

In the footsteps of the martyrs János Brenner and Dániel Halász



Informational Publication

On the Cross-Border Pilgrimage Route Developed
within the Frame of the Messages SIHU00012 Project

INTRODUCTION

A **pilgrimage** is not merely **the traversing of a route**. It is much more: **a spiritual journey**, where one becomes quiet, contemplates, and along the way discovers new experiences, answers, and connections. A pilgrimage can be long or short, lead to distant places or even to the church in the neighboring village – the essential thing is that whoever sets out does so with an open heart and a mindful spirit.

Religious tourism—beyond classic **pilgrimages**—also includes visits to sacred sites for **cultural interest**, spiritual **retreats**, and **community events** that help break away from the noise of everyday life and bring one closer to inner peace or a higher purpose. A short walk, a church visit, or even a quiet community program can offer a **deep and lasting spiritual experience**.

The effective operation of pilgrimage tourism depends on the collaboration of three areas:

- **tourism service providers**, who offer accommodation, meals, information, and a safe environment,
- **church participants**, who provide spiritual guidance and a sense of community,
- and **the pilgrims** themselves, who seek—whether faith, inner calm, or community..

Light at the border

These three groups together form the community responsible for preserving and renewing religious and cultural heritage. The aim of this publication is to show: what it means today to be a pilgrim, what roles helpers and communities play, and how each participant can become part of a larger spiritual journey.

During the project, special attention was devoted to learning about the lives of **two young priests**, János Brenner and Dániel Halász, who exemplified courage, fidelity, and faith.

By following in their footsteps, we too may come closer to ourselves—and perhaps begin our own pilgrimage.

These spiritual journeys not only become personal experiences, but also **build connections** between communities and nations.

*In that sense, **cross-border pilgrimages** truly become **lights on the border**—they show the way, connect, and bring light into others' lives!*



Information about the pilgrimage route

Within the **Messages** project, a new **pilgrimage route** has been established, leading from Szentgotthárd to Lendava, dedicated to the lives, work, and memory of two young martyred priests: Blessed **János Brenner** and the Servant of God **Dániel Halász**.

The route is special because it not only connects **historical memorial** sites, but also includes **spiritually** significant **stations**: chapels, memorial crosses, community prayer spots, and nature-immersed stretches. Visitors receive not only information about these locations, but also the opportunity for **silence, deep reflection**, and personal spiritual **renewal**.

Geographically and spiritually, the pilgrimage route forms a bridge: linking Hungarian and Slovenian border communities and offering participants the chance to jointly nurture the Christian heritage and the culture of remembrance. The route reminds us that **faith and belonging know no borders**, and not only recalls past testimonies but also sets an example for future generations about making faith, unity, and service part of everyday life.



Information about the pilgrimage route

This route is a true **“light on the border”**—a symbolic and real connection that strengthens spiritual unity and offers the opportunity for each of us, by following someone’s footsteps, to find our own spiritual path.

Whose footsteps we follow

The pilgrimage route from Szentgotthárd to Lendava traces the memory of two martyred priests, **Blessed János Brenner and the Servant of God Dániel Halász**. Though they lived in different times and under different circumstances, they each embraced priestly service with similar **fidelity and courage**—right up to the sacrifice of their lives. The **commitment** they showed to **faith, love,** and community **can serve as a guiding compass** for every pilgrim.

† Blessed János Brenner (1931–1957)

Born in Szombathely, he studied at the Cistercian school in Pécs, the Premonstratensian gymnasium in Szombathely, and the seminary. He began his chaplaincy in Rábakethely in 1955, serving several filial communities—Máriaújfalu, Farkasfa, Magyarlak, and Zsida. He quickly gained the disfavor of the communist regime because **he especially reached young people**. Despite threats, he did not abandon his place of service, and on the night of 14 December 1957, when called to a sick person, he set out with the Blessed Sacrament—but was brutally **murdered** en route.

Information about the pilgrimage route

Memorial sites:

- Rábakethely: church, cemetery, statue
- Zsida: Good Shepherd Chapel, memorial cross
- Szentgotthárd: relic, Brenner-altar
- Szombathely: cathedral, school, memorial windows

Beatified: 1. May 2018, Szombathely

Motto: „For those who love God, all things work together for good” (Rom 8:28)

† Servant of God Dániel Halász (1908–1945)

Born in Črenšovci, where he also celebrated his first Mass. He served in today's Slovenia: as chaplain in Lendava, then parish priest in Velika Polana. He actively participated in the Marian association, **preaching the Gospel in both Hungarian and Slovenian**. In spring 1945 he was arrested in Hotiza and **murdered**. His body was found in the Kót area.

