

WITNESSING WITH WHITE LILY AND RED BLOOD



**LIFE AND MARTYRDOM OF A WORKING GIRL
Mary Magdalene Bódi: 1921–1945**

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PREFACE

One does not become a saint when through canonization. Just the opposite. The saints are truly saints and the Church simply declares them as such. When the highest ecclesial recognition is pronounced, or even when it is delayed for some reason or other, the holiness of our heroes stays valid from the beginning of the process.

Even to pronounce the name of Cardinal Mindszenty was forbidden in Hungary for more than 40 years. Neither could one speak of the martyrdom of Bishop William Apor. Cardinal Mindszenty suffered for his people and nation perhaps more than any martyr. Bishop Apor shed his blood in defending the chastity of Hungarian women. They did it for Christ. Likewise we were not allowed to speak about that unknown working girl, Magdi Bódi, who witnessed to Christ with her blood in the spring of 1945. We are not interested in those persons who caused their sufferings and death. We want to look up to those who struggled, suffered, and witnessed to Christ.

It is time now to speak about their virtues and values. Books have been already written about them. This little booklet wants to do the same about Magdi Bódi. It is not a polished biography, but just a collection of data. Its value is that it tells the truth, without forming a judgment, without making it more palatable. It speaks for itself.

These pieces of the life of Magdi Bódi were collected by the late Rev. Dr. Miklós Galambos, pastor in Zalaegerszeg, with untiring zeal and studious labor. He never knew Magdi personally, but he saw in her the Hungarian Maria Goretti. He looked up people who were able to give some objective information about Magdi, or who were in close relationship with her.

We were at that time priests together in Fűzfőgyártelep: Dr. István Androvits (Fr. István), Dr. István Oross (Fr. István), and myself, Dr. József Temesi (Fr. Joseph). We related to him with sincerity all that we knew about Magdi.

Previously Fr. István Oross who knew about the death of Magdi, reported this to Bishop Joseph Mindszenty, at that time bishop of Veszprém. Bishop Mindszenty ordered a thorough and official investigation so that he then might decide about initiating a canonical process for a possible beatification. In September of 1945 the Minutes of 25 pages were prepared about the hearings. When Bishop Mindszenty became the archbishop of Esztergom, Dr. Ladislaus Bánáss was appointed Apostolic Administrator in Veszprém. On the basis of information received, he ordered the beginning of the canonical process.

The case thus has been concluded ecclesiastically, and I was given the task of translating all the Acts from Hungarian into Latin. In the interest of precise translation, I read every sentence several times, so that I knew it almost by heart. At the questioning of witnesses, everyone without exception gave a positive answer about her. It is too bad that these Acts did not reach Rome. They were lost without explanation.

At the request of Rev. István Oross, in 1990 Dr. Joseph Szendi, bishop of Veszprém, renewed the order to examine officially the case of Magdi Bódi on the basis of the Minutes of 20 pages, which were not among the official acts of the investigation, (but were used to prepare it). Interviews with surviving priests and other witnesses in 1990 give us hope that the process can be successfully continued after 45 years of forced silence.

This collection of data, independently of the official Acts (Minutes) was prepared for printing in 1956. The original text is published now with some abbreviation and rearrangement. Leányfalu, Feast of Assumption, on the day of the anniversary of Magdi's baptism, 1991.

Meanwhile Dr. Joseph Szendi, Bishop of Veszprém, appointed me as postulator of the cause. One of my tasks, among others was, to collect the results of petitions through the intercession of Magdi. – Thus, I am asking the readers in this little book to notify me if they know about such results. For the sake of authenticity, please sign your name and address if you submit such a result of prayers. I thank everyone who promotes in any way the cause of Magdi's beatification.

Leányfalu, March 23, 1997.

P. Joseph Temesi, SJ.

I. THE BEGINNING OF A LITTLE GIRL'S LIFE

Remembering Her Childhood

Her mother was told how in September of 1927 she took the little girl to register in the elementary school of Köveskál. Magdi bravely and gladly gave her name when she was asked, "I am Magdi Bódi". – The other girls wondered: Such a tiny first-grader, she hardly grew out of the earth. And look, how thin and lean she is! – But Magdi does not feel out of place in the school. Everyone loves her, because she is always meek and cheerful. She does not fight with others, yet she is vivacious. Her black eyes notice everything.

Her teacher soon realizes what is inside this little girl who on the outside is just the same as the others. The school often organizes celebration of national feasts, and since it is a Catholic school, they often do religious plays. Once Magdi got to recite a poem and everyone was awed, she was so good. She recited it with feeling and got tremendous applause. From then on, she got the best roles. She could also sing beautifully. Soon she became one of the best students. She can hardly reach the cross of the classroom from a chair, yet she decorates it always most zealously.

Magdi has two brothers: Julius (Gyula), who is two years older than she is, and Johnny (Jani), who is two years younger. Mrs. Bódi is a woman of big heart, but her concerns and family circumstances do not allow her to live a more religious life. But she teaches her children to pray daily, and sends them to church, though Mass is rarely celebrated in Köveskál. The parish church in Szentbékállá is a few hours away on foot. But Magdi does not need urging, she takes her younger brother even in bad weather, when others do not want to take this trouble.

Meanwhile the time arrived for Magdi's First Communion. Their religion teacher prepared the grade 3 students, coming over once a week to their village, and even saying Mass sometimes. Thus the people of Köveskál were able to receive Holy Communion even on weekdays. Magdi is one of the most zealous in this. Her little heart soon enters into an intimate relationship with Jesus. Jesus attracts her, and Magdi is looking for Him. Once she rejected a book, saying: This in no good, there is not a word in it about Jesus.

After her First Communion came her Confirmation in Kővágóörs. She took part in it with childlike joy. Many have noticed this happy little girl, radiating joy.

In the family, the father was a fearsome authority, but he loved Magdi very much. Her schoolmates noticed how much Magdi loved her parents and brothers. The two boys often fought with one another, but never with Magdi. Once Jani, as a joke, threw snow into Magdi's neck. Magdi laughed at this joke, but the next moment she did the same to her brother. Magdi is a lovely child. She can chat with young and with old people alike. Her words are clever and deep. She is interested in everything. When she is told to do something, she runs to do it right away. She is practical, cheerful, but remains always a kind and humble child.

Her childhood is known best, of course, through her mother. Mother is always kind, forthcoming, communicative with the visitors. She speaks quite objectively about her

daughter, not embellishing anything. She talks also about her shortcomings, so we can get a real picture from her about Magdi.

They still live today in that little house in Litér, which was the last home for Magdi, only in the neighboring rooms. The house stands opposite the castle, and is a long building of the estate, with many homes. Their doors open to a common courtyard. Today Mr. Bódi works on his 6 acres and also does transportation with his carriage. He earns the daily bread for his family.

Julius and Jani live in Litér, in a section where workmen live. They work in a factory. Both have family: Julius has 3 daughters, Jani 2 boys. The grandchildren often visit their grandparents, bringing joy to them in their old days. The littlest girl, Mary Magdalene, only a few months old, is the dearest to them.

I asked Mrs. Bódi to talk about Magdi's childhood, even if this sad remembrance may be rather painful to her, because she knows best about this subject. Mrs. Bódi is a strong woman; she does this willingly and calmly. Mr. Bódi at first seems a cold man, but soon we discover during our conversation that he often becomes emotional, just like his warm-hearted wife. Magdi was rather independent even as a little girl, – says Mrs. Bódi, – but she was never disobedient. If she wanted something which her parents first denied, she could be very cuddling until she got what she wanted. She could be very flattering. She always talked to us nicely, never consciously causing sadness. She always revered and loved her parents. When occasionally her father reproved her without reason, she never retorted. “Yes, father”, she used to say just like an older girl. But she never showed any sign of rancor, she was open and always honest. She never lied, she could not stand lies. One time she stuffed straw into a sack with another girl. This girl denounced her, saying that Magdi used fodder-straw. Magdi asked her: “Why did you squealed on me, and even lied about it?”, and gave her friend a little slap. Even as a small girl, she noticed every injustice and fought for justice. This character trait remained with her later on. As a little girl, she was an apostle, calling and taking her brothers to Mass, and exhorting them to pray.

About Magdi's First Communion, her mother said that beforehand Magdi always talked about Jesus and she was enthusiastic about him. Unfortunately Mrs. Bódi did not remember the details. – Mrs. Bódi also mentioned Magdi's “conversion”. What did she mean by this?

Magdi was always a good girl, but when she was about 10 years old, seemingly her religious life deepened. She began to pray on her knees for long hours. And her different forms of abnegations were also noticeable. She was willing to renounce many things.

She was always attracted to the poor. In Köveskál, a little boy in the neighborhood lost his parents and the grandmother who brought him up. When winter came, Magdi one day said to her mother: “Mother, I am going to collect some money to buy warm clothes for him”. – “Are you not ashamed to be a beggar?”, said her mother. – “Why? I will get the money to buy him some warm garments”. So she got the money and bought the clothes. Many remarked: “What a beautiful soul this little girl has!”

She loved to play, but even more to read. When during games she heard a bad word, she reprimanded the children: “Kids, shut up, this is not nice!”

In January 1934, the Bódís left Köveskál, and Magdi left behind her childhood. When later she returned on 2 occasions, the people noticed how much she had grown and how much her face radiated joy. The little, thin girl now became a big girl. It was the time for the wine harvest, so Magdi went to the home of her former teacher and said: “I came to

help you harvest the grapes”. – During the harvest everyone admired her behavior. People celebrated loudly, but Magdi never uttered a bad word. When others said such things, Magdi remained silent. She never chatted uselessly. Yet she spoke eloquently about God, and about how beautiful a life completely dedicated to God would be.

**It Is Good to Love God!
(Her Prayer-life And Spirituality)**

Magdi was a good, pious girl in Köveskál. When they moved to their new home in Máma, she began to pray a lot. The sound of the church bell hardly was able to reach the prairie home, but people cursed more frequently there. It was not customary here to go to church, not even on great feasts. The nearest Catholic church was in Balatonkenese.

On the 2nd spring they heard that there would be Mass also in Balatonfűzítő. The new pastor, Fr. István Androvits, gave books to Magdi who was able to read a bit of them after doing her chores at home. When she was not working or occupied with her mother, she was always reading a book in the shade of a tree or on the shore of Fűzfő-Kenese. She liked reading and thinking about what she read. Then she gazed contemplatively towards the smooth water of Lake Balaton, or to the hills of Tihany.

“I would like to go there”, she said to her younger brother who accompanied her. “Look what a beautiful world God has created for us, what a beautiful country He gave us! And what a beautiful lake is this Balaton!”

The neighbors often visited them. Mrs. Bódi would have given her last bit of food to the poor. It was enough to say just a word and she did everything she could for them, she helped them in work, she lent them thing they asked for. On these occasions people saw Magdi praying on her knees. She did not mind if others were in the room. She just looked at them with her big black eyes, greeted them kindly, and continued to pray. She could do this for hours.

“I feared often that she would get cold from kneeling on the cold pavement, and I put a rug under her knees”, said her mother. Then she asked her daughter: “Why do you pray so much, Magdi, you don’t have many sins!” – “Mother, one could pray much, but never enough!”, she said.

Whenever the young wife of their boss went traveling, she always asked Magdi to baby-sit. One evening she came home after midnight and found Magdi in front of the sofa asleep. It was evident that she had fallen asleep during prayer.

Her love of prayer continued to increase. Sometimes it happened, her mother said, that I found her in winter at night half frozen, asleep as she knelt praying by her bed. Then she covered her. If Magdi woke up, she continued her prayer to the end. – Sometimes, besides her work and apostolic activities, she hardly had more than 3-4 hours of sleep. Yet, she did not shorten here spiritual exercises. Her spiritual life was first for her. God blessed her with a strong physical constitution. She never complained of being tired. And this never appeared on her face or on her spirit.

Towards the end of her life, it happened once, – tells us Mrs. Biró, the director of charitable services of the parish in Balatonfűzfő, – that Magdi arrived late from Kenese to Fűzfő. Since public security in those days was rather weak, she asked Mrs. Biró to allow her to stay over. It was about 11 o’clock at night when she knocked on the door. She saw that Magdi was standing at the door. Mrs. Biró received her kindly, but since her husband was also home, she offered her the room of the priest who lived with them, but was away on that day. “This is a great honor for me, – said Magdi, – since the priest is God’s servant. How could I accept it? This is wonderful!” In the morning Magdi seemed refreshed and quite happy, said Mrs. Biró. “It was quite an honor, I did not sleep at all, just prayed the whole night”.

Another time she paced up and down in the kitchen during the night, so that she would not fall asleep. Then she leaned on the door post and fell asleep standing. Her mother woke up, saw the light in the kitchen, went out and noticed Magdi in such a strange sleeping position. “I was upset and sent her to bed”, said Mrs. Bódi. But Magdi was praying some novena, and when I fell asleep, she carefully went out again into the kitchen to continue her prayer. Later she confessed to me what she did. She could be very strong-headed in good things. – I often watched her at night as she slept, – says her mother. Her hands were always joined in prayer, holding the Rosary.

Near Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament

Magdi was a natural, cheerful, simple country-girl. When she was 18, she went to work to a factory, but did not lose any of her radiating presence. Many of her contemporaries were the same at one time, but soon they lost the glimmer of their eyes. Their vivacious youthfulness wilted before long through cosmetics, fancy clothes, and beach parties. It was not by chance that Magdi did not mix with them any more. The unbroken freshness of her soul was fed by the springs of life.

The family still lived on the farm in Máma, yet every Sunday Magdi went to Holy Communion at 10.30 Mass. It was no small sacrifice to make the trip of 6 km, when the eucharistic fast was still from midnight on.

Fr. Joseph recounts: “My pastor, Fr. István Oross and myself came almost at the same time to serve in the parish of Fűzfőgyártelep. We hardly knew anyone in the village. The former pastor, under whom I served only 10 days, introduced Magdi to me before the Sunday Mass. We invited her and another zealous girl who knew well the local customs and people, to inform us about the village. Meanwhile I asked about those who frequently received Communion. I asked them how often they received it. The girls answered: “On First Friday, and on Sundays and Feastdays. And also on weekdays when we can come to Mass”. – “Why don’t you receive every day?”, I asked Magdi. – “I could come only very early when I have the morning shift. After the night-shift I can come to Mass, but I don’t want to disturb you fathers to give me Communion so early”. – “But we are here to serve you, so you don’t disturb us!”, we answered. “I get up anyhow at 5 a.m. and at 5.30 I am in the church whether you come or not”. – “Thank you, Father, then I will come every day”.

Sometimes it happened that I was a few minutes late. On these occasions Magdi waited always patiently outside the closed church doors, because she was always there punctually, though she came from more than 3 km. Later she got from the Pastor, Fr. István Oross, a key to the sacristy, so that she could go in whenever she arrived in the morning, or at any time during the day. This was a smart thought, since often she arrived on her bicycle in heavy rain.

On weekdays, at dawn, Magdi’s bicycle was already there, leaned to the church wall, while she received the Bread of Life. On one occasion the gatekeeper of the factory noticed that this girl arrived every day a half an hour earlier than the rest, so he asked her: “Tell me, does it pay you to come every day a half hour earlier?” – “It is worth it for me”, she answered. She did not say more, since “it was not his business”, she told me later. “When I arrive, I greet him with a smile, so he opens the gate willingly. Now he does not make any more comments”.

One day when Magdi traveled to the Jankovich-settlement to make a retreat, I should have got into the church earlier than usual. But I slept in and arrived 10 minutes later. She could not wait, because then she would miss the train. I felt remorse. When she came home, I asked her forgiveness, but she said: “Actually, I should ask your pardon that I make such demands on you”. Of course, I was glad to do this little sacrifice for her. Seeing her spirit-filled face and closed eyes, I often thought that I was serving a saint. One of her friends mentioned to her, how happy she looked when she received Holy Communion. She asked Magdi, how she felt on those occasions. “I am very happy always, so I do not recall my special moments. It is worth getting up early.”

In one occasion Magdi spoke to her sodality friend, Margaret L., about her adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: “It is so good to love God. My heart is warmed up in those times.” She never missed the opportunity when she went into the village to drop into the church for adoration, just to be alone with the Lord. But it did not disturb her if others were in church at the same time. Even the girls remarked: “Look, how beautifully she prays”. She prayed on her knees, with closed eyes, her face smiling, filled with spirit. One girl noticed that Magdi did not even pay attention when a fly walked on her face during her prayer.

