

Károly Eszterházy Catholic University
Doctoral School of History

Máté Gál:

**Restrictions on the Catholic Church and the Practice of Faith in Heves
County in the 1950s and the Early Kádár Period (1950-1962)**

Theses of doctoral (PhD) dissertation

Eger, 2022

The life of the Hungarian Catholic Church during socialism is dealt with in a number of works written by professional historians after the change of regimes. There are still a lot of shortcomings in the evaluation of the local operation of the one-party system. Less affected areas include the ancient ecclesiastical capital of Eger and Heves counties. The predominantly Catholic county and Eger having served as archbishop's residence, had strong ties to the Catholic Church. The order of monks, or the educational, health, social and other economic institutions operating in the maintenance of the Catholic Church, the religious education at the county seat, and the land stock surrounding the territory of Heves County gave the Catholic Church serious authority and stability. As Catholic values permeated the mentality of the population and the clergy were present in all the settlements, the focus of communist church control was almost entirely on the life of the archdiocese and the parishes.

The researchers' interest, apart from a few exceptions and the processing of specific topics, has avoided this approach to the history of Heves County. These factors and the integrity of the area may well justify the choice of topic. What makes the subject even more exciting is that from the point of view of the ecclesiastical government, Eger, supervising the whole of the county, had two highly controversial personalities at the position of chief pastor as the head of the diocese. Gyula Czapik and Pál Brezanóczy. Both chief pastors were representatives of the church wing aspiring to *modus vivendi*, but their approaches were different. Czapik's conflict-avoiding habitude did not allow intransigent resistance to the Communists. After the dismissal of Archbishop József Grósz, but even before that, he sat at the negotiating table with the representatives of the government as chairman of the bishop's faculty. Over time, he became an internationally known figure in the church peace movement. However, his actions would never have compromised the unity of the episcopal faculty, his purpose was always the preservation of the church and the faith. After the second millennium, Archbishop Pál Brezanóczy came to the forefront of the issue with the question of church agents. It is a fact that the party state found one of the most stable ecclesiastical allies in Brezanóczy thanks to its cooperative habitus, his close relationship with the State Ecclesiastical Office (SEO) and his flexible diplomatic sense. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that he sought to turn the benefits of his special relationship, his quick wit, and his political sense to the survival of his church. However, the purpose of the dissertation should not to describe in detail the life of the two chief pastors. The dissertation, on the other hand, tries to further chisel the history of Czapik's and Brezanóczy's relationship with state power.

We hope that the dissertation will widen our knowledge and picture of the sovietization period of Heves county and the early Kádár era until 1962. The historical sources revealed that the state was able to carry out most of its short-term anti-church aspirations beyond the ecclesiastical political turmoil caused by the 1956 revolution by the end of the early Kádár era. The withering away of the influence of religion within society, increasingly hovered as a long-term goal in the eyes of the creators of the atheist doctrine. That is why we tried to extend the research to the relationship between the Catholic Church and society, as well as the examination of county trends in the practice of faith and the transmission of faith, until the middle / end of the 1960s. The impact of state intervention began to intensify more spectacularly from 1959 to 1960, and its results are markedly reflected in the source material generated by church control over the forthcoming 5-10 years. The relationship between Pál Brezanóczy and the party state until the end of the decade was also examined.

We have built our dissertation around the focuses recorded below. Examination of the church policy of the dictatorship and the relevance of political changes in Heves county. Defining the local institutional system of church persecution, its operating mechanisms and peculiarities. Representation of the ordeals and conflicts of the ordinaries on local level. Presentation of the challenges and strategies of the people serving pastoral priesthood. Deportation and persecution of the monastic orders living in the area, as well as a description of the hardships of dispersal. Reconstruction of the construction, crisis and reorganization of the county Catholic peace movement. Analysis of the limitations and control of the faith life of Heves County and rural measures of atheist propaganda. The structure of the dissertation discussing the described focuses is characterized by the individual parts and chapters built on each other in chronological order.