

CHURCH REPORTER

11/2022

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

20th November 2022 | Volume 7



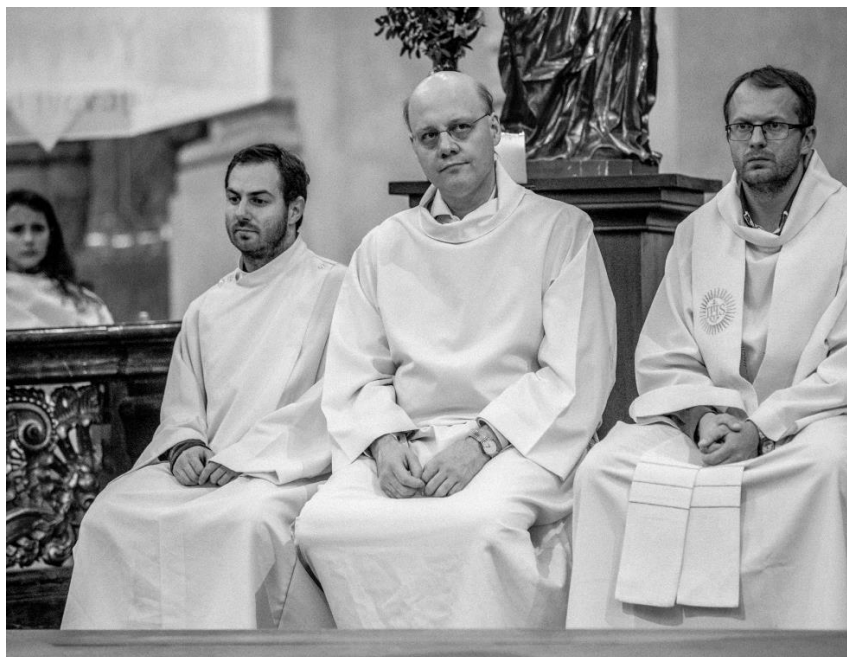


Pastoral Care of Lawyers in Prague

Once more remembering this year's opening of the new academic year in Prague in the Church of St. Salvator

In the very first paragraphs of the previous issue of our Church Reporter (10/2022), we brought you a detailed report on the start of the academic year at Prague's universities. This took place in our beautiful and spacious Church of St. Salvator in Prague's Old Town, directly opposite the bridge tower that opens on to the ancient Charles Bridge that spans the Vltava river.

Together with the students' pastor, Mons. Prof. Tomáš Halík, Templeton Prize winner, professor at Charles University's Faculty of Arts, president of the Czech Christian Academy and Honorary Doctor of Divinity at Oxford University, five other priests working at various faculties of Charles University concelebrated the Holy Mass. Among the two hundred representatives of the academic community from Prague's universities there were around twenty members of the Church Law Society.



The solemn Holy Mass, which traditionally takes place on the first Tuesday in October, this year, by the will of Providence, fell on the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, deacon and confessor. And so the entire Mass was celebrated from the liturgical texts falling on this feast and in the

spirit of this great saint. According to our colleagues, the entire service was conducted in the deep reverence of the entire massive congregation, supported by the simplicity and, at the same time, the splendour of the church that was built in the 16th century by the Jesuits as the foundation for their university in Prague, the second one in this city.

We would like to share with the readers of this issue the sermon that was delivered by Mons. Tomáš Halík and which made such a deep impression on all of us and which we also played a recording of at the meeting of the Church Law Society at Charles University's Faculty of Law held on 9th November 2022 and which we have a report about in a further article. And now the promised text of the Gospel and the sermon given on 4th October 2022.

The words of the Holy Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 11, 25–30)



Glory to you, Lord!

At that time Jesus said: I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Praise be to thee, o Christ.

The Sermon

We begin the new academic year on the feast of Francis of Assisi, a saint revered and beloved not only by Catholics and not only by Christians. We will try to answer the question of what, above all, he says to us today, at this important and dramatic hour of change in our world.

Last year, we wondered whether a new wave of the *coronavirus pandemic* would come and disrupt the normal running of the academic year.

Little did we know that within a year our society would face other, even *more dangerous pandemics* that would affect our lives even more deeply.

We are at war.

After a long-running hybrid propaganda war and an horrific war in Ukraine, a global economic war is brewing between Russia and the democratic world. If we are not to place ourselves at the mercy of Russia, we must look for new sources of energy – and the transition period (especially this winter) could be challenging.

But, let us leave further considerations on this subject to other platforms and other specialists.

