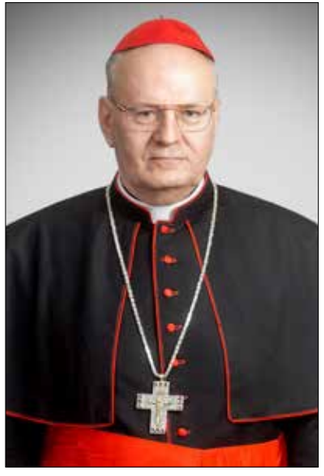


Ars
Sacra
Festival

20

The Good News of the Gospel



Twenty years ago, during the Year of the City Mission in Budapest, many of us sought ways to reach the people of our time with the joyful message of the Gospel. From this endeavor, the Ars Sacra initiative was born, aiming to showcase – through the language of art – all that is true, good, and beautiful. Over the past two decades, this noble mission has tirelessly built a bridge between faith and culture, and between the Church and the wider society.

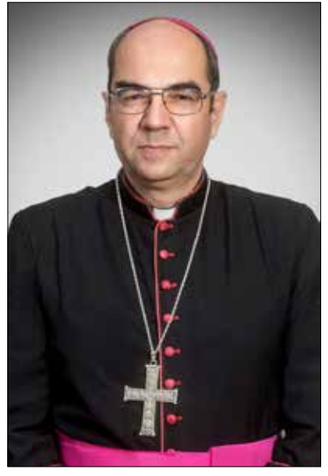
Year after year, the Ars Sacra Festival provides an opportunity for our churches, communities, artists, and institutions to bear witness together to the cultural and spiritual richness of our faith. A significant milestone on this long journey was the International Eucharistic Congress held in Budapest five years ago; the festival served as a fitting and unforgettable cultural accompaniment to the event, linking the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament with artistic beauty.

It is a particular pleasure that the initiative, which began in Budapest, has grown into a movement of national – and indeed international, Carpathian Basin-wide – scope, bringing the message of hope to many thousands of people.

The motto of the jubilee year – *"I give you a future and a hope"* (Jer 29:11) – is particularly relevant in our times. I pray that Ars Sacra will continue to help people encounter God through the beauty of art and be strengthened in faith, hope, and love. I invoke God's blessing upon the Ars Sacra community and upon all its organizers, supporters, and participants!

+ Péter Erdő
Cardinal, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest

The True, the Good, the Beautiful, and the Holy



Greek philosophers and Saint Thomas Aquinas alike often spoke of how the true, the good, the beautiful, and the holy are inseparable. Plato said that beauty is the radiance of truth. If something is true, it is inherently beautiful as well. If a building is designed according to the rules of the golden ratio – if its proportions are correct – then the building will be beautiful.

People today have a particularly acute need to encounter the Mystery of the true, the good, the beautiful, and the holy; for they are prone to drifting away from it, tending instead to focus only on what is useful, efficient, enjoyable, or functional. Martin Buber, the renowned philosopher of personalism, wrote that a culture survives only as long as it remains connected to the life-giving Mystery from which it originated. European culture – alongside Greek philosophy and Roman law – was born above all from its encounter with Christianity. We have a future only as long as we remain connected to this life-giving Mystery. While modern people may find it more difficult to connect with the values of truth and moral goodness, the sense for the beautiful – and the longing to encounter the mystery of beauty – remains alive within them.

Year after year, the Ars Sacra Festival offers this cathartic, life-giving encounter to all who are interested. In the presence of beauty and the sacred Mystery, anyone with an open heart can recognize the Mystery of truth and goodness as well, and rediscover the forces shaping culture and history – forces that once created Europe, that enriched European culture, the arts, science, and legal systems, and that made our continent so livable and fruitful. Those attending Ars Sacra events may encounter the very Mystery that represents the deepest longing of the human heart – a Mystery that offers a glimpse into the ultimate meaning, reason, purpose, and true substance of human life.

I offer my sincere thanks to the organizers of the Ars Sacra Festival for enabling thousands of people, year after year for the past two decades, to experience this cathartic encounter; and I wish for the Festival to continue fulfilling its mission – creating culture and enriching lives – in the decades to come.

+ János Székely
President of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference

Ars sacra: the sanctity of time, space, and beauty



At the very beginning of the Bible, we read: *"God created... the first day... the second day... and then the seventh day"* (Gen 1). The author of the Book of Ecclesiastes also acknowledges finite time, stating that "there is a time for everything." The true message of a holy place is not time, but timelessness. Eternity. Infinity instead of finitude. One cannot arrive here at the wrong time. There is never a closing time in the church. As Sándor Kányádi writes: *"Whenever you come, / God is at home"* (Continuity).

God created not only time but also space. He placed Adam and Eve in space – in the Garden of Eden. Space, of course, also imposes obstacles and limitations; one can run into walls or stumble on stairs. In sacred space, however, the world opens up to us in infinite breadth. Mircea Eliade rightly writes: *„For religious man, space is not homogeneous. It contains breaks and ruptures; it includes areas that are qualitatively different from the rest. ‚Do not come near,' God says to Moses, ‚take off your sandals, for the ground on which you stand is holy ground'"* (Exodus 3:5). In sacred space, one experiences a sense of infinity. „Compared to this experience of the *sacrum*, even the finest secular art evokes a sense of confinement, where distance must be measured in millimeters and meters rather than by the units of prayer and holiness."

Infinite beauty is a matter of celebration, and in it, not only man but God Himself finds joy. This is no longer earthly beauty, but divine beauty. God does not merely love the beautiful and take delight in it; He is beauty itself. Saint Augustine speaks of God's beauty with similarly inspired words: *"Lord, I believe, I know, and I feel that You are the supreme good. You are not only the supreme benevolence, but also the supreme beauty that surpasses all else. [...] I know that the perfect joy and happiness of the angels and the saints is to contemplate You – eternal beauty. [...] My gracious Redeemer, because I see how beautiful You are, I love You, and I desire to love You ever more."*

Tamás Fabiny
Lutheran Bishop

Greetings on the 20th Anniversary of the Ars Sacra Festival



Twenty years marks a milestone in the life of a festival, too – especially when those twenty years represent not merely a series of events, but a faithful service: service to the conviction that beauty can open a path toward truth and goodness, and ultimately toward God.

Year after year, the Ars Sacra Festival reminds us that the Gospel is not foreign to culture but is one of its deepest sources of inspiration. On the opening pages of Scripture, we contemplate the beauty of the Creator God's work, while the Psalms invite us: *"Sing to the Lord a new song"* (Ps 96:1). The Incarnation, moreover, is the ultimate foundation of all Christian art: the eternal Word became visible so as to speak to us through our human senses as well.

People today often open up more readily to a poem, a painting, a concert, a film, or a theatrical performance than to a theological argument. This is not a defeat for faith, but an opportunity for the Church. We must build bridges. Art can be such a bridge: it does not bypass the Gospel but prepares the heart to receive it.

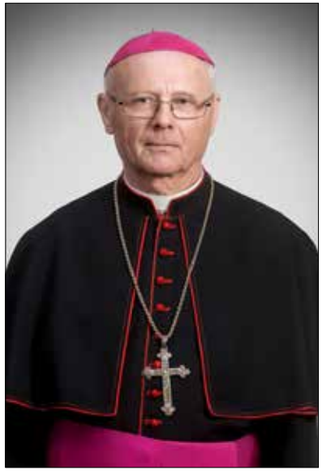
Thus, sacred art is not limited to works that directly address religious themes. Any creation can bear the mark of transcendence if it dares to honestly pose the great questions of human existence, give voice to the cry of suffering, celebrate the joy of love, or speak in the quiet tones of hope. A Bach Passion and a contemporary string quartet, Rembrandt's painting of the Prodigal Son and a modern photographer's images seeking human dignity, the silence of János Pilinszky or the captivating beauty of John Rutter's music – all can transcend themselves. For wherever a person truly encounters their own self – and, through that, another human being – the One who created them in His own image is not far away.

For twenty years, the Ars Sacra Festival has provided a space for this encounter. It demonstrates that faith and art are not rivals, but partners that enrich one another. It offers a shared language that believers and seekers, young and old alike, can understand.

It is my hope that this jubilee marks not a conclusion, but a new beginning. May Ars Sacra remain an open space where beauty gives rise to questions, questions lead to dialogue, and dialogue leads – by the grace of God – to an encounter with Christ, who is *"the same yesterday and today and forever"* (Hebrews 13:8)

József Steinbach
Reformed Bishop and President

The Light of Glory



The theological aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar bears the title *The Glory of the Lord* (originally *Herrlichkeit* – literally „Glory" or „Splendor"). As a concept, „glory" (*doxa*) entered the liturgy from the Greek language, where it is a frequently occurring term; indeed, in the Roman liturgy, it is an integral part of the Mass's Ordinary and a staple of liturgical language. In a biblical sense, it refers to the light and radiance accompanying God's presence – a radiance that, by its very nature, streams forth upon heavenly beings.

The radiance of glory enables a person living on Earth to recognize the invisible, supernatural God. In a physical sense, light renders the forms of the things around us visible; visually, it creates an image of them, leading first to perception and ultimately to the formation of concepts. While this is true, one need not always arrive at conceptualization; for the process of experiencing beauty – aesthetic reality – is a psychological process that precedes the formation of concepts. Although the light of glory shines within a person, it nonetheless lifts them out of themselves and their own world, thereby creating an opportunity for contact with the transcendent realm. It is this truth that captivated the minds and stirred the wills of the founders of the Ars Sacra Foundation and the driving forces behind the Ars Sacra Festival, spurring them to action.

The events of the festival are not limited to sight or hearing; both are present, for instance, in the art of film. Human movement, too, has the power to foster relaxation, refreshment, and spiritual balance. That is why the liturgy employs visual elements, combining them with the auditory and even with movement. All of these can also have a life of their own outside the liturgy. By offering all this, the festival seeks to lead us from the visible, the audible, and the art of movement toward an experience that brings us to the unseen, to that which is imperceptible to the human ear – to the eternal mover that is nonetheless constant.

+ Lajos Varga
Bishop, founder of the Ars Sacra Foundation











Beginnings

"I give you hope and a future!"
(Jer 29:11)

For the 20th Ars Sacra Festival, we chose the same motto as that of our original inspiration, the Budapest City Mission: *„I give you hope and a future!"* The City Mission in Budapest was launched in 2007 by Cardinal Péter Erdő, after Pope Saint John Paul II had called upon Europe's major cities to renew themselves in his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*.

Experiences in Vienna, Paris, Lisbon, and Brussels showed that thousands of people living without spiritual reserves or inner sources of support took part in the programs. The mission was overseen by Father Miklós Blanckenstein; my friends Ilona Toroczkay and Ildikó Kolek and I attended his catechism classes, and that is where we first heard about the mission. We were looking for a way to get involved ourselves and share the joy of faith. As an applied artist, I approached the Director General of the Museum of Applied Arts and asked if they could put together a small, intimate exhibition drawn from the museum's vast collection of sacred art, but the Director General was not enthusiastic about the proposal.

So I turned to Róbert Fenyő, the head of the Matthias Church's cultural center, and asked him for a letter of recommendation. He responded so positively that he enlisted the help of Balázs Mátéffy, the director of the Matthias Church Museum; the three of us then approached the Director-General again with the letter, and he agreed.

A piece of metalwork depicting the Holy Family was placed on display in an upstairs showcase, highlighting one of the Church's primary objectives: the strengthening of families.

