

# CHURCH REPORTER

## 5/2022

Newsletter for the English speaking members and friends of the Church Law Society  
Prague – Brno – Olomouc – Stříbro – České Budějovice

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15<sup>th</sup> May 2022, Prague: Navalis celebrations on the Vltava River and a concert of baroque music and light spectacular in honor of the national patron of the Czech lands, St. John of Nepomuk.

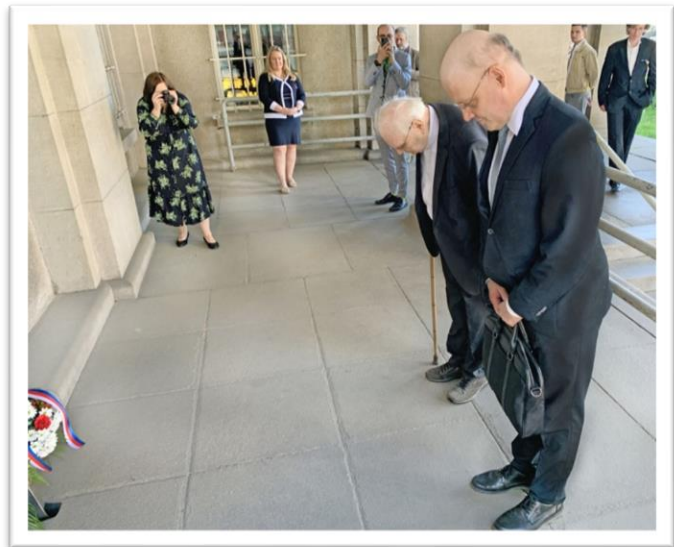
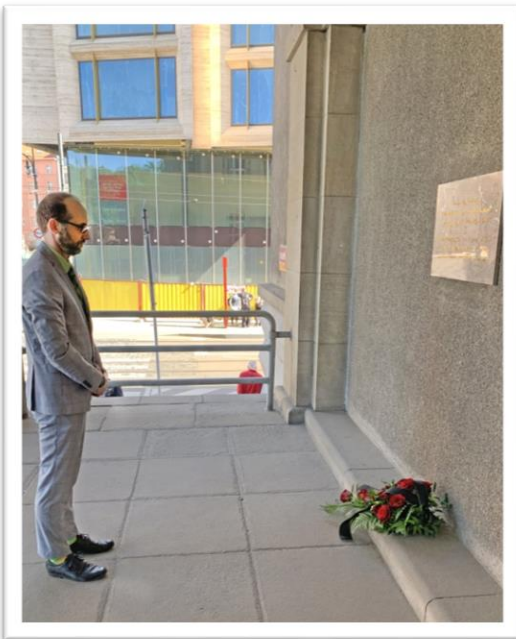
Photo Jakub Nagy

# The Memory of Veleslav Wahl, Law Student, Executed by Communist Regime in 1950

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, supported by the Soviet Union, came to power in a coup in February 1948. Before all in the first months and years of its totalitarian rule, it persecuted and assassinated its opponents.

In the first ten years of communist rule, hundreds of thousands of people were persecuted, imprisoned or sent to labour and concentration camps. Because of their political or religious beliefs, thousands of people were murdered, died or were killed during imprisonment. Russian “advisers” who taught their henchmen in Czechoslovakia, which was a satellite of the Soviet Union, planned the processes in advance and set judgments in the Communist Party’s committees prior to legal proceedings.

Three students of the Faculty of Law of Charles University laid down their lives as victims of communist totalitarianism: Karel Bacílek (1920–1949), Boris Kovaříček (1927–1949) and Veleslav Wahl (1922–1950). All three were sentenced to death in the political process for anti-state activities. We commemorated their memory at the Faculty of Law of Charles University on Sunday afternoon 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022.



