



BEARERS OF HOPE

***Pastoral works of the Catholic Church
in Roma communities***

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Introduction

The Catholic Church, through the activities of its missionaries — priests, order brothers and sister, seminarians, pastoral assistants (laymen) and many volunteers — is dedicated to the formation of the Roma as a natural part of the Church's pastoral activities. Experience so far confirms the fact that the renewal of life of the Roma based on a change of mindset has concrete positive consequences in their personal lives and in the society of this minority as such, as well as in the majority society in terms of cultural, educational, social/relational and economic aspects. Under the influence of religious formation, they show willingness to take responsibility for their actions and for their families, they prove competent not only in their local Roma communities but also on the labour market. These claims are also supported by the scientific study of 2010 of the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava: 'God between barriers' — Social Inclusion of Roma through Religion¹. The study confirms the fact that visible results of social inclusion of Roma are achieved by means of religious pastoral care. Religious formation focuses on transformation of the person himself. Such people after their religious conversion intensify their religious life and change their perception of themselves, thus approaching the needs of society in a proactive way. In the SIRONA 2010 research, researchers looked at fourteen indicators in the lives of Roma in marginalised Roma communities:

1. Improved school attendance of children
2. Reduction in the level of indebtedness
3. Reduction in the usury rate
4. Increase in job search activity
5. Labour market participation
6. Reduction of petty crime
7. Reduction of alcoholism and other substance abuse problems
8. Reduction of gambling and of gambling addiction
9. Increase in literacy rates (elimination of illiteracy)
10. Increase in communication skills
11. Increase in social skills
12. Increase in the frequency of positive contacts with other Roma
(Roma from other villages)
13. Increase in the frequency of positive contacts with the majority inhabitants
14. Elimination of stereotypes

According to the qualitative research findings, the most successful indicators for the Roma who became members of religious movements are: reduction of substance dependency — 98%, a significant reduction in petty crime — 95% and reduction in debt — 90%. The conclusion of this research is that "all 14 indicators studied showed a success rate of at least 80%." However, this is not social inclusion, but rather a social change. This positive change has a high potential to lead to social inclusion. Full inclusion is a "long run", but it starts with social change. It may start with one generation, but it will probably end with grandchildren of this generation.

Pastoral care is therefore based on the possibility and the need for holistic formation of the person in religious, spiritual, intellectual, educational, social and cultural aspects. **The fruits of this formation are Roma who are interested in education and employment — and in the long term — educated and**

¹ http://www.uet.sav.sk/files/socialna_inkluzia_romov_nabozenskou_cestou.pdf

employed Roma. Since pastoral care of the Roma brings an effect appreciated by both the majority population, municipalities and employers, we are convinced that promotion of pastoral care of the Roma will bring omnifaceted benefits for the whole society.

Pastoral care of the Roma includes about 80 Roman Catholic and 20 Greek Catholic parishes with about 100 priests, order sisters and brothers and more than 200 volunteers working in this field. Pastoral care of the Roma takes place in about 25 pastoral works in the form of institutionalised systematic pastoral work. In the remaining parishes it is carried out within the framework of regular parish pastoral care (in a less institutionalised way). Pastoral ministries cooperate with local governments, community centres, schools and leisure centres; with the Slovak Catholic Charity, with local or national NGOs — such as KANET, n.o.; Teach for Slovakia; o.z. Cesta von — Omama; o.z. Ženy ženám; o.z. Bunky, o.z. Jarovnice; Umelecké centrum F6 ; Horúci tím; o.z. Oheň nádeje, Dobrý pastier — Lačno pastiris, Fórum kresťanských inštitúcií (Christian Institutions Forum) and many others.

There is still no systemic support for pastoral care of Roma from public funds or other donors, but there are many short-term projects supported by e.g the following foundations or donors: German Renovabis Foundation (the largest support); Prešov Self-Governing Region; Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic; Slovak Catholic Charity; Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Slovak Republic; self-governments (self-governments of municipalities where Roma live); Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities; IUVENTA Foundation; Office(s) of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic; Franziskaner für Menschen in Not (Wien, Austria); United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (Washington, USA); Parish of St. Eugenie (Stockholm, Sweden); PORTICUS; CONRAD N. HILTON FUND FOR SISTERS, California; Vienna Charity; MCS ASBL Belgique; HOPE´87; Eset Foundation; International Women Club Bratislava; Porticus Vienna; PONTIS; HENKEL; DELL, Slovenská Sporiteľňa; and other non-governmental or private donors.

ARCHDIOCESE OF KOŠICE

Luník IX



REGION: Košice Region
DISTRICT: Košice
DIOCESE: Archdiocese of Košice
Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by Salesians of Don Bosco

About 4,500 Roma live in the Luník IX housing estate, making up 99.9% of the estate's population. The entire Salesian community is dedicated to pastoral care of the inhabitants of this housing estate — 4 priests, 4 pastoral assistants and about 10 external animators and volunteers, who are being gradually joined by animators from the local Roma community.

The mission in Luník IX started in 2003. Luník IX is the largest Roma settlement in Central Europe. It was built as a social experiment on the outskirts of Košice. The original inhabitants of Luník IX in the 1980s were Roma, members of the police and the army. In the 1990s, the majority population gradually began to move out of the estate. Approximately 5 000 people are registered to reside in the Luník IX housing estate. The estate is disconnected from heat (2005) and gas (2010), has limited water supply to one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon (2009), and a part of the estate is without electricity (2010). The area of the housing estate is one square kilometre, it has the highest population density in Slovakia. The average age is twenty years, unemployment is 90%. The primary school is attended by 1 100 children, of which 220 children attend the first year. For several years, priests as well as religious communities have been approached and asked to be present in Luník IX. In 2003, two diocesan priests from other dioceses volunteered for a five-year assignment. They were present on the estate and actively cooperated with the school (the priests funded scholarships). In 2005 they began construction of a pastoral centre. When their presence ended in June 2008, the Salesians of Don Bosco took their place and a new mission team was formed around them. They continued with the construction of the pastoral centre, which was completed in 2011. In 2017 they set up a laundry for the residents of the estate.