Encouraged by this success, my friends and I approached the directors of Budapest's major museums with a similar request, and we found open ears and hearts. We are grateful for this! Fifteen major museums in Budapest offered exhibitions and programs centered on the theme of the sacred. At the Museum of Ethnography, an exhibition titled *„Churches Living Together"* showcased objects associated with the Judeo-Christian faith; the exhibition was opened by József Pálinkás, then-President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, with the participation of the Hungarian Radio Children's Choir. At the Museum of Military History, the exhibition „In Defense of Europe" presented the figures of John Hunyadi and Saint John of Capistrano, as well as the 1456 Siege of Nándorfehérvár and the history of the midday bell.

The Hungarian National Museum showcased the Kőszeg Chasuble, the embroidered depiction of the Virgin Mary from which had appeared on our promotional materials for years. At the Petőfi Literary Museum, alongside the „Hope" exhibition, a selection was made from the sacred legacies of writers. The Textile Museum hosted the „Majláth Vestment" exhibition, while the Museum of Fine Arts organized an exhibition titled *The Lamentation of Christ*, for which a meditation space was also created. The Hungarian National Gallery held thematic guided tours and organized a museum education program.


Égni és világítani

Egyhetes városmisszióra készül a katolikus egyház






Elutasítják a látszatmegoldást

Városmisszió a köztereken

Erdélyből is érkeztek lelkipásztorok



Several museums also hosted theatrical performances and concerts. The Kiscelli Museum presented the play *Roman Triptych*, written by Pope John Paul II.

...a musical evening titled „Apostle Paul" at the Budapest History Museum. So many events were organized for the City Mission that it was given its own name. The Cardinal opened the Week of Sacred Arts at the Museum of Applied Arts.

The immense richness stemming from the Judeo-Christian faith – the root of European culture – touched the hearts of so many people. Hearing the positive feedback, we could not stop our work. In 2008, we asked Bishop Lajos Varga to establish the Ars Sacra Foundation so that we could continue this artistic mission within a formal legal framework.

Márta Dragonits

Reményt és jövőt adok nektek

Városmisszió
Budapest 2007



Night/Day of Open Churches – the first day of the Ars Sacra Festival

The Day of Open Churches emerged following the example of the „Lange Nacht der Kirchen" (Long Night of Churches) initiative in Vienna. We began by organizing the „Night of Open Churches," and more than a hundred churches opened their doors on these occasions!

Events held at night were not always successful in rural settlements, so we switched to organizing „Open Churches Day," where programs could extend well into the evening. We were able to showcase the churches through the lenses of art and faith, produce leaflets about the artworks, launch children's drawing competitions themed around the church, and create exhibitions from the resulting drawings. Art history students also got involved, writing short, illustrated brochures that included floor plans marking the locations of specific artworks. Church choirs and community musicians enriched the celebration with their ministry. Events included a treasure hunt, a poetry marathon, communal singing, prayer, and quiet reflection, as well as the distribution of scripture cards. People love getting a glimpse into spaces that are not always open to the public; sacristies were shown, and visitors could climb the church towers – in some places, even at night.

Open Churches Day was a major celebration in smaller settlements! Locals invited back those who had moved away, as well as municipal leaders, artists, and residents of neighboring communities. Exhibitions featuring sacred-themed works by local artisans were organized, providing an opportunity to share insights into local history. In one tiny village of just 67 souls, „heavenly manna" was cooked in the churchyard. In main squares where churches of multiple denominations are located, a path of small candles was laid out between the churches; people processed to one another's churches singing hymns, and treated visitors to small gifts and pastries. The cooperation required for organizing these events strengthens church communities. A special highlight was when they rented a „Dotto" – a small electric tourist train – in the Eighth District and toured the churches of Józsefváros. They visited every church and sang the children's song beginning with the words „This is the church, this is the steeple." In Miskolc, a wonderful initiative sees all of the city's churches, synagogues, and prayer houses visited on this day as part of a city-wide pilgrimage – a true example of civic cooperation. In Sibiu, dialogue has resumed among Christian denominations; for years, they have been jointly organizing the Day of Open Churches. It is a joy to collaborate with the „Living Stones" initiative at the University Church! With attentive love, they show visitors why the church's artworks were created and the message they convey to those who enter. Organizing the participation of church guitar bands for the Day of Open Churches has been a two-year initiative.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed their efforts to the artistic mission of the Day of Open Churches, helping us draw closer to God and to one another!

Márta Dragonits

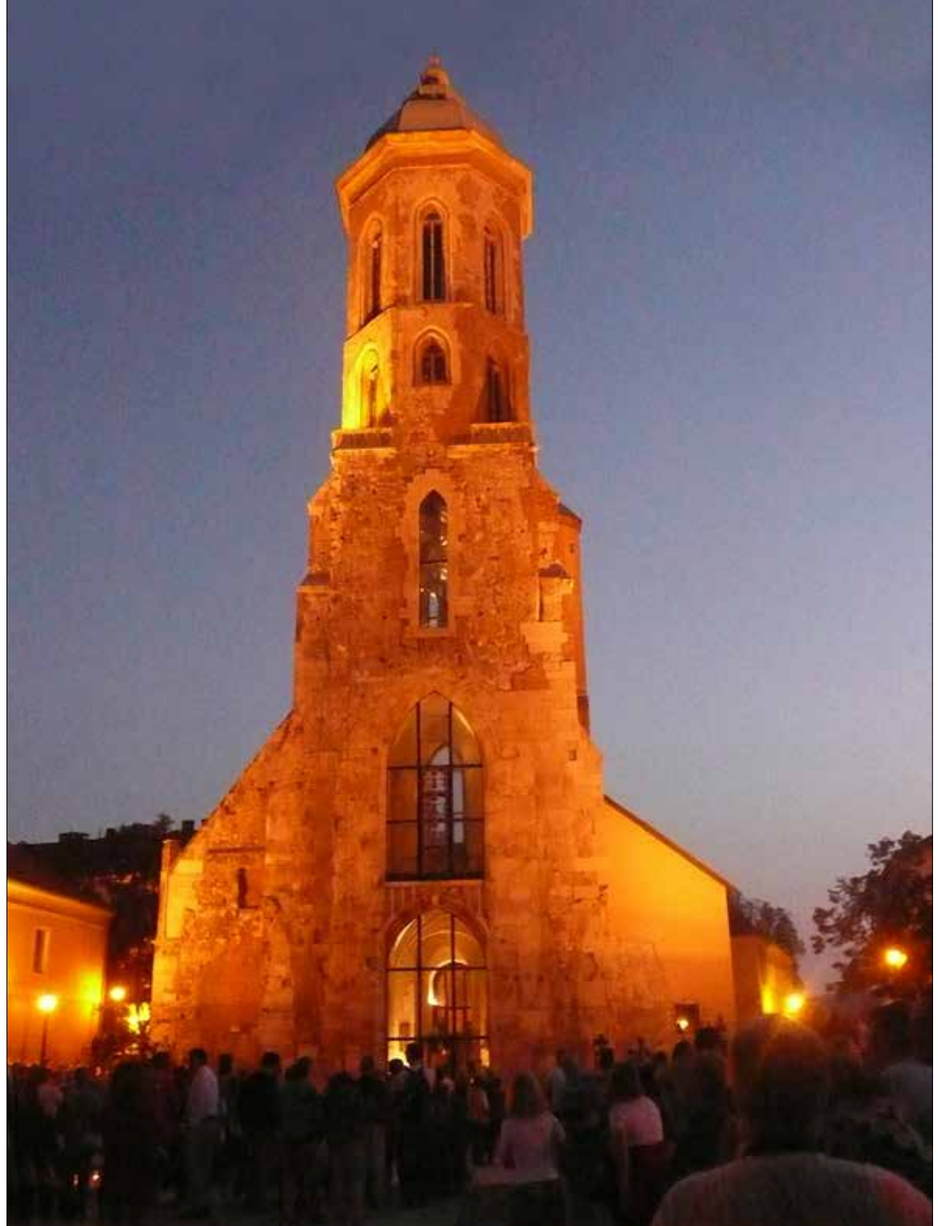












The failure of the Temple of Light

In the beginning, following our initial successes, we came up with more and more ideas and dreams. The number of programs and participants doubled year after year, giving us tremendous momentum to carry on. By the third year, however, a mistake crept into the series alongside the growth – though this, too, eventually proved to be a valuable learning experience. We had a brilliant idea: to use lasers to „reconstruct" the long-vanished walls of the church that once stood next to the Mary Magdalene Tower in the Buda Castle. Márti lived nearby, and the Garrison Church – which no one alive had ever seen – had captivated her imagination since childhood.

The event's appeal was further enhanced by the anticipation of significant interest; the 3rd Festival coincided with the European Heritage Days – which were focusing on sacred spaces – allowing the programs to reinforce one another. When visiting the laser technology specialist, we could only hope for success, as we were unable to fully assess the possibilities beforehand. To somewhat offset this risk, we organized several accompanying programs alongside the main event. Beside the square, three tents offered passersby a variety of treats starting in the afternoon: fresh, fragrant loaves of bread served from the baskets of smiling ladies dressed in white – free of charge. Luscious clusters of grapes in various colors and flavors – also free. Wine tasting featuring selections from the Prímás Cellar – available for a nominal fee. An exhibition of sacred textile art by textile artist Tünde Baloghné Jámbor opened in the tower. We set up a large stage with rows of seats in front of the tower.

During the program, Deputy Mayor János Sediánszky delivered a welcoming address, and the Barnabás Flute Trio performed medieval sacred music. The girls' choir of the King Saint Stephen Vocational High School, conducted by Mária Tünde Tőkés, sang sacred works. Actress Anna Kubik recited religious poems, and the program was hosted by tourism specialist György Ifju. Meanwhile, darkness was slowly falling. At least a thousand of us were waiting for the miracle: the appearance of the walls of light.

Then, as dusk settled in, the wind picked up – breaking the earlier calm. The smoke needed to catch the laser beams swirled away into the open air, and the flashing laser light was blinding rather than spectacular. Suddenly, darkness fell. The crucial piece of equipment had tripped the circuit breaker – the tower's electrical system couldn't handle the load. Just then, a nearby resident arrived with large candles and votive lights.

The performers held candles alongside their scripts, while votive lights burning in glass jars lined the rows of seats, marking the path. The air had grown chilly; people huddled together or snuggled up to one another against the cold. We stood behind the stage, leaning against the tower wall. We were even feeling a bit frightened by now. For some reason, Joan of Arc even crossed my mind. And then, something happened. Father Cserkó appeared on stage.

He offered a kindly greeting: „Praised be Jesus Christ!"

A few people quietly replied: „Now and forever. Amen." And he began to speak. About how we are expecting a miracle now, but it is not certain that a technical miracle will occur – and that is not a problem.















First, we must build a temple within our souls. Amidst the ruins of darkness, light can be born, and Jesus Himself can come to dwell among us. Then, we were invited to pray.

And that in itself was a miracle. Those who had been seated stood up, and the young people crouching amidst the ruins rose to their feet as well. Those who did not pray aloud followed the words in silence. After the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary and the *Memorare* were also recited.

And the people – much like an audience dispersing after a performance – slowly, calmly headed home. They did not take with them what they had expected, but something else entirely. Something that had perhaps been missing all along, or had only now become truly recognizable.

Was this truly a failure?

Ilona Toroczkay











A small shared home

„Even if only for a single occasion, we wanted to share these words and sounds with the public, bringing them to those who are forced to go without such things – offering the invisible walls of art as a shared shelter," wrote János Lackfi. He was the first person we invited to the program for the homeless, and he arrived enthusiastically alongside the band Misztrál. He ate and chatted with the guests, improvised poems, and created a cheerful atmosphere.

