

LESS KNOWN ICONOGRAPHY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN THE PRAGUE LORETO IN CONNECTION WITH THE TEACHING OF ST LAWRENCE OF BRINDISI

MARIE VYMAZALOVÁ

ABSTRACT

The text describes and contextualises collections of sermons by Lawrence of Brindisi about the Virgin Mary called *Mariale*, mainly the sermons about the teachings of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. Lawrence of Brindisi, a capuchin monk and a European diplomat, was an important person in European church history of the 16th and the 17th centuries, but his texts are not yet fully appreciated. The text compares the theological question with the works of art from Prague Loreta. The comparison of the layout of this Marian pilgrimage place and thoughts of Franciscan spirituality contained in Lawrence's sermons demonstrates the mutual interconnection between the specific period of theological thinking and a particular example of artistic expression.

Keywords

Iconography; Immaculate Conception; Virgin Mary; Prague Loreto; Lawrence of Brindisi

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‘...If piousness is not only sustained on doctrines of the learned, but if it is visibly displayed in majestic buildings, imperishable memorials and witnesses seemingly planted by the hand of God Himself, belief of our contemporaries and those who will come and admire these remarkable works will survive and grow. Yes, belief will survive and strengthen and eternal humbleness in the face of a miracle will come.’

Pope Nicolas V¹

Lawrence of Brindisi, an important European diplomat, a significant figure of the Capuchin order at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, a saint and, last but not least, a *doctor apostolicus*, left a great intellectual work for the future generations which, however, was not published in print until the 20th century. His texts are therefore not yet fully appreciated. The aim of this text is to describe and contextualise one of his largest collections of sermons about the Virgin Mary called *Mariale*, mainly the sermons about the teachings of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. This part will be the basis for the follow-up analysis² of the Prague Loreto in the 17th century, where this theological question repeatedly appears through selected works of art. The comparison of the layout of this Marian pilgrimage place and thoughts of Franciscan spirituality contained in Lawrence’s sermons will underline the mutual interconnection between specific period theological thinking and a particular example of artistic expression.

¹ The quotation was taken from Alick McLean, ‘Italian architecture of late Middle Age,’ in *Umění italské renesance: architektura, sochařství, malířství, kresba*, ed. Rolf Toman (Praha: Slovart, 1996), 12.

² The iconographic method was developed by Erwin Panofsky, who divides it into the stages of pre-iconographic description (teaching of the original significance), iconographic description (teaching of the secondary significance, i.e. of the concrete depicted story or allegory), and iconographic analysis (determination of the inner significance based on the knowledge of important tendencies of human thinking in that period, contained, for example, in philosophical or theological texts and other sources). See Erwin Panofsky, *Význam ve výtvarném umění* (Praha: Academia, 2013), 41–55.

1. Lawrence of Brindisi and his Theological Work

Lawrence of Brindisi⁵ (born Giulio Cesare Russo, 1559–1619) came from the town of Brindisi in south Italy, but from 1574, he lived in Venice, where he became familiar with the Capuchin Order. He took a monastic vow two years later in Verona. In both these important Italian cities, he studied philosophy and theology and gained good humane education and language skills. It was crucial for his future successful diplomatic activity in Italy, Spain, and Bohemia. In 1599, he brought the first Capuchin order mission to the Bohemian land. It settled in Hradčany in Prague after long negotiations with the imperial court, and it started its missionary activities. Lawrence was a very eloquent preacher and conducted repeated polemics with the non-Catholics, not only in the Czech milieu. He highly honoured the Virgin Mary because she allegedly cured his stomach disease, which had interrupted his studies in his young years. Lawrence died in Lisbon while fulfilling his diplomatic tasks in 1619. Soon the process of his beatification commenced, which was expected to be completed soon, as it was common in the early 17th century. However, the decision of Pope Urban VIII, who railed against fast canonisation processes and determined a period of 50 years after a candidate's death, halted this intention for many years. St. Lawrence was beatified as late as 1783 and canonised a hundred years later, in 1881. In 1959, Pope John XXIII conferred a degree of *doctor apostolicus* on him. Conferring this degree is also reflected in the increased interest in Lawrence's theological works during the first half of the 20th century.⁴

⁵ The most extensive work on this person is still Arturo M., da Carmignano di Brenta, *San Lorenzo da Brindisi: Dottore della Chiesa universale*, 4 vols., Miscellanea Laurentiana 4 (Venezia: Curia Provinciale dei FF. MM. Cappuccini, 1960–1965). The latest one is Andrew J. G. Drenas, *The Standard Bearer of the Roman Church: Lawrence of Brindisi and Capuchin Missions in the Holy Roman Empire (1599–1613)* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2018). In the Czech milieu it is Vavřinec Rabas, *Sv. Vavřinec z Brindisi, zakladatel česko-moravské provincie řádu kapucínského* (Olomouc: Dominikánská Edice Krystal, 1941) The latest one is Alessandro Catalano, “Duchovní válka slov” na začátku 17. století a Vavřinec z Brindisi (1559–1619), in *Pax et Bonum: Kapucíni v Čechách a na Moravě v raném novověku*, ed. Brčák Marek and Wolf Jiří (Příbram: Scriptorium, 2020), 54–60.

