

Ossuary

/ The Charnel House of St. Michael /

St. Michael's Ossuary was established in the first third of the XV century. As the very name suggests, it was used to store human remains from the older graves from the former cemetery near the parish church. Today's above-ground part of the ossuary was built in the early XVI century and after the fire in 1528 it was used as a chapel. In 1560, in connection with the Turkish threat, the Ossuary was used as the town armoury with metal casting facility in the basement. After a reconstruction and historical research, the building fell under the administration of Trenčín Museum and since 2007 it houses a permanent exposition.

Artworks exhibited in St. Michael's Ossuary represent a small collection of sacral art in the collections of the Trenčín Museum. Gothic sculptures complement the sculptural and painting works from the Baroque period. The oldest artefact presented is *a part of the Podlužany altar - Descent from the Cross* from the first half of the XV century. Among younger ones there is *the torso of the statue of St. Elizabeth of Hungary (of Thuringia)* who was the daughter of King of Hungary Andrew II. Elizabeth was known for her care for the sick and became the patron of the innocently persecuted and needy. The composition is completed by the *altar painting of St. Francis Xavier*, the co-founder and general of the Jesuit order, depicting also the Trenčín Castle. The exhibition includes also *statues of Franciscan monks and St. Francis of Paola*, the patron saint of hermits and infertile marriages. The statue dates from the late XVIII century. In the foreground of the Baroque interior of the Piarist church of St. Francis Xavier in Trenčín there are two *statues of St. John the Baptist*, the patron saint of monastic life and brothers hospitallers. In the niches opposite the entrance there are several fragments of sacral architecture and small sculptures. Statues of saints and gilded cherubs (the so-called putti) come from the XVII, XVIII and XIX centuries. The last one in the place is *the altarpiece of St. Martin*, Bishop of Tours, the patron saint of beggars, prisoners or abstainers.

In the lower part of the Ossuary, the exhibition is complemented by panels with information about the turbulent history of the nearby Parish church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, built on the so-called Marienberg or the Marian Hill. From the old Gothic equipment of this church a fragment of a small portable altar from the period around 1420 and two painted altar wings, dating back to around 1400, which are now in the National Gallery in Budapest were preserved. On the panel in the basement of the Ossuary we can see how they looked like.