



*The young
Stephen Kaszap,
SERVANT OF GOD*

INTRODUCTION

Jenő Bóday, S.J.

The name of Stephen (Szent) Kaszap a former novice and candidate of the Society of Jesus, is very well-known among Hungarians. His first biography by László Endrődy S.J., entitled, "A Life For Christ", was issued in 100,000 copies in the 1940's. Another booklet of 160 pages, entitled, "With Love and Suffering", containing meditations on his exemplary life, was issued in 300,000 copies. The prayer intercessions attributed to him number over 20,000. 360 small marble tablets around

Stephen Kaszap

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SERVANT OF GOD

(From the writings of László Endrődy, S.J.)

Who was born on March 25, 1916 at Szekesfehervar, Hungary, and whose soul returned to his Maker at the age of 19 on December 17, 1935? How did he become a shining example for all the young people? The compassionate writer, during his years as a Cleric student, together with his diaries that include his life as a novice, provide an insight into his life and thoughts.

Many people are of the opinion that Kaszap was led by the special grace of God, and that he always responded to the will of God with a docile and joyful heart. His untimely death was a great loss to the Church and the world.

Translation from Hungarian revised by
Aloysius Graham, S.J.

This biography was first published in 1940 and has since been translated into many languages. It is a beautiful and inspiring work that should be read by all who are interested in the life of a young man who gave his life for Christ.

INTRODUCTION

The name of Stephen (István) Kaszap a former novice and candidate of the Society of Jesus, is very well-known among Hungarians. His first biography by László Endrődy S.J., entitled, "A Life For Christ", was issued in 100,000 copies in the 1940-s. Another booklet of 180 pages, entitled: "With Love and Suffering", containing meditations over his exemplary life, was issued in 300,000 copies. The prayer intercessions attributed to him number over 20,000. 800 small marble tablets around his grave testify to the miraculous prayer answers attributed to his intercession.

Stephen Kaszap is also known in other countries. Writings have appeared about him in the English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Slovak and Spanish languages. His complete biography, the "Life For Christ", has been issued in Spanish.

What is the secret of this young man who was born on March 25, 1916 at Székesfehérvár, Hungary, and whose soul returned to his Maker at the age of 19 on December 17, 1935? How did he become a shining example for all the young people? The compositions written during his years as a Cistercian student, together with his diaries that include his life as a novice, provide an insight into his life and thoughts.

Many people are convinced that István Kaszap was led by the special grace of God, and that he always responded to the call of God with a spontaneous "Yes". A conspicuously large crowd was already present at his funeral at the local cemetery, and later public interest increased further after the appearance of his first biography.

Servant of God

ISTVÁN / Stephen / KASZAP

Candidate for the Company of Jésus

On the 11th of October, 1941, the bishop of Székesfehérvár, Mgr. Lajos Shvoy, initiated the process of the beatification of István Kaszap, and his case was transferred to Rome in 1947. In 1942 the remains of István Kaszap were carried in a triumphal procession to his present resting place in the arcades of the Prohászka Memorial Church in Székesfehérvár.

A person who has been scrutinized and whose virtues are acknowledged is given the title "Servant of God". According to the belief of the Church, those souls already in heaven may help the earthly members of the Church. This is expressed in the prayer of the Holy Mass: "... *all your saints, on whose constant intercession we rely for help.*"

In order to honour anyone publicly, a proclamation of the Church is required to the effect that the person is already in heaven, that his life was indeed exemplary, and that the Christian virtues were exercised by that person on a heroic level. The proof of God's intervention in István Kaszap's life is proven by the many prayer intercessions and miraculous healings.

Should the Church beatify Stephen Kaszap, his image would be elevated to the altar in his native country, as a model and a helper of the youth. In case of his eventual elevation to sainthood, he would be honoured by the Catholic Church all over the world.

PART I GROWING UP

CHILDHOOD

Stephen Kaszap was born the third of five children, on March 25, 1916 in Székesfehérvár, once the Roman town of Alba Regia, south-west of Budapest, Hungary. His father was chief supervisor at the local post office. A quiet, modest man, Mr. Kaszap is remembered as a devout Christian, very concerned with the religious education of his children. Stephen's mother is reported to have been an affectionate mother and devoted homemaker. Both parents were careful to have family prayers each evening and to be certain that the children memorized their basic prayers at an early age. Following the custom for Sunday Mass, the Kaszap family had a family pew near the pulpit in the local church.

What was Stephen like as a young boy? His mother, who must have known very well, tells us she worried a lot about his obstinate, aggressive behaviour and his sudden fits of bad temper. When irritated, or teased by his brothers, he would fly into a blind fury, and throw whatever he could grab in his small hands. Of course, his character also had a better side. He could be very happy and loved to whistle while he worked. His willingness to help with daily chores showed how much he loved his parents. When nine years old, later than is usual today, he received his first Holy Communion on Ascension Thursday, May 21, 1925.

STUDENT DAYS

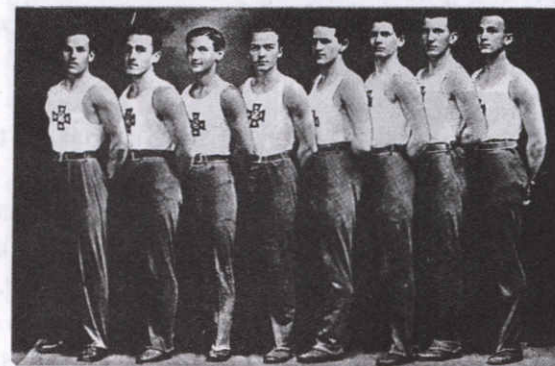
Stephen was sent to a Lycée, a school conducted by Cistercian monks. Perhaps one has to have been a "boarder" in such a school to fully appreciate what it meant to be a pupil in an institution conducted by religious priests. The Fathers of the Lycée had consecrated their lives not only to the intellectual formation of their students, but also to the spiritual growth they were convinced helps form the true Christian. Stephen liked his teachers but, as has always happened with school boys under the stress of discipline and rules, he was not at all beyond taking part in high-spirited antics and student mischief. He tells us of himself:

"In general, I was quite willful and sometimes worked around the rules but I was not perverted or corrupt. I have no doubt at all that I often irritated and annoyed the teachers. It seems to me now that the years at the Lycée just flew past. Hard work for exams, very pleasant vacations and wonderful excursions with my fellow students are what I remember best about my student days".