Folk-mission and Lenten missions in the parish were special feasts for Magdi. She walked that 6 km or bicycled in the afternoon or evening, to listen to the sermons.

She made a general confession to one of the mission-priests. She talked over with him all her spiritual problems. She was only 16. After that, she threw away all her cosmetics and every light reading book, once and for ever. At the end of her life, at the last Advent again she made a confession of her whole life to the same priest. The priest then asked the pastor: Who was this girl? So Fr. István Oross sincerely, very positively described Magdi. He said practically: “She is a saint!” Years later, Fr. Matthew Sánta, this priest heard about Magdi’s death and wrote to me: “She was a wonderful girl!” Since I was Magdi’s permanent confessor, I was confirmed in my judgment and was very much edified by it.

Magdi went, whenever she could, to the May and October devotions, and also to the litanies on Saturdays. On these occasions Mrs. Biró noticed her prayerful adoration. Magdi did not have prayerbooks. She always knelt, never leaned on the pew, closed her eyes, and buried her head in her hands. She immersed herself completely in her devotions. Once Mrs. Biró could not wait for Magdi to finish her prayers, so she gave her the keys of the church to close it when she finished. When she looked up, her face was radiating as of someone who came from far away. She did not disturb her any more. They agreed that Magdi would lock up the church after she finished her prayers.

At the beginning of 1938 the whole country was excited about the Eucharistic World-Congress, to be held in Budapest. Retreats and missions prepared the people for the great Catholic festivities. There was a folk-mission also in Balatonfűzfő, given by a Lazarist father. Magdi had already found God in the solitude of the fields, now she saw clearly what she ought to do in order to be intimately close to Jesus already here, on her earthly pilgrim-way. “How beautiful is the life of those who are close to God” – she said to her brother. She understood that a religious vocation would attach her completely to Jesus. She had thought of this before, but now, at the age of 17, she saw the time arriving to realize her wish. She asked Fr. István Androvits for his support. Finally, she revealed her plan to her family.

She wanted to belong completely to God, says Fr. Joseph, that is why she wanted to choose the religious life. Her vocation grew slowly, but it was not quite ripe yet. She did not know, into which religious family Jesus was calling her. True, the ecclesiastical and civil legal conditions made the realization of her wish almost impossible. Magdi was canonically an illegitimate child. Her parents could not marry, even civilly, because Mr. Bódi had no documents (birth or baptismal certificate). This was an impediment for entering religious life, though not an insurmountable one. It needed dispensation, but the times were not favorable to solve this problem. When later it became possible, Magdi was no longer on this earth.

Spiritual Relationships

One day Magdi heard people saying that those who work closely with priests in apostolic endeavors, are often looked upon with suspicion. “I cannot understand” – said Magdi – “that people may assume anything else than that two people are dedicated to good work in the interest of God”.

Her spiritual directors kept the memories of Magdi up until today. Her picture is found in their homes. Fr. Joseph has two holy cards which contain Magdi’s signatures. They are precious relics. Their origin is characteristic of Magdi’s happy attitude.

On Dec.31st, 1944, Magdi came to the rectory to say happy new year, but she did not find the priests at home. Fr. István Oross was sick in his home-town, and I went to have supper in a restaurant. Magdi found therefore only the maid, T. Ilonka, in the rectory, and her sister, Juci. They began to discuss how could they express their new-year wishes to me. They decided to write their thoughts on the back of a holy card, but none had any such picture. Ilonka, however, had a key to my room, since she cleaned it, and saw that there were some holy cards on my desk. So they donated to Fr. Joseph one of his own cards. Each wrote her greetings on it, then they also went for supper to the restaurant. I was just leaving when they arrived, but we met and they greeted me together. They began to giggle like little girls. I could not imagine what made them so happy, until I found their gifts on my desk. I liked their little joke very much. Compared to the customary new-year’s wishes of Ilonka and Juci, the words of Magdi were serious. The holy card pictured Jesus, sowing seeds. This inspired Magdi to write: “Dear Jesus. I promise that the seed you have sown in me will bring manifold result. Magdi, on the last evening of 1944”. This was her last Silvester day. – Another holy card pictured St. Joseph. She wrote on it: “Spiritual bouquet... for the feast-day of my spiritual father, with love, Magdi. On the day of St. Joseph, 1945”. This was her last gift, 4 days before her death.

Every priest who got to know Magdi, had the highest opinion of her. Fr. István Oross first came only as a temporary helper to Fűzfőgyártelep, but then later he became its pastor. When he had been appointed to this post, he went to Veszprém to see Dr. Tibor Mészáros, the secretary of the bishop, who preceded me there, – tells us Fr. Joseph. Fr. István asked for information from Fr. Tibor who gave a brief account about the people there. He said about Magdi Bódi that if Fr. István Androvits, the previous pastor who founded the parish and worked much there, had done nothing else than give a fundamental spiritual formation to Magdi, he would have sufficiently completed his pastoral duty.

We have asked Fr. István Androvits himself: Are all those good and beautiful things that they say about Magdi all true? This good priest reached into the inner pocket of his cassock near to his heart, and took out the picture of Magdi. After 10 years we could not have a more impressive and sure answer to our question.

We are talking about fruitful spiritual relationships, so we have to mention Mrs. Biró, this kind and bright woman who lived in Balatonfűzfő. She told us: – On the occasion of the mission in Fűzfő I asked Magdi to serve at the farewell supper which we organized in my house. I taught her how to set up the table and serviettes in an orderly way. She was so grateful for this and for everything: “I learned something again” – she said. “I would have just placed them down. Thank you very much. Mrs. Biró, please teach me everything”. She rejoiced that the guests had a good appetite. – “Please eat it as gladly as

I give it to you from my heart...” – “I like this twice as much, since such a nice-looking girl offers it”. – Magdi became silent, but in the kitchen she said to Mrs. Biró: “Ajaj, I did not need that!”

On one occasion Magdi was praying with closed eyes at her usual place in the church of Balatonfüzfő, near to the stained glass window of the Holy Family. It was impossible not to notice her devotion. She did not notice anything about what happened around her: the working women with their bonnets, the group of working girls in their fashionable dresses, and the occasional colorfully vested ladies on holidays. One of these, however, watched Magdi closely, Margaret Laurentzi, the daughter of a university professor. She was very much impressed by the devotion of this modest, pale girl. Margaret was a zealous sodalist. She decided to get to know her.

After Sunday litany some of the girls from the Altar-society and the Sodality used to visit Fr. István Androvits to talk over certain things with him. Magdi and Margaret met each other under these circumstances. The daughter of a simple peasant, who had only 6 grades of elementary school, and the holidaying young lady with university degree. They were tied together by the intimate love of the Lord Jesus and their apostolic zeal.

Margaret was already a grown-up lady. She taught Magdi how to do spiritual readings, how to meditate, etc. Magdi had a charming enthusiasm for every beautiful and noble thing, especially towards those which increased her religious knowledge.

From now on, they met often in the church. Then they walked together, hand in hand, on the streets of the housing development, which was being built on the shore of Lake Balaton. Their ideals were not scholars or stars, but the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, St. Theresa of Lisieux, St. Ignatius of Loyola, Margaret Mary Bogner. The spiritual relationship between Magdi and Margaret continued for years. “I feel”, – says Margaret after 10 years, – “as if Magdi would always be with me, close to me...”

II. MAGDI THE WORKING GIRL

At Home

Her mother remembers: She was still in school, when she already gave me very useful help with the household chores. I often worked for the neighbors. I could do that easily because Magdi gradually took over things around the house. She did the cleaning and the cooking. She was hardly 12 years old, but she could already cook chickens very well. On the farm in Máma, most of the time Magdi did these jobs around the house. They never saw her chatting uselessly or waste her time by going to the neighbors. We sent her often to the other end of the prairie where pigsties and stalls were used to give food to the animals. She considered it that this was her job. She washed the dishes, did the laundry, sewed, kneaded the bread. She was my right hand, I could trust her with everything. We used to go together to work in the fields of the estates of the landlord.

The children of the gentry went holidaying after a year of study. Magdi too went one summer to Hévíz – to be a kitchen girl. The lean and thin little girl, in her white uniform, was very useful in the kitchen or on the terrace. The guests noticed right away her sparkling eyes and ever-smiling face. She liked the job in Hévíz. She had fond memories of that time.

A nice relic of her stay in Hévíz is a photo. She is there among the servants of the restaurant. On Aug.20th, 1935, she sent home this photo with the following words: “Dear parents and brothers! I received your letter. Thank God, I am healthy, which I wish also to all of you with my whole heart. I have this photo made for 40 fillér. You may not even find me on it, because I have grown a lot, but I did not put on weight. True, I have some color, but this is from the change of climate. My kisses to all of you. Magdi.”

Meanwhile the thin little girl became strong and hardy from the work. Besides her work in the factory, she did a great many of the chores at home. She fed the animals, cooked, cleaned the house, scoured the floor. “As far as she could” – says her mother – “she spared me the hard work. In those days I was often sick. Magdi often took the bucket out of my hand. ‘Mother dear, she said, don’t go for water, I am going to do it for you’”.

When she took lunch to her parents or brothers who were working in the fields, she could not resist taking the hoe or sickle and work for hours with them. At the time of harvest, she went out to the field the night before, slept on the carriage, so that at dawn she could already begin to work. She went by bicycle at 5.30 a.m. to the village-church to receive Holy Communion. From 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., she worked in the factory. Her parents would not ask her to work in the field alone with her factory work. To go to work in the factory meant daily 8 km bicycling daily. But Magdi did this work gladly.

Magdi could not stand to be idleness and she could not stand idle people either. Later, when her brothers went to work at the factory, after work they lay down. Magdi asked them why they could not find work for themselves. One summer she encouraged them, during their paid holiday, to harvest the 90 acres of the neighboring estate. Magdi went with them to work from dawn to late evening.

Such hard work stimulates a corresponding appetite. The physical work exhausts one's strength and increases the appetite. It is worth noticing the self-abnegation of Magdi's life, about which she never spoke. One could suspect only a thing or two from her words, uttered privately.

Her mother carefully packed day provisions for her every day. Magdi knew, however, that Mrs. Biró could get hardly any milk for her sick husband, so she often left the milk there. Mrs. Biró wanted in no way to accept this from Magdi, but she jokingly insisted: "Just take it, Mrs. Biró, in compensation I will eat it up occasionally from you..." It was useless to refuse it. Mrs. Biró found the portion of Magdi's provision every morning before the door of their house.

Magdi was clumsy or ashamed, waiting to be offered food several times. When she was hungry, she said openly to Mrs. Biró: "This is so delicious and I am so hungry, that I am taking a third helping". At the same time, she would fast sometimes. Often she did not eat breakfast. Sometimes she did not eat anything until supper, but Fr. Joseph forbade her to do this because of the hard work she had to do. She obeyed without objection.

According to her mother, she did abstain mostly from those things that she loved most. During the Holy Week she did not cook with lard. She put only milk, tea, and dried fruit on the table. Her father grumbled a bit, but Magdi held the rein strongly in her hand.

Mrs. Biró asked one day: "Magdi, does your father obey you?" – "There was a time, when he did not, but now he does". – "And your brothers?" – "I try to mother them, which they do not always like and they tell me off. But I reply to them in such a way that it creates silence for a while..." The kindness and strength which radiated from her affected even her father's harsh nature. He loved his daughter sincerely.

In the Factory

On November 6th, 1939, Magdi went to apply for a job in the employment-office of the Nitrochemical Factory in Fűzfőgyártelep. She was accepted and became a working girl. She had just completed her 18th birthday. She was not a thin, fragile girl any more, but someone who earned her bread like the other girls of her age. She became stronger physically. Her lean face became rounded, she was rather pale, brown colored rather than pink. Her spiritual life remained unchanged. She was still girlish and cheerful. Just before she was accepted in the factory, she went on to a tour to Badacsony with the other girls of the Sodality. She jumped and clapped and sang, like someone who sees in everyone goodness and kindness.

Her hair tied in a bun, this brown colored girl went to work every morning and the gates of the factory swallowed her up with hundreds of other girls. The Nitrochemical plant had a good name in the Hungarian chemical industry. It was also first from a social point of view: there was a settlement with healthy homes, gardens, and plumbing. There was not a nicer settlement than the factory in Fűzfő. The plant gave work to thousands of workers in buildings hidden by the forest. The industrial railroads were built through flower-beds. From the windows of the work-rooms you could look onto either green groves or Lake Balaton. Everything was clean, orderly and disciplined. Yet, this earthly Paradise was the moral slough of the people of the region from Füred to Polgárd.

The factory was not worse than other plants, where the work began, continued and ended with swearing and cursing. The presence of women did not disturb their hideous speech. There were always here and there workers who told dirty jokes or boasted of their tasteless experiences. The young girls took it normal if the workers stroked and pinched their faces or arms. Those who did not swim with the flow soon were seen as bigots; they were despised and called “mimosas”. Such talk, of course, produced actions. In such places there are many men unhappy in their marriage. Many girls get pregnant foolishly. But nobody is scandalized or wonder about it. They consider it the most natural thing. Many girls learn here the ways of sin, and then lead a frivolous, pleasure-seeking life. Magdi’s working days were surrounded with this kind of atmosphere.

Nothing is more unpleasant for someone who is immersed in sin, than someone who is immune to these usual sins. Spontaneously they turn against those who are different from them in a way that cannot be denied. This happened also around Magdi. They made all kinds of remarks: “Look, how she parades as a saint!”, – “She has been fooled by the priests...”, – “She is nice, but too bad she is always going to the church”. Somehow people suspected that Magdi gladly would become a religious. Now the jokers had their specialty. They ridiculed her because of her skirt-pants which she wore for the bicycle and were not at all conspicuous. “A nun should not wear such skirt-pant”, – “A nun should not ride bicycle”... – What would mother superior say if you came to see her in skirt-pants?” Magdi did not let allow these remarks to bother her. She laughed and replied in a similar tone. She did not spare her retorts, but never in a sharp or hurtful way. On the contrary, with her cheerful remarks, she made others laugh. Thus she was able to neutralize the envy of others.

Magdi had a different reaction when her fellow/workers talked about serious things, or spread slanderous things against the Church or opinions against faith. On these occasions she debated them with flaming face, but never hurtfully. She had a rich

vocabulary, fast thinking and good knowledge, acquired through her reading, which assured her of superiority in every case. She was able to silence a half-dozen accusers, but never harmfully. Never with the attitude that “I am right!” but always with modesty and kindness. The others liked to hear these intellectual duels. She did not allow her emotions to enter the debate worse, but rather she conquered them with her superb wit. She was willing to debate only for God’s cause. Otherwise she left others to their own opinions.

Her spiritual readiness was even more effective, more impressive against the roaring waves of immorality. When later her younger brother went to work at the factory, he was shocked by the atmosphere. Magdi gave her this advice: “The one who is helped by God, is able to stand strong under all circumstances. I can thank God alone, that I was able to remain faithful to him”.

Magdi was not a stupid little duckling. Her glance noticed everything; she sensed things under the surface. Her answer to sin was always prayer.

First among the Workers

Magdi stood her ground in the work-place. The “pyro” section of the factory manufactured different things: patrons, colored rockets, etc. If it needed to manufacture something new, Magdi was among the first chosen to learn how to do it. She learned fast, so others then learned from her. In the “pyro” the girls wore bonnets, because from their work often they became so sooty that they looked like chimney-sweepers. Magdi never became fastidious about that. She never made any option between clean or dirty work. She was ready to do whatever was asked of her, and she was trustworthy doing it.

Soon the bosses wanted to entrust her with the leadership of a group, which would have been a promotion and more money. She would have become “foreman”. Magdi skillfully declined it, saying that she was too young and that another woman with family had more need for a raise in salary. For her this was self-evident, but the others began to esteem her behavior highly.

At the beginning of 1943, a nursing course was announced. Magdi found that here is a favorable opportunity to serve her country, and her fellows. She signed up with the intention of serving at the front. Everyone opposed her plan, yet she held on to it stubbornly. She jumped up and down when she received the list of what she ought to bring her, but became sad, when her call-up did not arrive. Her companions in the course went to the front one after the other. Magdi could not leave things as they were. She went to the military commandant and was told that the leaders of the factory would not let her go. They meant that they could not let one of their best workers go to the front. Earthly powers thwarted her plan to offer her life for something beautiful, something noble.

