

On the Hierarchy of Saints on Altars

Visitation Records of Otto Friedrich Buchheim, the Bishop of Ljubljana (1641–1664)

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Slovenska verzija dostopna na / Slovenian version available at:

(RIHA Journal 0027)

Abstract

The visitation records of Otto Friedrich Buchheim, the Bishop of Ljubljana from 1641–1664, offer an insight into the rules governing the disposition of saintly figures in altar retables. The central place was accorded to the titular saint, while companion saints are positioned in pairs (separately for each level of the retable) in such a way that those of higher rank are placed on the more distinguished gospel side, whereas those of lower rank stand on the subordinate epistle side. The priority of one saint over another was not a matter of a random choice, but of a fixed hierarchical order which was created over the course of centuries in the Litany of All Saints and also in the hymns of the *officium* for All Saints Day; this hierarchy, as Buchheim remarks, is "in agreement with the general feeling of the Catholic Church". Ecclesiastical art in Slovenia shows that in the Gothic period the hierarchical principle governing the disposition of saintly figures was not yet firmly fixed, but it was fully established in the late Renaissance and Baroque periods, which coincides with the period of unification of the Litany of All Saints for the entire Catholic Church. Later it started to loosen again, yet it remained in force up to the 20th century.

[1] The research into the 17th century visitation records of the Diocese of Ljubljana undertaken in the 1990s focused on the artistic policies of the bishops of Ljubljana, particularly from the viewpoint of effectuating decrees issued and guidelines drawn up by the Council of Trent, or, respectively, of implementing the instructions of Catholic reform theoreticians.¹ In terms of art history, the records of Bishop Otto Friedrich Buchheim, the Bishop of Ljubljana from 1641–1664,² who was greatly interested in the arts and well-

¹ Ana Lavrič, *Vizitacije ljubljanske škofije 17. stoletja kot vir za umetnostno zgodovino* (typescript thesis), Ljubljana 1993; Ana Lavrič, *Vizitacije kot vir za slovensko zgodovino*, in: *Grafenauerjev zbornik*, ed. Vincenc Rajšp et al., Ljubljana 1996, 483–491; Ana Lavrič, *Ljubljanska škofija v vizitacijah 17. stoletja. Vizitacije kot vir za umetnostno zgodovino*, Ljubljana 2007, <http://uifs.zrc-sazu.si/?q=lavric.vizitacije> (accessed 15 September 2011).

² For historical data see: France Dolinar, Puchheim (Puchaim, Puchaimb, Buchheim) Otto Friedrich, in: *Die Bischöfe des Heiligen Römischen Reiches 1648 bis 1803. Ein biographisches Lexikon*, eds. Erwin Gatz and Stephan M. Janker, Berlin 1990, 354–355; France Dolinar, *Ljubljanski škofje*, Ljubljana 2007, 133–140, with earlier literature; for the Bishop's collecting and patronage see: Ana Lavrič, *Rimska slikarska zbirka ljubljanskega škofa Otona Friderika Buchheima ter njegov prispevek za obnovo Germanika in cerkve sv. Apolinarija*, in: *Acta historiae artis Slovenica* 8 (2003), 53–84; Ana Lavrič, *Umetnostna dejavnost škofa Otona Friderika Buchheima v ljubljanski škofiji*, in: *Acta historiae artis Slovenica* 9 (2004), 31–69; Ana Lavrič, *Povezave škofa Otona Friderika Buchheima z*

read, proved to be of particular interest. Among other things, the records reveal the basis on which the Church formed the rules for the disposition of saintly figures in altar retables. A paper discussing this matter was published in 1993 in the journal *Bogoslovni vestnik*,³ while the present paper is a new version (in Slovenian and in English translation), complemented particularly with quotations from sources and with a greater number of examples taken from Slovenian art.

[2] After the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church—in controversies with Protestants, but in keeping with its traditions—again emphasised the holiness and dignity of liturgical spaces deriving from their consecration and the divine presence. Accordingly, the entire arrangement of churches and disposition of their furnishings were subordinated to the hierarchy of the sacred; thus, church buildings, as hierarchically organised units, also reflected the institutional structure of the Church. Of prime importance was the division of the building between the sanctuary as a place of liturgy and the clergy, and the nave as the place of the congregation. With regard to its distinction, the sanctuary had to be given particular visual emphasis, e.g. a vaulting, frescoes, marble pavement, etc., and—as recommended by Carlo Borromeo—it also had to be separated from the area occupied by the laity by means of a rail and steps.⁴ The nave was secondary to the sanctuary so its decoration was simpler, as was the quality of its vaulting and floor. Another important division in the church was between the gospel and epistle sides, which also represented the division between the two sexes; in Carniola, however, the demarcation was not marked by a wooden barrier, such as had been envisaged by the rigorous Carlo Borromeo to separate the area for women from that for men.⁵

[3] The gospel side, where the gospel was read (i.e. the right-hand side if viewed from the sanctuary at the nave, i.e. the position of the clergy; or the left-hand side if viewed from the nave at the sanctuary, i.e. from the position of the congregation, the so-called 'women's side') was more distinguished than the epistle side, where epistles were read (i.e. the left-hand side viewed from the sanctuary at the nave, i.e. from the position of the clergy; or the right-hand side if viewed from the nave at the sanctuary, i.e. from the position of the congregation, the so-called 'men's side'). This hierarchy was also expressed in the placement of the tabernacle in the wall on the gospel side, which in the

Dunajem in slikarska oprema njegovih rezidenc v ljubljanski škofiji, in: *Acta historiae artis Slovenica* 12 (2007), 43-63; Ana Lavrič, Oto Friderik Buchheim in njegovih kanoniški rezidenci v Salzburgu in Passauu, in: *Acta historiae artis Slovenica* 13 (2008), 121-136.

