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Theological Aspects of the Celebration of Marriage in the Esztergom Tradition after the Council of Trent

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Abstract

This study examines the theological focus of the marriage ceremony in the Esztergom tradition following the Council of Trent. It compares the Esztergom marriage rite, as outlined in the *Rituale Strigoniense* of 1625 under Cardinal Peter Pázmány, with the *Rituale Romanum* of 1614. The analysis highlights key textual and ritualistic differences, particularly in marital consent, the blessing of rings, and the use of multiple languages. The study further explores the theological implications of these variations, emphasizing a richer, more sacramental understanding of marriage in the Esztergom tradition, contrasting with the more juridical approach of the Roman rite. The study also explores how the Esztergom ritual's use of "amare" in *Rituale Strigoniense* aligns better with contemporary theological views of marriage as a personal, sacramental union of love, especially in light of post-Vatican II teachings.

Keywords: Esztergom tradition, Rituale Romanum, Marriage Rite, Rituale Strigoniense, Marital Consent.

The history of Christian worship requires a proper understanding and analysis of the various liturgical books. These books help us to create a picture of the ritual forms and contents of the celebration and the religious life of the time. The *lex orandi,* found in these precious sources, is essential for theological reflection. *Rituale*, one of the liturgical books that occupies a privileged place, bears witness to different forms of popular religiosity and liturgical worship throughout various periods. The *Rituale* contains all the necessary texts for celebrating the rites outside the mass and the office, such as the other sacraments, ceremonies, and blessings that are not the bishop's responsibility. It is therefore a valuable source of information about liturgical and pastoral practice in a specific place at a specific time.[1]

Before the Council of Trent, liturgical books were not published centrally in Rome, but by local archbishops-metropolitans for their ecclesiastical provinces. This was also the practice in the Archdiocese of Esztergom. To the most important and oldest written sources of the liturgical tradition in Hungary belong the *Codex Prayanus* (also known as the *Sacramentarium Boldvense*) and the *Codex Szelepchényi* (also known as the *Codex Nitriensis Latinus*), both from the twelfth century.[2] There are other sources from the period after the printing press was invented that have been the subject of scientific research in recent years. Researchers have also focused on the liturgical books published in the Archdiocese of Esztergom and several diplomatic or critical editions of liturgical books have been compiled.[3] Several studies have also analyzed the *Ritual of Esztergom*, but only from the point of view of printing history, linguistics or in the context of research on medieval liturgical music.[4] A more comprehensive liturgical and historical analysis of the *Ritual of Esztergom* has not yet been carried out.

The sixteenth century was a time of significant change for the church in Hungary. Although the Ottoman threat was growing, the political authorities did not take it seriously. The Ottoman Sultan Suleiman crushed the hastily assembled Hungarian army at the Battle of Mohács on 29 August 1526, opening the door to Hungary

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1   Cassian FOLSOM, „I libri liturgici romani," in *Scientia liturgica I.*, ed. Anscar Chupungco, Casale Monferrato: Edizioni Piemme, 2003, p. 327.

2   Polycarpus RADÓ, „De originibus liturgiae romanae in Hungaria saeculi XI," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 73 (1959): 299–309.

3   László DOBSZAY, *Az Esztergomi Rítus [The Rite of Esztergom]*, Budapest: Új Ember, 2024. Balázs DÉRI, *Missale Strigoniense 1484 id est Missale secundum chorum almæ ecclesiæ Strigoniensis, impressum Nurenbergæ apud Anthonium Koburger, anno Domini MCCCCLXXXIIII (RMK III 7)*, Budapest: Argumentum, 2009. Miklós István FÖLDVÁRY, *Ordinarius Strigoniensis impressum pluries Nurenbergæ, Venetiis ed Lugduni annis Domini 1493–1520 (RMK III Suppl. I 5031, RMK III 35, 134, 165, 166, 238)*, Budapest: Argumentum, 2009.

