

CHURCH REPORTER

11/2023

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

15th November 2023 | Volume 8
English version



9th November 2023, Holy Mass for students and graduates of Prague's Faculty of Law in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in the Old Town of Prague, at the foot of Charles Bridge.

Photo Jakub Nagy



Pastoral Care of Lawyers in Prague

Holy Masses for lawyers renewed

At 5 o'clock in the afternoon on Thursday, 9th November 2023, a meeting of students and graduates of Prague's Faculty of Law took place at a Mass in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, the church of the monastery of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star, which is in the Old Town of Prague, on Křižovnické náměstí (Square of the Knights of the Cross), at the foot of Charles Bridge. The meeting followed on from the successful gatherings in the past, which in previous years (from 2016) took place in various churches in Prague, most recently in the Church of St. Anthony of Padua in Prague–Holešovice in the summer of 2022.



The main celebrant of the Mass was *Professor Jiří Rajmund Tretera OP*, who also delivered the homily. Alongside him, the solemn Mass was celebrated by *Mons. PhDr. JCLic. Milan Hanuš*, cathedral priest, resident canon of the Metropolitan Chapter of St. Vitus in Prague, dean of the Collegiate Chapter of All Saints at Prague Castle, judge at the Metropolitan Ecclesiastical Court of the Archdiocese of Prague and chaplain working in the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament, and *Mgr. et Mgr. ICLic. David Kučerka O.Cr.*, administrator at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Prague's Old Town and priest of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star. All three are distinguished members of the Church Law Society.

The Mass was attended by around two dozen students and graduates of Charles University's Faculty of Law and many others.

*9th November 2023, the Church of St. Francis of Assisi:
Professor J. R. Tretera OP delivers the sermon.*

The Mass was followed by an informal gathering in the refectory of the monastery of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star, during which those present briefly introduced themselves to each other. They then chatted in a friendly atmosphere and with refreshments provided, until eight o'clock in the evening. And marvellous view on the Prague Castle.

Holy Masses for law students and graduates will be held **regularly on the first Thursday of each month at the same place**. The next meeting is planned for Thursday, 7th December 2023 at 5 p.m.



The start of the informal gathering in the refectory of the monastery of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star.



Some of the students during the friendly meeting after the Mass.

Text and photo Jakub Nagy

The homily delivered by Professor Jiří Rajmund

Tretera OP on 9th November 2023

Brothers and Sisters, Dear Friends!

Today, we celebrate with the whole Church a great feast: the Feast of the Consecration of the oldest church in Rome, the Archbasilica of the Most Holy Saviour and of Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist in the Lateran. It is the Holy Father's own church and the cathedral of the Diocese of Rome. Among the main churches of Rome it stands first as a major basilica.

As the inscription on its magnificent façade proclaims to the world, it is the Mother and Head of all the churches of the City, meaning Rome, and of the whole world. However, this church, built on the Roman site known as the Lateran, was until the 14th century also the seat of the Pope and the site of many ecumenical councils. And today the seat of the papal vicar for the City of Rome is in the Lateran Palace opposite the church.

Behind the church is the building of part of newly founded Pontifical Lateran University, an important part of which is the Institutum Utriusque Iuris. The Institutum consists of the two Faculties: Faculty of Canon Law and Faculty of Civil Law. I hope it is not too presumptuous to say that perhaps we can also consider the Lateran University the Mother of all canonists and church lawyers around the world. How many eminent contemporary canonists, in our country too, have a degree from this university!

However, we are celebrating today's feast not only to honour the mother church of all Catholic churches throughout the world, which is of course one of the destinations of all our pilgrimages to the Holy City of Rome, but also to honour all our churches and chapels to the last town and village in the Bohemian, Moravian and Silesian lands. From there, the living water of God's Word flows out into the world, as it did from the Temple in Jerusalem in the vision of the prophet Ezekiel in the Babylonian captivity in the 6th century B.C., as we have just read. Moreover, all our towns and villages and their inhabitants are sanctified by the presence of the Body of the Saviour of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ, in these churches and chapels. Whether it be a permanent presence, by placing the Body of the Lord in the tabernacle or an occasional presence, perhaps only even the occasional celebration of Mass, for example, once a month. Therefore, let us take care of our churches and not deliver them into secular hands or allow them to be demolished.

In my memoirs I often attest that for me the first impulse to accept the faith sometime in my fifteenth year of life, in 1955, was not people, but Catholic churches! It was the sight of them, the stones that call all people to open themselves to salvation, which made such an impression on me. The stones of the church speak, they affect even those that the human word cannot reach. However, in the Old Testament we read several times that the stones will speak even when the human voice is silent.