We – seasoned „Ars Sacra" veterans – were asked to assist the organizers of the first Catholic Social Days in jointly planning arts programs. With the help of the Community of Sant'Egidio, who had extended the invitation, we were able to invite homeless people to the Ars Sacra Festival. Members of this community visit those living on the streets every week, looking out for them and sometimes filling the role of friends or family. They pointed out that, above all, it was fitting to provide a delicious lunch for the poor, who would dress up for the occasion.

We, too, had prepared with great zeal for this unprecedented event. As guests of the Jesuits, in the basement of the House of Dialogue, the poor from the neighborhood were already trickling in for the welcoming Mass celebrated by László Vértesaljai – the beloved Father Laci. Few invitees had arrived yet, but we were pleased that some of them received Communion. We set the table for the lunch guests in the space of the former church; the eight tables – each seating six – were laid with white tablecloths and napkins, simple tableware, and pitchers of drinking water, with a vase of flowers blooming in the center. The church space, set up as a dining area, gradually filled with people dressed in their Sunday best. Our charming young musicians – members of the enthusiastic Misztrál band – along with our shared favorite, János, and we organizers sat at various tables, awaiting the guests who were looking for seats with a touch of shyness. Every seat was taken. Bowls of soup arrived, followed by roast meats; pickles were served alongside the side dishes, and later, cakes were placed on the tables. The atmosphere grew increasingly relaxed, especially where diners were pouring out their hearts to János. Those who had eaten their fill gradually quieted down, while the crowd grew as more people gathered in the church space.

They were all enthusiastic fans of János and the band Misztrál, and the magic began with cheerful music. The men sitting around us – who until then had only been talking among themselves – now turned toward us with brighter expressions; one of them, hiding a gap-toothed smile, mentioned that he, too, wrote poems. There was even someone who recalled helping us park under the bridge earlier. How different they were here – even those who usually seemed so rough! The music paused, and János asked the audience for unusual, rare words; he immediately crafted a poem from them while the musicians passed the time. A few minutes later, he read the new piece aloud. It was a huge success! Coffee was served at the tables, and amidst the pleasant music, those seated there shared many stories – some joyful, some sad – with one another. Perhaps, for this brief moment at least,the distance between us narrowed, and the city's homeless wanderers could feel at home. One woman even asked us to try and find her a job as a seamstress. She gave us her address, too – she still had one. János kept glancing at us to see if they should wrap things up; on the third time, we nodded. We rose at the end, filled with grateful joy:our prayer had been answered once again!

Ilona Toroczkay





















Deep Water

Organizing my first classical music concert could easily have put me off the idea for good – it was fraught with so many mishaps. Our festival was still in its infancy back then. We had envisioned a recital by the renowned pianist Gergely Bogányi in the glass-roofed Baroque Hall of the Budapest History Museum. „We've covered everything," I thought, like the naive novice I was. However, on the day of the concert, dreadful surprises awaited me.

Early in the morning, for instance, there were five missed calls on my phone. By the time I called the piano mover back, he had already dropped off the Bösendorfer in the foyer of the neighboring National Gallery. I nervously called the manager of the instrument rental company to ask for help. He answered angrily: we had to sort it out ourselves – he was on vacation at the seaside – and we needed to realize that if anything happened to the 25-million-forint piano, we would be the ones paying for it. How does this work? We organize free programs using volunteer labor and try to cover the costs through grants – and yet, on top of that, the burden falls on us? By this point, I was already on site. I had the piano brought over from the National Gallery, trusting that the security staff would keep an eye on it. But the guard on duty happened to be busy planning his upcoming wedding over the phone. You couldn't be angry with him – but you couldn't count on him, either. He was terribly excited, so I ended up guarding the piano myself. Visitors were coming and going through the passageway hall, and with that beautiful instrument standing there all alone, I was afraid someone might try playing it.

I got hungry and ran out to the snack bar. Before I bought anything, I heard someone tapping on the keys. I rushed back – but fortunately, it was just the piano tuner who had arrived. That left me a little time to look around. That was when I noticed there was practically no technical equipment.

Then, suddenly, I remembered that the wine festival starting next door required a 2,500-forint admission fee, and the museum was accessible from that same courtyard. In other words, our free concert could only be reached by passing through ticketed gates. I found out who was organizing the wine festival and called them. They were alarmed, too. In the end, we came up with a plan: a volunteer with a flag-bearing pole would wait at each of the two gates, and whenever a few concert-goers gathered, they would let them into the area together.

I called a musician friend of mine, but he was getting ready for an event himself, so he couldn't help. In the end, we got help from our church: a very decent young man – unable to use his motorcycle due to a „No Entry" sign – carried the huge speaker up the hill on his back. And then Gergely Bogányi arrived. The artist was waiting at one of the toll gates with his wife and young daughter; he asked if someone could come and meet them, as they couldn't find the way. I was happy to be that person.

By then, the auditorium was full. There were more people in the audience than there were available seats. And at the end of the incredible chaos, we heard a magnificent concert. Following Dr. Tamás Roska's introduction, Beethoven's music began to play. Doma was there too – the little boy from next door, who until then...











...pestered her parents until they brought her along. Having experienced the first concert I had organized myself, no amount of trouble could dampen my spirits. In fact, Gergely Bogányi has performed here every year since with his magnificent piano – always at a different venue, and often alongside musician family members. He shares his faith with us, and in recent years, his own compositions as well. Today, we regard him as the Face of Ars Sacra.

Ilona Toroczkay











Ecumenism, a sense of belonging

„Let us not seek what divides us, but what unites us!" – said Pope John XXIII. Ecumenism holds an important place in our hearts. As Catholics, too, we profess that sacred art – even if we are not speaking specifically of ecclesiastical art – cannot be divided along denominational lines.

In the spirit of emphasizing shared roots and values, we organized musical devotional gatherings for years, centered on the singing of psalms. We enriched this event – which became a tradition at the basilica – with choirs, children's choirs, and instrumental music. At times, the program featured exclusively contemporary musical compositions and modern sacred works. On occasion, we supplemented the performances of the four major historic churches with a mixed choir – a rarity in our country – that sang Anglican church music. Their conductor brought a piece familiar to the Protestant choir members, allowing them to perform it together.

As a special highlight, at the end of one of the performances, we joined the departing crowd to dance in a circle in front of the Basilica. The circle, initially small, kept growing: performers and spectators alike – holding hands – celebrated their sense of togetherness and their identity as children of God. Whenever the festival coincided with a Jewish holiday, preventing Chief Cantor László Fekete from singing, we found a solution: the music would be provided by organ and violin, or a non-religious singer would perform. These were truly uplifting concerts. After the effort of coordinating what was often a group of a hundred people, seeing those cheerful faces and sparkling eyes made it all worthwhile!

The 2021 International Eucharistic Congress in Budapest was a milestone event for which the Cardinal commissioned us to organize artistic programs. As the Basilica was hosting numerous events at the time, we were compelled to look beyond the venue that had been a favorite for years and instead seek out churches suitable for hosting ecumenical performances. In doing so, we discovered a unique „virtual cross" in the heart of the capital, with a significant church standing at each of its four endpoints: the Downtown Parish Church of the Assumption (at Március 15. Square), the Lutheran Church at Deák Square, the Reformed Church at Kálvin Square, and the Greek Catholic Church at Rózsák Square. These sites are connected by the cross – perhaps not by coincidence.

For six years now, artists from four denominations have been performing in these churches – sometimes in their own, other times in one another's. Their repertoire extends beyond sacred music; among the musicians and singers, one might find seekers of God, non-believers, or followers of other faiths, just as in the audience. Yet, the spirit of the venue and the ecumenical intent evoke a longing for togetherness and spiritual unity – a feeling fostered by art and music. With many young people among both the audience and the performers, every event is heartwarming. A wonderful group, beautiful programs, and uplifting stories centered on God, art, and family await here.

And one more thing: It is of particular significance that the church on March 15th Square was the first church in Pest. On the opposite bank of the Danube stands the statue of Saint Gerard, holding a cross in his outstretched hand. This cross – which recalls the roots of Christianity in this land – seems to point precisely to the imaginary line connecting our churches. We are grateful for this.

Ilona Toroczkay









ARS SACRA








The Agonies and Ecstasies of Love Languages

An enthusiastic young curate once approached us with a request to organize a program for the youth group for February 14th – one that would put the true meaning of Valentine's Day into perspective.

We were already preparing for our September festival, but we managed to fit in this January request as well. Knowing my passion for poetry, Márti assigned the task to me. At the time, I was collecting spiritual poems, but the theme of romantic love was not far removed from that; sometimes they touch upon the same depths. I quickly selected a few beautiful love poems and sent them to Pál Oberfrank, asking if he and his actress wife would read them to the teenagers on February 14th.

Later, Pali called sadly to say they wouldn't be able to make it after all. Meanwhile, the priest also spoke up: he had decided to organize a session of confession and Holy Communion for the young people that evening instead. By then, however, Mónika Miklya Luzsányi had already structured the poems into a program. I was delighted to see that she had not only beautifully compiled the material but also enriched it with contemporary poems and Saint Paul's Hymn to Love. Yet, the finished script ended up being shelved.

Around Christmastime, the idea came up that we could host an evening for our friends and acquaintances before the holidays. This time, Pali happily agreed. He made the Pilinszky Café – which he managed at the time – available for the event and asked Kitty Kéri to take on the female role.

Just before the performance, Kitty arranged the male and female poems – as well as the musical interludes – into their final order. I selected the music and designed a portable backdrop for the show. I chose blue and green curtains; they were easy to transport and set up, and we hoped to use them at other venues later on. For the music, I drew from Bach's piano works, as the fugues reminded me of the poetic dialogues, which were beautifully introduced by the soft melodies.

Everything was ready. Or would have been, had the weather not intervened. At dawn that day – one of the coldest mornings of the decade – the temperature plummeted to minus twenty degrees, and the restaurant's heating system froze and burst. That morning, we had just finished setting up the décor; the blues and greens blended beautifully. I had just gone to buy flowers for the Leading Lady when the water started pouring from the pipes. By the time I returned, it had already flooded the basement.

And yet, we had to hold the performance there. We even moved the backdrop down to the basement, because the vast glass surfaces upstairs only made the room colder. As the host, Pali worked a miracle: he pumped out all the water. We quickly set up chairs on the cold floor, as the brave audience members were already arriving. The audience sat in their coats. My daughter, who was expecting a baby, was among them. The actors prepared in layers of clothing in the vestibule outside the only usable restroom. And yet, we began *The Language of Love*.

It was minus nineteen degrees outside, and perhaps plus nineteen inside. Two of the twenty-five poets whose work was featured came in person: Márton Simon and my namesake, András Toroczkay. The texts came alive; the








actors recited them with total dedication, and a special connection formed between the audience and the performers. When it ended an hour later, the applause refused to die down. Faces – smiling through tears – asked if there would be another event like this.

It came to be. Over the course of ten years, thirty-nine performances grew out of it. We didn't advertise them. People spread the word among themselves. We were invited to schools, universities, weddings, to a barn, a sports hall, a living room, a drawing room, a village hall – even a dining room, when we had to flee there from the stage of the Szélrózsa Festival on the shores of Lake Balaton to escape a storm.

The evenings were often followed by conversation: priests, poets, and actors sat down together to reflect on love, charity, and the human spirit. And palpably present was He too – to quote the words of Mónika Miklya Luzsányi – „the Master of all your loves." And each time, we felt the same thing happening all over again: something that had first come to be in the basement on a cold December evening that had nearly ended in failure.

Ilona Toroczkay








Roma mission

To be honest, I knew nothing about Roma painters and their art. I just stumbled into it – much like I did into the role of a „helping volunteer."