⁴ In the 20th century Lawrence's theological contribution was assessed, mainly in the field of Mariology, which was examined in detail by G. M. Roschini, see Gabriele M. Roschini, ‘La Mariologia di S. Lorenzo da Brindisi (A),’ in *Lorenzo da Brindisi: studi: conferenze commemorative dell'edizione Opera omnia*, ed. Clemente da Santa Maria, *Miscellanea Laurentiana* 1 (Padova: Gregoriana, 1951), 141–179. Gabriele

Editing and publishing of Lawrence's manuscripts was initiated by his home community in Venice in the early 20th century.⁵ The first of fifteen published volumes was a collection of Virgin Mary sermons *Mariale* comprising eighty-four manuscripts.⁶ The sermons in *Mariale* are arranged into topic-based groups, e.g. The Woman of the Apocalypse in John's Revelation, The Salutation of the Angel, The Assumption of the Virgin Mary, etc. One of these topics is focused on the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.⁷ Every sermon is structured into short, numbered subchapters with arguments in which Lawrence first presents the given aspect of the mystery on which he wants to focus in the sermon. In the following chapters, he develops the topic to sum it up finally in conclusion. His construction of the text is therefore clearly structured and well thought-through.

Lawrence opens the topic of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary with a general contemplation.⁸ He accentuates Mary's motherhood and calls her God's dwelling full of mercy which was created for the Son of God. He argues that God is almighty, thanks to which God could and wanted to protect the Virgin Mary from sin. His reasoning is based on frequent quotations from the Holy Scripture and Church Fathers; very often, he refers to the salutation of angel during the annunciation, for example. However, the actual doctrine is seen in the context of the period. Thanks to his studies, Lawrence was aware of the theological development of the doctrine, even one of its

M. Roschini, *La Mariologia di S. Lorenzo da Brindisi (B)*, Miscellanea Laurentiana 2 (Padova: Gregoriana, 1951). In the Lawrence's bibliography from 1961, there are more than eighty other specialist texts just for the topic of Mariology. Felice da Mareto, *Bibliographia Laurentiana*, Subsidia scientifica Franciscalia (Roma: Inst. Hist. Ord. Fr. Min. Cap., 1962). Currently the topic of theological activities of St Lawrence is becoming relevant again, see Gabriele Ingegneri, ed., *San Lorenzo da Brindisi Doctor Apostolicus nell'Europa tra Cinque e Seicento: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Venezia, 17-19 ottobre 2019)* (Venezia: Biblioteca Provinciale Cappuccini, 2021).

⁵ Laurentius of Brindisi, *Opera omnia: a patribus min. capuccinis prov. Venetae e textu originali nunc primum in lucem edita notisque illustrata*, Padova, 1928–1956.

⁶ Vernon Wagner, 'Foreword,' in *The Mariale*, ed. Vavřinec z Brindisi and Vernon Wagner, trans. Vernon Wagner (Delhi: Media Haus, 2007), preface, unpag.

⁷ In the course of the time, the first Latin edition was complemented with other editions in other language variants. The author worked with two of them. The older one, in Italian language comprises twelve individual sermons delivered on the day celebrating the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, the younger one, in English language, comprises only eleven. Lawrence of Brindisi and Mariano da Alatri, eds., *Le Feste della Madonna* (Roma: Libreria mariana, 1959). Lawrence of Brindisi and Vernon Wagner, eds., *The Mariale*, trans. Vernon Wagner (Delhi: Media Haus, 2007).

⁸ Lawrence of Brindisi and Wagner, *The Mariale*, 276–289.

breakthrough moments in 1439, when the Council of Basel, on its XXXVI meeting, accepted a decree of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary and its celebration was set to be on the 8th December according to the existing tradition. Even though the council lost its legitimacy soon after and the announcement could not be accepted as a dogma, the wording of the decree influenced the following development mainly in the countries whose representatives took part in the council (Italy, Spain, France, and Germany).⁹ He does not forget about the significance of the Immaculate Conception in the European university milieu. He feels that this doctrine, which he does not doubt at all, is reflected in the religious reverence of the believers, and therefore it is lived by Church, even though it has not announced it as its dogma yet.

The second sermon presents Mary as an infinite light of mercy. Like God, the Virgin Mary is also likened to light which excludes darkness and therefore a sin. In this part, St Lawrence also celebrates the beauty of the Virgin Mary in three spheres (head, body, and legs), similar to a human being, who is divided into three parts – body, soul, and spiritual thinking. These parts are then connected with the individual virtues in connection with the teaching by St Thomas Aquinas (body – chastity, moral integrity, and other civil virtues; soul – cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, moderation, and bravery; thought – theological virtues: belief, hope, and love).¹⁰ The third sermon likens Mary to the new God's ark, which is compared with the old 'three-dimensional' square ark with golden rings in the corners. The element of number four is again compared to Cardinal virtues, number three to theological ones.¹¹ Using this example, we can show one of the generally valid principles of Lawrence's sermons. Some lines of reasoning are repeated across his sermons, in a slightly altered context. This is the case, for example, in the emphasis on the square shape of the ark, mentioned already in the first sermon, when the number four is presented as a symbol of Divinity with respect to the name of God himself (JHWH). However, he also mentions the Pythagorean teaching of Tetractys which considers the number four to be the ideal number.¹² Lawrence's width of intellectual sources was extensive and various. In the simile of the Virgin Mary as a new ark, he refers to the Old Testament. At the same time, he

⁹ Gabriele M. Roschini, *Dizionario di Mariologia* (Roma: Editrice Studium, 1961), 224.

¹⁰ Lawrence of Brindisi and Wagner, *The Mariale*, 395–396.

¹¹ Lawrence of Brindisi and Wagner, *The Mariale*, 406.