And the prayerful walls of the churches emit invisible rays that spring from the faith of our ancestors who prayed there. The paintings, statues and inscriptions in our churches, these are the transcription of God's Word from the testimony of the Bible, of the Holy Scripture, of true faith and also of the offer of salvation for all people.

On the Feast of the Consecration of our churches, of which we have several a year on the calendar, we commemorate not only the consecration of our stone churches, the dwellings of God, but also the temples of God within ourselves. Paul the Apostle, in his First Letter to the Corinthians and repeatedly in several other epistles, declares that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

We also read in a sermon by Saint Caesarius, Bishop of Arles in southeast France, delivered in the early 6th century, and many of us have read it today in the Office of Readings in the Liturgy of the Hours:

“It is with great joy that we celebrate today, dearest brothers, the anniversary of the consecration of the Lateran Church. We are to be the true and living temple of God. Yet nevertheless, all Christians rightly and gratefully celebrate the anniversary of the mother church of the Faith, knowing that they have been spiritually reborn in her. For when we were first born, we were worthy of God’s wrath: but the second birth has made us vessels of mercy.”

Why, we ask, does the holy bishop say that we are worthy of God’s wrath after our first birth? Well, we know that everyone is born tainted by the sin of Adam, by the pride that separates everyone from God and from people. For that pride comes from the fallen angel, the devil, who before his deposition from heaven cried out, I will not serve! The sin of original pride predisposes everyone to continue in sin unless they can be saved by being born again in the faith that Jesus Christ himself, the Savior of the world, offers in His sacrifice for the sin of the world.

Let us continue reading Caesarius’ sermon:

“The first time we were born to die, the second birth called us again to live. ... if we reflect carefully on the salvation of our souls, we find that we are the true and living temple of God. God not only dwells in the churches built by human hands, but above all in the soul, created as the image of God by the hands of the Creator ...

... we must not destroy in ourselves the living temples of God by evil deeds. Whenever we come to church, let us prepare our souls to be what we want the church to be. Do you want the basilica to shine with purity? Do not stain your soul with the filth of sin. Do you want the basilica to be full of light? God also wants your soul not to be dark, but to become what the Lord says: that the light of good works may shine in us, and that He who is in heaven may be glorified thereby.”

That is why our Lord at the beginning of His public ministry expelled the money-changers and the sellers of sacrificial animals from the outer courtyard of the Temple, as we read in the second chapter of the Holy Gospel according to John the Apostle. He did this before the first Passover at the time of His first ministry, i.e. in the 15th year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius or, as we read in the objections of the Jewish leaders, in the 46th year after the start of the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, so probably in the spring of AD 28. He places the story, which was witnessed by so many people, including readers of John’s Gospel, at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, which is certainly more accurate than the Synoptic Evangelists, who place it in the last phase of that ministry.

We, too, must first of all purify our hearts and with God’s help remove the dirt and filth of all sin, even expelling false and superficial piety.

It is clear from the Gospel passage we have read that the comparison between the temple and our body does not come from Saint Paul, even though he was extremely emphatic about it.

But it comes from our Saviour himself, who compared the temple to His body: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again”. On Good Friday, he was murdered on the Cross by the wickedness of the world. But on the Sunday morning, the third day, he rose gloriously from the dead, as we often contemplate in the appropriate title of the sacred rosary.

In the days ahead in our lives, let us devote our attention both to our churches and also to our own hearts. May the Lord help us in this.



Czech Christian Academy

Mons. Tomáš Halík decorated by the President of the Czech Republic

On 28th October 2023, the anniversary of the founding of independent Czechoslovakia (1918), *Mons. Prof. Tomáš Halík*, Templeton Prize winner and president of the Czech Christian Academy, received the *Order of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, class I*, a high state decoration, from the hands of the President of the Czech Republic, Petr Pavel.

Here is a short interview that Mons. Halík gave to the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, where he is a professor of sociology:

On 28th October, the President of the Czech Republic will bestow on you the Order of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, class I. What does the first Czechoslovak president mean to you?

For me, he is an example of a public intellectual who combined scientific work with public action, with the practical reform of society. I particularly admire his courage to stand up to the majority opinion, prejudices and national myths in the Czech environment – for example, in the “dispute over the Manuscripts” or in the Hilsner affair. I appreciate the European dimension of his thinking, his support for the unification of Europe.

Are you currently working on any publication or larger project? Maybe something personal to you? What will you be spending your time on in the near future?

