

## **Reviving the value system in the context of Marian spiritual tradition**

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### *Introduction*

A society's value system is closely linked to the cultivation and sustainability of human memory. Cultural memory is reflected in the civilisation development of a human society, preserving an image of human actions in the world. Thanks to their thinking, humans have the gift of creativity, which allows them to develop and improve.<sup>1</sup>

Anthropological and culturological aspects of learning about human evolution point to an entire spectrum of values applied every day by people throughout the world.

An integral part of this value spectrum is the language as an instrument of thought and a means of communication. It allows people to express and describe all their thoughts, feelings and ideas connected with the material and spiritual world they engage in.

From the very beginning of the formation of human society, since first interpersonal relationships, language has played the most important role in conquering the world and represents a central pillar of cultivation of human nature (identity).

People use linguistic means to name all realities perceived by their senses and grasped by their minds. Human civilisation itself is connected with the development of thinking and human creativity and imagination. Man is invited to name every being and find in it support for everyday life, work and creativity.

The emergence and life of a community (house, family, nation) is inevitably conditioned by the existence of relationships, i.e. mutual complementarity. These are not only relationships based on attraction or the

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<sup>1</sup> Dubovský, P. (ed.): *Komentáře k Starému zákonu*. [Commentaries on the Old Testament] Volume I. Genesis. Trnava: Dobrá kniha, 2008, p. 71.

fulfilment of needs, but it is a connection established as a result of internal similarities between the members of human community and their mutual communication. According to the teaching of the Bible, there is no humanlike being on earth because the axiological dimension of likeness to God (Genesis 1:27) prevails in humans. A human's personality is thus fully manifested in the life of the community. This is characterised by the complexity of human existence, which is reflected in the complementarity of all elements of human nature.<sup>2</sup>

Man is a co-creator of values and takes part in their management, naming and cultivation. The Bible (Genesis 2:19-20) says that humans, through the means of language, have gained dominion over all God's creations and they continue their mission to conquer the world when they name things, realities and actions that they themselves contribute to and cultivate using their creativity. Linguistic means are a source of learning about the oldest events in the world and the beginning of human society and civilisation. They include mainly linguistic means used in texts of the Bible, but also in various narratives, literary sources, epics, historical documents, chronicles and written culture in general. Linguistic means are evidence of the development of human thinking since the times of ancient civilisations. They contain proofs of origin and of the foundation for communicative (relational) and civilisational development of man, which in different parts of the world with diverse natural existential conditions has manifested itself in the historical and social conditions of development that the diversified human society has undergone in the context of its own cultivation.

Although in today's world we clearly differentiate between religious and non-religious everyday, this division is not natural for people as both components of human nature (physical and spiritual) cannot be separated from each other. Humans themselves are created in the synergy of experience (knowledge) and faith. All sources of cultural memory are reflected in the synergy of human knowledge and faith. The apt rabbinical commentary taken from the extensive Jewish collection *Midrash Rabba (Bereshit Rabba)* may be useful in this regard. It affirms God's intention to create man in his own image so that no person can say to another that the origin of one human being is greater than the origin of the other. God did not create man

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<sup>2</sup> Humans are created in the image of God, which distinguishes them from other beings. From Adam's rib, during his deep sleep, God made him a woman and appointed the human being (man and woman together) as the ruler destined to govern and cultivate themselves and the world.

from the heavenly elements, for humans would then live forever and not die. However, if God created humans only from the lower elements and humans merely died, they would not be able to live forever. God therefore created man in his own image from the higher as well as lower elements so that people themselves could choose from them those which they would cultivate in order not to die, but to live forever.<sup>3</sup>

The main asset of human nature is diversity based on the fact that the righteous should not boast that they are descended only from the righteous, and that the unrighteous should not make excuses that their ancestors were not that righteous. People are free to choose the responsibility for their actions and thus are naturally protected from deception and the appropriation or misuse of ancestral merits. People thus resemble not only celestial beings: they stand upright and are ready for the freedom of choice, they can see, understand and, above all, speak – communicate. At the same time, they also have the characteristics of dumb creatures (animals), which include the basic necessities of life: eating, drinking, procreation, excretion and mortality. In their actions, however, humans have the choice of cultivating their individual qualities and so by choosing the way of their existence they cultivate themselves for life or death.

### *The word as the expression of the relationship between content and form*

The right to name things and phenomena is related to humans being invited to take part in creation. Man was given the right to fill the word with content. The natural result of this right is mainly the desire to know the truth. Perhaps that is why the etymological basis of the Slovak words for *truth* (*pravda*) and *right* or *law* (*právo*) is determined by the highest degree of the value of knowledge. The terms *правьда* and *право* express the harmony between objective reality and a person's decision to act in accordance with the right to free choice.

The names *truth* and *right* create primordial tension that is balanced in the community by complementarity in man's relationships with God and with man, that is, between people. A relationship based on intrinsic coherence forms a natural part of cultural memory that can be expressed by linguistic means. Cultural memory expressed in the linguistic image of the

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<sup>3</sup> Dubovský, P. (ed.): *Komentáre k Starému zákonu*. [Commentaries on the Old Testament] Volume I. Genesis, op. cit., p. 78.

world constitutes the basis, the means and the goal of human identity.<sup>4</sup> The identity of a community is always expressed by anthropological linguistic means, through which the material world is in close relationship with the spiritual dimension and human imagination. Even words such as *pravý, pravdivý, správný* (*genuine, true, right*) express the qualities of the highest degree of reality perceived by the senses, grasped by reason and inherent in the object or subject described.