Some of the best qualities of his character began to show clearly during these years. For example, he made it a custom to get up early and promptly every morning, a custom that he kept for the rest of his life. His daily journal was started during these years and never dropped. He formed a habit of regular prayer and began to serve Mass whenever he had the opportunity. As he noted in his journal at this time, "I served Mass today for my professor, Father Szász. From now on, I shall serve every day that I can."

IN THE CONGREGATION OF MARY

During his junior year, Steve joined a group known at his school as the Congregation of Mary. He officially became a member on the feast of the Ascension, March 25, 1931. The ceremony of induction was traditionally an outstanding school event that took place each year in the college church, fully decorated and brilliantly lighted for the occasion.



Stephen Kaszap, fourth from the right

Géza Nika, who was student Prefect of the Congregation at this time, remembers that the Cistercian Father Rafael Marschall was in charge. The members met twice a month, on Saturdays, in a smaller chapel of their own, located beside the great nave of the college church. The main purpose of their activities, of course, was to increase their own devotion and love of our Blessed Mother and to spread their devotion to their fellow students by word and example. Steve wrote in his journal enthusiastically about various activities as a Congregationalist. Although it is clear that he did not seek special positions in the organization, he was eventually asked to undertake the important duties and responsibilities of Secretary.

IN THE BOY SCOUTS

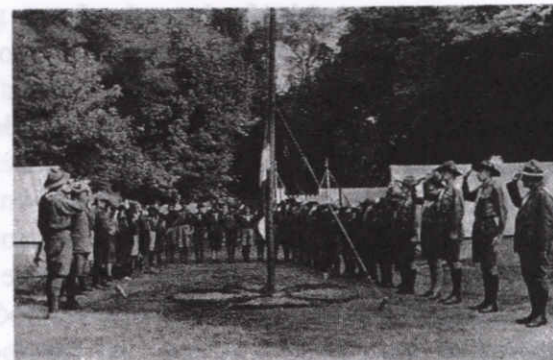
Until his graduation from the Lycée, Steve was an active member of the Boy Scouts in the Zrinyi patrol. This patrol, founded by their professor, Father Edgar Potz, O.Cis., was named after the great Hungarian hero, Miklós Zrinyi, who had fought long ago against the Ottoman Turks. Steve writes in his journal about his concept of a real boy scout, "Whom shall I call a Boy Scout? The boy scout, par excellence, should be an example in everything. He is never rude nor silly, but earnest and manly; at the same time, he is always joyful."

Keeping a journal was compulsory according to the rule of the troop and Steve observed the rule rigorously. He took part in many activities - among others, he seems to have become a proficient bookbinder. His journal reports: "This afternoon I went to the Center. Gabi Pal was on duty. I helped him carry water to scrub the floor and then went to the cellar for an axe and chopped some wood. After the chores, we went to play."

The man who, as a boy, was his patrol leader at the Lycée, writes as follows: "From the distance of some 60 years, I try to recollect some details from the days when Steve Kaszap was a boy scout. I knew him well from the time he joined us. I was the patrol leader of the team "Kakas" (which means "rooster" in Hungarian), and Steve was a junior member of this team. When an assistant patrol leader had to be elected, the team chose Steve. This was a great honour since, if the patrol leader was absent, the assistant was charged with the responsibilities of leader."

"I remember well that one day, shortly after Steve had been elected, he was assigned to practise his duties as assistant

patrol leader. This involved giving commands in a loud voice to the troop drawn up in military formation. Obviously excited, Steve's voice faltered and the troop began to laugh. Steve's pride was really hurt. It took quite an effort to get him to try again. During the three years I was patrol leader, there was never any discord between us. Whatever I asked, he carried out without argument or excuse. I could always trust him completely and always count on his support."



Stephen Kaszap was an active scout

"A good example of Steve's excellent memory was the way he succeeded in a game we used to call "kim", a game meant to improve the scouts' ability. In this game the leader piles a dozen or more small objects on a table - watches, pencils, jack-knives, matches, coins, and so forth - and covers them with a cloth before the players enter the room. When the players are ready, the leader lifts the cloth for a few seconds and quickly replaces it. The players then have a fixed time - say two minutes - to make a list of the objects. The player who makes the longest list wins the game. Steve nearly always won."

Steve had never shunned problems or difficulties. He simply accepted every task in life as it came, whether large or small. Asked to carry water in the camp, he was never heard to

complain about the game he had given up to do the work. Asked to stand guard at night, he never made a big issue of the sleep he had lost.

Later Steve became a patrol leader himself. The "Turtle Dove" patrol was formed of new recruits. His journal says: "This is the new junior patrol that is to begin scouting with the worthy aim of becoming better men and better Hungarians. These boys come to us with fresh enthusiasm, with the determination to make the ten commandments of scouting the driving force of their lives. Their goal is yet a long way off; there will be many struggles in the future. Lord, please give these boys courage and abundant energy."

The annual summer camps become milestones in a scout's life. Steve writes briefly about the one held at Dombóvár in 1932: "On the top of Mount Dombó are the magnificent ruins of an ancient fortress. At the foot of the mountain, we pitched our tents in a small clearing facing the thick forest. Our tricolor flies at half mast on the flagpole in the middle of the camp. Nearby a large cross made of birch poles guards our tents." One of his fellow scouts writes about him, "Steve often left the camp to go for a walk in the forest. He loved nature because he understood its language." Steve himself has this to say about the beauty of a sunrise in the camp, "The first rays of the rising sun break through the tree tops and the forest resounds with the song of many birds as the camp slowly comes to life."

