

# CHURCH REPORTER

## 10/2023

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

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English Version



28<sup>th</sup> September 2023: a view of Mariánské náměstí (Santa Maria Square) in Stará Boleslav, the centre of the celebrations of the Feast of Saint Wenceslas.

Photo Jakub Nagy

# We have celebrated the Feast of Saint Wenceslas

The twenty-eighth of September is a public holiday and a day of rest in the Czech Republic, when the whole nation commemorates Saint Wenceslas, the patron saint of the Czech lands. Many Holy Masses were celebrated and many pilgrimages took place throughout the country on this day. As usual, the main place of celebration was Stará Boleslav (Old Boleslav), a town just a few kilometres north-east of Prague, where Saint Wenceslas was murdered in 935. Again this year, a number of members of the Church Law Society took part in these celebrations.

## About Saint Wenceslas

Prince Saint Wenceslas was the son of Prince Vratislav I. He was probably born in the year 907 and was brought up by his grandmother Princess Saint Ludmila, Mother of Czech nation, in a spirit of Christian love and piety. Four years after her martyrdom in 921, Wenceslas took power. He strove decisively to raise the moral spirits of all the people, establish legal guarantees of life according to the Gospel, and eradicate the remnants of paganism among the customs of chieftains and subjects. In place of worshipping idols, to which a large part of the country's population still adhered, he introduced Christian worship. Wenceslas punished the chieftains of the people for their baseness; he corrected the social injustices that they committed. He cared for widows and orphans. He punished sexual debauchery, gluttony and drunkenness, and strove to abolish polygamy and the repudiation of women. This provoked the anger of the chieftains of the people and the followers of Wenceslas's brother Boleslav.



*The depiction of the murder of St. Wenceslas in the crypt of St. Wenceslas' Basilica in Stará Boleslav.*

*Photo Jakub Nagy*

We can imagine how they tried to get Boleslav, the prince's younger brother, to remove his brother and to take the throne in his place. Boleslav was evidently thirsting for power and was persuaded. He invited Wenceslas to make a pilgrimage to his fortress Boleslav to commemorate the memory of Saints Cosmas and Damian, to whom the church there was dedicated. The feast, which was held on Sunday, passed off peacefully. But, on the following morning on 28<sup>th</sup> September 935, when Wenceslas wanted to go to the church for the morning service, Boleslav attacked Wenceslas and tried to kill him with a sword without challenging him to a duel. However, Wenceslas was stronger and defended himself, even letting his brother live, although he had the right to kill him in self-defence. He then fled to the church seeking sanctuary. There, when he was already holding the ring of the church door, he was murdered by three of Boleslav's henchmen.

Boleslav (935–972) ascended the throne, but soon repented. He regretted his actions and in the third year had his brother's body carried to Prague Castle and buried in St. Vitus church. Thus, he founded the thousand-year cult of Saint Wenceslas. Prince Wenceslas I is called the "heir" of the Czech lands and its permanent protector. The crown with which Czech monarchs are crowned belongs to him. The Czech lands of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, which today make up the Czech Republic, are called the lands of the Crown of Saint Wenceslas.

*Editors*

## From the Saint Wenceslas celebrations in Stará Boleslav



On the eve of the celebrations, on Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the relics of Saint Wenceslas were transported from Prague to Stará Boleslav. Immediately upon their arrival, there was a prayer for the nation, a Saint Wenceslas concert and vespers in the local Basilica of St. Wenceslas.

On Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> September, a Holy Mass was held in the early hours of the morning at the tomb of Saint Wenceslas in the Cathedral of Saints Vitus, Wenceslas and Adalbert in Prague and at the same time there was a morning prayer in St. Wenceslas' Basilica in Stará Boleslav, which was followed at 7.30 and 8.30 by the celebration of several Holy Masses in the same basilica. The main celebration on the feast day was the pilgrimage Holy Mass at square Mariánské náměstí

*Pilgrims in St. Wenceslas' Basilica in Stará Boleslav.*

in Stará Boleslav, celebrated by Cardinal Dominik Duka OP, Archbishop Emeritus of Prague, as the main celebrant from 10 o'clock. The spiritual programme continued with prayers for the nation at the Palladium of Bohemia in the Church of the Ascension of the Virgin Mary in Stará Boleslav and was concluded with the departure of the relics of Saint Wenceslas for Prague Castle at 5 o'clock in the afternoon.