Already the Bible describes man created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26) using anthropological linguistic means. In breathing, which is the perfect expression of human life ('Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being,' Genesis 2:7), people are able to form a word by the vibration of the vocal cords and the activity of speech organs and thus subdue all named realities. By the existence of speech and communication, humans resemble their true model. In the New Testament, this relationship with God is stabilised in the incarnation of the Word, i.e. Christ. The Holy Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 3:18) even writes that it is through faith that we are transformed into God, of whom Christ is the perfect image (Corinthians 1:15), for he who sees Christ sees the Father (John 14:9). The anthropomorphic naming of things and phenomena is therefore an example of a legitimate way<sup>5</sup> of expressing the relationship between a term and its content. All names expressed by human language in speech are therefore a reflection of human thought and experience. This is why no terms created by human beings ever lose their anthropomorphic characteristics, since they are the result of human reasoning and are anthropocentric.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cultural memory presents a picture of the cultural, social and spiritual order of a society, which each community naturally protects from various foreign and adverse influences. Cf. Žeňuch, P.: Mariánske paraliturgické piesne v cyrilských spevníkoch na Slovensku z 18.–20. storočia [Marian paraliturgical songs in Cyrillic songbooks in Slovakia from the 18th – 20th centuries]. In Žeňuch, P. – Zubko, P. (eds.): Bohorodička v kultúrnych dejinách Slovenska [The Mother of God in the Cultural History of Slovakia]. Bratislava: Slavistický ústav Jána Stanislava SAV – Bratislavská gréckokatolícka eparchia, 2014, pp.163-199.

<sup>5</sup> See Le Goff, J. – Schmitt, J.-C.: Encyclopédie médiévale [Encyclopedia of Middle Ages] (translation from the French original Dictionnaire raisonné de L'Occident médiéval, 1999). Prague: Vyšehrad, 2020, p. 432.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Žeňuch, P. – Šašerina, S.: Obraz Boha v jazyku ako nástroji komunikácie a axiologické aspekty sviatku a sviatočnosti. [The image of God in language as an instrument of communication and axiological aspects of feast and sacramentality]. In Седакова, И. А. – Žeňuch, P. – Китанова, М. et al.: Axiologický výskum slovanských jazykov / Axiological Investigation into the Slavic Languages. Bratislava – Moscow: Slavistický ústav Jána Stanislava

The proof of the relationship between God and man is the language of Holy Scripture itself. It uses means of expression understandable to humans referring to value categories that clearly reflect and semantically fulfil an image decodable in human thought, perception and imagination.

Every human means of communication (language) is also evidence of the cultivation of a person in their own community. It is in the community that uses a particular linguistic code as a means of communication and an instrument of thought that language is a living instrument for expressing man's relationship to man and to God. This is also confirmed by the need to translate sacred and biblical texts into the national languages, which fulfil their kerygmatic task of communicating the truth about God. For this purpose, a cultivated form of language is used in the various communities as a means of communication, since God is present in every language and in all the historical stages of the development and cultivation of a community's language.

The use of language and its means is the result of humans' creative activity, which is based on conveying an image of the world by means of linguistic signs. Language therefore becomes not only a means of expressing thought, but also an affirmation of responsibility for free human knowledge. It is in human speech that thinking is manifested. Linguistic means synergistically express the relationship between image and representation, between sign and its content, between truth and faith.

### *Marian tradition as a basis for the revival of values*

The union of faith and truth is reproduced in folk piety by linguistic means in spiritual songs. Spiritual songs are therefore seen as empirical expressions of man and community. Spiritual songs apply and develop universal motifs based on the axiological principles of kerygma (proclamation) of truth. The kerygma of the Bible is based on truth and people's experience of God and faith so it is not primarily intended for institutionalised settings. In addition, the expressions of folk religiosity included in the spiritual songs did not remain hidden, but motivated people to express their experience across the full spectrum of reverence for God and the saints. People's religious experience is represented especially by the spiritual songs dedicated to God, the Holy Trinity, Christ, various saints, martyrs, confessors and

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SAV – Институт славяноведения РАН, 2019, pp. 18 and 21 and also Вендина, Т. И.: Средневековый человек в зеркале старославянского языка. [Medieval Man in the Mirror of the Old Slavonic Language]. Москва: Индрик, 2002, pp. 162-166.

Doctors of the Church, who found their place in the feasts of the church year. A special group consists of various penitential and supplicatory songs, songs of thanks and songs with different thematic focuses (e.g. funeral songs, wedding songs, songs for Lent, etc.). A thematically unique group is also represented by songs dedicated to Mary, the Mother of God, who is a typical example of a person experiencing faith and God's mercy.

The mission of spiritual songs is to encourage, instruct, exhort, explain and point to God and the saints, to inform and elucidate the causes and origins of miracles, biblical events, apparitions and feasts, to venerate and celebrate them.<sup>7</sup>

Spiritual songs use a variety of linguistic devices to convey the experience and sincere desire of human beings to respond positively to a variety of important stimuli shaping human relationships in communion with the natural and supernatural worlds. Spiritual Marian songs also include various songs with themes describing a person in crisis, in particular the image of a crisis of faith in God's mercy. This crisis has led man to commit evil in a state of jealousy. Jealousy is a state of mind already known from Cain's relationship and his attitude towards his own brother. Cain's solution was his free decision to inflict violence on his own brother. Although any decision by a person to act violently may have various external motivations, the decision itself need not be the source of an act of iniquity. However, an act of iniquity stems from a person's desire to command attention by any action, even iniquity, which gives rise to violence. And since every decision is made with the heart, all names with the root *srd-* (heart-) (*srditost'*, meaning 'wrathfulness', 'anger', *srdnatost'*, meaning 'courage', *srdečnost'* or 'cordiality', meaning 'amiability, kindness, sincerity', along with the term *milosrdenstvo*, i.e. 'mercy', meaning 'friendly understanding or sympathy for another's misfortune and suffering' can be seen as a picture of a human's personality disposition. A human's personality cannot be disguised even by modern means of personality training. The prerequisite for a person's transformation is acceptance of oneself, acceptance of one's position, one's place in the life of the community, etc. In spite

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<sup>7</sup> Žeňuch, P.: Kyrillische paraliturgische Lieder. Edition des handschriftlichen Liedguts im ehemaligen Bistum von Mukačevo im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Bausteine zur Slavischen Philologie und Kulturgeschichte. [Cyrillic Paraliturgical Songs. Edition of Handwritten Songs in the Former Bishopric of Mukachevo in the 18th and 19th centuries. Building Blocks of Slavic Philology and Cultural History] Reihe B. Editionen. Volume 23. Along with: Monumenta byzantino-slavica et latina Slovaciae. Vol. II. Köln – Weimar – Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2006.

of this experience arising from man's cultural memory, it is still a great mystery why man in crisis situations more often chooses to do evil than good.<sup>8</sup>

Spiritual songs based on popular Marian devotion are interwoven with the image of the Mother of God as the Mediatrix of Mercy in every need. So not only does the Marian spiritual song have an adorative, prayer, celebratory and religious function, but it also contains a variety of images and examples that focus on the reflection of moments of crisis whose resolution is realised in the fulfilment of the decision for *mercy*.