At this hour the guard is changed. Although most scouts are still sound asleep, the guards cannot help noticing some movement in the tent of the Kakas patrol. They know it is Steve Kaszap who always gets up half an hour before the others. His patrol leader, Ferenc Almássy, knows the reason: "Steve got up every morning earlier than the others to go to the edge of the

forest to pray." Another witness who frequently served Mass for the camp Commander, a priest, tells us that Steve was always at the morning Mass before returning to the wait for the others to rise.

Something else that Steve loved was bicycle trips, "During the summer, I visited our old Vértes mountain, roaming its thick oak forests and its moss-strewn precipices where everything speaks about our Almighty Creator."

After eleventh grade he finally owned a bicycle of his own, "It cost 50 Pengő. I earned 16 Pengő as a tutor, received 20 more as a reward and had to borrow the remaining fourteen. But I got my bike and now I can easily go anywhere I wish."

"I made a bike trip to Aliga and continued on to Keszthely on the south-west corner of Lake Balaton. The freedom, good air, warm weather and swimming in Lake Balaton were wonderful. At home we had only the lake connected with the mines to help us escape the summer heat."

Again he writes: "On the first of August I travelled by bike to Budapest and from there to Gödöllő where I visited the international jamboree. Then I went north-east to Aszód, Hatvan and Gyöngyös. I spent the night at Gyöngyös, at the foot of the Matra mountains, and was able to climb next day to the top of Kékes, the "blue mountain" of the Mátra. The view in all directions from the top is pure delight. My route took me from here to Pásztó and other towns near the Slovak border. At Balassagyarmat, I swam in the Ipoly river and then went through a number of small villages to get back to Aszód and Budapest. I spent the time all by myself but enjoyed it tremendously. Despite being tired, the five days were unforgettable."

SENIOR STUDENT

By the time the student reaches grade nine at the Lycée, he has come to be a young man. He has gained self-confidence and his interests have broadened considerably. Steve was now a young man. His journal is the best witness to how his interests had widened at this time. He chose for motto: "Only the selfish stand without sympathy."

In addition to his thoughts and record of daily events, Steve began to note in his journal quotations, proverbs, adages, and poetry that attracted his attention, as well as literary quotations in Hungarian, French, Italian, German and Polish. In his collection were Hungarian folklore, Italian prayers, Turkish dialogue. On a blank page we find the signature of Lászlo Mécs in pale blue ink.

We are told that his journal then grew much larger. The writing became more concise. He began to collect notes on various kinds of musical composition. There are notes on Mozart and Verdi. From the great writers, he writes about Manzoni, Lagerllóf, Camoens, Defoe, Fénelon. He continues his study of Assyrian and Sumerian linguistic curiosities and quotations from Mahabherata and Luziada. We know that he was interested in painting because there are a number of studies of the works of Rembrandt, Rubens, Holbein, Van Dyck, Murillo, Tizian. More practical disciplines also attracted his attention - such as surveying techniques with the theodolite. His notes on gymnastics and a list of books he was to read complete the panorama of his student journal.

At the same time he was studying French, Italian and Spanish. The literature of Latin peoples attracted his interest and through the study of their literature he became well

acquainted with their culture. Later he met Italian students visiting Hungary and became their guides. Steve had always been an avid reader and this seems to have lead him to undertake a wide variety of intellectual tasks and in fact to become something of a dilettante, a dabbler in many intellectual fields.

Inevitably, the great variety of his interests and initiatives had a very adverse effect on his school work. In the year in which he wrote most of his journal entries his marks in school dropped dramatically. In his final examinations in the tenth grade he did not have a single A grade, except in gymnastics. In Latin and Math he got only a passing mark and he actually failed his drawing course. He had really reached the bottom and was in danger of graduating two years later with such low grades that his dreams of scholastic achievement in the future would have been over.

These disappointing results, however, brought him to realize his position and he returned to better habits of concentration and study of the essentials. He put all his effort into improving his standing at school so that by the end of the year his marks in religion, German and French were at the A level and his mathematics just below this. He even improved his drawing. However, it was uphill work and he had fallen so far behind that his marks in history and geography were still unsatisfactory. Typically, this brought him to redouble his efforts and set up a strict study schedule for himself.

The effort succeeded. About the eleventh grade, he writes, "At the end of my summer vacation, I set out to meet the problems of the new year with new hopes, plans and resolutions. I trust that the Virgin Mary and Jesus will help me to reach the level that I am seeking to reach by my own work and effort." In fact he succeeded in graduating at the end of his

twelfth year with a straight A average. Steve himself tells us how he viewed his final success, "It was God's voice that guided me in my studies and helped me to carry them out with dedication."

By the time graduation had come, he had made his choice to follow a call to a religious vocation and was ready to give his life to God.

IN SPIRITUAL COMBAT

Steve Kaszap did not find moral virtue easy; he had to work hard to control his instincts and his passions. He was strengthened by his devotion to duty that required giving up favorite sports and recreations. He writes about his experience in his journal: "It was in the ninth and tenth grades that my eyes began to open and that I became truly aware of my conscience. The childish sorrows and frustrations of earlier years were gone now and in their place came the pains and trials of the teenager. In my years of puberty, my nerves were often agitated and I could easily become irritated. Gradually this inner storm passed. Today I look around me undisturbed but really astonished to see how much crime and corruption there is on every side; especially there seems to be so much impurity in human living." At one point he writes, "The temptations I fought during the year with more or less success, have surged again."

Later he notes, "After my first general confession, I fought again with all my strength against my temptations. During my vacation, I was delighted to find a very efficient weapon for my moral combats, a book by Marcell-Koszterszitz, called: "The Hard Commandment." My father gave it to me and I read it with a lot of interest. It became my morning breviary

because I found that reading it armed me against the temptations of the day." He confessed to his novice master: "My youth was pure but I was quite agitated as a teenager; I am only sorry that I was not able to go to Holy Communion much earlier in my life."



Stephen Kaszap in the Noviciate; in the middle of the 2nd row.

