

The Coronation Virgin Mary's images of Mercy in Bohemia and Moravia

Thesis Abstract

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Royal insignia, the crown and the throne, given to the images of Virgin Mary of Mercy *for greater honor and glory*, symbolizes the earthly apex of Marian reverence and piety.

During the Baroque period, count Alessandro Sforza Pallavicini of Piacenza, an Italian nobleman, who was known since his youth for his great reverence to the Mother of God, came up with the idea of coronation Virgin Mary's images of Mercy. His intent was approved by Pope Urban VIII. (1623–1644). The Count Sforza foundation was established and the Pope placed it under the administration of the Vatican Chapter House in St. Peter's. The Vatican Chapter House published clearly formulated conditions for coronation: in order to be crowned a painting had to be renowned (*clara imago*) and worshippers had to revere it as miraculous (*gratiis refulgens*). Miracles had to be proven by sworn statements from trustworthy witnesses. Another factor was the age of the reverence (*antiquitas originis et artis*) and the expansion of the cult to include the greatest possible number of worshippers (*cultus eximius et antiquus*), who had to visit the place of pilgrimage regularly and from a great distance (*concursum populi longinquo et perigrinationes continuae*). Pope Urban VIII. published a special brief, in which full pardons for holy days were listed and a special decree for the one who crowns was issued.

The first such ceremony to follow these regulations took place on August 25th, 1630, and the consecrated crown rested on the head of the Madonna de la Febbre in the sacristy of the basilica of St. Peter in Rome. Many coronations Virgin Mary's images of Mercy followed all over Europe and later in the whole world. In Poland, for example, Our Lady (The Queen of Poland) of Jasná Hora in Čenstochová was crowned on September 8th, 1717. Another coronation took place in Montserrat in Spain, etc ve.

Accurate records of papal coronations Virgin Mary's images of Mercy between 1634–1924 are kept all over the world in the manuscripts „*Incoronazione Mariane*“ held in dell' Archivio del Capitolo di san Pietro in the Vatican library.

In the Baroque period in the Czech Lands the statue of Our Lady Svatohorská (1732) was endowed with a crown; in Moravia the relief of the Madonna on Svatý Kopeček near Olomouc (1732) and the imago of the Madonna of St. Tomas in Brno (1736). Coronation celebrations were always grandiose affairs that lasted several days, usually a whole octave.

In the twentieth century coronations Virgin Mary's images of Mercy are especially connected to the Holy Father John Paul II., who during his papacy personally crowned several dozen Marian paintings all over Europe. He further authorized a new order for the coronation of paintings of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Ordo coronandi imaginem B. M. V.*), prepared by the Holy Congregation and ordered that it be published. In 1981 the original coronation order from the 17th century was replaced by a new order.

In the Czech Lands the tradition of the famous Baroque coronation Virgin Mary's images of Mercy was renewed after more than 170 years. In 1912 the statue of Our Lady Svatohostýnská in Moravia was crowned with papal crowns; it was followed by the coronation of the statues of Our Lady Křtinská and the Old Madonna Žarošská, which was the only one in the Czech Lands to be personally crowned by Pope John Paul II. on May 21st, 1995. In the Czech Lands the pieta of the Madonna in Sorrow in Bohosudov (Maria-Schein) was endowed with crowns in 1925. So far the last „papal“ crown was donated by the Holy Father Benedikt XVI. to the Infant Jesus of Prague during his visit to Prague on September 26th, 2009.