

SIGITAS NARBUTAS

The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences

ORCID: 0000-0002-8159-7077

## The Second Secret of Pacas<sup>1</sup>

Between 1648 and 1667, our state was ravaged by wars and its people felled by plagues and famines. These calamities still draw tears today, when one listens to original hymns composed in Lithuanian in those times. In the hymns, aid and protection from their enemies is sought from all – beginning with God our Lord, His angels and saints, and culminating with the Most Holy Virgin Mary. Here is how the tragic two decades were immortalized by Pacas' contemporary, Fr. Pranciškus Šrubauskis (ca. 1620 – 27 May 1680), in “The Hymn of the Wars that Ravaged the Grand Duchy of Lithuania” (Šrubauskis 1726, 244–245):

Hail to you, Holy Virgin Mary,  
Lily most pure of heaven and earth!  
To you we cry, to you we sigh,  
We sinners wait for your grace.

Since you are Mother of the Son of God  
And the fairest daughter of our Lord!  
Intercede, Lady, with your holy prayers,  
Do not forsake us, take us under your wings!

We see upon us a weighty crown  
Fallen amidst sorrowful groans,  
Our folk scattered, nobility worn,  
How low our kingdom has fallen.

Thousands were seized and enslaved;  
Swede and Muscovite made prisoners there;  
All bore the burden of a heavy crown;  
Innocent people in blood were drowned.

Holy churches, cities and towns,  
Estates and villages were burned to the ground;  
The foe looted altars, mocking faith,  
Defiled the churches using them as stables.

Priests, God's servants and humble monks,  
Holy sisters and other flock,

<sup>1</sup> The paper was read at the international exhibition “The Pacs. Lilies in the Garden of History”, held at the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, on 23 January 2025. It is now published at the request of the participants of this event. “The First of the Pacas' Secrets” published in 2024 in the *Proceedings of the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences* (Narbutas 2024).

Were driven out like sheep from the fold,  
Away from the churches, from the name of God.

Those the tyrant slew on the spot,  
The young and the old, were drenched in blood,  
People were tortured, stripped to skin,  
Leaving homes without a single thing.

They cut off breasts and boiled the children,  
And then coerced the mothers to eat them...  
What agonies must the mothers have endured  
Watching their children being boiled alive.

The land of Lithuania seemed lost and broken  
For seven long years beneath a yoke,  
But God revealed his love and grace,  
Sending a Patron ready to bring aid.

First printed around 1679, Šrubauskis' hymnal *The Voice of the Heart* where we find "The Hymn of the Wars that Ravaged the Grand Duchy of Lithuania", continued to console the faithful throughout the entire 18th century (Vaicekauskas 2005, 79). In tribute to his legacy, I will recount another secret of Pacas – the second one. In importance, it is no less significant than the first secret of Pacas, which focused on Lithuania's statehood and army – in fact, it even surpasses the first (Narbutas 2024). The second secret is vividly evidenced by a far greater number of sacral and secular cultural artifacts – monuments of both material and intangible heritage that have come down to our times. They are all well known to you individually from the works of researchers in church history, theology, culture, art, architecture, literature, and other fields. Yet the Pacas era, spanning the 6th to 9th decades of the 17th century, reveals unexpected connections and previously unseen meanings of these monuments.

Vilnius Voivode Mykolas Kazimieras Pacas demonstrated a living connection with the spiritual part of our existence, with the heavenly patrons of Lithuania and Poland, of his family, and of himself – not only through the shrine of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul and its impressive iconology. His piety and patriotism are also reflected in other contemporary works believed to express his intentions for the revival of his homeland, the Church, and his family. One such work is the collection of emblems and eulogies entitled *Military Aid, Gathered from the Holy Patrons as Well as Saintly Knights of the Polish and Lithuanian Nations* (1671), by Andriejus Młodzianovskis (Młodzianowski, 30 November 1626 – 10 January 1685), a graduate of Vilnius Academy, hagiographer, playwright, and creator of rhetorical prose. In this book, the Jesuit author presented saints who were eventually immortalized in the numerous expressive plaster sculptures of the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul.