It was Márti's idea to organize an exhibition, as she had seen some marvelous paintings in Gödöllő by a roma artist named Márta Bada. „What if we went to visit her?" we thought – and then we'd see what happened. A lean, gray-haired woman welcomed us with a commanding presence – yet with incredible kindness and helpfulness. She showed us her paintings. „Pick out whatever you like!" she said. I couldn't believe such unconditional trust existed! And the paintings themselves! Their color palettes, their themes, and their uniqueness completely captivated me. "Will you organize it?" Márti asked on the way home. "All right!" I replied. The subsequent steps followed naturally one after another: finding a venue; tracking down, borrowing, transporting, and installing additional sacred paintings by roma artists; and inviting an expert on the subject to the opening. Making the occasion festive and honoring the participants with kind words, delicious refreshments, musical accompaniment, and thorough preparation. A great deal of help with the organization came from both secular and church circles alike; people rallied to support the worthy cause.

In 2009, 2010, and 2011, the exhibitions were organized independently; in subsequent years, they continued through the „self-organization" of local communities, taking place in both Budapest and the countryside. Renowned and lesser-known Roma artists were given the opportunity to showcase their work as part of the Ars Sacra Festival. A few names – though by no means an exhaustive list – include: Bada Márta, Balogh B. András, Balogh József, Botos Flórián, Csányi János, Csámpai Rozi, Felkovics József, Kakas József, Kosztics László, Kun Pál, Labancné Milák Brigitta, Nagyné Horváth Judit, Kalányos Gyöngyi, Oláh Jolán, Oláh Mara, Orsós Teréz, and Váradi Gábor. Let us introduce you to three of these painters:

Márta Bada

Márta Bada was born on March 19, 1951, in Erdőtarcsa. Her painting style developed under the guidance of Iván Semsey (head of the Gödöllő Artists' Colony), painter Pál Mizser, and art teacher Lilla László. She has been painting regularly since 1975. Initially, she participated in competitions aimed at amateur artists. Her impressionistic paintings, characterized by a rich color palette, bring to life nature, the landscape of Gödöllő, the lives of the local Roma community, and an imagined fairy-tale world.

József Ferkovics

József Ferkovics was born in Letenye on April 17, 1961. His parents divorced early, so he was placed in a children's home. From a very young age, he drew everything he experienced or saw. His teachers noticed his talent and entered him in several competitions. At the Secondary School of Fine and Applied Arts in Pécs, his talent was honed by graphic artist János Horváth. In 1982, he became a private student of painters László Pajzs and Ernő Fóti at the College of Fine and Applied Arts. He left the college after three years, longing to focus on creative work. He spent years teaching and leading art workshops, while simultaneously completing his college studies and earning a degree in graphic art. It is featured in numerous exhibitions.













Gábor Váradi

Gábor Váradi was born in Ózd on February 14, 1958. He has been painting since 1989, creating landscapes, portraits, and dreamlike compositions featuring multiple figures. His first teacher was Zoltán Rákosy, and he regards Tamás Péli as his master. In the mid-1990s, after 24 years, he left the metallurgical industry to dedicate himself to art. His artistic ambitions took him to Iceland in 1994; by the time he returned home, he was already considered an established artist. In 1998, he founded an art school, which he ran until its closure in 2008. Since the 1990s, he has been a regular participant and exhibitor at the fine arts workshops organized by the „Cigány Ház" (Gypsy House). He has been exhibiting his work nationwide – including in Ózd and Budapest – since 1989.

I believe that by showcasing their works, we have presented a valuable and lesser-known facet of the visual arts, allowing those interested to discover more and more of the diversity of Roma culture year after year.

Hédi Baksay







Rex Hungarorum – King Saint Stephen

How can the story of a king who lived a thousand years ago be brought closer to today's children? Our foundation answered this question through the medium of puppetry by creating the production titled „Rex Hungarorum – King Saint Stephen." With the help of storytelling puppets, children can embark on a journey through time: they can get to know the young Vajk and the young Stephen, and discover the story of the coronation and the exciting events surrounding the founding of the state. Figures from history books suddenly come to life on stage, and events from the distant past turn into an adventure.

The performance does more than just tell a story; it also raises questions: What makes a good leader? Why are communities important? How can one create something of lasting significance in the life of a nation? Children can engage with the legacy of Saint Stephen in a way that is both playful and meaningful. Over the years, the production has been presented at numerous venues – including Margaret Island, the open-air events at Czakó Garden, schools, churches, community centers, and festivals. For many children, this marked their first encounter with the figure of Saint Stephen – not as a chapter in a history book, but as a vivid, living story.

The puppet show **Rex Hungarorum – King Saint Stephen** beautifully illustrates one of the key aims of Ars Sacra: bringing together faith, history, and art in a way that resonates even with the youngest audiences. For great stories endure when we retell them time and again – sometimes with the help of puppets.

Ildikó Kolek



















A Historic Encounter: Ars Sacra Debreceniensis at the Várkert Bazaar

One of the most successful exhibitions in the history of the Ars Sacra Festival dates back to 2015. As a highlight of the 9th Ars Sacra Festival, the Southern Palace of the Várkert Bazár in Budapest hosted the prestigious „Ars Sacra Debreceniensis" exhibition, bringing the sacred and artistic richness of Debrecen – known as the „Civis City" – to the heart of the capital. The exhibition was inspired by the 300th anniversary of the re-establishment of Catholic religious life in Debrecen. Created through the collaboration of the Diocese of Debrecen-Nyíregyháza and the Debrecen Cultural Center, the exhibition first achieved great success in the provinces before being showcased in Budapest as part of the festival. Nearly one hundred stunning artworks – spanning contemporary fine arts, applied arts, and photography – were displayed within the spaces of the Várkert Bazár. Dr. Márta Nagy, university associate professor and the exhibition's curator, oversaw the professional coordination, the high-quality selection of artworks, and the unique concept of the exhibition.

The ceremonial opening held in Budapest on September 10, 2015, brought together prominent figures from religious and cultural life, underscoring the event's exceptional significance. Nándor Bosák, Bishop of the Diocese of Debrecen-Nyíregyháza, welcomed the guests. Csaba Gyutai, Managing Director of Várgondnokság Nonprofit Kft., also delivered a welcoming address on behalf of the hosts, while the occasion was further enriched by the soul-stirring performance of vocalist Mária Maczkó.

Although the exhibition took the Catholic Jubilee as its starting point, it was realized in a deeply ecumenical spirit, true to the finest traditions of *ars sacra*. Catholic and Protestant identities met naturally in the featured works and among the participating artists. Both the opening ceremony and the exhibition itself demonstrated that art can transcend dogmatic boundaries and – through beauty – make visible the shared faith that unites different denominations.

„Ars Sacra Debreceniensis" remains a highlight not only of the 2015 festival but of the entire event series – a testament to the fact that sacred art can speak to people today while drawing deeply from the pure springs of the past.

Ildikó Kolek













Once Upon a Time, There Was an Ars Sacra Film Festival 2016–2021

The idea for the Ars Sacra Film Festival was born in 2016 out of a desire to express – through the language of film – the eternal human and sacred values that permeate the entire Ars Sacra Festival. We considered it important to provide a platform not only for the power of faith but also for works that address – with sensitivity and artistic excellence – the human condition, hope, community, survival, and the beauty of life. The film festival soon carved out a special place for itself in the domestic cultural landscape. The films screened did more than just explore sacred themes; they also brought key moments of Hungarian history, cultural heritage, and outstanding figures – as well as the lives of Hungarians living beyond the borders – closer to the audience.

The initial screenings were hosted by Premier Kultkafé, while the Tabán Art Cinema later became the festival's intimate and beloved venue. The submitted films were evaluated by a prestigious professional jury; its permanent members included director András Dér and film aesthetician Gábor Gelencsér. Over the course of six years, the festival received a total of 587 films, 245 of which were selected for the competition program. The selection included short and feature-length documentaries, as well as animated and experimental films.

The award-winning works included such memorable films as *Your Name*, *Euphoria of Being*, *Easy Lessons*, *On the Seventh Day*, *Tales from the Cell*, and *I Became a Monk*.

The abundance of high-quality films and the audience's interest led to the creation of the Ars Sacra Film Club, which welcomed attendees to the House of Dialogue on the last Wednesday of every month starting in January 2017. Following the free screenings, the audience had the opportunity to converse with the filmmakers and invited guests. Over the years, an open-minded community emerged – one that was thoughtful and sensitive to both film aesthetics and spiritual matters.

In 2021, the film club was organized in cooperation with Hungarian Catholic Radio. The screening themes were linked to the International Eucharistic Congress, although the events moved to the online space – specifically the Ars Sacra Foundation's YouTube channel – due to the pandemic. The discussions were moderated by Ágoston Gőbel, an editor at Catholic Radio. The creation and success of the Ars Sacra Film Festival and Film Club are the fruit of the dedicated work of many individuals. Ildikó Kolek, a member of the Foundation's board of trustees, and volunteer organizer Sára Forgács played particularly important roles, having shaped and built this unique community through years of devoted effort.

Sára Forgács and Ildikó Kolek


NMH










www.ars-sacra.hu


V. ARS SACRA
FILMFESZTIVÁL






HAGER RITTA







Lights of the Resurrection in the lower church Exhibition by Maria de Faykod

There are times when an exhibition does more than simply display images; it creates a sense of stillness. Such was the case with the exhibition by Maria de Faykod – a sculptor of Hungarian descent living in France – held in 2022 in the crypt of St. Stephen's Basilica in Budapest.

The exhibition evoked the world-famous Stations of the Cross at Lourdes through the artist's own photographs. Details were revealed to visitors that cast the artworks in a new light; individual gazes, movements, or gestures became stories in their own right, helping viewers to immerse themselves more deeply in the message of Christ's Passion and Resurrection.

The ceremonial opening of the exhibition took place on September 18, 2022. It was a great honor for us to have the exhibition opened by Academician Prof. Dr. Zsolt Tulassay, a Széchenyi Prize-winning university professor. Musical accompaniment by Péter Váray, Zsófia Váray-Major, and Domonkos Váray contributed to the elevated atmosphere of the event. The exhibition's closing event also drew significant interest and was attended in person by the artist. Borbála Szikora performed on the flute.

For us, this exhibition was a particularly significant milestone: it demonstrated that art truly has the power to build bridges between people, between faith and culture, and between heaven and earth. Through the works of Maria de Faykod, the Basilica's crypt became, for a few weeks, a unique meeting place for the message of beauty, hope, and resurrection.

Ildikó Kolek



















Our Role Models

Between Heaven and Earth: Timeless Role Models for People Today

One of the finest and most tangible fruits of our foundation's mission is the outdoor traveling exhibition titled *„Our Role Models – With Timeless Values,"* which we conceived in honor of the 2021 International Eucharistic Congress.

In recent years, the exhibition has evolved into a genuine spiritual pilgrimage. It has visited the square in front of the Mary Magdalene Tower at Buda Castle, Margaret Island, and the renovated Church Square in Piliscsaba, as well as the historic squares of Székesfehérvár, Győr, Esztergom, Zsámbék, Vác, Kecskemét, Miskolc, Zalaegerszeg, Sopron, Pécs, and Szeged. Its journey has taken it to Péliföldszentkereszt – a place of Salesian spirituality – to historic Vasvár, to Vászoly (a hidden gem of the Balaton Uplands) and various lakeside locations, and even across the border to the grace-filled shrine of Csíksomlyó and other Hungarian communities abroad, bringing timeless values into our midst through streets, churchyards, and school courtyards.