Mercy is first and foremost a deep emotion arising from conscious involvement in helping to resolve a person's crisis. Mercy itself, however, has no effective means to resolve the current crisis, but in itself it represents the necessary perspective for a successful revival of the value system, which takes place in the functionalisation of relationships in the community and in the purification of the neglected (degraded) human consciousness and capacity to govern the world as God. Mercy does not search for the reasons or causes of the crisis. Mercy is a perspective and its goal is the revival of values affecting human relationships. Mercy is the image of God in man.

The deification of humans through mercy can be seen in a number of spiritual songs with Marian themes, but also in the Marian religious cult itself, since it reflects the main principles of the character of the community that reveres the Mother of God. The reverence for the Mother of God provides many examples of satisfying the human desire for peace, protection, fulfilment, love, understanding, etc. The Mother of God is therefore not only an example of humility, but also an example of serenity in temptation and crisis; she is a heroine, a ruler, a protectress, a guide and a true human being with a sincere attitude of zeal for values that are expressed through mercy and love for each member of the community.

What takes centre stage in the spiritual Marian song, is the depiction of the Mother of God as protectress, rescuer, comfortress in misery,

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<sup>8</sup> See Dubovský, P. (ed.): Komentáře k Starému zákonu [Commentaries on the Old Testament]. Volume I. Genesis, op. cit., p. 199. A decision (by choice) can give rise to the very essence of the crisis resulting from man's action in favour of the good. Doing good is shaped at turning points along the lines of ethical character of that action, which may be influenced, for example, by acting in the name of the noble (altruistic) good as an end. Another type is acting on behalf of a useful good with the goal of personal or collective benefit as the outcome of such action. A third type, however, is already acting for the purpose of a pleasurable good, which is ethically dangerous because it already threatens the very essence of morality and thus focuses only on the originator of such action. Cf. John Paul II: Paměť a identita [Memory and Identity]. Trnava: Spolok sv. Vojtecha, 2005, pp. 40-42.

in poverty, in old age, in loneliness, in abandonment, in barrenness, in threats to certainties, rights and justice and in every need. The Mother of God is a patroness in times of danger and turmoil, for example, in times of rebellions, uprisings and ravages of war. All these and many other examples of crisis are the result of man's resistance to diversity in the world. The desire to dominate is the embodiment of jealousy, which results in unease as a symptom of human fragility. Therefore, people erroneously try to blame the emergence of crisis on the action of God, especially when they interpret crisis events as God's retribution for human mistakes and shortcomings. This jealousy of God is caused by the unenforceability of humans' right to receive recognition from God for their efforts. Already in the Abel-Cain story of fratricide, man experienced this difficult state of jealousy, which did not arise from a desire to murder a brother, but from jealousy of God who made possible the existence of diversity and cultural diversity when one is a shepherd (Abel) and the other a peasant (Cain). Human criticism of God also results from the obligation to hand over the first share of every yield. This commitment to hand over the first part of the gift (of the harvest, of the profit, of the benefit, of the proceeds, of the yield, of the income) lays the groundwork in the human heart for the emergence of jealousy and, consequently, a crisis of human identity. Every success or failure is thus an image of the struggle for *truth* and *right* according to human free choice.<sup>9</sup>

Marian spiritual song, which mirrors folk piety, points to these value conflicts of the relationship between truth, right and justice, which are reflected in various social and cultural-historical situations (in the family,

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<sup>9</sup> Standing upright (straight) before the Truth is the opposite of crookedness (sin). The rejection of evil (sin) does not cause a crisis in a relationship if one can control one's actions by doing good. However, even the good can be threefold: noble, useful or pleasurable (John Paul II: *Pamăt' a identita* [Memory and Identity], op. cit., p. 40), and opting for the good is related to freedom of choice. Here a person is really in an environment where freedom of choice and the prevention of conflict, which can imply a crisis of values, are decisive. John Paul II writes about it: 'A person wants a certain good, chooses it, and then is responsible for their choice. Against the backdrop of this metaphysical and, at the same time, anthropological vision of the good, a division is created, which is already primarily ethical in character. It is a division or rather a differentiation between the noble good (*bonum honestum*), the useful good (*bonum utile*) and the pleasurable good (*bonum delectabile*). These three kinds of good determine human action in an organic sense. (...) to move pleasantness to the first place in analysing human action is dangerous and threatens the very essence of morality' (Cf. John Paul II: *Pamăt' a identita* [Memory and Identity], op. cit., p. 40-41). So, what matters in this system is not only the place of man in the system of values, but also the place of the proper use of freedom in conjunction with human thought in the sphere of good and evil.



in war, in plague epidemics, in riots and tyrannies, etc.). The question of responsibility for all decisions comes to the fore.

Every crisis offers humans an opportunity for the cultivation of the heart, for example, by the decision to leave the bondage into which they fall when they feel that by freely choosing anger or jealousy, they will gain independence. It should be noted that jealousy itself is not the opposite to (the contradiction of) love. To be jealous or envious is to love what I cannot achieve myself. However, for the revival of true love, a reciprocal power of grace in the heart is necessary, i.e. to be in a state of favourable attitude towards the other person. To become strong in mercy, one does not need to seek the degree of grace in forgiveness, but in the strength of accepting the state of one's commitment to communicate in favour of revitalising the values and goods that result from complementarity, that is, from the relationship between people.

