

**A presentation of Hungary, the situation of the Catholic Church
and the role of lay people by the
Hungarian observer: Gabriella Nényei**

I am Gabriella Nényei a member of KALÁSZ (see on leaflet!)
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My task is to introduce the situation and the perspectives of my country
HUNGARY and my church with a special attention to lay people.

Our little country is between East and West, South and North, a
point of clashing through the centuries. Our ancestors chose the place,
the Carpathian basin for our home just 1100 years ago. We celebrated
our Millecentenary of our conquest last year.

If you would like to understand our present situation you must
imagine a great pot: a pressure cooker tightly covered with its lid. After
the first world war two-third of thousand years old country was cut off -
only the one-third middle part remained Hungary. Great migration
started from the detached parts. Mainly to the home country, but great
many immigrated to different countries all over the world (even to
Malta). In 1945 the Soviet Union occupied Hungary and not long after
the atheistic communist dictatorship CLOSED THE LID. We lived
under very great pressure for 10 years, ten thousands deported, put in
camps, priests and lay people imprisoned, executed, all movements and
organization both ecclesiastical and secular were dissolved and
prohibited. Our archbishop-cardinal tortured, tormented, ten thousands
lost their jobs or their field and goods, had to leave their home. In 1956

during the two weeks of Hungarian revolution the valve of the lid was open for a while - but soon the pressure was stronger than ever. For decades we thought in this pot, that there are two status in life: to be under pressure and to be free. And two kinds of people: against the oppression and with the oppression. After the seventies the pressure was slowly weakening and in 1989 the lid was suddenly taken off. Have you ever seen a soup in a pressure cooker when the lid is suddenly taken off?

It was great-great, almost unbelievable joy. (E. g. I was already born under pressure, the normal status of my life was to live in conspiracy in an underground church. How? I could speak to you about it for hours.

And then it occurred that there were much more than two kinds of people, there are many many ways and intention - life in a pressure cooker without lid: boiling turbulence, upheaval - the steam shoots up - and you see the atomization of the liquid inside. (Thanks to God this was a PEACEFUL revolt, without blood but with some burn = burned wounds.)

In this confusing new situation our first government led by a Christian Catholic prime minister: Joseph Antall made very great efforts for leading out the country from the confusion on the ways of freedom. But he had to fight with very very great problems, enormous debt-economical (the collapse of KGST = Council for Mutual Economic Aid = COMECON - economic alliance of the socialistic people's republics, communist economical alliance, ideological, human, ethical, moral, juridical, etc. - without skilled politicians and leaders. As all the

leadership training schools and universities had been communist for 40 years, mainly in the Soviet Union.)

Then in this confusion good and bad infusions came from west. Good: much help and opened doors (e. g. by different organizations of the Catholic Church - like WUCWO - so can I be here...), great possibilities for young people to learn and to see, how to get on in our new situation. And bad: sects, new age, pornography, homosexuality, prostitution, Coca-Cola anticulture, drugs, violence, etc.

At the same time the economic balance under the lid was turned up - great inflation started. People had no capital, no financial sources while the privatization started - as under the lid the whole country, every factory and institution belonged to the state. Who could buy? Those, who had money. Who had? The people over the lid, the former oppressors and western firms and companies.

At present.....% of the properties in the hands of foreign firms, while our national debt is not diminishing. Many-many people lost their jobs, some enriched and many fell in great poverty.

What happened in 1994? The same as in the desert, when the people of God was wandering without food and water. They rebelled against God and wished to go back to Egypt to the POTS OF MEAT. People thought that to be in slavery means security so they elected socialist government again. But after three years people are disappointed without any hope.

The rate of suicides is always on high level. The last year there was lower rate of birth than ever. The number of marriages is always decreasing - people are disillusioned, desperate.

And what can we do?