¹² Lawrence of Brindisi and Wagner, *The Mariale*, 385–386; Ex 25.

complements this idea with the teaching of Ancient Greek philosophy. He also follows up the first contemplations of Church Fathers about this topic. St Hippolytus of Rome uses exactly the same simile in his work *De Christo et Antichristo*.¹⁵

The fourth sermon interprets the Virgin Mary as a house of the embodied Word, as a house of Christ. Her womb was blessed, and therefore she can bring blessing to all believers. The fifth sermon about Mary as a dwelling of God mentions Mary as a new Eve and Christ as a new Adam. At the same time, however, it calls the Mother of God the Queen of the world, Queen of angels, Queen of saints, etc. In this part of *Mariale*, for the first time, there is a reference to Isaiah's words about the Jesse Tree: '*A staff shall sprout from the stump of Jesse and from his roots a bud shall blossom*.'¹⁴ It is a reference which is repeated in the whole text of *Mariale* and which is connected with the theme of Immaculate Conception in art, as it is shown below. The sixth sermon is focused on the Revelation of St. John and the motif of the Woman of the Apocalypse, and the seventh sermon returns to the creation of Adam and Eve as the first house of God, which was later destroyed. And thanks to her purity, the Virgin Mary became a new temple. In this sermon, Lawrence refers to Thomas Aquinas and his opinion that those who were chosen by God for a task were also prepared for it.¹⁵ St Lawrence sees just the purity of the Virgin Mary as this preparation. He also supports it with a quotation from the Holy Scripture: '*And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God."*'¹⁶ Lawrence thus copes with the older great theological personalities that can be included rather in a maculistic group. However, he does so with reference to the parts of the Bible (Annunciation) which were during the whole development of the doctrine considered the basic Bible quotations for reasoning.¹⁷

The eighth sermon deals with Mary as a bride and mother of God. The ninth sermon likens Mary and Christ to a gate. Mary is a gate

¹⁵ Stefano de Fiores, 'Immacolata,' in *Nuovo Dizionario di Mariologia*, ed. Stefano de Fiores and Salvatore Meo (Roma: Edizioni Paoline, 1986), 684.

¹⁴ Lawrence of Brindisi and Wagner, *The Mariale*, 423, Iz 11,1–2.

¹⁵ Lawrence realises, however, that Thomas Aquinas, together with Bernard of Clairvaux and Bonaventura, were not supporters of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Lawrence of Brindisi and Wagner, *The Mariale*, 438–439.

¹⁶ Lk 1,30

¹⁷ Aristide Serra, 'Immacolata. Fondamenti Biblici,' in *Nuovo Dizionario di Mariologia*, 690; Roschini, *Dizionario di Mariologia*, 217.

through which Christ came to us. Christ is then a gate through which the believers approach God. The tenth sermon describes Mary as the root of the humanity of Christ, a throne chamber, and pure water. Lawrence reminds us of the Biblical story about Nebuchadnezzar's dream in which he saw a great tree with its top touching heaven. However, this tree, symbolising human nature, was destroyed by sin and a new shoot sprouted from its stump – Christ. He also speaks highly about three virtues of Mary – gracefulness of body and soul, humbleness, and her noble authority.¹⁸ The eleventh sermon, and the twelfth one, in the Italian edition, are summarising discourses.

2. The doctrine of The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary

As regards the reasoning, Lawrence follows up the line started by John Duns Scotus (1265–1308), a member of the Franciscan order, who deals with the topic of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary mainly in his work *Ordinatio*. His reasoning for this doctrine, sometimes described with the word 'necdum', is based on this statement:

Nondum erant abyssi et ego iam concepta eram, necdum fontes aquarum eruperant, necdum montes grafi mole constiterant, ante colles ego parturiebar: adhuc terram non fecerat et flumina et cardines orbis terrae.

He believes that it would be appropriate for Christ to be born from a woman without an original sin. God Almighty could and wanted to do so, and therefore it happened.¹⁹ John Duns Scotus presented his formulation very carefully as a probable one not to be accused of heresy.²⁰ The same reasoning in the sense of *Potuit, deuit ergo fecit* is also used by Lawrence.²¹

In the 15th century, i.e. in the safer era for immaculist doctrine, Scotus's arguments were revived by the Padua theologian and Franciscan Francesco della Rovere, later Sixtus IV (1414–1484), who was a great supporter of the immaculist idea. In 1448, he created a sermon

¹⁸ Lawrence of Brindisi and Wagner, *The Mariale*, 455–456.

¹⁹ Dino Cortese, 'Francesco della Rovere e le "Orationes" sull'Immacolata del vescovo di Padova Fantino Dandolo (1448),' *Il Santo* 17, no. 2 (1977): 198–199.

²⁰ Fiore, 'Immacolata,' 686.

