

THE SAINT MARTIN MEMORIAL YEAR



The Saint Martin Memorial Year and the Ernst Codex facsimile edition

Saint Martin of Tours, our late antiquity saint of European relevance was born in 316, in Savaria, Pannonia (today Szombathely). The Hungarian Government declared the 1700th anniversary a Saint Martin Memorial Year (11 November 2015 – 11 November 2016). The two centers of the festive events were Saint Martin's natal town Szombathely, and the Mount of Saint Martin most commonly known as Pannonhalma where a Benedictine monastery was founded by Géza, Grand Prince of the Hungarians in 996, as according to local tradition (and recorded by the *Greater Legend of Saint Stephen*), Saint Martin was born there.

Although there has always been rivalry between Pannonhalma that maintained the cult of the saint for centuries, and Szombathely so proud of its famous son, they coordinated all the cultural, ecclesiastical and academic events of the Memorial Year. A nice example of this joint work was the exhibition *Saint Martin and Pannonia: Christianity on the Frontiers of the Roman World* organized together by the Iseum (Szombathely) and the Pannonhalma Abbey Museum, that presented late antiquity Pannonia and the spread of Christianity with a uniquely rich international material. (There is a Hungarian-English bilingual catalogue of the exhibition). Balázs Déri (ELTE University) and Konrád Dejsics OSB organized a research conference with the title *Martinus pauper et dives – Saint Martin's Legacy* in ELTE University and Pannonhalma (14-15 April 2016.), inaugurated by the dean of the University László Borhy, the current bishop of Tours (successor of Saint Martin) Bernard-Nicolas Aubertin and the abbot of Pannonhalma, Asztrik Várszegi. The contents, edited by the organizers, will be published in the spring of

2018. In the library of the Pannonhalma Abbey, two exhibitions were linked to the conference, under the curatorship of Ilona Ásványi and accompanied by a fine catalogue-booklet (*The Memory of Saint Martin*). The first exhibition inaugurated by László Boka had one single item on display: the *Ernst Codex*, a treasure owned by National Széchényi Library under catalogue number Cod. Lat. 431. with biographies of Saint Martin and the earliest Saint Stephen legends. The second ex-



hibition dedicated to the library's Saint Martin-related 16-18th century books was presented by Ilona Ásványi.

As for books, the most important event of the Saint Martin Memorial Year was without doubt the publishing of the *Ernst Codex* facsimile. The original codex was made in Hungary, probably in Pannonhalma, in the third quarter of the 12th century. Saint Martin's contemporary and disciple Sulpicius Severus wrote several works on the bishop's life with the authenticity of the eye-witness. He also described Gallia and brought notice of the hermits and the activity of Bible translator Saint Jerome in Egypt. The series of biographies, later referred to as *Martinellus*, became an important read of the Benedictine monks from the beginning. The codex also includes the greater and lesser legend of Saint Stephen, who was patron and, together with his son Emeric, frequent visitor of the monastery. The volume, taken

abroad as early as the Middle Ages, was purchased by National Széchényi Library from artwork collector Lajos Ernst in 1934. The fine facsimile edition was published by Pytheas Publishing House as a joint project of NSZL and Pannonhalma, accompanied by an essay collection edited by Balázs Déri.

The Saint Martin Memorial Year was concluded by a grand festive event in Pannonhalma on 11 November 2016, with a Holy Mass celebrated by cardinal Christoph Schönborn, archbishop of Vienna. The events of the year, promoted in Pannonhalma with the slogan “we live in a community”, were summarized by a dynamic documentary film. Then Balázs Déri and Kornél Szovák presented the books published on this occasion: the *Ernst Codex* facsimile and a new translation of the writings of Sulpicius Severus on Saint Martin. On 25 April 2017, a joint presentation of the *Ernst Codex* was held by the Pannonhalma Abbey and National Széchényi Library in our Ceremony Hall filled with guests. The authors of the accompanying essay collection, Balázs



Déri, Konrád Dejcics OSB, Edit Madas, Kornél Szovák and Gábor Thoroczky discussed together the book, then László Kéring and the Praetorius chamber choir performed Gregorian songs of the liturgy of Bishop Saint Martin and King Saint Stephen.

Edit Madas
madas.at.oszk.hu

