

## Overview and Acknowledgements

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# Journal of GLOBAL CATHOLICISM

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## HUNGARIAN CATHOLICISM

Living Faith across Diverse  
Social and Intellectual Contexts

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- Krisztina Frauhammer / Longings, Letters and Prayers: Visitor's Books at Hungarian Marian Shrines
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Photo by Kinga Povedák

MATHEW N. SCHMALZ

## Hungarian Catholicism: Overview & Acknowledgements



**Mathew N. Schmalz** is Founding Editor of the *Journal of Global Catholicism* and Professor of Religious Studies at the College of the Holy Cross. He received his B.A. from Amherst College and his Ph.D. in the history of religions from the University of Chicago. He has published more than fifty articles and essays that engage global Catholicism (particularly in South Asia), Catholic theology and spirituality, Mormonism, and The Watchtower movement. He is co-editor of *Engaging South Asian Religions: Boundaries, Appropriations, and Resistances* (SUNY, 2012, with Peter Gottschalk) and author of *Mercy Matters: Opening Yourself to the Life Changing Gift* (OSV, 2016). Schmalz has also written more than one hundred opinion pieces that have appeared in *On Faith*, *Crux*, *The Huffington Post* and in the print editions of *The Washington Post*, *Commonweal Magazine*, *US Catholic*, *The National Catholic Reporter*, *the Providence Journal*, and *the Telegram & Gazette*. He has provided expert commentary to *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *ABC's Good Morning America*, *NPR*, *CNBC*, *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, and *U.S. News & World Report*, among others.



**A**s Marc Loustau notes in his Introduction, Hungarian Catholicism is not a self-sealed, hermetic phenomenon. The articles in this issue of the *Journal of Global Catholicism* testify to this fact while simultaneously eliciting issues relevant to the study of Catholicism as a whole.

In her piece, Krisztina Frauhammer examines the corpus of inscriptions in visitor's books at Hungarian Marian shrines. She argues that, through the written word, pilgrims “personally encounter the Transcendent.” Frauhammer concludes by observing that pilgrimage creates a “rupture” that allows participants to bridge the heavenly and Divine realms. While Frauhammer explicitly draws upon the work of Peter Berger to make this point, there are also echoes of the work of Romanian historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, who charted the various ways in which mundane or profane experiences are elevated and transformed by contact with the Sacred. Frauhammer thus extends the ambit of her theory to provide a suggestive framework for considering how personal experiences—and longings—are effectively inscribed and joined together through the seemingly mundane, and quite common, act of writing in a visitor's book or leaving a note at a shrine.

Kinga Povedák introduces us to vernacular music practices and explores their embeddedness within the Catholic charismatic movement in Hungary from the 1960s onward. As Povedák argues, counter-culture in Hungary of the 1960s could—and did—involve various “spiritual awakenings.” Within this context, Catholic charismatic renewal attracted both ecclesiastical and governmental suspicion in the age of “Goulash communism” but also managed to survive as a grassroots movement or a series of “islands” within Hungarian society. Interestingly, Povedák concludes by observing that Hungarian versions of Catholic charismatic renewal operated relatively untouched by Western “styles” and by the 1990s had become “anachronistic.” Povedák's meticulously researched piece not only provides insight into an under-researched aspect of Hungarian religious culture but also engages important questions and issues regarding how religious movements sustain themselves during times of persecution.

Cecília Sándor’s article concludes this issue of the *Journal of Global Catholicism*. Sándor’s piece is an in-depth study of lived Catholicism in a Transylvanian village. In addition to her focus on magic—an important and under-studied aspect of Catholicism— Sándor draws upon the work of William Christian and Charles Stewart to make a distinction between officially sanctioned religious rites and rituals as the *langue* of Catholicism and magic and other associated practices as Catholicism’s *parole*. What emerges in her piece is not only a fascinating study of Catholicism as practiced in a particular social and cultural context, but also a useful theoretical framework that can be applied to Catholicism more broadly.

This issue of the *Journal of Global Catholicism* was edited by Marc Loustau, whose deep experience in Hungary was instrumental in bringing together such a fine group of scholars. The articles contained in this issue were originally presented at the 2018 conference “Lived Catholicism from the Balkans to the Baltics,” at Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem, Budapest, which was also organized by Marc Loustau on behalf of the College of the Holy Cross. The conference also could not have taken place without the generous and gracious assistance of Dr. Máté Botos and Dr. Katya Dunajeva at Pázmány Péter. At Holy Cross, gratitude is due Danielle Kane who expertly formatted the issue as well as to digital librarian Lisa Villa whose tutorials on digital publishing are always invaluable. As always, thanks to Dr. Tom Landy, director of the McFarland Center and the [Catholics & Cultures](#) initiative, of which the *Journal of Global Catholicism* is a part.



Photo courtesy of Cecília Sándor