³ Ana Lavrič, O hierarhiji svetnikov na oltarnih nastavkih, in: *Bogoslovni vestnik* 53 (1993), 337-343.

⁴ See particularly: Susanne Mayer-Himmelheber, *Bischöfliche Kunstpolitik nach dem Tridentinum. Der Secunda-Roma-Anspruch Carlo Borromeos und die mailändischen Verordnungen zu Bau und Ausstattung von Kirchen* (= tuduv Studien. Reihe Kunstgeschichte 11), München 1984, 110, 117, 122. For the Council of Trent, see also the fundamental work: Hubert Jedin, *Geschichte des Konzils von Trient*, vols. 1-5, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1949-1975.

⁵ Mayer-Himmelheber, *Bischöfliche Kunstpolitik*, 154.

17th century, for example, was often called the 'more respectable place' (*locus eminentior, locus honorabilior*) by the visitators to the Ljubljana Diocese.⁶ Later on, when the tabernacle was given an even more distinguished place on the high altar, thus defining and giving sense to the axis of the entire building, its original position on the gospel side was intended for the storage of holy oils. If there was an altar of the Holy Sacrament in the church, its position was usually on the gospel side. The priority of the gospel side over the epistle side was evident in altar retables in the disposition of saints, who, if placed on the former side, were accorded greater honour according to the generally accepted hierarchical order.

[4] The choice of saints to be worshipped in a certain church was left to commissioners, i.e. the congregation, founders or donors; but it was naturally also conditioned by time, place, society and personal factors.⁷ An exact hagio-topography of the dioceses in Slovenia has not yet been made, although there have been several partial studies.⁸ If completed, apart from the general image of the worship of saints in Slovenian territory, it would also show specific local features. An overview of individual parishes which comprise independent hagiographic units is also interesting. Each of these units should have been suitably balanced in terms of content, but certain *patrocinia* in some of them were repeated several times; as a warning against accumulating the same *patrocinia*, Bishop Otto Buchheim, for example, even calculated repeated occurrences of the same titular saints of the churches and chapels in individual parishes.⁹ When a congregation asked for a change of *patrocinium* of an altar, church or chapel, their argument was precisely that certain saints were already sufficiently represented in their parish. Even within a single church, which is likewise a complete hagiographic unit, several examples of the same patron saint occur, most often the Blessed Virgin, to whom even several altars were dedicated in a number of cases, and rather frequently, several images.

[5] As a rule, the image of the titular saint to whom a certain altar was consecrated was intended for the central position in the altar retable. As can be understood from 17th century visitation records, retables did not always correspond to the title of the altar.

⁶ Cf. Archiepiscopal Archive Ljubljana (= NŠAL), Visitations of Ljubljana Diocese (= ŠAL/viz), fasc. 1, no. 2, 1661/I, p. 111, and no. 3, 1665, fol. 70.

⁷ It is rather interesting that Bishop Buchheim reported discontentedly to Rome that the believers in his diocese also wanted to build churches in honour of certain characters of the Old Testament, see: France Dolinar, *Podoba ljubljanske škofije v rimskih poročilih škofov Rinalda Scarlichija in Otona Friderika Buchheima*, in: *Bogoslovni vestnik* 40 (1980), 31.

⁸ Cf. France Rupnik, *O češčenju nekaterih cerkvenih zavetnikov*, in: *Koledar Goriške Mohorjeve družbe za prestopno leto 1928*, Gorica 1927, 59-68; Franc Truhlar, *Problem starih patrocinijev v Sloveniji*, in: *Bogoslovni vestnik* 33 (1973), 61-117; Franc Truhlar, *Patrocinij sv. Jurija v Sloveniji*, in: *Arheološki vestnik* 31 (1980), 159-168.

⁹ See Buchheim's notes to Scarlich's visitation protocol in: Ana Lavrič, *Ljubljanska škofija v vizitacijah Rinalda Scarlichija 1631-1632* (= *Acta Ecclesiastica Sloveniae*, vol. 12), Ljubljana 1990, 66, 68, 73, 76-80 and *passim*.

Sometimes the titular saint was replaced by another, so that the titular saint—whose image was perhaps absent from the retable—can be inferred solely from consecration documents and holy mass obligations.¹⁰ It was not unusual for the central place in a retable to be occupied by a theologically more relevant motif, e.g. Christological or Marian, while the titular saint was moved to a side or the top position. The visitors ordered that such altars be adapted to the patron saint, so that the *patrocinium* of the altar would also be fully recognisable. Subordinate or associate saints were arranged to the side of the central saint or religious motif. Although the choice of these was optional, they were often (partly at least) related to the titular saint in terms of content or iconography, and a certain correspondence between them was required, at least for each individual pair. Thus, most often, both in the case of associate saints and titular saints if the latter appear in a pair or group, the usual pairs are present (e.g. Sts. Peter and Paul; Sts. Hermagoras and Fortunatus; etc.) and iconographically determined groups (e.g. a pair or group of apostles, martyrs, bishops, members of religious orders, Knights of Christ, etc.); it is only rarely that an unusual combination of saints who normally do not belong together occurs. The selection of saints sometimes followed the transfer of worship from removed altar retables to another altar in the respective church; this altar then, as Buchheim writes, "visually kept alive" the memory of their patron saints.¹¹

