

Czechoslovak Hussite Church celebrated its 100th anniversary with participation of representatives of the whole society

A ceremonial service to the 100th anniversary of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church was performed by the whole congregation of bishops under the leadership of patriarch ThDr. Tomáš Butta at St. Nicolas Church in Prague's Old Town Square. It was attended by many clerics and lay people from the whole church across many places in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia. Representatives of many churches of the Czech and foreign ecumene also participated: Daniel Ženatý, chairman of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic and synodal senior of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren; Michael of Prague, Orthodox Metropolitan of the Czech lands and Slovakia and archbishop of Prague; Václav Malý and Tomáš Holub, bishops of the Roman Catholic Church; Tomáš Tyrlík, bishop of the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (SECAC); Petr Procházka, superintendent of the United Methodist Church; Jan Klas, bishop of the Moravian Church; Petr Raus, 1st vice-chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Brethren Church; and others. Foreign ecumene was represented by Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches; Dr. Mario Fischer, general secretary of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE); Joachim Liebig, president of the Evangelical Church of Anhalt; Friedemann Oehme, principal of the Lutheran Church council in Saxony; Raphael Quandt, church councillor for Central and Eastern Europe of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria; and others. People who had also accepted our invitation and participated included Mrs. Livia Klausová, representatives of the Czech government – Jan Hamáček, deputy prime minister and interior minister; Adam Vojtěch, public health minister; senators Petr Šilar, Pavel Fischer and Jiří Drahoš; Jan Morávek, head of the office of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic; and representatives of the embassies of Germany and Hungary. The academic community was represented by Prof. Tomáš Zima, rector of the Charles University; Prof. Jan Royt, vice-rector of the Charles University; Prof. Ivan Wilhelm, emeritus rector of the Charles University; and Doc. Vojtěch Petráček, rector of the Czech Technical University in Prague. The ceremony was attended by MUDr. Col. Pavel Budinský, chairman of the Association of Czechoslovak Legionaries (ACL), and Ing. Milan Mojžíš, ACL's secretary, and other significant guests.

The individual parts of the ceremonial service to the 100th anniversary of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church as well as the Lord's Supper were performed and conducted together by David Tonzar, the bishop of Prague, Rudolf Goebel, the bishop of Olomouc, Jan Hradil, the bishop of Bratislava, Filip Štojdl, the bishop of Pilsen, Juraj Dovala, the bishop of Brno, Pavel Pechanec, the bishop of Hradec Králové and Tomáš Butta, the patriarch of the church, who preached and gave the closing blessing. In his sermon on the topic of the *100 years of the service to God and 100 years of the service to a man*, which is the motto of the 100th anniversary, he pointed out, that just 100 years ago on 11 January 1920 this church based on Catholic modernism, was solemnly proclaimed in St. Nicolas Church. However, it has professed to a much older tradition – it continued the tradition of John Huss, utraquists and the Czech reformation and understood itself as the Church of Christ, the congregation of the Lord. Patriarch Butta expressed the connection of the two parts of the motto in the words: „The service to God - that is on first place liturgy... At the same time, the service to God is not just participating on the solemn liturgy, but also serving to the good, the truth, the justice and the beauty in our everyday life.“ He also accentuated the freedom of conscience and the voluntariness, which was asserted in the new church since its beginning, at the same time, the service carries both a commitment and responsibility. „To serve to God is not possible without self-struggle, self-denial, without sacrifice.“ To serve to God means to perform it „even if it does not bring any personal advantages.“

„To think of God, does not mean to forget the man. To help to the other should be in the right sense selfless“, according to the pattern of Jesus' ministry, it can also be hidden, but God knows about it. At the end of the sermon, the patriarch self-questioned the church if it had always done so and left it upon the God's judgement. Among those „who served God with the trueness of faith and with love and who helped the others selflessly and effectively“, he highlighted the first patriarch Dr. Karel Farský and many other dedicated workers of the church who developed social work in many places, which was reducing human hardship, pain and suffering. One hundred years of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church left certain mark in modern history, but it is also necessary to think about the future of not only the Church, but also „about the future of christianity in our country and in the whole Europe.“

The patriarch Butta sees in the personal visiblens of Christ's commandments of love to God and love to a man as the task of all Christians. „Amongst all of our questions and also due to some uncertainty of the God's

word it is quite obvious that a church that serves to God and helps to people has and always will have an open future ahead.“

He closed the sermon with a quote of Apostle Paul: „Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord... Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers... Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another.“ (R 12: 11, 13, 15, 16).

At the end of the service, the patriarch emphasized that the sacrament of communion was served with the hosts and also from the chalice created by the artist František Bílek, who also used to be a member of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church. The chair of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic and the synodal senior of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren Daniel Ženatý and the bishop of the Roman Catholic Church Václav Malý greeted the congregation at the end of the service. The service was broadcast live by the Czech television.

After the end of the ceremonial service the participants held a parade to the Monument of Master John Huss in the Old Town Square, where the Prague bishop David Tonzar uttered the prayer and a joint chant was heard. Mrs Livia Klausová, patriarch Tomáš Butta and the rector of the Charles University subsequently laid down flowers at the monument and the Czech and Slovak anthems were heard. Then flowers were also laid down at the memorial plaque of the 27 representatives of the Estates Uprising, who were executed on this place 21st June 1621. Brother bishop David Tonzar commemorated the words of Jan Amos Komenský (1592 – 1670), whose anniversary also falls for this year.

The festive afternoon continued with a meeting in Brožík's Hall of the Old Town Hall under the auspices of the Councillor for Culture of the Prague Municipality, Mrs Hana Třeštíková. Representatives of the Czech, European and world ecumena, representatives of the academic world, representatives of the state and the public administration and representatives of organizations and associations received a commemorative medal to the 100th anniversary of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church from the hands of the patriarch Tomáš Butta. There is an emblem of the church and a portrait of its first patriarch Dr. Karel Farský. There were also the greetings from representatives of the Czech and foreign ecumene. The social gathering was enhanced by three performances of the Mladota Ensemble: Meditation on the Old Bohemian Chant of St. Wenceslas, op. 35 by Josef Suk, symphony in A major by Jan Zach and Two waltzes A major op. 54, No. 1, and D major op. 54, No. 4 by Antonín Dvořák. The space of Brožík's Hall visibly reminds of the Hussite tradition by two paintings by the Czech painter Josef Brožík (1851 – 1901). The first painting depicts John Huss (1371 - 1415) at the council in Konstanz and the second painting the vote of Jiří of Poděbrady (1420 - 1471) as the Czech King, which took place at the Old Town Hall in 1458. 600 years will have passed since the birth of this Hussite king this year.

The statement “Church and society“ was issued to the 100th anniversary of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church. The anniversary will continue with further events throughout the year 2020.

More information:

Mgr. Hana Tonzarová, Th.D.

Head of the Ecumenical and External Affairs Office of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church

Mobile: 00420 602 355 104

E-mail: hana.tonzarova@ccsh.cz