Currently, the pastoral care in Luník IX consists in coaching families and children - in cooperation with the school, in leisure activities (camps, tutoring), in preparation for the sacraments and the celebration of these, in the promotion of hygiene habits (the Salesians have set up a laundry for the housing estate), and above all in coexistence directly with the Roma people in the middle of the housing estate.

Web: <https://lunik9.sk/> ;

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/lunik9.sk>

IBAN

Luník IX – o.z. Oheň nádeje: **SK73 8330 0000 0028 0179 2078**

Saleziáni don Bosca: **SK65 0200 0000 0040 4823 9457**

Jarovnice



REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Sabinov

DIOCESE: Archdiocese of Košice

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by the community of three Congregatio Jesu order sisters (Sr. Silvia, Sr. Rachel, Sr. Antónia) in cooperation with two priests of the parish (parish priest Radoslav Gejguš (since 2011) and chaplain Bystrík Sabo (since 2021) in cooperation with lay Roma volunteers within the framework of OZ Jarovnice.

Jarovnice are inhabited by approximately 7400 inhabitants, of whom about 800 are Slovaks and 6600 are Roma. Pastoral care of Roma is provided by three order sisters of Congregatio Jesu who have been doing pastoral, social and educational work for the Roma in Jarovnice since 2007. In 2011 they established a religious community in the village. Within the framework of the OZ Jarovnice, 15 Roma volunteers and 35 Roma activation workers help them with the children and at the Roma church in the settlement. They are also involved in various assistance tasks both in the village and in the settlement. Roma lay volunteers (about 11) help as well. The sisters also cooperate with the parish office, the municipal office and the field workers in the village. They are assisted by two pastoral assistants — one Roma person and an order sister. The pastoral ministry in Jarovnice is broad and multifaceted. Besides pastoral care it includes social and educational ministry. The basic motto of the ministry is "practical love", with the emphasis on encouraging the Roma to participate and volunteer in the service to their own community and society (community social work). The order sisters carry out their voluntary service to the Roma selflessly beside their paid jobs. In their work with Roma, they apply a so-called 'merit system'. Everybody has to participate not only spiritually, but also practically and financially in the organized activities, trips, revivals, etc. In addition to preparation for the sacraments, as a part of the pastoral care, they also hold Bible and lector meetings and organize spiritual renewals for women, girls, and families. Every Sunday, they distribute the Eucharist to the sick and the elderly both in the settlement and in the village. With the help of volunteers, they take care of the Roma church — they do the washing, decorating and ironing. On various holidays they prepare spiritual academies, musicals and theatre performances in the three churches of the parish. They lead a children's and youth Roma choirs. Within the framework of social work, they provide basic social counselling, helping with various problems in the areas of work, family and social life. They also help with education of the Roma. They provide practical training as part of graduate practice. By means of activation allowance they assist in practical education thus helping to promote proper work habits. They organize various educational activities — lectures, trainings, exercises, tutoring and various cultural and educational trips and

competitions. During the week, about 350 young people, children and adults participate, in cooperation with Roma volunteers, in leisure-time activities (dance, theatre, guitar, singing, handicrafts, etc.). Products from the handicraft workshop are offered as a means of support of activities of OZ Jarovnice — they can be ordered and purchased for a voluntary contribution.

Within the framework of the OZ Jarovnice, a total of 14 projects have been implemented so far with the financial participation of this civic association, three of which are still in progress: a project of education in the computer and labour fields, in the field of communication and in the economic field for 105 Roma women and girls with the objective to eliminate discrimination; a project of pastoral assistants and a project of activation workers. In addition, Sisters of Congregatio Jesu are involved in the implementation of two other projects — the construction of a new church kindergarten, having bought the land for it and the completion and exterior makeover of the Roma Pastoral Centre, which was built with the majority financial support of the RENOVABIS Foundation. This centre will not only house the community of Sisters of CJ, but it will also be a home for various activities with the Roma people and for cooperation with universities (students come to Jarovnice for internships). The financial participation of the sisters is necessary for all of these projects.

Web: <https://www.jarovnice.sk/sestry-cj-jarovnice>

FB: [Sestry-CJ-Jarovnice](#)

IBAN - OZ Jarovnice: SK78 0900 0000 0005 0557 8895

IBAN - Sestry CJ: SK65 0200 0000 0029 0107 2158

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Bardejov – Poštárka



REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Bardejov

DIOCESE: Archdiocese of Košice

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by Salesians of Don Bosco

The Poštárka housing estate is located on the periphery of the town of Bardejov. It is inhabited by approximately 1,600 Roma. Pastoral care within this community began in 1989, when Sr. Athanasia from the Order of St. Basil the Great started regularly visiting the housing estate. After a year of working with the Roma here, she invited the community of the Salesians of Don Bosco to cooperate with her. These began their pastoral work first with the youth. At the beginning, activities took place only in the open air. Later the Salesians rented the premises of the cultural house. In 1995 they gradually reconstructed it with the help of local Roma and various sponsors, turning it into a pastoral centre and a chapel of the Blessed Zephyrinus, a blessed Roma martyr. Gradually the events began to evolve into regular activities — preparation for the First Holy Communion, marriage preparation meetings, girls' or boys' meetings, later also meetings for animators and confirmands. In 2001 the Salesians established a Church Kindergarten and in 2006 they opened the Blessed Zephyrinus Primary School with Kindergarten. Over time, other activities were added, the Devleskhere čhave choir was established and summer camps for children, prayer meetings for mothers and fathers, and tutoring for pupils have been organized regularly.