There exists another publication associated with Mykolas Kazimieras. Art historians refer to it as the most beautiful Lithuanian book of the 17th century (Liškevičienė 1996, 43; Vasiuliauskienė 2006, 117). It is a copiously illustrated prayer book, published in three editions and titled *The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Hours, and Various Other Prayers* (in Latin, ca. 1672 and ca. 1678; in Polish, 1686; Liškevičienė 1996, 52–53). Its compiler, the Grand Marshal of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Aleksandras Hiliaras Polubinskis (Połubiński, 1626 – 3 November 1679), was a contemporary and comrade-in-arms of Mykolas Kazimieras. In 1660s and 1670s, Aleksandras Hiliaras was a supporter of the Pacas family, who were loyal to

the King. He fought in the Battle of Khotyn under the command of Mykolas Kazimieras. This is suggested by the appearance of his name in the catalogue of Lithuanian military commanders referenced in the poem “The Might of the Lord’s Right Hand” (Benetas et Grinkevičius 2024, 39). On the other hand, his biographer Mirosław Nagielski does not make a direct mention of Aleksandras Hiliaras (Nagielski 1982, 361), referring instead to several units he had hired to take part in the battle.

*The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary* is structured according to the principle of the Liturgy of the Hours, though in a distinctive way, different from that of modern prayer books. In today’s prayer books, various prayers, hymns, and litanies are arranged sequentially for the convenience of the faithful. The Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary, recited and chanted Marian rosaries, the Rosary of the Holy Name of Jesus, other cycles of hymns and prayers are presented in succession. Meanwhile, the Polubinskis rosary consists of three main parts: a calendar, the Rosary of the Mother of God, and the Marian Hours. Those parts underlie *The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. Moreover, many other prayers, litanies and hymns are in this book. For example, “each part of Her Rosary is paired with the Little Hours: the first – the Joyful Mysteries – with the Holy Trinity; the second – the Sorrowful Mysteries – with the Holy Spirit; the third – the Glorious Mysteries – with the Holy Name of Jesus. This part is followed by the Rosary and Hours of the Holy Guardian Angel; as well as by the Rosary of the Holy Name of Jesus, whose three parts are arranged with the Little Hours of the Immaculate Conception, the Most Blessed Sacrament, and the Holy Cross. Next come the *Officium Parvum* of St. Joseph, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Crucifixion. All these devotions are concluded with the Litany corresponding to each title. The canonical Hours consist of *Matins (Matutinum)* and *Lauds (Laudes)* in the morning; *Prime (Prima)*, *Terce (Tertia)*, *Sext (Sexta)*, and *None (Nona)* during the day; *Vespers (Vesperae)* in the evening; and *Compline (Completorium)* at night — each accompanied by the appropriate hymns, antiphons, and readings. The two largest and most essential parts of this book are the Rosary of Mary and the Marian Hours” (Vasiliauskienė 2006, 120). The particular features of this *Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary* relate to its form but do not change the essence of its content: both in the 17th century and today, the meaning of the Marian Hours is to dedicate all the hours of the day to the glory of the Immaculate Mother, and the purpose of the Marian Rosary is to meditate on the most important events in the lives of Jesus and Mary (*Liturginis maldynas* 2007, 307, 313).

Explaining the meanings of the illustrations in *The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, the art historian Aušra Vasiliauskienė points out that here two illustrative traditions are combined – those of the Rosary of Mary and the Hours of Mary. The main theme of this prayer book is expressed by the frontispiece – a page with an engraving located at the very beginning of the book. It depicts the Mother of God holding the Tree of Life. The image of the Holy Virgin is set within a triumphal arch – a symbolic gateway to Heaven, opening the path to Paradise. On either side, the arch is guarded by the holy apostles Peter and Paul, while above and below are the four evangelists and Saint Casimir. At the bottom, we see an oval cartouche with the book’s title within it, with two other devotees of the Mother of God – St. Francis and St. Dominic – on either side. References to them or texts mentioning them can be found throughout various parts of the book.

