

CHURCH REPORTER

3/2025

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

29th March 2025 | Volume 10 | English version



18th March 2025: discussion among the speakers at the Essen Talks on State and Church Relations, an international conference on religion law in Mülheim an der Ruhr.

Photo Zábaj Horák



Local group in Prague

We are looking for an editor for our magazines Mšeno Parish News, Church Mirror and Church Reporter

Our scientific, peer-reviewed quarterly, the Church Law Review, is well equipped in terms of the manpower to perform the editorship of this prestigious Czech-Slovak-English journal. But our three popular illustrated monthly magazines have no one to look after them.

With these magazines, everything is in the hands of the editor-in-chief, his assistant and the technical editor. Like the Review, there is also a need for an executive editor to arrange the articles and photos and captions for the photos and to come up with the occasional short text or headline. All it needs is a modicum of love for visual expression and printed text and a little computer experience. We can guarantee a lot of enjoyment in the work and a reasonable remuneration.

Send an e-mail to: spcp@prf.cuni.cz

Church Law Society

A Catholic priest a member of the Czech Radio Council

On 9th March 2025, R. D. Zbigniew Czendlik, parish priest in Lanškroun (eastern Bohemia), was elected as a member of the Czech Radio Council. He is the first person ever to be elected to the Council by the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic.



6th March 2025, the refectory at the Knights of the Cross: Zábaj Horák received a cake to celebrate his fiftieth birthday.



Categorical pastoral care discussed in Mülheim an der Ruhr

It seems that categorical pastoral care is becoming a hit. It was not only the subject of the Fifth Prague Dialogues on Church and State Relations, which was held in the Charles University Faculty of Law on 11th–16th June 2024, but also of the 60th Essen Talks on State and Church Relations in Mülheim an der Ruhr. As is traditional, this conference met on 16th–18th March 2025 under the leadership of the trio consisting of the Bishop of Essen, Dr. Franz-Josef Overbeck, the director of Die Wolfsburg Catholic Academy in Mülheim an der Ruhr, Dr. Judith Wolf, and the moderator, Prof. Arnd Uhle of Leipzig University.

The conference was attended by nearly 100 representatives of religion law scholarship from universities, Protestant and Catholic church authorities, and governmental and judicial institutions from all the states of the Federal Republic of Germany, some representatives from Austria and one representative from the Czech Republic.

The author of these lines was delighted that the speakers probably most often mentioned the name of Prof. Tomáš Halík, the “Prague theologian”, who has discussed in detail the topic of categorical pastoral care in his books and several times in the past has lectured for the German audience at Die Wolfsburg Academy.

During the conference, lectures were given by experts from the fields of sociology and theology, and in particular from various legal disciplines.

In the afternoon on Monday 17th March, *Prof. Clemens Albrecht*, professor of sociology at the University of Bonn, gave a lecture. He mentioned that the founders of sociology, in their enthusiasm, believed that religion, serving to integrate society, would be replaced by sociology. But their expectations were not met. On the contrary: most sociologists of religion are unanimous in believing that religion is irreplaceable.

Religion and the Church have something that other institutions lack, namely *rituals*. These can overcome extreme situations, such as mass disasters; in intervention teams, in which church representatives participate, they provide help with pastoral care when accidents occur (Unfallseelsorge).

Religion can help to overcome impossible situations (such as the loss of a loved one), by expressing solidarity, sympathy and with the help of rituals (worship).

The clergy is also regularly involved in giving notification of death. They respect the person as a unity of body and soul; they work with other members of society.

Another of the speakers was *Bernd Hillebrand*, a professor of pastoral theology at Graz University.

As both speakers emphasised, an important part of the ministry of religious communities is the ministry of presence (Dasein in German).

Under German constitutional law, the provision of pastoral care in public institutions must be free of any pressure; from the Czech point of view, this is obvious.

Another speaker was *Prof. Michael Germann* from Halle University, who discussed the constitutional law covering categorical pastoral care. The fundamental norm is Article 140 of

the Basic Law in conjunction with Article 141 of the Weimar Constitution, which states, “if there is need for religious services and pastoral care in the armed forces, in hospitals, prisons or other public institutions, religious societies are permitted to perform religious acts, while refraining from any coercion.”