Web: www.pobavi.sk

IBAN: SK58 0200 0000 0041 6352 8254

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Hanušovce nad Topľou



REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Vranov nad Topľou

DIOCESE: Archdiocese of Košice

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by: in 1990 - 2020 by Roma deacon Michal Horvát; after his death his work is continued by his wife Daniela.

The pastoral care of the Roma in Hanušovce nad Topľou began in 1990. Hanušovce has 3800 inhabitants, of whom about 800 are Roma. In 1998, Roma deacon Michal Horvát was employed in the newly established Community Centre. The centre offered not only cultural and educational activities for Roma but also religious activities and events. In 2004, when there were no more finances for the operation of the Community Centre, deacon Michal Horvát continued his pastoral work nevertheless and raised finances for renting the premises. In 2017, the Pastoral Centre — Kher Anglo Roma was built thanks to the financial support of the Renovabis Foundation, the municipality, local Roma entrepreneurs and collections by both the majority and minority societies. After the death of deacon Michal Horváth (in 2020), his wife Daniela has continued to coordinate pastoral activities among the Roma.

Activities of the Pastoral Centre: tutoring children and preparing them for classes; music, arts, sports and other leisure activities; children and youth meetings; choir and music group; mothers' fellowship; mentoring; formation of volunteers; learning parenting skills, preparation for marriage — responsible parenthood, family care, preparing children for the sacraments; organizing pilgrimages, etc.

FB: [Pastoračné centrum](#)

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Maria Romero College



REGION: Košice Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Košice

DIOCESE: Archdiocese of Košice

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by Salesian order sisters

We started the pilot project of Maria Romero College in the school year of 2020/21 in a rented apartment, working with girls who were given care by the Salesian Sisters in Luník IX. It is a prototype of pastoral care that incorporates the following elements: assistance in studying at a school outside the ghetto; living in a favourable and supportive environment during school days; living within the Slovak majority facilitating integration and mutual contact without prejudice; educational and financial participation of the children's legal guardians and improvement of parenting skills through monthly talks on the child's progress. We connect the worlds of the majority and minority, not relieving parents of their responsibility for upbringing of their children — we want the child to keep in touch with his or her culture and spend weekends at home. We encourage mutual friendships between Roma and Slovak girls through mentoring relationships.

FB **Kolégium Márie Romero**

IBAN: SK80 7500 0000 0040 0786 8759

Trebišov



REGION: Košice Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Trebišov

DIOCESE: Archdiocese of Košice

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by order sisters from Community of the Sisters of the Most Holy Saviour

In Trebišov City live more than 6 000 Roma people, which represents about 25% of the population. Since 2017, the sisters of the Community of the Most Holy Saviour have been working with the Roma by meeting once a week with the children in the school cafeteria, where they are doing pastoral care. Sisters - as retired women, do this service on a voluntary basis. They cooperate with the municipality and with Archdiocesan Catholic Charity.

Roma Mission Centre Košice



REGION: Košice Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Košice

DIOCESE: Archdiocese of Košice

Director of the Centre: Salesian Don Peter Bešenyei

The Metropolitan Archbishop of Košice has established the Roma Mission Centre Košice in July 1, 2020. The main mission of the centre is to offer professional, moral and human support to all consecrated and lay people involved in the spiritual ministry to the Roma. A part of the Centre's mission is to facilitate more effective pastoral care in the territory of the Archdiocese of Košice in such a way, so that all those involved in spiritual ministry could find new sources of inspiration and opportunities for their ministry to the Roma in their respective parishes.

The Roma Mission Centre Košice published a Devotional to the Roma Blessed Martyrs Zephyrinus and Emilia and was intensively involved in the preparation of the meeting of the Holy Father Francis with the Roma at Luník IX, Košice.

E-mail besenyei.peter@abuke.sk

IBAN: SK54 0200 0000 0000 0024 3512

ARCHDIOCESE OF PREŠOV

Greek Catholic Roma Mision in the Vranov nad Topľou District (GRM VT)



REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Vranov nad Topľou

DIOCESE: Archdiocese of Prešov

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by Greek Catholic priests assigned for Roma pastoral care (Michal Fedin, Ján Dvorščák, Ján Lemeš, Peter Lazorík. Founder: Fr. Martin Mekel.)

The Vranov District can be considered the cradle of the entire Greek Catholic Roma mission. The first communities were formed here and from here the mission spread further to the districts of Bardejov, Stará Ľubovňa and Prešov. The mission in the Vranov District is under the auspices of the Greek Catholic Formation Centre (GFC) for Roma in Čičava. It is an independent legal entity that derives its legal personality from the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia and its founder is the Greek Catholic Archbishopric of Prešov. It was established in 2012. At present, four priests carry out pastoral care of the Roma in the following municipalities of the Vranov district: Čičava, Soľ, Večec, Rudlov, Zámutov, Kamenná Poruba, Sačurov, Jastrabie nad Topľou, Hlinné, Skrabské and Prosačov. The approximate number of Roma in these villages is 6,000. The appointed Greek Catholic priests are helped in their pastoral care of the Roma by local leaders, animators and volunteers. Together they are involved in the preparation of liturgies, organizing prayer meetings and forming evangelistic groups or communities. Special time is also devoted to young people and children, for whom mostly one-day trips and activities are organized (especially in this "covid period"). There are also several music groups operating in the district. Besides other activities, they accompany the celebration of holy liturgies. There is currently a Community Centre working under the GFC for Roma in Čičava, which works closely with the pastoral centre and is of a great benefit for the whole pastoral care.