[6] Naturally, associate saints did not flank the central saint at random or in spontaneous combinations, but in a certain hierarchical order. The disposition of saints in altar retables observed an order of precedence which echoed the superiority of the gospel side and the subordination of the epistle side. The saint who was given priority was placed on the gospel side (i. e. to the right if viewed from the side of the central saint), while the one of lower rank was assigned to the epistle side (i. e. to the left if viewed from the side of the central saint). However, the priority of one over the other was not a matter of individual decision-making, but of a generally accepted hierarchy of saints which was theologically grounded and rooted in Church tradition.¹² This hierarchy was established in the course of centuries in the Litany of All Saints and in the liturgy of prayer or, respectively, the liturgy of All Saints Day; it was observed in breviaries and

¹⁰ Cf. NŠAL, ŠAL/viz., fasc. 1, no. 2, 1661/II, p. 32.

¹¹ NŠAL, ŠAL/viz., fasc. 1, no. 2, 1661/I, p. 163: *Visitatio parochialis ecclesiae S: Martini ad pontem Crainburg.em [...] Tertium dicitur altare Sancti Georgij, ad quod etiam cultus diuinus in eadem Reinaldina visitatione translatus est, ex demolitis duobus Sancti Stephani, et Sanctae Catharinae altaribus, quae eiecta sunt propter ecclesiae angustiam: unde etiam icon altaris noua, sed non dum picta, refert in parte prima Sanctum Georgium, in parte secunda Sanctum Stephanum, et in fastigio Sanctam Catharinam, ne priorum altarium memoria penitus aboleatur.*

¹² For the development of the cult of All Saints or, respectively, the formation of groups of saints in the liturgy and arts see: Rudolf Günther, *Die Bilder des Genter und des Isenheimer Altars. Ihre Geschichte und Deutung*. 1. Der Genter Altar und die Allerheiligenliturgie, in: *Studien über christliche Denkmäler, N. F. der Archäologischen Studien zum christlichen Altertum und Mittelalter*, 15 (1923), 4-35; Heinrich Feurstein, *Allerheiligen*, in: *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, ed. Otto Schmitt, vol. 1, Stuttgart 1937, 365-374; Balthasar Fischer, *Allerheiligen*, in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 1, Freiburg-Basel-Rom-Wien 1993, 405-406.

other liturgical books.¹³ Hierarchical ranking was intended to reflect the heavenly hierarchy in which the angels and saints are ranked according to their priority in the history of redemption and according to their personal merit. Thus, in chronological principle, the representatives of the Old Testament precede those of the New Testament; particular priority is given to Christ's relatives and disciples. In the period following Christ's lifetime, priority was accorded to martyrs, followed by representatives of the high ecclesiastical hierarchy, then clergy of lower rank, etc. Because male saints take priority, female saints follow only at the end, and are ranked according to the same basic principle (priority goes to female martyrs, etc.). As participants in the heavenly liturgy (*liturgia coelestis*), the saints are assembled in this succession before God's throne or the Lamb of God.¹⁴

¹³ Particularly important for the establishment of groups of saints, or the heavenly choirs, and their hierarchical order were the two hymns of the *officium* for All Saints Day (1st November); see the entry Allerheiligenbild, in: *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie. Allgemeine Ikonographie*, vol. 1, Rom-Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1968, 101-104 (editorial board). The original hymns, 'Iesu, salvator saeculi' and 'Christe, redemptor omnium', presumably by Hrabanus Maurus (776–856), were revised by Pope Urban VIII (1623, 1643) for the Roman Breviary and are known under the titles 'Salutis aeternae dator' and 'Placare, Christe, servulis'; after Vatican II, the two hymns are included in the reformed Breviary in their original form. The former one is chanted at matins (Ad Laudes matutinas): *Iesu, salvator saeculi, redemptis ope subveni, et, pia Dei genetrix, salutem posce miseris. / Coetus omnes angelici, patriarcharum cunei ac prophetarum merita nobis precentur veniam. / Baptista tui praevisus et claviger aethereus cum ceteris apostolis nos solvant nexu criminis. / Chorus sacratus martyrum, sacerdotum confessio et virginalis castitas nos a peccatis abluant. / Monachorum suffragia omnesque cives caelici annuant votis supplicum et vitae poscant praemium. / Sit, Christe, tibi gloria cum Patre et Sancto Spiritu, quorum luce mirifica sancti congaudent perpetim. Amen.* The latter one is a constituent part of the first and second vespers (Ad Vesperas): *Christe, redemptor omnium, conserva tuos famulos, beatae semper Virginis placatus sanctis precibus. / Beata quoque agmina, caelestium spirituum, praeterita, praesentia, futura mala pellite. / Vates aeterni iudicis apostolique Domini, suppliciter exposcimus salvari vestris precibus. / Martyres Dei incliti confessoresque lucidi, vestris orationibus nos ferte in caelestibus. / Chori sanctarum virginum monachorumque omnium simul cum sanctis omnibus consortes Christi facite. / Sit Trinitati gloria, vestrasque voces iungite ut illi laudes debitas persolvamus alacriter. Amen.* For the two hymns, which are even clearer than the originals as to the enumeration of the groups of heaven's inhabitants in Urban VIII's revision, see: <http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Hymni/Salutis.html> and <http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Hymni/Placare.html> (accessed 15 September 2011). At least partly, the disposition of saintly figures on the portals of medieval cathedrals (particularly on the archivolt) already corresponded to the *officium* of All Saints Day, e.g. in Burgos, Strasbourg, etc., cf. Günther, *Die Bilder des Genter und des Isenheimer Altars*, 20-21.