In the summer of 1943, Magdi made another closed retreat in Pécel. Here she told God her big secret wish: “That I may die a beautiful death”.

One cannot deny her moral superiority. The envious people gradually became silent and the men felt something special around her. Not only the workers, but also her well-educated bosses. One of the chief engineers of the factory, an imposing individual, let his authority be manifest before the workers. He hardly returned the greeting of the workers, or did not return it at all. But he always greeted Magdi ahead of time by raising his hat. Others noticed this too. Magdi accepted this distinction humbly, if she could not avoid the encounter.

The chief engineer of her section also made a well-meaning exception towards her. She was promoted to “foreman” and Magdi could not refuse. But at the first opportunity she asked to be transferred to section “Tri”. Here she worked in the laboratory and did not have any subjects under her supervision.

Her amiability gave her authority. In her presence, there was no swearing, no double-meaning talk. When she visited another section in the factory, the girls, who were talking about unbecoming things, held their tongues, saying: “Watch out, Magdi is coming”.

In the Service of Charity

Mrs. Biró, who introduced Magdi as a little prairie-girl to caritative services, remembers teaching her how to decorate the altar. In the beginning Magdi did not have much taste for it, but she had an ambitious and open nature which kindly accepted directions from others. With time, she completely learned the art of Mrs. Biró. Later she told me in detail how she decorated the altar in Litér. “Was this all right? Because I wanted to make it really beautiful”.

On the Feast of Peter and Paul, says Mrs. Biró, Magdi arrived already at 5 a.m. with a great bunch of freshly-picked flowers. She had gone to the field at early dawn. She did not regret making this sacrifice for the beauty of God’s house. Later, when she was the leader of a girls’ club, she carefully introduced the other girls to the art of decorating the altar. “To decorate the altar – she said – is like when a bride is expecting her bridegroom. Of course, she adorns herself. By this she expresses that she thinks of her bridegroom, that her heart belongs to him. So when decorating the altar, we express how sweet is the Lord Jesus for us and with how much love we expect him on the altar in the Mass”.

In the summer of 1935, Mrs. Biró and Magdi began a great project in connection of propagating the Sacred Heart Messenger (Szív Újság). A church was being built in Balatonfűzfő, (which is not like Fűzfőgyártelep), where they wanted to have a stone altar, dedicated by the diocesan bishop himself. From the 20% commission of selling the Sacred Heart Messenger they baked cookies and sold them, and they gave the income for building the stone-altar. The church was completed in the summer of 1936 and was dedicated by Dr. Nándor Rott, the diocesan bishop of Veszprém. It is characteristic of Magdi’s childlike spirit, (she was only 15 at that time), that when she saw the old bishop perspiring and exhausted during the long ceremony, she said to the others with her usual enthusiasm: “Let us pray for him, lest he gets a cold... He should not get sick”.

It belonged to the works of the parish to organize different collections, visiting and helping poor families and the sick, prepare the charity breakfast of first communicants, to recruit people for the retreat-sermons, etc. Magdi was always ready to do these. She performed her work conscientiously and trustworthily, in spite of often encountering humiliating and harsh rejections, and swallowing sharp remarks.. She never mentioned in detail what kind of inconveniences she had to bear, but everyone knew how difficult this kind of work was.

Magdi’s generosity never wanted to show off. She did not announce ahead of time what she was going to do, but rather surprised those whom she helped. When she heard that a poor family was expecting a child, she turned to the Altar Society’s layette-service in their behalf. Often she sent the clothes with somebody else, herself wanting to remain in the background.

She took care of Mrs. Biró with the same generous attention. On one occasion she wanted to do her a favor by bringing some corn-bread to her, when she found her in - pain. She asked Mr. Biró how to alleviate the pain when this happens. She then boiled water for tea, heated a pot-lid to warm up the sick. She looked for the family, washed the dishes, cleaned the kitchen, and only then she went to the factory for the afternoon shift. In the evening 10 p.m. she came back once again to ask about the sick. She gladly made a great detour from her usual bicycle route. “Whenever she came”, said Mrs. Biró, “she

began to help without a word, as she noticed that I was ill. She did not let me work on those occasions”.

Magdi hated to subject other people to painful situations because of her. Once in the dressing room somebody stole her watch. She could have found the thief by searching everyone, but she did not want to expose her friends to such a search. The thief would have received a shameful penalty and perhaps even dismissal. She preferred her watch to be lost. At home, she was blamed for not guarding her things better. She remained silent.

In her last years she attended the meetings of the Working Girls (DL, Dolgozó Leányok). She talked over with her companions how they could help others. She introduced them to the work she had previously done alone. She thought with special love of those young women, who had no one to help them care for their young. Magdi organized the services for these women whether Catholic or Protestant. Some “pious” Catholic women objected that Catholic girls helped Protestant women. Magdi could not care less about their objections. She did not pay attention to such earthly opinions when it was the matter of loving her neighbor.

It often happened that Magdi has changed her day-shift to night for mothers with small children that they might be at home during the night. Very few girls imitated her in this enterprise.

Besides generosity she had the opportunity to practice patience as well. No setback could discourage her. In every enterprise which was not successful she looked on the bright side and not on the failure.

As much as their strength and time allowed, the DL-girls cared for the elderly who needed help. They cleaned their homes, brought them food, helped them in every way. One of them became sick from disgust, when they washed up the spittle of an old man from the floor. Instead of thanking them, the old man grumbled. He did not allow the windows to be opened. During cleaning, a carved object fell on the floor from his rickety bed. “They broke my bed” – grumbled the old man indignantly. Instead of retorting, Magdi began to giggle. Her good mood passed on to the two other girls. They liked how Magdi could derive fun out of a mishap.

At another occasion, they patched a child’s shirt on the wrong side. It was quite a test for them to listen with due seriousness to the admonitions and criticism of their work. They promised to be more careful in the future.

They combed the tousled hair of little girls and they washed the faces of those whose mother was sick. In this kind of service it happened that unwanted residents transferred into the hair of the caretakers, especially if they had such thick hair as Magdi. In other words, they became infested with lice. They got rid of them with much combing amid lots of laughing. Why should they be annoyed? Ultimately, they got into this unpleasant situation for the glory of God, in the service of their neighbors.

The Association of Working Girls (DL) in Litér began a great project at the end of November 1944. They heard that a military hospital had been established in Balatonfüred. The wounded soldiers missed home cooking. So the girls went through the village collecting food for the soldiers. From the ingredients they cooked and baked fine food, and filled a whole cart with these packages. Magdi spoke with the leaders of the hospital and got carriers, with whom they took to the road on a Sunday afternoon. Magdi asked the priests to accompany them, because it would be more impressive if there were some men among them. It was an unforgettable event when the wounded soldiers received not just the fine food, but also the love that radiated from the eyes of the girls. –

The trains were rather deficient and uncertain, so they had to travel by horse-carriage. It also rained, but their joyful singing made them forget all the inconvenience.

In time of war, the food was rationed and one needed tickets. You needed a ticket also to buy sugar. Together with Fr. István Oross, we got sugar in exchange for our tobacco tickets. We would have liked to organize an afternoon with ice-cream for the apprentice-boys of the factory. The boys themselves exchanged their tobacco-tickets for sugar-tickets. Thus they succeeded to get together the necessary money. The boys were very glad that some people thought of them. – In the preparation and organization of the ice-cream-afternoon Magdi was the main collaborator. It was a problem to flavor the ice-cream, since now one hardly could buy anything. Magdi decided that they would make caramel-ice-cream which did not need any further aroma. The organization, the kind service, the good mood and atmosphere was all Magdi's doing. The boys were happy, that they, who were rather despised in the factory, have been treated so kindly. They knew that the soul of the whole enterprise was Magdi, who was much more in their eyes than just a working girl.

The ice-cream-afternoon was a success, but afterward came the washing of dishes and clean up. This was not as pleasant as being hospitable. Magdi did it almost alone, but with the same enthusiasm: the washing of dishes, the cleaning up the kitchen, as she did the serving of ice-cream to the apprentices. The kitchen was so shining clean, that the mother of Fr. István Oross who was with us, expressed her joy and admiration. She then asked her son to arrange with the bosses of the factory, that instead of Helen T. they should send Magdi to serve at the rectory. (It was the custom that the cleaning lady of the rectory got her payment from the factory as a normal factory worker).

We were hilarious at the suggestion of this caring mother. Her son, the priest tried to explain to her mother that Magdi was excellent at work around the house, but she had more important things to do in the life of the parish. Helen T. was present at this conversation, but she did not feel ashamed. She was not envious of Magdi, because she loved her and recognized Magdi's excellence.

My room was usually cleaned while I was celebrating Mass. As far as I remember, one day we changed the order of Masses. Magdi went to the Mass of Fr. István Oross, and I celebrated after him. After Mass I went to my room and I was truly surprised. Everything was shining and in right order in my simple room, I was sure, that it was cleaned not by Helen T., who did the work very well, but not in such an excellent way. I went to breakfast and asked Helen: "Who cleaned my room this morning?" – "Did you notice, Father, that not me? Magdi wanted to help me, because she had some time. I asked her to clean up your room". – She sincerely loved Magdi, so she could not be envious of her.

On the last Christmas the girls sew clothes for poor children. Magdi organized this too. They were still able to buy some material in the store (Hangya), from the money collected in the saving-box of St. Anthony. They did the work together. Magdi cut up the cloth for dresses, then showed the girls how to sew it.

The last great program of the Working Girls (DL) was a course in nursing. More than 70 girls signed up for the one-week course. Magdi called a registered nurse from Pápa to teach and direct the course in an expert manner. A few talks were given also by the military doctor who was around the village. In the crowded village they were not able to get a room for the nurse, so she and Magdi slept in the parish hall which was just being

built. Magdi did not want to leave the nurse alone, so she shared the room with the young nurse who was just as enterprising as Magdi.

In Intellectual Work

Magdi was very talented. Her intellectual ability manifested itself already in the first grades of elementary school. She became the best among the students of the class, and her field of interests was unusually wide. Whatever she heard from the adults, she kept in her mind and she showed interest even towards those things which were normally far from the mental world of a country girl. Thus, she was interested in sport, film, arts, etc.

Magdi was the most popular actress of the stage in the Catholic school. The people in Köveskál still remember her, when she appeared with a bonnet and long skirt, and recited a poem from their primer together with her younger brother who was vested in the uniform of a hussar: “What do you want to be, my dear son, when you grow up? – I want to be a hussar, my dear mother...” At the end of the poem the little mother hugged her even smaller son. On every occasion the applause did not stop when they performed this act.

When the school put up the “Hungaria” play, Magdi got the main role. She moved the audience to tears as she recited the prayer for the nation. She could play with great feelings. Her deep black eyes glittered under her brows. Her face was creole-pale, but her enthusiasm was able to put vivid redness on it. At the last Christmas-play in Köveskál in 1933, Magdi was modeling a little humpbacked girl who was healed by Jesus. Jani played the part of St. Joseph.

One was able to notice quite early in Magdi’s intellectual life, which formed her inner self, that she liked to read. For her good progress in her studies she always got books. One after the other, she read also all the books of Sophie, the niece of their boss, who was two years older than Magdi. She often visited a neighboring family in Köveskál, and while her mother helped in the kitchen, Magdi was befriended by their daughter, Gizella, who studied in Budapest. Magdi read with pleasure the books of Gizella too.

The love of reading already in the prairie-home in Máma has formed Magdi’s soul. The new pastor in Fűzfőgyártelep, Fr. István Androvits, gladly gave his spiritual books to young people for reading. He took care also that they discuss with one another what they read. Everyone had to read the same book and then at their next meeting they exchanged views and opinions among themselves. If they did not understand something, they asked their spiritual father. So they covered in this way also the Book of Spiritual Exercises by St. Ignatius. His views and the later discussions became deeply engraved in Magdi’s soul. Similarly they discussed the life of St. Aloysius and the books of Jolán Gerely, written specially for girls.

Later the work occupied much of Magdi’s time, which curtailed considerably the time spent for reading. Yet, Magdi still tried to use her lunch-time and other breaks for this purpose. She covered almost the whole Hungarian Catholic Youth literature of that time. On one occasion Mrs. Biró gave her the New Testament to read. Magdi was touched by her gesture and gladly accepted it.

On one occasion, when Magdi asked for some spiritual reading from me, – says Fr. Joseph, – and was selecting from among my books, she remarked: “I am interested in the struggles of the saints. Not when they had already become saints, but how they became saints. I like especially the spiritual ambitions and struggles of St. Ignatius of Loyola.” – I remarked: “With spiritual readings, the author is not important, but what kind of truth they contain. One has to meditate upon these, so that we too may use them in our striving

for holiness... Magdi, do you make notes about your spiritual life? If you do, then I would like to read them eventually”. – “Who is interested in what I scribble together” – she laughed at this bizarre suggestion. – “I am interested” – I said smiling, – if for no other reason than for getting know your writings, because in your case of canonization I am going to be the ‘devil’s advocate’. I will reveal everything that you said and did”. – Magdi saw this as a joke: “On the contrary, I am going to disclose everything about you, Father, in your process of canonization. Since you are older, you will die sooner than I”, – she said it in an impish way, because I was one and half year older than she, and she knew that well. – “But seriously” – I continued – “you should take care of your writings, because I, as your spiritual father, would like to know them for control”. – Then Magdi responded seriously: “That is different. I will take care of them and whenever you want them, I will hand them over to you”. The little box, which she carefully guarded even in the air-raid shelter, probably contained these notes. The eye-witnesses mention that they found pieces of paper around the shelter after Magdi’s death. Unfortunately, these have been lost. I could not produce them at the canonical process.

Magdi wanted to complement her mental readiness in preparing herself for the private exams of the “polgári” high school by following diligently the private courses, which the factory organized for these people. – “I was teaching the religion classes”, – explains Fr. Joseph, – “since religion was an obligatory subject. Magdi was doing at that time the 4th grade of ‘polgári’ (i.e. 8th grade). I taught liturgy in that year, and teaching the rituals, Magdi gladly helped me by bringing over from the church the liturgical vessels and vestments. One day I said a ‘dry Mass’ from the Missal of Szunyogh Xavér, so that they might understand in Hungarian what we pray at Mass and what happens there. Everyone was enthusiastic, especially Magdi.

On one occasion I gave them a quick written exam from religion, to know how much they had learned. I graded them by giving points. Magdi reached the highest grade. When I announced the result, she was ashamed for being the first. Then I mentioned the second best student, and Magdi was happy by saying: “That’s right! Everyone knows that he is the best student among us!”. Everyone was smiling. They all liked Magdi and they enjoyed how she wanted to get out of being appreciated. They did not even wonder about that.

Often this additional work meant a great deal for her. Normally she worked until 2 p.m. Twice weekly she went to the course from 3 to 7 p.m. to preparing for high school. Then came the daily apostolic work. When she arrived home at 10 p.m. she studied, often until after midnight.

Her mother mentions that she wrote her diary also in the evenings. Then she gave an account to her mother where she had been and what did she had done. Then she prayed her long prayers. I watched this forced overwork with some apprehension. It made me anxious. She was going continuously, she did not have day or night. I do not know how long she would be able to continue at this pace. But as long as she lived, she did not get tired of it.

Mr. Biró remarked it once to his wife: “One wonders how a simple prairie girl could have such wisdom. Even an educated man would be proud of her opinions. Often she disturbed me, because I was not able to respond to her magnificent words”.

Our parish in those days was Fűzfőgyártelep, to which belonged as filiae also Litér, Vilonya, and Királyszentistván. In her last years Magdi lived in Litér, but she was active in the whole territory of the parish. The parent in Vilonya did not know her; they just saw

how she dealt with children. The children were enthusiastic about her. The parents thought that Magdi was their teacher, who by her profession dealt with the kids in the association of the Sacred Heart Crusaders. – “On one occasion I was in Vilonya”, – says Fr. Joseph, – “when they mentioned Magdi. In passing I mentioned that she was not a teacher. The parents were amazed, because she led the Crusaders so well and so competently, that everyone thought she is a teacher. In her appearance, manner and talk, she truly gave the impression that she was an educated girl. Her chaste spirit penetrated all her words and actions.

III. MAGDI IN THE APOSTOLATE

Magdi was born for apostolic work. She was destined to this with her grace-filled soul and with the attracting power of her nature and manner. She considered as her life vocation the great work of saving souls.