Currently, GRM VT is working intensively on a new exceptional project — establishing an organic farm "Adamov dvor" (Adam's Court) with the main objective to educate and employ people from the Roma community.

Web: <https://romskamisia.sk/misia/vranov/>

FB <https://www.facebook.com/romskamisia>

FB Adamov dvor: <https://www.facebook.com/obrabataopatovat>

IBAN: SK28 0900 0000 0050 2604 8873

Greek Catholic Roma Mission in the Bardejov District (GRM BJ)



REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Bardejov

DIOCESE: Archdiocese of Prešov

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by a Greek Catholic priest assigned for Roma pastoral care (Igor Čikoš) and volunteers

The Greek Catholic Roma Mission in the Bardejov district is an independent legal entity, which derives its legal subjectivity from the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia. It was established on August 1, 2017 by the Archbishop and Metropolitan of Prešov, Mons. Ján Babjak, SJ.

The mission of the Greek Catholic Roma Mission in the Bardejov District is to bring the message of the Gospel especially to people living in Roma communities in the territory of the Prešov Greek Catholic Archdiocese in the Bardejov District, through a variety of pastoral, formation, spiritual, cultural and social activities. GRM BJ contributes to the prevention of racism and xenophobia and helps to reconcile communities with different social, cultural or spiritual roots. We work in the following Roma settlements: Malcov, Snakov, Lenartov, Petrová, Cigeľka.

We have been working with Roma in the Bardejov District since 2016. We minister to young people, children, married couples, families and the elderly. Our whole ministry is based on the spirit of our vision: to lead the Roma people to eternal joy through piety, reconciliation and commitment. It is built on 4 pillars: evangelism, quality, building up Roma leaders, and creating space for Roma outside the settlements. We serve in supporting the parishes and create infrastructure for this ministry, e.g. housing for the priests and their families or facilities (chapels, pastoral centres) for meetings and regular activities for ministering to the Roma in the respective villages and settlements. In 2017 we managed to buy an older family house in Lenartov and we are currently converting it into a parish house where the priest and his family serving in GRM BJ will live. All the construction work is done by the Roma themselves. The basis of the ministry is working with people in small groups on a regular basis, meeting at least once a week. Spiritual formation of children, youth and adults takes place in formation groups. We also engage in sacramental pastoral care.

In the Bardejov Roma Mission, several gospel music bands have been formed, e.g. AV MANCA and a theatre group led by Mgr. Vladimír Špurek, PhD. We regularly attend and participate in the organization of various events: the Roma pilgrimage of families to Ľutina, the FestRom festival, the Bararas activities, and the Rybka theatre competition. Throughout the year we also organize our own smaller pilgrimages and open praise and worship prayer meetings.

Web: <https://romskamisia.sk/>

FB: [Gréckokatolícka rómska misia v okrese Bardejov](#)

IBAN: SK75 0900 0000 0051 3375 4693

Greek Catholic Roma Mission in the Stará Ľubovňa District (GRM SL)



REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Stará Ľubovňa

DIOCESE: Archdiocese of Prešov

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by Greek Catholic priests assigned for Roma pastoral care (Leontín Lizák) and diocesan priests in the parish (Miroslav Šimko and chaplains)

The Greek Catholic Roma Mission in the district of Stará Ľubovňa is a part of the diocesan (eparchial) Roma Mission within the diocese of Prešov. Active pastoral work has been carried out in the parish of Šarišské Jastrabie since 2015, in Jakubany since 2016 and in Čirč since 2019. There is one priest assigned to Roma pastoral care. In Šarišské Jastrabie this special pastoral care is carried out by diocesan priests (by the parish priest and the chaplain). The priests devote themselves to the formation of men, boys, girls and women respectively, they organize spiritual renewal events, camps, trips, prayers, praise and worship meetings and networking meetings across villages and settlements. In Šarišské Jastrabie, there are about 700 Roma inhabitants out of the population of 1,400. Pastoral care for them takes place in a former stable in the local cooperative. Even such pastoral care is bearing fruit in changing the lives of many Roma in the village.

Web: <https://www.misiamozna.sk/>

IBAN: SK48 0900 0000 0051 3345 5837

Greek Catholic Roma Mission Centre in Sigord



REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Prešov

DIOCESE: Archdiocese of Prešov

Director of the Centre: Greek Catholic priest Martin Mekel

In addition to the pastoral ministry in the field, the ministry for Roma communities is being professionalized in terms of institutional and promotional activities. In 2017, the magazine Roma Samaria, an occasional magazine, was launched to fill the information gap in describing the situation of the Roma and to point out the positive changes that are already taking place within the Roma communities as the Kingdom of God is proclaimed among them. In January 2018, on the initiative of Fr. Martin Mekel, Robert Neupauer, and other personalities, the Network of Engaged People for Roma Ethnicity - SAVORE, which means ALL, was established. The acronym also includes the pillars of this platform: Cooperation - Engagement - Vision - Expertise - Development - Evangelisation (*Spolupráca – Angažovanosť – Vízia – Odbornosť – Rozvoj – Evanjelizácia*). Its objective is to accompany and support people working with the Roma by means of spiritual ministry and to promote their cooperation at the local level. The motto of the SAVORE platform is "Engage with faith for the future of Slovakia".