However, the problem regarding the impoverishment of a large part of our world and of society, the need to adopt a more modest lifestyle, gives us our first encounter with today's saint. Saint Francis was a flagbearer and lover of Lady Poverty.

Let us distinguish between poverty and deprivation. Deprivation, the condition of *not having what one needs to live a dignified life*, is an evil that we are called on and obliged to confront, above all, through solidarity and a fair and sensitive social order. This is the theme of a whole important theological discipline, Christian social doctrine and the Church's social documents, including the encyclicals of Pope Francis.

Pope Francis recently gave an important speech in Assisi at a meeting of young economists on Franciscan inspiration for economics, especially economic ethics.

Poverty is different from deprivation. **Poverty is the state of not having what one does not need.**

Poverty is not primarily about the state of our wallet or bank account, it is a state of mind, a life orientation, a lifestyle.

Christianity does not glorify material poverty but rather the *spirit of the poor* – having an inner freedom, not clinging to things, being detached. That is why it is recommended as a lifestyle, particularly for people who are concerned with the spiritual side of life (and for the religious it is one of the commitments, the religious vows).

Wealth is the state of having an abundance, of having many things and resources that one does not need for oneself. According to Christian doctrine, this state is not in itself bad but – like power – it is morally risky; according to Christian doctrine, it is connected with a “social mortgage” – with a moral obligation to help people in deprivation and to help the common good of a given society.

We find a different conception of wealth in the Old Testament and also in some strands of Calvinism – Max Weber wrote about it in his reflection on the origins of capitalism.

Saint Francis, more than anyone else in Christianity, developed the **spirituality of poverty** – poverty chosen voluntarily as a path to freedom from the many worries and addictions we encounter.

In our situation today, let us distinguish two things:

On the one side, there is the *fear* that certain classes of poor people will fall into deprivation (let us ask ourselves how far these fears are justified and how to face up to these dangers).

Something quite different is the *panic and dread* of moving from a society of affluence and waste to the need to adopt a more disciplined and modest lifestyle.

Who, other than the spiritual disciples of Saint Francis, should show by example to the surfeited, spoiled and wasteful part of society that a certain amount of asceticism and modesty can lead to a morally and physically healthier lifestyle.



In addition, a more disciplined lifestyle has one other aspect that is inherently connected with the saint of Assisi – **love, respect and consideration for nature and the environment**.

The author of the hymn to creation is rightly revered by the Church of our time as the patron saint of environmental care.

Environmental responsibility and social responsibility for the poor, the marginalised and the exploited were undoubtedly among the reasons why a pope from South America chose the name Francis.

The Jesuit courage to take on new tasks are wedded in Pope Francis with these features of Franciscan spirituality.

But then there are two other features that link the current Pope to the spiritual legacy of Saint Francis: **a determination to radically reform the Church and a sense of the universal brotherhood of all people.**

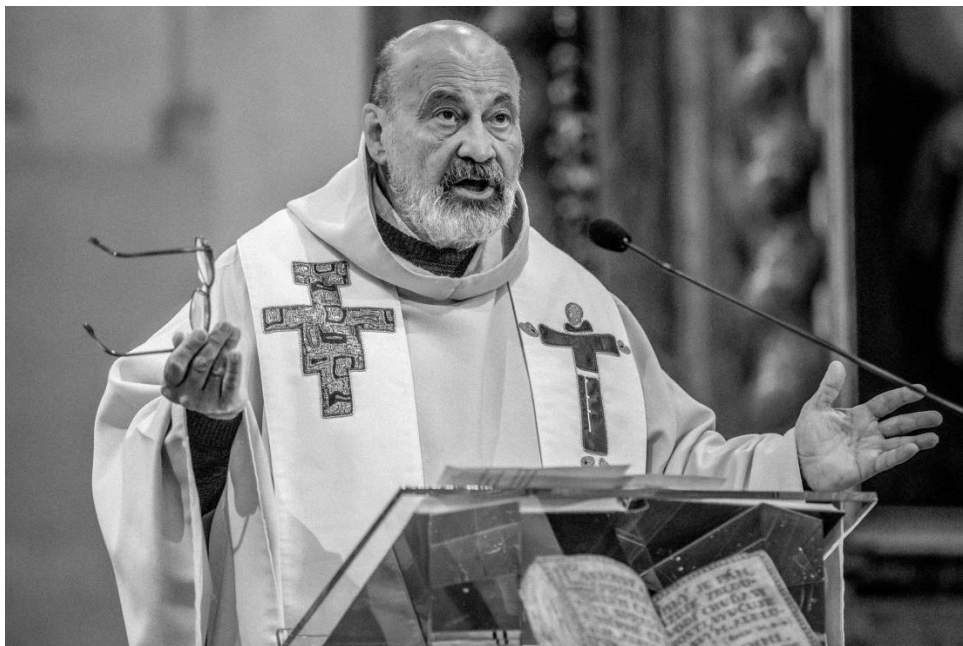
According to one of the legends, Francis of Assisi's life was transformed by a dream in which he heard God's call: go and repair my house!