4   Martin HRADNÝ, „Ostrihomský rituál a jeho slovenské texty [The Ritual of Esztergom and its Slovak texts]," *Duchovný pastier* 43 (1968): 41–44. Ágnes PAPP, „Retrospektív liturgikus-zenei forrásunk új megvilágításban: A 17. századi medvedics-rituále [Retrospective liturgical music source in a new light: The 17th century ritual of Medvedics]," *Magyar Zene* 51 (2013): 384–399.

to subjugate all Christian Europe. Most of the Hungarian army commanders, two archbishops and five bishops died in the battle, while the king died in his escape. The consequences of the Battle of Mohács were, therefore, catastrophic. The political map of Hungary was changed and the country lost its political and ecclesiastical leaders.[5]

The Catholic renewal began with Archbishop Ferenc Forgách (1607–1615). In 1611, the provincial synod was held, which was of great importance for the Catholic reform in the country.[6] Following in Ferenc Forgách's footsteps, his successor, Archbishop Péter Pázmány (1616-1637), also convened several diocesan and provincial synods.[7] Two of these are crucial for our research. The synod of 1629 obliged all parishes to use the *Ritual of Esztergom,* published in 1625. Subsequently, the provincial synod of 1633 decided to adopt the *Roman Missal* (1570) and the *Roman Breviary* (1568) and to abandon the liturgical books of the Province of Esztergom.[8]

The *Ritual of Esztergom*, however, was not affected by this regulation. This is because the *Roman Ritual* of Paul V, issued in 1614, was never fully obligatory and room was left for local ritual books issued by local archbishops.[9] For this reason, the *Ritual of Esztergom* of 1625[10] is an important source for the liturgical research of the so-called Rite of Esztergom. After the Council of Trent, the liturgical peculiarities of the Esztergom Province survived only in this ritual book. Pázmány drew inspiration from two earlier rituals, the *Ordo et Ritus* of 1560[11] and the *Agendarius* of 1583[12]. He compiled a new ritual that was adapted to the *Rituale Romanum* (1614)[13] and the decisions of the Council of Trent.

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[5]   Vojtech NEPŠINSKÝ, *Liturgia na Slovensku v období Tridentského koncilu [Liturgy in Slovakia during the Council of Trent],* Banská Bystrica, Badín: Kňazský seminár sv. Františka Xaverského, 1998, pp. 15–16.

[6]   NEPŠINSKÝ, *Liturgia na Slovensku v období Tridentského koncilu,* pp. 75–77.

[7]   Paul SHORE, Péter TUSOR, „Péter Pázmány: Cardinal, Archbishop of Esztergom, Primate of Hungary," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 7 (2020): 526–544. https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-00704002

[8]   Ján JALOVECKÝ, „Význam Trnavskej univerzity pre liturgiu v Cirkvi [The importance of the University of Trnava for the liturgy in the Church]," in *Pamiatke trnavskej univerzity 1635–1777 [Commemoration of the University of Trnava 1635–1777].* Trnava: Spolok sv. Vojtecha, 1935, pp. 220–240.

[9]   Adrien NOCENT, „I libri liturgici". In *La Liturgia, panorama storico generale (Anàmnesis 2),* Marietti: Genova–Milano, 2005, p. 180.

[10]   *Rituale Strigoniense, seu formula agendorum in administratione Sacramentorum, ac ceteris Ecclesiæ publicis functionibus*, Posonii, 1625.

[11]   *Ordo et Ritus Sanctæ Metropolitane Ecclesie Strigoniensis, quibus Parochi et alii animarum Pastores in Ecclesiis suis uti debent*, Viennæ, 1560.

[12]   *Agendarius. Liber continens ritus et cæremonias, quibus in administrandis Sacramentis, benedictionibus, et aliis quibusdam Ecclesiasticis functionibus, parochi et alii curati in Dioecesi et provincia Strigoniensi utuntur*, Tirnaviæ, 1583.

[13]   *Rituale Romanum Pauli V. P.M. iussu editum,* Romae: Typographia Camerae Apostolicae, 1614.

In his introductory decree, Cardinal Pázmány mentions the two older liturgical books from 1560 and 1583, confirming the continuation of the tradition of publishing liturgical books. He also states that the ritual he composed conforms to the *Rituale Romanum* in all aspects, except for variations in the rite of the baptism of children and the practices in the celebration of marriage, which would be harmful to change.[14]

The rite of celebration of marriage contains local specificities that can provide insight into the perception of this sacrament in the context of the Esztergom ecclesiastical province. Previous studies have focused on the historical context and structural comparison of the *Rituale Romanum* (1614) and the *Rituale Strigoniense* (1625).[15] This study focuses on a detailed comparison of the rite of the sacrament of marriage in these two rituals and a theological analysis of the differences found.

