

RELICS OF ST. CONSTANTINE-CYRIL IN SLOVAKIA¹

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Abstract: IVANIČ, Peter. *Relics of St. Constantine-Cyril in Slovakia*. The worship of the remains of apostles, martyrs and saints has been practiced in Christianity since antiquity. Relics have spiritual and other meanings. In the present paper, I focus on the relics of St. Constantine-Cyril in Slovakia. Constantine-Cyril died in Rome in 869 and he is the co-patron of Europe together with his brother St. Methodius. The research itself was mainly focused on documenting the existence of relics, their description, dimensions and weight, identification of the certificate of authenticity of the relic, and the historical contexts of their acquisition. The research was conducted in nine Roman Catholic churches or church institutions (Banská Bystrica, Bzovík, Nitra, Rajec, Rakovice, Selce, the Spiš Chapter and Žilina) and in one Greek Catholic church (Košice). In the past, some relics were privately owned, but except for one case, they are currently owned by the church authorities. In two cases it was not possible to document the relics; their existence is, however, confirmed in the literature and archives. It is worth mentioning that after the Czech Republic, Slovakia comes second in the number of relics of St. Constantine-Cyril.

Keywords: *St. Constantine-Cyril, relic, reliquary, monile, Slovakia*

Introduction

The worship and veneration of Sts. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius has been developing on various planes. The patrons of Europe are closely linked to Slovakia. Their work is reflected in the political, cultural and spiritual life of the Slovak nation (Ivanič – Hetényi 2016, 215-250; Judák 2014, 145-164; Judák – Hlad – Ďatelinka 2022, 40-52; Letz 2020a, 151-164; Letz 2020b, 452-472, Michela 2018, 309-352; Škvarna – Hudek 2013, Žeňuch 2005; Žeňuch 2016, 199-209). For example, the patronages in some churches, celebrations held in their honor, or several places of pilgrimage (Judák – Poláčik 2009, 155-158; Krogmann et al. 2017, 183-185; Krogmann – Kramáreková – Petrikovičová 2020), are the reminders of their activity. A special phenomenon is the existence of relics of St. Constantine-Cyril in some Slovak churches, church institutions or personal collections of the priests.

St. Constantine-Cyril's original name was Constantine, and he adopted the name Cyril shortly before his death when he entered the monastery. He died in Rome on February 14, 869 and was

¹ This paper is dedicated to the memory of Cardinal Jozef Tomko (1924 – 2022), who belonged to the worshippers of Sts. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius and participated in the transfer of the remains of St. Constantine-Cyril from Recanati to Rome after their rediscovery. The author would like to thank Mons. Viliam Judák, Bishop of Nitra, for valuable advice and cooperation. This article is supported by H2020-870644 Social and innovative platform on cultural tourism and its potential towards deepening Europeanisation (SPOT); grant agency of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic KEGA 035UKF-4/2021 Cultural, edifying, educational and social policy in Slovakia in the 20th century. An interactive teaching aid for the study of history in secondary schools.

buried in the Temple of St. Clement in Rome.² The information about the burial of the younger of the Thessaloniki brothers and the fate of his remains can be found in hagiographic writings, but also in the archival documents from the Middle Ages to the present day, as evidenced by Bulgarian Slavists Slavia Barlieva and Aleksander Naumow (2015a, 15-31; 2015b, 31-42) in their studies. In the past, several researchers have devoted themselves to the identification of Constantine's grave and remains. Their views were summarized by the Dominican Leonard Boyle (1967, 45-57) who managed to rediscover the relic of St. Cyril in the chapel of the Antici-Mattei family palace in Recanati near Loretto in 1963 because in 1799 it was taken from the Church of St. Clement and had been missing ever since. Its transfer back to Rome was ensured by the American bishop of Slovak origin Andrej G. Grutka, Mons. Štefan Náhalka and later by Cardinal Jozef Tomko (Náhalka 1963, 1-3). Subsequently, Pope Paul VI transferred and ceremoniously handed it over to the Church of St. Clement where it has been located until the present day. As early as in 1963, Michal Lacko published a short study about the fate of the remains of St. Cyril in Rome in the magazine *Most* (1963, 230-235). In 1965, the Czech church historian Josef Cibulka published a more extensive study in the magazine *Duchovní pastýř* (1965, 129-130, 151-153, 166-168, 192-195). Extensive research into the relics of St. Cyril was carried out in the territory of the former Czechoslovakia by the Mikulov residentiary Vojtěch Samec who first published the results anonymously on the pages of the samizdat magazine *Sursum* (*Ostatky* 1985, 3-12) and in *Sborník Velehradský* (1992, 49-59) as a supplemented study. The grave and relics of St. Cyril were analyzed and supplemented with some new facts by Ján Hnilica (1997, 125-134; 2012³, 90-105) in his study in the magazine *Most* and in the monograph on Sts. Cyril and Methodius. Martin Hromník published several popular-scientific articles (2014a, 24-25; 2014b, 24-25; 2014c, 25-26) on the topic together with the photos of some reliquaries in the Slovak Catholic monthly *Posol*.

The term “relic” is used in most modern European languages and it comes from the Latin “reliquiae”. This word was widely used in connection with the relics of the saints as early as in late antiquity. In the context of the cult of the saints, the word “reliquiae” covers a wide spectrum of objects, ranging from whole bodies to ashes and strips of cloth that touched the graves of the saints, which we usually refer to as contact relics (Wiśniewski 2019, 2-3). The worship of the remains of apostles, martyrs and saints has been known and practiced since antiquity. They were wrapped in expensive fabrics and placed in decorated boxes and chests, but at that time it was not customary to display them to the public. It was not until the 13th century that reliquaries with a viewing hole appeared. At that time, it was common practice to divide up the bodies of the saints although in the 6th century it was still a rarity (Wiśniewski 2019, 176-177).⁴ As Patrik J. Geary (1991, 5) points out on the medieval period: “Relics hold a fundamental place in the fabric of medieval life. While their significance differed from place to place and from person to person there was no class of individuals, be they theologians, kings, or peasants, for whom relics were not of great importance. From the church where they were a required equipment of altars, to the court of law where they were necessary for oath taking, to the battlefield where they helped bring victory in the hilt of Roland's sword, relics were an indispensable part of daily life, accepted as unquestioningly, in fact, as life itself.”