In December 2019, GRM purchased the building of the former dormitory of the Forestry Secondary School to provide a broader scope of spiritual ministry for Roma living in the communities. The complex includes a kitchen, a dining room and a gymnasium with facilities. The buildings are in need of significant investment, but several activities have already been carried out at the centre in 2020.

IN THE CENTRE WE ARE GRADUALLY PLANNING TO SET UP:

- a chapel and a conference room to be used also for praise and worship meetings and teaching
- accommodation for the ministers responsible for the operation of the centre
- accommodation for residential activities (approx. 70 places)
- catering facilities
- a gymnasium for various sports
- wellness facility
- an icon-writing workshop (weekend school, a workshop and a warehouse)

- mini museum of Roma history and culture
- project and administration centre GRM
- café with library
- scout clubhouse with a warehouse
- a room with a small stage
- music studio and a space for filming videos
- LOGOS TV broadcasts (liturgies, classes, praise and worship...)
- simple woodworking
- arboretum
- agrotourism opportunities
- 24/7 room (world map, candles), room for the Service of the Ear
- ballroom with mirrors
- mini cinema with bean bag chairs
- entertainment room — bowling, billiards, table tennis, calcetto...

Web: <https://romskamisia.sk/>
<https://romskamisia.sk/sigord/>
<https://savore.sk/>
<https://romskamisia.sk/casopis-romska-samaria/>

IBAN: SK91 0900 0000 0051 6852 6092

DIOCESE OF SPIŠ

Lomnička



REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Stará Ľubovňa

DIOCESE: Diocese of Spiš

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by diocesan priests (Martin Pasiar, Jozef Gorčák, formerly Štefan Hrbček, Ján Záhradník and others) and **5 order sisters from the Congregation of the School Sisters of St. Francis**, pastoral assistants, lay assistants and volunteers.

Lomnička is a village with approximately 3200 inhabitants, 99% of whom are Roma. The average age of the inhabitants is around 20 years. The pastoral care of Roma in the village has been carried out intensively since 2004. Since 2008, when the parish building was renovated, priests have been living in the village among the Roma. The basis of their ministry is sacramental pastoral care and formation of children and youth. An important part of the parish life are the annual pilgrimages to the Marian pilgrimage sites in Levoča and Gaboltovo, as well as to other places. Spiritual ministry is complemented by social assistance. The parish provides many different services to the local population, ranging from counselling to practical assistance in building projects, loan of washing machines, drills, jackhammers, scaffolding, wheelbarrows and other tools for self-help repairs and construction work on houses and other services. The parish owns a tractor, which it uses to help local residents collect firewood for winter or to transport building materials and to maintain local roads in the village during the winter months. Every year we organize a week-long summer residential camp for boys and girls in Važec. Salesian animators from Bratislava come to the parish during the holidays to provide a non-residential camp for children. The priests actively cooperate with the religious sisters of the Congregation of the School Sisters of St. Francis in their work with the youth. These sisters have been working in Lomnička since 2007 and have established the House of the Immaculate Heart of Mary there.

The four order sisters initially commuted daily from Podolíneč, where they lived. In 2011 the sisters moved directly to Lomnička. In the House of the Immaculate Heart of Mary they have established a social services facility — a community centre, employing eight workers for its activities. The

Community Centre provides services both to adults and children. The sisters provide social counselling, leisure activities for children and also low-threshold activities. Two order sisters are employed in the House of the Immaculate Heart of Mary where they work with children, youth and adults and provide basic health counselling and treatment. The other two order sisters are engaged in pastoral care visiting the sick or otherwise needy in their family environment. One order sister teaches in a local primary school and is also active in pastoral care. The sisters living directly in the village, thanks to their constant presence there, became a part of the local community. Some of their other activities include: facilitating a youth choir, music groups, sports activities with boys and girls, creative workshops, organizing Bible meetings for boys, girls and adults, formation meetings, cooking, baking and more. Approximately 100-150 people of all ages attend the House each day. Exchanges of seasonal clothing, furniture, and household goods are a valuable help to the people of the community.

Web: <https://www.mojakomunita.sk/web/farnost-lomnicka>
<https://www.mojakomunita.sk/web/kongregacia-skolskych-sestier-lomnicka>

FB: [Komunitné centrum Lomnička](#)

Instagram: [Farnosť Lomnička](#)

IBAN: SK82 0200 0000 0035 7338 5351

Letanovce



REGION: Košice Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Spišská Nová Ves

DIOCESE: Diocese of Spiš

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by diocesan priests (parish priest Marián Sivoň and his chaplain)

Since 2015, the civic association DOBRÝ PASTIER - LAČHO PASTIRIS (the Good Shepherd) has been operating within the parish. It is dedicated to ministry to the Roma. The parish of Letanovce includes the village Letanovce (2,400 inhabitants of whom about 200 are Roma) with the settlement Strelník, where about 1,000 Roma live, Spišské Tomášovce (2,100 inhabitants, of whom 650 are Roma), Arnutovce (700 inhabitants, of whom 350 are Roma). The whole parish of Letanovce has therefore population of about 2200 Roma. Ministry to the Roma consists of three pillars: **pastoral care** — preparation for the sacraments and the celebration of the sacraments, summer camps, meetings with children and youth, **charitable activities** - clothing exchanges, helping with finding furniture, wood, etc., and **social care** - counselling, job search, activation activities, help in acquiring proper work habits, etc. In 2019, the construction of the Mission Centre DOBRÝ PASTIER - LAČHO PASTIRIS in the settlement of Strelník was completed and pastoral care, charitable and social activities are held there — especially preparation for the sacraments, meetings with children and youth, clothing exchanges, counseling, assistance in acquiring proper work habits and skills while building up and enhancing the centre and its surroundings.