Comparison of the texts in the Roman and Esztergom Rituals
A key aspect of the research is the comparison of the texts of the marriage ceremony in the *Rituale Romanum* and the *Rituale Strigoniense*, which are presented in the following table.

RITUALE ROMANUM 1614[16]	RITUALE STRIGONIENSE 1625[17]
De Sacramento Matrimonii	**De Sacramento Matrimonii**
The introduction contains the prescriptions and instructions for the parish priest to follow. It is a more comprehensive three-page text.	*The introductory prescriptions and instructions are identical to the Rituale Romanum. The Rituale Strigoniense only omits the paragraph „Caveat autem Parochus…", which advises against conferring a blessing on the bride and groom in the case of a second marriage (if it is a widower or a widow).* *The text provides announcements in Latin, Hungarian, German, and Slovak. In contrast, the Roman Ritual only gives instructions on how to make announcements in the local language.*

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[14] „…et quidem in Administratione Sacramentorum, per omnia Rituali Romano conformatum si modo excipias, primas Infantium Baptizandorum interrogationes, et peculiarem quamdam ab ipsa conversione gentis Hungaricae usitatam consuetudinem Matrimonio copulandi, quae sine offensione variari haud potuerunt."

[15] Andrej KRIVDA, „Comparative Analysis of the Ritual of Esztergom (1625) and the Roman Ritual (1614)," *Religions* 14 (2023): 984. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14080984

[16] *Rituale Romanum. Editio Princeps (1614)*, ed. Manlio Sodi, Juan Javier Flores Arcas, Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004, 144–148.

[17] Andrej KRIVDA, Gabriel RAGAN, Lukáš SEKERÁK, *Ritus celebrandi Matrimonii Sacramentum. Corpus fontium Metropolitanae Ecclesiae Strigoniensis*, Ružomberok: VERBUM - vydavateľstvo KU, 2023, 23–35.

Ritus celebrandi Matrimonii Sacramentum	Ritus celebrandi Matrimonii Sacramentum
Introductory rubric - after the announcements have been made, if no impediment has been identified, the pastor, wearing a rochet with a white stole, in the presence of three or two witnesses and relatives, asks the couple for their consent to marry (the ritual provides the Latin text but specifies that the questions are to be asked in the vernacular):	*Introductory rubric - after the announcements have been made, if no impediment has been identified, the pastor, wearing a rochet with a white stole, in the presence of three or two witnesses and relatives, asks the couple for their consent to marry (rubric identical to the Rituale Romanum).* *Questions in Latin, Hungarian, German, and Slovak follow. The groom is asked first:*
N. Vis accipere N. hic praesentem in tuam legitimam uxorem iuxta ritum Sanctae Matris Ecclesiae? Respondeat sponsus: Volo.	Sac: Quod est tibi nomen? Sponsus: Ioannes, vel N. Sponsa: Catharina, vel N. Sac. N. Interrogo te sub obligamine fidei tuæ Christianæ, fatearis vere, An cuipiam obligaveris te ad Matrimonium præter hanc honestam personam: /hunc honestum/ N. et an promiseris alicui alteri, quod velis eam ducere in Uxorem /eum accipere in Maritum/ Sp. Non. Sac. Amasne hanc honestam personam /hunc honestum/ N.? Sp. Amo. Sac. Visne illam /illum/ accipere in tuam legitimam Uxorem /tuum legitimum Maritum/? Sp. Volo. Sac. Rursum sub obligamine fidei ex te quæro, An non sit inter vos aliqua consanguinitas, Affinitas, cognatio spiritualis, vel quidpiam aliud, propter quod Matrimonio jungi non possitis? Sp. Non est.
Mox Sacerdos sponsam interroget: N. Vis accipere N. hic praesentem in tuum legitimum maritum iuxta ritum Sanctae Matris Ecclesiae? Respondeat: Volo.	*Deinde Sacerdos eodem modo interroget Sponsam, et illa respondeat, ut supra.*