### *The image of mercy in Marian spiritual song*

The themes of the songs, which express popular Marian devotion and reverence, are drawn from the Bible and from apocryphal and legendary tradition. However, an important part is to pass down the experience of a person's living and everyday faith from one generation to the next. This is why the development of popular Marian religiosity is a counterpoint to official Marian liturgical veneration. It is through spiritual songs that the experience of faith is passed to the wider community associated with Marian reverence.<sup>10</sup> The rhymed song lyrics are easier to remember, unlike the liturgical texts. From the formal perspective, the songs also have a simpler structure, which has a God-centred content through the image of the Mother of God.

The inspiration for such popular devotion comes from various invocations of litany nature and various exclamations of the worshippers: 'Kyrie eleison', 'Christe eleison'. These in fact link the service with folk singing. In addition to the anthropological forms of address for God,<sup>11</sup> specific forms of address for Mary appear in the texts of popular religious reverence. They are formed using symbols inspired by psalm texts and the biblical world from the Old Testament, e.g. *the burning bush*, *Aaron's staff*, *Noah's ark*, *the Ark of the Covenant*, and also influenced by the New Testament and the

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Petri, H. – Beinert, W.: Učení o Marii [The Teaching about Mary]. Olomouc: Maticе Cyrilometodějská s. r. o., 1996, pp. 587-589.

<sup>11</sup> See Žeňuch, P.: Jazykový obraz Božej vlády [The linguistic image of God's reign]. In: Parrésia. Revue pro východní křesťanství / A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies, 2019 – 2020, vol. 12.-13., pp. 181-194.

symbolism of nature, e.g. *the star of the sea, the ivory tower, the pure lily, the well of sweetness, the grapevine, the window to heaven, etc.*

A special group of forms of address for Mary consists of comparisons of her to the tabernacle in which the eucharistic meal is hidden, e.g., the Mother of God as the *kivorion (sacrament house), God's table, the inexhaustible chalice, etc.* Mary is also often compared to Mount Zion in paraliturgical songs: Ты гора еси гора сиона, подобна еси гда трона (MBSLS, p. 889). Mary actually represents the New Testament Zion that brought the New Testament to humanity. Just as the tablets of the Law of Moses were deposited in the ark of the Old Covenant, under the heart of Mary, as in the ark of the New Covenant, was deposited the New Testament: Christ. The most widely used iconographic representation of the Mother of God, however, is the Hodegetria icon, which depicts the Mother of God standing or down to the waist, holding Jesus as a child in her left hand. Nonetheless, Christ is also depicted here as a ruler, holding a scroll of parchment or a book in his left hand (representing the Word of God) and blessing with his right hand (the fingers of his right hand forming the letters IC XC, which stand for Jesus Christ). Mary points with her right hand to the little Jesus. Icons of this type are very numerous and many are considered miraculous.<sup>12</sup>

The titles of the Mother of God as *Queen of Peace, Queen of Angels*, or designations that also point to her regal majesty, e.g., *ruler, protectress, rescuer, duchess, representative, enthroned, throne of the Most High, royal sceptre*, etc., reinforce people's belief in her firm, stable and permanently unchanging position of rulership. To the Mother of God as the Queen belongs the throne and the majesty. In the tradition of the Eastern Church, the throne in icons is usually reserved only for Christ as the true Pantocrator. In the icon of *Mary's Majesty*, however, the Mother of God is also depicted as the heavenly ruler, the Queen (МАРІЕ НЕБЕСНА ЦАРИЦЕ) seated on the throne, yet with Christ sitting on her knees, Mary thus represents the throne of the Most High. The majesty of Christ is also the majesty of the Mother.

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<sup>12</sup> Žeňuch, P.: Pieseň o obraze klokočovskom ako historické svedectvo o zázraku. Kultúrno-historická a jazykovo-historická interpretácia prameňa. [The song of the Klokočov icon as a historical testimony of a miracle. Cultural-historical and linguistic-historical interpretation of the source.] In: Žeňuch P. et al.: Bohorodička v kultúrnych dejinách Slovenska. Slziaci klokočovský obraz Patrónky Zemplína. [The Mother of God in the Cultural History of Slovakia. The Weeping Klokočov Icon of the Patroness of Zemplín]. Bratislava: Slavistický ústav Jána Stanislava SAV – Veda, vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied, 2020, pp. 51-90.

The symbolism of the paraliturgical songs helps the believer to understand the meaning and significance of the kerygma in salvation history. This kerygma is reinforced by the historical awareness expressed in various allegories, images and symbols with the motif of the purification of man. Such a symbol is, for example, the water springing from the stone at the place of the apparition of the Mother of God or at the place of her icon weeping, the miracle of healing, deliverance from ills, enemy armies, etc. Purification is represented by the image of tears (e.g. in the weeping of the icon), which symbolise spiritual and physical purging and the subsequent revitalisation of life, which the miraculously weeping image or icon of the Mother of God performs for a person. In this context, Mary is often seen in many spiritual songs as the *fount of new joy* and *the mother of new life*. There is a special symbolism in the names associated with the depiction of the Mother of God as a *compassionate rescuer*, *an early rescuer*, *a patient helper*, *a suffering mother* and *a perceptive woman*, who is ready to show mercy under any circumstances and in every difficult situation. The Mother of God is the image of a hurting person in a state of crisis who longs to catch God's attention and be in his favour.