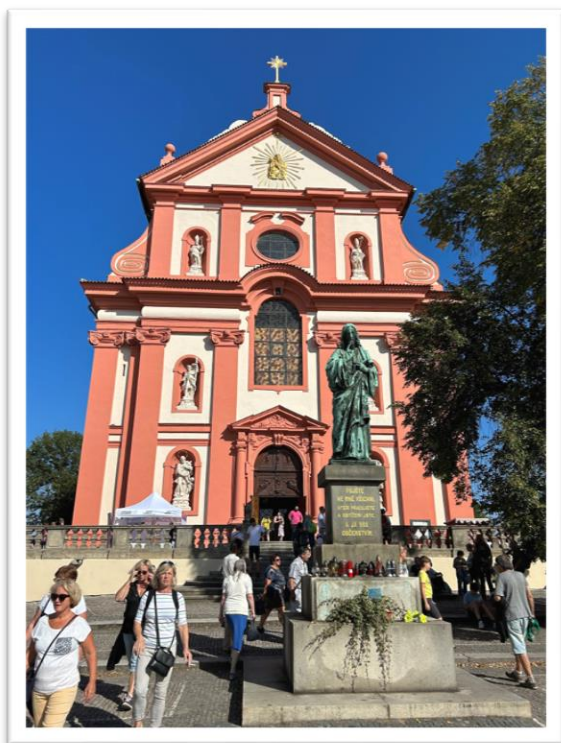
*The reliquary bust of Saint Wenceslas in St. Wenceslas' Basilica in Stará Boleslav.*

Throughout the day, pilgrims could visit both St. Wenceslas' Basilica, at whose door Saint Wenceslas was murdered, and the Church of the Ascension of the Virgin Mary, which houses a Gothic metal relief of the Madonna and Child, known as the Palladium of Bohemia (pictured below). Both churches, which are among the most important pilgrimage sites in the Czech lands, have recently been beautifully renovated.

In the grounds of St. Wenceslas' Basilica there was a whole-day programme in the form of a Saint Wenceslas market with craft demonstrations. It was also possible to purchase books by leading Czech and foreign theologians and historians. The publications on offer also included books on church law written by members of the Church Law Society.

A varied cultural programme had also been prepared: a mediaeval Saint Wenceslas fair, a mediaeval battlefield, a demonstration of birds of prey, workshops for children, craft demonstrations, stalls selling refreshments and products, etc. Also, throughout the afternoon there were theatre and musical performances on two podiums on Mariánské náměstí in the centre of Stará Boleslav.

The festive day ended with a Saint Wenceslas parade and fireworks.



*The exterior and interior of the pilgrimage Church of the Ascension of the Virgin Mary in Stará Boleslav. The inscription under Jesus Christ statue on the Santa Maria Square: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11, 28)*

*Text and photos Jakub Nagy*

## From New Publications

AUGUSTIN, Bernhard, REES, Wilhelm, *Ehe und Familie. Orientierung in bewegter Zeit*, Innsbruck University Press, Universität Innsbruck, 2023, 388 pp., ISBN 978-3-99106-099-4.

The contents include:

PŘIBYL, Stanislav, *Johannes Paul II. über Ehe und Familie*, pp. 129–146.

ORZESZYNA, Krzysztof, SKWARZYŃSKI, Michał, TABASZEWSKI, Robert, *International Human Rights Law*, C.H. Beck, Warszawa, 2023, 417 pp., ISBN 978-83-8291-182-4.

MIRAS, Jorge, CANOSA, Javier, BAURA, Eduardo, *Compendio di diritto amministrativo canonico*, Terza edizione aggiornata, Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, Facoltà di Diritto Canonico, Roma, 2023, 462 pp., ISBN 979-12-5482-168-8.

PIRSON, Dietrich, RÜFNER, Wolfgang, GERMANN, Michael, MUCKEL, Stefan, *Handbuch des Staatskirchenrechts der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Dritte, grundlegend neubearbeitete Auflage, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin, 2020, ISBN 978-3-428-18135-3.



*Maja tulips (Tulipa Maja) in Průhonice Dendrological Park near Prague.*

*Photo Záboj Horák*

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Photo on the front page: 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023, a view of Mariánské náměstí in Stará Boleslav, the centre of the celebrations of the Feast of Saint Wenceslas.

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