² For the activities in Rome, see M. Husár (2016, 29-38; 2017, 93-110); V. Vavřínek (2013, 160-173).

³ This is the third updated edition. The first edition was published in 1989. The author of the contribution would like to thank Ján Hnilica for his valuable advice and information.

⁴ Currently, the procedure for the acquisition of relics is part of the instruction by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints of December 8, 2017 titled *Istruzione della Congregazione delle Cause dei Santi su “Le reliquie nella Chiesa: Autenticità e Conservazione”* (Istruzione 2017).

Relics have spiritual and other meanings. They also present the stories that can unite the Christian community. Especially in the Middle Ages, relics connected with high indulgences promised personal salvation for the believers. The sheer number of pilgrims traveling to see them have significantly affected the economic growth in some regions and cities. The habit of displaying the holy remains to the public has been known ever since (Angenendt 1994). *Ostensio reliquiarum*, which took place in Prague during the reign of Charles IV (1346 – 1378), and in which a combination of various extensive indulgences could be obtained, was the most famous public display in Central Europe. The public veneration of the remains of saints in Prague is considered to be an innovation of the aforementioned monarch rather than something copied from other cities (Bauch 2017, 81; Hrdina 2017, 11-13). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Charles IV procured a relic of St. Constantine-Cyril from Rome for St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague. The relic is first mentioned in the inventory of the temple from 1365, which was published by Antonín Podlaha and Eduard Šittler (1903, XXV). There is no information about it in the older inventories from 1354 and 1355.

In his study, Vojtěch Samec (1992, 49) published a hypothesis that Charles IV must have procured the relic of St. Constantine-Cyril in 1355 when he was crowned in Rome as Emperor of the Roman Empire. Samec (1992, 49-55) traced the subsequent fate of this relic, which was used as a source of relic fragments for other church institutions in the territory of the present Czech Republic. Some relics of St. Cyril in the Slovak churches, ecclesiastical institutions or personal possessions, as we will point out later in the text, can be traced back in several cases to this very relic whose smaller fragments can be found in St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague in the St. Vitus treasure (Přehled relikviářů 2022).

The subject of the present study is the relics of St. Constantine-Cyril located in the territory of today's Slovakia and the research is primarily focused on documenting their existence, description, dimensions and weight, identification of the certificate of authenticity of the relic, and the historical contexts of its acquisition. Most published works usually only state that the relic "exists" and detailed information is available only in some cases. This issue, therefore, deserves serious attention and further study. Important documents were collected through our own archival research and in cooperation with the archivists of the individual archives at the relevant Episcopal Offices.⁵

The Rajec reliquary

The oldest reliquary with the presumed remains of St. Constantine-Cyril in Slovakia dates back to the second half of the 19th century and is located in the parish of Rajec (Fig. 1) in the Žilina Region. In 1862, it was donated to the local church by the local native Metod Jozef Gazdík, a Franciscan priest, who received a relic box in Rome in 1847 with several relics among which – based on handwritten labels – were the remains of St. Constantine-Cyril (S. Cyrilli) and Methodius (S. Method J.C.).⁶ In 1865, the Slovak priest Štefan Závodník reported in the *Cyrill a Metod* magazine that he was able to honor the remains of the Slavic apostles in the church in Rajec on March 21, 1865. He also published the Latin texts of two documents that testified to the authenticity of the relics. The first was a letter by Metod Jozef Gazdík who claimed to have acquired the relics in 1847 during his stay in Rome and donated them to the church in Rajec. The second document is a certificate of

⁵ I was able to personally document some of the relics thanks to the willingness of specific priests, and I collected some information indirectly – primarily from communication via e-mail.

⁶ V. Samec (1992, 55) commented on the remains of St. Methodius.

authenticity of the relic from 1847, which was reportedly issued by Vicar General Cardinal Patrici. Under the text, the abbreviated name Jos is apparently used erroneously, which may indicate the name “Joseph” as stated by Ján Hnilica (2012, 15, note 238). The real name of the cardinal should be Costantino Patrizi Naro (1798-1876) who was also the archpresbyter of the Basilica Papale di Santa Maria Maggiore, which is also called the Basilica Liberiana after Pope Liberius. The text in the header contains this information. According to the document, the cardinal released and sealed the relics (Závodník 1865, 87). The gilded reliquary on a silver base has the shape of a small monstrance. In the upper part, God the Father is depicted. The oval box with the relics around the perimeter is decorated with a silver wreath in the shape of olive branches inlaid with blue, red, brown and pink stones. There are angels with swords in hand on both sides. The box bears the seal of the Roman Curia.⁷ The reliquary was later forgotten and it was only discovered in 1969 by the parish administrator Pavol Vanko (Hromník 2014a, 24; Relikviár sv. Cyrila 2022). The reliquary is 36 cm high, 13.5 cm wide at the top, and the diameter of the base is 12 cm.⁸

Relics from the interwar period

The most famous relic of St. Constantine-Cyril in Slovakia is stored in St. Emmeram's Cathedral at the Nitra Castle (Fig. 2). The public can see it not only in the temple itself, but also during the nationwide Holy Mass held on Sts. Cyril and Methodius Day, which is officially celebrated in Slovakia on July 5. The relic of St. Constantine-Cyril in a gilded Neo-Gothic glass reliquary in the shape of a Gothic temple with turrets, which was purchased in 2011 in Rome (Hromník 2014b, 24), is located in the so-called Pribina's or Late-Roman part of the Nitra Cathedral. The reliquary is 39 cm high and 33 cm wide at the bottom. Inside is a box with the remains stored in two silver-plated cabinets. The top one with four legs is glazed and is 11.5 cm high x 21.5 cm wide, and it was originally tied with a white-red-blue ribbon, which was in the upper part of the cassette and sealed with the seal of the Bishop's Office in Nitra during the first analysis on April 26, 2022. The upper part of the smaller cassette is made of glass. Its dimensions are 4.5 cm high and 6.5 cm wide. These boxes weigh 1892 g. The relic itself is kept in an oval relic box with a hanging ring - a monile⁹. These are several smaller bone fragments glued to a backing paper and placed on a purple cloth. The inscription “Ex Brachio S. Cyrilli Slav. Ap.” can be found on the inside. The reliquary is placed in a latticed niche on the right side of the Cathedral under the statue of the Virgin Mary. The certificate of authenticity, which was issued by the Vatican Vicar General Petrus Canisius Jean van Lierde, was procured in 1964.¹⁰ Apparently on the basis of this information, M. Hromník states the following: “As a gift of Pope Paul VI, the relic was brought to this cathedral from Rome by Eduard Nécsey, the Bishop of Nitra, who attended the meeting of the council commission for the apostolate of the laity from February 28 to March 13, 1964”. In the parenthesis, he refers to the magazine *Hlasy z Ríma* without a specific reference. In the 1964 edition, there is a photograph of the Nitra Bishop Nécsey and information about the meeting in Rome, but there is no mention of the bishop bringing the relic (*Hlasy z Ríma* 1964, 3). On November 14,

