

# Priesthood for the Church to Come



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Česká společnost pro katolickou teologii  
(člen Evropské společnosti pro katolickou teologii)



# Conference Priesthood for the Church to Come

**December 9, 2023**

**Jabok College (Salmovská 8, Prague 2)**

## **Organizers**

[Czech Christian Academy / Česká křesťanská akademie,](#)

[Pedagogical Section](#) and its journal *Theology and Philosophy of Education*

[Jabok College / VOŠ Jabok](#)

[Czech Society for Catholic Theology / Česká společnost pro katolickou teologii](#)

**Contact:** [ped@krestanskaakademie.cz](mailto:ped@krestanskaakademie.cz)

The conference will be in a hybrid form; the link to connect: <https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3atBkgNSqSI6RYulBTiTJ85WtRrmzik2rWG5NeE-gdSEQ1%40thread.tacv2/1699264179127?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22e09276da-f934-4086-bf08-8816a20414a2%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22da59b418-9bdf-4c0e-b401-2e81c8f22ed6%22%7d>

## **Morning programme**

9:00-9:05 Introduction speech (Zuzana Svobodová)

9:05–9:25 Filip Sedlák: Voice of One Calling in the Wilderness – Activist Priest?

9:30-9:50 Petr Jan Vinš: Women Priesthood as a New Obstacle to the Unity of the Church - The Case of Roman Catholic and Old Catholic Ecumenical Dialogue

9:55-10:15 Lawrence Thaikattil: A Paradigm Shift in the Understanding of Priesthood

Discussion, break (posters: Peter Rusnak, Marcel Martinkovič: L. Hanus and P.A. Florensky: two philosophers and priests discuss the phenomenon of priesthood in a totalitarian era)

10:30-10:45 Claudio Laferla: The married-priest is the future of the Church of Jesus

10:50–11:10 Stuart Nicolson: Priests and Apologetics in the Vatican II Documents

11:15-11:30 Zuzana Svobodová: Can experiences from living in totalitarian regimes in the 20th century enrich the vision of the Christian priesthood?

Discussion, break

## **Afternoon programme**

13:30-14:00 Fáinche Ryan: Priests for a Priestly People

14:00-14:30 Michael Kirwan: The Priest: catalyst of baptismal grace

14:30-15:00 John Berry: The Challenges of Being a Priest Today

15:00-15:30 Tomáš Halík: Ministry in the Church on the Threshold of Transformation

## Abstracts of papers

### **Filip Sedlák** (Charles University, Hussite Theological Faculty): **Voice of One Calling in the Wilderness – Activist Priest?**

There is much talk about getting clergy out of churches. To stop being dusters of empty pews and fixers of falling buildings and become the heralds of the gospel they have been called to be. What concrete form should this coming out of the church take? Can activism be an answer? Should the example of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his ilk still be the exception to the rule, or should it become the new norm for understanding who a priest is? Can we imagine, as a standard, a priest speaking at an environmental demonstration, carrying banners, tying herself to trees, and being taken into custody by the police? This paper will critically reflect on contemporary forms of Christian activism in the context of the universal and sacramental priesthood as following Christ, its biblical and traditional basis, and its potential pitfalls.

### **Petr Jan Vinš** (Ecumenical Council of Churches of the Czech Republic): **Women Priesthood as a New Obstacle to the Unity of the Church – The Case of Roman Catholic and Old Catholic Ecumenical Dialogue**

Increasingly, new lines of division are emerging in ecumenical dialogue, eclipsing traditional doctrinal differences between denominations. In addition to ethical issues, one such new division is the question of the priestly ministry of women in the Church. The example of the ecumenical dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Old Catholic Churches will be used to show this new issue, which represents a significant obstacle to the search for the future unity of the Church.

### **Rev. Dr. Lawrance Thaikattil** (Rector, St. John Paul II Minor Seminary; Thirumudikunnu: Professor of Ecumenism in Marymatha Major Seminary, Trichur, Professor of World Religions, Ghent, Belgium): **A Paradigm Shift in the Understanding of Priesthood**

In his ground breaking study, Msgr. Stephen J. Rossetti, the leading American authority on the Catholic priesthood and former director of the Saint Luke Institute, finds that American priests enjoy an extraordinarily high rate of happiness and satisfaction, among the highest of any profession. This strong statement is questioned and disagreed by many when we come to the Indian situation today. There is difficulty to accept the western categorised priesthood. One can observe a kind of dichotomy in pursuing the western understand of Priesthood from the eastern mind. Of course we are not going to deny sacramental nature of priesthood with the theological help as form and matter. In this frenzied situation we try to inculcate the vision of priesthood from St.Elias Kuriakose Chavara, the first Carmelite priest from India, and the triad Indian model namely Jnana Marga, Bhakthi Marga and Karma Marga for priesthood.

