

STUDIES

VISITATIO LIMINUM OF HUNGARIAN BISHOPS AT THE ROMAN CURIA IN THE MIDDLE AGES

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The canonical institute of *visitatio limina apostolorum* played a significant role in the Middle Ages as a power and administrative instrument of the Roman Curia and, together with the institutions of papal legates and nuncios, represented the most important way of exercising papal authority outside the papal state. It evolved from the original pilgrimage of the clergy to the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome as the most sacred Christian pilgrimage sites from the time of early Christianity, and later became obligatory. This obligation also applied to the Hungarian episcopate, which has been documented in the archives of the Roman Curia (especially in the archives of the Apostolic Camera) since the end of the 13th century. The intensity of Hungarian episcopal visits *ad limina* reflected the degree of authority of the Pope in the Kingdom of Hungary and thus also reflected the extent of the power influence of the Papal State on the political situation in the country.

Key words: Middle Ages. The Kingdom of Hungary. Hungarian bishoprics. Apostolic Camera. Roman Curia. Visitations *ad limina*.

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“Bishops who are subject to apostolic appointment are also obliged to show reverence by appearing each year at the tombs of the apostles.” Such a gloss was noted by Gratianus in his collection of canon law around 1140 to Pope Gregory VII’s canons on the superiorship of the Bishop of Rome.¹ He thus named one of the most important administrative mechanisms of the Roman Curia.

1 Decreti Gratiani prima pars, Dist. CXIII, C. 3. In FRIEDBERG, Aemilius(ed.). *Corpus iuris canonici*. Editio Lipsiensis secunda (further CIC) I. Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1959, coll. 321: *“Episcopi vero, qui apostolicae ordinationi subiacent, etiam hanc reverentiam debent, ut singulis annis apostolorum liminibus sese repraesentent.”*