The artist Aleksander Tarasewicz (ca. 1650 – 12 June 1727) illustrated not the entire *The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, but only three of its parts: the calendar, the Rosary of the Mother of God, and the Hours of Mary. The 15 illustrations of the Rosary help the believers immediately grasp the content of each mystery, while the texts beneath each image provide material for devout contemplation of that mystery. This method of illustrating the Rosary – be-

ginning with an engraving reflecting the overall theme, followed by the contemplation of each mystery – is considered traditional, as it developed in the 16th century and was standard in all illustrated prayer books. Meanwhile, the calendar and the cycles of the Hours of Mary belong to a different illustration tradition. At the beginning of each month's calendar, there is an engraving depicting the work or other activities typical for this month. The calendar of *The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary* is decorated with the following images: January, *Celebration*; February, *By the Fire*; March, *Tree Pruning*; April, *Garden Scene*; May, *Hunting*; June, *Sheep Shearing*; July, *Haymaking*; August, *Grain Harvesting*; September, *Grape Pressing*; October, *Ploughing and Sowing*; November, *Tree Cutting*; December, *Slaughtering of Livestock*.

The Hours of Mary are illustrated in the following order: Morning: *ad Matutinum* — *The Annunciation, ad Laudes* — *The Visitation*; Daytime: *ad Primam* — *The Nativity of Christ*; *ad Tertiam* — *The Circumcision*; *ad Sextam* — *The Adoration of the Magi*; Evening — *The Flight into Egypt*. Each engraving occupies approximately three-quarters of the page. This method of illustrating the Hours is also based on an old tradition. The images helped the believers to more quickly and easily contemplate the most significant moments in the life of the Mother of God as described in the text beneath them (Vasiliauskienė 2006, 121–124).

The iconography of the Church of Saints Peter and Paul reflects the religious intentions behind the prayer book compiled by Aleksandras Hiliaras. A key ideological emphasis of this sanctuary lies with none other than the Blessed Virgin Mary and Her pure venerator, Saint Casimir, the patron of Lithuania. Mykolas Kazimieras' intentions and efforts to express gratitude to the Mother of God for Her protection are further evidenced by another Marian devotional site – the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Merkinė. It was restored from ruins in 1676 by the Grand Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Mykolas Kazimieras Pacas.

Mykolas Kazimieras' cousin, the Grand Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Kristupas Zigmantas Pacas (1621 – 1 October 1684) made a far greater contribution to the veneration of the Mother of God. Fulfilling the testamentary will of his father, the Sub-Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Steponas Pacas (1587 – 19 November 1640), he took care of his monastic foundations: the Vilnius Barefoot Carmelites monastery with the Church of St. Teresa, the Vilnius Barefoot Carmelites monastery with the Church of St. Joseph, as well as the construction of the parish Church of St. Michael the Archangel in Jieznas (Paknys 2013, 46–47). Both of the extant sanctuaries – the Churches of St. Teresa and St. Michael the Archangel – abound with signs of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The most important monument of Kristupas Zigmantas' gratitude to the Mother of God, and the most prominent expression of her veneration, remains the Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Camaldolese monastery in Pažaislis. In 1660, the Grand Chancellor found a suitable, secluded location for such a monastery: a wooded, hilly plot within a bend of the Nemunas River near Kaunas. In 1661, Pope Alexander VII, by a special bull, granted permission to establish a Camaldolese monastery with a novitiate at that site. In 1662, the Sejm of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth approved Kristupas Zigmantas' proposed foundation plan, and the following year, in 1663, an official charter for the monastic foundation was issued. On 22 May 1664, the Grand Chancellor purchased the Pažaislis estate from its previous owner for 14,000 Polish guilders. The act of monastic foundation was signed on 3 November 1664, and on November 6, Kristupas Zigmantas ceremonially presented the Camaldolese monks with symbolic keys and the foundation charter itself. The cornerstone of the Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Pažaislis was blessed in 1667, and the church was completed in 1674. After the interior decoration and finishing work were comple-

ted, the church was solemnly consecrated in 1712. The consecration was performed by Bishop Konstantinas Bžostovskis of Vilnius (Paknys 2013, 31; Šinkūnaitė 2014, 15–16).