*On the left, the Dean of the Faculty of Law, Professor Radim Boháč. On the right Professor Jiří Rajmund Tretera and Associate Professor Záboj Horák paying tribute to the memory of the executed students of the Faculty of Law.*

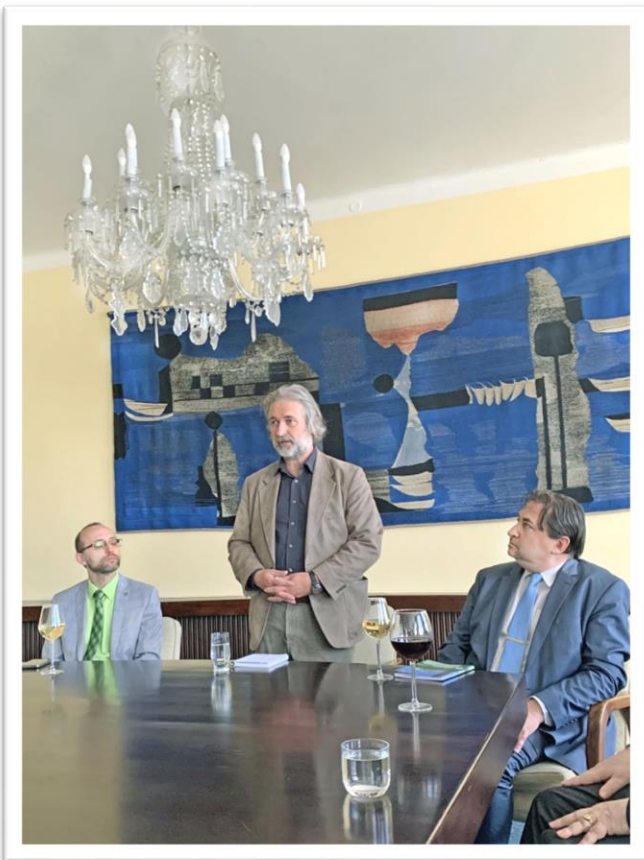
The reverence meeting was attended by teachers and students of the Faculty of Law of Charles University, representatives of student and academic associations: *Church Law Society*, *Prague Academic Club 48*, which brings together former students who actively opposed totalitarian power and were persecuted as well as current students who preserve the memory of communist crimes and defend freedom and democracy, *ELSA Prague*, the Prague section of European Law Students’ Association, and furthermore the *Czech Society for Ornithology*.

After the act of reverence and the laying of flowers at the memorial plaque on the building of the Faculty of Law of Charles University, the participants headed to the assembly hall.

First, the Dean of the Faculty Professor Boháč explained the whole tragedy of the event in detail and described the unfair process from the professional point of view of a law professor. He recalled the horrors currently taking place as a result of the Russian aggression in Ukraine and mentioned that the Ukrainian flags, which he had hung in the atrium of the faculty and on its roof, would not be removed.

Afterwards, *Dr Petr Voříšek* from the Czech Society for Ornithology made his speech. He introduced in detail the personality of one of the three executed students – *Veleslav Wahl*, who was a student at two faculties of Charles University: Faculty of Law and Faculty of Science. At his young age, he was not only an excellent lawyer, but he also excelled in his extraordinary knowledge in the field of ornithology, which he had been studying since childhood. To this day, ornithologists admire his 1944 work *Prague Birds: Birds of the City and Its Surroundings*, numbering over 250 pages, which he wrote in just 22 years of age. The book will be republished shortly.

A *legal point of view* of the work of *Veleslav Wahl* was presented by *Associate Professor Vojtěch Stejskal* from the Department of Environmental Law, Faculty of Law, Charles University. He praised *V. Wahl*'s extraordinary contribution to the protection of birds and his proposals for changes in legislation. Until then, the law had mainly a prohibitive nature (e.g. a ban on hunting, a ban on catching birds). According to *V. Wahl*, the laws have a duty to do something *positive* to protect birds and nature as a whole. The duty of public administration is also to provide *assistance and service the public*, not just prohibitions and orders.



*Faculty of Law, Charles University, Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022: a lecture by ornithologist Dr Petr Voříšek. On the left, the Dean of the Faculty, Professor Radim Boháč, on the right Associate Professor Vojtěch Stejskal from the Department of Environmental Law.*



In addition to Veleslav Wahl's expertise, both speakers also highlighted his moral principles and sense of justice. Wahl never got along with totalitarian regimes. He served both in the domestic anti-Nazi resistance and later as a member of the anti-communist resistance. This became fatal for him – on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1950, he was sentenced to death by a kangaroo court and subsequently executed.

After the contributions of Dr Voříšek and Associate Professor Stejskal participants were invited to an informal friendly discussion and a small feast. They spent almost two hours in stimulating conversations.