The exhibition breaks with the cool detachment typical of museums. On twenty-one monumental, rotatable panels, our nation's greatest saints, blesseds, and venerable figures come to life in actual size. Kriszta Kállai Nagy's stunning, colorful, and expressive illustrations clothe iconographic traditions in a modern style, making the figures seem to step right off the panels.

Gábor Bethlenfalvy's finely tuned, incisive biographical summaries do not merely present dry facts; they also make palpable the inner, spiritual struggles lying behind the lives portrayed.

From the kings of the Árpád dynasty to the martyrs of the twentieth century

The exhibition traces a beautiful arc connecting Hungary's past with the present. Starting with the faith of Saint Stephen, the founder of the state, and the knightly virtues of Saint Ladislaus, and passing through the active charity of Saint Elizabeth and the self-sacrificing, atoning life of Saint Margaret, we arrive at the martyrs and confessors of our own recent past. The youthful zeal and purity of István Kaszap, the steadfast loyalty of Mária Magdolna Bódi, the self-sacrifice of Blessed Sára Salkaházi, the pure determination of János Brenner, and the unyielding fortitude of József Mindszenty all bear witness to the same thing: the all-conquering power of love.

This exhibition is not about perfection, but about the choices made by flesh-and-blood people – about how it was possible to preserve peace, patriotism, mercy, and moral integrity even during history's most turbulent centuries. The traveling exhibition's core message is that holiness is not something set apart from everyday life, but rather an integral part of bustling public spaces, city streets, and the ordinary routine.

„Do not be afraid to aspire to become saints!" –said Saint John Paul II. In the year of the 20th anniversary Ars Sacra Festival, this exhibition continues to proclaim that although the world changes, the compass of an authentic human life remains constant. The saints of our nation still walk among us today, and through their lives they proclaim: *„I give you hope and a future!"*

Ildikó Kolek






Salkaházi
Sára


Szent
László
1046-ban született
Lengyelországban,
1095-ben
halt meg,
valószínűleg
Nyitra
környékén.


Batthyány-
Strattmann
László
IV. Károly


Márton
Áron
Salkaházi
Sára
Mindszenty
József



If the stones could speak…

„If they keep silent, the stones will cry out"
(Luke 19:40)

As we walk the streets of Budapest, we often pass by places that hold centuries of history. A church doorway, the remains of a monastery wall, an old tombstone, or a secluded courtyard – each could tell a story, if only there were someone to listen. The Ars Sacra walks aim to do exactly that: to give a voice to the city's visible and hidden monuments and to bring the richness of its sacred heritage closer to the people.

The history of these walks is inextricably linked to the mission of the Ars Sacra Foundation. Just as the festival seeks to convey values rooted in faith through the language of art, these walks reveal the connections between past and present as they traverse the city's public spaces. They are not merely sightseeing tours, but encounters with architecture, history, art, and human stories.

Over the years, we have explored numerous sacred sites in Budapest – both well-known and lesser-known – with the participants. At times, we wandered among the medieval monuments of the Buda Castle; at others, the history of the city's churches and monasteries unfolded before us. We discovered the sacred heritage of Margaret Island – spanning more than eight centuries – as well as the world of the Dominican nuns and the legacy of Saint Margaret of the Árpád dynasty, all while the island's familiar landscapes took on new meaning.

The walks often led to places that remain closed to visitors in everyday life. Galleries, towers, crypts, and sections of monasteries opened up for the occasion, revealing a lesser-known side of the churches. At such times, we see not merely a building, but the history of a community that shaped the life of the city over the centuries.

Cemetery walks hold a special place among the programs. On these occasions, Budapest's perhaps quietest places find their voice. Walking among the monuments, the focus shifts away from transience to what endures: faith, creative work, human memory, and stories passed down through generations. Behind each headstone, the life stories of artists, scientists, clergy, and ordinary people unfold, while the cemetery itself reveals itself to visitors as an open-air sculpture museum.

Over the years, the Ars Sacra walks have brought together people united by curiosity, a love of culture, and an openness to spiritual values.

Looking back on the occasion of the Ars Sacra Foundation's anniversary, it is clear that these walks represent far more than just a cultural program. They are bridges between past and present, meeting points for people, and opportunities to view the world around us with fresh eyes.

For the city is truly full of stories – and the Ars Sacra walks help us hear them.

Ildikó Kolek



















Conferences on sacred architecture

„The church stands as a model of the universe"
(János Pilinszky)

During the City Mission, the idea arose that everyone might examine their relationship with God through the lens of their own profession. This led us to organize the first conference on sacred architecture and interior design. As a companion publication, we produced a work titled **The Church of Today – Images, Light, and Thoughts**, in which we asked contemporary architects how they envision the church of today.

We organized the two-day conference in cooperation with the Interior Design Section of the Hungarian Chamber of Architects. On several occasions, we combined the conferences with building visits and professional excursions. In connection with architectural works, the events also showcase the roots of European culture from historical, theological, literary, and art-historical perspectives. Between 2011 and 2017, the conferences were organized by architect and interior designer Péter Rainer – a recipient of the Noémi Ferenczy Prize – with themes centered on philosophical and theological concepts: silence, inner silence, the acoustics of sacred spaces, light as the most important yet intangible building element of sacred architecture, and the cross as a symbol, sign, and spatial organizing element in both historical and contemporary architecture. Musical contributors included the Schola Gregoriana Budapestiensis (conducted by György Béres), László Virágh, and folk musician Mihály Sipos.

The conferences were held primarily at the FUGA Budapest Center of Architecture and the Sapientia College of Monastic Theology. The conferences are accredited by the Hungarian Chamber of Architects (MÉK), and chamber members receive continuing education credit points for their participation. From 2020 onwards, the conference themes have been closely linked to the significant historical anniversaries of the religious orders celebrating their jubilees. They examine the heritage of the orders – ranging from archaeological finds and Baroque reconstruction to state-of-the-art contemporary architectural and renovation projects.

Pauline 750 (2020): A presentation of the spiritual and built heritage – as well as the modern church architecture – of the only monastic order founded in Hungary. We were also able to tour the Cave Church with Provincial Superior Fr. Antal Puskás.

Premonstratensian 900 (2021): The history of the Order and its establishment in Hungary (e.g., Zsámbék, Csorna, Türje), complemented the following day by a professional pilgrimage and site visits by bus. We are grateful to Premonstratensian monk and architect Dénes Márton Holnapy for organizing the conference.

Dominican 800 (2022): The 800-year history, architectural heritage, and contemporary architecture of the Dominican Order. Special thanks to Balázs Zágorhidi Czigány for his assistance. The conference concluded in the Dominican Courtyard of the Hilton Hotel, where we sang the Office of Saint Dominic with Dominican sisters.

Franciscan 800 (2023): The history of the Order was presented by Provincial Vicar Benedek Dobszay; the origins of mendicant architecture by Kapisztrán Varga OFM; and outstanding contemporary Franciscan projects – such as Mátraverebély-Szentkút and the expansion of the













Franciscan high school in Esztergom – by the architects themselves.

István Jelenits, a Piarist priest and teacher, regularly gave lectures; other speakers included – though the list is not exhaustive – interior designer György Fekete, János Krahling, András Krizsán, Balázs Csapó, István Mányi, Imre Bálint, Gábor Csanády, György Bartos, Zsuzsa Snopper, István Schneller, Zofia Wlodarczyk, Karol Badyna, János Mónus, István Istvánffy, Csaba Jakab, Eszter Csaba, Zoltán Páricsy, and Zorán Vukoszávlyev.

A conference held in Esztergom in 2024 – initiated by Mária Prokopp – took place under the title *„The Architectural Realization of the ‚Hungarian Zion'* Concept at the Beginning of the Reform Era," featuring participants from both Hungary and abroad. The introductory lecture was delivered by Miklós Kásler, and the speakers included distinguished professors in the field. The event paid tribute to the life and work of Sándor Rudnay, Archbishop and Prince-Primate of Esztergom, who – after a lapse of 300 years – relocated the seat of the Archdiocese back to Esztergom from Nagyszombat, where it had been moved to escape the Ottoman occupation.

To conclude the event, members of the Matthias Church orchestra performed an excerpt from Beethoven's **Ode to Joy**. Architect László Tóth is organizing a showcase of contemporary churches for the 2026 conference. The projects to be presented include László Benczúr's Lutheran church in Budakeszi; the Reformed church in Csömör by Zoltán Berzsák and László Nyikos; Robert Gutowski's Saint John Paul II Church in Páty; Zoltán Győrffy's Saint George Church in Debrecen-Józsa; Róbert Jahoda's Blessed Zoltán Meszlényi Church in Kelenföld; András Krizsán's Béthel Lutheran Church in Piliscsaba; and László Váncza's Holy Trinity Church in Derekegyház.

Márta Dragonits







Our main sponsor is the Holy Spirit!

We profess and live by our motto: *The Holy Spirit is our principal benefactor!* Over the past two decades, we have experienced countless times that, even in the most hopeless situations, helping hands and unexpected support reached us at the very last moment. When, from a human perspective, every door seemed closed, Providence always opened a way – something we, with hearts full of gratitude, recognize as the tangible presence and assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Although we have funded our programs through grants from the very beginning – ensuring that all our events remain free for the public – the true miracle lies in the spirit of collaboration and personal sacrifice.

We extend our gratitude to our key institutional supporters: the National Cultural Fund (NKA), the Hungarian Academy of Arts (MMA), the National Cooperation Fund (NEA), and the MOL New Europe Foundation. We also wish to express special thanks to the Hungarian Catholic Church for its support through 2023, to the municipalities of Budapest Districts I, V, VII, IX, and XII for their ongoing partnership, and to the private donors who have joined us with their selfless contributions.

Alongside these institutional pillars, the greatest asset lies in the three members of our Board of Trustees – Márta Dragonits (Chair of the Board), Ildikó Kolek, and Ilona Toroczkay. Since 2007, driven purely by inner conviction and without financial compensation, they have contributed hundreds of millions of forints' worth of voluntary work to the operations of the Ars Sacra Foundation and the annual organization of the festivals.