Every architectural and artistic detail in this sanctuary was skilfully, inventively, and impressively put in the service of the veneration of the Mother of God, as the ensemble and its decor were created according to a specific iconological program. I will quote the assessment of the first researcher to notice and appreciate this, Birutė Ruzgienė (Ruzgienė 1992, 61–62):

What is the central focus of the monastery's fresco iconographic program? It is the glorification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This theme stems both from the Tridentine decree emphasizing the veneration of Mary and from the ancient Camaldolese tradition of devotion to the Mother of God. [...] This tradition also determined the title of the Pažaislis Camaldolese Church: The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The theme of Mary's glorification was placed at the ideological centre of the architectural composition of the ensemble – the church itself and its highest points along the main longitudinal axis [...]. The fresco of the "Visitation of Mary" in the church vestibule is the initial focal point of the theme along the main axis within the interior; the theme is developed at the end of this axis – in the ceiling of the choir room ("The Assumption of Mary"), in smaller compositions of playing and dancing angels, and in the frescoes of the vault surfaces depicting Mary's earthly life. These emphasize, frame, and close off the longitudinal compositional axis, highlight the symbolism of the key motif of Mary's joys, and associate it with the breviary antiphon: *Assumpta es Maria | in coelum: gaudent | angeli, laudantes | benedicunt Dominum* [You are, Mary, taken up into heaven – the angels rejoice and, praising, bless the Lord]. Such a composition of the Marian theme within the church interior functions almost as a literal translation of the antiphon "Ave, Regina" into the language of imagery: *Ave, Regina caelorum, | ave, Domina angelorum, | salve radix, salve porta, | ex qua mundo lux estorta. | Gaude, Virgo gloriosa, | super omnes speciosa, | vale, o vale decora, | et pro nobis Christum exora* [Hail, Queen of Heaven! Hail, Lady of the Angels! Hail, Root! Hail, Gate, from whom the Light has risen for the world! Rejoice, glorious Virgin, fairest of all! Farewell, O gracious one, and intercede with Christ for us!]. However, the frescoes do more than just reveal individual aspects of the Marian theme (see the diagram: along the same axis are positioned "Regina caelorum" [Queen of Heaven] in the church dome, "Domina angelorum" [Lady of the Angels] on the ceiling of the choir, as well as "radix" [Root] and "porta" [Gate] on the vestibule ceiling). The symbolic meaning of each room is also reflected in the content of the frescoes.

This sanctuary is the main, but not the only, part of the Pažaislis complex. In addition to the church, the complex also includes the Great and Holy Gates, two guesthouses, several outbuildings, the monastery, hermitages, and the bell tower. In all the preserved buildings, the theme of veneration of the Mother of God dominates. This is easy to observe in the cartouche on the pediment of the Great Gate, which features a double lily (the founder's coat of arms and the flower of the Blessed Virgin) and a Latin inscription (a prophecy from Isaiah, evoking Mary's messianic role). On either side of the Holy Gates were administrative rooms adorned with two frescoes: "The Sorrowful Mother of God" and "The Holy Family". In the founders' hall of the guesthouse hung, among other works, two paintings by Michelangelo Palloni (29 September 1642 – between 1711 and 1713): "The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple" (an 18th-century copy is extant) and "Jesus Among the Teachers in the Temple" (the original has survived). From the guesthouse, one enters the churchyard. The paths within it form the letter M – the monogram of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Highly expressive signs of devotion to the Mother of God are found in the most important object within the sacred space of the churchyard – the church façade. Above its portal, a marble plaque proclaims to whom the sanctuary is dedicated, when it was completed, and when it was consecrated: "To the Queen of Peace, | the Virgin crowned

