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The Catholic Church in the Czech Republic and Sexual Abuse of Minors

Abstract

The article describes the present situation in the Church in the Czech Republic in relation to the topic of sexual abuse of minors in terms of extension of cases, education in the topic, church documents and measures adopted and prayer initiatives. It also discusses the specific factors that make it difficult to accept the reality of the existence of sexual abuse of minors by clerics also in the Catholic Church in the territory of the Czech Bishops Conference.

Keywords

Czech Republic, Catholic Church, Bishops Conference, sexual abuse, minors, priest.

In the Czech Republic, there are two Ecclesiastical Provinces and eight latin Dioceses, and one Apostolical Exarchat. In 2020 there were about 1800 priests (including religious), 633 male religious and 1048 female religious. The number of of Sunday Mass visitors were around 375 000 persons. The Catholic Church is the founder of 95 schools of any grade. There are three theological faculties and three major seminaries (one in Rome).¹

¹ See <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/dieceze>; https://cbk.blob.core.windows.net/cms/ContentItems/30910_30910/katolicka-cirkev-v-cr-dl-2020-cz-web.pdf (21.01.2022).

This article would like to describe the present situation in the Church in the Czech Republic in relation to the topic of sexual abuse of minors. All the facts presented here have been published either by church representatives or by the persons mentioned herein or have been communicated to the author or are based on her own experience. The content of the article relates to the Catholic Church in the territory of the Czech Bishops Conference (hereinafter referred to as ČBK). The situation of individual Dioceses or Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life have not been specifically analysed since no such information is publicly available except for the few that we list.

1. Are there any perpetrators and victims of sexual abuse of minors in the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic?

The Meeting on “The Protection of Minors in the Church” (21–24 February, 2019) in Rome², was monitored also by the media in the Czech Republic. On this occasion, the server seznam.cz on 7 April 2019 published the list of public known cases of sexual abuse by catholic priests in the Czech Republic.³ The article contains the map of such cases and their short description. The first case dates back to the 1987 and the last is from 2019., Altogether there are mentioned 10 cases and 53 victims. These are cases that have ended up in court. The last one was still being investigated by the Police. In one more case, the priest was acquitted.⁴

Around the time of the Rome meeting and since then, few comments and reports had occurred in media.⁵

² See <https://www.pbc2019.org/> (21.01.2022).

³ See <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/mapa-sexualniho-zneuzivani-v-katolicke-cirkvi-v-cesku-je-53-dolozenych-obeti-69243> (21.01.2022).

⁴ See https://www.idnes.cz/olomouc/zpravy/jesenik-byvaly-knez-osvobozeni-zprosteni-obzaloby-zneuzivani-ministrant.A190213_113114_olomouc-zpravy_stk (21.01.2022).

⁵ The list until 2020 can be found here: <https://www.farnostcheb.cz/clanek.php?id=268&sbm=404> (21.04.2022)., In 2020 a bachelor thesis was written at the Masaryk University of Brno entitled: *The media representation of the Catholic Church in connection with sexual abuse of children by priests on pages in the daily Právo and Katolický týdeník*. See https://is.muni.cz/th/bud6u/BP_Sebelova_460162_final.pdf (21.01.2022).

In September 2018, Jiří Kylar, the victim of a priest of the Archdiocese of Praha, published his story of being abused as an altar boy.⁶ There was no response from the Archdiocese.⁷ In March 2019, Jiří Kylar made the official announcement and underwent the canonical procedure.⁸

Since the first article counting the cases of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, there were six other cases presented in public. One of them was the case of the man who was abused as a 16 years old boy by two Dominicans, now deceased. The abuse happened, in Praha during the period the current Card. Dominik Duka had been the superior of the Bohemian-Moravian Dominican Province.⁹ The internal investigation of the Czech Dominican Province¹⁰ showed that these Dominicans and the other four who were investigated were punished by the Dominican Order, according to the statement issued by the Province. This victim asked Card. Duka to meet him but the meeting was denied because Card. Duka does not see him as a proper victim; one of his reasons for

⁶ See <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/svedectvi-obeti-bral-jsem-to-jako-sve-vlastni-selhani-sexualni-zneuzivani-bylo-v-cirkvi-tabu-56150>; <https://denikn.cz/95824/vedel-jsem-ze-i-kdyz-reknu-ne-stejne-se-neubranim-knez-me-zneuzival-a-pak-jsem-se-mu-z-toho-musel-zpovidat/> (21.01.2022).