The conversation with ornithologists gave rise to a spontaneous idea: the lecture evening of the Church Law Society in the autumn of this year will be devoted to ecology. We can build on the very successful and well-attended 81<sup>st</sup> Evening Event *Ecology, Christianity and Law*, which took place at the Faculty of Law of Charles University on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

The emphasis on a positive attitude towards nature and man is highly topical today, especially in view of the gross violations of the law during the Russian aggression in Ukraine.



*From an informal and friendly discussion over coffee. From left Dr Petr Voříšek, Professor J. R. Tretera and Associate Professor Záboj Horák. In the background, representatives of the Prague Academic Club 48.*

*Text and photos Jakub Nagy*

# Navalis Festivities in Prague Successful Again

The same evening on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022, just a few hundred meters from the building of the Faculty of Law of Charles University, on Charles Bridge and in front of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in the Old Town of Prague, and right on the Vltava River, the celebration of Navalis peaked.

Navalis is an annual celebration and commemoration of one of the most famous Czech saints, the patron saint of the Czech lands, *St. John of Nepomuk*, Vicar General of the Archbishop of Prague and an excellent canonist. It is always celebrated on 15<sup>th</sup> May, on the eve of St. John of Nepomuk.

Let's recall that St. John of Nepomuk, same as the above-mentioned students of the Faculty of Law, was assassinated by state will. The reason was that John of Nepomuk firmly defended the ecclesiastical position of his archbishop John of Jenštejn against the King's unjustified interference in ecclesiastical affairs. It happened during the terrible torture in 1393, to which he was subjected to, at the command of the King Wenceslas IV.

The body of John of Nepomuk was subsequently thrown from the Charles Bridge into the Vltava River by the royal guard. We wrote more about the life of John of Nepomuk on the pages of this periodical last year, when the national celebrations of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beatification of John of Nepomuk took place.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> CHURCH REPORTER 6/2021, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021, <[http://spcp.prf.cuni.cz/CHURCH\\_REPORTER\\_2021.06.pdf](http://spcp.prf.cuni.cz/CHURCH_REPORTER_2021.06.pdf)>

This year's Navalis festivities began with the decoration and blessing of horses on Hradčanské náměstí (Hradčany Square) near the Prague Castle. This was followed by a solemn Mass in the Cathedral of St. Vitus, Wenceslas and Adalbert, celebrated by Dominican Cardinal Duka, and the Midsummer procession from Prague Castle to Charles Bridge and the Church of St. Francis of Assisi on Křižovnické náměstí (Crusaders Square) at the foot of Charles Bridge (pictured above).

The festivities ended with a parachute jump symbolizing 5 stars over the head of John of Nepomuk and a concert of baroque music on the Vltava under the Charles Bridge. Regattas from Croatia paced the river of Vltava all evening, and after dark every eye of the participants was pleased with the light spectaculum (see photo on the front page of this periodical).

*Text and photo Jakub Nagy*

## New Archbishop of Prague

On Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2022, Pope Francis appointed the 37<sup>th</sup> Archbishop of Prague and the 25<sup>th</sup> Primate of Bohemia *Mons. Jan Graubner*, chairman of the Czech Bishops' Conference, current Archbishop of Olomouc and Metropolitan of Moravia. Mons. Jan Graubner succeeded Cardinal Dominik Duka, O.P., who had been Archbishop of Prague and Czech Primate since 2010.



Mons. Graubner was born on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1948 in Brno, the historic capital of Moravia, the second largest city in the Czech Republic. He grew up in the town of Strážnice (southeast Moravia) as one of five siblings. He graduated from grammar school in 1967 and then worked for a year in the city of Zlín, the world-famous shoe industry centre Baťa, as a labourer in order to acquire a “working class” and increase his chances of being accepted to study theology.

In 1968 he was admitted to the seminary and to the branch of the Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, which was briefly restored in Olomouc at that time. He received ordination on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1973.

He worked as a chaplain in Zlín and Valašské Klobouky. From 1982 to 1990 he was a priest in Vizovice (all of southeast Moravia).

On 17<sup>th</sup> March 1990, he was appointed Titular Bishop of Tagari and Auxiliary Bishop of Olomouc. He chose the quote *Quod dixerit vobis, facite* (What he will tell you, do) as his episcopal motto. After the death of Archbishop František Vaňák in the summer of 1991, he took over the administration of the Archdiocese of



Olomouc as its administrator, and on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1992, he was appointed Archbishop of Olomouc.

