

HISTORY OF ST CATHERINE'S MONASTERY

First third of 15th century – a gothic chapel made of stones stood on a rocky hill above the Dubovský stream in the woods of the Little Carpathians; The existence of this chapel is evidenced by an archaeological research

Late 1500s – a shepherd, who built here a small chapel into a cave, allegedly had several apparitions of St Catherine of Alexandria

1617 – another man, a ploughman Ján Manca from Dechtice, allegedly had an apparition of St Catherine of Alexandria. A noble young man Ján Apponyi, a son of a rich count from Jablonica, came to live here as a hermit in the cave. His noble family got angry about his behaviour and forced him to come back home. He died of sorrow the following day. Even nowadays he is venerated as a candidate to holiness

1618 – 21st December – Count Krištof Erdödi, a domain owner, issued a foundation document establishing a Franciscan monastery, dedicated to St Catherine of Alexandria, on this site

1619 – There were the first twelve monks in the monastery

1645 – The monastery was plundered and set on fire during an armed rebellion of the Hungarian nobility led by Juraj Rákoci I.

1646 – Restoration and reconstruction of the monastery and the church was led by the founder's son Gabriel Erdödi and his wife Judita Amade. The church was substantially rebuilt to incorporate the original small one from 1618 that served as a sanctuary to the new one

App. 1650 – A new lay Franciscan order called "the Chordigers" was established at the site. Apart from religious activities their main ministry was to take care of the poor and the sick. The king Joseph II. abolished this fellowship in 1782 for alleged abuse of indulgences

1663 – The monastery was attacked by the Turks, then by the emperor's army. The soldiers killed noblemen who were seeking refuge from persecution here

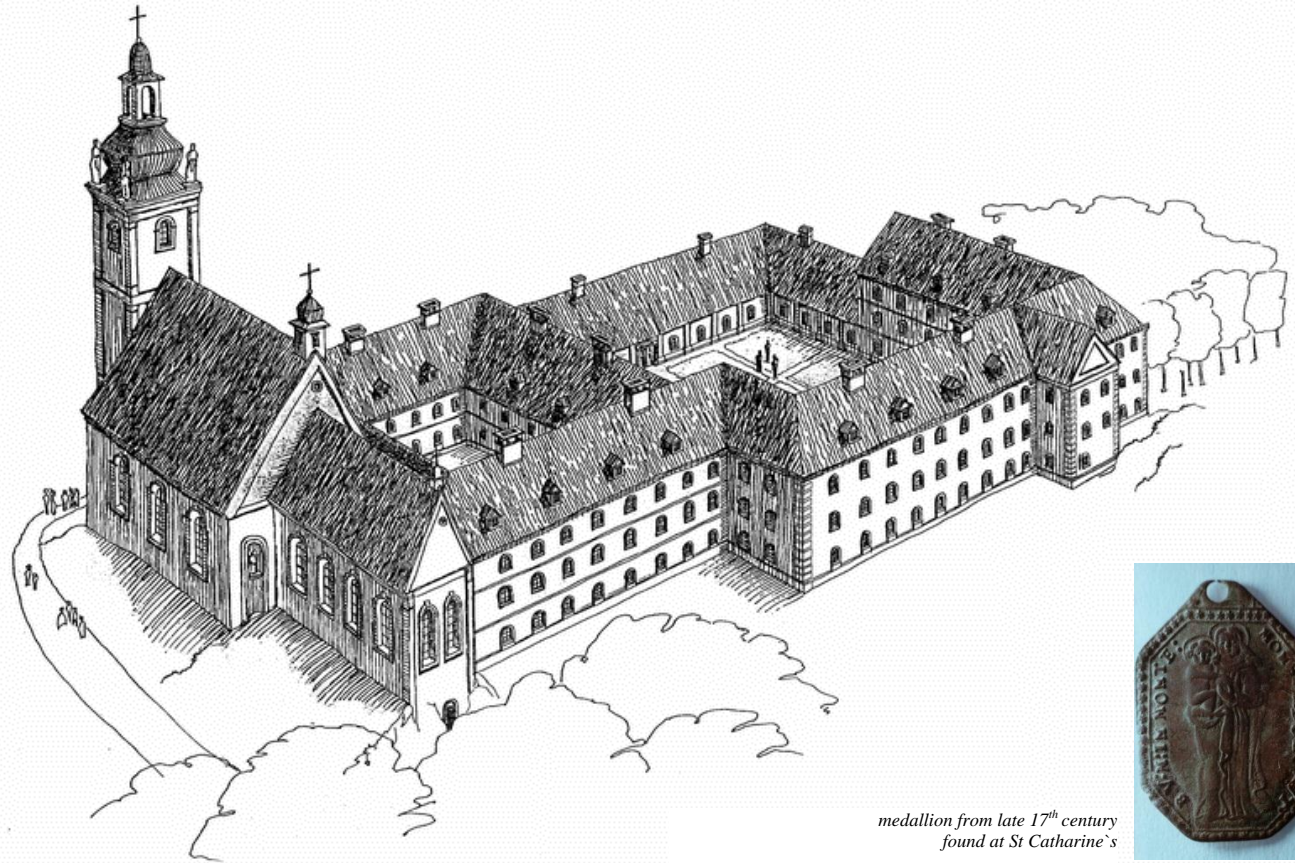
1683 – Troops of Imrich Tökoly damaged the monastery during another rebellion of the Hungarian nobility