⁷ Later on, it was said that the Archdiocese could do nothing as he had not said the name of his perpetrator and so he had covered for him. See <https://www.dominikduka.cz/rozhovory-menu/rozhovor-pro-server-hlidaci-pes/>; <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TtW3raDPXk> (21.01.2022).

⁸ The canonical procedure disappointed him; he claimed it insensitive both to the victim and perpetrator, indiscreet as the sensitive information was unnecessarily shared with a lot of people and also with media. He claimed he and his family were traumatized by the unprofessional treatment of his case. Jiří Kylar had been approached by more victims, he himself had found another victim of the same perpetrator, and wanted to assure the proper and sensitive way to handle them before they would share their names and stories with the church superiors so that they would have no traumatizing experience. See <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/aktuality/190331kardinal-dominik-duka-v-sobotu-odvolal-ze-sluzby-kneze-z-pripadu-panajiriho-kylara>; https://www.christnet.eu/zpravy/29609/kardinal_duka_podal_kvuli_zneuzivani_trestni_oznameni_obet_mu_vsak_neveri.url; <https://www.facebook.com/michal.opatrný.5/posts/2270133246341311> (21.01.2022).

⁹ See https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/cirkev-dominikani-sexualni-zneuzivani_1904042355_ako; <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/duka-o-nem-vedel-a-nekonal-ustavni-soud-resil-sexualni-delikt-v-cirkvi-166776> (21.01.2022), and other links cited in the article.

¹⁰ See the interview with Jiří Kylar and the present provincial Lukáš Fošum OP in the Catholic TV Noe <https://www.tvnoe.cz/porad/24393-kulaty-stul-sexualni-zneuzivani> (21.01.2022), also https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/dominikani-katolicka-cirkev-sexualni-zneuzivani-deti-mladistvi-lukas-fosum_1904071845_lac (21.01.2022).

this attitude was the homosexual orientation of this victim and his supposed sinful sexual life.¹¹

In the Diocese of Plzeň, three priests were said to be investigated. One of them, during the canonical process, had asked to be dismissed from the clerical state and the rescript was granted to him.¹² In the case of the other one, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith decided to leave the solution in the hands of the diocesan bishop because the presumed act had not be a crime at the time of its presumed committment. The priest then resigned from all his offices.¹³ The third case is not concluded yet. Thanks to open and at the same time decent actions of the diocesan bishop Mons. Tomáš Holub in relation to parishioners and to journalists, there were no scandals examined in the media.

The discreditation of the situation in the Czech Catholic Church by Card. Dominik Duka led one victim to make a public appearance with the intention to educate people in the matter of sexual abuse and its dynamics. Her name was Jiřina Kočí and she had been abused by a Salesian priest. The Salesian Congregation had reacted very well and the provincial took part in the reportage.¹⁴

In January 2019, the lay judge of the Diocesan Ecclesial Tribunal of Brno, Jan Rozek, founded the Associazione “Pro čistou církev” – “For the Pure Church”, and started the website which has offered the legal, therapeutic and financial help to victims of sexual abuse and other delicts from catholic church employes. He declared to propose his plan of helping victims to Card. Duka and to the ČBK but it was not accepted, so he started to work on his own because of a deep feeling of duty to help the victims.¹⁵ The ČBK issued a statement in which it did not recommend taking advantage of the offer of Jan Rozek.¹⁶ The diocesan bishop

¹¹ See <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/dominikani-priznali-sest-pripadu-sexualniho-zneuzivani-69738>; <https://denikn.cz/649522/duka-zpochybnuje-pripad-sexualniho-zneuzivani-ktery-potvrdila-policie-i-jeho-rad-omlouvav-se-odmita/?ref=list>; https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/cirkev-dominikani-sexualni-zneuzivani_1904042355_ako (21.01.2022).

