.

The last segment dealing with texts is the overview of periodicals which contain extremely important data connected to the topic of the dissertation. As part of the Catholic press activities of the 19th century, the order also established its own periodicals and most of these were for the tertiary. By reports from brotherly communities, central initiatives and preachings, the thriving cult, defining the decades near the turn of the century, can easily be identified.

IV. Manifestations of honoring St. Elisabeth in the third orders in Umbria in the 19th and 20th centuries

This chapter details the oral sources obtained through interviews and participant observation. We strived to show the cult in the lives of communities based on three viewpoints. First of all, we analyzed those secular and regular third orders from Umbria that are named after St. Elisabeth. After that we tried to answer the question whether we can find unique traditions connected to the holiday in November.

Considering that there have been numerous initiatives rooted in honoring the saint during the anniversaries of her birth, death and canonization in the 19th and the 21st centuries, elaborating on these is in a separate subchapter.

The final chapter of the dissertation summarizes the results of our analysis. Since the evaluation of visual sources is an inherent part of the research, we found it important to include all depictions in the annex. Furthermore, there are also specific representations to illustrate text sources and the holidays of the communities.

The results of the dissertation

We have tried to formulate our paper in a way that the data collected and analyzed during the research as well as the findings in corresponding literature would form a unit that could help

the reader in understanding the process of St. Elizabeth of Hungary's integration to the third Franciscan order.

Although most of the material collection and examinations were confined to a specific area, the statements can be generalized due to the fact that Umbria has been an integral part of the order's life. Even though there are already a couple of studies on the veneration of the Hungarian-born saint, the complex longitudinal analysis of the cult's Franciscan aspects is not common. The exploration of multitudes of new visual and written sources is a significant result of the research. With the help of new data as well as the deeper investigation of the history of the third order we could gain more nuanced information on how brothers honored St. Elisabeth in certain historical times as well as why and how this has changed throughout the course of centuries.

List of publications related to the topic of the dissertation

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