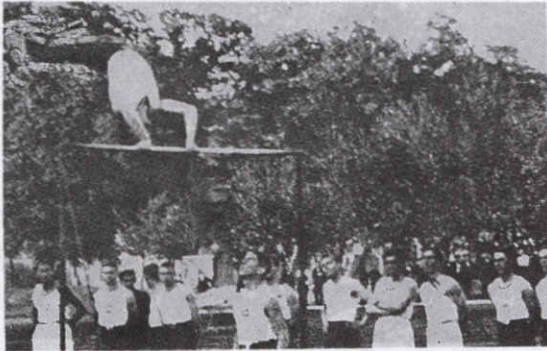
We have the witness of his religion teacher: "Before class, Steve would go to church and if he had no time for Mass, he would make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. He goes to Holy Communion quite frequently."

Steve himself tell us: "I went to Mass whenever there was one; otherwise I recited a decade of the Rosary and some prayers. I like to take part in the Litany of our Lady and that of St. Stephen and to listen to Bible reading. I used the prayers

of the Congregation for my morning prayers but usually joined my family for evening prayers."

AS A GYMNAST

At the Lycée, Steve had an excellent gym instructor. Professor Denkinger had an exceptional ability to inspire his students. By giving special attention to the more talented, he was able to train many outstanding gymnasts and develop a national reputation for his school.



Stephen Kaszap, the gymnaste.

Steve, who seems to have had considerable native ability, benefited by this regime and was eventually able to become an outstanding performer. Apparently this was not without some failures; one of his companions tells us he had a lot of trouble learning to hold his head correctly when performing on the bar. Eventually he succeeded in perfecting his technique and winning many honours in gymnastics.

In fact he succeeded in various competitions outside the Lycée. In a competition of the National League of Junior Sport

Clubs (KOSOSZ) he stood in fourth place among the winners. In the KIZOJZ competitions he won four gold, three silver and one bronze medal. On March 7, 1934, in the gymnastic tournaments at Székesfehérvár, the ancient royal city south-west of Budapest, Steve won several gold medals - on the combined bars, the high bars and in horse racing. With this he was junior champion of the school district of Székesfehérvár. He was proud to win for his school in these regional games.

THE QUESTION OF VOCATION

One can read in Steve's diary:

"The joy of the heart is a fragile and delicate flower which can easily be damaged and destroyed by money, poisoned by celebrity, anesthetized by pleasure, but it can bloom to beauty in the noble-spirited, those in whom the only ideal and purpose is the most holy: God the Eternal."

At this point in life Steve Kaszap has to deal with the question of his vocation. What will this man of 18 years choose? -- this young man who had such broad interests, who graduated with distinction, who was student vice-president in his college, who was the secretary of the Marian Congregation, also a scout master, gymnastics champion, and last but not least, a much-liked and respected member of his community. What kind of ambition animates him? What does he intend to do with his life? The answer is quite surprising! In the opinion of his home room teacher, Steve considers himself inept for everything. He thinks about the priesthood, but in this case, he feels that he should be a monk, or an elementary school teacher in a remote village. His spiritual director guides him in his dilemma. He makes him realize that he sins against God if he

does not choose a career corresponding to his capabilities.

A retreat directed by a Carmelite father will come to his help: "Never has a retreat had a greater impact on me," - he writes -, "than this one. For this I can be thankful to a Carmelite father. My soul was cleansed by a general confession and my will strengthened. I pray to God that he provides more priests like him to my poor country, and that their words will be more than just a cry in the wilderness."

A book by Bishop Ottokár Prohászka, entitled *The Way and The Stages*, also helped Steve to make his decision. In this book the Bishop talks about his years at the German-Hungarian College of Rome. The College was under the direction of the Jesuit fathers. "I read with great interest Father Ottokár's accounts," he writes. "A sort of a beauty and harmony emanates from his words. In the middle of the chapter called 'Germanicum Hungaricum,' a thought moved me: a Jesuit life would agree with me the most."

As it was customary in high school, a Jesuit priest led one of the student retreats. A classmate of Steve's arranged for Fr. Kovacs to see them at 3 p.m. The meeting took place. Then on June 21, he visited the Jesuit Novitiate, Manresa, and he was admitted. His mother asked: "Steve, do you want to be such a poor priest?" She had had other dreams for her son. On the other hand, his father admonished him to be steadfast in his prayers.

PART 2 IN THE JESUIT ORDER

NOVITIATE AT THE MANRESA

What kind of a novice was Steve Kaszap? He reflected an inner maturity, coming across as a warm, calm, reserved individual who was, at the same time, informal and friendly. There was something about him that made him stand out from the other 18-year-old novices. What was it? It was as if the struggles of the previous years had left an indelible mark on his whole character, a mark made by a life deliberately focused on God. He started his novitiate and continued as long as he possibly could, with the same determination and seriousness, with the same drive that characterized his last years of high school.

Here is an entry from his diary: "My fellow novices are very agreeable and likeable. It is only the extraordinary heat that is unusual. It even gives me a headache. My Lord, how glad I am that you led me to such an excellent company. I see my colleagues zeal and joyful devotion. My God, give me energy that I might resemble them. Fill me, Lord, with energy every morning, to last me through the day. My God, I only ask for this one thing, for the rest will come from that 'energy'."

"The greatest treasure on earth is the priestly life. We have given everything away, we have left everything behind and now we must give our whole being."

"The duty of the novice is to transform his soul in the spirit of the rule - leaving all work and worry aside in order to grow in spiritual life and in the practice of virtues."

He himself lists the questions for his examination of conscience: "Getting up: is it done quickly? Visiting the Blessed Sacrament: is it with devotion? Do I ask for grace? Breakfast: is it food for the soul or greed? Reading: is it done with attention, energy, diligence? Gymnastics: are they performed conscientiously? School and studying: am I diligent, attentive? Recreation: is it joyous, refreshing? Love: is it complete? Conversation: is it eager? Are the walks calm? Is the conversation loving, joyful? Is fatigue gladly endured and concealed? Rosary: is it said devoutly and attentively, is it unforced? Examination of conscience: is it zealous, noble, accurate? Is there repentance? Firm resolution?"