Ildikó Kolek















2007. Week of Sacred Arts

„I give you hope and a future" (Jer 29:11)

4,000 visitors, 37 events, 1 location
Highlights from our program:
Museum of Applied Arts – Opening of the Week of Sacred Arts
Budapest University of Technology and Economics – Musica Nostra, Elemér Balázs Jazz Concert
Ethnographic Museum: „Churches Living Together"
Museum of Military History: „In Defense of Europe"
Hungarian National Museum: The Kőszeg Chasuble
Museum of Fine Arts: „Lamentation of Christ" meditation space
and concert by the Discantus Ensemble
Kiscell Museum: „Roman Triptych" (a play written by Pope John Paul II)
Budapest History Museum: „Apostle Paul" – a musical evening with Dániel Gryllus
Launch of competitions: MOME, Hungarian University of Fine Arts, BME
St. Michael's Chapel: Cross Exhibition
First Conference on Sacred Architecture and Interior Design

2008. II. Week of Sacred Arts

„Let us lift up our hearts" (Sir 3:41)

8,000 visitors, 62 events, 6 locations
The Ars Sacra Foundation was established; composer Péter Nógrádi wrote the Ars Sacra signature theme.
We published a dedicated program booklet featuring Ilona Toroczkay's artwork „Cross" on the cover.
We adapted the City Mission logo to create the logo for the Week of Sacred Arts; the first rural locations joined the event series.
Hungarian National Museum – opening ceremony: „Let Us Lift Up Our Hearts"
Pauline Library opens its doors
St. Michael's Chapel – Cross exhibition
Magdalena Tower – PRO-DEO flag exhibition (Association of Hungarian Fine and Applied Artists)
Museum of Applied Arts – Concert by the Pro Musica Girls' Choir; featuring Miklós Blanckenstein and György Czigány
St. Margaret High School – Performance of *Énekes Madár* (Singing Bird)
Pilinszky Café – Discussion: „The Love of Art – The Art of Love"
Second „The Light" Conference on Sacred Architecture and Interior Design



















2009. III. Week of Sacred Arts

„In him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4)

16,000 visitors, 120 events, 24 locations
The first programs in the Carpathian Basin – Kassa, Oromhegyes, Magyarkanizsa, Törökkanizsa
The City Mission cross created by Csaba Ozsvári was erected in the Ceremonial Hall of the Hungarian National Museum
St. Stephen's Basilica – for the first time
Joint musical devotional service of the historic churches
St. Stephen's Basilica (crypt) – Admonitions of Saint Stephen – Exhibition by Ildikó Csete
Museum of Applied Arts – Piano recital by Gergely Bogányi – Introduction by Pál Oberfrank
St. Michael's Chapel – Depiction of Christ/Cross – Opened by Peregrin Kálmán
Magdolna Tower – Failure of the „Temple of Light"
EOK – „Church Photos" – Exhibition by Sándor Fegyverneky
First performance of „Language of Love"

2010. IV. Week of Sacred Arts

„You are the salt of the earth" (Mt 5:13)

24,000 visitors, 160 events, 51 localities
Opened by Bishop Dr. György Udvardy
Our new logo – designed by Iván Szamos
St. Stephen's Basilica – Joint Musical Devotion of the Historic Churches
Buda Castle Municipality: „Contemplation with Line and Thread" – Exhibition by textile artist Krisztina Kókay
St. Ladislaus Parish (Istenhegy): „A Wish for Peace" – Performance by Mariann Tallián and Balázs Lázár
Zengővárkony – Sacred Egg Exhibition
Óbuda Cultural Center – „Bread Comes from God": Sacred artworks by Roma artists
Textile Museum – „God Created the World for Free" – Theatrical performance
Sacred Architecture Conference – Esztergom
Semmelweis University (SOTE) – Villő Vocal Ensemble and Péter Dóczy
Semmelweis Salon – Concert by Edit Klukon and Dezső Ránki
Pál Molnár C. Studio – Works from the collection of Father Zoltán Szilárdffy




















2011 V. Week of Sacral Arts

"Let there be light!" (Gen 1:3)

35,000 visitors, 320 events, 65 settlements
Our new, finalized logo was designed by István Nagy
We produced a high-quality program booklet and promotional materials summarizing the first 5 years of Ars Sacra
An Ars Sacra banner was displayed on the façade of the Hungarian National Museum
Museum of Ethnography – „Fifteen Psalms" – a concert featuring Márta Sebestyén, Vilmos Gryllus, and Dániel Gryllus
Budavár Municipality Hall – Concert by Gábor Boldoczki and Teréz Szabó
Museum of Applied Arts – „Lights of Faith" – a chamber exhibition on menorahs and eternal lamps
Concert by the Pro Musica Girls' Choir of Nyíregyháza: „Praise the Lord"
Hungarian National Museum – Choir and Orchestra of Matthias Church – Liszt's *Missa Solemnis*
Óbuda Cultural Centre (Óbudai Társaskör) – „Live Fish, Heavy Coats" – an evening with János Lackfi
Budavár Municipality Hall – Exhibition by painter and Munkácsy Prize laureate Tamás Kárpáty
St. Stephen's Basilica – Joint Musical Devotion of the Historic Churches










2012. VI. Week of Sacral Arts

"Let us lift up our hearts" (Sir 3:41)

For the first time, we have invited patrons
Ecclesiastical Patron-in-Chief: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
Secular Patron-in-Chief: Mrs. Ferenc Mádl (Dalma Mádl), wife of the President of the Republic
50,000 visitors, 430 events, 83 settlements
Our program booklet is a special edition of *Fidelio*
Magdolna Tower – „On the Way" – Exhibition by painter and Kossuth Prize laureate János Aknay
Atrium of the Buda Castle District Municipality – „On the Way Toward Truth" – Angéla Császár and Bence Takács
Petőfi Literary Museum – Exhibition by Ilona Lovas
Office for the Protection of Cultural Heritage – „The Depths of Our Hearts Are the Same" – Exhibition by Roma painters
Museum of Applied Arts – St. Ephraim Male Choir – Byzantine Mosaics
Museum of Fine Arts – Pro Musica Girls' Choir – Conducted by Dénes Szabó
Újpest Synagogue – Jewish New Year – Rabbi Ervin Szerdócz



2013. VII. Ars Sacra Festival

"Everything is possible for one who believes" (Mark 9:23)

Ecclesiastical Patron-in-Chief: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
Lay Patron-in-Chief: Mrs. Ferenc Mádl (Dalma Mádl), wife of the President of the Republic
52,000 visitors | 450 events | 103 settlements
Opening "Special Flashmob" – Kodály's *Evening Song* (*Esti dal*) – conducted by Ferenc Sapszon
Budapest Music Center – Concert by Gergely Bogányi, with an introduction by Father Mihály Kránitz
St. Michael's Chapel – *Eternal Harmony* – Exhibition by BOLDI
St. Stephen's Basilica – Joint Musical Devotion of the Historic Churches
Barabás Villa – *To Confess You, To Deny You*
János Kájoni Community House – *I Find You Everywhere* – Exhibition by Péter Farkas and Rita Mohay-Rodler
Magdolna Torony – *Jesus's Life* – Exhibition featuring János Aknay, István F. Zámbó, and Csaba Tábori
A38 Ship – Weiner-Szász Chamber Symphony, conducted by Salamon Kamp
Óbuda Cultural Centre (Óbudai Társaskör) – Dénes Gulyás and his students
Church of the Sacred Heart – Rachmaninoff's *All-Night Vigil* – St. Ephraim Male Choir
EOK (Educational and Research Centre) – Memorial Concert for György Vukán – Béla Szakcsi Lakatos

2014. VIII. Ars Sacra Festival

"You are the light of the world" (Mt 5:14)

Secular Patron-in chef: Mrs. Anita Herczegh, wife of the President of the Republic
Mrs. Dalma Mádl was also present.
Ecclesiastical Patron: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
Opened by Bishop Ferenc Cserháti
57,000 visitors, 480 events, 110 settlements
Participating locations from beyond the borders included Berehove Vienna, Komárno, and Stuttgart
Magdolna Tower – "Paths Toward the Transcendent," an exhibition by Tamás Konok
St. Francis of Assisi Church (Ferencváros) – Concert by Ferenc Snétberger
MOM Cultural Center – Concert by Kristóf Baráti and the Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra
Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) Castle District Congress Hall – Fortepiano concert by Malcolm Bilson
EOK (Basic Medical Science Center) – Mihály Dresch Jazz Trio
St. Michael's Chapel – "Transvision," an exhibition by Éva Mayer and Áron Majoros
District XII Municipality Corridor Gallery – Exhibition by Ildikó Kolek: "El Camino – Our Path"
"Music, Tales, and Trying Out Instruments" – Weiner-Szász Chamber Orchestra – Barabás Villa













2015. IX. Ars Sacra Festival

"Be holy!" (1 Peter 1:16)

Ars Sacra

EUROPE FOR FESTIVALS FESTIVALS FOR EUROPE EFFE LABEL 2015-2016

Secular Patron-in-chef: Mrs. Anita Herczegh, wife of the President of the Republic
Ecclesiastical Patron-in-chef: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
60,000 visitors | 580 events | 142 settlements
The Ars Sacra Festival was awarded the EFFE Label 2015/2016 by an international jury, placing it among the best festivals in Europe. The Ars Sacra Foundation became a member of the Hungarian Festival Association.
At the opening ceremony, the Cardinal presented the *Pro Cultura Christiana* award to Márta Dragonits.
The National Theatre joined the Ars Sacra Festival with a production titled *Árnyország* (Shadowland).
MOM – Colors and Hearts – Borbála Dobozy (harpsichord) and the Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra
St. Stephen's Basilica – Joint Musical Devotion of the Historic Churches
Várkert Bazár – Ars Sacra Debreceniensis
Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Ferencváros – Concert by the Cantemus Mixed Choir
Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Ferencváros – „Ami ima" (Which Is a Prayer) – a Jewish-Christian program of musical poetry
BMC – Bach for Three Pianos – Edit Klukon, Dezső Ránki, Fülöp Ránki, and the JSB String Orchestra

2016. X. Ars Sacra Festival

"I will give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11)

Ars Sacra

EUROPE FOR FESTIVALS FESTIVALS FOR EUROPE EFFE LABEL 2015-2016

Ecclesiastical Patron-in-Chief: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
Lay Patron-in-Chief: Mrs. Anita Herczegh, wife of the President of the Republic
Patron for programs in Slovakia: Ambassador Éva Czimbalmosné Molnár
Patron for programs in Italy: Ambassador Péter Paczolay
Patron for programs in the Southern Region (Délvidék): Ambassador Dr. Attila Pintér
Patron for programs in Austria: Ambassador Dr. János Perényi
50,000 visitors | 430 events | 83 settlements
The Ars Sacra program offering has expanded to include a film festival; we received the „For Budapest" Award from Mayor István Tarlós.
Trinity Square (Szentháromság tér) – Open-air concert by pianist Gergely Bogányi
Várkert Bazár – "In Memoriam '56" – Concert featuring works by composer Péter Nógrádi
Vígszínház (Comedy Theatre) – "Good News on Guitar Strings" – Concert by Ferenc Snétberger
Hungarian Academy in Rome – Piano concert by Balázs Fülei
Magdolna Tower – "Window to the Day" – Photography exhibition by Father Dr. Kornél Fábry



















2017. XI. Ars Sacra Festival

"Do not be afraid" (Jeremiah 42:11)

Secular Patron-in-Chief: Mrs. Anita Herczegh, wife of the President of the Hungarian Republic
Ecclesiastical Patron-in-Chief: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
Patron for Vojvodina: Dr. János Babity, Consul General of Hungary
The Ars Sacra logo has been granted trademark protection.
We have been awarded the EFFE Label by the international jury for another two years.
80,000 visitors | 736 events | 125 settlements
BMC – Piano recital by Edit Klukon: The Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross
St. Stephen's Basilica, Knights' Hall – Exhibition by painter Tibor Bráda
Háló Community Center – "10 Years of Ars Sacra" exhibition; memorial evening for Anna Jókai
St. Stephen's Square – 11th Wind Band Festival on St. Matthew's Day
Church of St. Teresa of Ávila – String Orchestra of the György Solti Music School, conducted by Milán Bolla
MOM – Ditta Rohmann and the Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra
Reformed Church on Szilágyi Dezső Square – Reformation 500 – Connection
Frankel Synagogue – Tour of the synagogue; Havdalah (conclusion of the Jewish Sabbath)











2018. XII. Ars Sacra Festival

"Look to the heavens and see" (Job 35:5)

Secular Patron-in-Chief: Mrs. Anita Herczegh, wife of the President of the Hungarian Republic
Ecclesiastical Patron-i-Chief: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
87,000 visitors | 620 events | 119 settlements
The Ars Sacra Festival has grown into a nationwide event, extending its reach across the Carpathian Basin.
St. Stephen's Basilica – Joint Musical Devotion of the Historic Churches
Marczibányi Square Cultural Center – Family concert with the Kelemen family
St. Stephen's Basilica – An evening with Ferenc Snétberger and his students
Church of St. Elizabeth of the House of Árpád – "Someone Walks on the Hill of Trees" – An evening dedicated to Sándor Kányádi, featuring the Kaláka ensemble
Bethlen Square Theatre – *Faith and Illusion* – A play by Pál Csáky, starring Imre Boráros
Városmajor Parish Church – Concert featuring sacred music played on Scottish bagpipes
BMC (Budapest Music Center) – Piano recital by Edit Klukon and Dezső Ránki, with an introduction by Father Mihály Kránitz
Buda Castle District Municipality Hall – "Enveloped in Prayer" – Featuring Szilvia Sass and her students