To begin with, Francis did not fully understand this summons, thinking he was being called on to repair a dilapidated chapel on the edge of the town, and only later did he understand that he was being called to repair a morally dilapidated, powerful and wealthy mediaeval Church. To bring into it Jesus' blessing of poverty, the poor and the spirit of poverty (not the "poor in spirit") – namely an attitude that expresses freedom and produces joy, as opposed to the worries, dullness and pride of people clinging to their material, but also spiritual, certainties, to the religion of the "know-it-alls", the puffed-up religious professionals, pharisees and scribes.

Pope Francis also links a sensitivity towards the poor with a struggle with those who have a power relationship with religion – what Jesus called the leaven of the Pharisees, Pope Francis calls the disease of clericalism.

He also sees clericalism, abuse of power and authority as the main cause of the Church's worst scandals in recent times:

spiritual, psychological and sexual abuse.



Pope Francis is also fulfilling God's dream of repairing His house, the Church.

This is the meaning of the **synodal reform of the Church** now underway – from a rigid, bureaucratic organisation it is to become a dynamic network of mutual communication, the same path (syn-hodos).

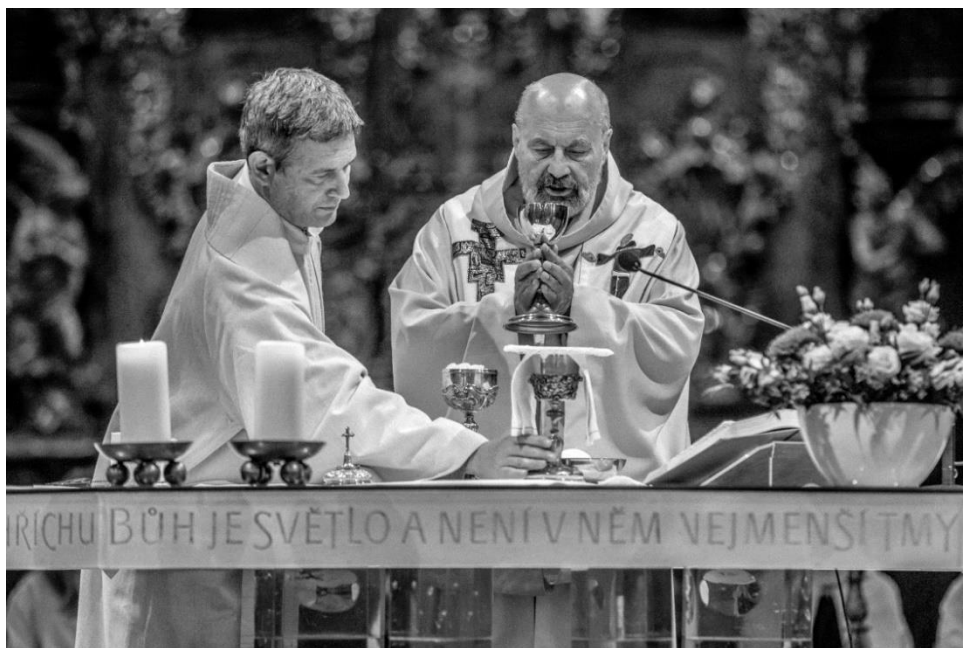
Just as Saint Francis of Assisi only gradually realised that the whole Church needed repair, so in the synodal reform it is becoming clear that the “same path” is not only a model for the Church but an inspiring *ideal for the coexistence of the whole human family*.

This is the content of Pope Francis’ historic encyclical, which in its title (like his “green encyclical” on environmental responsibility, *Laudato si’*), bears the words of Francis of Assisi: *Fratelli tutti!*

Humanity is called to the task of creating one family, of transcending all national, cultural and religious boundaries – and Christianity is to be the way to this goal.