THIRTY-DAY RETREAT

The great test for the novices is the thirty-day retreat. It is divided into four weeks with a one day break between each week. This is the first, real, great encounter of the novice with the Lord and Master whom he wants to follow. This is where a life-time resolution is formulated: to follow Christ the King and Master in poverty, chastity and obedience, according to the rules of the Society of Jesus. The vows are taken at the end of the second year. The whole novitiate prepares for this pledging of self.

"If my mind is in its right place," Steve writes in his notes, "it is absolutely necessary that I follow Christ. Why follow closely? His person, the importance and sanctity of the matter deserve it. The reward is great, the sacrifice relatively small (Romans 8, 12). I have no right to refuse his exceptional grace. Noblesse oblige! There is a need for saints who will take the faithful with them. The world needs missionary apostles and heroic leaders. Christ deserves an honour guard. Let the Leader have faithful replicas. The priestly spirit is

needed to fight sin: virtue must win a daring and magnanimous victory. And what about me? Should I be a piece of cheap glass in the body of the Church or a gem? To make the task and the sacrifice easier, Jesus gave us an example. He carries us on wings of consolation ... I must study Christ on my knees, with a soul full of prayer and with devout love. Veni mecum, labora mecum! (Come with me, work with me). Answer: I will follow you closely. Saint Paul fell in love with the crucified Christ. Mediocrity will not lead to the goal: you are either a saint or a failure. Follow closely. Christ is calling. You must obey unconditionally - more than mere words are needed to be an apostle. Action should be followed by teaching. Virtue is not submission but heroism." At the retreat this is what he writes to his parents: "I can tell you that I learned a lot. I reaped many benefits and gained great vigour. Lay people cannot even imagine how many blessings and what spiritual value there is in a retreat. This is when vocation becomes truly conscious and the person decides to break with every earthly attraction, joy, amusement, comfort ... to offer one's complete freedom to God."

IN PURSUIT OF A HOLY LIFE

Endeavouring to be gentle: "Kindness should dominate not only your words but your thoughts and deeds as well, in other words, your whole being. People are most impressed by kindness."

"At every ringing of the bell think of obedience (let it be brisk, prompt, cheerful) as if Jesus Christ himself were commanding or ordering." "The will of God always held him captive", says one of his fellow novices, "making him always peaceful and smiling, and his whole personality reflected a well-balanced, pleasant individual."

"Our works alone," he writes, "are insignificant, but with love they can be made valuable."

"Practice brotherly love, tolerance, patience, gentleness, do the will of others rather than your own, see Christ in everybody else, be polite, speak well of others, be cheerful always."

"You cannot rest until you really love everyone, therefore you must always speak and think well of others. Do not flinch at sacrifices for your brothers. Let these sacrifices be ongoing rather than just the result of moods."

"Carry out and keep to the daily agenda with all your might. This will make you holy and perfect. To determine easily how far you have gone on the way to this perfection,

think about how your tasks are carried out in times of fatigue, adversity, etc. This is the measure of holiness."

"Sanctity does not consist of being faultless but rather in not compromising with my weaknesses. Do I resign myself to them? If I fall a hundred times, I get up a hundred times and continue to fight resolutely. Punishment is necessary."

This energy and quest for perfection are surprising! "What is at the heart of this state of mind?" asks Fr. Endrody. The concentrated effort of an athlete and champion? That too.

"True love can be achieved through action, with the strength of our muscles and the sweat of our brows ... True love is what is most important, for it is everlasting. Reflect on this a lot and pay special attention to it when performing the examination of conscience."

"Jesus Christ is very jealous: He wants you either totally or not at all. Mediocrity does not lead to the goal."

"Do not be afraid of the future. If you have a strong faith and put your trust in the Holy Spirit, you will get whatever you need for your apostolate."

"The truly humble person is indifferent to diverse positions: this person considers himself or herself unfit for any of them but, with God's grace, capable of anything required by obedience."

"We must build God's kingdom in our hearts."

"I am God's servant, my whole life is a continuous great Yes to God."

"Be consistently faithful to Christ the King in your self-denial, moderation and mainly in the conscientious performance of your spiritual duties. If you are very tired, think of the great merits earned when the spirit overcomes the body. This is possible with inner strength."

"At meal times, rise above the body. Do not miss a word of the reading during meals!"

"At meal times, consistent moderation has to be established and kept, with self-denial at least once a day."

"What do I fear? I fear the recreation period and performing in public. What use will it be if I can give a homily, but at the table I am a speechless fool? This is a very heavy moral burden because it will last my whole life through. This makes me lose heart and hinders me in my work because I cannot reconcile taciturnity with perfection, since that in itself

is imperfection."

"Now you are bashful, taciturn, faint-hearted, full of doubts and worries: pray to the Holy Spirit every day for devotion, talents, memory and the art of conversation and you will be completely transformed! This requires cooperation, but don't lose heart, be a man! Christ the King is the leader, you are His soldier, be brave and always eager in your struggle. Start your program with the triduum of self-denial, constant prayer, supplication in your free time to the Heavenly Father, to Christ, to the Holy Spirit, to the Virgin Mother, to your patron saints, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary and to Saint Stanislaus Kostka!"

THE PRAYERFUL LIFE

"St. Thomas Aquinas says that what Divine Providence has decided from the beginning of time to give to each individual, He will subsequently give only through prayer. Divine Providence ties everything to conditions and to definite rules: the earth remains fertile only through diligent cultivation ... This is exactly what He decreed and decided that the soul could receive divine grace and instruction through prayer alone. This is why the Saviour says: "ask and you shall receive, seek, and you shall find, knock, and the door shall be opened to you." (Mt. 7,7)

"Many of my meditations are imperfect, done when I am sleepy. My reviews are not forceful enough. At common prayers I do not pay attention and my imagination roams."

"When perturbed, do not be of little faith nor faint-hearted, do not despair, but remain calm, steadfast and make good use of time for gaining merit; keep in mind that you have

your common sense and spiritual guidance (honesty) and remember that a few hours, days or weeks are nothing compared with eternity and that after the rain comes sunshine. (Above the grey clouds the sky is forever blue). At times like this you can meditate on how terrible it is when God leaves man alone for a short period of time, let alone forever! Dreadful!"