¹⁴ The ranking of the heavenly choirs can already be seen in medieval depictions of All Saints, or the heavenly liturgy, of which one of the most famous examples is the Ghent Altar by Hubert and Jan van Eyck of 1432, where, next to the mystic Lamb of God and the fountain of life, stand first the prophets and the patriarchs, as well as the apostles and the doctors, next come the martyrs, bishops and confessors, and as the last the female saints, while on the wings (with regard to the name and profession of the patron) follow the Knights of Christ and the righteous judges, holy hermits and holy pilgrims, see: Günther, *Die Bilder des Genter und des Isenheimer Altars*, 29; cf. Karl Künstle, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst. 1. Prinzipienlehre, Hilfs motive, Offenbarungstatsachen*, Freiburg i. Br. 1928, 558-560; cf. Feurstein, *Allerheiligen*, 365-374. For the medieval understanding of the saintly hierarchy, see the Golden Legend (*Legenda Aurea*), which acknowledges four choirs of saints: the apostles (*prima igitur differentia est apostolorum*), the martyrs (*secunda differentia est martirum (!)*), the confessors (*tertia differentia est confessorum*) and the virgins (*quarta differentia est virginum*), whereas it mentions the fifth choir, i.e. the patriarchs and prophets, only in connection with the legend of the vision of the sexton at St. Peter's church in the Vatican (Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea vulgo Historia Lombardica dicta*, Melle 2003, 718-728).

[7] The basic hierarchical scale was established more concretely through the Litany of All Saints. At first, in spite of its similar basic composition, the Litany was practiced in several local variants which were adapted to the local veneration of saints;¹⁵ when Pope Pius V (1566–1572) gave the Litany its present form, it became uniform for the entire Catholic Church.¹⁶ The rearranged Litany, which had already been generally introduced by the Roman pontifical in the 16th century, was subsequently only slightly altered: the acclamation to St. Joseph was inserted, and the order of certain saints inverted.¹⁷ The rearrangement of the Litany also fixed the number of acclamations, which were very numerous in the early variants of the Litany, and a fixed hierarchy was established, descending from St. Mary, via archangels and angels, orders of blessed spirits, St. John the Baptist, patriarchs and prophets, apostles and evangelists, disciples of the Lord and innocents, martyrs, bishops and confessors, doctors, priests and levites, monks and hermits to virgins and widows.

[8] The Litany of All Saints—following the Roman pontifical¹⁸—enumerates angels and saints in the following order:

• *Sancta Maria [...], Sancte Michael, Sancte Gabriel, Sancte Raphael* • *Omnes sancti Angeli et Archangeli* • *Omnes sancti beatorum Spirituum ordines* • *Sancte Joannes Baptista*¹⁹ • *Omnes sancti Patriarchae et Prophetae, Sancte Petre, Sancte Paule, Sancte Andrea, Sancte Jacobe,*²⁰ *Sancte Joannes, sancte Thoma, Sancte Jacobe,*²¹ *Sancte Philippe, Sancte Bartholomaeae, Sancte Matthaee, Sancte Simon,*²² *Sancte Thaddaeae,*²³ *Sancte Mathia, Sancte Barnaba, Sancte Luca, Sancte Marce* • *Omnes sancti Apostoli et Euangelistae* • *Omnes sancti Discipuli Domini* • *Omnes sancti Innocentes, Sancte Stephane,*²⁴ *Sancti Laurenti, Sancte Vincenti, Sancte Fabiane et Sebastiane, Sancti Joannes et Paule, Sancti Cosma et Damiane, Sancti Gervasi et Protasi* • *Omnes sancti Martyres, Sancte Sylvester, Sancte Gregori, Sancte Ambrosi, Sancte Augustine, Sancte Hieronymae, Sancte Martine, Sancte Nicolae* • *Omnes sancti Pontifices et Confessores* • *Omnes sancti Doctores, Sancte Benedicte,*²⁵ *Sancte Antoni, Sancte Bernarde, sancte Dominice, Sancte Francisce,* • *Omnes sancti Sacerdotes et Levitae* • *Omnes sancti Monachi et*

¹⁵ Maurice Coens, *Anciennes litanies des Saints*, in: *Recueil d'études bollandiennes* (= *Subsidia hagiographica* 37), Bruxelles 1963, 129-322.

¹⁶ Coens, *Anciennes litanies*, 129-322; Martin Lechner, *Litanei*, in: *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, vol. 3, Rom-Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1971, 102-103; Balthasar Fischer, *Litanei*, in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 6, Freiburg-Basel-Rom-Wien 1997, 954-955.