with Lilies, | journeying to the hill country, | on the Mount of Peace | built and consecrated | in the year of Christ 1674.” Above the clocks is a balustrade that, until the mid-19th century, held four sculptures: Saint Joseph, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Elizabeth, and God’s servant Simeon. The sacristy, located behind the hexagonal church, is decorated with frescoes dedicated to the theme of the Eucharist: “The Last Supper”, “The Supper at Emmaus”, “The Angel Brings a Crystal Chalice to St. Francis of Assisi”, “The Supper at the House of Simon”, and “Jesus Washing the Disciples’ Feet”. On the opposite side, in the chapter hall located behind the hexagonal church’s, the dominant theme is the Passion of Christ. The hall’s altar is decorated with “The Crucified Christ”, which crowns a cycle of the Passion, while the vault surfaces feature frescoes depicting “The Scourging of Jesus Christ”, “The Crowning with Thorns”, “Ecce Homo”, and “Jesus Christ Carrying the Cross”. The monastery refectory – a place of both bodily and spiritual nourishment – is decorated with five frescoes: “The Wedding at Cana in Galilee”, “The Miraculous Multiplication of Bread and Fish”, “The Feeding of Saint Benedict in the Wilderness”, “The Miraculous Discovery and Feeding of Saint Romuald”, and “The Temptation of Jesus in the Desert”. The church’s titular bell, which has thankfully survived to the present day, bears a cast image on its waist of “The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth” (Šinkūnaitė 2014, 22, 26–30, 31, 38, 41–42, 43 ff., 145–149, 156–160, 164–169, 171).

Returning to Kristupas Zigmantas — if we consider this nobleman’s determined efforts to venerate the Mother of God, his enlistment of the finest artists and craftsmen, and the vast sums of money dedicated to this purpose, we are entitled to ask: what inspired and guided his intentions, thoughts, and actions, as well as those of other Pacas family members? The answer to this question must come from some authentic text that would reflect the thoughts and will of the Grand Chancellor himself. One such text may be found on the plaque affixed to the cornerstone of the Pažaislis church. Here is the inscription (translated from Paknys 2013, 198):

To the One God in the Trinity, to the Queen of Heaven who visits the Mother of the Herald, to the holy fathers: to Benedict, the father of the great monastic lineage, and to Romuald, the first reformer of this monastic order and restorer of the eremitic life, as well as to the [heavenly] patrons of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, during the reign of the most illustrious and victorious John Casimir, King of Poland and Sweden, who, renowned for his military campaigns, suppressed the rebellious Cossacks, quelled two civil wars instigated by the nobles, dismantled three military confederations, expelled the Muscovite who had invaded having thus broken treaties, defeated Charles Gustav of Sweden who had ravaged the country with his army for six years, won back the Prussians who had leaned toward the Swedish side, and with his troops destroyed the Hungarians, [thus,] for all the good deeds previously received [from this king], with unwavering loyalty, steadfastness, wisdom, and prudence in supporting him and remaining faithful to him everywhere, the Grand Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Kristupas Pacas, after the noise of war had fallen silent, was the first in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to establish, and endow with estates, the Mountain of Peace, a mile from the royal city of Kaunas. There, the seeds of the flowers of the Camaldolese hermits were sprinkled with the blessing of the Most Holy Roman Pope Alexander VII, that they might sprout, and they were then grafted by the Most Illustrious Bishop of Vilnius, Jurgis Bialozoras, in the year 1664, that they might grow. [Therefore here,] at his own expense, together with his wife, Geneviève Isabelle de Mailly-Lascaris, he begins to build the church along with all the edifices of the eremitic monastery, relying on the protection of the Most Holy Lady, the prayers of the holy patrons, the will of the newly crowned Pope Clement IX and his predecessor Alexander, [and] with the approval and support of the Bishop of Vilnius. [And,] on the 20th day of October in the Year of Our Lord 1667, laying its cornerstone, he marks this monument for eternity with a sacred stone, that in this enclosed garden it might spread the sweet fragrance of lilies before the Lord.