1697 – During a pilgrimage attended by a huge number of people some soldiers of the emperor's army forcibly tried to recruit some young men among the pilgrims to the army. The crowd of pilgrims pushed the soldiers in the church and one soldier was lynched to death

1701 – 9th January – The church sullied with blood of murder was reconsecrated. Juraj and Krištof II. Erdödi issued a deed of gift of 500 ducats for the church's maintenance

1710 - 9th September – A well-known Franciscan monk Benignus Smrtník (1650-1710) died of cholera during its epidemic. He was an author of various religious books written in Slovak, e.g. *Kunšt dobre umrtiti (The Art of a Good Death)*

In 18th century – Numerous donors, mainly nobility but villagers as well, supported the church generously. Families of noble origin, for example, Erdödi, Apponyi, and Labšanskí, built their crypts here



medallion from late 17th century found at St Catharine's

1782 – Juraj Fándly, the parish priest in Naháč, complained people from his parish preferred attending the holy masses in St Catherine's church rather than in their own one. He expressed his anger in a well-known book *Dúverná zmlúva medzi mníchom a diabľom, 1789*

1786 – 22nd July – Joseph II. Emperor's decree abolished St Catherine's monastery together with other 738 monasteries in the empire. They were regarded as "useless" since they neither took care of the poor nor educated the youth

1787 - 22nd January – The monastery was taken over by the state and kept under its control. Step by step, monastic property and valuable items were taken to churches and monasteries around, many of these were stolen or lost forever...

1788 – 1792 - Seven war invalids from Trnava lived in the abandoned monastery

1793 – the church crypts were plundered by three thieves

1797 – The deteriorating monastery was bought by Jozef Erdödi as a tribute to his ancestors buried in the crypts there. However, gradually the objects went to ruins

1811 – A calvary sculpture originally from St Catherine's monastery was brought by Erdödi family to Dechtice

1835 – The last official record of „a guardian of the St Catherine“ – that time it was Jozef Kollár from Dechtice

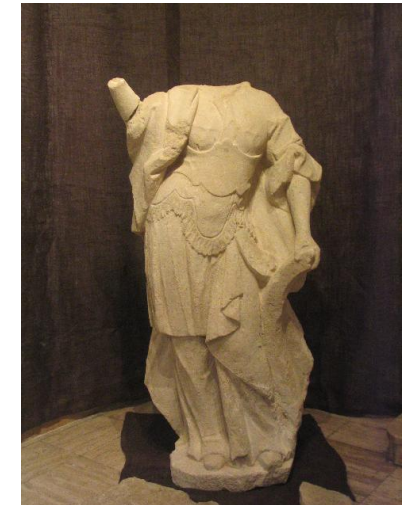
1869, 1891 – The first historical publications dealing with St Catherine's monastery were written by Odoricus Balázsovits and Pál Jedlicska