⁷ Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain a photo of said seal.

⁸ Information was provided by dean Mgr. Peter Hluzák.

⁹ The Latin word “monile” (sometimes monilium) refers to an ornament (ornamentum coli) worn on the neck. In a broader sense, this word is used not only for medallions hanging around the neck, but also for an art object, usually richly decorated with precious metals and stones or pearls, used as an ornament placed on the buckle of a pluvial (fibula or agraffa) or on boxes with relics (hanging reliquaries) (KPMK 2022).

¹⁰ The document on the authenticity of the relic was provided by Mons. Viliam Judák, the Bishop of Nitra.

1963, Bishop Nécsey, together with Bishop Robert Pobožný (1890 – 1972) of Rožňava and Bishop Ambróz Lazík (1897 – 1969) of Trnava, was present at the audience in the Sistine Chapel in Rome when the rediscovered relic of St. Constantine-Cyril was handed to Pope Paul VI by the American bishop Andrej G. Grutka (Hlasy z Ríma 1963a, 2). He also took part in the solemn deposition of the relic in the Basilica of Saint Clement on November 17, 1963 (Hlasy z Ríma 1963b, 5). This way he came into direct contact with the relics transferred from Recanati to Rome.

M. Hromník's article about the relics of St. Constantine-Cyril in Nitra also mentions a relic that the Nitra Bishop Karol Kmeťko (1875 – 1948) supposedly received from the Vatican in 1926. It states that the relic was kept in a silver case (Hromník 2014a, 26). In the literature referenced in the series of articles on the relic of St. Constantine-Cyril, a reference is made to a detailed study titled *Ostatky svätých Cyrila a Metoděje nalézajúcí se v Československu* [The remains of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Czechoslovakia] by Vojtěch Samec (1992, 49-59). This author also mentions Slovakia to a lesser extent. Regarding the Nitra reliquary, he states that it is located in the local Cathedral. He refers to the written communication with the Bishop's Office in 1969 and puts it in a historical context of the relics that were obtained by the Slovak bishops appointed after the First World War. Considering the date of said correspondence, it is interesting that Vojtěch Samec (1992, 53) only mentions a single reliquary and not two reliquaries that should have existed in Nitra in 1969. There is an interesting contribution to this topic by the Slovak writer and author of historical prose Ladislav Zrubec (1997, 177-180) who published the article The Remains of Saint Cyril in Nitra in the publication *Vykopaná pravda* [The Dug-Up Truth]. In it, he describes the story of how together with the Nitra residentiary Rudolf Formánek (1892 – 1975) they accidentally discovered a reliquary in the archives of the Nitra Bishop's Office, purportedly with the inscription "Ex brachio s. Cyrilli sclava". A part of the silver case was bound with a white thread, its ends were attached to the seal with sealing wax, and according to the description, the whole case was placed in a "precious ostensory". Residentiary Rudolf Formánek purportedly continued the archival research and I was able to document in the Bishop's Office mail logbook from 1923 – 1926 that the shipment with the relic arrived in Nitra by mail directly from the Vatican in 1926. A record of this shipment was registered in incoming mail under the number 32/1926 (Zrubec 1997, 178). Unfortunately, I was unable to confirm this information in the archives of the Bishop's Office in Nitra. The archive fund currently only contains the logbook of sent mail from 1925-1927. However, it includes an important entry from February 8, 1926, where the following is recorded in under the number 311: "S. Cyrilli reliquiae Ordinariis transmissuntur" (A-BO N, Protocollum actorum 1925-1926-1927). This is a clear proof that the said relic of St. Constantine-Cyril is related to the Nitra Bishop Karol Kmeťko. Ladislav Zrubec goes on to mention a meeting with the Trnava Bishop Ambróz Lazík (1897 – 1969). He states the following: "From the story of Dr. Kmeťko, he (Bishop Lazík - author's note) remembers that he arranged for St. Cyril's bone fragments to be sent to Nitra. However, he couldn't be more specific." (Zrubec 1997, 178). Bishop Lazík purportedly arranged for the then Vicar General of Nitra and later Bishop of Nitra Ján Pásztor (1912 – 1988) to travel to the Vatican and carry the rare ostensory with him to determine the authenticity of the remains of St. Constantine-Cyril. According to Zrubec (1997, 180), the verification of authenticity took several months. Finally, on February 12, 1969, Cardinal Angelo Dell'Acqua (1903 – 1972), the Vicar General of Rome since 1968, issued a certificate of authenticity of the relic. In the accompanying letter it was written that the fragment is part of St. Cyril's collarbone. It follows that he had to travel some time in 1968. Zrubec (1997, 180) further writes: "After a thorough investigation, the Papal Curia identified the seal signature found on the ostensory. It belonged to a Bulgarian bishop who worked in the Vatican in 1926 and was probably a good friend of Dr. Karol Kmeťko, the great patron of Slovakia and Slovaks. Out of personal sympathy, the Bulgarian bishop sent a rare ostensory – the reliquary of St. Cyril – to Bishop Kmeťko of Nitra". The aforementioned

