

*Despicis angustum praecisa rupe sepulchrum?  
hospitium Paulae est caelestia regna tenentis.  
fratrem, cognatos, Romam patriamque relinquens,  
divitias, subolem Bethlemitico conditur antro.  
hic praesepe tuum, Christe, atque hic mystica reges  
munera portantes hominique deoque dedere.<sup>65</sup>*

Vidíš tu těsnou do skály vytesanou hrobku?  
Toť útulek Pauly, dlící v království nebeském,  
jež opustila bratra, příbuzné, majetek i rodný Řím,  
aby spočinula v této betlémské jeskyni.  
Neb zde je tvůj žlab, Kriste, a králové  
nesoucí mystické dary člověku a bohu. (překlad Jiří Šubrt)

## Summary

### PEREGRINATIO PAULAE AD LOCA SANCTA IN ST. JEROME'S LETTER 108

In the fourth century A.D., crowds of Christian pilgrims began to stream into Palestine in order to visit the sites where biblical events had taken place. Among them was also a rich Roman widow, Paula, whose travels around the Holy Land are described in Jerome's *Letter 108*, written after the death of this noblewoman in 404 A.D. The aim of this letter is primarily encomiastic and hagiographic, and the account of the pilgrimage to holy places incorporated in it aids to create a picture of Paula as a devout woman shrouded in an aura of sanctity. This article is focussed both on the concept of pilgrimage to the Holy Land and the meaning of this phenomenon in the life of a devout Christian woman, as expressed by Jerome in his letter. First of all, for Jerome, Palestine represents a textual land where the traces of the biblical past are still visible, and first-hand experience with it therefore enhances one's understanding of the Scripture. At the same time, it is a region where biblical history unfolds before the eyes of the pilgrims, so long as they are gifted with the ability of *oculi fidei*. Thus, according to Jerome, journeying to the Holy Land has great importance for the Christian believer and benefits him extraordinarily both on the intellectual and the spiritual level. *Peregrinatio ad loca sancta*, for Jerome, is essential to those who consider

<sup>65</sup> Tamtéž, 108,33 (CSEL 55,350–351).

themselves to be serious about their faith, especially in the case of women. In this light, Paula appears as an exemplary pilgrim illustrating Jerome's concept, and demonstrating what it is like to experience the holy places first-hand. Jerome was the first Latin Christian thinker who presented the concept of the Holy Land as a spiritual centre of the Christian world and made an attempt to establish a new religious practice: pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Keywords: pilgrimage; Holy Land; Jerome; St. Paula of Rome

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