What message does this Baroque text convey? The idea to thank the Mother of God by establishing the Camaldolese monks in Pažaislis and building a sanctuary for Her, and a monastery for them, arose “once the noise of war had fallen silent.” The inscription mentions the Ukrainian Cossack uprising that raged from 1648 to 1654, the 1654–1667 war between the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and the State of Moscow, the 1655–1660 war with Sweden, and also several smaller-scale clashes with Sweden’s allies – the Prussian Germans and the Hungarians. The inscription speaks only of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Kristupas Zigmantas’ homeland endured the storms of twenty years of war. The Grand Chancellor had no doubt that this happened under the protection of the Mother of God. After all, it was to Her that, back in 1656, Poland and Lithuania were consecrated by none other than the very ruler whom this nobleman steadfastly supported with “unshakable loyalty, constancy, wisdom, and prudence,” and to whom he himself faithfully served – namely, John II Casimir Vasa (see more in Vaišnora 1958, 145–153). The storms of war did not break the Lithuanian faith in the protection of the Mother of God – on the contrary, as we can see from this and many other monuments that have reached our time, they only strengthened it further.

Kristupas Zigmantas’ view of the Mother of God and her role in the life of the individual, society, and state could be understood through the insights of Antanas Maceina’s (27 January 1908 – 27 January 1987). Here is what he writes in his most important Marian work, *The Great Helper* (Maceina 1994, 436–437):

In Mary’s intercessory mission, the true agent is and always remains her Son, our Savior and God. She herself merely enables Christ to turn toward a specific situation in our lives – one in which, without His Mother’s intercession, He perhaps would not act at all, or would act differently, at another time or in another way. *Mary’s intercession is the act of bringing Christ’s redemptive mission into existential reality* – its application in terms of time, space, person, and circumstance. Called by God Himself to act on behalf of humanity, Mary looks upon the actual condition of her children and, bends divine grace according to that condition. Mary is not the source of grace, but merely its channel, as St. Bernard called her. Grace always flows from Christ, and Mary simply directs it toward our present concerns – those of this time and this place.

The Church deeply reveres this role of Mary and therefore calls Her the Intercessor of all Graces, the only one “able to open for us the way to the knowledge of Christ,” who is “our advocate with God and the dispenser of heavenly graces,” from whom “flows to us all that is grace or salvation within us.” St. Cyril of Alexandria captures this Church belief in these wonderful words: “Through You the apostles proclaimed salvation to the nations. Through You the precious wood of the Cross is honoured throughout the world. Through You evil spirits are driven out, and man is restored to heaven. Through You every creature, once lost in the error of idol worship, is led to the truth. Through You the faithful receive baptism, and through You churches are built everywhere on earth.”

It is easy to observe that all the intercessory interventions of the Holy Virgin Mary listed here correspond to specific existential situations: the proclamation of the Gospel, the veneration of the Cross, the conversion of idolaters, the expulsion of evil spirits, baptism, and the building of holy places for the Lord. The foundation and essential condition for all these works lie in the redemption of Christ, without which they would not be possible. Only Christ’s coming to earth made it so that God bent down toward humanity and entered into human existence – not merely as a sustaining providential principle in general, but *as a Person* who helps us, saves us, guides us, and protects us. Nevertheless, for this universal salvation and perfection of humanity – accomplished and still being accomplished by Christ – to manifest in our concrete situations, Mary’s intercessory word is needed; her plea and guidance are necessary, for she is our mediator and intercessor before the Lord.

One would like to believe that this – or something similar – was how the entire Pacas family thought about the Mother of God, valued Her protection, and prayed for Her intercession before the Lord. By their example, they encourage us, the keepers of their heritage, to do the same. And this would be my answer in seeking the key to the second mystery of the Pacas family.

## SOURCES

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