FB Lačo Pastiris

IBAN: SK42 0200 0000 0034 3339 6059

Krížová Ves



REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Kežmarok

DIOCESE: Diocese of Spiš

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by diocesan priests, director of the centre, members of the band, pastoral assistants, adults and youth volunteers and animators from the local community.

Krížová Ves has approximately 2,200 inhabitants, of whom about 1,700 are Roma. In the village of Krížová Ves, the Roma Spiritual and Social Centre Krížová Ves offering pastoral care has been operating since September 2007. After several years of evangelization by priests and lay people from the parish of Spišská Belá, the need arose to build a pastoral centre directly in the Roma settlement in Krížová Ves. Subsequently, in 2005, church foundations Renovabis and Kirche in Not (Germany), as well as the Social Development Fund, released funds for the construction of the Roma Spiritual and Social Centre in Krížová Ves. In September 14, 2007 — on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, with the participation of the Bishop Štefan Sečka — the Roma Spiritual and Social Centre (RDSS) was opened and blessed. Under the guidance of local priests, the Youth Commission of the Spiš Diocese, the now deceased Mgr. Róbert Neupauer, PhD, a lay missionary to the Roma and other volunteers, pastoral care for the Roma and various evangelization activities have been carried out in this centre. Gradually, the centre started offering and supervising activities of afternoon classes in the Church Leisure Time Centre and of teaching pupils of the Private Joint School in Kežmarok — in the elocated workplace Krížová Ves — all in the premises of the Roma Pastoral Centre. We thank God that the Word of God has taken root in the hearts and lives of many of us, that the many years of work of priests, order sisters and lay people has also borne fruit, and that the Lord is constantly caring for and protecting this work of God among us.

Web: <https://rkfarnost.spisskabela.sk/romske-duchovno-spolocenske-stredisko-v-krizovej-vsi/>

IBAN: SK14 0900 0000 0000 9327 6988

Smižany



REGION: Košice Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Spišská Nová Ves

DIOCESE: Diocese of Spiš

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by Pallotine priests and brothers

The parish has been administered by Pallottine priests and brothers since 1993. There are approximately 2,700 Roma in the parish, which is approximately 20% of the total population of the parish. Father Peter Klubert, a Pallottine friar is devoted to Roma pastoral care in the parish. At the moment there are no facilities for pastoral care in the Roma settlement. There are two churches in the parish where the Roma come and where the pastoral care of the Roma is carried out. One of the churches is the diocesan Shrine of Divine Mercy, where pilgrimages for the Roma, blessed by Bishop +Sečka, are also organized.

Web: <https://www.rimkat-smizany.com/pallotini>

IBAN: SK31 0900 0000 0050 2937 7277

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Rakúsy



REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Kežmarok

DIOCESE: Diocese of Spiš

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by: diocesan priest (local parish priest)

The village of Rakúsy has 3,200 inhabitants, of which 2,600 are Roma, of whom 2,330 live in the Rakúsy Roma settlement. Since 2013, there is a Leisure Time Centre operating directly in the settlement. In 2017, there was also established a chapel in the settlement of Rakúsy. Priests take care of the sacramental life of Roma, celebrate the Holy Mass and teach religion. The

Leisure Time Centre operates thanks to lay workers and volunteers, including Salesian youth. The activities of the Leisure Time Centre focus on leisure activities (afternoon classes and workshops and camps), adult activation work, missionary and pastoral activities, educational concerts, etc.

Web: <http://www.cvrakusy.sk/>;

FB: [Amaro Gav Rakusy](#)

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Poprad – Matejovce



REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Poprad

DIOCESE: Diocese of Spiš

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by: diocesan priest (local parish priest)

Poprad Matejovce is an industrial district of the town of Poprad with about 3,000 inhabitants. The Roma community has a minority representation of about 300-350 people. The pastoral care of the Roma primarily consists of preparation for and celebration of the sacraments. It is carried out by the parish administrator together with a catechist and one animator. It consists of joint catechesis in the church and other occasional activities (barbecues, outings, visits by the priest to the settlement). There is a form of tension between the majority population and the Roma community, which is why the pastoral ministry of the Roma is mainly carried out individually outside the majority parish community. When not hindered by obstacles of various kinds, the Roma are interested in the Christian faith in God and in receiving the sacraments. They are religious in nature and the belief in the supernatural is a part of their lives. There is therefore a great scope of opportunities to proclaim the Gospel. The parish administrator and his co-workers strive to make the Church a "field hospital." They want the Church in the parish of Matejovce not to be "a customs office", but a father's house where there is room for everyone, where all feel accepted and loved, and where they can find encouragement for their lives.

Spišské Podhradie



REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Levoča

DIOCESE: Diocese of Spiš

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by Presentation Sisters

The town of Spišské Podhradie with a population of about 3,800 inhabitants includes approximately 1500 Roma inhabitants.