At a time when words are coming out of the Kremlin that the world has not heard since the time of Hitler and Goebbels, that Orwellian newspeak that calls the truth a lie and a lie the truth, the aggressor the victim and the victim the aggressor, and a criminal war of aggression protection of peace and independence, the Gospel as put into practice by the saint of Assisi is resounding from the heart of the Church.

Let us try in the new academic year – in our parish and in all the settings we enter – to develop and realise this great dream of God.



The inscription on the altar table: God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.



Association for Support of Humanization of Health Care

Conference on Chaplaincy in Prague

On Thursday, 13th October 2022, the conference *TOGETHER: The Professional Environment of Chaplaincy in the Czech Republic* took place in the refectory of the Benedictine Monastery in Prague-Emmaus.

The conference was organised by the Czech Christian Academy in collaboration with the Czech Bishops' Conference, the Ecumenical Council of Churches, the Association of Hospital Chaplains, the Catholic Association of Hospital Chaplains in the Czech Republic, the Prison Chaplaincy, the Forum of Chaplaincy Services, the Military Chaplaincy, and the Police Chaplaincy. An expert legal report was presented by Jiří Rajmund Tretera and Zábój Horák. The conference was chaired by the vice-president of the Czech Christian Academy, Pavel Hošek, professor at the Evangelical Theological Faculty of Charles University.



13th October 2022, the Emmaus Monastery in Prague. From the left: hospital chaplain Petr Živný (Milan), Jiří Rajmund Tretera, Zábój Horák, prison chaplain Miroslav Dítě (Plzeň-Bory).

Photo Petr Živný



Local group in Prague

The 84th Evening of the Church Law Society: War in Ukraine, Ecology and Ecological Threats

On the evening of Wednesday, 9th November 2022, the 84th Evening of the Church Law Society was held in the Representative Hall of the Faculty of Law of Charles University, with the above theme as its focus.

First of all, Professor Jiří Rajmund Tretera OP, President of the Church Law Society, spoke. Then, the attendees listened to a recorded extract from the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 11, 25–30) and a sermon given by *Mons. Tomáš Halík*, professor at Charles University's Faculty of Arts and our academic pastor. This sermon was given during the solemn service in the Church of St. Salvator at the start of the new academic year on 4th October 2022, on the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology and environmentalists, and was transcribed in a previous article.



The beginning of the 84th Evening of the Church Law Society.

Photo Antonín Krč

It was a deeply meditative part of the evening, during which everyone had the opportunity to reflect on the difference between *deprivation*, which is always a negative phenomenon against which the Church struggles, and *living in poverty*, which is state to which all Christians are called by the Gospel. It is not only reserved for the religious who promise a life in poverty but a recommendation for all. Living in modesty so that we only use the few things that we

need to live is very good for us. Without creating an unnecessary stock of things and spiritual gratifications.

In the second part, *Associate Professor JUDr. Vojtěch Stejskal, Ph.D.*, Head of the Department of Environmental Law at the Faculty of Law of Charles University, spoke on *The impact of the war in Ukraine on the environment and nature from the perspective of law*.



Associate Professor Vojtěch Stejskal speaking at the 84th Evening of the Church Law Society.

Photo Antonín Krč

In his talk, accompanied by a presentation with maps and photographs from Ukraine, of cities and the countryside, of the steppes, and what were once such rich fields and large expanses of water, Associate Professor Stejskal discussed the horrific effects of the barbaric war unleashed by Putin's war, after the invasion of Ukraine, on the environment and human health not only in Ukraine. Soldiers and civilians, women and children are dying, nature is dying.

The tragic consequence of the Russian aggression in February 2022, which has persisted tenaciously till today despite all the global protests and the strong resistance shown by our country is and shall continue to be the immense damage to the lives of humans and animals, nature and the landscape, which will take tens or hundreds of years to repair, if it is possible at all. Some animal species are even at risk of extinction.

The damage caused to Ukraine, which is so close to us, is also spreading to neighbouring countries and, in the end, will affect all of Europe. In Ukraine, as a result of the Russian aggression, people, animals and trees are dying violently and needlessly and the whole of nature is being devastated, including expanses of water which are being contaminated not only throughout Ukraine but the toxication is also penetrating into the waters of the entire Black Sea and neighbouring countries. And for many years the devastation of nature will also penetrate deep into the earth's soil through the mines that have been extracted.

