



Johannes Aquila's workshop by his first co-worker, the so called Master of the Apostles of Martjanci. Characteristic for him is a more rough and expressive drawing. In his *al fresco* painting style with engraved and stamped patterns the figures are additionally handled with pasty, some parts with azure lines. This master's approach is moving away from Johannes Aquila and the gothic spatial-plastic style.

His stylistic expression is close to the elapsing 14th century soft (beautiful) or international gothic style. Examples in the works of anonymous Master of the Třebon altar piece (Prague, National Gallery, around 1385-90) and illuminations in the grand Bible of king Vaclav IV are in the works of Master of the Apostles of Martjanci reflected in qualitative painting sense.

Besides the gothic architecture and wall paintings in later years the parish church in Martjanci is marked with stormy and rich past. Visitations describe the main altar dating from 1529 with the statue of St. Martin, two side altars, shaped in late gothic manner, placed on stone pedestal.

The 16th and 17th century period is marked with reformation. The relations are remarkably described not only in 'contract of Martjanci' from 1. January 1643, that in local language *prekmurščina* regulates the vineyard hires, but also in literal-historic precious 'songbook from Martjanci', a songs collection, written between 16th and 18th century in the dialect called *kajkavščina*. In the stormy reformation times, when a quarrel between the Lutherans and Calvinists was going on, the Turkish agha from Nagykanizsa determinately intervened with a letter from 29. June 1652. After the year 1673, when the church became catholic again, nave has been vaulted (1702) in the accordance with contra-reforma-

tion liturgical demands. In the late baroque period new church equipment of even greater quality has been placed: side altars that have till the middle of 20th century been dedicated to St. James Nepomuk, a canon from Prague, patron of bridges and saviour from the floods, and to cardinal Charles Borromeo, worshipping the Christ on cross, a saviour from infectious diseases. Both paintings are works of Jožef Digl, a painter from Radgona, dating from 1749 and 1750. It is significant how due to the artistic concern in Martjanci, as well as in other villages in region of Prekmurje, masters from Radgona or Styria have been very much preferred. On the wall behind the former northern side altar we still can read that in 1791 it has been renewed by Janez (Johannes) Klein, who, like Johannes Aquila and Jožef Digl, was born in Radgona.

The monumental character of the church in 20th century is enriched by architect Jože Plečnik. In 1925 he excellently transformed the main altar with exquisite marble sculpture of St. Martin, who in harmony with other equipment and Samass' candlesticks greatly cohabitate with gothic architecture and wall paintings. From the period before the II World War we must expose architect Mušič's intervention in effective ventilation system with clay pipes, preventing moisture to threaten the valuable wall paintings. After getting the equipment made by architect Jože Valentinčič and Mary with child by Jože Lapuh, the church has in 2nd half of the 20th century gone through some less felicitous changes. Not judging the changes of centuries and tastes, St. Martin's church is a magnificent monument: it preserves the original artistic identity of past centuries and as such remains unchangeable warrantor of spiritual presence.



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Janez Balažič



Parish church in Martjanci

Long time ago, in 1365/66, the village and parish of Martjanci were written down with the name of the patron St. Martin – *Scenmartun in dystricu Sancti Martini*. A legionary from Savaria, today's Sombathely, miraculously sharing his coat with a beggar in distant Gaul, as shown on a splendid painting in the lower part in the church in Martjanci, became the bishop of Tours and in his honour in 1392 on this beautiful highest point on the road through the village a church has been built. It happened in the time of parish priest Erasmus as the writing on the southern presbytery wall informs us: "... Item Anno M^oCCCLXXXII Edificata fuit ista ecclesia et c(etera) v(idelicet) t(em)p(or)e plebani Erasmi".



From far away the high bell tower can be seen, its entrance and front in three floors, formed in gothic manner, are rhythmically perforated with narrow dormers; the fourth one is decorated with gothic tracery and under the roof are four partly gothic stone cut biforas. The tower and the nave, that until 1702 was flat, are outside supported by stone pillars, placed right-angled to the corners. The

worshipper's area can also be entered from the southern part, brightened by three gothic windows. In harmony with gothic proportions on the eastern part a narrow, single-polar with five-eighth terminal concluded presbytery with vestry on the northern part was simultaneously built. The corners of the sanctuary are as well supported by graduated sandstone pillars. In the choir a tracery bifora steps out that was by the end of the 17th century, as other windows too, glazed with coloured Apostle's figures (stained-glass). The interior of the presbytery is divided by stone sedilia, the portal of the vestry and the wall tabernacle. The architectural parts, the vaulting with wedge-shaped ribs with a gutter on sides, keystones and consoles are attributed to a regional workshop that with the realization in Martjanci represents the top of 'the group of the gothic architecture in Prekmurje'. In the spirit of the so called 'Parler style' masks shaped leaf consoles, close to those in St. George's church in Ptuj, testify for Viennese architectural examples.

A broader meaning to the sanctuary in Martjanci is given by its wall paintings. In the last decade of the 14th century, as the writing informs us: *p(er) man(us) Johannis Aquile de Rakespurga oriund(us)... (depicta/ornata?)*, it was painted by Johannes Aquila from Radgona/Radkersburg.

In the nave and especially in the presbytery the paintings are tuned to a medieval perception of the heavenly Jerusalem, turning from the aristocratically elevated and worldly to a common believer, addressing him with hidden supposition to presentation and Christian benevolence. On the bottom of the northern wall are the scenes with St. Martin sharing the coat with a beggar, angel Michael with a balance, the female saints St. Dorothea, St. Helen, St. Barbara, St. Margaret, St. Apollonia, St. Hedwig and St. Elizabeth of Hungary are depicted in charitable roles. Above the suffering Christ in a sarcophagus ('*imago pietatis*') vine is mending in a sense of deeper offering. The southern wall is decorated with St. Martin's miracle of awakening the dead knights, with writing on a band: *In nomine domini ihesu surgite et credit*, meaning: In the name of lord Jesus, stand up and hope! The last scene represents the death of St. Martin.

The middle part of the northern wall begins with parish priest Erasmus' call on a writing band: *Deus esto propicius michi peccatori* – God have merci upon me sinner! In this burning piety the patron St. Erasmus is symbolically supporting him on the other side. Along with the Apostles

on both walls St. Martin and St. Nicholas are presented in their charitable rapture. As a part of Passion symbolism besides the vine around the windows the acanthus leaves and flowers (roses) also appear and Veronica's cloth on the top. In the frame of the European wall paintings above the south-eastern window an important scene is still preserved, Johannes Aquila's (self-)portrait with painter's coat-of-arms and intercession band in his hands: *Omnes s(ancti) orate pro me Johanne Aquila pictore*, meaning: All saints pray for me, Johannes Aquila, the painter. In wall closings prophets are represented and on the vault the symbols of the four Evangelists, Christ as ruler in glory as well as the angels with hymn's lyrics. On the inner arch wall St. George's fight with a dragon and St. Paul the hermit are painted. In the nave scenes are preserved only on the northern wall: the pope with a donor (St. Ambrose?), St. Katherine, St. Anne with Mary and child and Baptism in Jordan, on the arch wall St. Nicholas with the donor Nicholas Szengrót and Mary giving shelter under her coat.

In the paintings two workshop's concepts enforce. Different disposition and new impulses are taking the leading role, brought to the