This aspect of the spiritual renewal of a person in crisis is represented in the Marian tradition, for example, by the song with the incipit **МИЛОСЕРДІА ДВЕРИ**. The desire to open the door is a recurring motif in the song. The door is an image of the space for the coming of God's mercy, which the Mother of God helps open for a person in crisis, in hardship and amid the worries of life: **МИЛОСЕРДІА ДВЕРИ, ШВЕРЗИ НАМЪ МИЛОСЕРДІА ДВЕРИ. БЛАГОСЛОВЕНАА БГРДЦЕ ДИВО, ШВЕРЗИ НАМЪ МИЛОСЕРДІА ДВЕРИ.**<sup>13</sup> In the song, the Mother of God acts as the human who provides, in particular, guidance for opening the doors to human hearts for the arrival of God's mercy. In liturgical texts, the Mother of God is also compared to *the ladder* on which God descended to man when she consented to God's coming into the world, and now, by the same path, she leads man to the knowledge of the truth. She is the key for opening the door to God's mercy.

The leitmotiv of the song **МИЛОСЕРДІА ДВЕРИ** is derived from a liturgical troparion, which is also the basis for other interpretations of popular Marian religiosity in thematic areas for which it is necessary to emphasise the process of human transformation. The birth of mercy in man is a condition for the revitalisation of the value system. Perhaps this is why the purely an-

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Žeňuch, P.: Kyrillische paraliturgische Lieder [Cyrillic Paraliturgical Songs], pp. 647-648.

thropological dimension of the celebration of Mary as a successful human being can be seen in the annual liturgical cycle of the church's feasts. In fact, the church's liturgical calendar in the milieu of the Byzantine tradition begins with the Marian feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God (8 September) and continues with the feast of the Entry (Presentation) of the Theotokos in the Temple (21 November) and the Annunciation of her motherhood (25 March). The annual cycle ends with the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos (15 August). The central set of spiritual songs aimed at the development of folk religiosity is therefore probably mainly represented by the texts of songs from the church's festive cycle. These also make up the most important source of popular Marian veneration. This cycle inspired by the official teachings of the church is complemented by folk religiosity.

At its core, folk religiosity is the sum of values, historical experience and Christian tradition.<sup>14</sup> Folk religiosity has the capacity for reviving synthesis, linking emotion with reason, community with church, faith with homeland, person with community, thus constantly making the biblical stories present in contemporary events. This connection between past and present, faith and the experience of generations, is made possible by the constant recollection and reliving of the cultural memory of the community.<sup>15</sup> This folk piety provides the most important answers to people's many existential questions when they begin to compare their lives with that of Mary. The faithful, however, are not passive in these comparative glances at their own lives and that of Mary, but draw strength for their own action in family and social life from the similarity of the various trials of life.<sup>16</sup> A very interesting aspect of folk religiosity in this regard is provided by the song of the family of Jesus, which is recorded on sheet no. 4r-4v in the songbook from the

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<sup>14</sup> Folk piety is viewed as a combination of Christian and pre-Christian customs, values and axiological ideas about the functioning of humans in the world. Белова, О.: Народная Библия. Восточнославянские этиологические легенды. [Folk Bible. Eastern Slavic etiological legends]. Москва: Индрик, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Katechismus katolickej cirkvi* [Catechism of the Catholic Church]. Trnava: Spolok sv. Vojtecha, 2013, § 1674-1679.

<sup>16</sup> Зосим, О.: Западноевропейские богородичные песни в восточнославянском репертуаре XVII–XIX вв. [Western European Mother of God Songs in the East Slavic Repertoire of the 17th-19th cent.] In *Вестник православного Свято-Тихоновского гуманитарного университета. Серия 5: Вопросы истории и теории христианского искусства*, no. 4, 2011, pp. 133-164. See also Зосим, О.: Східнослов'янська духовна пісня: сакральний вимір. [Eastern Slavic spiritual song: Sacred dimension.] Київ: Міністерство Культури України, Національна академія керівних кадрів культури і мистецтв, 2017.

village of Kamienska, the Kamienska Songbook or Kamiensky Bohohlasník (1737). In the song entitled *Съ фамилии Іс Хсѣтой*,<sup>17</sup> for example, there is a plea for the newborn Mary to always stand up in time for saving virtue as well as marriage and to work to fix all broken relationships between people and also between the classes of the society: *НЕНАРУШЕНЪ Ъ ПАНЕНЪТЪ, НАДОСКОНАШІЙ Ъ МАЛЖЕНЪТЪ, ЗОПОВАНЫ НАПРѦ СТАНЫ, А СПРѦ ЗГОДА МЕДЖИ ПАННИ, БЫ МО Ъ ПОКОЮ ТЪ ЖИЛИ, Ъ ЕДНОСТИ БѢА ХВАЛИЛИ*. Very interesting in the song is the appeal to St. Joseph, who is addressed as the son-in-law of Joachim and Anna. He thus represents man in full harmony with the humanly imperfect learning about God's presence already at the conception of each new human being. Here Joseph presents himself as an important mediator of supplications before God, who in his family has overcome the crisis of rebellion against God before accepting Christ: *И ТЫ ПРЕДІННІЙ Ъ СВѢ СПРАВА ІХЪ ЗАТЮ, ПОСЦЕНЪ Ъ ТВѢМЪ БѢА ПОЧАТЮ, ЗЪ ІАКОВА ІУСИФЕ СТЪИЙ; ЗА ШЦА Ш БѢА ВЪЗТАИЙ, БЛГѦЙ НА БѢА НШЕГО, ЗА НА МЪКИ ПДЕМШАГО, БЫ СМЫ ГО НЕВБРАЖАЛИ ЗА ГРѢХИ ПОКЪТОВАЛИ*.

