



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

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Holy See Communiqué: Signing of the Agreement between the Holy See and the Czech Republic on some legal questions

Today, 24 October 2024, at 13.45, at the Office of the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic in Prague, an *Agreement between the Holy See and the Czech Republic on some legal questions* was signed.

The signatories were:

On behalf of the Holy See, His Eminence Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin;

On behalf of the Czech Republic, His Excellency Mr. Petr Fiala, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic.

The following were also present at the ceremony:

For the Holy See:

His Excellency Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, Apostolic Nuncio to the Czech Republic; Msgr. Jan Maria Chun Yean Choong, Nunciature Counsellor and Official of the Secretariat of State; the Reverend Vital Akélé N'Gbesso Ohochi, Secretary of the Apostolic Nunciature to the Czech Republic;

For the local Church:

His Eminence Cardinal Dominik Duka, O.P., Archbishop emeritus of Prague; Archbishop Jan Graubner of Prague; Bishop Stanislav Přebyl C.Ss.R., of Litoměřice; the Reverend Roman Czudek, Secretary General of the Czech Episcopal Conference; the Reverend Fr. Damian Němec, O.P., professor of Canon Law at the Faculty of Theology of Saints Cyril and Methodius of the University of Olomouc; Dr. Jakub Kříž Ph.D., professor of Law at the Faculty of Philosophy and Law of Charles University, Prague;

For the Government of the Czech Republic:

Mr. Marek Výborný, Minister of Agriculture of the Czech Republic; Mr. Marek Benda, Member of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic; Mr. Tomáš Pojar, National Security Advisor; Mr. Eduard Hulicius, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic; His Excellency Mr. Václav Kolaja, extraordinary and plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the Holy See; Ms. Petra Fojtíková, Director General of the Section of the Office of the Prime Minister; Ms. Lucie Ješátková, government spokesperson; Ms. Hana Thorne, Director of the Protocol Department; Ms. Magdalena Pokludová, Director of the Department for Foreign Relations; Mr. Dan Macek, Official of the External Relations Unit.

The Agreement, which consists of 16 articles aimed at further strengthening the friendly relations between the Holy See and the Czech Republic, favours the fruitful collaboration between Church and State in the promotion of the common good and the spiritual, human and cultural values of the Czech people. In line with the Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* of Vatican Council II, it seeks to guarantee further the religious freedom of the faithful and, as a consequence, the freedom of the Church in the fulfilment of her mission. Therefore, this new bilateral treaty reiterates the right to freedom of thought, consciences and religion, not only of Catholic faithful, but all persons, in accordance with international instruments on human rights. Furthermore, it affirms that the freedom of worship can be regulated exclusively by law (and not by norms of a lower level), and only to the degree necessary to protect public order, health and the rights of others.

In the sphere of the ecclesiastical mission, on the basis of the recognition of religious freedom, the State recognizes the right of the Catholic Church to operate according to her own rules, to self-govern and to appoint freely her own ministers of worship. In addition, it guarantees the right of conscientious objection both in the context of military service and in the sphere of healthcare. The Agreement protects the inviolability of the sacramental seal, without conditions or limitations, and of secrecy, analogous to that of the confessional, to pastoral workers. It also recognizes the Church's right to establish educational and charitable bodies, as well as to provide spiritual assistance and pastoral care to persons housed in social welfare, health and prison facilities. Finally, the new Agreement will facilitate pastoral care for members of the armed forces and police.

The new Agreement will then have to be submitted for ratification by the Holy Father and the Parliament of the Czech Republic. It will enter into force on the first day of the month following the exchange of the instruments of ratification.