Memorial sites:

- Črenšovci: birthplace, memorial chapel and exhibition
- Kót: memorial park
- Hotiza: Way of the Cross
- Velika Polana: gravesite, parish

Beatification process ongoing, since the 2000s his life is recalled in numerous publications, pilgrimage brochures, and prayer hours. His spiritual legacy is maintained by the Murska Sobota diocese and many local communities.

Motto: „If there is joy on earth, it belongs to the pure-hearted” (Thomas à Kempis)

Recommendations for tourism service providers

Hospitality and openness during the pilgrimage!

Hosting guests in pilgrimage tourism offers a special opportunity for accommodation providers and restaurateurs. Pilgrims travel primarily for **spiritual renewal**, so **simplicity, attentiveness, and tranquility** are important to them. When designing services for such guests, an **open mindset** and **genuine hospitality** are indispensable.

Accommodations – supporting spiritual retreat

Pilgrims generally arrive with modest expectations, but great openness. These points can help make a lodging pilgrim-friendly:

- **Flexibility** around arrival and departure times, especially if the day's distance or weather affects scheduling.
- **Early breakfast** or a packed "on-the-way" meal provided.
- **Simple, clean room** with minimalist decor, so as not to distract from inner reflection.
- **Smaller candles or soft lighting** to support evening liturgy, conversation, or prayer.
- **Quiet, retreat-suitable surroundings** that support spiritual deepening.

Recommendations for tourism service providers

- **Storage space** for pilgrimage gear (e.g. boots, backpacks).
- **Ability to accommodate larger groups** in one shared space or close proximity.
- **Community areas** (garden, courtyard, chapel, prayer corner) to allow evening quiet, conversation.

Restaurants – simplicity and attentiveness

Pilgrims often look for simple, nourishing, quick meals, while respecting religious customs. Recommended guidelines:

- **Offer vegetarian or meat-free dishes** on fast days, religious feasts, and **“Fasting dessert options”** (e.g. fruit salad, honey-plums) so sweets are still available on holy days.
- A **pilgrim menu** or daily special, fast service, **shorter waiting time; pilgrim-friendly pricing**, such as group discounts or pre-ordered pilgrim meals.
- Showcasing **local traditional dishes** — as part of the cultural experience.
- **Provide water refill stations** (bottle-filling), energizing snack packs (e.g. fruit, cereal bars).



Recommendations for tourism service providers

Communication and attentiveness – small gestures, big impact

Religious tourists can be more sensitive to tone, style, and personal attentiveness. It is important to pay attention to:

- **Knowledge of and respect for religious customs** (e.g. making the sign of the cross, prayer, courteous restraint).
- Greetings and **helpful orientation** at sites or along the route.
- An open, supportive attitude — a **brief conversation** or kind gesture can become a lasting memory.
- **Pilgrim passports and stamps**: introducing a unique local stamp so that stops and accommodations become collectible memories.
- Offering **feedback options** via simple anonymous forms or QR codes where pilgrims can share their experience.
- Providing **basic medical supplies** such as pain-relief tablets, blister plasters, thermometer, etc.

Pilgrim Points – places of attentiveness

Increasingly communities establish “pilgrim points”: hospitality or resting spots marked with a logo, information, or basic provisions (e.g. drinking water, bench, restroom) for those on the route.



Recommendations for church participants

Pilgrimages—even small local events—offer opportunities for **faith, culture, and community to meet**.

Church participants — **parishes, pastors, spiritual leaders, active communities** — are essential to ensuring that faith and hospitality form a unity during the pilgrimage.

Opening churches, organizing **communal prayers**, and offering individual **spiritual accompaniment** all serve to help pilgrims feel at home in God's house. These suggestions aim to make the faith experience a memorable spiritual renewal and genuine communal encounter.

Church participants as spiritual companions

Pilgrimage is not only a physical journey, but a spiritual path in which one deepens connection to God, self, and community. In this process, churches, parishes, pastors, and **church communities hold key roles**: guardians of tradition and shapers of pilgrims' spiritual experiences.

Churches, chapels, and other sacred spaces carry the memory, identity, and spiritual heritage of local communities.



Recommendations for church participants

A visit can have deep spiritual impact, especially if:

- a short **guided presentation is available on the place's history** and significance, along with an individual or **collective prayer**;
- a **quiet retreat space** is provided where the pilgrim can rest and meditate;
- a **spiritual companion is present**, either for **conversation** or **shared devotion**.

Who are the church participants? What roles can they fulfill?