In 1993 Presentation Sisters came to Slovakia, first to teach english in Primary and Secondary schools in Bratislava and later in Košice and Spišské Podhradie. The sisters always worked with local people offering family support, faith community development and work with the homeless. Spreading the Christian story of redemption has always been part of their charism and life-style. Catholic organizations, churches, and faith development have been part of the ministry of Presentation Sisters in Slovakia. The Presentation Sisters work in Spišské Podhradie since 2004. The community provides educational and family support among the Roma people as well as teaching English in the local Catholic Secondary Schools. The Sisters also cooperate with the diocesan seminary, at the request of the local bishop, enabling the training of future pastors to work in the Diocese of Spiš. There is also a Pre-school funded by Presentation Sisters for those aged 3 -7, all Roma who do not have the opportunity otherwise to avail of Pre-school education. The building called NANO NAGLE CENTRE is used for community services for Roma people from Spišské Podhradie and segregated areas.

We have seen many signs of educational and social development each year since 2004.

- a. Pre-school numbers are up
- b. Attendance is regular
- c. Parents are taking a much more decidedly positive attitude towards education and learning.
- d. The children are clean and cared for and the older children want to get on with their school studies and do homework.
- e. Adults are availing of classes in reading, writing and maths. (Pre-Covid)

Štrba

REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Poprad

DIOCESE: Diocese of Spiš

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by: diocesan priest (local parish priest)

Approximately 300 Roma live in Štrba, which is about half of the Roman Catholics in Štrba as such. The Roma are cared for by the parish administrator within the framework of regular pastoral care, through religious education, meetings at the parish house before the First Holy Communion and Confirmation, all children — majority and minority together, without distinction. Some of the Roma live in poorer conditions, others in normal conditions just like the rest of the population.

Web: www.rkcstrba.sk

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Veľká Lomnica



REGION: Prešov Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Kežmarok

DIOCESE: Diocese of Spiš

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by local diocesan priests — parish priest and chaplain (Adam Rataj, formerly Vincent Pollák and others).

Veľká Lomnica has approximately 5,000 inhabitants, of which about 2,500 are Roma. Roma pastoral care is beyond the possibilities of regular parish pastoral care. A community centre for Roma in the settlement is used for this purpose, for which the parish office pays rent to the municipality. The Community Centre is used for Holy Mass and prayers, peer meetings, preparation for the sacraments, day camps, leisure activities and games. Priests organize trips, pilgrimages, spiritual renewal, etc. for local Roma.

Spišská Kapitula



Formation of seminarians

In the Diocese of Spiš there are many Roma communities, therefore, in preparation for their priesthood, seminarians are also engaged in learning about the specifics of this people. In addition to lectures and theoretical training, they regularly visit several Roma communities in order to get to know the Roma better and thus serve them more effectively. These visits consist of interviews with local priests as well as with the Roma themselves, visits to schools or other facilities in the given area, as well as prayers and celebration of Holy Mass together with the Roma. For this practical training, priests, order brothers and sisters and lay assistants are available to the seminarians, coming mainly from the villages of Lomnička, Letanovce, Rakus, Krížová Ves and Veľká Lomnica.

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DIOCESE OF ROŽŇAVA

Veľký Blh, Uzovská Panica, Barca, Ratkovská Lehota



REGION: Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Rimavská Sobota

DIOCESE: Diocese of Rožňava

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by order Sisters of the Family of Our Lady and priests of the Work of Christ the High Priest

The Family of Our Lady and the Work of Christ the High Priest operate in the parishes of Uzovská Panica, Barca, Ratkovská Lehota. These parishes are located in the district of Rimavská Sobota, in the Diocese of Rožňava. The parishes include almost 40 villages with the majority of them being the Roma community. In these parishes, the sisters of the Family of Our Lady and the priests of the Work of Christ the High Priest, together with several lay people and volunteers also from the Roma community, work with Roma children and families. The parishes of Uzovská Panica and Barca have been administered by them for over 25 years, the parish of Ratkovská Lehota for 5 years. They dedicate themselves to Roma children, for whom they organize catechesis, Holy Masses, free time activities, trips and camps; together with them they learn, sing, pray and play. Roma children come from very poor family conditions, their families often live in one room, they have no electricity or running water. Therefore pastoral care includes also material help to the families — the Roma are provided with clothes, food, hygiene necessities, they are assisted at school work and with various household needs. The priests and order sisters have good, friendly relations with the Roma families. For the needs of the Roma mission, a pastoral centre has been built in the village of Veľký Blh and several houses have been set up in the village of Uzovská Panica, which are used for various activities and meetings with children, young people or adults. Buses have also been purchased for the parishes to bring Roma children from all villages and parishes to the mission and pastoral houses. The mission covers a total of around 400 children and young people.

IBAN SK37 0900 0000 0002 2143 0258

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Stará Halíč



REGION: Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Lučenec

DIOCESE: Diocese of Rožňava

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by order Sisters of the Family of Our Lady

The Sisters of the Family of Our Lady are dedicated to the Roma mission in the Roman Catholic parish of St. George in Stará Halíč, diocese of Rožňava, where about 15% of the total population is Roma. The sisters work with children through educational activities — tutoring, preparation for classes, accompaniment, formation, and coaching of entire Roma families. They also prepare snacks for children from Roma and socially disadvantaged families. Thanks to partnerships with individual families from abroad — from Austria, Germany and Switzerland — they also provide them with charitable and humanitarian aid.