On one occasion, Magdi was chatting with Fr. István A. about her future: “If you do not succeed in becoming a nun, you should not remain without any goal”. – Yet, she emphasized that she never wanted to get married. She wanted to belong completely to the Lord. She meditated often about whether she should do that. How would she run her life in the world? How would she arrange things so that she would solely spend her life in the service of God? Providence prepared for her the way of a religious vocation: in the world of factories and workrooms she would become the organizer and leader of her fellow-workers.

“I like my name very much” – she said once to Mrs. Biró “If it depended on me, I could not have chosen a better name. It reminds me of Mary, the Blessed Virgin. And Magdalene calls my attention always to my vocation. My vocation is to acquire erring souls, like Mary Magdalene, to the Lord.”

The Beginning of Her Apostolate

The apostolic trait in Magdi began to show itself already in the first grades of school. When she was a supervisor, she would have liked to keep discipline, but often this was not successful because of many boys. She wrote their name on the board, but she did not have the heart to let them be punished. When the teacher came back, she erased the board fast.

She was playing with the other children at Cigánydomb and Nagyrét. In winter they played with a sleigh on the hills. But even in those times, she warned the disturbers, and tried to reconcile those who fought with one another.

Sometimes they organized discussions with the Protestant children. Usually this ended in a way that the larger group chased the smaller one, either the Catholics the Protestants, or vice-versa. Magdi ran always in the front, when they chased the others, or when they ran from them.

As soon as she left school, Magdi began her independent apostolic activity. Her pastor, Fr. István Androvits, noticed that Magdi always met with a group of children from the farm in Máma at the Sunday Mass. Not one of them was missing. Fr. István was very glad to see this apostolic zeal, which Magdi showed without any asking or prodding from others. On one Sunday, Fr. István told Magdi: “Magdi, the children from Máma did not know the answers in religion”. – “You will see, Father, that next time they will know them”. (Fr. István recognized in Magdi the apostolic soul, and he became her first spiritual director). Magdi did not say more. But she performed what she promised: the children from Máma were always the best in the religion class. “How did you learn these things so well?” – asked the Father. – “Magdi Bódi taught us and asked these questions from us” – they answered.

Without causing any sensation, Magdi became the apostle of these 6-7 prairie children. She took them to church regularly. The people noticed it and remarked: “Here comes Magdi and her family!” Sunday afternoon she went with them to collect wild flowers and meanwhile she talked to them about Jesus.

In industrial regions and summer resorts there are often unbelieving people. Magdi noticed this. She warned the more advanced children: “You know, there are people who say there is no God. One should not believe this, because those who say such things, are stupid people”.

For the day of St. Nicholas, Magdi became Santa Claus. She rewarded and warned the children. For Christmas, she organized a modest little play in one of the barns of the prairie. Into the hearts of the children and their parents she poured in this way a little Christmas joy.

Preparation for the Apostolate

The little prairie girl from Mama was not yet a well-prepared apostle. She could not yet express briefly, tersely, her faith and worldview according to the circumstances of people who talked with her, but she was able to give her whole self that lived from faith. This was surprising and often too much for people who had a rather weak faith. “She is far from real life” – they thought.

Margaret L. was not able to convince others that Magdi’s faith was already a living reality, and so she was not much interested in the things of this world. That is why she seemed often far from reality. But Magdi had shown with her deeds, that someone may be skillful and have practical sense, and at the same time a deep spirituality. She often appeared with her bicycle in the needy days of the years of war and brought certain things to the parents of Margaret L. She often noticed from hidden words that these people from Budapest were unable to get certain things which they needed. She did not say a word, just appeared next time with the needed things. “Magdi truly has a deep spirituality...”, and they changed their opinion about her.

This conquering apostolic spirit began to flourish in Magdi's heart in the summer of 1941. She made her first closed retreat in the retreat-house of Pecel. The retreat was organized by the Sodality of the Queen of Apostles. Its aim was to form lay apostles for the Actio Catholica. If she could enter a religious community, then she was going to be a lay apostle – decided Magdi, inspired by God’s grace.

Magdi was not just enthusiastic about this, but she searched in books, methods, which could introduce her into the secrets of educating the young people. She began to watch closely one of her Sodality companions, who was very popular in the factory because of her kind behavior. She was curious how one could win over others.

The Society of the Catholic Working Girls (DL) called at that time the parish of Fuzfogyartelep, to send one or two working girls to the formation courses which were organized in Jankovich-settlement. Fr. Istvan Androvits called Magdi who was just waiting for something like this. She spent her holidays between August 5-14 there. She had too much self-respect to accept the traveling cost and the registration fee from the parish. She went at her own expense. The director of the course noticed right away the enthusiasm and interest of Magdi who used every minute of her time to learn. The study-week increased Magdi’s apostolic zeal. Her self-respect as a working girl, which was until now quite neglected, began to blossom. “My vocation is that I am a working girl, therefore I have to lead the workers to Christ”.

Apostle at Home

It was painful for Magdi that she could not see her parents near to God. Her mother had a good heart, who used to pray, but she could not receive the sacraments because their marriage was not regularized. Her father had never received a religious education. He did not even know to what religion he belonged. He knew that he was baptized, but he did not know the Lord's Prayer. This factor has been influential in the life of the boys.

Magdi saw the situation of her family with anxiety. She could not do anything else than pray and offer sacrifices for them. She made a vow that she would not cut her hair and would not follow the modish coiffures of those days. On her photo we can see that she wore ear-rings, but in the last years of her life even those she avoided. She did not wear a ring. She offered as sacrifice not going to movies, and not going to the beach to swim. How much abnegation this meant for someone, who lived her whole life near the Lake Balaton, and who was often invited by her friends on hot summer days to swim in the cool lake!

Mrs. Biró related that Magdi often asked her to pray for her father's conversion. She especially prayed that he would not die without receiving God's grace. God heard her prayer, but Magdi was informed about this in heaven. – Magdi knew well the principle that one has to hate sin, but to love the sinner. This meant quite a challenge for her, especially on that heroic level she required from herself. It was difficult for her to love her father, but she struggled with the problem. Its outside effect was that her father loved her very much. He never quarreled with her, and often softened his behavior, when in a drunken state he wanted to hurt his wife. On these occasions Magdi stood between her parents: "Here I am, father! If you want to fight, then hit me but not my mother!" But her father never hit her.

Magdi considered her mother a martyr who truly suffered a lot. "I remember well" – said Mrs. Bódi, – "that on one occasion of such a family fight, I began to cry and said to Magdi: 'I cannot stand it any more, I will leave you and go somewhere. You know everything, so I will not be missed...' – 'But my mother, said Magdi, do not disrupt the family nest! What would happen to us?' – She could speak with such kindness. 'We suffer for you, and you suffer for us. Forgive my father, because he did not receive any education.' – Among her torments she encouraged herself and the others: 'We should not be angry with our father...'"

She always encouraged her brothers for the good. Especially with Jani, she had lots of trouble, for he did not listen to her. Not understanding him, did not lessen her love for her younger brother. When he served in the army, Magdi often visited him, not shying away in those dangerous, air-raid filled times from difficult traveling to meet her brother. When Jani went to the front, Magdi slipped a holy card into his prayerbook with these words: "I promise that I will love you. Magdi". Jani watered this precious relic with his tears and he keeps it even today.

Magdi was kind also with Gyula. "Just wait, brother," – she said -, "I am going to pick a good wife for you ..." On Sundays she often asked him: "Gyula, it is Sunday and you have time. Come with me to Mass..." – According to her mother, one can explain that Magdi was rather reticent at home, and hardly spoke about her interior life.

After the death of Magdi, many things were settled in the family, which she could not achieve during life. During the time of war we had many canonical permissions, – says

Fr. Joseph. Bishop Joseph Mindszenty urged the deans to convey the authorization to the priests, which they could use in those days. We received authorization also to give exemption for marriage impediments. Even the civil authorities allowed the marriage of people in the church without previous civil marriages, since obtaining the necessary documentation was almost impossible in those days. Then on the basis of the ecclesial marriage, their names were entered into the civil register.

Canonically on March 23rd, 1945, on the day of the Soviet occupation of our village, it became possible to regularize the marriage of Magdi's parents. On that day Magdi left us forever. Beginning from the first Sunday after Easter, I went regularly to Litér to celebrate Mass. I talked it over with Mr. and Mrs. Bódi that – if they wished – we could have their wedding without any publicity. They both gladly agreed. After confession and Holy Communion I married them and they received also the marriage certificate. Now they were able to register themselves also civilly, and later these personal data were entered also in their personal papers. Mr. Bódi had no other documents at all. The elderly parents today live a peaceful life. “What would happen to me, – says Mr. Bódi to his caring wife, – if you were to die before me. I do not wish you to work in the fields. It is enough for you the work around the house.” On long winter evenings, when they were just the two of them, Mrs. Bódi read to her husband instructive texts. Meanwhile she also taught him about religious things.

Gyula and Jani are good fathers. Marika, the oldest granddaughter, is already in school. She earns lots of praise from her religion teacher, Fr. Lajos Török, who has been pastor of Balatonfűzfő from 1943 up to now, and who still knew Magdi very well: “She is just like Magdi”. They all go to make their Easter confession which they hold as their freely chosen obligation. “We have not been worthy of her” – says Mrs. Bódi, remembering Magdi with kind humility.

Leader in Apostolic Activities

The providential apostolic vocation of Magdi unfolded mostly within the context of Catholic associations. In those days Catholicism in Hungary blossomed most vividly within these groups. Magdi took her part in them courageously.

Among the Crusaders of the Sacred Heart

Magdi was initiated into the Sodality of Our Lady on December 8th, 1942. The more zealous members of the Sodality were leaders of the Crusader-groups in the neighboring villages. The Bódi family moved in 1942 from Vilonya to the farm-land of Daka, about 3 km away. But Magdi continued to lead the Crusaders in Vilonya. She did her work with heart and soul. There was never a bad enough weather which would to keep her home. Her father's new boss asked her with amazement: "Magdi, where are you going in such muddy weather?" – "My kids are waiting for me" – said Magdi with a happy smile. On one occasion I traveled with the car of the factory from Vilonya to Litér. We caught up with Magdi as she was pushing her bike on the side of the road. The mud was so thick that she could not sit up on the bike. We had a hard time to convince her to get up into the car. We placed her bike between the seats of the coachman and the passengers. The coachman was helping most readily, – says Fr. Joseph. Meanwhile I made some remarks on the weather. Magdi however turned the discussion in her natural way to some spiritual subject. "Everything is easy, if it done for Christ and for the souls" – she said.

Magdi played with the Crusader kids, jumped around with them, but all this was only a means to bring the hearts of the children closer to Jesus. Week by week, she asked them to fulfill the weekly theme, that is the practice of some freely assumed virtue. Slowly she led them to the custom of frequent Communion. Magdi could speak about Jesus in a moving way. The kids were enthusiastic about her. When they were asked what they did on Sunday afternoon with aunt Magdi, they praised her exuberantly: "She told us beautiful stories..., then we played a lot, and she also gave us some cookies..."

Sometimes Magdi walked together with Jani, because Jani was courting a girl in Papkeszi. When they parted on the road, Magdi remarked: "I am going to pray for you two". – "And for who else?" – "For my kids, the Crusaders".

Her work with the children brought Magdi in closer relationship with their parents. She knew the family from her contact in the factory. Now she visited them in their homes and propagated the Sacred Heart Messenger (*Szív Újság*). It was easy on these occasions to turn to religious themes. Magdi knew how to be quietly and jokingly forceful. In one of the families the woman did not want to go to the sacraments, so it was useless to use arguments. So finally she said: "Aunt D., I am not going out from here until you promise to come to Communion with your daughter". Magdi brought many worker-families back to God through her Crusaders.

Magdi's parents moved again in April 1944. They moved to the property of the Nitrochemical Company in Litér. This became the last home for Magdi. But she still often returned to her Crusaders in Vilonya.

On one occasion I was playing with the children in front of the school in Vilonya. We were immersed in play and the children had a good time. Meanwhile unexpectedly Magdi appeared with her bicycle on the road. One of the little boys noticed her and shouted: "Here comes Aunt Magdi!" The whole group of kids suddenly left me there alone, and ran to meet Magdi who then continued to play with them. They did not miss me at all. I was glad that they love Magdi so much.

Magdi continued to do the same in Litér as she did in Vilonya, but here there were many more children. On Corpus Christi in 1944, Magdi organized the homage of the children in front of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The girls were vested in white and in

their little baskets carried rose-petals as they walked from Litér to Fűzfőgyártelep. At the agreed time, Magdi went to meet them on her bicycle and brought the little ones. She had to make the 3 km trip four times. This was her last Corpus Christi feast.

Among the Girls of Forced Labor

In this war-time situation, the military authorities were rather insensitive towards moral norms, and in different regions they called the girls into “voluntary work-camps”. There was one such camp near the factory of Fűzfő. The girls were placed not within the compound of the factory, but crowded in outside barracks like soldiers. Right beside their barracks were the soldiers in similar compounds. Naturally, the soldiers could freely come and go into the girls’ barracks. – With Fr. István O. we were exasperated, because we could not do anything in defense of the girls, – says Fr. Joseph. We priests could not visit them, due to the unfriendly propaganda against the church.

The factory in Fűzfő was not under civil, but under military regulation. Our pastor, Fr. István O. forcefully protested against the shameful situation of the girls. He received merely a cynical response from the commander, who later changed his mind. Women attendants were given to the girls who tried to create some order among them within a frame of decency. But they could not prevent the girls, those who wanted, from staying out all the night. Then we decided to ask the help of Magdi on their behalf.

With Fr. István we thought of enlisting the help of the other Sodality girls as well in this apostolate, said Fr. Joseph. More girls with united power could have achieved perhaps a better result. But it was Magdi who assumed this rather sensitive pastoral task. For the others, who were students and civil servants, it would have been a scandal to get friendly with these labor-service girls who had a bad reputation. Magdi was a working girl. For her it was less conspicuous to talk and be friendly with them.

Magdi very skillfully got in contact with them at the work-place. Then she looked them up in their barracks. In this way she was able to gather together about 30 girls, who had better sense and character. Quite a few of them came because of their patriotism, but soon they realized that they had been misled. But there was no return.

Magdi called them together in the big hall of the parish. Then she asked me to talk to them. The hall was 10x5 meter wide and close to the rectory. It had tables and chairs. Magdi suggested what subject I should address about religion or worldview. I was willing to accept her suggestions. She opened the meeting, then I talked and went back to my room. Then the girls continued to discuss the issues. Magdi led the discussion and later she told me about it. Some parlor games, jokes and singing completed the meeting. Magdi then accompanied them back to the barracks.

Magdi often talked with them in pairs. Thus she got to know them more deeply. Gradually she convinced them to go to church again. The next step was to prepare them for a good confession, then the beginning of the great novena. Magdi assumed the task to wake them up every morning, to come from Litér before 5 a.m., and I – says Fr. Joseph, – was waiting for them in the confessional of the church. Before the morning shift, they all received Communion together with Magdi.

In this way, Magdi succeeded to save about 26 girls, from among the 80, from getting lost, and even to make them better Christians. Of course, those whose conscience was disturbed by Magdi’s efforts, moved in the opposite direction and looked at her work with hostility, opposing Magdi’s visits. Magdi gladly suffered these hostile remarks, but when it became expedient, she had the appropriate vocabulary to respond. Thus it happened one day when she was waking up the girls for First Friday Communion. One of the chief opponents called out indignantly: “Why is she disturbing us? She does not let us

sleep!” – though she was not woken up at all. Magdi then quietly pointed out: “Why? Did you not yourself disturb the others when you came home at night from the soldiers?” The complaining girl suddenly shut up. Magdi’s girls giggled.

Of course, the girls whom Magdi won for Christ did not become saints right away. Often they turned back to their old faults. Magdi told me this. Once she mentioned to me sadly, that she had seen one of her girls arm in arm with a man, when she returned late night from her work. She took this very badly, because she just had a talk with this girl the previous night. “You see, Magdi, believe me, the girls are rather unsteady, it hardly pays off to deal with them”. – said Fr. Joseph. “Precisely for this reason we have to care for them”, she said, “because they are so weak and need the encouragement”. She continued to care for them without discouragement.