For the pilgrimage's spiritual and organizational success, the following roles are important:

- **Pastors and chaplains**, who welcome pilgrims by opening churches, **leading prayers**, authorizing Masses, offering **brief greetings**;
- **Sextons, cantors**, who assist with practical arrangements and **liturgical preparation**;
- **Church volunteers** and faith-life communities, who support the experience through orientation, distributing prayer materials, **hospitality**;
- **Diocese- or deanery-level staff**, who may **coordinate, organize joint events**.



Recommendations for church participants

Many pilgrims wish not only to see, but also to experience the reality of faith.

This can be supported by:

- sharing **personal stories** by local residents,
- offering **opportunities** for **prayer**, candle lighting, short reflections,
- providing space for **meditation**, hymns, contemplations,
- openness to **liturgical events**, with brief explanations for visitors.

Engagement with local community and tourism stakeholders

Pilgrimage tourism development requires dialogue between religious and secular players:

- **cooperation** with municipal authorities, tourist offices, service providers,
- organizing **joint events**, feasts, pilgrimage days,
- **sharing information** on opening hours, reception facilities, events.

Preservation of local traditions

The church plays a pivotal role in preserving local religious traditions and festivals. These:

- give **identity** to the community,
- **attract** pilgrims and **visitors**,
- help **engage** and involve younger generations



Recommendations for those preparing for the pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is more than a simple tour; it is a **special journey** during which one can come to know not only various places but also oneself more deeply. It offers the chance **to be still**, reflect, **and connect with others**, nature, tradition – and with God – through an open heart.

This chapter helps everyone to begin well, with preparedness, open heart, and respect.

Behavioral rules and local customs

- **Do not litter, do not make noise**—in forests or near churches.
- **Behave respectfully** at religious sites: modest attire, mobile phones set to silent.
- **During prayer or Mass** remain silent, wait until the end, or join quietly.
- **Groups**: if traveling together, only one group at a time approaches a holy site so as not to disturb others' contemplation.
- **Permissions, tickets**: if you plan to visit a paid shrine, museum, or protected area, check opening hours and other regulations in advance, as well as entrance fees and additional charges.



Recommendations for those preparing for the pilgrimage

Orientation and use of local services

- Learn **local customs**; be patient and open-minded.
- Feel free **to ask** at hospitality venues—many are happy to help.
- Respect the life rhythm and **traditions of local communities**.
- Observe **local celebrations**: know when pilgrimages, village festivals, or national holidays occur, since some services may close—but these occasions can also offer wonderful **cultural experiences**.

Spiritual preparation

- **Reflect**: Why are you setting out? What are you seeking? What do you wish to let go of or find?
- **Carry** a scripture **quote**, prayer, or thought that may accompany you on the journey.
- **Join local community prayers**, spiritual guidance, meditations—or choose silent retreat if that feels more nourishing.
- **Share experiences**: if traveling with others, hold an evening “circle prayer” or sharing session to help process the day’s events.



Recommendations for those preparing for the pilgrimage

Why set out?!

Why is it worth undertaking this journey? **Answers vary** – but many report that pilgrimage helps with **self-examination** and **spiritual deepening**.

Encounters, moments of silence, prayers—all contribute to **renewal**.

For younger pilgrims, elements of **adventure**, **play**, **discovery** are important. Game stations and map challenges can help maintain attention while offering a faith-based **experience!**

Practical information

- **Dress in layers**, wear comfortable hiking shoes, carry a rain jacket.
- Bring **water**, **snacks**, first-aid kit, sun protection, fully charged phone/powerbank.
- For offline navigation, download PDF **maps** or GPX files so you can follow the route without internet – or use paper maps.
- Don't forget: the pilgrim's passport also serves for stamp collection – **gather memories**, take notes, or keep a journal!
- If uncertain, **ask for help** – many are happy to guide.



Recommendations for those preparing for the pilgrimage

Interreg



Slovenija – Magyarország

Messages

Set out with this preparedness, and experience every silence, adventure, and spiritual richness of the pilgrimage!

May **this journey** strengthen you, inspire connection, and **leave a mark on your heart** – while the hospitality of communities on both sides of the border guides your steps.

A Parting Thought

On a pilgrimage you don't just touch a place – the place touches you. If you journey with an open heart, at the end of the path **you arrive not only at a destination** – but closer to something important that perhaps you were not even seeking.

This publication was prepared by the Vas County Governmental Office, in cooperation with MURABA ETT and the Municipality of Lendava, to jointly build a bridge between past and future, faith and culture.