IBAN: SK58 0200 0000 0037 8204 6751

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EPARCHY OF KOŠICE

Blatné Remety



REGION: Košice Self-Governing Region
DISTRICT: Sobrance
DIOCESE: Eparchy of Košice
Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by diocesan priests (Peter Horváth)

The village has about 450 inhabitants, 250 of them children, about half of them is from the children's home, assigned to individual families for foster care. 80% of the population is Roma. In 2004-2015, a Roma parish priest Peter Horváth established parish pastoral care of Roma children and youth, in addition to the regular parish pastoral care. Hnutie Svetlo-Život (Light-Life Movement) in co-operation with the priest organized formation meetings, summer camps for children, various regular trips and pilgrimages throughout the year. The parish participated in the Eparchial Parade of Choirs and later, they organized a parade of Roma choirs directly in the village of Blatné Remety. As performers, they also took part in the nicest concert of the year, Úsmev ako dar (Smile as a Gift). In 2014, in cooperation with Vysoká škola sv. Alžbety (the College of St. Elizabeth), the Pastoral Centre of St. Martyr Teodor Romža was established in Blatné Remety. The centre has been offering afternoon activities and workshops, leisure and sports activities, as well as coaching to married couples and parents, in cooperation with various professionals. In 2018-2020, a large art project "Kočovná galéria ("Nomadic Gallery") was implemented, the outcome of which were numerous artworks with the theme of Roma culture. A wall calendar was compiled from selected paintings of the project.

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DIOCESE OF BANSKÁ BYSTRICA

Banská Bystrica



REGION: Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Banská Bystrica

DIOCESE: Diocese of Banská Bystrica

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by the Congregation of the Mission of St. Vincent de Paul

In Banská Bystrica, the Community of the the Congregation of the Mission of St. Vincent de Paul, in the premises of St. Vincent's House, provide pastoral and social care for Roma girls from foster homes, up to 18 years of their age. The facility was established in 1995. The coaching of the Roma girls consists in helping them in their studies, in finding jobs, in strengthening their work habits and in preparing them for life. At the same time, the girls are provided with formation, together they discover the meaning of life. The order sisters instill in them proper moral values and teach them many practical skills, e.g. financial literacy.

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ARCHDIOCESE OF NITRA

Orechov dvor



REGION: Nitra Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Nitra

DIOCESE: Archdiocese of Nitra

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by order sisters — Salesians; one order sister — Servant of the Holy Spirit, lay assistants, priest Viktor Tomčányi and diocesan priest Miroslav Hefera.

In Orechov dvor, where about 400 Roma live, there are two order sisters working in the kindergarten and three order sisters providing care for mothers with small children in the maternity centre. In addition, there is Átrium Dobrého Pastiera (Atrium of the Good Shepherd) in the settlement which provides education and training of preschool children. Preparation of both children and adults for the receiving of sacraments is carried out as well. The sisters also work with older children, girls, mothers, and men. Once a week the priest holds a meeting with fathers of families. The sisters work together with community and outreach workers in organizing summer camps, trips, and larger events in the settlement (such as Roma Day, Children's Day, etc.). Regularly, in the last two weeks of August, the cooperating volunteer organization VIDES sends volunteers to the settlement for a summer school. Order sisters have been working in the settlement daily since 2012. They cooperate with many people from the parish of Klokočina who support them mainly materially, with clothes for children and adults, sometimes with food and other forms of necessary humanitarian aid.

"We are happy to work among these people because it teaches us many things. We do not measure the results, we try to move forward with the hope that the Lord will bless it all and these people will achieve salvation. And that's important." Salesian Sisters and Servants of the Holy Spirit at Orechov Dvor.

Web: <https://salezianky.sk/>;

IBAN: SK17 7500 0000 0040 2827 0254

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ARCHDIOCESE OF BRATISLAVA

Plavecký Štvrtok, o.z. Francesco



REGION: Bratislava Self-Governing Region

DISTRICT: Malacky

DIOCESE: Archdiocese of Bratislava

Pastoral care of Roma is carried out by the local parish priest, a pastoral assistant, the director of OZ Francesco Tomáš Florián, a social worker, two order Capuchin Franciscan brothers and about 15 volunteers. Members of the Community of St. Egidio help as well.

Plavecký Štvrtok has about 2,500 inhabitants, of whom about 700 are Roma. The Community Centre, first under the name EMANUEL, began its operation in 2004, following the work of the Order of the Sisters of Mother Teresa (Missionaries of Charity), which initiated the work with the local Roma community. OZ Francesco, a civic association, through the Community Centre Bunky, has been continuously building on this project and has been carrying out educational activities for Roma children and youth and also untiring field work in which workers contact and visit families and individuals. Roma community is provided with evangelization, pastoral care, preparation for the sacraments, pilgrimages, trips, summer suburban experience camps and meaningful leisure and sports activities for children, youth and adults. The aim of the Community Centre Bunky is to help the Roma ethnic group living in the territory of the village of Plavecký Štvrtok to integrate into society and to create a space for comprehensive personal growth of specific individuals as well as the community as a whole and to provide them with impulses for the development of religious, cultural and social life. As a part of outreach social work, workers visit families, help solve educational and training problems through counselling. They encourage parents to take responsibility for their children's upbringing by means of supervision and insistence on school attendance. Through its activities, the civic association Francesco aims to reduce tensions between the majority population and the Roma minority in the area and offers the possibility of a positive outlook on the Roma. It seeks to encourage members of the Roma community to take an active approach to their life situation, to have a positive outlook on their surroundings and to take responsibility for their own lives. The parish priest cooperates closely with the civic association, therefore Holy Mass is celebrated in the settlement, the sacraments are administered and the Roma thus have the opportunity to saturate their spiritual needs.

Web: www.ozfrancesco.sk

FB: [Komunitné centrum Bunky](#)

IBAN: SK48 1100 0000 0029 2989 9966

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Contacts

For more information please visit:

Web: <https://romovia.kbs.sk/>

FB: [Rómske pastoračné diela](#)

Instagram: [Rómske pastoračné diela](#)



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BEARERS OF HOPE

Pastoral works of the Catholic Church

in Roma communities

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