²¹ Lawrence of Brindisi and Mariano da Alatri, *Le Feste della Madonna*, XII–XIII.

on the topic of the Immaculate Conception for the Church of St Anthony in Padua, which was delivered there by the local bishop Frantino Dandola. Originally, the authorship was attributed to the bishop himself, but Dino Cortese, in his historic, graphological and mainly philological research, proved that the real author is Francesco della Rovere.²² The future pope also builds his reasoning on the same principle, i.e. ‘Necdum’. Moreover, he mentions frequent Biblical references which are not found in other Dandola’s work. Among many others, in his reasoning, he uses, for example, a simile to women from the Old Testament, Nebuchadnezzar and his dream about a tree, Adam and Eve, Gideon’s cloak, etc.²³ However, the defence of this doctrine by Francesco della Rovere is not finished with the sermon. Following his election as the pope in 1471, Sixtus IV issued two papal bulls about this question, in particular *Cum Praecelsa* in 1477 and *Grave Nimis* between 1482 and 1483. Between 1477 and 1480, he also had two liturgies of hours created. The first one, created by Sixtus’s pupil Leonardo di Nogarole, was intended for the whole Church of Rome. The second one, created by Bernandino di Busto, was aimed at the Franciscan order.²⁴

On the basis of the common reasoning lines and similar Biblical similes, Lawrence’s sermons can be included in the intellectual tradition of John Duns Scotus as well as Sixtus IV.

3. The Iconography of The Immaculate Conception

The above-described complicated development of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary is obviously in strong

²² Cortese, ‘Francesco della Rovere e le “Orationes” sull’Immacolata del vescovo di Padova Fantino Dandolo (1448),’ 207–213.

²³ At the beginning of the sermon, he also mentions the Revelation of St Bridget of Sweden. For a transcript of the sermon, see, 215–225.

²⁴ There will be only a brief outline of the further development of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as it is not necessary for the development of the text. The Council of Trent commented the Immaculate Conception only indirectly in the decree on the original sin. The doctrine was further supported by Pope Alexander VII in the papal bull *Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum* issued in 1661. The last important turning point is the year 1854, when the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary was announced by Pope Pius IV. For a basic outline of the doctrine development, see e.g. Roschini, *Dizionario di Mariologia*; Fiore, ‘Immacolata’; Serra, ‘Immacolata. Fondamenti Biblici.’; Václav Wolf, *Neposkrvněné početí Panny Marie v průběhu historie* (Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská, 2005); René Laurentin, *Pojednání o Panně Marii* (Prague: Krystal OP, 2005).

contrast to the development of the motif in the history of art. For the development of the iconography of this topic, the turning point was the second half of the 17th century when it prevailed to use a traditional depiction of Immaculata as a young girl or woman with loose hair on a crescent of the moon and a snake under her feet, i.e. with clear references to the Woman of the Apocalypse. This gradual codification of the topic had been going since the Council of Trent, after which there occurred the first theological theorems on how to process the topic in art, for example, Molan's work *De pictoris et imaginibus sacris* or Charles Borromeo's work *De pictura sacra*.²⁵ The discussion is later joined by artists, for example, the Spanish artist Francesco Pacheco, who recommended in his work *Arte de la pintura, su antigüedad y su grandeza* to depict Mary with the attributes of the Woman of the Apocalypse. This type of visualisation was later popularised by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo.²⁶ The actual acceptance of the dogma in 1854 did not mean any further significant iconographic changes.

What preceded this artistic usage accepted in the second half of the 17th century? Despite the fact that the dogma was not accepted by the Church officially, the theme of the Immaculate Conception occurred in art. However, there was no unified usage of it. As it is mentioned by Sarah Blake Mcham, works with this theme have two basic characteristic features. The discussed theological idea is hard to express in the visual form as it cannot be approached using a direct, narrative scene, only a substitutional one. Thus a resulting visualisation was only used once or repeated only to a minimum degree very often.²⁷ Due to that, the actual meaning of the work could be lost in the course of time. As regards the iconographic method, the pre-iconographic description and iconographic analysis were fulfilled. But the iconographic interpretation was not performed sufficiently because the connection to certain theological ideas was lost. Thanks to the study of coherent literary sources, however, some works of art were 'rediscovered' in the last decades and reinterpreted with respect to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. The best-known examples include Donatello's main

²⁵ Serra, 'Immacolata. Fondamenti Biblici.'

²⁶ Jan Royt, *Slovník biblické ikonografie* (Prague: Carolinum, 2006), 191–192.

²⁷ Sarah Blake Mcham, 'Visualizing the Immaculate Conception: Donatello, Francesco della Rovere, and the High Altar and choir screen at the church of the Santo in Padua,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (2016): 831–864.

altar in the Church of St Anthony in Padua or Leonardo's The Madonna of the Rocks.²⁸

As pointed out by Sarah Blake McHam, Donatello's alter is connected directly with the sermons by Sixtus IV.²⁹ It is proved, for example, in the text in repeated emphasis on Mary's womb and artistic depiction of the figure of the Virgin Mary, who holds Christ very unusually in front of her lap. Similarly, in later works of art, Christ is depicted directly in Mary's womb.³⁰ McHam also points out that the current state of the altar is not original. Seven main statues, the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus, St Francis, St Anthony, St Justina, Daniel, St Louis of Toulouse, and Prosdocius are now placed in a cascade way on the altar. She supposes that it was originally grouped in the so-called *Sacra Conversazione*. The figures of the significant personalities of the Franciscan order and patron saints of the town were supposed to be roofed with a canopy (lost nowadays) that depicted God the Father shading the Virgin Mary – it means protecting her symbolically against sin.³¹

Levi D'Ancona connects Leonardo's composition of the Madonna of the Rocks, which was created for the Franciscan brotherhood of the Immaculate Conception in the Church of St. Francesco Grande in Milan, with the above-mentioned Milan monk Bernardino de'Busti. The creation of the painting was initiated by the approval of de'Busti's new immaculate liturgy of the hours.³² The interpretation of the painting as the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary is a generally accepted fact. It only differs in concrete ways of explanation, whether it is a depiction of yet uncreated world accenting Mary's purity since the beginning of time or it refers to the second chapter of the Book of Daniel.³³

However, these are very specific and complicated iconographic constructions which could not always be built. As an indirect depiction

²⁸ Mirella Levi D'Ancona, *The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (New York: College Art Ass. of America, 1957).

