

FATHER FRANZ RETZ, GENERAL OF THE SOCIETY
OF JESUS, AND THE INTRODUCTION OF PENITENTIAL
MISSIONS IN THE BOHEMIAN LANDS

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The Prague-born Father Franz Retz (1673–1750), the 15th general of the Society of Jesus, was the order's only leader from Bohemia. The present article starts off with rendering, in a nutshell, Father Retz's descent and biography, which have received scant attention so far. The main focus is on the period immediately before Retz joined the Jesuit order, and his eventual career within its ranks. A second part describes Retz's successful attempts at introducing penitential missions in Bohemia from 1733 onwards. Special attention is devoted to the guidelines which Retz gave the missionaries, and to his correspondence with the Province of Bohemia of the Jesuit order and also with the missionaries. The missions themselves are described as to their programme, the scenario to which they unfolded, and their outcome. A documentary supplement carries reprints of Retz's eulogium, the rules Retz drew up for missionaries within the Province of Bohemia of the Society of Jesus and a description by Father Antonín Koniáš of the method of recollection as used in Prague.