

Church Law Society



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Celebration of St. John of Nepomuk on Charles Bridge in Prague on 15th May 2021. Photo by Ferdinand Peroutka.

Celebrations of 300th Anniversary of Beatification of John of Nepomuk

In mid-May, church and secular institutions in the Czech Republic celebrated the 300th anniversary of the beatification of the most famous Czech saint, St. John of Nepomuk, priest and martyr whose statues adorn hundreds of bridges in Europe and the Americas.

John of Nepomuk was born in Pomuk (Nepomuk) in southwestern Bohemia around 1345. He studied theology at Charles University in Prague and canon law at the University of Padua, where he became rector of Transalpine students and in 1387 obtained a doctorate in law. Upon his return, he became canon of the chapter in Prague at Vyšehrad and in 1389 Vicar General of the Prague Archbishop Jan of Jenštejn.

At that time, King Wenceslas IV, the son of the Roman emperor and King of Bohemia Charles IV, ruled in the Czech lands. Unlike his father, Wenceslas IV did not have diplomatic wisdom, he lived a personally unruly life and got into conflicts with the higher nobility and the Church.

In 1393, the King tried to interfere with the Church's powers by an attempt to create a new diocese on the property of the Benedictine monastery in Kladruba near Stříbro (western Bohemia) after the death of the abbot in order to weaken the Prague archbishopric. He intended to appoint one of his favourites to head the diocese. The rapid counteraction of Archbishop Jan of Jenštejn and his Vicar General John of Nepomuk, i.e., the canonical confirmation of the newly elected abbot, made it impossible though. The King's fierce reaction followed: the expulsion of the Archbishop, spiritually oriented man with a good reputation, from the country and the torture of his Vicar General, a great lawyer and a conscientious public official. The Vicar General died as a result of torture and beatings, and then his body was thrown into the Vltava River. It was found by fishermen less than a month later. Five star-like lights shone around John's head. Hence his stars among the attributes of this saint.

John of Nepomuk was beatified in 1721 and declared saint in 1729 by Pope Benedict XIII. Cult of St. John of Nepomuk gradually spread throughout the world, to which mainly the Dominican, Jesuit and Carmelite missions contributed. He is the patron saint of *lawyers, sailors, raftsmen, millers, confessors and bridges*, and for Catholics a symbol of *secrecy, courage and reliability*.

On the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the beatification of St. John of Nepomuk, on 16 May 2021, a solemn pilgrimage Mass was held in Nepomuk. Bohemian and Moravian bishops, Mons. Charles Daniel Balvo, Apostolic Nuncio in the Czech Republic, as well as members of the Institute of St. John of Nepomuk, representatives of Nepomuk athletes and other organizations and associations from Nepomuk. The Holy Mass was celebrated by Dominik Cardinal Duka, Archbishop of Prague and Primate of Bohemia.



We also commemorated the anniversary of the beatification in Prague, where *Navalis*, an old Baroque festival to St. John of Nepomuk, which is always celebrated on 15th May, on the eve of the feast, was restored in 2009. They are visited by a large number of people not only from the Czech Republic, but from all over the world. This year's celebration began at 5.30 pm by the *Mass* in the Cathedral of St. Vitus, Wenceslas and Adalbert at Prague Castle, which was presided by Archbishop Dominik Cardinal Duka of Prague. In his sermon, he emphasized the bravery of John of Nepomuk and reminded that this quality is also needed on the way out of the current coronavirus crisis.

This was followed by a *procession* on Charles Bridge on the Vltava River (pupils of the Elementary Art School in Veselí nad Moravou are pictured on the previous page) and ringing of church bells of all churches dedicated to St. John of Nepomuk. At exactly 7.30 pm, 300 bells rang all over the world symbolically. *It rang in Poland, Germany, Italy, Spain, Croatia, India, Australia, the USA, Brazil, and Cuba.* The event ended with an evening concert on the surface of the Vltava.



Prague, 15th May 2021: procession at the Navalis festival.

On Tuesday, 18th May, the *Prayer for the Homeland* took place in Nepomuk. The Mass was held in the church of St. John of Nepomuk by the Bishop of České Budějovice Vlastimil Kročil, with the participation of the Apostolic Nuncio, Bohemian and Moravian bishops, mayors of surrounding towns and villages and other guests.

The celebrations ended with the *World Pilgrimage to John of Nepomuk* held on 30th May in Nepomuk, with the participation of Bohemian, Moravian and foreign priests from the areas of the cult of John of Nepomuk.