²⁹ Blake McHam, 'Visualizing the Immaculate Conception.'

³⁰ Blake McHam, 'Visualizing the Immaculate Conception,' 842.

³¹ Blake McHam, 'Visualizing the Immaculate Conception,' 846–847. Kim E. Butler also used the motive of the Immaculate Conception for one of the other interpretations of the Sistine Chapel ceiling because of the connection between Sixtus IV. and Julius II. Kim E. Butler, 'The immaculate body in the Sistine ceiling,' *Art history* 32, no. 2 (2009): 250–289.

³² Levi D'Ancona, *The iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance*, 75.

³³ Stefaniak 1997, 5; Butler, 'The immaculate body in the Sistine ceiling,' 254.

of the theme of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary before its codification, artists used a topic of Joachim and Anne meeting at the Golden gate, possibly complemented with their kiss – a symbol of Mary's conception. Different visualisation was a depiction of the Virgin Mary in St Anne's womb or Birth of the Virgin Mary. Another traditionally connected motif was the Jesse Tree that accentuated the Virgin Mary as part of the history of Israel.⁵⁴ However, at the same time, it refers to Isaiah's prophecy of the Saviour.⁵⁵ As analogies from the Old Testament, artists used the stories of Esther, who saved the people of Israel during Persian domination or a depiction of Adam and Eve.⁵⁶ The difficult-to-express narration of the immaculist doctrine is also depicted as a discussion of significant theologians and saints about this topic expressed by the person of the Virgin Mary. The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary can also be expressed using various symbols, following up both Biblical analogies or patristic texts. The basis for these depictions could be, for example, Loreto litanies with many similes of the figure of the Virgin Mary.⁵⁷ Another symbolism is, for example, a depiction of the Virgin Mary as a throne of wisdom.⁵⁸

4. The Immaculate Conception from Amadeit Church in Milan

It is due to this wide variety and local variability that we cannot deal with all the examples of the depiction of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary before its codification in the 17th century. For the further development of the text, however, I will mention one more concrete example of this topic of Immaculate Conception, which relates to both the person of Pope Sixtus IV and the Franciscan spirituality

⁵⁴ Vincenzo Francia, 'L'Immacolata Concezione: alla ricerca di un modello iconografico,' in *Una donna vestita di sole*, ed. Giovanni Morello, Vincenzo Francia and Roberto Fusco (Milan: Motta, 2005), 36.

⁵⁵ Iz 11,1–2.

⁵⁶ Adam and Eve were depicted as the first God's creation which was, however, destroyed by sin. Another meaning can be their depiction of those who were also created without original sin. In this context, Mary and Christ can be seen as a new Eve and a new Adam. The motif of Adam and Eve must always be explained in a concrete context. This motif was processed specifically during the 16th century thanks to the work by Giorgio Vasari, who in the space of the painting, developed a direct connection of Eve and connected Virgin Mary. Benedetta Moeschini, 'Committenza ed evoluzione iconografica dell'Immacolata Concezione nella Toscana del XVI secolo,' in Morello, Francia and Fusco, *Una donna vestita di sole*, 54–55.

⁵⁷ Francia, 'L'Immacolata Concezione,' 36.

⁵⁸ Francia, 'L'Immacolata Concezione,' 38.

from which Lawrence proceeded. Elena Rampi described as one of the specific expressions of the topic the motif of the Adoration of Christ by the Virgin Mary originating in the Milan church of Santa Maria della Pace, a monastic church of the Amadeits, i.e. a reformed branch of the Franciscan order. The original model of this motif was an unpreserved fresco (before 1472) which was then amply repeated in the church and spread in the area surrounding Milan.³⁹ The scene depicts the standing Virgin Mary, bareheaded, whose clothes are either white or, in reference to the Amadeit church, covered with the word PAX. With arms crossed over her chest, Mary is bowing to newborn Jesus, who is lying naked on a white cloth spread directly on the ground. The scene is usually set in an open countryside, without any spectators. The motif quite faithfully follows a visionary text by St Bridget of Sweden influenced by Franciscan spirituality.⁴⁰

Based on the study of the literary sources and Franciscan spirituality, E. Rampi proves that this motif also originated as one of the specific expressions of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.⁴¹ The motif (and the text of St Bridget of Sweden) accentuates the painless birth of Jesus and the incarnation of the Son of God, which both refers to this doctrine. Besides St Birgitta's text, from the literary sources, we need to mention the text *Meditaciones vite Christi*.⁴² The composi-

³⁹ Anonymous, former monastery Santa Maria della Pace, Milan; Giovanni Ambrogio Bevilacqua, Gemäldegalerie Dresden; anonymous, Civici Musei, Pavia; Ambrogio Bevilacqua (attr.), Civici Musei, Pavia; anonymous, Cappella delle Donne, Chiaravalle; the circle of Camillo Procaccini, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan; Ambrogio Bergognone (attr.), Certosa, Pavia. Elena Rampi, 'La Madonna di Santa Maria della Pace: un'iconografia immacolista riconosciuta,' *Artes* IV (1996).