documents from Cardinal Dell'Acqua could not be found during our research. However, in addition to L. Zrubec's testimony about their existence, we were able to substantiate two other mentions of the document issued by Cardinal Dell'Acqua. In 1969, *Katolícke noviny* published a photo of the reliquary in Nitra. The following was written in the comment: "The origin of the relic was confirmed again on February 12 this year (1969-author's note) in Rome by Cardinal Dell'Acqua. The document can be found at the Bishop's Office in Nitra". The reliquary itself has the shape of a monstrance in the photo, so it can be assumed that it is the valuable ostensory mentioned by Zrubec. The current location of the reliquary published in the photo could not be ascertained. A detail of a relic box with a hanging ring was published right next to it (KN 1969, 6). According to the design of the box and arrangement and wording of the text, I assume that it is the same box that is stored in the current reliquary. The existence of the document from 1969 and the acquisition of the relic from the Vatican is evidenced by an interesting document from the assets of the aforementioned Bishop of Nitra Pásztor. It is his handwritten response to a letter dated March 13, 1969 to Štefan Šmálik, administrator of the parish in Liptovský Trnovec, who on behalf of the Bishop's Office in Spišské Podhradie was checking the information about the relic of St. Constantine-Cyril deposited in the cathedral church in the Spiš Chapter. He positively knew about the relic of St. Constantine-Cyril in Nitra and wanted to determine how it was brought to Slovakia. Pásztor wrote a draft answer on the back page. It states that the Nitra Cathedral has the relic stored in a small oval box marked with the number 32-1926. He also tells us how he found out in Rome that it was indeed the identification number of the Vatican office in the Lateran. According to him, he sent the relic there for "reconnaissance". He received the relic back with a new stamp, new registration number and a decree of authenticity signed by Cardinal Dell'Acqua (A-BO N, Fonds Curia episcopalis nitriensis, n. 346/1969).¹¹ His words were proven right during a direct analysis of the reliquary on June 23, 2022 when the monile was opened. Inside, at the back, its front part was tied with a red string that went through the holes in the side, and sealed on a white piece of paper. This seal can be attributed to Cardinal Angelo Dell'Acqua. The number "64-1969" was written with a pen under the seal. At the back of the monile box, the number 33 was underlined with a pencil on the inside. The dimensions of the oval monile are 2 x 4 cm and the weight is 14 g. After examining the monile, it was sealed by the Bishop of Nitra, Mons. Viliam Judák (Sv. Cyril na Nitrianskom hrade 2022).

A fundamental proof of procuring the relics of St. Constantine-Cyril by the Nitra Bishop Karol Kmeťko was found in the documents stored in the Archives of the Bishop's Office in Rožňava, which were provided by its archivist – librarian Silvia Lörinčíková. On December 5, 1925, Vendelín Javorka (1888 – 1966), a Slovak Jesuit and the first rector of the Collegium Russicum in Rome, wrote that he visited the General Vicariate in Rome on said day where he successfully requested the relics of St. Constantine-Cyril. These supposedly included part of the saint's right hand. In a letter to the apostolic administrator of the Rožňava Diocese and the newly ordained bishop Michal Bubnič, he wrote that he was asked to do so by Bishop Karol Kmeťko who had previously sent him some money but it was not enough to procure the relics for all Slovak bishops. According to him, it was only possible to obtain the relic after the payment of 35-40 lire, and for this reason he asked for 50-60 CZK to be sent for ordinary expenses (A-BO RV, file Cultus divinus, n. prot.: 3870/1925). Bishop Kmeťko sent the relic to Rožňava on February 8, 1926 (A-BO RV, file Cultus divinus, n. prot.: 477/1926). This letter is marked with the number 311, which is also listed in the logbook of sent mail of the Bishop's Office in Nitra from 1925-1927 (A-BO N, Protocollum actorum 1925-1926-1927). A certificate on the authenticity of the relic issued by Cardinal Basilio Pompili (1858 – 1931) on January 13, 1926 (Fig. 11) under the number 32 (A-BO

¹¹ In the original document, the number 32-1928 is used by mistake.

RV, file *Cultus divinus*) has also been preserved in the Archives of the Bishop's Office in Rožňava. This number was already mentioned by Ladislav Zrubec (1997, 178). However, his hypothesis about the Bulgarian bishop who supposedly sent the relic to Bishop Kmeťko, is not based on truth. Interestingly, Ladislav Zrubec (1997, 179) probably saw the original monile seal because, as he himself stated, citing Pásztor's claim, there was "a kind of royal crown with a double cross". The seal of Cardinal Basilio Pompili in the upper part visually resembles a royal crown with a double cross.

The relic in the reliquary of St. Constantine-Cyril in St. Emmeram's Cathedral in Nitra was acquired by the Nitra Bishop Karol Kmeťko in 1926. It was not possible to ascertain how the authenticity certificate from 1964 got to Nitra and whether it is related to the relic obtained by Bishop Kmeťko. The year when the relics arrived in Nitra and were subsequently sent to the Slovak episcopal offices is not accidental. According to the Old Slavic legend of the Life of Constantine, this saint died in February 869 at the age of 42. Some authors used this information to assume that had his age been between 42 and 43 years at the time of death, he would have been born in 826, and thus 1926 was the 1100th anniversary of his birth. Such a report was also published by the Apostolate of Sts. Cyril and Methodius under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1926 (*Jubileum narodení svätého Cyrila 1926*, 128).

The Nitra relic is not only tied to Nitra, but it also traveled around Bulgaria and Romania. According to the decision of the Conference of Bishops of Slovakia, and as part of the preparations for the 1150th anniversary of the arrival of Slavic evangelists in our territory, the relic traveled around Slovakia from December 30, 2010 to the end of November 2012 (Hromník 2014b, 25). This was not for the first time: already in 1969 on the occasion of the 1100th anniversary of the death of St. Cyril, the relic traveled around the Diocese of Nitra. At the time, *Katolícke noviny* reported on the veneration of the relic in Skačany, Trenčín, Bánovce nad Bebravou and Uhrovec (KN 1969a, 6; KN 1969b, 6; KN 1969d, 6).