The most widespread dimension of the Marian cult is represented by the spiritual songs dedicated to the Feast of Pokrov, e.g. Intercession or the Protection of the Most Holy Mother of God (1 October). These commemorate the historically verifiable event of saving Constantinople from destruction by the Persians and the Avars. In many of the symbols and images, the Mother of God is seen in song not only as a protectress, but above all as a *powerful ruler, rescuer and mediatrix of God's mercy*. In many songs inspired by this theme, the Mother of God appears as a true *duchess*. In a well-known spiritual song with the incipit *ИѦКЪ БѢОМЪ ИЪЗВРАНИЮ, МАТЕРЬ ДѢВЪ ПРЕКРАСИЮ*,<sup>18</sup> one can find the explicit title of the Mother of God as the Duchess of the Christian Family. The designation 'duke' is semantically associated with 'a member of a privileged estate with the status of a knight', but it also contains a semantic dimension that emphasises in particular 'the generosity of a person with excellent manners'. The Mother of God is indeed the first person to give herself over fully to God's mercy, so she is rightly a 'duchess' and the first representative of Christians: *СЪНА ВЪ*

<sup>17</sup> Žeňuch, P.: Kyrillische paraliturgische Lieder [Cyrillic Paraliturgical Songs], p. 139.

<sup>18</sup> In eastern Slovakia it is known mainly thanks to variants of the song in the Kamiensky Bohohlasník from 1734, the Šariš Songbook, in Juhasevič's songbooks from 1811 and 1812 and also in many East Slavic manuscript songbooks of the 17th and 18th centuries. Cf. Žeňuch, P.: Kyrillische paraliturgische Lieder [Cyrillic Paraliturgical Songs], op. cit., pp. 170-172.

ѢСТЬ ВОЕВОДА, ХРЪТІАНСКАГВ РОДА: ЧЖДАНА, ЦРЦЕ, МТИ НША ВЛЦЕ, ВСЕМЪ ДАРЖЕШЪ, ПРНВ: ДАРЫ НЕЗАВИСТНО. The title ‘Duchess of Christians’ is inspired by the title of the opening kondak of the Akathist to the Theotokos, in which the Theotokos is addressed as ‘the duchess’, ‘the mighty and invincible ruler’: ‘*Взбранной Воеводѣ, побѣдительнаа, якв избавльшеса ѿ слыхъ, благодарственнаа восписуемъ Ти раби твои, Богородице, но какв имущаа Державу непобѣдимую, ѿ всакихъ насъ бѣдѣ свободи, да зовемъ Ти: Радуйса, Невѣсто неневѣстнаа!*’ / ‘To you, Mother of God, mighty ruler, we sing a song of victory. You have delivered us from evil, therefore we thank you fervently, though we are but unworthy servants. You are invincible, deliver us from all misery that we may sing to you: Rejoice, Virgin Bride!’

As a liturgical text, the Akathist itself was written in praise of the Mother of God to thank for the protection from the attacks of the Persians and Avars on the holy city of Constantinople. One only needs to add that this first kondak of the Akathist *Взбранной Воеводѣ...* was sounded according to the legends from the Synaxar, which describe the miracles of various icons of the Mother of God, always in times of danger and hostile attacks on Christian centres. The miraculous triple overcoming of the enemy attack on Constantinople (an Avar-Slavic attack and two Arab attacks) influenced the cultural awareness of the entire Christian community of the invincibility of the Mother of God. Perhaps this is why the use of motifs from the Akathist has become a characteristic element of spiritual songs, which are dominated by the hope of salvation for man, and not only in the liturgically specific Lenten season when this ancient liturgical hymn is sung on Akathist Saturday (the Saturday before the fifth Sunday of Great Lent). It turns out that when the believer sings the Akathist (in Greek ακάθιστος, in Church slavonic **НЕСЕДАТЕЛЬНЫЙ**) in the upright posture (standing), it is a symbol of resolve and a manifestation of strength in every time, in danger and crisis,<sup>19</sup> for strength is manifested in the acceptance of one’s own weakness. Only a strong person can truly reveal their weaknesses, and the realisation of one’s

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<sup>19</sup> The chanting of the Akathist became established only after the new invasions of the Saracens (in 673 and 716) and spread throughout the Byzantine Church. Its use as a liturgical text was confirmed by Patriarch Sergius in the 7th century, to whom the authorship is also erroneously attributed. Theologians and church historians consider Romanos the Melodist the author of the Akathist and regard this hymn as a testament to the faith of the ancestors. For more see Hurbanič, M.: *The Avar Siege of Constantinople in 626. History and Legend*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

own strength in the manifested weakness is the result of the freedom of choice to do good, not only in times of prosperity, but especially in times of crisis, hardship, anxiety, etc.<sup>20</sup>

In some spiritual songs the Mother of God also appears as a real heroine or warrior, a duchess dressed in military armour with shield: *ЗЫЙ НА СТЪЮ ВЪРЪ ѿ НАТЪРЫ, МОНАСТЫРСКІЕ БЕЗЪСЪРМАНЪ МЪРЫ, ХОТѢЛЪ ПОДЪ МОЦЪ СВОЮ ВЪЗАТИ, НАДЪ ТЫМЪ МЪРОМЪ ДБА МЪТИ, РАТЪНКУ ДАЛА, ЗА ТАРЧУ СТАЛА*<sup>21</sup> and elsewhere e.g.: *Заставъ на тарчовъ збавленна: силѣ всего имени, оушикну же на, в мѣсцахъ беспечныхъ, збѣи неприятелей вѣчныхъ*.<sup>22</sup> But even here, the Mother of God is neither a heroine nor a warrior with the intention of gaining military success or so that she may be celebrated for accomplishing extraordinary feats (saving from destruction, healing the sick, a weeping icon, etc.). She stands out for her bravery, courage and determination that she shows in life's decisive moments because they arise out of everyday necessity. In spiritual songs, too, the real heroes are those who are involved in reliving the described event as each such event is a way of reliving the development of a person in a particular state of crisis. In the song, the protection of people and their rights is not achieved through military intervention and the expulsion of the enemy, but through an act of mercy towards the suffering, which is considered to be the real rescue.

In this context, other symbols can also be mentioned. They depict the Mother of God as a defender at court trials. For example, there is symbolism based on the variation of the meaning of terms in legal terminology intended to demonstrate the presumptive innocence of human society, which turns to the Mother of God for protection, since she has been spared from the consequences of sin and is fully associated with God's mercy. The appeal

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<sup>20</sup> 'Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.' (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:1-10).