¹⁷ The text of the Litany was revised again only after Vatican II.

¹⁸ I quote the Litany after the Roman Pontifical of 1596, kept in the Seminary Library in Ljubljana. I am indebted to Dr. Marijan Smolik for the presentation and explanation of the Litany in the Pontificals and for his suggestions in selecting literature.

¹⁹ In later variants, the acclamation to St. Joseph follows.

²⁰ James the Greater.

²¹ James the Lesser.

²² Simon Thaddeus.

²³ Jude Thaddeus.

²⁴ In later variants, St. Lawrence precedes St. Stephen.

²⁵ In later variants, St. Anthony precedes St. Benedict.

Eremitae, Sancta Maria Magdalena, Sancta Agatha, Sancta Lucia, Sancta Agnes, Sancta Caecilia, Sancta Catharina, Sancta Anastasia • Omnes sanctae Virgines et Viduae • Omnes Sancti et sanctae Dei [...].

[9] As can be understood from the Litany, a precisely defined ranking was usually established within individual groups, at least for some of their saints; prior to the introduction of the unified form, this had varied in locally conditioned variants in individual local Churches. But where the Litany enumerates only groups of saints and omits the list of concrete names, the arrangement within a single group is based either on the equality of all its members, and is hence optional, or is subject to established principles of priority; thus, for example, the hierarchy of angelic choirs had long been established by tradition—seraphim (*Seraphim*), cherubim (*Cherubim*) and thrones (*Throni*), dominions (*Dominationes*), virtues (*Virtutes*) and powers (*Potestates*), principalities (*Principatus*), archangels (*Archangeli*) and angels (*Angeli*)²⁶—although it is not explicitly stated in the acclamations.

[10] According to Bishop Buchheim, the hierarchical arrangement of saints in the Litany was "in accordance with the general feeling of the Catholic Church";²⁷ therefore, it was intended as a guide to the disposition of saints in altar retables. While on a visitation inspection, Buchheim issued specific orders for the placement of statues on altars: the order of the Litany was to be observed. Because he was the only visitor of the Ljubljana diocese to have mentioned this issue, his records are interesting and valuable documents.

[11] Being well educated and highly cultured, Buchheim would in general have expatiated upon questions of iconography. While on visitations, he examined the iconographic adequacy or acceptability of the depictions, and demanded, in the spirit of post-Trentine efforts, that depictions of saints be in harmony with accepted models and historical truth. Thus, for example, he warned against the incorrect presentations of St. Leonard who, in Upper Carniola (present-day Gorenjska), i.e. at Jesenice and Kranj, was incorrectly depicted as a Cistercian monk, although, as a disciple of St. Benedict, he should have been dressed in a black Benedictine habit.²⁸ He was also concerned with attributes, which are very important in identifying the person depicted. When, for example, he noticed this type of mistake in the church at Ljubno ob Savinji, he ordered

²⁶ For the angelic choirs, see: Dionysius Areopagita, *De Coelesti hierarchia*, in: *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. Balthasar Corderius, vol. 3, Paris (Migne) 1857, 119-370; Karl-August Wirth, *Engelchöre*, in: *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, ed. Karl-August Wirth, vol. 5, Stuttgart 1967, 555-601.

²⁷ NŠAL, ŠAL/viz., fasc. 1, no. 2, 1661/II, pp. 61, 205.

²⁸ NŠAL, ŠAL/viz., fasc. 1, no. 2, 1661/I, p. 73 (see n. 31); NŠAL, ŠAL/viz., fasc. 1, no. 2, 1661/I, p. 112: *Visitatio parochiae S. Leonardi in Assling [...] Visitavit altaria, primum in choro S: Leonardo dicatum et consecratum, mandavit [...] statuam S: Leonardi, in habitu albo repertam, quasi fuisset Cisterciensis, mandavit denigrari in formam Benedictinorum, quia fuit S: Benedicti discipulus.*

that "the golden apples should be put back on the book held by the saint, so that the statue could be distinguished from other holy bishops".²⁹

[12] Naturally, of most interest are the Bishop's remarks on the arrangement of saints on altars, as they directly point to the source from which his hierarchical principles were drawn. When he visited the church of St. Peter in Bistrice ob Sotli, he found that the hierarchy of saints on the high altar was "against the order observed by Holy Mother Church, which in the Litany first calls upon St. Andrew and only then upon St. John".³⁰ Therefore, he had the statue of St. Andrew—located in the wrong, i.e. 'second', place—moved to the gospel side, and the statue of St. John the Evangelist to the epistle side. Also, in the case of the high altar at Kropa, he had the positions of the statues of Sts. Barbara and John the Baptist exchanged, so that John—who was higher in rank and hence preceded Barbara in the Litany—would thereafter stand on the gospel and Barbara on the epistle side.³¹ In the case of Preddvor, the Bishop decided that the statues of Sts. Paul and Sebastian on the high altar were to be placed to the gospel side, with Sts. Andrew and Roche moved to the epistle side,³² because only in this way would the two pairs of saints be correctly positioned: the leading apostle Paul would have priority over the apostle Andrew, and the martyr Sebastian over the confessor Roche. The definition shows that each pair was treated as an independent hierarchical unit; so the hierarchical rule had to be followed separately for the outer and inner pairs, which are not necessarily related in terms of content. Buchheim also noticed an error at Križe, where on the altar of the Holy Cross, St. Roche stood on the gospel and St. Sebastian on the epistle side; because "a martyr surpasses a confessor", the visitor ordered that St. Sebastian be placed to the more distinguished side.³³ A case similar to that in Bistrice ob Sotli is found