During his talk he recalled the devastation of nature in Czechoslovakia caused by Russian troops who, after the invasion by the Soviet Pact in August 1968, settled permanently in

Czechoslovakia until 1991 and even occupied large areas of forests and meadows, in fact even some villages, for their own purposes. Even only Russian currency was used there and the Czech population had to move out. Not only after 1991, the ecological damage that the Russian occupiers had caused in our country for more than twenty years with their insensitive attitude to nature had to be removed over the course of many years but some of this damage is still being repaired to this day. The damage caused to nature lasts an incredibly long time.

The third block focused more on the situation in the Czech lands and the consequences of the war in Ukraine, which are being felt mainly in our agriculture. The speaker was *Matouš Horák*, a landowner from Podbrdí (west Bohemia). He drew attention to all the evils that the war in Ukraine is bringing to the zoosphere, including in our country. He pointed out one interesting fact that not everyone is aware of: Czech agriculture, which in recent decades has been suffering from the steady exodus of workers to towns and cities and industrial areas, leaving behind work in agriculture where only 2 % of the population remains working, is fortunately being supplemented by the work done by refugees from Ukraine. The Czech Republic not only ranks first in Europe in terms of receiving refugees, especially women and children, from Ukraine in relation to its total population, but Ukrainian workers are also contributing significantly to the staffing of Czech agriculture. According to statistical estimates, Ukrainians now account for 25 % of workers in Czech agriculture, whether they arrived earlier in previous decades or emigrated to our country as a result of the horrific war this year. We are deeply grateful to them for repaying our hospitality with this urgent work for us.

The final part of the evening consisted of friendly discussions in groups and pairs over an abundance of sandwiches, some wine and a whole range of non-alcoholic drinks. The attendees dispersed freely around the lecture hall and moved into the equally large, adjacent conference space, dimly lit but with round tables set up for people to stand around eating, drinking and having a good time.



Matouš Horák considering the impact that the war in Ukraine is having on Czech agriculture.

Photo Antonín Krč

We really must congratulate the Church Law Society's secretary, Tomáš Grundza, and his two colleagues for arranging such excellent catering. Many of the attendees, including older participants, spoke highly of the gentle and attentive approach of the two girls who throughout the long evening consistently made sure that the carafes of water were constantly refilled. Yes, they even poured water into everyone's glasses.



After the end of the official part of the evening there were refreshments for the guests.

Text Jakub Nagy, Zábaj Horák, Jiří Rajmund Tretera.

Photo Antonín Krč



IN MEMORIAM ENRICO VITALI

Enrico Vitali was one of the founders of the European Consortium for Church and Research. He belonged to the generation of great legal scholars – Alberto de la Hera, Alexander Hollerbach, Joseph Listl, Francesco Margiotta Broglio, Axel von Campenhausen and others – who understood from the beginning the potential of the Consortium but had the discretion not to impose their dominant presence in its direction and management. He helped organize the Consortium's first conference, which took place between Parma and Milan, and served as president in 1998, later becoming emeritus in 2011.

Enrico Vitali embodies a figure that is not usual among the Consortium members but was widespread – and to some extent still is – in the legal departments of the Italian Universities: that of the professor-lawyer, the scholar and teacher of law who at the same time practices it in the courtrooms. To these two characteristics Vitali combined a third, that of being a man of great culture, ranging from literature, music and especially painting.

From the beginning of his academic career, he taught at the University of Milan and helped make this University an important centre for the study of Canon law, Ecclesiastical law and Comparative law of religions, training young researchers and calling other colleagues to join him in teaching.

He was a strong defender of the secular State, but always with measure and without harshness. He was the first president of the Italian association of professors of Canon and Ecclesiastical law and was a member of the joint commission between the Italian State and the Holy See for the preparation of the law that should have implemented the marriage provisions contained in the Agreements of Villa Madama. He wrote important books on marriage law and criminal law, analyzing the (now disappeared) provision on the vilification of the State religion. At a time when this topic was still unexplored, he emphasized the importance of sociology for ecclesiastical law studies.

Able to appreciate life's many pleasures, Vitali went through it with elegance and lightness. Even when he had to take sharp and sometimes harsh positions, he always did so with a grace and style that came, I believe, from his familiarity with the art world. His departure makes the Consortium and the Italian University a little poorer.

Silvio Ferrari (Milan)

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: 4th October 2022, Holy Mass for the opening of the academic year for Prague's universities in the Church of St. Salvator in Prague.

Photo Zuzana Lazarová

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

Available online at: sccp.prf.cuni.cz/newsletter. Issues appear monthly.

E-mail: sccp@prf.cuni.cz

ISSN 2695-012X