<sup>21</sup> Žeňuch, P.: Kyrillische paraliturgische Lieder [Cyrillic Paraliturgical Songs], op. cit., pp. 889-892.

<sup>22</sup> Žeňuch, P.: Kyrillische paraliturgische Lieder [Cyrillic Paraliturgical Songs], op. cit., pp. 817-818.

for help in the crisis is thus directed to the Mother of God as the advocate of the right side of the dispute: **ПО ТВОЙ ПЛАЩЬ СЯ ОУТЪКАМЕ ПАНЕНКО МРІА, ОУ ТЕБѢ СТРАНИХ ГЛАДАМЕ МАТКО ЛЮТОСТИВА**; so that also those who turn to her may be spared from the difficulties of the crisis. The song with the above incipit is dedicated to the feast of Pokrov (1 October) and is written in Cyrillic in the Šariš Songbook of the early 18th century. Its other two variants can also be found in Ján Juhasevič's songbooks from the early 19th century (1811 and 1812). The model is the song written down in the second edition of the *Cantus Catholici* collection (Trnava, 1700) and probably spread from it in the area of the Byzantine-Slavic tradition in eastern Slovakia, as evidenced by the language of the song itself. However, the song may have penetrated the area of the Church of the Byzantine rite in Slovakia as early as the end of the 17th century from *Šteyer's hymnbook* as it has the character of a planctus or lament, but owing to the Turkish threat, it acquired the dimension of a prayer for protection from the enemy, as evidenced by the verses: **ГЛАТЬ, БО ТАГНУТЪ (НА) НАСЪ ПОГАНОВЕ, ОТВРАТЪ ПРОТИВЕНСТВА, КЪ ТЕБѢ БОЛАМЕ, МЫ ХРИСТИАНЕ, БРАИ (НАСЪ) НЕВЕСПЕЧЕНСТВА**. The dispute expressed in the song is a basis for understanding the crisis between the Christian and Muslim worlds, which for the Hungarian milieu at that time was represented mainly by the Turkish threat and interfaith unrest.<sup>23</sup>

In the context of folk religiosity, the allegory of the Mother of God as a judicial advocate shows an interesting semantic dimension of the believers' reproach that people address to heaven for the fact that on the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God (15 August), this jealous heaven takes not only the soul, but also the body of Mary as the only tangible proof of the earthly life of a noble person: **ГДѢ НБѢ ЗАДРОСНЕ ЦЮ НА ВЫТВАРАЕШЪ; ГДЫ ЕДНУ ПОТЪХУ Ѡ НА ѠБИРАЕШЪ; ЧИМЪ СЯ ВЪДЕТЬ ЗЕМЛА ТЪШИЛА; ПОТЪШИТЕЛКИ КОЛЬ СВОЕЙ ПОЗЫЛА**.<sup>24</sup> Here jealousy is also at the core of the dispute between man and the supernatural world (heaven). This conflict is nonetheless pervaded or permeated in the eyes of the simple man by the mystery of human deification in the form of the acceptance of Mary as the queen of heaven. In the following verses of the song, however, the Mother of God is already presented as the enduring hope of salvation for those who continually pray to the Mother of God as a heavenly protectress and helper

<sup>23</sup> Žeňuch, P.: Kyrillische paraliturgische Lieder [Cyrillic Paraliturgical Songs], op. cit., pp. 173-175.

<sup>24</sup> Žeňuch, P.: Kyrillische paraliturgische Lieder [Cyrillic Paraliturgical Songs], op. cit., pp. 520-521



in crisis: ЛЕЧЬ ПЛАЧЪ Ъ ВЕСЕЛОСТЬ ѠМѢНЯЙТЕ ВЪСИ, НЕЗАБУДЕ Ѡ НАСЪ МѢИ И Ъ НѢСИ. ТИЛКО ЕЙ ЗАВСЕ ТРЕБА В МЫСЛИ МАТИ, И ЦЮ ДЕНЬ КРИПКО Ѡ ПОМОЩЬ ПРОХАТИ.<sup>25</sup>

Various other spiritual and paraliturgical songs describing historically verifiable events, e.g. attacks of heretics on churches and monasteries, various riots, plagues, events based on eyewitness testimonies, etc., were also very popular. They point to the constant presence of the mercy of God in a particular historical space-time. Such spiritual songs often resemble historical and heroic songs in genre. In their interpretation, however, the spiritual and historical plotlines cannot be seen separately, but the historical and religious dimensions of the song must be interpreted as a whole with doxological overlap.

The embodiment of this worldview is people's active participation in religious, historical and cultural life based on freedom of choice and action, yet such unbounded freedom can only be achieved by the heart. According to the tradition of the Eastern Church, the heart cannot be viewed in isolation from the rest of the human body. The heart is the synecdochic image of the whole human being. It is not for nothing that the priest, when celebrating the liturgy, calls on the worshippers: 'Lift up your hearts!' It is not a matter of a one-off emotional outburst or of thinking about what is happening during the celebration of the liturgical rites. 'Lift up your hearts!' is a total call for the believer to lift up to God all that we are, all our thoughts, all our feelings, all our desires: simply the whole person.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, a paraliturgical song denotes such a song and literary form which is not merely an approximation of the mystical world, but it creates a spiritual area of its own. The primary mission of paraliturgical songs is thus to encourage, instruct, exhort, explain and point to God and the saints, to inform and elucidate the causes and origins of biblical and apocryphal events, miracles and apparitions, and to venerate and celebrate them. In this way, the paraliturgical song proclaims the mystery of faith using metaphor, imagery and allegory to liken a particular sociohistorical event to biblical (New Testament or Old Testament), legendary and apocryphal scenes. According to this teaching, a mysterious re-enactment of the past is constant-

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<sup>25</sup> Žeňuch, P.: Kyrillische paraliturgische Lieder [Cyrillic Paraliturgical Songs], op. cit., pp. 520-521.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Špidlík, T.: Slovánská spiritualita [Slovak spirituality]. In Špidlík, T. (ed.): Spiritualita, formácia a kultúra [Spirituality, Formation and Culture]. Velehrad: Refugium, 1995, pp. 28-31.