After a brief explanation on the how to give consent, the priest asks both parties to shake hands and says:	
Ego coniugo vos in matrimonium. In nomine Patris, + et Filii, et Spiritus sancti. Amen.	
The rubric allows this formula to be adapted to the custom of the concerned ecclesiastical province.	
Blessing of the ring follows.	*His ita actis, jubeat Sacerdos Sponso et Sponsæ, ut Annulos suos ad altare ponant, et benedicat eos hoc modo.*
Benedictio Annuli	**Benedictio Annulorum**
Adiutorium nostrum… Qui fecit… Domine exaudi… Et clamor meus… Dominus vobiscum. Et cum spiritu tuo.	Adiutorium nostrum… Qui fecit… Domine exaudi… Et clamor meus… Dominus vobiscum. Et cum spiritu tuo.
Oremus. Benedic + Domine annulum hunc, quem nos in tuo nomine benedicimus + ut quae eum gestaverit, fidelitatem integram suo sponso tenens, in pace, et voluntate tua permaneat, atque in mutua charitate semper vivat. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. R. Amen.	Oremus. Benedic Domine hos Annulos, quos in tuo nomine benedicimus: ut qui eos gestaverint, in tua pace consistant, et in tua voluntate permaneant, et in tuo amore vivant et senescant, et multiplicentur in longitudine dierum: Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Resp. Amen.
	Oremus. Creator et conservator humani generis, dator gratiae spiritualis: tu Domine, mitte Spiritum Sanctum tuum paraclitum de cælis super hos Annulos; ut armati virtute cælestis defensionis, illis qui eos portaverint, proficiant ad salutem. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Resp. Amen.
The priest asperses the ring with holy water; the groom takes the ring and places it on the ring finger of the bride's left hand while the priest says:	*The priest asperses the rings with holy water and places the rings on the ring fingers of the right hand of the bride and groom, saying:*
In nomine Patris, + et Filii, et Spiritus sancti. Amen.	In nomine Patris, + et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.
	If it is the bride's first marriage, even though the groom is a widower and has already been married, the priest bestows a blessing on the bride and groom:

	Benedictio nubentium
	V. Adiutorium nostrum… R. Qui fecit… V. Confirma hoc… R. A templo sancto… V. Benedictis sitis… R. Qui fecit mundum…
	Oremus. DEUS Abraham, DEUS Isaac, DEUS Jacob, bene+dic adolescentes istos, et semina semen vitæ in mentibus eorum: ut quidquid pro sua utilitate didicerint, hoc facere cupiant. Per Dominum nostrum JESUM Christum recuperatorem hominum, filium tuum unigenitum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus sancti DEUS, per omnia sæcula sæculorum. Resp. Amen.
	Psalmus 127 Beati omnes qui timent Dominum: qui ambulant in viis ejus. Labores manuum tuarum quia manducabis: beatus es, et bene tibi erit. Uxor tua sicut vitis abundans: in lateribus domus tuæ. Filii tui sicut novellæ olivarum: in circuitu mensæ tuæ. Ecce sic benedicetur homo: qui timet Dominum. Benedicat tibi Dominus ex Sion: et videas bona Jerusalem omnibus diebus vitæ tuæ. Et videas filios filiorum tuorum: pacem super Israël. Gloria Patri. Sicut erat, etc.
The priest immediately adds a prayer:	
V. Confirma hoc… R. A templo… Kyrie el. Christe el. Kyrie el. Pater noster… V. Et ne nos inducas… R. Sed libera nos… V. Salvos fac… R. Deus meus… V. Mitte eis… R. Et de Sion… V. Esto eis Domine… R. A facie… V. Domine exaudi… R. Et clamor meus… V. Dominus vobiscum. R. Et cum spiritu tuo.	Kyrie el. Christe el. Kyrie el. Pater noster… V. Et ne nos inducas… R. Sed libera nos… V. Salvos fac… R. Deus meus… V. Mitte eis… R. Et de Sion… V. Esto eis Domine… R. A facie… V. Domine exaudi… R. Et clamor meus… V. Dominus vobiscum. R. Et cum spiritu tuo.