²⁹ NŠAL, ŠAL/viz., fasc. 1, no. 2, 1661/II, p. 149: *Visitatio parochialis ecclesiae Sanctae Elisabethae in Lauffen [...] mandavit, ut statuæ huius Sancti [Nicolai] sua poma aurea eius ab alijs Sanctis Ep.is distinctiva, super libro, quem tenet restituatur.*

³⁰ NŠAL, ŠAL/viz., fasc. 1, no. 2, 1661/II, p. 205: *Visitatio parochialis ecclesiae Sancti Petri, ad Königspurg nuncupatae [...] Visitavit etiam aliam ecclesiae dispositionem, et aduertit in icone altaris maioris contra ordinem S: M.ris Ecclesiae S: Andream prius, et postea S: Ioannem in Litanij inuocantem, statuam S.ti Andreae tenere locum secundum id est a parte Epistolae, et Sancti Ioannis esse a parte Euangelij collocatam. Ideo mandavit eas transponi.*

³¹ NŠAL, ŠAL/viz., fasc. 1, no. 2, 1661/I, p. 73: *Visitatio curatae ecclesiae S: Leonardi in Croppa [...] Primum [altare] in choro tituli S: Leonardi, cuius statua, cum reperta sit in habitu cisterciensi, sicut etiam eiusdem imago picta in vexillo processionali. Ideo mandavit utrimque habitum, et colorem benedictinum nigrum restitui, S: Leonardo, tanquam Diui Benedicti discipulo competentem. Notavit item in hac icone a parte Euangelij statuam S. Barbarae, et a parte Epistolae statuam S: Ioannis Baptistae. Ideo mandavit dextrum partis Euangelij locum Diui Ioanni, et sinistrum S: Barbarae assignari.*

³² NŠAL, ŠAL/viz., fasc. 1, no. 2, 1661/I, p. 153: *Visitatio vicariatus S: Petri in Höfflein [...] Visitavit etiam altaria, et in hac ecclesia reperit esse tria. Primum in choro Diuo Petro Apostolo dicatum, et consecratum, in quo mandavit SS: Pauli, et Sebastiani statuas reponi ad partem Euangelij, et SS: Andreae, et Rochi ad partem Epistolae.*

³³ NŠAL, ŠAL/viz., fasc. 1, no. 2, 1661/I, p. 140: *Visitatio vicariatus S: Crucis prope Neūmarktl [...] Visitavit etiam altaria, quae tria reperit consecrata. Primum in choro tituli S: Crucis, in cuius icone medium locum tenet S: Hellena cum cruce. A parte Euangelij statua S: Rochi, et a parte Ep.lae S: Sebastiani Martyris, cum autem in Ecclesia Dei Martyr praecedat Confessorem, mandavit has*

in the chapel in Škale, where Buchheim noted that on the altar of St. Anne, the statue of St. Andrew stood on the epistle and the statue of St. John the Evangelist on the gospel side, which was "against the general feeling of the Church, which in the Litany places St. Andrew before St. John"; therefore, he ordered that their locations be exchanged.³⁴ In this case, the mistake was made only within the hierarchy of members of the same group, which should have followed the established order of the apostles, whereas several of the mistakes mentioned earlier were related to the incorrect ranking of members of different groups of saints (e.g. unjustified priority of a confessor over a martyr). The shifting of statues as ordered by Buchheim was still feasible in his time, since sculptures had not yet become so dynamic and extended into the surrounding space, and not so complementary in terms of composition and adapted to the architecture of the retables as they were later in the period of the high Baroque, when their dynamism increased and their interrelations visually more accentuated.

[13] The rule which Buchheim explicitly states must have been generally known and accepted, because mistakes were relatively rare, as the records prove; had they been more numerous, the Bishop's sharp eye would have certainly noticed. The surviving altars in Slovenia—as far as they can be taken into account at all, given later renovations and alterations—show that in the Gothic period the hierarchical principle was not followed consistently, but was enforced more vigorously in the late Renaissance and the Baroque—which corresponds to the period of unification of the Litany of All Saints for the entire Church—but, of course, not everywhere with the same strictness. Although it later lapsed again, it was generally in force throughout the 19th century and thereafter to some extent. Then, if the arrangement of figures of saints in altar retables (at several levels, if the altar had several 'storeys') is analysed in terms of the hierarchical principle, certain patterns which we may otherwise completely have overlooked become evident. So it becomes clear that on all the altars on which Sts. Peter and Paul figure as a pair, the former always stands on the gospel side and the latter on the epistle; the above-mentioned rule explains the reason for this. There are numerous other similar examples of this hierarchy; a few selected cases are presented below to illustrate individual periods, but this selection extends beyond the boundaries of Ljubljana diocese to encompass a broader area of modern Slovenia.

transponi, ut Martyr partem Euangelij, et Confessor teneat partem Epistolae.