I am involved in several international research projects, one of them focusing on the changing relationship between believers and non-believers (it seems that these categories have become obsolete, as they are fading in favour of “spiritual seekers”), another on the political abuse of religion in post-communist countries, and we are preparing a third concerning the methodology of “reading the signs of the time”, a deeper spiritual interpretation of key events in society and culture. I am writing a follow-up to my book *The Afternoon of Christianity*, which has been

a great success internationally and has been translated into a number of languages. I am also undertaking intensive lecture tours – this year I have been in several places in South Korea, early next year I will be in New Zealand and Australia, then in several European cities and probably in the USA. In addition to that, I intend to continue teaching for a while at the Faculty of Arts. I run a very lively academic parish at St. Salvator Church in Old Town of Prague, where each year we prepare several dozen adults for baptism, I am the head of the Czech Christian Academy and serve on the academic boards of several foreign universities. I don't get bored.

You have received many awards for your human rights advocacy, interfaith dialogues, scholarly work and more. Is there one that you particularly value? And why?

In my old age, I really have received many awards in recent years, especially foreign awards, so I jokingly say that if I hung them all on my jacket, it would look embarrassing, as though I were a Soviet general. Of the state awards, I appreciate the Cross of the Order of Merit from the presidents of Poland and Germany, and of the academic ones, an honorary doctorate from Oxford University, because only three Czechs had received one before me, presidents Masaryk, Beneš and Havel. The most prestigious, however, is the Templeton Prize, sometimes called the “Nobel Prize for Spirituality”. In establishing this prize, first awarded at Buckingham Palace by the Queen's husband, the philanthropist Sir John Templeton was responding to the fact that the Nobel Prize is awarded for achievements in the sciences, literature and peace but neglects the equally important area of spirituality. That I have also received awards from the Vatican, especially my appointment as an honorary papal prelate, is for me in particular a kind of protection against the constant attacks of a certain section of Czech Catholics. I am glad that all these awards have come to me at an older age. The older a person is, the more he realises that his true worth does not depend at all on such awards.

In your opinion, what are the challenges facing the humanities today?

I often repeat the bon mot that the humanities are ballast – and that the word ballast refers to what you put in a boat to stop it from capsizing. What is seemingly not useful is in actual fact absolutely essential for the health and safety of society. A thorough diagnosis of the spiritual and moral climate is needed today because a free society depends on this environment for its survival. So, the challenge is what Pope Francis calls “integral society”.

In Europe and elsewhere, instability and insecurity in society are on the rise, with radicalisation on both political spectrums and also today's military conflicts. Would you say that the tension in society will continue to rise. Aren't we just tilting at windmills?

Unfortunately, all the signs are that tension will rise. The fight against populism and demagoguery, against human stupidity and malice cannot be won definitively, but we must never give up.

At the moment, as well as the conflict in Ukraine, the Czech public is also closely following the current conflict in the Middle East. How do you view them? Do you believe that there is any non-violent solution to them?

If I knew the answer to your question, I would be a candidate for the Nobel Prize, but I do not have any more space in my cupboard for that award.

When you are not working, what do you do in these relatively busy times and what do you enjoy?

I have adopted the motto of the Benedictine Order “Pray and work!” and gradually these two dimensions of life have merged into one for me. In the remaining time I just sleep, which I enjoy very much. But I am convinced that my best thoughts come to me above all in my dreams or in that state between sleep and wakefulness. Just today I was writing a chapter about that for my forthcoming book.



Karel Schwarzenberg is no longer among the living

It was with great sadness that we heard the news that Prince Karel Schwarzenberg, the “kindest politician in the Czech Republic”, had died on Saturday, 12th November 2023. He was the chancellor to President Václav Havel, Czech foreign minister and member of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, forester and innkeeper. In the presidential election in 2013 he finished in second place with 45 percent of the vote. Of the largest Czech cities, he won an absolute majority of the votes in Prague, Brno, České Budějovice and Liberec.

During a short commemorative celebration in the leadership of the Church Law Society we listened to Jiří Rajmund Tretera’s recollection of several occasions on which he had met Karel Schwarzenberg at lunches in the refectory of the Dominican Monastery in Prague and during the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Church Law Society, which Karel Schwarzenberg honoured with his presence.

Záboj Horák



Václav Havel and Karel Schwarzenberg in 1990.