"I was inconsolable all day today. Consolation came during meditation in the evening. Was it worth losing heart? (Above the grey clouds the sky is forever blue)."

"When praying it is important to recollect oneself, to concentrate, to put brakes on the senses, to rise above the body, to muster inner and outer devotion, attention and composure. Prayer should be short, simple, trusting and unselfish."

"Are you thirsty? Do not let yourself be satisfied with earthly refreshment and consolation but go to God. He will satisfy you with the refreshing waters of his grace, the fountain of all living water."

"Do not seek extraordinary paths for meditation! Take the proven, sure road. If it was good enough for so many, it will be good enough for you too. Should it be God's will, He will lead you to a new, more perfect way of meditation. What is most important is to put your resolve into action."

THE EUCHARIST

"If you go by God's house, even if you are in a hurry, go in to greet your Lord God."

"Oh heaven-sent holy Bread! How is it possible that I should sometimes be so indifferent towards you? I do not think

about you often enough, yearning for you. I do not understand how it is that I do not meditate more on God's infinite goodness for giving us, human insects, the Body of His Only Son for food so that we might have eternal life."

"How magnificent is the Eucharist, the source of all strength, devotion, self-sacrifice, martyrdom. Love, adore and study it so that, like the saints, you will have all these."

In response to Jesus' infinite love manifested in his Sacred Heart, he writes: "I offer my whole life as a sacrifice to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for my own and other people's many horrible sins."

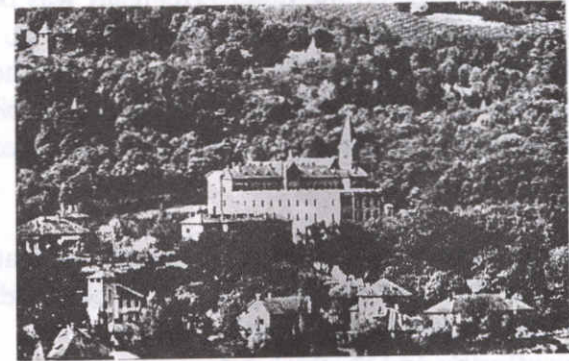
GRACE

What will assure God's final victory in the world and in the soul, in history and in the destiny of the individual? What is it that makes those who accept Him always victorious, and those who turn against Him always defeated? But above all, what are we to do to have God win a total victory in our souls?

Barely six weeks prior to his death, he writes in his "lumina" journal: "Finally! Eureka! I found what I have for so long searched for, but could not find. What is it? What is the sole reason for prayer, something for which we have to plead constantly? Every other spiritual need is contained in it. It is grace, the grace to recognize God's gifts always, and never to resist it but to follow it and trust in it, so that it can mould our souls. Thomas à Kempis expresses the same thing when he says that you should always desire and pray that God's will in you be fulfilled."

Steve Kaszap had a great respect and admiration for the

saints. He took notes about their lives. He studied with remarkable zeal the lives of those tortured for their faith at the city of Kassa. He liked to talk about the three beatified Jesuits, Canon Mark Korosi, Menyhert Grodecz and Istvan Pongracz. He knew a lot about them and about the era in which they lived, their relics, the miracles and the story of their beatification. He prayed for their intercession and encouraged his schoolmates to revere them. He would pray to Saint Joseph with the simplicity of a child and this is what we find in his notes about the Virgin Mary: "Love your Heavenly Mom! You love and long for your mother very much but, look, you'll find an even holier mother in the Virgin Mother! Love her and trust her unconditionally."



The Manresa

PART 3 THE WAY OF THE CROSS

AFFLICTIONS

When Steve Kaszap entered the novitiate, he appeared to be in excellent health but the medical check-up at the time detected fever. Was it a result of nerves? The doctor interpreted it so. Or did it have another cause, something lurking behind the appearance of strong physical health? Only the good Lord knows the deep secrets of every human body.

On the warm summer afternoon of July 30, 1934, he entered Manresa, the Jesuit novitiate. His heart was full of joy, and he felt he had reached his goal. His happiness, however, was not undisturbed. The very next day he became hoarse and soon lost his voice. Steve Kaszap took this as a warning, a premonition. In his notes this is how he prepared for his sufferings:

"A person prepares and thinks of something that he loves (the cross) and then the suffering is not a surprise. (Jesus foretold his own sufferings.)" Further on he wrote: "Love to meditate on suffering and death and think of your own suffering and grief."

His voice came back, but then his tonsils needed medical attention. After Christmas his ankles became swollen, he had arthritic pains and could barely walk. Pus-filled abscesses appeared first on his fingers, then on his neck and face. The specialist ordered yeast treatment and, finally, he became bedridden with tonsillitis.

"Any cross God gives must be carried with joy," he

wrote. He went through his trials with a sunny heart. "A little illness is more useful than ten or twenty years spent in health." Meanwhile he suffered a nosebleed and then his fever rose. The diagnosis was pleurisy. His nosebleed started again and became nearly fatal. The doctor cauterized the bleeding vein. Steve Kaszap suffered without complaint. Anyone in contact with him admired his inner strength.

Accepting God's will, this is what he wrote on March 2, 1935: "I suffer gladly for Christ and I don't run from pain." The book, "On the Road to Eternal Life", meditations by Jozsef Korompai, published after the author's death, had a great impact on him. He wrote: "Reading this book makes one find delight in suffering." Steve got better but on the fourth day his fever rose again. He had abscesses on his thigh and loins and his fever was up to 40°C. He was taken to the hospital for the first time. According to the doctor, humanly speaking there was no hope for Steve. The date was March 17, 1935. It was exactly one year to the day that Steve had become a junior gymnastics champion.

IN THE HOSPITAL

Surgery was scheduled for March 19, the feast of St. Joseph. Many prayers were offered for the health of the seriously ill novice.

After the operation he whispered to his novice master, Fr. Hemm: "Holy Communion helped me greatly today and that is why I was so calm going in for surgery. I trust St. Joseph very much." Then he added: "How small our sufferings are and how much the Church needs them! These thoughts make suffering much easier for me."