³⁴ NŠAL, ŠAL/viz., fasc. 1, no. 2, 1661/II, p. 61: *Visitatio parochiae S.ti Georgij in Skallis [...] Quartum altare est in capella propria a parte Euangelij, Sanctae Annae dicatum, et consecratum. In cuius icone statua Sancti Andreae a parte Epistolae, et statua S: Ioannis a parte Euangelij collocantur, contra communem sensum Ecclesiae, quae in Litanijis praeponit Sanctum Andream Sancto Ioanni: ideo mandauit easdem transponi.*

[14] A medieval example, St. Sigismund's altar at Ptujška Gora from c. 1410, shows an incorrect disposition, because the statue of St. Barbara stands to the titular's right, while that of St. Erasmus, who gallantly ceded the more respectable place to the 'lady', stands to his left (fig. 1).³⁵



1 Sculptural workshop of Ptujška Gora, the altar of St. Sigismund, c. 1410, basilica of Holy Mary of Protection, Ptujška Gora (photo Andrej Furlan, © UIFS ZRC SAZU)

³⁵ Robert Peskar, *Bazilika Marije Zavetnice na Ptujški Gori*, Ljubljana 2010, 139-146. The altar was damaged during a Turkish attack in the second half of the 15th century. In his record of Ptujška Gora, Paolo Santonino, who between 1485 and 1487 accompanied the Aquileian visitor Peter Carli, expressly states that the sacrilegious Ottoman hands threw the statues from the retables on the floor and impiously broke off their limbs. This might have been the reason for the subsequent rearrangement of the statues, although this cannot be confirmed from the situation on the altar; cf. Paolo Santonino, *Popotni dnevniki*, Celovec-Dunaj-Ljubljana 1991, 71; cf. Emilijan Cevc, *Gotsko kiparstvo (= Ars Sloveniae)*, Ljubljana 1967, notes s. p.

[15] The same holds true of the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary—also at Ptujška Gora and of the same date—in which St. Catherine has priority over the apostle St. Andrew (fig. 2).³⁶



2 Sculptural workshop of Ptujška Gora, the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary, c. 1410, basilica of Holy Mary of Protection, Ptujška Gora (photo Andrej Furlan, © UIFS ZRC SAZU)

³⁶ Peskar, *Bazilika Marije Zavetnice*, 146-153; see commentary to n. 35.

[16] As a representative of the so-called golden altars, which already observe the hierarchical order more strictly, the one of St. Martin at Crngrob dating from 1680 is an example: in the central part of the altar, St. Francis of Assisi, as the founder of a religious order, is correctly placed on the gospel and St. Anthony of Padua on the epistle side; similarly, on the top of the altar, the first martyr, St. Stephen, justifiably takes priority over the martyr St. Laurence (fig. 3).³⁷



3 Altar of St. Martin, 1680, succursal church of the Annunciation, Crngrob (photo Andrej Furlan, © UIFS ZRC SAZU)

³⁷ For the altar, see: France Stele, *Crngrob* (= *Spomeniški vodniki*, vol. 3), Ljubljana [1962], 41; Dušan Koman, *Crngrob* (= *Kulturni in naravni spomeniki Slovenije. Zbirka vodnikov*, vol. 201), Ljubljana 2000, 35.

[17] The Baroque high altar from the mid-18th century in the church on the island of Lake Bled punctiliously observes male priority, since St. Henry accompanies the Blessed Virgin in the central niche on her right and St. Kunigunde on her left (fig. 4).³⁸



4 Altar of the Assumption of the Virgin, c. mid-18th century, succursal church of the Assumption of the Virgin, Bled - Otok/Isle (photo Andrej Furlan, © UIFS ZRC SAZU)

³⁸ For the altar, see: Sergej Vrišer, *Baročno kiparstvo v osrednji Sloveniji*, Ljubljana 1976, 127-130.

[18] The 'prescribed' order of the Litany is also reflected in the arrangement of the doctors, e.g. in the mid-18th century altar of the former monastery church at Kostanjevica na Krki, now located in the church at Golo: featuring as the inner pair, next to the central niche, are St. Gregory (on the gospel side) and St. Ambrose (on the epistle side) and as the outer pair, in the same disposition, St. Augustine and St. Jerome (fig. 5).³⁹



5 Anonymous Bavarian sculptor, high altar (originally at Kostanjevica na Krki), mid-18th century, parish church of St. Margaret, Golo (photo Blaž Resman, © UIFS ZRC SAZU)

³⁹ For the altar, see: Blaž Resman, Baročna oltarna oprema kostanjeviške samostanske cerkve, in: *Vekov tek. Kostanjevica na Krki 1252–2002. Zbornik ob 750. obletnici prve listinske omembe mesta*, Kostanjevica na Krki 2003, 486–487; Blaž Resman, Die Grundströmungen in der Skulptur des Barock in Slowenien. Übersicht, Problematik, Einflüsse des bayerischen Rokoko, in: *Bayern und Slowenien im Zeitalter des Barock. Architektur, Skulptur, Malerei*, eds. Janez Höfler and Frank Büttner, Regensburg 2006, 104. The author attributes the altar to a master who came from Bavaria to work in the monastery.

