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*The history of the Archdiocese of Kalocsa-Bács during the
ecclesiastical governance of Archbishop József Grösz (1943–1961)*

PhD Thesis Booklet

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*“These two things I ask of you:
fidelity to Christ and fidelity to the Hungarian homeland!”*

József Grósz
Archbishop of Kalocsa-Bács
Kalocsa, 12 July 1943

I. OBJECTIVE OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION, PROBLEM STATEMENT

The study of the history of Hungarian dioceses in the 20th century remains incomplete to this day. Overall, only the revised book versions of the dissertations by KRISZTINA TÓTH and ANDOR LÉNÁR can be regarded as monographic works that approach the topic through the examination of the ecclesiastical institutional system and its functioning. The former focused on the episcopal governance of József Grósz in Szombathely, while the latter examined the period of Árpád István Hanauer in Vác.

These works sought to break away from bishop-centered presentations of dioceses and instead aimed to explore the different levels and elements of ecclesiastical structure, applying an institutional-historical approach. This line is also followed by DÁVID KELEMEN'S dissertation, which examines the Diocese of Győr during the period of Kálmán Papp. Alongside these, numerous works on episcopal history have naturally been produced; however, in these, the role of the bishops has generally remained emphasized.

To date, no comprehensive diocesan history has been written on the 20th-century history of the Archdiocese of Kalocsa-Bács. ANDOR LAKATOS is almost the only exception, whose overview work – primarily based on the processing of archdiocesan circular letters – expanded the existing historiography. At the same time, he did not analyze in detail the governance of individual archbishops – such as József Grósz – but rather presented their lives and activities within the broader context of national church policy.

Before him, PÁL WINKLER should be mentioned, who in the early decades of the 20th century discussed the history of the archdiocese from a local and institutional historical perspective. His methodology already differed from earlier approaches, such as that of ISTVÁN KATONA, who at the turn of the 18th–19th centuries primarily emphasized the history of the archbishops.

Regarding the period of Grósz, historical research has mainly focused on his 1951 trial, persecution, and – partly – his relationship with the communist state after his release, especially in his role as president of the bishops' bench. In my earlier works, I have also attempted to provide insight into the final phase of the Second World War and the subsequent transitional period in the archdiocese. A biography of József Grósz is known from the work of JÓZSEF TÖRÖK.

Since my BA and MA theses also dealt with events connected to Archbishop József Grósz, it was a natural choice to examine his period of ecclesiastical governance (1943–1961) in my doctoral dissertation.

II. METHODOLOGY OF THE DISSERTATION

In developing the structure of the dissertation, I relied on the 1937 study of the Benedictine church historian TIHAMÉR VANYÓ, which analyzes the methodology of writing diocesan history. Adapting the perspectives of contemporary French historiography, VANYÓ outlined the content elements necessary for such a work. I applied and modified this framework, taking into account the specific characteristics of the period and region under study.

As indicated by the title, diocesan history is inseparably intertwined with the person of the archbishop. Accordingly, although the dissertation fundamentally adopts an institutional-historical approach, certain biographical elements – such as the description of Grósz's death and funeral – make the presentation more vivid and nuanced, as these events were also significant for the life of the archdiocese.

Archdiocesan circular letters and schematisms served as the starting point for reconstructing the territorial and hierarchical structure. The circular letters were processed in detail and compared with other sources. However, schematisms for the 20th century are only available to a limited extent: after 1942, the next edition appeared only in 1975, which was also the last volume of the traditional structure.

It should be noted that around 1950–1951 a schematism edited by PÉTER GYETVAI had already reached a print-ready state, following the traditional structure, and its state approval was underway; however, political events – namely the arrest of the archbishop, GYETVAI himself, and several members of the archiepiscopal court – prevented its publication. Today, this work survives in manuscript form.

For interpreting the functioning and personnel of the archiepiscopal curia, I primarily relied on the canon law work of JÓZSEF BÁNK, taking into account the provisions of the 1917 *Codex Iuris Canonici*.

The use of the oral history method also contributed to a more nuanced dissertation. In particular, the recollections of bishop emeritus ENDRE GYULAY of Szeged-Csanád, and cathedral provost JÁNOS BERGMANN of Kalocsa, proved to be especially valuable.

III. RESULTS OF THE DISSERTATION

Understanding the examined period required uncovering its antecedents as well. In certain cases, it was necessary to extend the analysis beyond the boundaries of the archdiocese, since after 1945 József Grósz repeatedly acted as head of the episcopal bench, thus influencing national church policy.

Grósz was appointed Archbishop of Kalocsa in 1943, following a period of uncertainty. The circumstances of his appointment are discussed in greater detail than in previous works, and during my research in Szeged, the only known surviving papal bull related to this appointment was discovered.