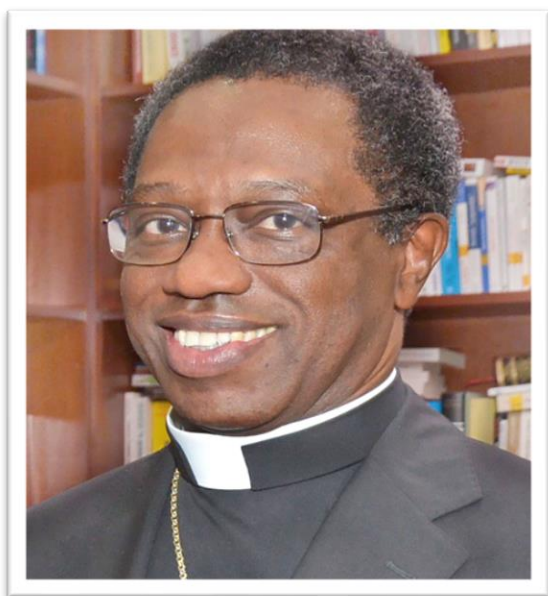
He focused on the restoration of the diocesan structure, founded a number of church schools and built a network of charities. He initiated the *Three Kings Collection*<sup>2</sup> and the *Days of People of Good Will*<sup>3</sup> in Velehrad (a municipality in South Moravia, symbolizing the capital of the Great Moravian Empire from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, now a monastery and church centre).

He engaged in the pastoral care of families, for which he established a *Centre for the Family* with a branch in each deanery (vicariate) of the archdiocese. He founded the pious association *Eucharistic Hour*. He devoted himself to the restoration of the pilgrimage sites of Velehrad and Svätý Hostýn (Jesuit centre, the site of the victory of Czech troops over the Tatars in 1241) and the development of the pilgrimage of firefighters, hunters, beekeepers and other professional groups, or deanery pilgrimages for family renewal and priestly professions. He initiated the *Honours of the Clergy* who perished in the concentration camps.

From 2000 to 2010, he was a chairman of the Czech Bishops' Conference, then vice-chairman and, since 2020, chairman again. At the same time, he is its delegate for charitable activities, missions and new evangelization.

Since 1999, he has been a member of the Board of Trustees of Palacký University in Olomouc, which he chaired for many years, and as Archbishop he was the Grand Chancellor of the Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology at Palacký University and a member of its Scientific Council.

## New Apostolic Nuncio in Prague



On Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022, the Holy See Press Centre announced that *Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo* was appointed new Apostolic nuncio to Czech Republic by Pope Francis. Archbishop Okolo, who has already served at the Prague nunciature in the past, will be the 6<sup>th</sup> Apostolic nuncio to the Czech Republic since 1990. He replaced the current nuncio, Archbishop Mons. Charles Daniel Balvo from the USA, today the Apostolic Nuncio to Australia.

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<sup>2</sup> The largest charity fundraiser in the Czech Republic. It continues the tradition of caroling on the Three Kings Day (i.e. 6<sup>th</sup> January). Thousands of volunteers take part in its course. The proceeds go to help people in need.

<sup>3</sup> Celebrations of the national holiday of the Day of the Slavonic Missionaries of Saints Cyril and Methodius, held since 2000 every year from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> July at the pilgrimage site of Velehrad in Moravia.

Archbishop Okolo was born on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1956 in Kano, Nigeria. He was ordained a priest on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1983. He joined the Holy See's diplomatic services in 1990 and served in the Apostolic Nunciature in Sri Lanka, Haiti, the Antilles, Switzerland, the Czech Republic (as secretary of the nunciature) and Australia.

In 2008, he was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to the Central African Republic and Chad. Five years later he was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to the Dominican Republic and Apostolic Delegate to Puerto Rico. From May 2017 to the present he was the Apostolic Nuncio in Ireland.

## From New Publications

COCCOPALMERIO, Francesco, *Sinodalità ecclesiale "a responsabilità limitata" o dal consultivo al deliberativo? A colloquio con padre Lorenzo Prezzi e nel ricordo del cardinale Carlo Maria Martini*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2021, 118 p., ISBN 978-88-266-0671-2.

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Photo on the front page: 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022, Prague: Naval celebrations on the Vltava River and a concert of baroque music and light spectacular in honor of the national patron of the Czech lands, St. John of Nepomuk. Photo Jakub Nagy

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