In his articles on the relics of St. Cyril, V. Samec states that in addition to Nitra, even the bishops in Banská Bystrica, Rožňava and the Spiš Chapter received gifts from Rome after the First World War. In the case of the Spiš Chapter bishopric (Fig. 3), he stated that they kept the relics in the bishop's residence in the ostensory with the inscription "Ex brachio St. Cyrilli Apost. Slav" in 1992 and their authenticity was documented¹² (Samec 1992, 53). M. Hromník (2014a, 25) mentions that the Bishop of Spiš Ján Vojtaššák had a portion of the remains in his seat of the Spiš Chapter in a monstrance-shaped reliquary. The reliquary with the remains of St. Constantine-Cyril is now located in the Cathedral of St. Martin in the Spiš Chapter.¹³ Sources also mention an interpretation that Bishop Ladislav Záborský, a zealous worshiper of the Thessalonian brothers, acquired it from Brno (Hromják 2020, 30) in 1863. However, this is only a hypothesis, not based on a real written document. Based on the appearance of the monile, the inscription "Ex Brachio S. Cyrilli Slav. App." and written communication between Š. Šmálik and J. Pásztor, it can be claimed that the relic in the Spiš Chapter was sent from the Nitra Bishop's Office to the Spiš Chapter on February 8, 1926 A-BO N, *Fonds Curia episcopalis nitriensis*, n. 346/1969). The reliquary is 31.8 cm high, 14.5 cm wide at the top, and the base has a diameter of 11 cm. It weighs 416 g. In the jubilee year of 1969 on the occasion of the 1100th anniversary of the death of St. Constantine-Cyril, the relic traveled the Spiš Diocese starting on the Feast of the Holy Trinity (KN 1969c, 6).

¹² However, the authenticity could not be verified during our research and even the original inscription is partially different from the published version.

¹³ I had the opportunity to view the reliquary in the presence of Mgr. et Mgr. Vladimír Olejník, PhD.; doc. HEDr. Luboslav Hromják, PhD., prof. ThDr. PhDr. Amantius Akimjak, PhD., prof. ThDr. PaedDr. Roman Králik, ThD., prof. Dr. Abraham Khan.

The Bishop of Banská Bystrica Marián Blaha (1869 – 1943) kept the relic of St. Constantine-Cyril (Fig. 4) in his episcopal seat in Svätý Kríž nad Hronom (later renamed to Žiar nad Hronom) where, according to the research of V. Samec (1992, 53), it was located as late as in 1969, but in 1978 it was already transferred to Banská Bystrica. To this day, it is stored directly at the Bishop's Office in Banská Bystrica in a gilded reliquary in the shape of a monstrance with a cross on the top; it is 21 cm high, 9 cm wide and the thickness of the capsule is 2.5 cm. There is a gold-plated and silver wreath in the shape of roses around the oblong-shaped monile. The inscription "Ex Brachio S. Cyrilli Slav. App." is the same as in the case of the Nitra and Spišská Chapter relics. The monile itself has the seal of Cardinal Basilio Pompili (1858 – 1931) and the marking 32-1926 on the back side.¹⁴ It is a clear proof that it was obtained by Vendelín Javorka and sent to Bishop Blaha by the Bishop of Nitra Karol Kmeťko. A document has been preserved in the Archives of the Bishop's Office in Rožňava attesting to the fact that Bishop Blaha sent the Rožňava administrator Michal Bubnič 70 CZK already on December 19, 1925, so that he would send 60 CZK to Vendelín Javorka (A-BO RV, file Cultus divinus, n. prot.: 3433/1925).

According to the research by V. Samec (1992, 53), Bishop Michal Bubnič of Rožňava had the relic of St. Constantine-Cyril placed in the pax with the description "E. brachio S. Cyrilli". As evidenced by the preserved written correspondence with Vendelín Javorka, Bishop Bubnič also sent him a total of 120 CZK on behalf of the Banská Bystrica bishop (A-BO RV file Cultus divinus, n. prot.: 477/1926). The fact that the Rožňava relic became part of the pax is no coincidence because Bishop Kmeťko wrote in an accompanying letter in 1926 that it would be appropriate to make the reliquaries in the form of a cross so that the remains of St. Constantine can even be worshiped by the believers (A-BO RV, file Cultus divinus, n. prot.: 477/1926). After the death of Bishop Bubnič in 1945, information emerged that he had contributed to the acquisition of the relic, but the specific story was forgotten. It follows from the written correspondence between V. Samec and the Rožňava Bishopric in 1969 that Bishop Bubnič was supposed to bring the relic from Rome, but it was not known in which year (A-BO RV, file Cultus divinus, n. prot.: 324/1969).¹⁵ Correspondence with the theologian Jozef Kostolný has also been preserved from the mentioned year¹⁶: he requested a photo of the relic and information about it for Anton Bagin, professor of church history at the Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology of Cyril and Methodius in Bratislava (Bagin 1999). It also mentions that Bishop Bubnič procured the relic from Rome together with a "document". The then bishop of Rožňava Róbert Pobožný did not mention what kind of document it was, but it might have been the authenticity protocol. It is interesting to note that Bishop Pobožný sent a photo of his pectoral with a relic from Bishop Bubnič (A-BO RV, file Cultus divinus, n. prot.: 818/1969). In the March issue of *Katolícke noviny* from 1985, a photo of the pectoral of the bishop of Rožňava, who was already dead at the time, was published. According to the description, in addition to the remains of St. Constantine-Cyril, it also contained the relics of St. John Berchmans, St. Adalbert of Prague, and St. Neot (KN 1985, 4). At the turn of 1988/1989 there was further correspondence between V. Samec, the residentary of Mikulov, and the administrators of the diocese in Rožňava, according to which the Bishop's Office has a relic of St. Constantine-Cyril in a pectoral with a hand-written inscription "E. brachio p. Cyril". The dimensions of the bone were 5 x 2 mm and the size of the pectoral was 10 x 5 cm (A-BO RV, file Privata laicorum, n. prot.: 13/1989). Despite the efforts of Silvia Lörinčíková, the above-mentioned pectoral could not be found. Based on the published photo of the open reliquary in

¹⁴ The information and photographs of the reliquary were provided by the secretary of the diocesan bishop ICLic. Peter Lupták.

¹⁵ We wish to thank the director of the archive, Silvia Lörinčíková, for her help in our research.

¹⁶ In 2003, Jozef Kostolný became Chancellor of the Bishop's Office in Rožňava (Jozef Kostolný 2022).