⁴⁰ The latest information on this topic of the iconography of the Nativity of Christ in connection to Birgitta's text Maria H. Oen, 'Iconography and Visions: St. Birgitta's Revelation of the Nativity of Christ,' in *The Locus of Meaning in Medieval Art: Iconography, Iconology and Interpreting the Visual Imagery of the Middle Ages*, ed. Lena Liepe (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 212–237; Bridget Morris and Denis M. Searby, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden III: Liber Caelestis, Books VI–VII* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), book 7, chapter 21, 250–251. '... And when all these things had thus been prepared, then the Virgin knelt with great reverence, putting herself at prayer; and she kept her back toward the manger and her face lifted to heaven toward the east. And so, with raised hands and with her eyes intent on heaven, she was as if suspended in an ecstasy of contemplation, inebriated with divine sweetness. And while she was thus in prayer; I saw the One lying in her womb then move; and then and there, in a moment and the twinkling of an eye, she gave birth to a Son, from whom there went out such great and ineffable light and splendor that the sun could not be compared to it.'

⁴¹ Rampi, 'La Madonna di Santa Maria della Pace,' 13.

⁴² Oen, 'Iconography and Visions,' 212–223. There is an outline of the development of the motif iconography, including the discussion of Henrik Cornell and Erwin Panofsky

tion of the motif follows up the frontispiece of the Franciscan breviary deposited in the University Library in Bologna.⁴³ On the frontispiece, we can find the combination of two motifs – Adoration of Christ (who has his finger on his mouth) set into the Enclosed Garden (Hortus Conclusus). This frontispiece was connected with the actual doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary already by Robert Calkins.⁴⁴ It is necessary to point out that, on the same side, there is also the motif of the Annunciation, one of the central Biblical arguments for the ideas of the Immaculate Conception. The conscious interconnection of the motif of the Annunciation with the ideas of the Immaculate Conception in art in the Renaissance era, mainly within Franciscan spirituality, was later documented by Alessandra Galizzi Kroegel.⁴⁵

5. Amadeo Menez de Sylva

The motif of the Adoration of Christ in the sense of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary is therefore based on the Franciscan spirituality in the milieu in which it further developed. It was also the case of the above-described concrete example of the Amadeit composition. E. Rampi supposed that its creator was Amadeo Menez de Sylva,⁴⁶ the founder of the Amadeit order, confessor of Pope Sixtus IV

whether the text of Birgitta's Revelation of the Nativity of Christ was created first and then depicted visually (Cornell) or whether the first initiation motif was the visual one and on this Birgitta based her text (Panofsky). The author of the publication *Meditationes vite Christi* is possibly the Franciscan brother John of Caulibus who created it for an unnamed Clarist in the 14th century in the Tuscany area. Holly Flora, *The Devout Belief of the Imagination: The Paris 'Meditationes Vitae Christi' and Female Franciscan Spirituality in Trecento Italy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 17.

⁴³ Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna, ms. 337. Rampi, 'La Madonna di Santa Maria della Pace,' 9.

⁴⁴ Robert G. Calkins, 'The Master of the Franciscan Breviary,' *Arte lombarda* 16 (1971), 19th tape, see Letter 1, 16.

⁴⁵ Alessandra Galizzi Kroegel, 'Franciscan Wordplay in Renaissance Annunciations,' *The Canadian Journal of Rhetorical Studies* 4 (1994).

⁴⁶ Amadeo Menez de Sylva (1427–1482) entered the Franciscan order in 1456. Later, he established a congregation of the Amadeits based on the Franciscan monastic order. They founded their first monastery in Bressano near Castelleone thanks to the support from Bianca Marie Visconti in 1460. Subsequently, in 1468 they established the above-mentioned monastery of S. Maria della Pace in Milan. In 1472, this monastery and the congregation were promised the protection by new Pope Sixtus IV with respect to discords with other branches of the Franciscan order. At the same time, Amadeo was called to Rome and became the Pope's personal confessor. Amadeo was put in charge of the church of S. Pietro in Montorio. In 1482, during visitation of his monasteries, he died in Milano, in the monastery of S. Maria della Pace.

and the author of the text *Apocalypsis Nuova*, which also refers to the Immaculate Conception. Like in the above-mentioned examples, there was also the cooperation of a theologian and an artist in the creation of this work. Amadeo himself was seen very ambivalently, already during his life, and the same applied later to his text, which was supposed to be a record of his dialogue with the Archangel Gabriel during his frequent visions on the Janiculum.⁴⁷ After his death, the text was sealed and opened as late as in 1502 upon the order of Cardinal Bernardino Lopez de Carvajal. After opening the manuscript, the text was probably reworked by the Franciscan theologian Giorgio Benigno Salviati.⁴⁸

Due to its fully visionary nature, the text of *Apocalypsis Nuova* cannot be compared with the above-mentioned texts with a construction of exact argumentation by Sixtus IV or Lawrence of Brindisi. However, thanks to his function as the Pope's confessor, Amadeo must have had certain influence over the Pope.⁴⁹ The second wave of Amadeo's influence, this time directly on art, came after opening and popularising his text in the milieu in Rome in the 16th century. Thanks to that, we can find Amadeo and Salviati, for example, in Raphael's Disputation of the Holy Sacrament in the Stanze in Vatican.⁵⁰ For our Czech artistic milieu, the specific importance lies in the fact that the motif of the Adoration of Christ, to the origination of which he contributed, is situated on the main altar of the Church of the Nativity of Our Lord in Prague's Loreto.