We must know that

“Not from the East (Soviet-communism)
of from the West (rich countries)
and not from the wilderness (new age)
comes lifting up,
but it is God, who executed judgment”

Ps. 75. 6-7

We, Christian people, do not cease to give thanks to God for the preserved Christianity during the decades of strong persecution. We could survive - and this is this marvel. (E. g. I could see much about his marvels in my life, how did he grow me up in Christianity though not only the school-teaching was atheistic, but even my parents were not believers.) Our Catholic church suffered very much, but members of Christ were cleansed during these 40 years. Those who were not believers sincerely could not undertake the persecution: they dropped their faith, they became alienated from the Church. But those who were faithful, experienced the love and great help of God through every persecution. They found the way to practise faith in an underground church.

When the lid was taken off we were very glad to see: how many we are! The groups working and living in secret separated from each other now came out to the open air and are learning, how to get on. We have no practice in living in freedom. (Though, we must not suffer from it too much, because after 1994 the liberal-post-communist government put us in shelter. We can freely practice our faith, but sometimes we do

not have the same rights, our moral, ethical, educational objectives are swept away. (E. g. in the matter of violence, pornography, prostitution, TV, etc. program, abortion, protection of family life education, etc.) The Church got back many properties - like churches, buildings, hospitals and schools - but nothing what is needed for self-supporting (e.g. fields). So, we have no financial source (apart from the generous contribution of believers). That is why we have to accept much help from the Church of Western countries (thanks for your generosity for my being here!!). Thanks for the Universal Catholic Church that helps us!

Some words about our Church today.

As under the lid many self-organized groups were living and working secretly - often separated from each other, these groups emerged now and try to find their identity in the universal Church. So, many of them are attached to different spirituality coming from the west, like Focolar, marriage encounter, ways charismatic movement. There are some originally Hungarian spirituality that could survive - such like Regnum Marianum movement and KALÁSZ that could revive after 1989.

Our church makes great effort to reorganize itself. There are synods of Dioceses one after the other, where priests and lay people together build the new way of Catholic Christian life. There are appointed executive officers (referees), lay people for various fields, like referent

- of pastoral work,
- of youth
- of family
- of religion teaching

of taking one for vacations
of charity, etc.

And what can we do? We, lay people?

For example we, members of KALÁSZ (Katolikus Asszonyok és Lányok Szövetsége = Alliance of Catholic women and girls) which means as well: ear of grain as well, symbolizing the grain of God's word, what we accept, like the good soil and we wish to bear much fruit - much grain in the ear. Even symbolizes our brotherhood rooted in Christ.

What can we do?

Like the women around Jesus we can love Him, and do our duty. Not asking why, and what for like Mary, Mary-Magdalene and Salome who did some very unreasonable thing: went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. Is it worthy of anything? To anoint body of a dead man? Oh yes! That was their duty! They did not ask anything, wanted to do it. And Jesus accepted their effort and presented them with the greatest gift: with His presence, with the joy and good news of His resurrection. They became the first evangelist, telling

Christus Recessit!

What is our duty?

Let me mention some.

In the world of immorality, pornography and time of collapsing families live real Christian life. To love each other, to

be clean to marriage

to be faithful in married life

to bear children (E. g. in our church there are great many families with even 7, 9 children living a life of good example.)

Our goals you can see on our leaflet:

- to bring up girls
- 1) STRONG in FAITH
 - 2) morally clean
 - 3) to cultivate our national worth, etc.

Let me say some words about our 3rd goal.

When we were in the pressure cooker we were proclaimed a guilty nation. Guilty, because Hungary was in alliance with Germany and Italy in the 2nd World War, guilty, because we wished to keep contact with our Hungarian relatives cut off from Hungary, guilty because the ideology of materialistic-bolshevism was not Hungarian ideology. That ideology was forced on us, and even internationalism that wanted to abolish nations and make one mass of people.

So, we were forced to forget our national and Christian tradition, and were forced to feel ashamed ourselves for being Hungarian. Our duty is to give back self-respect to our people and to help to understand, that to be Christian and Hungarian is a gift from God with great duty between West and East, South and North.

Please pray for us to fulfill God's plan with us.