Katolícke noviny and the painting of Bishop Pobožný by the painter Prokop in 1965 and the photo of the bishop with the pectoral on his chest (A-BO RV, jubilee photo album from 1949-1959. Uncatalogued) it can be concluded that the item is identical.

V. Samec (1992, 52-53) assumes that the relics obtained by the Slovak bishops from Rome in 1926 came from the relic from the Benedictine abbey in Rajhrad, which was brought to Rome in 1881 during the thanksgiving pilgrimage of the Slavs to Pope Leo XIII and subsequently redistributed between several Moravian churches and the Roman Curia. It is interesting that this relic was procured for Rajhrad in 1765 by Abbot Otmar from the Collegiate Church of St. Peter in Brno¹⁷ where the relic arrived at the beginning of the 16th century, probably from St. Vitus Cathedral (Samec, 1992, 50-51).

Relics in church institutions and churches acquired after 1989

After 1989, Roman Catholic Bishop Pavol Hnilica (1921 – 2006) with his brother Ján Hnilica procured the relics of St. Constantine-Cyril for several Slovak church institutions or donated them to the priests. A lesser-known relic is on display at the side altar of the Virgin Mary in the parish church of St. Stephen the King in Bzovík (Fig. 6). It was acquired by the local priest Miloslav Madola in 1997 through the already mentioned Bishop Pavol Hnilica.¹⁸ The certificate of authenticity of the relic was issued on Tuesday, January 7, 1997 by Archbishop Cesare Nosiglia, Deputy Vicar General of the Diocese of Rome. The monstrance with rays in the upper part ends with a cross. The front part is decorated with four red glasses. The height of the reliquary is 31 cm, the width is 14 cm, the base diameter is 12.5 cm and it weighs 546 g. The monile itself has an outer diameter of 3 cm and an inner diameter of 2 cm. Inside the monile is the inscription “S. Cyrilli E.C.” printed on white paper. A small piece of bone covered with dark glue is placed on a white background in the shape of a three-leaf rosette. Štefan Moyzes (1797 – 1869), a promoter of the cult of Sts. Cyril and Methodius and Bishop of Banská Bystrica, was active in the Bzovík parish.

Žilina is the seat of an eponymous Diocese, which was established by Pope Benedict XVI on February 14, 2008 on St. Cyril and Methodius Day¹⁹ because both saints became the patrons of the diocese. In 2010, the relic of St. Constantine-Cyril (Fig. 7) from the assets of the Slovak Bishop Pavol Hnilica was donated to the diocese by his brother Ján Hnilica. The certificate of authenticity of the relic was issued by Archbishop Cesare Nosiglia on December 3, 1997 (Fig. 12). The relic is kept at the Bishop's Office and is accessible to the public in the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity during the feast of Sts. Cyril and Methodius (Relikviár sv. Cyrila 2022). The silver-plated reliquary in the shape of a decorated isosceles cross with a height of 32.4 cm and a width of 17.3 cm ends with a cross in the upper part. The monile is placed in the middle in a glass opening in the shape of a rosette. Inside, the inscription “S. Cyrilli E.C.” is printed on white paper.²⁰

On the same day as in the case of the Žilina relic, Archbishop Cesare Nosiglia issued a certificate of authenticity for the relic of St. Constantine-Cyril that was brought from Rome with the help of Bishop Pavol Hnilica and his brother Ján by the bishop and chairman of the Saint Adalbert Association in Trnava Peter Dubovský (1921 – 2008) for the new church dedicated to Sts. Cyril

¹⁷ The today's Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul.

¹⁸ The information was provided by parish administrator ThLic. Vladimír Slovák.

¹⁹ The feast of Sts. Cyril and Methodius is celebrated on July 5 in the Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia and Czech Republic and on February 14 in other non-Slavic countries.

²⁰ The information and photographs of the reliquary were provided by the secretary of the diocesan bishop ICLic. PhDr. Štefan Židek and Ing. Juraj Malobický.

and Methodius in 2005²¹ in the native village of Rakovice (Veselé parish) near Piešťany (Hromník 2014b, 25). The cross-shaped reliquary (Fig. 8) is gilded and has a base 9.5 cm in diameter. It is 24 cm high and 16 cm wide. The round monile with the inscription “S. Cyrillí E.C.” is inserted in a cross in a circular glass case decorated with 12 red glasses. The decoration also includes four medallions inserted into the border around the cross. It is located on the main altar.²² Peter Dubovský’s respect for the Thessaloniki brothers is not accidental: their statue from 1924, ordered by Jozef Svitek and his wife Julia (née Lužáková), is located in front of the Church of Sts. Cyril and Methodius. The birthplace of Bishop Štefan Moyzes of Banská Bystrica still stands in the neighboring village of Veselé.

Since 1998, the village of Selce near Banská Bystrica has been a diocesan place of veneration for Sts. Cyril and Methodius because this village boasts the oldest Roman Catholic church in Slovakia dedicated to Sts. Cyril and Methodius. The church was consecrated on May 31, 1863 in the jubilee year of the celebration of the arrival of the Thessaloniki brothers to Great Moravia by the aforementioned Bishop of Banská Bystrica Štefan Moyzes who was a zealous promoter of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition and the founder of *Matica slovenská*, which was founded in the same year. Precisely on the 150th anniversary of this event – on May 31, 2013 – the Bishop of Banská Bystrica Marián Chovanec placed a relic from the bone of St. Constantine-Cyril in the Selce church (Fig. 9). It was donated to the church by the dean of Nová Baňa Peter Mišík who obtained it from the estate of Slovak immigrants to America²³. The authenticity of the relic is confirmed by the document issued by Cardinal Clemente Micaru dated May 30, 1963, and, according to M. Hromník, the dating of the document indicates that the relic originated from the Slovak Institute of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Rome (the today’s Pontifical College). He assumed so based on the fact that even in the case of this relic the certificate was issued on the same date (Hromník 2014b, 25). The monile itself has a round shape and is housed in a gilded reliquary in the shape of a cross, which is 18 cm high and 11 cm wide. The weight is 506 g and the base of the reliquary is of an irregular oval shape with a maximum width of 5.8 cm. The relic is placed in the Church of Sts. Cyril and Methodius on a stone column in front of the altar. The inscription reads “S. Cirilli E.C.”²⁴