2019. XIII. Ars Sacra Festival

"That they all may be one." (John 17:21)

Secular Patron-in-Chief: Mrs. Anita Herczegh, wife of the President of the Hungarian Republic
Ecclesiastical Patron-in-Chief: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
117 settlements, numerous open churches, 418 cultural and community institutions, 700 programs, 100,000 visitors
Hungarian National Museum – Opening Ceremony – Gemma Vocal Ensemble
St. Stephen's Basilica – Joint Musical Devotion of Four Historic Churches
Church of St. Teresa of Ávila – Joint Concert by the ensembles Kaláka and Misztrál
ORFI Community Center – Performance by the Villő Vocal Ensemble and an exhibition by Márta Bada
Church of the Holy Angels in Gazdagrét – Gergely Bogányi
Lóvasút Event Center – "Psalm-Singing Rogues" (Zsoltározó Zsiványok) – János Lackfi
Church of St. Elizabeth of the House of Árpád – "Celestial Voice" – Concert by Irén Lovász
Háló Community Center – Roby Lakatos and his ensemble
MOM Cultural Center – Violist Máté Szűcs and the Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra
Óbuda Social Circle (Óbudai Társaskör) – String Orchestra of the György Solti Music School – Conducted by Milán Bolla
Vácrátót Botanical Garden – "Plants of the Bible" – Guided Walk

2020. XIV. Ars Sacra Festival

"All my springs are in You!" (Psalm 87:7)

Secular Patron-in-Chief: Mrs. Anita Herczegh, wife of the President of the Hungarian Republic
Ecclesiastical Patron-in-Chief: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
70,000 visitors | 432 events | 300 settlements
Hungarian National Museum – Ceremonial Opening of the Ars Sacra Festival
Inner City Parish Church – *Deo Gratias!* – Gemma Vocal Ensemble
Lóvasút Cultural and Event Center – *be happy*
House of Dialogue – János Lackfi: *Swings* – Krisztina Irma Tarjányi and Enikő Molnár
Tabán Art Cinema – 5th Ars Sacra Film Festival
Háló Community and Cultural Center – *S4* – Jazz concert by the János Nagy Trio
BMC (Budapest Music Center) – Piano recital by Fülöp Ránki
St. Stephen's Basilica – Paintings on the life of Jesus by Endre Muzsinszki Nagy
Pauline 750 – 14th Conference on Sacral Architecture
ORFI Community Center – *Rome, the Holy City* – Travel sketches by István Madarassy














2021. XV. Ars Sacra Festival

"All my springs are in You" (Psalm 87:7)

Secular Patron-in-Chief: Mrs. Anita Herczegh, wife of the President of the Hungarian Republic
Ecclesiastical Patron-in-Chief: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
100,000 visitors | 560 events | 310 settlements
Cultural programs of the International Eucharistic Congress "Cross-Concerts"
Matthias Church – Gemma Vocal Ensemble – Opening concert of the Ars Sacra Festival
Margaret Island Water Tower – *Saint Stephen, Rex Hungarorum* (King of the Hungarians) – Puppet performance
St. Elizabeth of the House of Árpád Parish Church – Solo concert by guitarist Ferenc Snétberger
Lóvasút Cultural and Event Center – Concert by young talents: Gergő Devich and Kristóf Tóth
Church of the Holy Angels in Gazdagrét – Concert by the Pro Musica Girls' Choir
Sapientia College of Theology – *Premonstratensians 900* – Conference on Sacred Architecture
Petőfi Literary Museum – *Pilinszky 100* – Featuring literary scholar Anna Juhász
University Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Musical prayer evening – Mónika Varga, Attila Lambert, and Attila Dolhai
BMC (Budapest Music Center) – Piano concert by Misi Boros













2022. XVI. Ars Sacra Festival

"Love one another as I have loved you!" (John 13:34)

Secular Patron in Chief: Katalin Novák, President of the Republic
Ecclesiastical Patron in Chief: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
72,000 visitors | 467 events | 72 settlements
Hungarian National Museum – Ceremonial Opening of the Ars Sacra Festival – Jazzation and János Lackfi
Deák Square Lutheran Church – „Cross-Concerts" 2 – Organ Concert by László Fassang
Lóvasút Cultural and Event Centre – „Illumination" – A Literary Evening with Róza Juhász on the Life of Anna Jókai
MOM Cultural Centre – The Misztrál Ensemble Turns 25!
Institute for Musicology (RCH HAS) – Piano Concert by Renáta Konyicska
St. Stephen's Basilica, Undercroft – Photo Exhibition of Marble Sculptures from Lourdes by Maria de Faykod
Church of the Holy Angels in Gazdagrét – Anima Musicae, with Barnabás Kelemen and Katalin Kokas
House of Hungarian Music – Performance Hall (our new venue) – Kodály 140 – Piano Recital by Fülöp Ránki












2023 . XVII. Ars Sacra Festival

"Seek peace" (Ps 34:15)

Secular Patron in Chief: Mrs. Katalin Novák, President of the Republic
Ecclesiastical Patron in Chief: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
82,000 visitors, 480 events, 104 settlements
Ars Sacra Festival in Miskolc, Gellért Festival in Bakonybél; program booklet produced exclusively online
Inner City Parish Church of the Assumption, Budapest – „Cross Concerts" 1 – Tutti Cantabile Vocal Ensemble
Deák Square Lutheran Church – „Cross Concerts" 2 – Capella Esterházy Chamber Ensemble
Kálvin Square Reformed Church – „Cross Concerts" 3 – Korossy String Quartet
Greek Catholic Church of the Protection of the Theotokos, Budapest – „Cross Concerts" 4 – Lautitia Youth Mixed Choir
Lóvasút Cultural and Event Center – Jazzation – Aeterneum
St. Emeric Church, Buda – Gergely Bogányi and Misi Boros
Church of the Holy Angels, Gazdagrét – St. Ephraim Male Choir and the Budapest Strings
Church of the Holy Angels, Gazdagrét – Era Nova Chamber Orchestra










2024. XVIII. Ars Sacra Festival

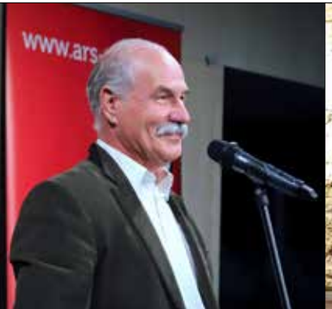
"Justice brings about peace!" (Is 32:17)

Secular Patron in Chief: Mrs. Zsuzsanna Nagy, wife of the President of the Republic
Ecclesiastical Patron in Chief: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
90,000 visitors | 439 events | 94 settlements
2nd Ars Sacra Festival in Miskolc and Sibiu (Nagyszeben)
MOM Cultural Center – Jazzation
Inner City Parish Church of the Assumption – „Cross Concerts" 1: Korossy String Quartet
Lóvasút Cultural and Event Center – Harp Concert by Álmos Tallós
Lóvasút Cultural and Event Center – András Berecz
Church of the Holy Angels in Gazdagrét – Gergely Bogányi and his family members at the Ars Sacra Festival opening concert
Kálvin Square Reformed Church – „Cross Concerts" 3: Capella Esterházy Chamber Ensemble
FSZEK (Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library) – Sárkányos Children's Library – Márk Fülep: The Story of Vuk, the Little Fox
Inner City Parish Church of the Assumption – „Budapest's Largest Cross" – A lecture by Ilona Toroczkay
Matthias Church – Ars Sacra Festival Closing Concert: „Venite, Adoremus!" – Gemma Vocal Ensemble

2025. XIX. Ars Sacra Fesztivál

"Pilgrims of Hope" Holy Year

Secular Patronin Chief: Mrs. Zsuzsanna Nagy, wife of the President of the Republic
Ecclesiastical Patron in Chief: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
100,000 visitors | 540 events | 112 settlements
Matthias Church – Ceremonial Opening of the 19th Ars Sacra Festival – Gemma Vocal Ensemble
Saint Ladislaus Community House – Concert for Children by Vilmos Gryllus
Church of the Holy Angels in Gazdagrét – Concert by Gábor Bretz and Zsuzsanna Gráf
Várkert Bazár – „Faith and Poetry Pass, Freshly, with Music..." – János Lackfi and István Gyárfás
Church of the Holy Angels in Gazdagrét – Piano Recital by Tamás Érdi
Church of the Holy Angels in Gazdagrét – Piano Recital by Edit Klukon and Dezső Ránki
Church of the Holy Angels in Gazdagrét – Gergely Bogányi and the Angelica Girls' Choir
Church of the Holy Angels in Gazdagrét – Tamás Bubnó: *PRIMISSA*, an Oratorio of Hope
Ceremonial Hall of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) – Concert by the Pro Musica Girls' Choir of Nyíregyháza – Conductor: Dénes Szabó












2026. XX. Ars Sacra Festival

„To give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Ecclesiastical Patron-in-Chief: Cardinal Péter Erdő, Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
105,000 visitors, 585 events, 113 settlements
Church of the Holy Angels in Gazdagrét – Joint concert by the Bogányi family
Saint Ladislaus Community House – Concert by Edit Klukon, Dezső Ránki, and Fülöp Ránki
Inner City Parish Church of the Assumption (Budapest) – „Cross Concerts" 1: A musical and poetic testimony by the Lackfi family
Kálvin Square Reformed Church – „Cross Concerts" 2: Concert by the Devich family
Deák Square Lutheran Church – „Cross Concerts" 3: Milán Bolla and the String Orchestra of the György Solti Music School
Parish Church of Saint Elizabeth of the House of Árpád – „Cross Concerts" 4: Concert by the students of Tamás Bubnó and János Mezei, and a performance by the Magnificat Girls' Choir















Ars Sacra Gallery – EWTN Studio, Budapest

The Ars Sacra Gallery is a unique venue in Budapest where contemporary visual art meets Christian spirituality. Established in the summer of 2023, the EWTN Gallery will continue its operations—starting in September 2025 and in collaboration with the Ars Sacra Foundation—under the name „Ars Sacra Gallery – EWTN Studio," located within the studios of EWTN Catholic Television. Its mission is to showcase diverse visual expressions of faith, transcendence, and the spiritual dimensions of human existence through the works of Hungarian and Central European artists. With an ecumenical spirit of openness, the gallery presents exhibitions that are refreshed every two months, featuring both figurative and abstract art from the 20th and 21st centuries.

Previous exhibitions have showcased the work of artists including Marianna H. Szántay, Tünde Jámborné Balog, Asztrik Kákonyi, László Patay, Péter Prokop, and Krisztina Tornay. The gallery's ecclesiastical liaison is Szabolcs Sajgó SJ, its curator is art historian Anna Tüskés, and her professional activities are supported by an advisory board.

A unique feature of the gallery is its integration of the visual arts with Catholic media: through EWTN's television broadcasts, artist interviews, and discussions, the message of the exhibitions can reach an audience well beyond the physical gallery space. The collaboration between Ars Sacra and the international networks of EWTN and Mária Rádió creates a new opportunity for the universal values of contemporary sacred art to gain recognition across national and denominational borders, thereby strengthening the bonds between faith, culture, and community.

