

## **St Vitus' Cathedral in Prague: Liturgy, Symbolism and Architectural Imitation in Medieval Bohemia**

In this thesis, the focus is put on the Wenceslas Chapel in St Vitus' Cathedral, the unusual design of which seems to have two levels of meanings: On the one hand, it was probably designed as a recreation of an earlier rotunda that had been founded by St Wenceslas. On the other hand, it seems that the intention was made the chapel and the whole cathedral would resemble the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, where the Calvary Chapel occupied the same position as the Wenceslas Chapel. This was most likely inspired by presence of the Imperial insignia containing the valuable Passion relics that Charles had acquired in 1350 and placed in the basilica, probably near the Wenceslas Chapel. Perhaps from that reason Charles had the new Gothic chapel decorated with semi-precious stones, because its red spots were associated with the blood of Christ and the Passion. The Wenceslas Chapel together with two Passion chapels at Karlstein Castle, containing Charles IV's private passion treasure, gave rise to the "Passion" architecture of the Luxembourg period. It included the church of St Margaret in the Cistercian monastery in Zlatá Koruna and the Resurrection Chapel attached to the church of SS Peter and Paul at Vyšehrad Castle, built by Václav Králík of Buřenice, probably as an imitation of the Rotunda of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. On the other hand, the church of SS Peter and Paul was perhaps intended as an architectural imitation of the Basilica of St Peter in Rome, where Charles IV was crowned emperor in 1355. The cult of the Holy Sepulchre was also promoted in the Cistercian monastery in Sedlec and since the 13th century also in the Monastery of the Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre in Zderaz in Prague. When the New Town of Prague was founded in 1348, this monastery became part of the monumental sacral topography of Prague, which was dominated and protected by a symbolic cross formed by five churches.