Oremus. Respice quaesumus Domine, super hos famulus tuos, et institutis tuis, quibus propagationem humani generis ordinasti, benignus assiste, ut qui te auctore iunguntur, te auxiliante serventur. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.	
	Oremus. Respice, quæsumus Domine, super hanc conventionem de cælo sancto tuo; et sicut Tobiam et Saram, Angelo pacis comitante protegebas, ita et istos a mortifera dæmonum infestatione protegas, et ab eis mentis et corporis adversitates repellas: ut munimine tuo protecti, laudent nomen tuum sanctum, quod est benedictum in sæcula sæculorum. Resp. Amen.
	Oremus. Adesto Domine supplicationibus nostris; et institutis tuis, quibus propagationem humani generis ordinasti, benignus assiste: ut quod te auctore jungitur, te auxiliante servetur. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Resp. Amen
	Oremus. Benedic + Domine JESU Christe hunc famulum et hanc famulam tuam, sicut benedixisti familias filiorum Israël per orationem Moysi, ut venientes per Mare rubrum, in conspectu Pharaonis salvi fierent, ita et hi in conspectu tuo salvi fiant in die judicii. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Resp. Amen.

	Benedictio Benedicat + vos DEUS Pater, custodiat vos JESUS Christus, illuminet vos Spiritus Sanctus: ostendat Dominus faciem suam vobis, et misereatur vestri; et convertat Dominus vultum suum super vos, et det vobis pacem omnibus diebus vitæ vestræ; impleatque vos omni benedictione cælesti, in remissionem omnium peccatorum vestrorum, ut habeatis vitam æternam in sæcula sæculorum. Resp. Amen.
	The priest asks both of them to shake hands and wraps a stole around them, saying:
	Ego conjungo vos in Matrimonium, in nomine Patris +, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.
	Then, in accordance with the local customs the priest requires both of them to take an oath, placing their right hands on the relics. The bride and groom recite the oath separately, repeating the text after the priest. The text of the oath is given in Latin, Hungarian, German, and Slovak. Its complete Latin text is as follows:
	Sic me Deus adiuvet, Beata Virgo Maria, et omnes sancti Dei, quod hanc honestam personam amo, amando accipio in meam legitimam Uxorem, iuxta divinam ordinationem, et sanctae Matris Ecclesiae ritum, et quod illam non deseram, mea et illius vita durante, in ulla necessitate, ita me Deus adiuvet.
	After the oath, the priest asperses holy water on both of them and dismisses them.
Final rubrics - if the blessing of the newlyweds is to be conferred, the priest celebrates Mass for the bride and groom according to the Roman Missal. The Council of Trent seeks to preserve the various customs of different ecclesiastical provinces. After everything has been done, the parish priest records the details of the marriage in the official marriage register.	*The final rubrics - as in the Rituale Romanum: if the blessing of the newlyweds is to be conferred, the priest celebrates Mass for the bride and groom, according to the Roman Missal. Once the ceremony is complete, the parish priest records all the details of the marriage in the official marriage register.*

The comparison shows that the *Rituale Strigoniense* rite is significantly more extensive than the *Rituale Romanum* rite, given the text's length. The *Rituale Romanum* itself, however, is intended to serve as a model that can be supplemented and adapted by individual provinces to align with their customs. The rubric at the end of the rite emphasizes this: "Caeterum, si quae Provinciae aliis, ultra praedictas, laudabilibus consuetudinibus et caeremoniis in celebrando matrimonii Sacramento utuntur, eas Sancta Tridentina Synodus optat retineri."[18]

Textual and ritual differences

The following differences in the *Rituale Strigoniense* rite emerge from the comparison:

- The text of the announcements and the marriage oath is provided in four languages: Latin, Hungarian, German, and Slovak. However, the *Rituale Romanum* requires these parts to be celebrated in the language of the people.

- The marital consent questions are more elaborate in the *Rituale Strigoniense*.

- Confirmation by the priest takes place at the end of the ceremony, just before the oath, unlike in the *Rituale Romanum.*

- Two rings are blessed and given to both the bride and the groom, whereas the *Rituale Romanum* foresees the blessing of the bride's ring. Additionally, the ring is placed on the left hand in the *Rituale Romanum* rite, while in the *Rituale Strigoniense* rite, it is placed on the right hand.