The work of Magdi with the girls from labor-service created a storm. She was somewhat shocked and reported to me right away: “Father, there is trouble. They want to bring me in for questioning”. They reported maliciously to the Protestant director of the factory, who usually was quite unfriendly towards Catholics, that Magdi Bódi organizes a youth association in the war factory without permission. The simple thing in this case would be to investigate the case and forbid the organizer to continue. The director of the factory was a big shot in those days. Magdi was ready for everything, yet she jovially pondered the possibilities: “I am not afraid of Uncle John. If he arrests me, so be it. What can they do with me? The most is that they will exclude me from the factory...” Then she added smiling: “If they throw me out through the door, I will climb in through the window”.

This did not happen. The director held it degrading for himself to deal with a simple working girl. According to him, a working girl could not do any harm. Therefore they warned the supposed leader of the organization, who was a faithful wife of a zealous civil servant. She reported it to Fr. István O., who was her pastor. The case was concluded. The camp of the labor-force girls was disbanded in November 1944, and the girls went home.

In the Association of Working Girls (DL) in Litér

Magdi was ready for the disbanding of the camp of labor-force girls. Therefore parallel with her work among them, she was looking for some place where she could lay the foundation for a stable DL-association. It seemed to be best to work on gathering the young girls in Litér itself. Here they had a settlement for hundreds of workers. But she was still somewhat of a foreigner. “The Bódi family came here only in April 1944. I myself became an associate pastor in the parish of Fűzfőgyártelep on the 1st of June” – say Fr. Joseph. When Charles Takács, the pastor, introduced Magdi to me on one Sunday before Mass in Litér as an associate pastoral worker, we were still in rather unknown territory.

Later, one of girls from the DL, recalls the first meeting: “I had seen Magdi before the DL was founded here. I liked that she always smiled at us, though she did not know us yet. We did not even greet each other. She cycled by us, we looked at her, she looked at us and smiled. Her smile attracted us.”

“One day she came to us,” – continues the same girl, – “she introduced herself and explained what kind of association she would like to organize. She invited us.” And so she visited all the homes where girls lived. It was somewhat difficult that they were in the village also “levente”-girls, who sympathized with military methods. Even the boy scouts were directed towards military discipline, and called them “soldier boy scouts”. Under these circumstance it was not without danger to organize a merely “religious” group for young people, instead of doing something “patriotic”.

“A ‘levente’ is concerned only with the body” – explained Magdi to a girl who wanted to be a “levente-girl”. The DL is concerned primarily with the soul. We take care of our body, as if we would live here on earth for ever. Actually our body becomes dust. Our soul takes us to eternal life. We work for God. We do not expect thanks from men”.

During the fall, Magdi called the applicants for a founding meeting, – explained later a girl from the DL. They were about 14 girls there. She recommended the association to the Sacred Heart and to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In her opening remarks she said to her companions: “We begin the life of this association for Jesus. We want to work for Jesus. We want to love each other for Jesus”.

It was not easy to hold together an association in the last years of the war. The military had occupied the Catholic school in Litér. The homes were filled with refugees. Magdi called the girls together either in her own home, or to the sacristy of the school-chapel, or to an empty store-room. She arranged everything. The meetings were mostly discussions, since they were only a few youngwomen. They missed the inspiring effect of a larger crowd, but there was more intimacy and closeness among them. Magdi set the tone. Of course, the others intervened too with their remarks. Magdi tried to strengthen the ideological foundations in them. “She could speak beautifully, nicely about God and Jesus Christ”, – the girls reported later. “She spoke about the use of dresses, cosmetics. She emphasized that we should wear neat dresses, but they should cover our whole body”. – “If someone holds her baby with red nails, it is like a wild animal had grabbed this poor little babe into her claws... Are not your nails more pretty, than those beastly claws?” – and she held her finger in front of the girls. On another occasion they discussed the right behavior of girls towards boys. “You give your first kiss to your fiance” – she

told them sincerely. Then they were sang either a cheerful, or a sad, or even a holy song. Magdi made a good use of her nice voice on these occasions.

The girls, especially the younger ones, were already waiting for the day of their meeting, so well did they feel about their companionship. Many cheerful events welded them together, more strongly than any other program. It was a pleasure to work together with Magdi. Her sweet mood never left her.

Magdi was able to tell the truth in an impish way that astonished the others: “Imagine, I have scandalized the dead!” – “How?” – they asked curiously. “I wanted to take a sun-bath, but because I am not going to the beach, I went out to the lawn beside the cemetery. So there the dead must have been scandalized by me”.

Magdi spoke to the girls often about the Blessed Virgin Mary as their model. She recommended that in every prayer they should ask her help. She taught the praying of the Rosary to those who did not know it yet. Mostly she herself donated a Rosary to them.

Private Apostolate

Magdi was most influential on young girls, when she went with one for a walk. They opened up the deepest secrets of their heart to her. Without any hindrance, she was able to talk about these things with them. With many of them it was simply the matter of elementary religious duties. Patiently she explained them and then dealt with more serious obligations. The crown of her apostolate was when a girl after a well-prepared confession was able to live her spiritual life independently.

“She possessed the inner trust of the girls”, – says Fr. Joseph. “They went to her with their problems and so she lightened our pastoral work considerably. We then just had to hear their confessions. – To preserve constantly the life of grace and to grow in it, depends on frequent confession. Magdi knew that well, and so she herself went to confession every two weeks. With her example she achieved more than with words.

One of her girls related later: “At her convincing talk, I decided that after missing confession for 3 years I am going again. But when it came to do it, I did not dare to go even to Mass. I said that I slept in. This repeated itself also the next week. Then Magdi came to see me. I cannot forget her sad look. I told her that I did not dare to go to confession. She said: “Let’s go for a walk.” We went and she began to talk. “There was a girl one time who loved the Lord Jesus very much. She often went to visit Him. She received Him in the Eucharist, but since she did not want to go before him with empty hands, she brought Him her abnegations, good deeds and also souls. Once the Lord Jesus entrusted to her a soul with the request to bring her to Him. The task was almost successful, because the girl promised that she would go with her to the table of the Lord. As she was kneeling in the church and waited for that other girl, she spoke to the Lord joyfully: ‘Lord, today that girl whom you entrusted to me will come’. But this girl just did not come. She waited and waited, and looked towards the door even when they rung the bell for Communion. She just did not come. That day the girl could not give anything to the Lord Jesus...” Then I understood that she was talking about me. I began to cry and promised to go even to the church of Gyártelep, since I did not want to cause her more sadness. A few days later there was again Mass in Litér. This seemed to be a good opportunity. She came for me and encouraged: “Confession is going to console you”. When we arrived at the sacristy, she pressed my hand and said: “Just go in... Meanwhile I am going to pray for you here outside”. We went then together to Holy Communion. She was so happy! We knelt together, I looked on her face... she prayed so devoutly... I felt that she was talking to the Lord about me...”

Another occasion she was consoling the downhearted: “Maybe you were not thinking enough of the Lord Jesus that is why you experienced this failure. If we are alone, we are like a grain of dust which is blown away by the smallest wind. But if we hide ourselves into the hands of God, no hurricane will be able to snatch us away”. She encouraged her girls to go with their sorrows before the Blessed Sacrament. “Sometimes I am also downhearted” – she said. “But then I enter the church and I tell to the Lord everything, and I receive so much consolation...”

In Everyday Life

Magdi told to Mrs. Biró how on one occasion she convinced a workman about the wrongness of cursing. “Only bad men used to curse” – I said to him, “but I see that you are not bad. You are a fine soul, only you live in a bad environment. You should give up this kind of talk. You need only a little will...” The man later admitted that he thought of Magdi each time he wanted to curse, and put his hands on his mouth.

In one occasion the Protestant girls suggested that the Catholic girls adored holy images, though the Bible says that one should not venerate carved images. Magdi then responded: “If we love someone, we would like this person before our eyes, because it is easier to think of them in this way. That is why we have images even about God. We try to make it nice and beautiful, because before a beautiful image even those can pray better who otherwise could not...”

On another occasion two girls were talking in the factory about the life of St. Theresa. Someone remarked: “Those saints!? It is all the propaganda of priests...” Magdi again intervened: “I see I came just the right time...” The discussion continued: “How can saints help? You cannot notice it...” – Magdi responded: “If this is your attitude, then of course they will not help you. If you think, let’s just try it, maybe I will be lucky.... In order to get result from our prayers, we have to have faith. If I do not believe, they are not going to help...”

Magdi knew, related Fr. Joseph, the inhibitions people have when they talk with a priest about ideological issues. They do not dare to bring up sensitive questions. Therefore in the high school preparatory religion classes Magdi asked those questions, which referred to certain errors and false assumptions. This gave us an opportunity to talk about them. If she had not brought these up, I would not have dealt with them, thinking that these are not problems for them.

Gradually the others also got the courage to ask questions. They watched Magdi’s style, how she asked them, never attacking, always curious, arguing with her opinions, not answering back. Her questions were formulated by her intellect and not by passion. It was a pleasure to answer these smart questions. It often happened that after class 5 or 6 of them came to my room, among them Magdi, and we continued the serious talk. On these occasions Magdi retired into the background and let others talk. If someone was hesitant or had difficulty to ask the question, then she helped them.

On another occasion we were picking cherries in the garden and while enjoying how Magdi worked on others spiritually, – says Mrs. Biró. “Joe came to make a new clothing with my husband, arrived to try it on and as a favor he helped to pick cherries”. – “Well, the nice suit is useless, said Magdi, if your soul is not clean. Every honest man goes to church first after getting a new suit.” – You still could be a good man, if you do not go to church” – countered Joe. “But who gave you the new suit? Not the good God?” – “But I was working for it in the factory!” – “But who gave you health so that you can work?” At the end Magdi received a double prize, because not only she did not eat cherries, but she did not let Joe either eat during picking. The result of the discussion was that Joe appeared in the church in his new suit and for many years he guarded with reverence the kind memory of Magdi.

It happened a few times, says her mother, that Magdi gave away not only her shoes, but also mine. Once she borrowed even my winter coat, so that someone might go to Mass.

On the evening train, the workers traveled in complete darkness to Fűzfőgyártelep. One of the engineers and the boss of the workshop, who knew Magdi personally, mentioned that one of the workers said about her: “You know, what a nice girl is this Magdi?!” – “Yes, but it is too bad that the priests turned her head... Not long ago she almost convinced me that there is a heaven...”

Once she tried to arrange the case of a girl who went astray. She turned to me and asked for my prayers to settle things successfully. She talked to the father of the child and tried to convince him to marry the girl and so rectify the things which he messed up. There was no success. “One cannot force the thing”, – said Magdi, “but let us continue to pray, Mrs. Biró. Then everything will go well”. Meanwhile the man moved away in order to shake off the girl. Then he enlisted in the army. Magdi continued to trust in the power of prayer. A year later the man came home, wounded. He needed the nursing care of the girl. After he recovered, he married her. These were Magdi’s great joys.

“Her is my Heart! Here is my Heart!” – shouted Magdi the newsgirl in the factory. She was selling the Sacred Heart Messenger quite successfully. She cared especially that those who seemed to be far away from God, should buy it. She smiled, offered the paper, and it was difficult to resist her. Then a little talk... and the seed was sown, almost unobserved.

At one of the explosions two workers suffered serious burns. They were taken to hospital. Magdi baked cookies and visited the sick men. Besides the cookies she packed a few good books as well. For wrapping paper she used some old copies of the Messenger. Perhaps it will catch their eyes...

It happened in the farm of Máma, that at the construction site one of the workers set his eyes on two girls from Kenese, who lived in a nearby hut during the time of farm work. In the evening, this man with two of his companions went over to the lonely girls to court them. When one of the girls left for water to the farm, Magdi warned her: “Why don’t you chase away those impertinent guys?” – “We don’t dare to”, she responded. “There are three of them, and we are only two. We are afraid that they will force themselves on us. We don’t know what to do”. – “Then I will go with you”, said Magdi. “Just wait a bit”. – “What are you doing?”, asked her mother. “I was praying, and now I will go and not leave them alone”. – “But what can you do?”, continued her mother. “The Good Lord will help me!” – She went to the hut to stay with them during the night. After a half hour the men sidled away. According to the neighbors they left went as if they were slapped on the face.

Next day the construction workers saw Magdi and began to make fun of her. “Laudetur Jesus Christus... reverend mother!” – “In aeternum. Amen”. – “When is the next Mass?... reverend mother?..” – “Every morning”. – “Is it true, that the host is artificial?... and that you need a ticket to get it?” – “The host is not given for tickets. It only needs a pure soul.” This is how she answered them, and she never lost her cool.

Magdi one day had to give a message to one of the DL-girls before the morning shift began at 6 a.m. So that she might not disturb the house so early, she wrote down the message and tied a few flowers to the paper.

Magdi taught little Rosalie, a neighbor child, self-sacrificing love: “Better not to eat, but give always alms to the poor”.

Her mother relates: “In the farm of Daka there lived beside us a family with many children. Magdi often cleaned and scrubbed their home, and out of kindness she tried to get them all kinds of things. She nursed the mother when she was sick for a long period of time. Then she had to listen to the comments of those who were not willing to help: “They have too many kids...” – Magdi defended the laws of the Church: “Do not listen to them, aunt R. Trust in God and he is going to help you. I am glad to help you, and when the little baby arrives, we will have everything that is needed...” She often visited expectant mothers in other villages. She went as far as Vörösberény.

Magdi saw a suspicious book in the hand of her younger brother: on love letters. The energetic sister took it and threw it into the fire. “It was not even mine... What shall I say now to Béla? – said Jani. “Just get this Béla before me, and I will give him a piece of my mind that he deserves for his books!” But Béla carefully avoided the warrior Bódi-girl, and did not come to face her about his book.

Once Mr. Bódi wanted to kill a pig on Friday, while Magdi objected forcefully against it. Of course, she won at the end, and the family event was postponed to Saturday, recalls her mother.

Magdi was very sad that the marriage of her parents could not be regularized. “How would this be possible?” she asked me one day. We began a long talk. I had to explain to her the canonical problems about the different situations. At the end we agreed that if she hears about such a case, she should inquire about the impediment. If the impediment could be removed by dispensation, and the marriage could be regularized, then the pastoral work could begin. The couple should then come to Fr. István O., the pastor. In many cases she succeeded in her efforts. On one occasion there was a regularization of marriage in liturgical form. But we did not have two witnesses, because the people went home right after Mass. They did not know that there would be a marriage. So I asked Magdi to be one of the witnesses. She was greatly honored by it, but said, “The curator is still here, he is more worthy for this role”.

Magdi did very serious pastoral work, hence she often had to come to the rectory. People began to gossip. It was always a favored topic for certain kinds of people to suspect priests who met with girls, especially by those who themselves lived in disorderly or even sinful relationships. Magdi was blamed because she went so often to the priests. She calmly responded: “Yes. I go to them, because I need their directives. If I saw in them only the male aspect, I would stop going. The servant of God is holy and inviolable for me.”

There was a big noise when one of the girls picked flowers for the teacher of a Catholic school. A maid, who was a Lutheran and could not stand Catholics, saw as an opportunity to attack Magdi: “Don’t come here any more, because you are guilty of a crime!” – she shouted unjustly and indignantly. “If you had not drawn this crowd of girls, the flowers still would be here.” It was no use asking for forgiveness, or trying to create peace. The tension between the DL and that woman endured and only slowly died out.

Within the association they were more successful at creating peace. All that was needed, was a few kind words of cheerful encouragement, and the hearts of the girls was won. They even decided jokingly that they would organize artificial quarrels, just to hear Magdi’s amiable words.

A younger DL-girl had just been scolded for something by her parents, when Magdi stepped into their home. The girl was crying and sulking. Magdi talked to her, then she signed her forehead with the sign of the cross, and kissed her. Peace was restored.

On another occasion Magdi was collecting aluminum paper for a Christmas party on behalf of poor kids in the workroom. Three of her colleagues jumped on her: “How can you be such a beggar?... How can you humiliate yourself so much? This is nothing else than a mania...” Magdi responded without being offended: “If this is mania for you, that I wipe away tears, feed the hungry, pick up those who have fallen, then I am a maniac as you say. Yet, I am doing all this because I love God.”

Her successes did not make her proud. She always remained humble. Later she could not stand praise. Every one of her words revealed her natural honesty, modesty and true humility, – says Margaret L. Deep humility of her heart accompanied all of her actions.