Franz-Josef Overbeck, the Diocesan Bishop of Essen, who is also the Catholic Bishop of the German Armed Forces (Militärbischof), spoke about military pastoral care. The German Armed Forces have Protestant, Catholic and Jewish chaplains, and pastoral care is very popular among soldiers, regardless of religion or no religion. Ecumenical openness is high.

Tuesday 18th March was devoted to the legal regulation of other areas of categorical pastoral care. *Prof. Markus Heintzen* from Berlin spoke about pastoral care in the Police Force, *Prof. Stephan Rixen* from Cologne about hospital pastoral care and *Prof. Jörg Kinzig*, a professor of criminal law and criminology at Tübingen University, spoke in his humorous contribution about pastoral care in the prison system.

The final speaker at the conference was *Prof. Henning Radtke*, a judge at the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe and a specialist on criminal law. He highlighted the importance of the criminal law protection of the seal of the confessional and similar secrets, which is related to the protection of religious freedom and human dignity (Article 4 (1) and Article 2 of the Basic Law).

Záboj Horák



**Local group
Mšeno Skalička**

We are looking for a housekeeper for our house in Mšeno

We are looking for a man/woman to help two users with the care of a well-appointed, two-storey house in Mšeno u Mělníka. This would involve the regular cleaning of five rooms, a kitchen, bathrooms and corridors and help with cooking and washing up. A total of about 20 hours a week, or at least 10 hours a week. Fair treatment and remuneration. Please call on mobile no. 737 478 444.



The Roman Consortium for Canon Law invites you to the XVIIIth International Congress of Canon Law in Brazil

The XVIIIth International Congress of Canon Law, entitled **Human Dignity and the Rights of the Faithful**, will be held in Rio de Janeiro from 22nd to 26th September 2025.

The thematic areas, into which the conference's work will be divided, are:

- a) human dignity and the rights of the faithful: fundamental issues;
- b) the rights of the faithful and the power of the government;
- c) the dignity of the faithful and criminal sanctions.

You can submit the proposed title and corresponding abstract (1500 characters) of your paper by 31st March 2025 to: info@consociatio.org.

*Consociatio Internationalis Studio Iuris Canonici Promovendo,
Committee*

From new literature

BROEKE, Leon van den, PAHUD DE MORTANGES, René (eds.), *Comparative Reformed Church Polity, Similarities and Differences*, Summum Academic Publications, Kampen, 2024, 216 pp., ISBN 978-9-49270-156-5,

From the contents:

BROEKE, Leon van den, *The Nature of the Notions of Church, State, and Church Polity in the Calvinistic tradition compared to the Lutheran, Zwinglian, and Bucerian Concepts*, pp. 11–29,

PAHUD DE MORTANGES, René, *Reformed Church Law in Switzerland*, pp. 31–52,

CSUKÁS, Adam, *The Church Polity of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren in the Twenty-first Century*, pp. 53–75,

DE WALL, Heinrich, *Reformed Church law in Germany*, pp. 77–93,

MAASTRICHT, Matthew J. van, *The Polity Foundations of the Reformed Church in America*, pp. 95–116,

DIJKSTRA, Auke, *Reformed Church Polity in the Netherlands: New Topics, Old Questions*, pp. 117–138,

SMIT, Johannes, *Reformed Church Law in South Africa*, pp. 139–168,

BERKMANN, Burkhard J., *Roman Catholic Church Polity: Elements for comparison*, pp. 169–198,

PAHUD DE MORTANGES, René, BROEKE, Leon van den, *Similarities and differences between Reformed church laws*, pp. 199–203.



16th March 2025: flowering snowbells in the garden at the Horák Residence in Mšeno.

Photo Záboj Horák

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

Photo on the front page: 18th March 2025, discussion among the speakers at the Essen Talks on Church and State Relations, an international conference on religion law in Mülheim an der Ruhr.

Photo Záboj Horák

Editor-in-chief:	Rev. Jiří Rajmund Tretera OP
Deputy editor-in-chief:	Záboj Horák
Executive editor:	vacat
Technical editor:	Tomáš Grundza
Layout:	Marek Novák
English translation:	Gareth Davies

Available online at: sccp.prf.cuni.cz/newsletter. Published each month in two versions: English and Czech. Sent to 1172 addresses.

E-mail: sccp@prf.cuni.cz
ISSN 2695-012X