1905 – Four sandstone statues representing saints situated on the top of the church's tower were moved to the Palfis' burial crypt in Smolenice cemetery

The 1930s – Scout camps and Franciscan novices' trips were organized here

2nd half of 20th century – The communist state lost an interest in this historical object and only historians Hadrián Radváni and mainly Jozef Šimončič dealt with it

1995 – 3rd July – Picturesque ruins came back to life again thanks to youth activity and their "Katarinka Order – the historic preservationists"



Altar's statue of St. Catharina from the first third of 18th century found in 2004 during archaeological research of the church's sanctuary



Katarínka = splendid ruins of a Franciscan monastery dating back to early 17th century. It is situated deeply in the woods of the Little Carpathians, over the Dubovský stream, close to villages Dechtice, Naháč and Dobrá Voda.

Project KATARÍNKA

St Catherine's monastery preservation project dedicated to educating and leading young volunteers to responsible approach towards society. From the age of 17 youths from Slovakia can join one of four two-week summer camps in July and August every year.

Who we are

Who we are:

Civil association - o.z. **KATARÍNKA** in cooperation with **Association of the Christian Youth Communities (ZKSM)** - an apolitical youth organization based on smaller Christian communities all over Slovakia. ZKSM organizes various events such as *Akadem*- gatherings of academic youths, *Dubova Colonorum* and *Katarínka* – summer preservation camps, *Murán-Levoča* pilgrimage, etc.



St Catherine's monastery preservation project is organized by o.z. **Katarínka** and **ZKSM**. Our members are not only young Christians but also non-Christian volunteers from the whole Slovakia. We closely collaborate with the regional centre of the Monuments board in Trnava, Dechtice municipal authority, State Forests SR - Smolenice, Archaeology department of Comenius university in Bratislava and the Franciscan Order.

The project is financially supported by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and many other sponsors.

Our goals

Our goals are:

- Preservation and conservation of the ruins in order to make them available to tourists
- Comprehensive archaeological, historical, preservation and geophysics research of the site
- Cleaning and maintaining serenity of the nature reserve *Katarína* (cleaning and keeping order, educational trails, elimination of fire places, etc.)
- Giving young people a chance to spend two weeks of their life in the wild far from civilization
- We want to show that with enthusiasm, determination and dedication the young volunteers are able to preserve and save this valued cultural monument

We do not intend to rebuild the monastery since we want to keep its present romantic atmosphere, uniqueness and spiritual character.

History of the project

History of the project:

- ♦ August 1994 – Peter Herceg with his friends had an idea of organizing summer camps on the site. Consultations with experts started in autumn.
- ♦ July 1995 – first camp works done by almost 70 volunteers from Slovakia. They built campsite tents, cleaned the interior parts of the ruins and made a pre-preservation survey and documentation of the area
- ♦ Since 1996 – summer camps in July and August have been organized every year, almost 1,600 volunteers have participated the project
- ♦ In 1996 and 1999 – a project documentation a proper conservation of the ruins was prepared in cooperation with PRODIS Bratislava – a company specialized in structural engineering and diagnostics structures that has been supervising all conservation works since then
- ♦ In 1996 – necessary cleaning of the site and removing trees and plants that had grown into walls of the object