I had the opportunity to observe this personally, remembers Fr. Joseph. In Litér, Fr. István O. organized the third teacher’s post of the Catholic school. The new teacher arrived, a nice girl, called Magdalene Cs. I introduced them to each other: “Magdalene, I introduce you to our pastoral associate, Magdi”. They shook hands and smiled. On Magdi’s behavior you could see the sincere reverence and humility. These were not the signs of servitude, or of inferiority, but the respect due to someone who is more educated, and of the humility of a girl who wanted to learn from her. “How good it will be for me”, she said to me. “Now I can learn from Magdalene how one can deal expertly with the children and lead the Crusaders. The reality was, however, that Magdi, who learned it from practice, knew much more how to be a leader of the Crusader, than the learned teacher who just began her career.

The DL was an excellent defense for Magdi’s modesty and humility. When she was praised, she always remarked that it was due to the DL-girls. Even the girls noticed this and remarked: “Magdi, you value yourself so little, though you are doing so many things...” – “This is nothing in comparison with what the Lord Jesus did for us! If we see this, then everything I have done is meaningless. If we see what we are doing, we will be arrogant. Therefore we should always look upon what God does in us, then we remain humble”.

IV. WITNESSING WITH THE FLOWER OF LILY

Before Great Decisions

In August 1941, Magdi went with Margaret to Pécel for the first closed retreat of her life, in the retreat-house of the Sisters of Sacred Heart (Néplányok). In this retreat two things especially captivated her soul: “I have to become a saint by all means”, and “I have to be an apostle for souls”.

“We traveled home together”, – says Margaret. “Our souls were full of the touching events of the retreat”. – “We are going to be saints. I tell you this, and you will whisper it always in my ear. We will succeed! We will correspond about this, and pray for it, and encourage one another” – Magdi added. – “We do not want to become canonized saints. . We live our everyday life each in her place, saving souls and working for the kingdom of God”, – I continued. – “What would happen, if one of us would be really raised upon the altar?” – “We are going to testify for each other”. – But I am going to do this! Since I am going to live longer, because I am younger than you! I am going to tell everything about you, because I know all you do...” – said Magdi. We continued to talk jokingly about these things, mixing serious thoughts with cheerful ones. Finally we came to the conclusion that this was not going to happen, since we were going to be little everyday saints, whom nobody would notice.

We were full of enthusiasm. Especially Magdi’s face was shone with happiness. The weather in August matched the inner world of our hearts, with the magnificent blue sky above us. At the result of the retreat, we were enjoying the beauties of nature as much, – according to St. Ignatius of Loyola, – as they serve the greater glory of God.

Meanwhile a group of men boarded the train, continued Magdi. Their loud voices, conceit, libertarianism aimed to impress the young girls. We sat at a distance and continued our conversation. We realized how far this world is from us. Our joy will be if we are able to protect some souls from this world for Christ. Magdi stated that she did not have to bother about men, since she was going to choose the Lord Jesus, and would consecrate her life completely to Him. I tried to present objections: “You have to think about this a little more. You are still too young to decide definitively about your life. And motherhood is a very holy thing”. – “I know that” – she replied in a resolute voice, “but I gladly offer my life, as a beautiful promise of life to God. I already had a suitor who pleased me, but I give thanks to God for putting before me a choice in this way. Thus I am able to show that I love the Lord Jesus more than anyone else.”

Forever Given to Christ the King

On the Feast of Christ the King, October 26th, 1941, Magdi knelt before the altar, offering her life, – we hear from Margaret. – “She placed into the hands of her King the vow of perpetual virginity. It may seem strange that the reality of Christ the King became the center of the heart of a girl. This was the deep result of the Ignatian retreat on Magdi’s soul.

She had just completed her 20th year. She was a working girl, a factory worker, not a thoughtless child. She knew both sides well, the lights and shadows of life. She was not a prejudiced fanatic. She knew that God’s holy plan can be realized in Christian matrimony. “How beautiful it could be”, – she once said to me, “to carry under my heart someone who would resemble me and would me mine. But it is worth to offer also this for the Lord Jesus...”

“She revealed to me also the things of her heart”, – says Margaret. She mentioned that her heart was fiery, she had to fight with it, but she did not allow others to notice it. On one occasion we were walking in front of our villa, when the conversation turned to kissing. Magdi remarked: “I would be able to kiss purely and nicely. I see the essence of this in giving one’s soul to the other. I could give my whole self with a kiss, but I have already given my life to Jesus. I love Him more than everyone”. “She talked also that because of her fiery heart she had to watch herself not to call the attention of others to her femininity: with her behavior, coiffure, jewels, etc. She prayed in a special way that people would not notice anything in her that would be favorable or conspicuous.

The Reality of the Ideal in the Turmoil of Daily Life

It was still at the beginning of her prairie life, that her father took Magdi to a village dance. Magdi felt foreign in this environment. “While dancing one of the boys leaned very close to me and began to whisper into my ear”, – she said later. “I almost broke my waist to keep away from him. I could hardly wait for him to stop”. Years later she mentioned this event to her DL-girls, when she wanted to warn them against this kind of dancing.

The festival of the church in Fűzfő was a special event, when fried dough (lángos) was served.. There were also tea-evenings and similar entertainment. In the beginning Magdi was afraid of these events. She was concerned about how to behave. She did not want to be conspicuous, neither did she want to seem a stupid little duck. She placed herself beside Mrs. Biró and whispered into her ear: “Juj, I just want to stay here beside you. If I make a mistake, you should tell me. I will not resent it, I would rather be grateful for it”. With time, she became so polished that nobody noticed her lowly origin. Of course she could be very amiable.

Magdi was a pretty girl, said Mrs. Biró. When she appeared on Sunday in her festive dress, the boys looked at her with big eyes. Her face mirrored her fine, deep soul, so that in spite of all her modesty, one could see what a precious girl she was. It is easy to understand that her presence made a good effect on the young people, her colleagues in the factory.

The boys tried to get close to her. Already in the prairie in Mára there were curious boys around the Bódi house. But Magdi retreated. They were able to approach her most easily when they let her talk about religious things. So it happened that her neighbor’s brother-in-law asked for her hand. Magdi did not hesitate a moment. She said no, decidedly, but very nicely.

In the factory there were certain light-weight young men who conceitedly tried to court her repeatedly. They could achieve nothing with Magdi with a few flattering words. Magdi saw through them very quickly. She noticed that they did not even come close to testing her, so she treated them cordially. She even tried to correct them, so that they might get something out of their wasted time.

Once a tall young man stood in front of her wanting to marry her: “I want to marry a chaste girl”, – he said. “How do you know that I am that?” – asked Magdi. “I can see in your eyes”, – came the honest acknowledgement. Magdi stopped the conceit of this young man, and nicely but decidedly refused him. She then told her girls: “The boys want a chaste girl to be their wife, but they do not consider what keeps a girl chaste... that Jesus Christ is the only way in this mystery. Of course, no one can understand this, who never fought for chastity”.

She had serious suitors, who wanted to court her. She felt that she could easily sympathize with them. On these occasions she got out of the way. She did not play with the hearts of others. Decidedly, but very tactfully, she let them know, that they should not even try.

One day I was talking with Fr. István O. about Magdi’s attractive, and at the same time modest and reserved demeanor, said Fr. Joseph. She acted among us like an associate, as if she was a priest and not a girl. – “Maybe she does not have the heart of a girl”, – remarked Fr. István, “that is, I mean she does not have to struggle for her chaste

life”. – “I am thinking the same way”, – I responded. “At an opportune time, I am going to ask her, because I am sure, I will learn from her answer”.

I was not just Magdi’s permanent confessor, but also her spiritual father. Besides her confessions, if she could she came every two weeks for a spiritual report. At these times we talked about the pastoral work she had done and what she should do. At the next meeting, I asked her the question we discussed with Fr. István. The first sentence of her answer revealed already an unusual considerateness in my regard: “I don’t mind talking about this, but would it not be harmful for you Father? You are still so young!” I was at that time 24 years old, and Magdi was only one and half years younger than I. “Thank you, Magdi, you are so considerate. But if I mention one or two things from my life, you may understand right away, why it is so important that you answer me. I had no sisters. I prepared for the priesthood from the age of 6. I had no girl-friend, I did not go to dancing school. So for me the world of the heart of girls is completely unknown. Now, as you know, I have to deal with girls. Therefore I ought to know something about the world of the heart of girls. Who would be better and more competent to discuss this than you? And in addition, I am asking you about your own heart. True, the Lord has given us priests the special grace necessary for our work. I believe that your response is not going to hurt me. Moreover, I am sure I am going to learn from it.”

“I have a warm heart, which quickly gets fired up”, – responded Magdi. “I inherited it from my father. But I am always able to bridle it.” – I did not expect this answer and I was very surprised. I thought that the Lord gave her a somewhat cold heart, and that is why it was easy and natural for her, that her shining chaste girlhood could remain in the background behind her charming humanity. After a few minutes I continued: “Is this not an impediment for you, or cause difficulty when you do some apostolic work with boys?” – “Oh, no! I do not allow them to court me. I do not listen to their courting talk, but rather I give into their hands one of the books of Tihamér Tóth, and ask them to read it for my sake. The next time, if he wants to talk with me, I ask him, what did he took from the book. If he did not read it, I do not talk with him any more. If he had read it, he can talk about it with me, until he gets tired and goes away. Even so, it still happens that after such talk they ask for my hand. Then I tell them openly that I am not going to get married.” – “Don’t you think, Magdi, that with these talks you give some hope to the heart of honest boys, and at the same time you cause them pain and frustration by telling them that you are not going to get married?” – “Yes, there was a boy whom I valued more than the others because of his religious attitude. He, too, asked for my hand. When I told him that I was not going to get married, he asked me why? I was rather embarrassed. I cast down my eyes and responded: don’t ask me that. The boy understood it and replied: “ Sorry, Magdi, that I dared to do this. I promise that you will not see me any more”. He left the factory, gave up his job. Because he behaved in such a noble way, I had great sympathy for him. I regretted causing him such pain. For more than two years I struggled with my feelings. Sympathy for an honest boy has great influence upon the heart of a girl.” – So one can then understand that later too she was careful not to get into similar situations, not to call attention to herself.

She was not showing off, when she spoke in this way. One evening, during an air-raid black out, Magdi came to see me. We went over to Fr. István O. to talk over a certain pastoral issue, in which he was the competent person. Between his room and my room there was a large hall. Its windows were not blacked out, so we could not use a pocket lamp. The chairs and tables were all disturbed, so I said to Magdi: “Give me your hand

and I will lead you through this hall, lest you bump into something and hurt yourself". – "Oh, thank you, that is not necessary. I can pass through..." She said that laughingly, so as not to hurt me or show distrust towards me. All right", she said, "when you hear some rattle, then you will know that I bumped into something". Soon there was a rattle and laughing behind me, indicating how well I was able to guide. "You see, I know the ground well. I do not need any guidance". Together with Fr. István, all three of us laughed about the incident.

"In one of our spiritual talks, we came again to speak about Magdi's intention of not getting married", continued Fr. Joseph. "I asked her: You know, Magdi, marriage is a sacrament, and one can be a saint in married life? Or you think you would not be able to truly love your husband?" – "I know that marriage is a holy thing. And I could truly love my husband". – "Or you could not be a loving mother for your children?" – "Ah, I love children very much...", then she became moved for a moment. You could see mirrored in her face the emotion of renouncement, but only for a moment. I asked further: "If it is so, why do you not think of getting married?" Magdi cast down her eyes and became silent. Her face revealed that I should be able to give the answer to this question. At this moment a thought occurred to me and I said right away: "Magdi, do you have a vow of virginity?" I did not wait for the answer, because it seemed so evident. But I asked another question immediately: "How old were you, when you made that vow? Can you be dispensed of it?" Magdi burst into laughter like a child from whom someone wants to snatch away a favored, precious toy. "But I cannot do that! I was more than 18 when I made that vow!" – "It would have been good if you had told me about that earlier. Such an important thing ought to be revealed to the spiritual father". – "Father, I did not think that this should be expressed also in words". Then she again cast down her eyes, but now she was smiling sweetly. "Magdi, when you made that vow, you became a soul dedicated to God. You came very close to a priestly spirituality. If you allow, I will read you a part of my diary. I wrote it for myself about holy purity, when I assumed it at my ordination to the subdiaconate". – "I would be very glad to hear it. I am always ready to hear about holy chastity". – In this portion of my diary it was explained what the difference is between ordinary chastity and the chastity of a person dedicated to God. The conclusion was that God created the heart to love, and the chaste heart to love even more. Actually, chastity is crowned by the love of God himself. This is the meaning of the vow of chastity. – "Thank you very much, father, that you let me have glimpse into the inner life of a priestly soul", said Magdi finally.

During one conversation with one of the girls, who came very close to Magdi's soul, Magdi asked her about her state of health: "I am not well emotionally. The trouble is that I am a girl", she said. "Why, perhaps you do not hold the vocation of woman beautiful enough?", Magdi asked in amazement. "No, I mean that I feel myself a girl, when I should be indifferent." Then she complained that she noticed in herself the desire to look out of the window after those whom she should not. Magdi was careful even about such fine things as well. But she could not withdraw herself from the impressions of the outer world.

Some time in February of 1945, this girl visited Magdi again. When she recalled that time, she said that the work in the factory ceased, but work at home did not give her much more peace. In every home two or three soldiers were put up for lodging. So there were always visitors coming and going. The soldiers of the army were very undisciplined and even immoral. Yet, there were some soldiers who stayed spiritually honest. These

boys received the sacraments, went to church regularly in spite of the sarcastic remarks of others. “I met such a nice boy”, said this girl, “whom Magdi also knew and valued highly. There arose in Magdi a kind of enthusiasm towards these boys. And something even more. This is what Magdi did not want to tolerate in herself, but she was exposed to it against her will. On one occasion some soldiers were lodged in the home of Magdi’s family. When they said goodbye, one of them held Magdi’s hand more and she did not let it go immediately. Her conscience held this as infidelity, even if it was insignificant. She told me about it, and I tried to calm her down.” – “Maybe for you it is nothing, when truly it is something insignificant. But I cannot do this, because I vowed fidelity to the Lord Jesus...”

“I visited them again”, says the same girl. “We were talking about indifferent things. The suddenly she began to cry. When I looked at her in wonder, she said: “You think that it is so easy for me. I also have struggles. Often difficult struggles. You may guess what I mean. I cannot yet talk about it. Perhaps later, when I have conquered them.” That afternoon she spent a long time in adoration in the church of the settlement.

“One afternoon I was making a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. The main door of the church was open. The vestibule was open, but the church was closed by a large glass door. Then I noticed that Magdi entered the church through the sacristy. It did not surprise me, because we gave Magdi a key to the sacristy, which was open anyhow. I was just starting to leave”, – says Fr. Joseph, “when I asked Magdi: “Were you looking for me?” – “No, I came to be alone with the Lord Jesus”. She went into the church and knelt. I stayed for a short time in the sacristy. Then I heard suddenly Magdi weeping, then sobbing. I tried to remain silent.”

Magdi later told her girl friend: they had a common acquaintance, a soldier, whom Magdi valued highly and felt some attraction to him. She began to cry, because besides some failure and external unpleasantness, she noticed this attraction in herself, which she considered prohibited for her. From this time on, she avoided the companionship of this boy so that he would not notice it. After a few days this interest was wiped out also from Magdi’s soul. She became composed again.

“It was really a problem for Magdi”, says Fr. Joseph, “not to be noticed by others. She saw in this a kind of infidelity towards Christ. She wanted to please only Him. This caused her difficulty internally. On the outside, her appearance, manner, modesty radiated a special light of virginal chastity to everyone”.

“This was more than 10 years ago. Since then I have been in many places, and met many girls and sisters of pure heart, who lived the life of grace. I have been their confessor and spiritual director, but in vain do I look for among them even one, who would be like Magdi, having her pure spirit and holy innocence, which radiated through her external appearance.”

V. WITNESSING WITH HER BLOOD

A Brave Girl

Because of her many commitments, Magdi often had to walk outside in the late evening hours. She did most of her apostolic work then. She was not afraid, though in those days, murders and burglaries happened quite frequently. – “I am not afraid”, she said when they talked about it among the DL-girls, “because I am not alone, the Lord Jesus accompanies me. I watch my soul, that He may never leave me alone...” On these occasions she prayed the Rosary, which she always carried in the pocket of her coat.