When his confessor asked if there was anything bothering him, he replied with simple honesty: "My youth is pure though my childhood was restless. My only regret is that I was not a daily communicant before. How strange that there are so many prodigal sons among God's children and so few totally innocent ones."

He wrote: "My Te Deum (thanksgiving) should be in my suffering, just like St. Elizabeth's." In fact, suffering became his daily song of praise.

This is when the Master said to his novices: "God's grace is marvelous. Brother Kaszap grows more in his spiritual life in one hour than we do in one year."

Steve Kaszap's hospital stay had positive effects on the other patients who learned to appreciate and love him. Once he was able to walk he was happy to help them. His influence was most noticeable at the Easter Holy Communion. Ten out of the eleven patients in his hospital room received the Lord well prepared and with deep faith. The eleventh patient, a non-Catholic, was moved to tears and said: "I never thought there was so much faith, harmony and love in the Catholic faith."

AT MANRESA AGAIN

Undoubtedly Steve Kaszap wanted to get better since his vocation, his life as a priest, depended on it, but at the same time he learned the wonderful taste of suffering for and with Christ. "The greatest value in our earthly life is to suffer silently and without complaint," he wrote.

To love suffering is only possible for those who do it with Jesus and for the same reason He did. This gave strength

to the martyrs who suffered gladly and were happy to have something in common with Jesus. "I drink eagerly from the cup of suffering for the love of God. The more I drink, the thirstier I get. Illuminate my mind so that I never obstruct the path of your grace! Open my eyes, fill my prayers and my will with strength ... Jesus help me!"

His illness did not relent. He had been at the novitiate for one year now, a year full of suffering. "The cross on my shoulder is enormous, I am afraid that I won't be able to bear it." He was balancing between doubt and trust as his illness disappeared for a time, only to reappear stronger than before.

"Death can find you at any moment. Expect to die after finishing each task. Thus, with God's help, you will do all your work with care."

Because of his sores he could only sit on the edge of his chair. Later, the abscesses spread to his knees, and from there on, he stood during his visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

THE CAUSE FOR GREAT ANXIETY

The novitiate is two years long. During the first year, the official canonical year, an absence of only 30 days is allowed. Steve Kaszap spent more than that in hospital, therefore the novice master requested the Superior General in Rome to consider his second year to be his canonical year. On the basis of Steve's performance, this was granted. His second year became his official first year. He started it off with great enthusiasm, but it soon became apparent that, because of the recurring nature of his illness, in spite of his good will, he did not have the required health to continue.

These are the thoughts he wrote down on October 18, 1935: "Sacred Heart of Jesus grant that I might empty myself completely! I do not want to reserve anything for myself, for my own intentions, not even my prayers, my sufferings or anything else. Everything is yours, you gave them to me and I give them back to you, Sacred Heart. I want to serve the Seat of Love, Your Most Sacred Heart, with love and suffering (these two are what I need most in life; after them only death: the last hurdle towards perfect love). This is my goal in life, the essence of my life's philosophy."

His superiors had no alternative but to send Steve home. When he was healthy again, they would receive him with open arms. He then wrote his parents: "Reverend Father Superior advises me that since, in my present condition, I cannot fulfill the requirements of the novitiate, I should go home until I am completely cured, which might be hastened by the change. When I recover completely, I will come back."

SAYING GOOD-BYE TO THE NOVITIATE

The day of leaving the novitiate was the saddest of his entire life. His colleagues gathered in the common room where Steve, said good-bye to each one of them. This would not usually be done when someone leaves, but Steve Kaszap was expected to return. Then, in civilian clothes, he left his beloved Manresa, it was hoped, only for a short time. Nobody ever thought that within seven short weeks God would be calling him to Himself. He took with him his large rosary and the cross that he had received when he received his cassock. He left with a heavy heart but accepting it all as God's will.

"Bodily sufferings cannot be compared to those of the soul," he wrote in his journal. The Lord's ways are inscrutable!

Steve accepted the sufferings with Jesus. He understood that though Jesus taught with words, He redeemed the world by sacrifice. He felt that God had accepted his life as a sacrifice, and this filled him with inner peace. He thanked God for it every day. Naturally he would have liked to get well to serve God's cause as a priest, and his dream was to die as a Jesuit priest, but at the same time, he submitted everything to God's will. "My whole life should be a continuous Yes to God," he wrote.

AT HOME AGAIN

Steve went home with his mother at the beginning of November. In the familiar surroundings, his father and four brothers and sisters were waiting for him. His fever went up again. On November 8, the doctor was called and he was admitted to hospital again. He took his cross and the telephone number at Manresa so that if his condition became terminal, he could ask permission to telephone to take his vows. The diagnosis was erysipelas, so he was admitted to the hospital for contagious diseases, where he remained for two weeks.

At the end of November he went to church every morning and his daily schedule followed the priestly routine of prayer and study. He was preparing for the Greek exam required for his studies in theology. He asked his father for the book, "The Road to Perfection" by St. Teresa of Avila.

By December, Steve thought it was high time to get rid of his tonsils, the apparent reason for his miseries. Because of severe pain in the joints, the doctor recommended immediate surgery. Steve asked to be admitted to the Red Cross Hospital in Budapest where he had been treated previously. He entered the Ear, Nose and Throat Department on December fourth.

Because of the urgency, he underwent surgery that same evening. The surgery was successful but his incision healed slowly. After several days, he still had difficulty swallowing, had a number of minor hemorrhages and had to be on a liquid diet. Though he could not talk, he did not isolate himself. He visited his little nephew who was recovering from ear surgery in another section of the hospital. He also received visitors. He had a long exchange on the Jesuit way of life with one of his former classmates; but Steve's part had to be in writing. A few days later the hemorrhages stopped and the site of the surgery was healing well, so on the tenth day he was allowed to go home. Before leaving the hospital, he spent two hours playing with his nephew. This was three days prior to his death.