Another relic of St. Constantine-Cyril can be found in the Greek Catholic Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Košice (Fig. 10), which was donated by Bishop Viliam Judák of Nitra on February 26, 2017 during the solemn holy liturgy (Gabor 2017). A monile with the inscription “S. Cirilli E.C.” is placed in the center of the lower part of the icon where both saints are depicted. The icon is placed in a gilded portable box in which it traveled around all the parishes of the Košice Eparchy. The icon was painted by Peter Vereščák and its dimensions are 53cm x 67cm.²⁵ According to the testimony of Mons. Judák, it comes from the estate of Mons. ThLic. Rudolf Bošňák (1919 – 2009), the former rector of the Priestly Seminary of St. Gorazd in Nitra, and it was probably procured by Bishop Pavol Hnilica. The original certificate of authenticity has not

²¹ In his article on the relics of St. Cyril, M. Hromník (2014b, 25) mentions the year 2003, but the church was consecrated by Archbishop Ján Sokol in 2005 according to a document discovered during the research in the altar.

²² I would like to thank parish administrator Peter Kuljaček for his cooperation.

²³ It can be assumed from the e-mail communication with Peter Mišík that the relic was a gift from a parishioner from Nová Baňa shortly before her death who received it from her brother, a Franciscan priest, who gave it to her before his death. He supposedly received it from his father who worked in America, who in turn received it from an American bishop.

²⁴ I would like to thank parish administrator Jozef Kuneš, PhD. for his help.

²⁵ The information was provided by the chancellor and secretary of the Archbishop of the Košice Eparchy HELic. Mgr. Martin Mráz.

been preserved. A copy of the document from 1964 located in Nitra was provided as a certificate of authenticity of the relic.

Ján Hnilica (1997, 134; 2012, 105) claims that small relics of St. Constantine-Cyril are also in possession of the parishes in Šenkvice near Modra (from 1996) and Radvaň, which is part of Banská Bystrica (from 1997). Based on the communication with the current parish administrators, this information could not be confirmed. In the case of Radvaň, the relic was most likely donated to Mons. Ján Ďurica.

Relics in personal possession

V. Samec (1992, 53) mentions written communication with the former administrator of the parish in Liptovský Hrádok Štefan Košťal (1913 – 2013) who owned a relic of St. Constantine-Cyril in 1991 as a retired person living in his birthplace of Liptovská Osada. According to his sources, the certificate of authenticity of the relic was issued on February 25, 1960 by Cardinal Clemente Micara (1879-1965). The inscription on the relic reads “Ex ossibus S. Cyrilli fratris S. Methodii”. The fate of the relic after the death of Štefan Košťal is not known although the administrator of the parish in Liptovská Osada PaedDr. ThLic. Karol Karaš tried to get more information from Košťal’s relatives. I tried to verify the existence of the relic in Liptovský Hrádok, i.e. the last parish Košťal served in. Parish administrator Mgr. Marcel Matava stated that it is not located in this parish church. It is interesting that in 1923 the parish Church of St. John the Baptist in Liptovská Osada was extended and the old baroque altar was replaced by a neo-Gothic altar with a wooden statue of St. John the Baptist in the center and the statues of Sts. Cyril and Methodius (RKC 2022) on both sides. Apparently, the respect for the Thessaloniki brothers in his native parish had an influence on Štefan Košťal to procure the relic of St. Constantine-Cyril.

Among the Slovak priests, a relic of St. Constantine-Cyril is in possession of Mons. Ján Ďurica, which he acquired through Ján Hnilica and his brother Bishop Pavel Hnilica while working in Radvaň. The relic carries a description “S. Cyrilli E.C. ex indumentis” and the certificate of authenticity is from December 8, 2000. He plans to place it in the altar of the Chapel of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Hriňová, which was built in 1949 by his father Ondrej Ďurica.

Conclusion

The relics of St. Constantine-Cyril can currently be found in Slovakia in eight Roman Catholic churches or ecclesiastical institutions and in one Greek Catholic church. In the past, some of them were privately owned. At present, only one relic is in private hands. It was not possible to determine the location of the relic that belonged to Štefan Košťal in Rožňava, but its existence is documented in literature and archival research. Except for the relic in Rajec, other remains of St. Constantine-Cyril were procured after 1925. It can be proven with archival documents that the relics were jointly procured for the Slovak bishops in Banská Bystrica, Nitra, Rožňava and Spiš Chapter in 1926. After 1989, several relics were brought to Slovakia thanks to Bishop Pavel Hnilica and his brother Ján. These differ from the older relics. The shape of the monile is smaller and rounder and it contains only a single small bone fragment. An original certificate of authenticity has been preserved for most of them. The reliquaries usually have the shape of a monstrance or a cross. It should be noted that each relic should also be viewed in the context of the place of its installation. The location and placement of the analyzed relics varies. In the case of Rakovice and Selce, they are kept in the churches dedicated to Sts. Cyril and Methodius, who are

the patron saints of the Žilina Diocese. Historically, Nitra is directly connected with the mission of the Thessaloniki brothers. Veneration of the saints is also strong in the Spiš Chapter. Rakovice and Bzovík can be connected with the Bishop of Banská Bystrica Štefan Moyzes who was a worshiper of Sts. Cyril and Methodius. The analysis of the inscriptions on the relics shows that the most used abbreviations after the name of St. Cyril are Slav. App. and E.C. In the first case, the abbreviation means a “Slavic apostle” and was used for relics imported from Rome in 1926. An exception is the specimen from Rožňava. In this case, it can be assumed that a new label was created due to the placement of the relic in the pectoral. The E.C. used on the relics acquired after 1963 stands for “Episcopus Confessor”. In the Roman Catholic Church, the title Confessor refers to the saints and blessed who were not martyred. It is also worth mentioning that after the Czech Republic²⁶ where Vojtech Samec (1992, 49-54) documented the occurrence of relics in fifteenth Roman Catholic churches or institutions²⁷, Slovakia comes second in the number of relics of St. Constantine-Cyril. Ján Hnilica (2012, 103-105) recorded six sites on the territory of Italy and the Vatican. He also mentioned Thessaloniki. Another magnificent reliquary is on Mount Athos in Greece (Relics of Sts. Cyril and Methodius 2022) and two relics were obtained from Prague by the prominent Russian historian Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin in the 19th century (Samec 1992, 52). Documenting the relics of Constantine-Cyril outside Slovakia will be the subject of further research.

