

## **Popular devotion and pilgrimage**

### **Popular piety**

Among the topics of our PAMINA Museum, "popular piety" has a high rank. Due to the nationally known pilgrimage church "Maria Bickesheim" with its long tradition and history, the topic was and is of great importance in Durmersheim and its surroundings.

In general, popular piety is the visible expression of religiousness among the laity of a regional religious community.

It is composed of the "official" liturgy (the totality of religious ceremonies and rites) and traditional customs which are associated with religion in "good faith". These often have pagan roots.

From a theological point of view, popular piety is understood as religiously motivated actions that are not legitimized by the holy scriptures, but are also not regarded as superstition or heresy. Contrary to popular belief, they are tolerated or integrated, but not promoted.

The popular piety is part of the popular faith. These two terms (especially in German folklore) are often not clearly defined and used synonymously. The latter, on the other hand, is specifically related to the "spiritual superstructure" of religious and spiritual convictions.

Pope Benedict XVI called popular piety a "Incarnation of faith in which a hunger for God is expressed as only the simple and the poor can feel it".

Popular piety appeals more to subjective feelings than to reason. It often expresses itself in expressive, expressive forms and works with a variety of symbols. Lived and official piety were often in an oppositional relationship.

The following phenomena are typical of popular piety outside the liturgy:

- Use of sacrificial candles (Christianity) and incense sticks (Far Eastern religions)
- A multitude of devotional objects (devotional objects)
- votive gifts
- Pictures of grace, veneration of relics, holy sites
- pilgrimages
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In 1750 the Enlightenment philosopher David Hume designed a "two-layer model" of religious studies according to which monotheism would always have a "religion of the common people" and an "elite religion". While the elite - the theologians and the clergy - fully understood the doctrine and tried to preserve it, a tendency towards

(hidden) polytheism would prevail among the people (example: worship of saints in Catholicism).

### **Causes of the emergence**

Popular piety often arises from the practical handling of the faith of lay believers and can thus also be understood as "popular piety". It often lacks the tradition of intellectual discussion within the faith (theology), the "official piety".

Here also own and new can arise in the exercise of faith.

Regional influences, influences from other religions and rites as well as the zeitgeist expand festivals and customs. Thus they offer a valuable contribution for the understanding of one. The number of "foreign religious" elements in popular piety varies greatly from region to region (even within a nation) and depends on ethnic mixes and historical influences caused by suppressed or forbidden (pagan) religions.

Piety is a way of life in which religious beliefs are reconciled with everyday behaviour; it is man's lived response to the question of the meaning of life. Popular devotion adapts the beliefs and practices of the churches to one's own needs and ways of thinking. It is more an emotional than a rational expression of faith. Therefore, it is also a very expressive devotion that has often been brought close to superstition by the Church.

### **Christianity**

Catholicism has developed a variety of popular forms of devotion, above all in the area of the veneration of Mary, angels and saints, in which one-sidedness and excesses also arose and are criticized by the ecclesiastical teaching authority and partly condemned as heresy.

Protestantism, which demanded a return to Scripture, was sceptical about popular piety from the very beginning. To a lesser extent, however, pictorial and ritual forms of expression have also found room in his area and regional peculiarities have developed.

#### Forms of popular piety in the church year

There are many customs of popular piety that have grown out of the ecclesiastical festive year, e.g. the Advent wreath, at Christmas the crib, the Christmas tree or the pastry and the star singers.

Also Passion plays in the Easter time like in Oberammergau (by a vow) or also the Volksschauspiele in Ötigheim are expression of regional people piety.

The many traditional flower carpets at the Corpus Christi processions, candle consecrations at St. Blasius or the herb tuft consecration ("Wiiwisch") at the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (15 August) are also part of it.