ly taking place in contemporary events. The believer repeatedly desires to be involved in these glorious processes; this is aided by the update of the historical and religious event in song through the signs of God, which cannot be understood with the senses, but only with the heart, for they stand between the two spaces of the *Sacrum* and the *Profanum*.<sup>27</sup> Just as the rites of service and liturgical rites of the Eastern Church and their chants are inspired by the ancient theophanic tradition, the sacred song raises the visibility of the contribution of the sacred dimension to the revitalisation of the society's value system. Spiritual song can thus be regarded as a song documenting faith and experience, which is complemented by historically verifiable events and also has a didactic and reflective level. At the same time, it is a simplified image of the possibilities of reviving the cultural awareness and value system of people in their relationship with God and mercy.

The manifestations of this awareness can be seen in the various spiritual songs dedicated to the Mother of God, in which she acts as an intercessor who pleads with God for the rescue of man not only in times of difficult and adverse situations caused by natural and social events, but also the transgressions of the classes as well as the church, and especially in the interpretation of various signs and threats on the verge of an apocalyptic crisis.

Although the song with the incipit *Прѣтаѡ Панно Ѡгласка Црице* written in the Kamienka Songbook is a chant of gratitude about the reverence for the Mother of God, it describes a land devastated by man, especially owing to various interfaith riots at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. For this malice towards the earth and fellow human beings, people even then expected the Judgement Day as they were convinced of its coming by various natural phenomena, including, for example, the solar or lunar eclipse, or the approach of Halley's Comet. Literally, these natural phenomena are referred to in the song as follows: *Ѡще не ты мѡишь сѡа за нами, зѡсквернейна земла нашими грѣхами. Нѡо хмѡрами все са заслонѡеть. Мѡцъ ѡздобѡ свою ѡмѣняетъ; свѣзды свѣтлыѡ, нигда непостають, запевне страшный сѡдѡ проавлають, Ѡ воздухѣ са всѣ ѡминили, натѡрѡ свою надолѡ похылили. Црѡво на Црѡво гды настѡпѡеть, оѡпадокъ свѣта ѡжѡ знаменѡеть*.<sup>28</sup> The song enjoyed great popularity especially in eastern Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, as evidenced by its widespread use in several local manuscript songbooks,

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<sup>27</sup> For the relationship between sacred and profane space see Eliade, M.: *Posvátne a profánni* [Sacred and Profane]. Praha: Česká křest'anská akademie, 1994, pp. 17-49.

<sup>28</sup> Žeňuch, P.: *Kyryllische paraliturgische Lieder* [Cyrillic Paraliturgical Songs], op. cit., pp. 916-918.

among which we can mention the Šariš Songbook, Peter Rudnov's Songbook, and the Songbook of Nižný Tvarožec. The solar eclipse which was visible in Hungary in 1711 was perceived by the people as a harbinger of the apocalyptic end. These images are frequent in a number of song lyrics from the aforementioned period, e.g. in a song written in Ján Juhasevič's songbook from the years 1761–1763. The song explicitly mentions the bloodshed in the fratricidal war in connection with the Rákóczi Uprising of 1703–1701. In addition to the fratricidal war, there is also mention of interfaith hostility among Christians or disputes between neighbours caused by hateful words and false speeches spoken in a fit of jealousy: По затмѣнью сѣнца нѣмашь ничь до-  
брого, толко крѣпролатиа, повсталъ брѣтъ на брѣта. Кролѣвства падають,  
цесарства рѣшають ѿ великїе пѣнства въ иши край рѣшають. Вѣра на вѣрѣ  
барзо повстала, не ѣдна црковъ южъ ѣсть зрѣнтована. (...) В прїятелствѣ  
непрїязни много, же радъ бы предѣти южъ ѣденъ дрѣгого; ѿ сѣсѣдѣ сѣсѣда  
в оубоствѣ нератѣе, але емѣ во словахъ своихъ трѣтизнѣ готѣе.<sup>29</sup>

Often the only way out of a crisis situation was resignation. But the way out of a crisis is not the death of man! The only rescue is mercy, as it is also mentioned in the song with the incipit Мѣтко сѣгаѣ людеѣ оубтрапленїи, which is also found in the manuscript Songbook of Nižný Tvarožec from the beginning of the 18th century, written at a time of crisis marked by tensions and danger to human life: Новина смѣтнаѣ южъ по свѣтѣ слынетъ, не еденъ теперъ  
вѣз сповѣди гынетъ. Росказаѣ пѣнно сѣтъ твой ѣггломъ, вы нефолговали  
наймиѣ човекови: Далъ мечъ ѣстрѣый стрѣлы ѣдовитї; абы племена вѣсѣхъ  
людей гѣвитї; Бы нѣша племена были выглажены ѣко прахъ земный вѣтромъ  
рознесенны. Заставсѣ пѣно просъ сѣна своего, нехай некараетъ члѣвка грѣшна-  
го. Неха некараетъ насъ ѣ запалчивостї, нехай ѣпѣщааетъ вѣсѣ наша злостї.  
Нѣмашъ ратѣнкѣ, оуб кого проситї, тѣлко ѣ тебе пѣно вси жадаемъ.<sup>30</sup>

The strengthening of the common value and cultural consciousness of the community is achieved through the constant revival of historical memory as a unique source of lessons from various moments of crisis in the development of human culture and civilisation. The way out of a state of crisis is to learn from the experience of one's ancestors who showed their courage and strength by admitting weakness, humility and mercy.

<sup>29</sup> Žeňuch, P.: Kyrillische paraliturgische Lieder [Cyrillic Paraliturgical Songs], op. cit., pp. 923-925.

<sup>30</sup> Žeňuch, P.: Kyrillische paraliturgische Lieder [Cyrillic Paraliturgical Songs], op. cit., pp. 921-923.