Grósz was the last archbishop to assume office in accordance with traditional practice, conducting a full inventory of ecclesiastical movable and immovable property, and he was also the last archbishop who was a large landowner. However, as a result of the 1945 „land reform” decree, he lost control over these estates and could not pass them on to his successors. The dissertation examines the impact of these changes in detail.

The ecclesiastical administration of the Bács territories was carried out by an apostolic administrator until 1968; Grósz – and his predecessor Count Gyula Zichy – could exercise actual jurisdiction over the reannexed southern territories only between 1941 and 1944. A separate subsection of the dissertation deals with the church history of this region.

Grósz assumed leadership of the archdiocese under difficult circumstances: by 1944, armed conflict was already taking place in the region, Kalocsa was bombed, and the population suffered severe losses. The sources provide a detailed picture of the challenges of the period. The archbishop’s extensive written legacy – his notes and marginal comments on newspaper articles – is particularly valuable, as it allows events to be interpreted from a personal perspective.

After the war, the political system gradually shifted to the left, making the administration of the archdiocese increasingly difficult.

Grósz maintained a balanced relationship with the canons. The life of the Cathedral Chapter of Kalocsa was significantly affected by the loss of church estates. The research examined the holders of the prebends and their roles, with particular attention to their relationship to the political system.

Special attention was paid to the selection and functioning of officials of the archiepiscopal curia and the ecclesiastical court, based on the analysis of administrative records and correspondence.

The issue of clerical recruitment was of key importance. Due to political changes, the institutional system of priestly training in Kalocsa ceased to exist, requiring new solutions for fostering vocations. The dissertation presents the development of priestly vocations during this period with quantitative data.

Significant changes also occurred in education: the nationalization of church schools in 1948 and the restriction of religious instruction fundamentally transformed the system. The role

of religious orders was examined primarily through the consequences of the withdrawal of their operating permits in 1950.

In examining state intervention, particular attention was paid to the functioning of the State Office for Church Affairs and the role of the local “mustached bishop.” Compared to his successors, Grósz represented ecclesiastical interests more firmly, although he was often forced into compromises. In connection with the “peace clergy,” the dissertation also presents the operation of *Opus Pacis*, of which he served as president.

The closing section of the dissertation addresses the vacancy of the see in 1961 and the appointment of Endre Hamvas in 1964, placing the examined period into a broader context.

IV. EVALUATION

It is my hope that, following the works of KRISZTINA TÓTH and ANDOR LÉNÁR, this dissertation—building on the methodological legacy of TIHAMÉR VANYÓ – may serve as a starting point for further research into diocesan history, whether in Kalocsa, Esztergom (1949–1975), or Eger (until 1956).

V. PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION TOPIC:

- SÁGI GYÖRGY: *Kalocsa megmentője, Grósz József érsek*, Egyháztörténeti Szemle 18 (2017) 4. 62–80.
- SÁGI GYÖRGY: *Nuspl János bácskai német plébános összefoglaló jelentése az 1944 utáni délvidéki megtorlásokról. (Forrásközlés)*, Levéltári Közlemények 88 (2017), 347–367.
- SÁGI GYÖRGY: *Az utolsó általános főnöknői relatio quinquennalis (1943/1947). Az iskolák államosítása- és a szerzetesrendek feloszlataása előtti utolsó helyzetkép a Miasszonyunkról Nevezett Kalocsai Szegény Iskolanővérek Társulatának állapotáról és működéséről. XXIV. Tavasz Szél Konferencia 2021 – Tanulmánykötet II. Szerk. Molnár Dániel, Molnár Dóra, Budapest 2021, 647–657.*
- SÁGI GYÖRGY: *Grósz József pappá szentelésének 50. évfordulója: Szakács Gyula egyházügyi főelőadó jelentése a jubileumi ünnepegsorozatáról és a főpap körlevélbéli visszatekintése aranymiséjére,* Múltbanézó (2021) 17/9. https://mnl.gov.hu/mnl/bkml/multbanezo_17_9 (2026. 03. 25.)
- SÁGI GYÖRGY: *Grósz József kalocsa-bácsi érsek megbeszélései Alvary Gascoigne budapesti angol követtel 1945-ben. Magyarország és a római Szentszék III. Exquisitæ lucubrationes Cornelio Szovák amicabiliter dicatæ (Collectanea Vaticana Hungariæ I/21). Szerk. Tusor Péter–Kanász Viktor, Budapest–Róma 2022, 341–358.*
- SÁGI GYÖRGY: *Egyházmegyés papok képzésének megszűnte, illetve áthelyezése Kalocsáról Szegedre az 1950-es évek elején. Tavasz Szél 2022 Tanulmánykötet III., Budapest 2022, 282–392.*