- Following, the conferral of the rings a prayer blessing of the bride and groom is offered. In Roman tradition, the blessing usually occurs during the Mass for the couple. The *Rituale Strigoniense* also envisages it in the ceremony itself and subsequently in the Mass, if celebrated. This blessing is euchologically richer; it consists of five prayers and Psalm 127.

- The blessing of the bride and groom is followed by the priest's confirmation, during which the priest wraps the joined hands of the betrothed with a stole. This gesture is absent from the *Rituale Romanum*.

- The consent is accepted, followed by an oath, which is also not mentioned in the *Rituale Romanum*.

Therefore, the difference between the marriage oath and vow needs to be analyzed. It is also theologically interesting to examine the exchange of the rings and the insertion of the blessing of the bride and groom before the priest's confirmation.

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[18]   *Rituale Romanum Pauli V. P.M. iussu editum*, p. 148.

Theological analysis of two forms of celebrating matrimony

First, it is important to confirm that both vow forms closely follow the theology of the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The Council of Trent can be understood as a response to the reformers' new theology while emphasizing the divine institution of marriage as a sacrament. Martin Luther argued against the sacramentality of marriage and claimed that it is simply a natural institution ordered to fight concupiscence, but the Council confirmed its divine institution by God and its elevation to the level of sacrament by Christ. The Council specifically referenced passages from Ephesians 5:25 and 5:32, emphasizing that the union between a husband and wife should mirror the relationship between Christ and his church. Consequently, marriage was considered one of the seven sacraments and was exclusively under the Church's jurisdiction.

At the same time, marriage was confirmed as a contract between husband and wife, which had to follow a canonical form for its validity. For the marriage to be considered valid, it had to follow a specific canonical form: "…after the announcements have been made, if no *impediment* has been identified, the pastor […] in the presence of three or two witnesses and relatives, asks the betrothed for marital consent…" The investigation then proceeded by examining whether both man and woman fully understood the sanctity honour of this sacrament, and whether they were or promised to be in a marriage with someone else, and whether they were related by blood – everything following the conciliar teaching about the canonical form and validity of the marriage. Thus, during the marriage ceremony, the priest acted not only as a witness to a sacrament but also as an investigator and judge at a court hearing, which ruled over the official act of confirming the contract between two parties.[19]

The differences between these two forms are evident within the words of oath. While the tone and overall character of both the *Rituale Strigoniense* and *Rituale Romanum* follow the theology of the Council of Trent and its understanding of the juridical status of marriage, the nuances of wording in the *Rituale Strigoniense* rite introduces a slightly different emphasis on the character of marriage in this region, potentially reflecting a distinct theological perspective. When men and women are asked about their intention to enter into marriage freely, they are first asked about their love for their future spouse: "Amasne hanc honestam personam /hunc honestum/ N.?" (Do you love this honest person N?) These

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[19]   The role of the priest in the celebration of the sacrament of marriage has historically evolved along with the theological conception of the sacrament. Particularly in the 15th and 16th centuries, we already see the profiled approaches of different regions – from the role of the formal witness, through that of the dispenser of blessings, to that of the confirmer of the union under God's authority. See Kenneth STEVENSON, *To Join Together. The Rite of Marriage*, New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1987, pp. 50–52.

words may suggest that, before a juridical act of confirming the marital contract, the couple must affirm the presence of a personal relationship and mutual love. In comparison to the *Rituale Romanum* rite, the *Rituale Strigoniense* rite offers a richer and more complex reality of matrimony celebration: it views matrimony not as an exclusively juridical act, but as an expression of personal relationship, a union of love. Viewed from this perspective, the theological emphasis on marriage as a sacrament has been preserved in our territory in a more noticeable way in both orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Based on the order of the questions in the vow, it can be concluded that the sacramentality was more important than the contract.