[19] On altars featuring the figures of the Holy Family, the placing did not observe the same principle everywhere; sometimes it was determined by the titular saint, e.g. in Tunjice, where St. Anne—with the Maiden Mary and infant Jesus—has her husband, St. Joachim, on her right side, whereas St. Joseph, who has priority in the hierarchical scale, is removed to her left and Sts. Zacharias and Elizabeth, more remote in terms of kinship, form the outer pair and are arranged in accordance with the accepted rule of male priority (fig. 6).⁴⁰



6 Lovrenc Prager (design), Anton Stampfel (execution), Valentin Vrbnik (statues), high altar, 1763-1766, completed 1782, parish church of St. Anne, Tunjice (photo Andrej Furlan, © UIFS ZRC SAZU)

⁴⁰ For the altar, see: Blaž Resman, *Kiparstvo poznega baroka na Gorenjskem* (= *Opera Instituti Artis Historiae*), Ljubljana 2006, 25, 62, 198. The retable was made c. 1766 from the plan of Lovrenc Prager by the stucco master Anton Stampfel, while the statues were carved before 1774 by Valentin Vrbnik.

[20] To illustrate the angelic hierarchy, the case of a seraph and a cherub dating from 1709 is given here, the former mounted on the more distinguished gospel side, and the latter on the epistle side of St. Francis Xavier's altar in the church of St. James in Ljubljana (fig. 7).⁴¹



7 Franc Grumnik (retable), Paolo Gropelli (statues of the cherub and seraph, attributed), altar of St. Francis Xavier, 1709-1710, parish church of St. James, Ljubljana (photo Blaž Resman, © UIFS ZRC SAZU)

⁴¹ Ana Lavrič and Blaž Resman, Oltar sv. Frančiška Ksaverja pri ljubljanskih jezuitih – nova dognanja, in: *Jezuiti na Slovenskem. Zbornik simpozija* (= *Redovništvo na Slovenskem*, vol. 3), Ljubljana 1992, 119-135; Matej Klemenčič, *Francesco Robba in beneško baročno kiparstvo v Ljubljani*, Ljubljana 1998, 18-20, with earlier literature. The altar was made by Franc Grumnik; the two statues were related to the oeuvre of Enrico Merengo or Giuseppe Torretti, and were eventually attributed to Paolo Gropelli.

[21] The high altar of St. John the Baptist in the church in the Trnovo suburb in Ljubljana, a work by Matija Tomc of 1859, is evidence that the rule was still in force in the mid-nineteenth century: in the pairs of saints, St. Joseph correctly takes priority over St. John the Evangelist, St. Florian over St. Nicholas, and St. Zacharias over St. Elizabeth (fig. 8).⁴²



8 Matija Tomc, high altar, 1859, parish church of St. John the Baptist, Ljubljana-Trnovo (photo Andrej Furlan, © UIFS ZRC SAZU)

⁴² For the altar, see: Ivan Vrhovnik, *Trnovska župnija v Ljubljani*, Ljubljana 1933, 328.

[22] Although irregularities would later occur with increasing frequency, in theologically more conservative milieus the rule was followed well into the 20th century; thus, for example, on the altar of the pilgrimage church of Our Lady of Help at Brezje, a work by Ivan Vurnik of c. 1900, St. Francis of Assisi has priority over St. Claire, who, being a female saint, is accorded a lower place, following the accepted hierarchical order (fig. 9).⁴³



9 Ivan Vurnik (retable), Jožef Pavlin (statues), high altar, c. 1900, basilica of Our Lady of Help, Brezje (photo Andrej Furlan, © UIFS ZRC SAZU)

⁴³ For the altar, see: Henrik Damiš, Brezje – Marija Pomagaj, in: *Brezjanski zbornik 2000*, Ljubljana 2000, 51. The statues are by Jožef Pavlin.

[23] The formula presented in the visitation records of Buchheim is a type of iconographic aid or orientation for the identification of the saints depicted, and in doubtful cases, the lodestar for their disposition. As a rule, it is valid only for the retables in which the saints are, as it were, 'exposed' to worship and perform the special function of a patron saint, or share this function with some other saint; meanwhile, in paintings, frescoes and the like, where religious stories are illustrated with a narrative or didactic aim, their arrangement is optional. If frescoes substitute for altar retables, the hierarchical rule should be observed in them, but because of the reversal of various prints that were used as models for painting, mistakes sometimes occurred.⁴⁴ A deliberate hierarchical placement can also be seen in some figural groups which are not always placed in a retable. One of the most typical examples is the crucifixion, where St. Mary, in accordance with tradition, is always on Christ's right, i.e. on the more distinguished gospel side, while John is on Christ's left. On the other hand, the right side for the penitent thief Dismas and the left side for the obstinate sinner Gestas indicate a moral distinction and their positions based directly on the Biblical account. According to the Bible, each side bears its own moral characteristics, which is revealed in the eschatological dimension in the announcement of the last judgement, when the Son of Man "will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left" (Matthew 25:33); however, the definition of the right and left sides in a church building or in the altar retable always has a positive meaning and is subordinate only to the order of the hierarchy.⁴⁵

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⁴⁴ An example of this kind is the retable of St. Catherine on the wall in Tunjice, a work by Janez Potočnik of 1775, where St. Ursula stands on the wrong, i.e. epistle, side, due to copying a model print in reverse; see: France Stele, *Politični okraj Kamnik. Topografski opis* (= *Umetnostni spomeniki Slovenije*, vol. 1), Ljubljana 1929, 140.

⁴⁵ I am most grateful to my colleague Alenka Klemenc for the translation of my Slovenian paper, and my colleagues Andrej Furlan and Blaž Resman for the photographs.