THE FINAL SUFFERING - Like the Suffering Christ

He went home on December 14, feeling well but still somewhat tired and unable to eat properly. Finally his tonsils, apparently the culprits for his ills, were gone. However, before nightfall he was shaken by chills. His weakened body shivered and shook and his fever rose above 38°C. On the morning of December 15 he could no longer speak. His throat was swollen, his fever was above 40°C. The doctor prescribed an antipyretic and a throat rinse. By the afternoon he could no longer swallow, but he received his visitors with a smile.

"I visited him two days before his death," wrote one of his friends from the novitiate. "He could not talk but there was a smile on his fever-flushed face. He looked at me lovingly and signalled that when he got well he would return to the novitiate."

On December 16, the doctor visited him again and was saddened to diagnose a tumour in Steve's throat. The ENT

specialist was called and he sent Steve to the hospital. Admission took a long time, and then, following normal procedure, the patient with a 40.6°C temperature was given a bath. His mother spoke to the hospital chaplain and let him know that Steve would like to receive Communion every day. Then they said farewell - for the last time. At night he was given an injection because, as he wrote, "breathing is difficult," but nevertheless he grew worse. The struggle for every breath of air was increasingly painful and desperate.

"He cried all night, his tears flowed down his face," said the nurse. He was rushed to the operating room at around 3 a.m. and the doctor in charge performed a tracheotomy, inserting a silver tube in his throat, and tried to improve his breathing with injections and artificial respiration. As soon as he regained consciousness, he laboriously wrote on his sheet, "I would like to see a priest", and reached for his cross and, with his Marian medal, held it to the end. The nurse sat by him. Steve reached for the paper and pencil on his night table and wrote in faint letters: "My mouth is filled with blood, I would like to spit". Then, in big, easily readable letters, he wrote: "Is the priest coming?" But the nurse just smiled and did not move because she was convinced that Steve's life was in no danger. We can only surmise what went on in his mind while waiting.

He had once written: "What will console me at my death? My holy faith will give me hope since I will have no other consolation." Elsewhere he wrote: "The great virtue in the last hour of our life is the acceptance of death with humility and self denial for our sins." Now all his consolation was in the tightly-held cross and the Marian medal.

At five o'clock in the morning the night nurse was relieved. The patient wrote: "I have great difficulty breathing," then, "I would like to be washed. The nurse brought him water

and washed his sweat-soaked face and hands. Steve wrote again: "I cannot make my confession, but I request absolution for I am repentant. I cannot take communion either because I cannot swallow. I would like the last rites." He underlined the last sentence. The nurse nodded that she understood. She arranged his bed. Steve was grateful, "The fresh water feels good on my hands," he wrote in appreciation. The nurse went to fetch the priest. What happened after the nurse left him will remain a secret forever. By the time she came back with the priest, Steve Kaszap was no longer conscious, but his last message lay beside him!

"God be with you! We will meet in Heaven!
Do not weep, this is my birthday in Heaven.
God bless you all!"

Steve Kaszap's eyes were still open, fixed on the crucifix and the Marian medal in his hands, but he no longer saw the nurse nor priest. The priest gave him absolution, anointed him with the sacrament of the sick and gave him the papal blessing.

In less than half an hour, at ten minutes past six, he stopped breathing and his soul was before Jesus, the eternal Judge who judges the living and the dead.

EPILOGUE

Steve Kaszap was my fellow novice. My impressions of him are still fresh in my mind. As a novice, I respected and, to be honest, I admired him. His gymnastics routines impressed me greatly since I had no such training. I learned to admire his acceptance of all his suffering and his offering himself as a sacrifice to God.

I have tried to evoke his memory by quoting his own words. I believe he has a message not only for today's youth but for everyone. It has always been difficult to accept suffering, especially during war time. Many people lose their faith. There is but one solution: to suffer with Jesus for the same reason He suffered. This is what Steve Kaszap did.

God put him in a family with a deep faith, where he learned to pray. He grew up in the atmosphere of a school run by a religious order. The Marian Congregation taught him to love our Heavenly Mother. In the Scout movement he became a responsible leader, a good friend and a lover of nature. His dedication led him to become a champion gymnast. As a student he earned good grades and became a top student through diligent work.

He offered his life to God generously as a novice to serve Hungarian youth. He was a hero in his sufferings, one from whom God seemingly took everything, yet he kept his inner peace and serenity. His death was his birthday in heaven, the reassurance that we will meet beyond the grave. His only regret was not having become a daily communicant earlier.

I am convinced that Steve Kaszap is still the good friend who helps those who seek his intercession. The many favours granted bear witness to this.

Bibliography:

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PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you have said, "Anyone who wants to follow, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me," look upon your faithful servant Steve Kaszap and through his intercession grant us the grace that we ask of you, provided it is for our good. We pray that you grant us the grace to follow his example by serving the Seat of Love, your Most Sacred Heart. Amen
Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father...

PRAYER FOR STEVE KASZAP'S BEATIFICATION

Lord Jesus, you have said, whoever wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me, look upon your faithful servant, Steve Kaszap. The goal of his young life was to renounce everything to serve the Seat of Love, Your Most Sacred Heart, with love and suffering. During his lifetime he gave everything to your Sacred Heart, including his suffering and prayers. Let your Sacred Heart grant him everything, Lord Jesus, that he, we trust, is asking for us in heaven. Grant conversion to sinners, healing to the sick, consolation and relief to the suffering and help to those in need. I pray that you grant me the grace that I need and the favour I ask through his intercession.

I ask you with my whole heart, Lord Jesus, to honour your son, Steve Kaszap, whom your infinite love chose to serve you and to suffer with you then called him to yourself. Grant that we may soon honour him at our altars as an example of pure innocence, heroic love and faithfulness unto death, a young Hungarian saint dedicated to your Sacred Heart for the glory of the Holy Trinity. Amen.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Remember, O Virgin Mother, the filial love that Steve Kaszap professed for you when he urged us to love you and have unconditional trust in you as our Heavenly Mother. We ask you as Mediator of all Blessings to accept, make it your own and bless the case of Steve Kaszap which we offer you, we dedicate to you and entrust to your motherly protection. Amen.

You are asked to notify the following address of any favours granted through the intercession of God's servant, Steve Kaszap:

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Kaszap István
1916-1935

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