

CHURCH REPORTER 4/2021

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



Joyful Easter in Czech Republic

This year, the Easter Triduum was celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm throughout the Czech Republic. Last year, due to the pandemic, public Easter services could not be held at all and the baptisms of adults were postponed to Whitsunday.

This year, worshipers followed strict health restrictions, including that churches can only be occupied to 10 percent of their capacity, and pews must be disinfected before and after services. Mass singing, so popular in all Slavic countries, is not allowed. During the Easter Triduum, the government made an exception to the rules of free movement restrictions: they could return to their homes until midnight. As of Maundy Thursday, the curfew from 9 pm did not apply.

Catholic priests responded by organizing additional services. Participants signed up in advance to observe to the 10 percent hygiene limit. As we are informed, the attendance of online services was extremely high this year and we have no doubt that they were watched by many those who do not profess the faith.

The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, which is the second largest church in the Czech Republic in terms of the number of participants in services, followed a similar approach.



Many adult baptisms took place in the Catholic and Evangelical Churches during Easter this year.

In the Cathedral of Saints Vitus, Wenceslaus and Adalbert at Prague Castle, which is also the seat of the President of the Czech Republic, Cardinal Dominik Duka, Archbishop of Prague and Primate of Bohemia, baptized and at the same time confirmed four men, two professional soldiers, mostly parishioners of the cathedral parish. One of them was an officer of the Castle Guard, which guards Prague Castle, in the grounds of which the cathedral is located, barracks are also in the parish. Two baptized were prepared in the Prague headquarters of the Prelature of Opus Dei, which is also based near Prague Castle. The Easter Vigil, which lasted three and a half hours, was streamed by cathedral television, which is managed and financed by the Metropolitan Chapter at St. Vitus in Prague (<https://katedrala.tv/>).

His Excellency Mons. Charles Daniel Balvo (standing in the photo on the left), the Apostolic Nuncio in the Czech Republic, took part in all the services of the Easter Triduum in the Prague Cathedral. He aroused the warm sympathy of worshipers and online viewers with his friendly behaviour and knowledge of Czech. On Maundy Thursday 1st April, in the morning during a service renewing priestly vows and sanctifying sacred oils, attended by several hundred priests from the Prague Archdiocese, he delivered a Czech speech, which was received with great sympathy.

Cathedral of Saints Vitus, Wenceslaus and Adalbert, 1st April 2021. Photo by Jakub Šerých

Prague Conference on Church and State Postponed for a Year

We regret to announce that the 5th International Scientific Conference Fifth Season of Prague Dialogues on Church and State Relations, scheduled for June 2021, is postponed for a year due to coronavirus pandemic. The topic of the conference remains: *Spiritual Care in Public Institutions II*. We intend to follow up on the successful 4th Season of the Prague Dialogues, which took place in June 2019 at the Faculty of Law of Charles University.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming experts from home and abroad to Prague and having a few days of interesting scientific conversations with them on the banks of the Vltava, where the building of the Faculty of Law of Charles University is located.



Participants of the 4th Season of the Prague Dialogues in the Atrium of the Faculty of Law.

Photo by Zábaj Horák

Publication *Spiritual Care in Public Institutions* in Europe on World Book Market

Results of the 4th Season of the Prague Dialogues on Church and State Relations are captured in the above-mentioned English collective monograph, edited by Jiří Rajmund Tretera and Zábaj Horák and published by the Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag in Berlin in 2019.



The publisher sends the authors a regular half-yearly overview of sold copies. From 1st January to 31st December 2020, 43 paper copies and one e-book of this title were sold. We are pleased that the book is of interest not only in Europe, but also overseas, where it was, for example, the library of Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

The book can be ordered at the publisher's address: Berliner-Wissenschaftsverlag GmbH, Behaimstr. 25, 10585 Berlin, Germany or online <https://www.bwv-verlag.de/spiritual-care-public-institutions-europe>

Cardinal Duka Supported Bishops in Slovakia

On 1st April 2021, Dominik Cardinal Duka, Archbishop of Prague and Primate of Bohemia, sent a letter to His Excellency Mons. Stanislav Zvolenský, Metropolitan Archbishop of Bratislava and President of the Conference of Bishops of Slovakia, in which he supports the position of the Conference regarding church closures during Easter.

Dear Brother in the Episcopal Service, Father Archbishop and President of the Conference of Bishops of Slovakia,

I am happy to send you greetings from Prague and, at the same time, express my personal support for both you and your common position of the bishops of Slovakia on the situation of services during the coronavirus, especially during the Easter holidays, which are the most important holidays for Christians during the year.

I see with true hope that around the world we can observe a certain uprising of the global episcopate in the defence of the fundamental human rights, which, in accordance with the attitude of Pope Francis, includes religious freedom, and in that, the freedom of cult. In the common state of the Czechs and Slovaks (ČSSR), we were able to know to the core what it means to be persecuted, not liberated and suppressed from the freedom of cult, as well as having restricted the activities of the church in general in public spaces.

Undoubtedly, not only you, the bishops of Slovakia, but also your priests have shown your willingness to fully cooperate with the current leadership of the Slovak Republic, not only while respecting the necessary epidemic measures, but also in helping society as a whole. I appreciate your initiative very much, when the priests of your dioceses – and the first message came from the Archdiocese of Košice – that dozens of priests have joined in to provide auxiliary medical service in hospitals for patients with Covid-19. I remember our meetings together and

our common path towards freedom. I respect also the Slovak Catholicism, which has so many times been able to show good service to both its nation and our continent in the struggle for freedom, which is indivisible. I also remember the well-known Candle manifestation in Bratislava and the large number of pilgrimage festivities that took place in Slovakia before 1989. In the political timelessness at that time, they were, also, an encouragement for us in the Czech Republic. Undoubtedly, it must be said that the famous Velehrad pilgrimage in 1985 would not have the necessary strength that it demonstrated without the participation of pilgrims from Slovakia. To this day, my greatest greeting goes to the believers, women of Orava, whose precious voice became a decisive and remarkable protest.

I remain connected with you all in prayers, especially in support, so that the Slovak Church can fulfil its glorious mission. Worship services at this time are an encouragement to the population and also a vaccine against stress and fear. They give meaning to the human life and to the struggles for the same dignified human life.

Yours in Christ,

+ Dominik Cardinal Duka

Letter of Support to Cardinal Bo

Dominik Cardinal Duka, Archbishop of Prague and Primate of Bohemia, sent a letter on 1st April 2021 of support to His Eminence Charles Maung Cardinal Bo, SDB, archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar, President of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.

Your Eminence, my dear friend, Cardinal Bo,

Allow me to send you special greetings from Prague, the city of the Infant Jesus of Prague, which is also known in the area of your leading in Southeast Asia.

I would like to thank you for your attitudes at this time. Whether it is your legitimate criticism of the Chinese coronavirus, with a clear reminder of the inactivity of the United Nations and the World Health Organization, I would like also to express my support and connection with you in the prayers for freedom in your family. It is with great joy and admiration that I follow your role as the President of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, where the voices of your conferences are a challenge and a greater call to the worldwide Church.

I also send you special greetings from your fellow brother, my auxiliary bishop Karel Herbst, SDB.

Asking for mutual prayers and blessings,

+ Dominik Duka OP



Stříbro (Western Bohemia), Deanery Church of All Saints, Maundy Thursday, 1st April 2021. From the right, archdean Jiří Hájek and parish priest Miroslav Martiš. Photo by František Kratochvíl.

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Photo on the front page: Stříbro (Western Bohemia), Deanery Church of All Saints, Good Friday, 2nd April 2021. Photo by František Kratochvíl.

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