A similar distinction can be observed in the number of rings blessed during the marriage ceremony. The vow text in the *Rituale Romanum* specifies the blessing of a single ring, given by the groom to the bride, whereas the *Rituale Strigoniese* prescribes the blessing of two rings. The practice of giving one ring was preserved in Rome, probably as a relic of the ancient tradition, where the groom gave the bride a ring as a kind of deposit, a guarantee, and a sign of the marriage covenant.[20] However, in many regions of Europe, despite the natural influence of Rome, the custom of exchanging two rings (for both the groom and the bride) emerged, thus adding a different meaning to the gesture.[21] Why might this be the case? While the Roman tradition emphasized rather a contractual side of marriage, symbolized by the groom giving the bride a ring so that a woman was conjoined to a man by the bond of obedience. The tradition in our region emphasized a more theological side of marriage. This could be reflected in understanding that there is one blessing that pours sacramental grace on both spouses alike, which was confirmed by the priest himself giving a ring to each of them in the same manner. Once again, the marriage celebration appears to have been understood more sacramentally than jurisdictionally in our countries.

Finally, based on the aforementioned and compared aspects of the two forms of the marriage vow, it is essential to consider whether and to what extend the *Rituale Strigoniense* rite aligns with the contemporary form of the vow in *Ordo celebrandi matrimonium, secunda editio* (1991), as well as to contemporary theology of marriage. The latter, since the Second Vatican Council, has been situated within a broader ecclesiological context.[22]

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[20]   Pietro DACQUINO, *Storia del matrimonio cristiano alla luce della Bibbia,* Torino: Elle Di Ci, 1984, pp. 116–117.

[21]   A practice attested e.g. since the 11th century in Spain. See Kenneth STEVENSON, *Nuptial Blessing,* London: Alcuin Club, 1982, pp. 93–94.

[22]   Gerhard Ludwig MÜLLER, *Dogmatika pro studium a pastoraci,* Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitanské nakladatelství, 2010, pp. 775–776.

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* described marriage according to new personal anthropology and the "communio" theology:

"Christian spouses, in virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony, whereby they signify and partake of the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and His Church, help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children. By reason of their state and rank in life, they have their own special gift among the people of God. From the wedlock of Christians there comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born, who by the grace of the Holy Spirit received in baptism are made children of God, thus perpetuating the people of God through the centuries. The family is, so to speak, the domestic church." (LG 11)

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes* 48) also drew attention to the personal and ecclesiological importance of marriage in the *Lumen gentium*:

> *"Christ the Lord abundantly blessed this many-faceted love, welling up as it does from the fountain of divine love and structured as it is on the model of His union with His Church. For as God of old made Himself present to His people through a covenant of love and fidelity, so now the Savior of men and the Spouse of the Church come into the lives of married Christians through the sacrament of matrimony. He abides with them thereafter so that just as He loved the church and handed Himself over on her behalf, the spouses may love each other with perpetual fidelity through mutual self-bestowal.*
>
> *Authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is governed and enriched by Christ's redeeming power and the saving activity of the Church, so that this love may lead the spouses to God with powerful effect and may aid and strengthen them in sublime office of being a father or a mother. For this reason, Christian spouses have a special sacrament by which they are fortified and receive a kind of consecration in the duties and dignity of their state. By virtue of this sacrament, as spouses fulfil their conjugal and family obligation, they are penetrated with the spirit of Christ, which suffuses their whole lives with faith, hope and charity. Thus, they increasingly advance the perfection of their own personalities, as well as their mutual sanctification, and hence contribute jointly to the glory of God." (GS 48)*

In summary, conjugal love's primary place is its cooperation with God's love (GS 50). Thus, it is evident that the teaching of the Second Vatican Council emphasizes marriage as a life-giving communio of love as a reflection of the love between

Christ and the Church, which is a "form that qualifies ontologically communion between the spouses".[23]

One might expect that this theology would be reflected in the most tangible and concrete form in the newest ritual of matrimony; however, the contemporary form of the vow, for the most part, reflects the juridical tone of the *Rituale Romanum* in 1614. First, a priest asks questions about the intention of the couple: "N. et N., venistísne huc sine coactióne, sed líbero et pleno corde ad Matrimónium contrahéndum? Estísne paráti, Matrimónii viam sequéntes, ad vos mútuo diligéndos et honorándos, totíus vitae decúrsu?" (N. and N., have you come here to enter into Marriage without coercion, freely and wholeheartedly? As you follow the path of Marriage, are you prepared to love and honour each other for as long as you both shall live?) After the interrogation, both exchange their mutual consent: "Ego N. accípio te N. in uxórem meam et promítto me tibi fidem servatúrum, inter próspera et advérsa, in aegra et in sana valetúdine, ut te díligam et honórem ómnibus diébus vitae meae."[24] (I, N, take you, N, to be my wife. I promise to be faithful to you, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love you and to honour you all the days of my life.) Aside from legal statements of intent, which echo the theology of previous magisterial teachings, the term describing conjugal love – "diligere" – is perhaps the only word closely associated with the theology of the Second Vatican Council about personal communion of love between husband and wife, reflecting the love between Christ and the Church.