The relics themselves and their stories are important not only for local believers, but also in terms of their possible interconnection on the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius, which promotes the spiritual and cultural legacy of the brothers and their disciples in each of the participating countries (Cyril and Methodius Route 2022; Peterka 2016, 106-118).

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²⁶ To understand the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition in the 21st century in Bohemia, see P. Maturkanič – I. Tomanová Čergetová – D. Příbylová (2022, 161-176).

²⁷ Some contain more relics. In three cases, the specimens were missing.

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Appendix



Fig. 1. Reliquary of St. Constantine-Cyril in the Church of St. Ladislaus in Rajec. Photo: Mgr. Peter Hluzák.



Fig. 2. Reliquary of St. Constantine-Cyril in St. Emmeram's Cathedral in Nitra. Photo: Peter Ivanič.



Fig. 3. Reliquary of St. Constantine-Cyril in St. Martin's Cathedral in the Spiš Chapter. Photo: Roman Králik.



Fig. 4. Reliquary of St. Constantine-Cyril at the Bishop's Office in Banská Bystrica. Photo: Peter Lupták.

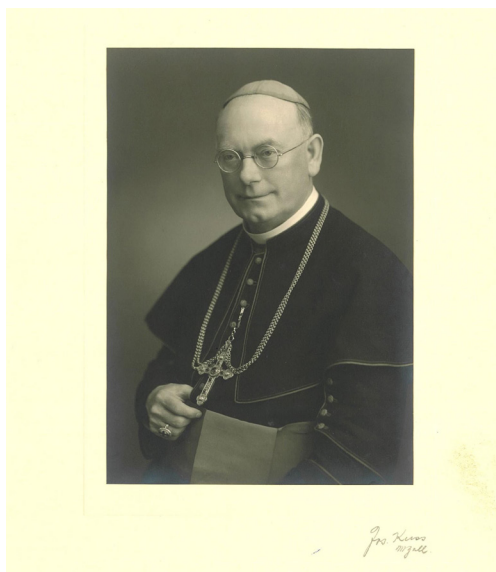


Fig. 5. The Bishop of Rožňava Michal Bubnič with the pax. Photo: Archives of the Bishop's Office in Rožňava – Silvia Lörinčíková.



Fig. 6. Reliquary of St. Constantine-Cyril in the Church of St. Stephen the King in Bzovík. Photo: Peter Ivanič.



Fig. 7. Reliquary of St. Constantine-Cyril at the Bishop's Office in Žilina. Photo: Štefan Židek.



Fig. 8. Reliquary of St. Constantine-Cyril in the Church of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Rakovice. Photo: Peter Ivanič.



Fig. 9. Reliquary of St. Constantine-Cyril in the Church of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Selce. Photo: Peter Ivanič.



Fig. 10. Reliquary of St. Constantine-Cyril in the Greek Catholic Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Košice. Photo: Archive of the Košice Eparchy.

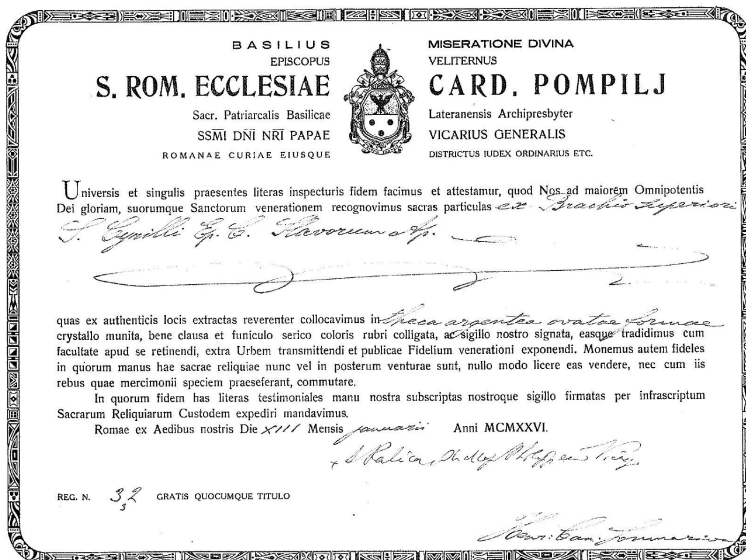


Fig. 11. Certificate on the authenticity of the relic of St. Constantine-Cyril from January 13, 1926. Photo: Archives of the Bishop's Office in Rožňava – Silvia Lörinčíková.

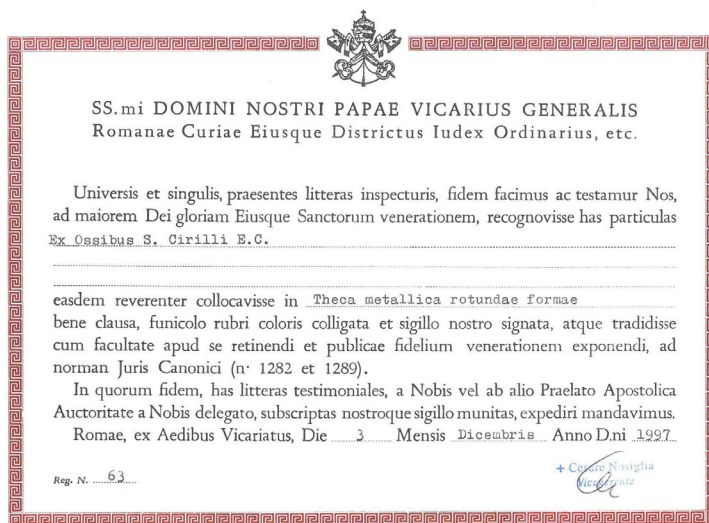


Fig. 12. Certificate on the authenticity of the relic of St. Constantine-Cyril at the Bishop's Office in Žilina from December 3, 1997. Photo: Štefan Židek.