Anna Tüskés art historian, curator

On the Wavelength of Sacred Art









The radio program *Szent Művészet* (Sacred Art) is a fruit, a reflection, and an extended arm of the Ars Sacra Festival. It literally gives voice to the Good News as it takes shape within art. When the Ars Sacra Festival reached its tenth anniversary, Mária Rádió – recognizing the festival's values and our shared mission – offered 40 minutes of airtime per month to the festival. I had already known Márta Dragonits for years by then; she had been a guest on my programs for Catholic TV on several occasions. She and her colleagues, Ilona Toroczkay and Ildikó Kolek, placed their trust in me and invited me to serve as the editor and host of this newly launched magazine-style program.

For a decade, I have undertaken and carried out this service with both pride and humility, because from the very first moment, I have believed that the *Sacred Art* (*Szent Művészet*) program is more than just a radio broadcast: it is a meeting point for the profession of faith, religious instruction, and art. Through the airwaves, it invites listeners to draw closer to God by way of artistic creations. Over the past ten years, poets, writers, actors, directors, and artists – from the realms of music, song, dance, and the visual arts – have borne witness to their faith; festival organizers have shared stories of the everyday miracles they experienced within their community; and priests, religious, and bishops have offered teachings on the sanctity of art, the eternal beauty manifested in these works, and the Supreme Good – God Himself. We have accompanied all of this with music, literature, and conversations that strengthen the faith.

In a unique approach within Hungary, the Ars Sacra Festival serves its audience not only during its series of events but throughout the entire year via its own radio program. In 2024, responding to a call from Pope Francis, we launched a prayer series titled „Prayers of the Saints." Through this, we continue to invite our listeners to provide the greatest form of support to the Festival: to pray for it! And, just as I have said at the end of every broadcast for the past ten years, my only wish now is this: Do not forget to love one another! You know – just as He loves us. (John 13:34)

Eszter Parák
Journalist, Broadcaster



Eternal moment - Weöres Sándor

What you don't trust to stone
and decay, shape out of the air.
A moment leaning out of time
arrives here and there,

guards what time squanders, keeps
the treasure tight in its grasp–
eternity itself, held
between the future and the past.

As a bather's thigh is brushed
by skimming fish– so
there are times when God
is in you, and you know:

half-remembered now
and later, like a dream.
And with a taste of eternity
this side of the tomb.

(Translated by Morgan, Edwin)



On the third day – Pilinszky János

And the ashen grey skies start blustering,
the trees of Ravensbrück towards dawn.
And the roots start to feel the light.
And wind rises.
And the world resounds.

Because perfidious mercenaries may have killed him,
and his heart may have stopped beating, – on the third day he triumphed over death.
Et resurrexit tertia die.

(Translated by N. Ullrich Katalin)



Ady Endre: The Arrival of God

When I was left,
When I could hardly carry my soul,
In the silent, unexpected I was embraced
By the God.

Not with bugle,
But he came with dumb, true embrace,
Nor in bright daylight
But in the night, when war raged.

And my vain eyes
Got blinded. And my youthfullness died,
Only to see his brigthly greatness,
Forever in my life.

(Translated by Főfai Sándor)

Our colleagues were:

Andrea Laczkó
Anna Kamp
Anna Romándi
Cecilia Tivadarné Körmendy
Emese Szenci-Kovács
Erzsébet Maczkó
Fanny Némethné Nobilis
Ferenc Győri
Gabriella Kiss
Ildikó Hrtyán
Júlia Manninger
Kata Bors
Kata Dér
Katinka Legányné Erdős Boda
Viktória Timár
Violetta Tóth

Önkéntes segítőink voltak:

András Végh +
Anett Mészáros
Balázs Vincze
dr. Cecília Sümeghy
Gitta and Ferenc Homor
Hédi Baksay
Ildikó Gyarmati
Iván Fekete
Judit Szilvási +
Kata Kuslits
Kati Szórádi +
László Rieger
László Tóth
Mariann Karády
Péter Dóczy
Péter Farkas
Péter Rainer
Sándor Török
Sára Forgács
Tamás Deme
Zsolt Keresztury-Albert
Zsuzsa and Tamás Walthier

"...some seed fell into good soil. When it sprouted and grew, it produced a crop – some yielding thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred times as much." (Mk 4:8)

Abasár, Albertirsa, Bajót-Péliföldszentkereszt, Balatonalmádi, Budaörs, Cegléd, Csongrád Debrecen, Dunaújváros, Eger, Esztergom, Fót, Göd, Gödöllő, Gyöngyös, Győr, Hárskút Jászberény, Kaposvár, Kecskemét, Keszthely, Leányfalu, Mezőberény, Mezőkövesd, Miskolc, Mosonmagyaróvár, Nagykutas, Nagymaros, Nagytarcsa, Nyíregyháza, Pannonhalma, Pápa, Pécs, Piliscsaba, Pomáz, Salgótarján, Sárospatak, Simontornya, Szendrő, Szentendre, Szentes, Szolnok, Szombathely, Terény, Tiszakécske, Törökszentmiklós, Vác, Vácrátót, Veszprém, Zalaegerszeg, Zsámbék and another 450 settlements

From beyond the borders: Alsó Kelebia, Bécs, Beregszász, Csíksomlyó, Eszék, Kolozsvár, Nagyszeben, Nagyvárad and another 46 settlements



Ars Sacra Thanksgiving Prayer

Almighty God, our Creator and Provider!

We stand before You with grateful hearts to give thanks for the twentieth anniversary of the Ars Sacra Festival.

We thank You that the seed sown during the 2007 Budapest City Mission has sprouted under the protection of Your loving care, and over the past two decades, has borne a rich harvest in the souls of us all.

We thank You that in artists – whom You created in Your own image *(*Imago Dei*)* – the creative imprint of Your divine creative power has been able to shine forth. For, as Michelangelo professed, a fine work of art is nothing other than a copy of Your divine perfection and a shadow of Your brush; and, as Blessed Fra Angelico taught us: *"He who wishes to depict the things of Christ must live with Christ."*

We pray that You may continue to grant artists the grace to live out the Gospel, so that their works may be born from a daily, living relationship with You and from the knowledge of the Truth.

We bless You for true beauty, which – as You have conveyed to us through the teachings of our holy popes – awakens in our souls a thirst for God and helps us to understand Your reality. We thank You for the icons, for the rays of light breaking through the stained-glass windows, and for the resounding fugues – all of which become true windows into the invisible, lifting our souls from transient things toward the heavenly homeland to which You have invited us.

Grant that, through this beauty, we may come to know the complete and liberating Truth, and that our lives may become a faithful following of Christ.

We give thanks for the **Day of Open Churches** – for the wide-open gates that invite every seeker into Your house, free of charge and regardless of denominational differences. We thank You for these hallowed spaces where, sheltered by centuries-old walls and removed from the clamor of daily life, we can discover inner stillness and engage in a personal, intimate dialogue with You.

We praise You for the community that **transcends borders**, uniting our settlements across the Carpathian Basin and strengthening our sense of national and cultural belonging; we also give thanks for the recognitions that attest to the worthy standard of this ministry before the world.

Lord, as we profess Your words with faith during this jubilee year – „I will give you a future and a hope" – we ask that You bless the organizers of this series of events, the performing artists, and every visitor. May this festival continue to be a place of solace for the soul and a setting for meaningful encounters – a place where, through Beauty, Truth, and Goodness, and while walking the path of discipleship, we may all draw closer to faith and to Your holy truth.

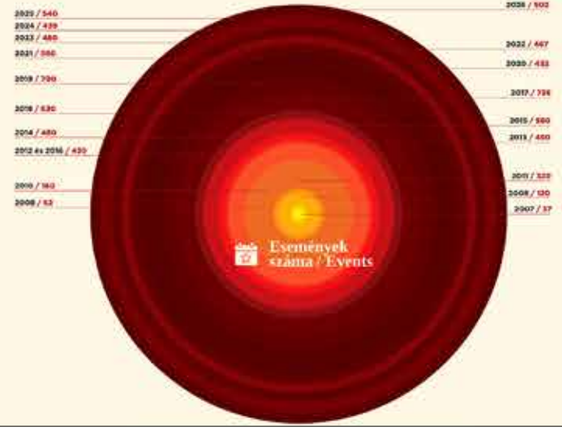
Amen.

Dr. András Jávor

Ars Sacra®

20 ÉV SZÁMOKBAN | 20 YEARS in NUMBERS

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
4.000 látogató 4.000 vendég	8.000 látogató 8.000 vendég	16.000 látogató 16.000 vendég	24.000 látogató 24.000 vendég	35.000 látogató 35.000 vendég	50.000 látogató 50.000 vendég	52.000 látogató 52.000 vendég	57.000 látogató 57.000 vendég	60.000 látogató 60.000 vendég	50.000 látogató 50.000 vendég	80.000 látogató 80.000 vendég	87.000 látogató 87.000 vendég	100.000 látogató 100.000 vendég	70.000 látogató 70.000 vendég	100.000 látogató 100.000 vendég
„Reményt és jövőt adok nektek" „To give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11	„Emeljük fel szívünket" „Let us lift up our hearts" Lamentations 3:41	„Benne az élet volt, s az élet volt az emberek világossága." „In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind." John 1:4	„Ti vagytok a föld sója" „You are the salt of the earth." Matthew 5:13	„Legyen világosság!" „Let there be light!" Genesis 1:3	„Emeljük fel szívünket" „Let us lift up our hearts" Lamentations 3:41	„Minden lehetséges annak, aki hisz" „Everything is possible for one who believes." Mark 9:23	„Ti vagytok a világ világossága" „You are the light of the world." Matthew 5:14	„Szenek legyetek!" „Be holy!" 1 Peter 1:16	„Reményt és jövőt adok nektek" „To give you hope and a future" Jeremiah 29:11	„Ne féljetek" "Do not be afraid" Jeremiah 42:11	„Tekints az égre és lásd meg" "Lookat the heavens, and see" Job 38:4	„Legyenek mindnyájan egyek." "That they all may be one." John 17:21	„Minden forrásom belőled fakad" "…all my springs are in you." Psalms 87:7	„Minden forrásom belőled fakad". Psalm 87:7 "…all my springs are in you." Psalms 87:7
72.000 látogató 72.000 vendég	82.000 látogató 82.000 vendég	90.000 látogató 90.000 vendég	100.000 látogató 100.000 vendég	110.000 látogató 110.000 vendég										
2022	2023	2024	2025	2026										
„Úgy szeressétek egymást, ahogy én szerettelek titeket." "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13:34	„Keresd a békét." "Strain after peace." Psalm 34:15	„Az igazság békét terem." "The fruit of that righteousness will be peace." Isaiah 32:17	„A remény zarándokai" "Pilgrims of Hope"	„Reményt és jövőt adok nektek" „To give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11										





The creation of this publication was supported by:
Dr. Tamás Sulyok, President of Hungary,
and the Tiszta Formák Foundation

© Written, with images selected and designed, by
Márta Dragonits, Ildikó Kolek, Ilona Toroczkay

Technical Editor:
Dr. László Legeza

© Graphics:
László Lapos

© Source of the images:
Photo archive of the Ars Sacra Foundation

Published by the Ars Sacra Foundation
Publisher: *Márta Dragonits, President*

ISBN 978-615-7239-00-5

Printing services:
Prime Rate Zrt., 2026 Budapest
Person in charge:
Dr. Péter Tomcsányi, Managing Director

Ars Sacra – EWTN Gallery

Ars Sacra Radio Maria

Ars Sacra YouTube