This is why it is unexpected that contemporary theology of marriage is better outlined by the *Rituale Strigoniense* than by the *Rituale Romanum* which developed into its new form of 1991. It is not only because the *Rituale Strigoniense* already at that time used the word expressing love, but also because this word reflected a relationship between man and woman on a level that is more common to theology today. It was not an expression of a legal relationship; rather, it was an expression of trust, will, emotions, even of an erotic bond since the verb "amare" has a very broad meaning: "to love, be in love, make love, have affection for, be attached to". Despite not knowing the origin of this word within the *Rituale Strigoniense* and its precise meaning in the liturgy at that time, we know that there is no verb "amare" in the decrees of the 24th session of the Council of Trent regarding the marriage. The *Rituale Strigoniense* is an exception to Roman thinking about marriage – at least from what we see in the official decrees of the Council of Trent and the *Rituale Romanum*. However, the broader and personal meaning of love is closer to the theology of the Second Vatican council and the magisterium of the post-conciliar times that pay more attention to love as mutual, two-sided relationship that gives

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[23]   Franz COURTH, *I Sacramenti. Un trattato per lo studio e per la prassi*, Brescia: Queriniana, 1999, p. 451.
[24]   *Ordo celebrandi Matrimonium,* Civitate Vaticana: Typis Vaticanis, 1991, p. 17.

(agape) as well as receives (eros).[25] Pope Francis in his Post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* warns against very strict and limited understanding of marriage – especially focused exclusively on moral obligations or canonical elements – and insists on seeing the complex reality of marriage as a true path to happiness: "We have long thought that simply by stressing doctrinal, bioethical and moral issues, without encouraging openness to grace, we were providing sufficient support to families, strengthening the marriage bond and giving meaning to marital life. We find it difficult to present marriage more as a dynamic path to personal development and fulfilment than as a lifelong burden."[26] Such contemporary understanding of marriage only supports a broader meaning of love that protects all the natural and supernatural elements of marital love and which we believe appeared within the *Rituale Strigoniense* by verb "amare" and which was for this precise reason put before other questions.

Conclusion

In this study, the marriage ceremony as outlined in *Rituale Romanum* (1614) and the *Rituale Strigoniense* (1625) following the Council of Trent was compared. The comparison revealed interesting differences not only in the rituals themselves but also in the euchological aspect, which were further examined in greater detail. The textual and theological analysis of the *Rituale Strigoniense* rite uncovered three essential aspects of the theology of marriage:

1. The *Rituale Strigoniense* rite, deeply ingrained in our region's culture at the time, was characterized by less legalistic view of marriage and a more natural and/or supernatural understanding of marriage as a union of love.

2. The blessing and placing of two rings by a priest himself prove a different tradition than the juridical handing over of one ring in the Western Roman countries and demonstrates theological kind of equality between man and woman in the Church.

3. In the contemporary era of the post-Vatican II, the Esztergom ritual's choice of the word "amare" still seems to be relevant since the magisterium of recent popes confirms the broader meaning of love not constraining marriage to

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[25] The wide reality of Christian love as both "eros" and "agape" is well described by the Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical letter *Deus Caritas est* (7): "Even if *eros* is at first mainly covetous and ascending, a fascination for the great promise of happiness, in drawing near to the other, it is less and less concerned with itself, increasingly seeks the happiness of the other, is concerned more and more with the beloved, bestows itself and wants to 'be there for' the other. The element of *agape* thus enters into this love, for otherwise *eros* is impoverished and even loses its own nature. On the other hand, man cannot live by oblative, descending love alone. He cannot always give, he must also receive. Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift."

[26] Pope FRANCIS, *Post-synodal apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia*, n. 37.

juridical elements and, thus, the *Rituale Strigoniense* offers a path to a wished renewal of marriage.

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