Jakub Nagy

Photo: Ferdinand Peroutka, Anna Guthrie (Člověk a víra)

Member of Church Law Society Re-Elected Secretary General of Czech Bishops' Conference

At the plenary session of the Czech Bishops' Conference, which took place on 16–18th May 2021 in Nepomuk, *Revd ThLic. Ing. Stanislav Příbyl, Th.D., CSsR*, was elected its Secretary General for another five-year term.

Redemptorist Revd Stanislav Příbyl (born 1971) was ordained priest in 1996 after studying at the Catholic Theological Faculty of Charles University in Prague. He held the office of Provincial of the Czech Redemptorists and Vicar General of the Bishop of Litoměřice. Since 2011 he has been a member of the Church Law Society. In 2012, he obtained doctorate in theology from the Catholic Theological Faculty of Charles University and two years later doctorate in theology with a focus on canon law. He also studied economics.

The Czech Bishops' Conference consists of bishops of two archdioceses (Prague, Olomouc), six dioceses (Hradec Králové, Litoměřice, České Budějovice, Plzeň, Brno, Ostrava-Opava) of the Latin Rite, and an apostolic exarch standing at the head of the Greek Catholic Apostolic Exarchate in the Czech Republic and auxiliary bishops active in the Czech and Moravian dioceses.

Night of Churches for Thirteenth Time

On Friday, 28th May 2021, the 13th season of the popular event Night of Churches took place in the Czech Republic. More than 1,200 churches, chapels, and prayer houses of a larger number of churches took part and 4,600 programs were prepared. The purpose of the Night of Churches is to offer the public the opportunity to visit churches and prayer houses, get to know their cultural and spiritual value, but also get to know Christianity through music, fine arts, theatre performances, conversations, or meetings.

As in the past, this year's event was marked by restrictive measures. Many churches thus broadcast their program online. But despite the current restrictions, public interest was high. E.g., about 80,000 visitors were recorded in the Prague Archdiocese. The organizers prepared a new mobile application for this year's participants, which helped them plan their own schedule of visits from a wide range of programs.

The motto of this year's Night of Churches was the 20th verse of Psalm 104 (103): *You bring darkness and night falls, then all the animals of the forest wander about.* According to the organizers, the motto should express respect for the environment and humility towards all of God's Creation. It is to be a reminder that man is not the king of Creation, but a part of it. And that Creation, nature and life is a wonderful gift that we should manage with gratitude and humility.

Jakub Nagy

Academic Committee of Czech Christian Academy Hold Meeting

On Saturday, 5th June 2021 at 11 am, President of the Czech Christian Academy, Professor Tomáš Halík, laureate of the Templeton Prize, Honorary Doctor of the Oxford University, parish priest of the Prague Academic Parish and honorary member of the Church Law Society in Prague initiated the regular semi-annual meeting of the Czech Christian Academy.

Due to restrictive measures, the meeting was held in a combined form. President, Vice-presidents and Director were present at the seat of the Academy at the Benedictine Abbey of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Jerome and Slavonic Saints (Emmaus) in Prague–New Town. Directors of scientific sections and chairmen of local groups from all Bohemia and Moravia were present online.



Presidium of the Czech Christian Academy. President Professor Tomáš Halík sitting in the first row in the middle. Mrs Ilona Trnková, Director of the Academy, standing second from the left.

Photo: Czech Christian Academy

Professor Tomáš Halík read a report regarding activity of the Czech Christian Academy during the last half-year. The Czech Christian Academy is an association of 1,120 individual members of various confessions, five collective members and 67 local groups. It publishes the popular scientific picture magazine *Universum* with a circulation of 1,400 copies.

Director of the Legal Section Professor Jiří Rajmund Tretera presented a report concerning the section and the Church Law Society as a collective member.

Dr Zuzana Svobodová, Director of the Pedagogical Section, spoke about the importance of providing information about religion for primary and secondary school pupils.

In his concluding remarks, Professor Halík mentioned: “Our country is not atheistic, it is only religiously uneducated.” The coronavirus crisis has deepened interest in religious issues (“death looks over your shoulder”) and increased interest in various types of spirituality. Possible shocks and crises can strengthen all, even the current active members of the churches. He emphasized responsibility for society and the state, ecumenical cooperation, and wished all present God’s help and energy in overcoming the current health crisis.

Záboj Horák

Professor Jiří Rajmund Tretera Celebrates Birthday

Tomorrow, on 8th June 2021, the chairman of the Church Law Society, Professor Jiří Rajmund Tretera, celebrates his *81st birthday*.

We wish him good health, happiness, and God’s blessing.

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Photo on the front page: Celebration of St. John of Nepomuk on Charles Bridge in Prague on 15th May 2021. Photo by Ferdinand Peroutka.

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