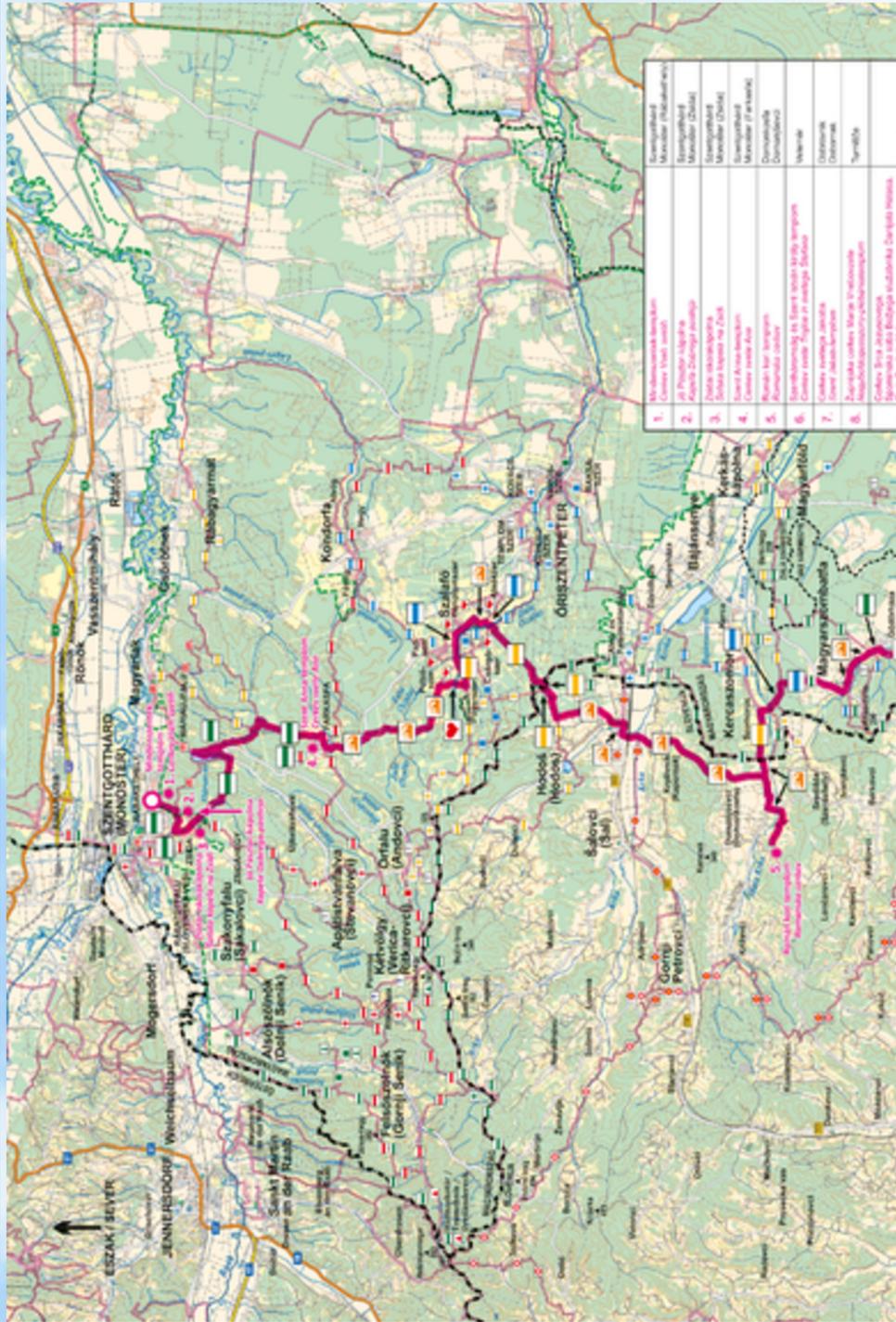
muraba



občina LENDAVA
LENDVA község



The Messages SIHU00012 project is financed by the European Regional Development Fund under the Slovenia-Hungary Interreg Programme.



Checklist

Before departing!

-  Personal documents: identity card, social security card, pilgrim passport
-  Cash and bank card
-  Charged mobile phone and charger/powerbank
-  Paper map or downloaded offline GPX files

-  Water bottle, drinking water
-  Food: sandwich, fruit, energy bar
-  Necessary medicines; allergy and insect bite treatments; tick/mosquito repellents
-  Glasses, contact lens case + solution
-  Hand sanitizer and/or wet wipes
-  Small first-aid kit (plasters, painkillers, disinfectant, elastic bandage, etc.)
-  Small repair kit (shoe cleaning cloth, sewing kit, tape, etc.)
Comfortable hiking shoes, spare socks
-  Weather-appropriate clothing: hat, rain jacket, layered
-  clothing

-  Sunglasses, sunscreen
-  Small torch or headlamp (for early starts, evening rests)

-  Notebook or pilgrim journal, writing instrument
-  prayer booklet, scripture quote, or personal spiritual guide