Preservation and conservation work

- ♦ 1996-2003: reconstruction of window arches, the original lawn was planted on the top wall layer on the east side of the **monastery**
- ♦ conservation work on the west side of the building is carried out in 2013-2015
- ♦ 2004 - 2015 – conservation of the **church nave** - front church's gable (22m high), its windows and later 2006 – 2009 all its walls, pillars and window holes
- ♦ In 2005 the **church tower** (30m high) was saved by fixing those parts that were likely to fall
- ♦ 2010 – 2015 a research and a later conservation of the **tower** are carried out together with a project documentation for renovation of its wooden floors as close to the original ones as possible in order to change the tower into a **lookout tower for tourists** – the top wooden floor serves as a roof of the tower
- ♦ During this period the walls and windows of the tower were preserved; the wooden timbers were **hand-crafted** for the floor structures and these 200-300kg heavy oak timbers were lifted and attached to the tower's levels using a **historical wooden windlass** that was made by the volunteers

Archaeological research

- ♦ **1997** – archaeological research started and since then we have cooperated with the Institute of Archaeology of Slovak academy of sciences (1997-1998), The western Slovakia museum in Trnava (1999-2006) and The department of archaeology, Faculty of Arts at Comenius university. The main aim of this activity is collecting, documentation, recording and later conservation the foundations of various buildings found such as:
- ♦ **1997-2000**: a baroque chapel near the church; **2000**: monastery's entrance; **2000-2001**: crypt in the church's nave; **2003-2005**: foundations and exploration of the Gothic chapel in the church's sanctuary; **2004**: remains of the main baroque altar with a statue of St Catherine, St Tekla and an angel's torso in the sanctuary
- ♦ In 2000 and 2004 – *The mysteries of St Catherine's monastery* – our representative exhibition in the crypt and rooms of *West Slovakia Museum in Trnava*
- ♦ in 2002-2012: the **archaeological research** continued on the oldest parts of locality: the grounds of gothic chapel and buildings standing there before the monastery was founded, as well as the new- found baroque parts of church – e.g. altar made of stone, including statues of St. Catharina and st. Tekla found during the research (presented now in West-Slovakian museum in Trnava)

During the project's existence there have been almost 1,600 young volunteers. We present our project in mass media, at youth festivals and events, and at exhibitions and conferences. The project was awarded the "Pamiatky a múzeá" National Prize as the Best event to save the culture heritage in the Slovak Republic in 2004

Plans for the future

Our plans for the future:

- Finish the conservation of the remaining ground parts of the walls and arches in the monastery. The conservation and reconstruction of the original church tower's floors continues – so that it can serve as a lookout tower



- Continue with the systematic archaeological research and conservation of its findings
- Cooperate with the Administration of the protected landscape area of the Little Carpathians in preserving the nature reserve *Katarína*.
- Make this place an attractive, impressive and save destination for visitors

How we live in the camp

How we live in the camp:

- Far from the civilization, in the wild
- Without using watches, mobile phones or the Internet
- Working half of the day – till lunch
- Having fun in the afternoon – adventures, games and sports
- Campfire, fun and singing in the evening
- Programme of the camp activities is history-oriented; we try to follow a lifestyle of the 17th century Franciscan brothers

What "The order of St. Katarína – order of the preservationists" is:

- All the volunteers become its members
- For two weeks we experience a life of medieval monks without modern gadgets, a simple life where community and common activities are important
- We have regular morning and evening prayers
- A "ceremonial" clothing is a habit made of sackcloth
- We observe the "Rules of Order of St. Katarína – the preservationists"

How we work:

- Refilling the missing parts of walls and pillars with stones and mortar
- Conserving weather worn and damaged top wall layers by taking them apart, re-assembling them and fixing them with lime mortar in order to keep a genuine image
- Gap-filling the walls where it is needed
- Placing the handmade oak timbers that substitute the old original ones in the stonewall
- Mowing the surrounding meadows and the monastery grounds
- Carrying out the archaeological research on the site under the supervision of relevant authorities

NGO
Katarínka
Šándorova 8
821 03 BRATISLAVA 2
SLOVAKIA

chairman: Peter Herceg
mobile: +421-908-811 033
tel: +421-2-4329 4373

e-mail: katarinka@katarinka.sk
http://www.katarinka.sk

KATARÍNKA

záchrana ruín kláštora svätej Kataríny