The congregation of the Amadeits ceased to exist in 1568 when all its thirty-nine monasteries were annexed to Franciscan Observants. For the latest information about Amadeo, see D. L. Dias who was the only person who published a critical edition of his text. Domingos L. Dias, *Beato Amadeu. Nova Apocalipse* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2014), 5–9; Rampi, 'La Madonna di Santa Maria della Pace,' 13.

⁴⁷ The book is divided into two parts, the first one deals with the issues of faith. The second part deals with the sermons of John the Baptist and Christ. The book also has elements of prophetic texts as it expects coming of a pope 'pastor angelicus' who will restore the church.

⁴⁸ The basic work on this topic is Anna Morisi, *L'Apocalypsis Nova. Ricerche sull'origine e la formazione del testo dello pseudo-Amadeo* (Roma: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1970); Dias, *Beato Amadeu. Nova Apocalipse*.

⁴⁹ The question remains the influence of Amadeo's sister Beatriz de Silva y Meneses, who stayed in the court of Isabella of Portugal in Spain, and in 1484, she established the order of Ordo Immaculatae Conceptionis Francia, 'L'Immacolata Concezione,' 33.

⁵⁰ Christoph L. Frommel, 'Tradizione e rinascita nella genesi della Stanza della Segnatura di Raffaello,' *Accademia Raffaello*, 1/2 (2019), 48–51.

6. The Painting of The Immaculate Conception in Prague Loreto

The painting copies the Amadeit composition very faithfully; there is only a shift in the painting style, as the painting originated probably between 1640 and 1663. In the collections of Prague Castle, we can find its model, a painting of the same dimensions originating from the early 17th century.⁵¹ The motif of the Adoration of Christ must have been highly respected in the Loreto, as the altar canvas is older than the current architectonic state of the church. In connection to the Milan church, it is clear that the painting from the main altar in the Loreto church depicts the theme of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. We could argue that this motif was used in the artistic milieu in northern Italy, mainly in the 16th and early 17th centuries. The Prague painting thus does not fit in this wave of ‘interest’ in the Amadeit motif, and the composition was used here inadvertently. However, below I will try to substantiate that doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is present in the whole complex of Loreto in Prague and the core of this theological issue determined the layout of this pilgrimage place.

The pilgrimage destination of Loreto was established on 3rd June 1626 by countess Benigna Catherine of Lobkowicz, and it was developed into the current form of the complex for more than a hundred years.⁵² However, the first stage of the construction and its basic layout were finished as early as 1640. First, Santa Casa was built – a copy of a house from Loreto in Italy where the Annunciation allegedly happened, according to the legend. A small chapel was finished in 1627, but it was consecrated later on 25th March 1631 by Archbishop of Prague Cardinal Ernst Adalbert von Harrach. In the same year, Benigna Catherine of Lobkowicz had the foundations surveyed for the surrounding cloisters,

⁵¹ The mutual relationship of both paintings has not been explained fully yet. The author deal with the castle painting in more detail in the currently prepared article called *Zapomenuté obrazy Adorace Krista na pražských Hradčanech*.

⁵² Archive sources for the theme of the Loreto include mainly the collection of the Capuchin order in the National Archives (ŘK 31), Lobkowicz archives (sign. R 7/43–49) and Capuchin Provincial Library in Prague's Hradčany (here mainly Capuchin Provincial Library, ‘Annales Patrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Bohemiae’. For a wider insight, see Marek Brčák, ‘Kapucínský řád a jeho působení v Čechách a na Moravě (1673–1783)’ (Dissertation work, Institute of the Czech History, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, 2019) From the artistic and historic point of view, the most important works are Jan Diviš, *Pražská Loreta* (Prague: Odeon, 1972); Milada Vilímková, ‘Stavebně historický průzkum Prahy 1228a.’ Block between Loretánská street, Kapucínská street and Loretánské nám. square, No 100, 102.

whose construction started in 1634. In 1640 there is a record in the Annals about the completion of the Loreto house ‘into the square’,⁵³ i.e. the completion of the cloisters. Two spires on the side of the big chapel were also completed.⁵⁴ From this record, we can infer that it was planned from the very beginning to enclose the Loreto chapel with square cloisters. Although from our perception it is a standard architectural form for Loreto complexes, older Czech Loreto buildings were not constructed in this layout.⁵⁵ We are also informed by this record



Fig. 1: Michal Puhač, drawing of the altarpiece of the Church of the Nativity of the Lord, Prague Loreto

⁵³ *Annales Patrum Capucinatorum Provinciae Bohemiae*, MS, inv. n. 390–412, 1726–1787, p. 63.

⁵⁴ Vilímková, ‘Stavebně historický průzkum Prahy 1228a,’ 11.

⁵⁵ Older Loreto chapels: Horšovský Týn, 1584, Jilové u Prahy, 1621, Hájek u Prahy, 1623 (cloisters were added later). Square cloisters of other Baroque places were only constructed later: (Starý Hrozňatov, Bílá Hora, Svatá Hora etc.)

that in 1640 there was a big chapel in this complex, and its location is shown by two towers. Therefore, it was the area of nowadays church which was rebuilt to its current form as late as in the 1730s. There is a contract with the master Hans George Gottwieck from 1660, among others, about the completion of the cloisters, their paving on the sides of the Chapel of the Virgin Mary, and the extension of the two side chapels so that their altars were aligned with the line of the cloisters.⁵⁶ The contract informs us that the main chapel was consecrated to the Virgin Mary at the very beginning. And the two side chapels of St Francis and St Anthony of Padua were built latest as of 1660. However, the wording of the contract does not exclude the existence of altars inside the cloisters (protruding to the area of the cloisters) at the place of later chapel recesses.