Photograph: volimkarla.cz

Against anti-Semitism

The leadership of the Church Law Society has expressed its outrage at the attack on Israel by hordes of Arab aggressors on 7th October 2023. In letters written to the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic and the Fellowship of Christians and Jews, of which many of us are members, we have expressed our sympathy and support for the Jewish state, and thus to all members of the Jewish religion throughout the world, attacked in this new and perhaps hardest way possible.

We are dismayed to see how a wave of anti-Semitic filth and hatred has risen across Europe. In this country, too. Therefore, we support all measures taken by the Czech authorities against the latest manifestations of anti-Semitism. In the interest of humanity, they need to be stamped out early.

Jiří Rajmund Tretera, Záboj Horák

Invitation to a seminar on the crimes of the Communist “courts”

On 27th November 2023, a seminar entitled *The Still Living Past ... The Josef Pták Case in a Broader Context* will take place in the Senate of the Czech Parliament under the auspices of the chairman of the Constitutional Law Committee. The seminar is being organised by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (ÚSTR) and is dedicated to crimes of communist “justice” in general and specifically the case of Josef Pták, a peasant unjustly executed during the third Czech insurgency, this time anti-communist (the first insurgency took place in 1914–1918, the second one in 1939–1945, the third one started in 1948 and finished in 1989).

At its heart is the case of a hardworking and honest villager who owned just over 4 hectares of land but was denounced as a kulak. Subsequently, in 1958, in an artificially contrived court case he was sentenced to death alongside two other victims of a trial held in a theatre in Kutná Hora (central Bohemia) for their alleged involvement in the killing of a local female Communist official in 1952, despite the fact that he had nothing to do with the killing. The official in question had forced peasants into a cooperative farm in style of Soviet kolkhoz in a small village in central Bohemia.

Conference programme:

9.00 – 9.45 – registration of speakers and participants

9.45 – opening remarks by the organisers (representatives of the Senate and ÚSTR)

10.00 – 11.30 first part: **Law and justice in Communist Czechoslovakia**

- Prof. JUDr. Zdeněk Kühn, Ph.D., LL.M: *The Communist takeover of the judiciary in the late 1940s*

- JUDr. Kamil Nedvědický, 1st Deputy Director of ÚSTR: *Class justice*

- Mgr. Tereza Blažková, Ph.D.: *Advocacy and notary public in Communist Czechoslovakia*

11.30 – 12.00 discussion

12.00 – 13.00 lunch break

13.00 – 14.30 second part: **The Josef Pták case not only in a historical context**

- Mgr. Martin Tichý

- PhDr. Aleš Kýr

- Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Marek Preiss, Ph.D.

14.30 – 15.00 discussion and short break

15.00 – 16.30 third part: **The review of political trials and the rehabilitation of their victims**

- Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Jaroslav Rokoský, Ph.D.

- JUDr. Lubomír Müller

- PhDr. Alena Šimánková

16.30 – 17.00 discussion and closing remarks

Compiled by JUDr. Zábaj Horák according to the report from JUDr. Kamil Nedvědický, 1st Deputy Director of ÚSTR

From New Publications

L'année Canonique, Tome LXIII – Juin 2023, La Société Internationale de Droit Canonique et de Législations religieuses comparées, publié avec la collaboration de la Faculté de Droit Canonique de Paris, Letouzey et Ané, Paris, 2023, ISSN 0570-1953,

from the contents:

ÉCHAPPÉ, Olivier, *Les personnes vulnérables en droit français*, pp. 7–21,

GONÇALVES, Bruno, *Quelques réflexions autour de la notion de personne vulnérable en droit pénal canonique*, pp. 23–40,

TOXÉ, Philippe, *La prescription dans le nouveau droit pénal canonique*, pp. 129–145,

BORRAS, Alphonse, *Éléments canoniques et pastoraux pour un discernement dans la mise en oeuvre du motu proprio Spiritus Domini*, pp. 167–185,

VALDRINI, Patrick, *Quarante ans de promulgation du code latin de droit canonique. Une évolution vers une plus grande rationabilitas?*, pp. 187–199.

Church Reporter – Newsletter for the English-speaking members and friends of the Church Law Society, Prague – Brno – Olomouc – Stříbro – České Budějovice, published by Church Law Society, Sudoměřská 25, 130 00 Praha 3, CZ.

Photo on the front page: 9th November 2023, Holy Mass for students and graduates of Prague's Faculty of Law in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in the Old Town of Prague, at the foot of Charles Bridge.

Photo Jakub Nagy

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Available at: sccp.prf.cuni.cz/newsletter. Published monthly.

E-mail: sccp@prf.cuni.cz

ISSN 2695-012X