When the family still lived on the farm in Daka and she had the afternoon shift in the factory, she returned home only at 10 p.m. She had to walk 4-5 km. The road was partly steep, leading through a forest. She could not use her bicycle, so she left it at the rail-road signal-cabin, and continued on foot through the dark forest. For a time, her brother Jani went to meet her, but when he became a coachman apprentice, he could not be of help for his sister. Her parents worried about her, and tried to convince her that she should stay with one of her acquaintances in Fűzfő. Sometimes she did this, but it was not always convenient. So then she went home at night.

“We should frighten Magdi, this was our plan”, said Jani, “that she may lose her bravery and not insist on coming home after her afternoon shift. One evening we went out with one of my friends to the forest path. We spread a thin, weak string between two trees on the road, so that when the string is broken, the pots and pans with great rattle would roll down and would frighten Magdi. But as Magdi broke the string, the pots rolled down with great rattle precisely in the direction where I and my friend were hiding. We could hardly save our head from the rolling pots. Magdi had a good laugh on us, how our test back-fired.”

The German soldiers sometimes got bored and fought with one another in the courtyard. It was not very edifying or a harmless play. “Once somehow I got into this brawl”, related Jani. “The situation began to be so dangerous that I had to flee. I ran into the house, so I could escape through the window on the other side. The German soldier came after me... Then, as the violent, furious man entered our home, Magdi stood in front of him and said him only this: ‘*Na, was wollen Sie?*’ So this violent man suddenly became ashamed and left the house. Magdi saved my life”.

The estate was full of German soldiers billeted there. Magdi knew a bit German, so she talked with them occasionally. One of them, however, during conversation caressed Magdi’s face. Magdi right away gave him a good Hungarian slap in the face. “The Hungarian girls have a hot temper”, said the German soldier politely and left. “Were you not afraid to slap this *Kamerad?*”, the girls asked her later. “Why should I have been afraid, I have right to defend myself”, – she responded.

The arrow-cross press of those days praised the suicide highly, as if it would erase the shame which the girls had to suffer. Magdi saw right away the opposition between the wrong opinion of people and that of God’s will. “Through suicide, an offense against God, one cannot regain one’s honor”, she said to the girls. But she was ready to defend

her chastity with all her power. This decision increased her courage. “Do not be anxious for me, dear mother,” she said often to her mother, “I am not going to be the prey of anyone”. In the turmoil of flight and impatience, when many of Magdi’s acquaintances left the country, she knew what her duty was: to stay put. “One cannot avoid one’s fate”, she said often, and trusted solely in God. She accepted her fate from God, whatever it might bring.

One day Mrs. Biró told Magdi how much one of the members of the Altar society, whom they both knew, was afraid of dying. Magdi broke out in a laugh, just as when someone hears an unbelievably strange thing: “How can one fear death? Surely we can see our Lord only after dying... Death is a happy moment. How can one fear of that?”

Doing Something Great for God...

“I would just like to do more good”, said Magdi to Mrs. Biró, “so that I may lead more souls to the good Lord... I would like to do something great that my smile may become really perfect, and that it may please the good Lord...” For the time being she did not yet see what the Lord wanted from her, what would be that “great thing” that she could do for Him.

Magdi thought that she should do something great on the altar of the country. That is why in the summer of 1943 she applied to be a nurse at the front. “Do not try to talk me out of this, nobody should try it”, she said to Margaret. Her brothers, parents, and Mrs. Biró tried everything to dissuade her. She was ready with the answer: “I love my mother very much. But what a great love it is to stand beside a wounded soldier, who sheds his blood for his fatherland. On these occasions God and my country stand before my eyes...” – “And what would happen”, some said, “if you are hit by a bullet, and you cannot even be buried in Hungarian soil. Your mother could not even go to your grave.” – “My mother will be consoled, knowing that her daughter died as a heroine”, responded Magdi. “Could you imagine a more noble death than this? Even to think of it is beautiful: to die for your country... I have to go, because I want also to save souls, not only earthly lives.” – Then they tried to paint the situation for her quite black. “What a wailing will be there! Even men will lose their self-control. There will be no quiet time to do spiritual things...” Magdi here acknowledged some anxiety: “I will ask some counsel from my spiritual father”. Then she became calm. However, the management of the factory did not let Magdi go.

A year later, in December 1944, Magdi was sewing something together with her girls, preparing for the Christmas of the poor. They asked her to read something to them while they were working. She began to read the lives of the saints. The story spoke about a martyr. After the reading she remarked: “How happy are those, who can shed their blood for their faith. I would be willing to die for Christ without thinking.” She could not have known that only three months later, her wish would be realized.

The Time Is Approaching

In the region of Fűzfőgyártelep the bombardment first began on Dec.3rd, 1944. The front stretched from Budapest through Székesfehérvár to the southern shore of the Balaton. The air-raids became more and more frequent. At that time we went into the “tunnels”, remembers Fr. Joseph. Our tunnel was 1 km long, hollowed into the rocks of Fűzfő, and led to a huge construction site where many machines and electric generators were operating. Above them was solid rock, about 20 meters high. This was quite secure against bombs and in case of necessity it could accommodate more than a thousand people. As the days passed by, we spent most of our time there. Many high school students and other interested people gathered there and we held some higher level religion classes for them.

Magdi was preparing for Christmas. She did everything to assure that not only in the factory church, but also in Litér there would be a midnight Mass. But this became rather difficult. Trouble never comes alone, as they say. Fr. István O. suffered a rather serious bleeding of ulcer. In our circumstances we were not able to take care of him, so he had to go to Moson, to his birthplace. He left us with heavy heart, hoping that he could return soon healthy. “What are we going to do now?, I asked Magdi. “How can we solve the midnight Mass in Litér? If I could get some help, it would not be a problem.” – “Let us ask someone from Veszprém.” – The idea is not bad, but you know that Bishop Mindszenty too is in prison. No one is there to run the things.” – “You should go to see the Bishop and ask him to do something”. – “I could try, but I don’t believe it will be successful”. – I went to Veszprém at the instigation of Magdi, and we succeeded.

Christmas came, Magdi’s last Christmas. We did not know this at that time. She came to see me about 6 p.m., bringing her Christmas gift. It was a holy picture with a spiritual bouquet, and a little Jesus made of wax in a golden nut-shell. She placed her gift on the table. “My gift is very poor, but I brought it from my heart”, she said. She could not bring me anything better. Then she came with a request, which she considered “a great request”. “If I get permission from the authorities and the military, would you then come to Litér to celebrate midnight Mass?” – “We planned it, and I promised that if the last impediment is removed, Magdi, then of course I would go”. – “I am going right away”, she said.

In those days it was impossible to walk on the streets, says Fr. Joseph, especially around the factory. Everywhere soldiers guarded the plant.. The factory was an important military objective. The front was already quite close, near top Balatonkenese. In the whole country, midnight Mass was held on the 24th of December in the afternoon because of the air-raids and severe war-time situation.

Late afternoon and evening on that day, when everyone wanted to have some peace and quiet and joy at the crib of the Newborn Jesus, Magdi was going around to the offices for permission. She went by bicycle in the dark, quite exhausted, but she wanted to bring into the souls of people the real joy of Christmas, the light of sanctifying grace.

I was afraid that the military commanders, who were not very polite, would deny the permission. But they could not resist Magdi, she could ask them so nicely. She got permission. For the black-out she had to assume personal responsibility.

Besides the permission of the military, she also got permission from the mayor of the village for the people to walk on the street freely to midnight Mass and back. The things

were prepared for the Mass in the big hall of the castle. About two hours later Magdi came back happy and handed me the copy of the permission. “Father, come a bit sooner, because there will be people who want to go to confession, even “some big fish”. – “I will be there an hour ahead of time”. Every midnight Mass is beautiful, but this was marvelous because of the many converts and of the great number of communicants. After Mass, Magdi thanked me for coming, though I should have thanked her. It was almost 3 a.m. when we arrived home.

Christmas turned out to be a sad day. The factory stopped working. Magdi put all her energy into the apostolic work in Litér. She took care of the poor, nursed the sick. She went to walk with her girls, visited them in their homes. She talked much about the future. They were especially worried about what they have heard of the horrible things women had to endure from the enemy.

In January 1945, Magdi called her girls to a half-closed retreat. They were 8 or 10 only. Early morning they started from Litér and before night they returned home. The pastor’s house was empty, so they used the kitchen. Magdi cooked a warm dinner, but they had to go home for supper. There was Mass in the church, and a meditation in the morning and in the afternoon. During the day they kept silence, they could talk only on the way home. I was very touched by the zeal and sincerity of the girls, said Fr. Joseph.

“We were living in serious danger of our lives, so the meditation on death was not just a frightening talk. At the end of it, we prayed in common for the one who would die first among us”. On the way home, many thought they would be the first. “You will see, I will be the first”, said Magdi very seriously, but not sadly.

“In the first half of March, Magdi came for the usual spiritual account,” remembers Fr. Joseph, and almost word for word he quotes their decisive conversation. This is a clear explanation of Magdi’s final conduct and conscious martyrdom.

“Father, what is going to happen to us when the war is over?”, she asked. “Magdi, we have not come yet to the end of it. But I can state now that even if you were to die, I could accept that with the greatest calmness. I even would accept calmly, if you were hit by a bomb so that we could not even find a piece of your body. I would be completely assured about your soul... But if you have to die, it would be good for you to die a martyr’s death and so to crown your life.” – “Father, I think I will succeed in that”, she said smiling, with serenity, as if it would be the most natural thing. – “Yes, this could happen, because for girls it is not difficult to be martyrs, if they die in the defense of the sublime virtue of holy chastity”. – “We are going to defend our chastity. We talked about it among the girls. We would rather die to the last person, but we are not going to give ourselves up”. – “If you would do this, you would remain chaste and become also heroes, but not martyrs. But you may have a clear concept of martyrdom in the light of our faith. I ask you to pay attention to the following”. – To those serious words Magdi’s intelligent, radiant face began to pay close attention, as if she could see a near future event, and live it through. “A Christian person have to escape death until he or she is faced with the choice: between sin or death. But if it comes to this choice, then without thinking one should choose death. This is martyrdom. One should not hasten or cause the circumstances which would lead to death! It is true, there were among the martyrs those who spontaneously threw themselves into fire, when they were already condemned to death. But they did it in the sure knowledge of death and at the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. St. Ignatius of Antioch did this too, in order to hasten the conditions of his death. But he did not incite people, but the animals who were destined anyhow to tear him to

pieces. But I want to emphasize again, to look for the dangers of death or to hasten it, is not allowed, not even for the desire of martyrdom. The simplest way to martyrdom is if someone dies in the defense of the treasure of holy chastity. Because of the your vow, keeping faithfully your promise made to God, it is more than the martyrdom of a chaste girl, who was not obliged by vow. A person with vows keeps the Lord always before his or her eyes. One dies for the Lord rather than for chastity. Therefore, Magdi, you should always have with you a pen-knife or a scissors, so that you may defend yourself. You must be sure that your attacker does not want to rob you, or beat you, but wants to take away your chastity. Only in this case are you allowed to defend yourself. But then you must defend yourself! You may disable your attacker out of self-defense. You can do that only if you cause him some sharp pain. That is why I mentioned that you could hit your attacker with a sharp object! If you just resist him, he would want to rape you even more violently. But if you strike his eyes, his pain would stop the flames of his body. And because his sinful plan has been thwarted, he may kill you. In this case everything that you do, Magdi, you do in the defense of your chastity and you die faithful to God, that is, you would be a martyr. You will have to choose therefore between sin and death, and you choose rather death. Would you dare to do this, Magdi?” – “Yes, father, I would. The good Lord will give me the courage to do it”. – “Magdi, if the good Lord allow this to happen, and you become a martyr, you will go strait to the beatific vision of God. Then promise it to me now, that you are going to ask the Lord much grace for me and for those whose souls will be entrusted to me.” – It is difficult to describe the expression of her face at this request. It was as if some feeling of responsibility was mirrored in her eyes, as if she had been already with the Lord. She did not refuse the request, did not make excuses, since everything was still very uncertain. Modestly, humbly, she cast her eyes down, and softly, but decisively she said: “Father, I promise this...” – “Thank you, Magdi. Don’t forget about your promise!” – “I will not forget.” -“Now I have to tell you a certain conversation between a dying child and a priest, who gave her the first Communion under those circumstances: ‘Father, if I die and go to see the good Lord, do I have to genuflect first or can I jump right away into his lap?’” – Magdi smiled and spontaneously answered: “There is no need there to have a genuflection. We may immediately lean on the heart of Jesus.”

“Meanwhile we experienced great joy”, says Fr. Joseph, “because Fr. István O. unexpectedly arrived back, quite healthy. I rejoiced that there was a priest beside me, to stand beside the faithful. Still I said to him: “Why did you not stay at home a little bit longer? You came back in the most difficult days.” – “I am glad that I was able to come, precisely in these difficult days. I have my place here, especially now.” – “It is much better for me also, but I am worried about your health”. Thank God, Fr. István O. jumped into pastoral work quickly. Together with Fr. István A. they decided to conduct a retreat for his people in Fúzfő, and I would go to Herend to give a retreat to the people of Fr. István A. on March 16-18th.

And so it was. I started back home on the Feast of St. Joseph with a German military auto-stop. It was 1 p.m. when I arrived home. Magdi has already been looking for me to make her monthly spiritual report and at the same time to congratulate me on my feast-day. She waited for a long time, but she had to go, not being able to wait any longer. She left behind a holy card with a spiritual bouquet.

This would have been our last meeting. We never saw each other again. The time came close. On March 21st was the 2nd anniversary of my priestly ordination, and on

March 25th the feast of my first Mass. Between these two memorable dates there was now another precious day: the feast of Magdi's martyrdom, March 23rd.

The Time Has Run Out...

Among Magdi's girl friends many went abroad with the refugees. They tried to frighten her too with the prospect of what she could expect if she stayed behind. "You don't have to worry about me", she said, "I will scratch out the eyes of those who want to touch me". So Magdi stayed home. She packed together the valuables from the school chapel and buried them. The fighting reached our village. Machine-gun bullets howled above the houses. Mines exploded here and there. The people hid in air-raid shelters.

Magdi and her family spent the night of March 22-23 in the shelter which was dug in the courtyard of the castle. Beside Magdi, 4 women and 4 children were there. The shelter had an exit at both ends. During the day they briefly visited the neighboring courtyard to feed the animals. When the shooting stopped for a while, Magdi went to visit a sick lady who was alone and very much afraid. Magdi tried to console her.

She spent about an hour with this sick lady. But then she noticed some DL-girls in the next house and went to see them. "Magdi, what is going to happen to us?", – they asked. "Do not be afraid, the good Lord is with us. They may kill our bodies, but not our soul. Just be careful to keep your soul always clean! One moment we live, the next we may die... So, girls, we are not afraid! What may happen? At most, our desire will be fulfilled and arrive to the good Lord.."

"She was also talking about our final goal, which is not our earthly life, but our union with the heavenly Father", related the girls. As always, Magdi was able to talk with natural cheerfulness about deadly serious things. Her smile, her cheerful ideas did not leave her. One woman, seeing this balanced, cheerful and elevated spirit, stated: "Magdi, you have a strong faith, which drives away your fear!" Then they came to the subject of the danger, which threatened their chastity. "We do not give ourselves up", said Magdi, "we are going to die chastely just as we lived. Yes, girls, we may die... At least I am going to die. God be with you and with me! Pray...!"

Magdi spent the rest of the day in the shelter. She sat silently on the stairs of the entrance, sewing clothes for poor children. Sometimes she read some spiritual book. In the afternoon, around 4 p.m., they had to go again upstairs with another girl to feed the animals. That other girl was afraid. So Magdi suggested that they pray first. They said a decade of the Rosary and then they went up. They arranged everything. Nobody hurt them.

As they returned a few minutes later, two soldiers with guns arrived on a motor-bicycle, One had a machine-gun, the other two revolvers. They started to go towards the shelter. Here at the entrance were the women. They stood there so that they would not spend the whole day in darkness. The soldier with the machine-gun came down the stairs. Magdi tied a kerchief on her head and tried to cover much of her face with it. The soldier called her and ordered her to go deeper inside of the shelter: "Hajde, hajde..." Magdi began to go without a word. Her hands were in the pocket of her jacket. In her left hand she had the Rosary, in the right hand she held the small scissors which she used during sewing. Her mother noticed that Magdi had something in her pockets. Her mother tried to take Magdi's hand out of her pocket. Magdi did not let her to do this: "Let me go, mother, I am going now". She said that and she held her fingers tightly together. She entered the dark inside the shelter. And the soldier went after her.