### **Peter Rusnak, Marcel Martinkovič** (Slovak Academy of Sciences): **L. Hanus and P.A. Florensky: two philosophers and priests discuss the phenomenon of priesthood in a totalitarian era** (posters)

The authors of the study analyse and compare the specifics of understanding the importance of Priesthood and church (institutional) life in thinking of two authors. The starting point of comparison is the concept of Priesthood and church orthodoxy (and broader understanding of human identity in an environment of love) of the Russian religious philosopher P.A. Florensky.

Florensky's definition of priesthood is accessible only through understanding of the concept of man, while man can become personality only after gaining self-respect and respect from the society of others. The understanding of the spiritual Truth is possible only in the society, because only in human society the metanoia of man can take place. It is also the only place where a man can come into contact with the God, who represents love. To change your thinking, it is necessary to have the courage to step forward to new way of thinking, the courage with the characteristics of belief and hope. The only condition of integrality of human thinking and life is the love of two loving persons. It is only in unity of thought of the two loving persons that gives grounds for other forms and institutions of co-existence of human beings of Church. The Christian concept of priesthood in Florensky's thinking is always a philosophy of man, based on the courage of the man to authenticity. The second part of the study will be a comparison of the previous concept with opinions of the Slovak philosopher and priest Ladislav Hanus (1907-1994). His concept is an understanding of faith, Priesthood and the Church in the broadest cultural and social context. Very interesting acts in particular polarity of the Priesthood in communism, as well as the polarity of Catholicism and Protestantism.

**Stuart Nicolson** (University of South Bohemia, Theology Faculty): **Priests and Apologetics in the Vatican II Documents**

Original apologetics was for ordinary faithful, as called for by Peter among others in Scripture. After a century of ordinary apologetics, Justin Martyr and his successors turned apologetics far more intellectual, elite, then significantly clerical. It was embedded in this way in the Mediaeval period, and it was only in the English-speaking world before the Second Vatican Council that organic apologetical developments took place. Balthasar's third way, of love, is consistent with the Petrine apologetical calls and content in many of the Council's documents. Particularly in *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the laity are called to Petrine apologetics, which should be embedded in parish life with priests having a central role. Therefore, priestly formation and ministry should have an apologetical flavour, and priests are called in *Presbyterorum Ordinis* to develop their engagement with the laity as co-apologists rather than the Justinian elite image of being the parish's sole fount of theological wisdom.

**Zuzana Svobodová** (Charles University, University of South Bohemia, Jabok College, Czech Christian Academy, Czech Society for Catholic Theology): **Can experiences from living in totalitarian regimes in the 20th century enrich the vision of the Christian priesthood?**

The priest as a mediator must humbly learn the language of those to whom he is to speak. The priest as mediator is called as the one concerned with the care of the soul. So he himself must be the one who understands what was called in Greek *τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιμέλειαν* and then called in Latin *cultura animi*. He is the one responsible not only for the word, but for the Word of God. This responsibility means to be in a living dialogue, firstly with God, and then with people. This responsibility also means being ready to witness the Word made flesh to people who are from different churches, to those who do not belong to any church, and to those who claim to be atheists. Such a priest, living from dialogue with God, can be the one who really helps to shape a living church, the church to come.

In her paper, Zuzana Svobodová will accent a type of priest from the theology of agape, theology of love that Josef Zvěřina sought to develop in the 20th century, living in a totalitarian communist regime in Czechoslovakia. She will speak about Zvěřina's approach as a sign of times, even for today.

**Dr. Michael Kirwan** (Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, The Loyola Institute, School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies): **The Priest: catalyst of baptismal grace**

This presentation will reflect upon the theology of ministry from the perspective of 'mimetic theory', associated with the Catholic cultural theorist René Girard (1923-2015). Girard's striking insights into the relationships between desire, conflict, and social formation have been applied to ecclesiology (Raymund Schwager, James Alison), though not, explicitly, to theology of ministry. A further dimension is offered by a Jewish Girardian scholar (Vanessa Avery-Wall), who has suggested that religious ritual and traditions might be considered as a kind of 'vaccine' against the incursions of violent desire. Can these insights help us to a renewed awareness of the role of the priest in the contemporary and future church?

**Prof. PhDr. Tomáš Halík Th.D.** (Charles University, Faculty of Arts, President of the Czech Christian Academy, honorary member of the Czech Society for Catholic Theology): **Ministry in the Church on the Threshold of Transformation**

Synodal renewal is the beginning of a long-term journey of transformation of Christianity. After the fall of Christianitas, the "temple form of Christianity", modern Christianity as a "worldview" is also coming to an end. The Church in the age of culminating globalization, the "intermingling of worlds," must rediscover its Catholicity and ecumenicity. After the disintegration of the network of local parishes, it will be necessary to establish centers of spiritual life, celebration of the liturgy, exchange of experience, and spiritual accompaniment.