Conclusion

The state of the Loreto complex in 1660s was therefore as follows: in the middle of the complex, there was Santa Casa surrounded by square cloisters. In its western part, there was a little house for the sacristan and the first area of the treasure house. In the eastern part of the cloisters, there was a 'big chapel' of Virgin Mary with an altarpiece painting of the Nativity of Our Lord. In the southern and eastern parts, there were chapels (originally maybe only altars) of St Francis and St Anthony. Based on the above presented examples and a schematic description of Loreto in the 17th century, it is possible to state a hypothesis that the motif of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary was represented not only on the altarpiece painting. In my opinion, this gradually developing theological theme was reflected in the whole complex since the moment of its construction. Adoration of Christ from the altarpiece painting was complemented with the motif of the Annunciation by means of the actual Santa Casa. There is the same correlation as, for example, in the frontispiece of the Franciscan Breviary from Bologna, generally substantiated by A. Galizzi Kroegel. This basic pair is then complemented by the side chapels of St Francis and St Anthony. An analogy for using these two saints in the theme of the

⁵⁶ Vilímková, 'Stavebně historický průzkum Prahy 1228a,' 13. Transcription of the contract by Max Dvořák, *Maria Loretto am Hradschin zu Prag* (Prague: Selbstverlag, 1883), 22. The contract is deposited in the Lobkowitz Archives.

Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary is also found in the Padua altar where these two saints accompany the state of the Virgin Mary from both sides. A repeated interconnection of these two persons in the studied motif was noticed by S. Blake McHam. Both these saints were highly respected by Pope Sixtus IV himself; therefore, they were also situated in the Pope's sepulchral chapel consecrated to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary in the original St Peter's Basilica.⁵⁷ The interpretation of the Prague Loreta through the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary is based on the above correlations (connection with the Annunciation motif, typical saints, the Jesse tree, the recurring motif of the Amadeit altar). And it indicates that the complex of the Prague Loreto and the layout of its individual parts was created on the basis of a forward-thinking plan following Franciscan and Capuchin (or Amadeit) spirituality.

The high afterwards respect given to the theme of Adoration of Christ in the Loreto environment is also reflected in later works of art. On the door of the golden sanctuary, there is again the motif of the Adoration of Christ. It is also on the Waldstein chalice and Waldstein monstrance, which was funded by the foundations of Marie Margaret Countess of Waldstein.⁵⁸ The shaft of the monstrance is formed by a male figure symbolising the Jesse tree. Its crown is decorated with the figures of St Anne and St Joachim. As it was presented above, both are accompanying iconographic symbols of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. The masterpiece processing of this motif in the Loreto environment is in the Diamond monstrance.⁵⁹ Its authors, however, had already adopted a new custom how to picture the motif of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary – the shaft of the leg is formed by the figure of the Virgin Mary with twelve stars around her head and a diamond belt (a reference to the Woman of the Apocalypse) standing on the crescent of the moon. From it, the defeated dragon is curling around the leg of the monstrance. Above the Virgin Mary, there is the radiant crown of the monstrance hovering with masterly lightness – it gave this jewel its alternative name of 'Prague Sun'. Above the lunule, i.e. the space for the incarnation of the Son of God, there is a dove of

⁵⁷ Blake McHam, 'Visualizing the Immaculate Conception,' 847. More examples are stated there.

⁵⁸ Loreto treasure, inv. No P-68 and P-70, dated 1721, Diviš, *Pražská Loreta*, 96, 109, 202, 203.

⁵⁹ Loreto treasure, inv. No P-300, dated 1696–1699, Diviš, *Pražská Loreta* 80–89, 199.

the Holy Spirit and the figure of God the Father in the crown. He, with his arms spread and a gesture of blessing and protection, looks down at the whole scene beneath. He is therefore fitted here similarly as his location was understood by Donatello. The motif of the Immaculate Conception was thus repeatedly consciously recalled in the environment of Loreta, although its visual representation gradually changed.

However, the above presented complicated iconographic programme of the layout of the Loreto complex in the 17th century is not conceivable without a sufficient intellectual background which was provided by the immaculist ideas developed in the 15th century in the intellectual environment of Padua, Milan, and Rome and used abundantly in the 16th century in art. In my opinion, *Mariale* by Lawrence of Brindisi, i.e. a collection of his later published sermons, is a record of his intellectual scope and knowledge of the theme. So, it could be him or another Italian Capuchin who mediated these deep theological thoughts to Prague. The original painting of the Adoration of Christ, which is now deposited in the collections of Prague Castle, originated in the period when St Lawrence was staying in Prague. He could become familiar with the original Amadeits' motif of the Adoration of Christ during his studies or his activity in the monastic order in northern Italy. The fact that he was aware of the interconnection of the theme of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary and the biblical text of the Annunciation is proven by his reasoning in his sermons in *Mariale*. An uncertain issue for future research remains the fact whether the layout of the cloister, i.e. in a square shape, as it is explicitly stated in the *Annales*, is based on the local urban disposition or connected with the remainder of the Pythagorean teaching of Tetractys, which is supposed to refer to the Virgin Mary as a new ark.

*Catholic Theological Faculty
Charles University
Thákurova 3
16000 Praha 6
Czech Republic*

E-mail: marie.vymazalova@ktf.cuni.cz