For some seconds there was a tense silence in the air. Nobody watched the fast moving events with the intention of giving an account of them later, if one asked about it. One person noticed one movement, another another one. Later they were able to relate only what one or the other had noticed. According to some, they heard shots from the inside of the shelter, others could not remember this.

Magdi soon appeared at the entrance of the shelter through which she had entered earlier. The kerchief on her head was shoved back, not forward as when she entered. Her face showed agitation. But all her words were calmly said: “Anne, go, escape, because you will be the next”, she said to the other girl. “I am going to die... My dear mother, go away from here, I am going to die.” Magdi escaped, but she did not run. Maybe she was unable, otherwise she would have run away from death. Her words betrayed that her death was quite certain. It seems then that those who had heard the shots from the shelter, were the ones who remembered well.

Magdi went up to the courtyard. Meanwhile at the other entrance of the shelter that soldier who had led Magdi inside, came outside. He was mad. Blood oozed from a wound under his eyes. Magdi missed his eyes in the dark. But surely he was surprised at her unexpected defense. Probably then he shot the first bullet. When the soldier noticed Magdi in the court, he shot her right away. At the second shot Magdi raised both her hands toward heaven, then closed them as the priest does in the liturgy of the Mass, and said: “My Lord, my King!... Take me to yourself!”

These were her last words. She was shot still about 6 times. Each time she wavered, but remained standing. She did not scream, she did not make a scene. She just clasped the Rosary in her pocket. The last bullet, like the others, struck her in the back, but this one found the way to her heart. Magdi fell forward on her face.

The other women ran away, each to where she could. So that the girl, now covered with blood, might not be too conspicuous, the soldiers placed her on the stairs of the shelter. It is possible that they were looking for the gun, or dagger, or knife, with which she had defended herself.

“I heard what happened”, says Mr. Bódi, “the news spread fast, and I went there right away. The soldiers were still around. ‘You killed my daughter’, – I shouted at them in Russian. This surprised them very much. “Take her away!, – they said angrily.” I leaned down towards my daughter. Her body was still warm, but there was no life in it. I took her in my arms and carried her home sadly. The soldiers shot at me twice. The bullets were howled beside my ears”.

The body of Magdi could not be buried properly. Her father dug a grave and just as she was in her clothes, they rolled her in a coarse blanket. This is how she was buried.

“After a few days, the region became calm again from the noise of war”, says Fr. Joseph. Many corpses were lying around inside the factory and also in the fields. We organized groups to bury them. We dug graves and everyone was buried wherever we found them.”

“I myself looked for papers on each of the corpses, whatever we could find on them. As much as was possible, I tried to identify the person’s name, address, and personal data. Accordingly, we registered them and notified their relatives as far as it was possible.”

This is how we came to bury Magdi. Fr. István O. went with that group of people who worked at the burials in the area of Litér. They took a real casket with them, the type of

casket which we used for liturgical purposes in the church when we celebrated a Requiem Mass with a catafalque. This became the casket of Magdi.

Her temporary grave was opened. Her mother with the other women transferred Magdi's body to the casket, they discarded the blanket, then they closed the casket. Fr. István O. did the funeral rite. Two boys served him, both of them Crusaders of the Sacred Heart.

VI. AND AFTER...

Where Magdi's Martyred Body Lies...

Litér is 15 km from Veszprém by bus. Every bus from Fúzfő touches the end of the village. If we walk through the Main Street of the village and pass by the Protestant church, we have to walk right and upwards until we come to a long, tall stone fence. This fence encircles the courtyard of the former castle. It was here that Magdi shed her martyr's blood.



The place of Magdi's martyrdom



Monument dedicated to Magdi's martyrdom

Continuing on our way, we soon come to the end of the village. First, we find some old graves on the right side, then we reach the new cemetery. There we see a nice, white crucifix. In its shadow lies Magdi's martyred body. This is the inscription on it:

Mary Magdalene Bódi
1921-1945
"Blessed are the pure of heart:
for they will to see God".



The grave of Magdi

This grave marks the last station of Magdi's earthly life. Her brief life-span ended here. It started in Szigliget, turned through the northern shore of Lake Balaton, and here on the hillside of Litér she disappeared from the eyes of men.

Looking southward, we can see the village. On the right, rises one of the smoking chimneys of the factory of Fúzfő behind the hills. On the left, stretches the highway between Veszprém and Balatonfűzfő. If we follow this line, we can see Fúzfő. From here about 3 km away towards the south-east is the farm of Mára. Towards the East there is a flat region: Papkeszi, Vilonya, the prairie of Daka... This is the region where Magdi lived.

Magdi's old parents and her brothers still live in Litér. So much one can see with the human eye from the grave of Magdi.

As Magdi Now Prays for Us...

The late Bishop Ladislaus Bánáss, bishop of Veszprém, said on one occasion in the presence of the writer of these lines: “In my difficult hours, I turn always to little Magdi Bódi, because she listens to my prayers”.

A self-confession: “I try to live a spiritual life. I accept the inner and outer difficulties that this life involves. Since I knew Magdi Bódi, she is my most powerful support, my heavenly helper. Besides her example, her prayers help me that I may remain faithful in every circumstance.”

The mother of Magdi tells us that a lady who suffered much, often visited Magdi’s grave and their home. She was the wife of a physician in Budapest. They had not even bread to eat. She asked fervently for Magdi’s intercession that her husband might get a job. At the second visit, she gladly related the news that everything happened as she asked.

“Each time when I become weak and fall”, says a tormented, but well-intentioned soul, “I always have the strength to get up and remain faithful. The intercession of Magdi Bódi gives me courage even in dark hours. Every day I ask her that I may not get lost”.

In village B. the pastor’s caretaker has not been to confession for a long time. In vain did they try to convince him. Once his wife began to pray to Magdi for the conversion of her husband. The next day, without saying a word, he went to church and received the sacraments.

“Since the day of her martyrdom, I pray every day to Magdi”, – says Fr. Joseph. “She promised that she will not forget about me and those whom I serve. Magdi keeps her promise. – On March 25th, 1945, on the 2nd anniversary of my First Mass, at the offertory I commended myself to her patronage according to our agreement. Beyond the vows of priestly chastity, I made also the perpetual vows of poverty and chastity. My life has been exposed to many spiritual dangers since then, but Magdi is always with me. I hope that she will lead me to make the religious vows one day, as I have desired since my days in the Seminary”. (Fr. Joseph eventually was accepted and made her vows in the Society of Jesus).

In the horrors of the war, the Hungarian women suffered much in Litér. But none of Magdi’s girls was hurt. She was guarding them closely.

“It seemed”, – says a pastor, F.P., “that after much pestering the tide would swallow me up. At that time I read first about Magdi... ‘If you are truly a saint and martyr, then help me’, – I prayed to her after my arrest from the bottom of my heart, when I had lost all my hope. After two hours of torture, unexpectedly I was freed completely. Up until today I do not know how... All this happened in Szigetvár in 1947.”

Similar unusual help is reported by a priest, D.P. In his hopeless situation he prayed to Magdi. “Lo and behold, in court before the judge, even the representatives of the groundless accusation sided with me. The tribunal acquitted me and set me free... I thank Magdi for all this!”

Under the heavenly protection of Magdi new parishes have been built. One in that place where she spent 10 years from her short life, another in a village in Somogy, in Ordacsehi, in the mother-church of the Jankovich settlement. Both roofs are finished. Fr. István O., the former pastor of Magdi, day by day asks Magdi’s help in his difficult job. “Talk to your dear heavenly Mother, the Blessed Virgin, and to those in whom you had such confidence here on earth: St.Joseph, St.Aloysius, St.Thérèse of Lisieux. Ask them to be kind and stand up for the cause of our parish. – Remember that beautiful two weeks you spent in the Jankovits-settlement, Magdi. I remember well you were always ready to help and your good heart always found joy in it. Your heart was torn apart by a bullet because of your fidelity to Jesus. That is why I trust and count on your helping hand. I ask you to help me in this project. May the kingdom of Jesus who had a meek and humble heart, come to us”. – No wonder that as a result of this heart-felt prayer, the heavenly dew fell upon this generous enterprise of the small village in Somogy in the year of 1956.

During war, Magdi’s favoured church in Fűzfőgyártelep lost everything, – says Fr. István O., except those things that Magdi, with the help of two apprentice-boys buried at the 17th column of the fence of the factory. She showed this to Fr. Joseph. Apart from these things, we had nothing. For the 60.000 pengő collected in Budapest, we could buy only a little bell. I prayed to Magdi, who during her life served the house of God with such love, to help on us and the church, where she used to pray so much. Hardly had I stepped out to the street, when I met one of my acquaintances, who had been entrusted with all the equipment of a big church with the remark that he might donate from it anything he wished. And all this completely free... I took as much as I was able to carry for the poor church in Fűzfőgyártelep. Magdi helped again.

A young priest, M. L., had suffered for a long time of stomach troubles. His sickness progressed so far that he was impeded from fulfilling his priestly obligations. He went with great confidence to Magdi’s grave to ask her intercession. “My condition has substantially improved. I thank Magdi for it ...”

Someone was praying with great confidence for his aging mother who suffered from heart disease: “Magdi, heal my mother”, she repeated many times. The sick mother’s condition improved precisely in those days. She got up and began to work again. Then she ceased to take even the medications. She is doing fine. This happened a year ago. The healing seems to be permanent.

“Because of my weak physical condition, I could not do my work, unless she helped from above”, – says Magdi’s mother. She helped my sons come back from captivity, from the war. In the fall of 1945 both of them came, Gyula from Russia, Jani from Germany came back quite healthy...”

I was unprepared and very surprised when I got in May 1945 the nomination which Fr. István O. brought from Veszprém. Bishop Mindszenty appointed me to Bodé, in a little mining village of the coal-basin of Ajka, to be administrator of the parish. For a moment, I was filled with despair and helplessness: “The bishop is going to answer to God for daring to do this to me!”, – remembers Fr. Joseph. “Magdi Bódi will help you in Bodé”, – Fr. István O. warned me. I never had problems with obedience, not even now. But mentioning Magdi suddenly calmed down my emotional shock, which prompted me to say those words of indignation. It happened as Fr. István O. said...

When I turned to that country road, tired from the long walk, which leads from Ajka to Bodé, I looked around the fields. Not a soul anywhere. Then I knelt down on the dusty road and began to cry hard: “My God, you sent me here. Show me what you can do, because I cannot do anything”. I cried for a while then calmed down. “Magdi Bódi will help you in Bodé”, – I heard again the words of Fr. István O. “Yes, Magdi, you promised it. Ask many graces for us and for me, as we agreed”.

The reality was more frightening than I was prepared for. No church, no rectory, no income, and they do not want a priest. My dean said to me: “It will be good if you can stay for two weeks. Go to Veszprém and tell them not to make such bad jokes. They do not need a priest there”. – “Magdi, do you hear this?...”, – I thought.

First, I wanted to attract the children. We began with the Crusaders of the Sacred Heart. I spoke to them about Magdi’s life and death. I told them that she loved them too, because I am among them and with them.

The older girls understood it quickly. As a gift from Fr. István O., I distributed to them the photos of Magdi, which they placed into their prayerbooks and they too began to love Magdi.

A year later in the spring we organized a school excursion. Our goal was Litér: the grave of Magdi. The women and girls wove a beautiful wreath, which we carried with us. We arrived and got down from the truck. The children, who already knew the beauty and value of silence, without any directions lined up silently and stood around the grave. We all prayed silently. Not for her, but to her. Then we prayed aloud. At the end I kissed the wooden cross and I was able to say only this: “What happens in our souls, is not my doing, but hers whose body lies here in the grave...”

“I was never a popular priest”. – says Fr. Joseph. “I dealt with the people with a strong hand and strictly, and the people did not like it. In Bodé, the number of those who were supposed to go to confession was 800 souls. The number of yearly Holy Communion reached 5.000 in the first year. I stayed there for four and half years. The number of Communion steadily increased. In the last year it reached the 17.000.

“You eat the host by the bag”, – remarked sarcastically remarks those few but well-organized atheists. They too noticed the change of the spirit of the village. “Up to now they called our village ‘the Little Moscow’, now they gave it a new name: ‘the Little Rome’. And we may even live to see that a church will be built here”, – said the

Communist Party Secretary in a public meeting. I had to leave there, but the church was built and those who believed remain believers, even today.

We may add to this that these numbers far surpass the best pastoral statistics of the country. They remind us of the statistics of Belgium or the Netherlands, where almost everyone is used to making closed retreats.

All this happened in a rather difficult Hungarian mining region... Magdi did not forget her promise.

“One cannot put into words all that Magdi mediated to me through God’s grace during the past 11 years”, says Fr. Joseph.

Finally, the writer of these lines does not want to make a detailed statement. He just says about Magdi: “For me, this girl is truly a miracle”. There is no doubt that the result of the intercession of Magdi Bódi is going to increase wherever people get to know her and love her...

THE BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF MAGDI

- 1921: born in Szigliget, on August 5th.
- 1921: baptized in Badacsonytörmedic, on Aug.15th.
- 1927: in September she goes to school in Köveskál.
- 1934: the family moves from Köveskál to the prairie Mára.
- 1935: Fűzfőgyártelep becomes a local mission, caring also for Balatonfűzfő.
- 1937: Magdi's spiritual life receives a definite direction.
- 1939: Magdi becomes a worker in the Nitrochemical factory.
- 1940: Fűzfőgyártelep becomes a parish.
- 1940: Bódi family moves from Mára to Vilonya.
- 1941: in August, Magdi makes her first closed retreat in Pécel.
- 1941: on Oct.26, Magdi vows perpetual virginity to Christ the King.
- 1942: Balatonfűzfő becomes a parish.
- 1942: Bódi family moves from Vilonya to the prairie Daka.
- 1942: on December 8th Magdi becomes a Marian Sodalist in Fűzfőgyártelep.
- 1943: in January, Magdi completes a nursing course, sign up for front duty.
- 1943: in the summer Magdi makes her 2nd close retreat in Pécel.
- 1944: in April, the family moves from Daka to Litér.
- 1944: in July, Magdi makes a retreat in the Jankovich-settlement.
- 1945: in February, Magdi gives a retreat in Fűzfőgyártelep.
- 1945: on March 23rd, Magdi dies a martyr's death in Litér.

IMPORTANT CLOSING REMARK

Dear Reader,

I would like to call your attention to the fact that I did not write this present book, but only was its lector and publisher.

As I have already mentioned in the foreword, these biographical data were collected by the late Dr. Nicholas Galambos, abbot-pastor of Zalaegerszeg.

Fr. István Oross also compiled a brief biography of Magdi Bódi, which was then given to Fr. Galambos, who inserted this writing into his own collection. Besides, as you can see from the texts, many of us told him all that we knew from our personal experience and acquaintance with Magdi.

In 1956, Fr. Galambos allowed the typed text to be bound in a book. Of the few copies only a few people got one, as I did. Neither before, nor in the following years was it possible to think of a printed edition of these notes.

As it became possible, first Fr. István Oross published the brief biography in 1990 with the title: *“The life of a young working girl up to martyrdom: Magda Bódi, 1921-1945.”*

The present book: *“Witnessing with white lily and red blood”*, comprises therefore almost completely the texts of Fr. Oross and Fr. Galambos.

I still thought it useful to publish again this collection of data. It contains a few more items about Magdi, especially about the formation of her spirituality of martyrdom. This makes it clearer, why did she did everything as she did, when she began to walk as a martyr from this earth to Christ the King.

As she promised, Magdi intercedes for all those people who have used my priestly service throughout my whole life. I want to offer this service now to all those who are going to read the data of her biography.

P. Joseph Temesi, SJ.

TESTIMONY

This is to testify that I have translated the book of P. József Temesi, SJ.: “Tanúságtétel liliommal és vérrel (Bódi Mária Magdolna élete és vértanúsága, 1921–1945)”, written in Hungarian and published in 1997 by the Szt. Gellért Nyomda és Kiadó Budapest, Hungary. The Hungarian edition has been published with ecclesiastical approval.

I also certify that the text corresponds faithfully to the Hungarian original.

Toronto, July 31, 2004.

+ Attila Miklósházy, SJ.
Ep. tit. Castellominoritanus