¹² See *Acta curiae episcopalis pilznensis* 07-08/2021, n. 24, N.E. 2354/2021, p. 14.

¹³ See <https://www.bip.cz/cs/novinky/2021-01-oznameni-o-vysledku-setreni-loketskeho-farare> (21.01.2022).

¹⁴ See <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/sekce/audio-podcast-ve-stinu-celibatu-429> (21.01.2022) (podcast); <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/tri-roky-hrubeho-sexu-zenu-dostihlo-davne-trauma-ze-zneuzivani-v-cirkvi-166969> (21.01.2022) (video series).

¹⁵ <https://www.procistoucirkev.cz/> (21.01.2022),

¹⁶ See <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/aktuality/190206prohlaseni-generalniho-sekretare-cbk-k-webu-jana-rozka> (21.01.2022).

of Brno removed Jan Rozek from his office of the judge of the diocesan tribunal with justification that he did not have the necessary prerequisites for the office of judge, had lost his unimpaired reputation and did not keep the oath he took on taking the office. The oath states that any judge had to be strictly impartial, an obligation which Jan Rozek had violated by starting his association.¹⁷

On April 3, 2019, the Czech TV broadcast the report in which Jan Rozek and two Catholic experts had commented on the topic of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and two Czech victims of sexual abuse anonymously told their stories.¹⁸ In response, card. Duka filed a criminal complaint against an unknown perpetrator so that “the Police of the Czech Republic would investigate if these criminal acts had been really committed and claiming anybody who knows any victim or perpetrator was obliged to name them.”¹⁹

Because they had been publicly claiming to know more victims of Catholic priests, Jan Rozek and Jiří Kylar retrieved the pre-suit notice from the legal representative of Card. Duka. Card. Duka asked them to report to him or to the Police all the cases they knew. In that document, the legal representant of Card. Duka had suspectedion that both men had covered up for the perpetrators and had favoured them, and had damaged the reputation of the Catholic Church.²⁰ In November 2019 the members of the ČBK voted by a majority of votes to file the criminal report against unknown perpetrators of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic quoting the words of Jiří Kylar and of Jan Rozek. Both men were then questioned on the Police.²¹ Jiří Kylar responded with the open letter in which he declared that he tried to, repeatedly but unsuccessfully,

¹⁷ See https://www.idnes.cz/brno/zpravy/cirkev-krestanstvi-aktivista-soudce-vyhazov-odvolani-jan-rozek-pomoc-obeti-brno.A190220_458759_brno-zpravy_mos1 (21.01.2022).

¹⁸ See <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10117034229-168-hodin/219452801100303/>; <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/2749757-knez-se-nade-mnou-ukajel-znasilnili-mepopisuji-obeti-zneuzivani-v-cirkvi-je-hysterie> (21.01.2022).

¹⁹ See <https://www.dominikduka.cz/vyjadreni/stanovisko-k-ochrane-pred-sexualnim-zneuzivanim/>; <https://www.dominikduka.cz/rozhovory-menu/rozhovor-pro-server-hlidacipes/> (21.01.2022).

²⁰ The pre-suit notice to Jan Rozek can be found on: <https://www.dominikduka.cz/dokumenty/vyzva-panu-rozkovi/> (21.01.2022).

²¹ See <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/cirkev-vysetruje-obet-sexualniho-nasili/r~78b0f9cafcb11e9b259ac1f6b220ee8/>; https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/ceska-biskupska-konference-dominik-duka-zneuzivani-v-cirkvi-trestni-oznameni.A191124_145633_domaci_chtl/; <https://www.dominikduka.cz/rozhovory-menu/nedelni-partie-na-tv-prima/> (21.01.2022).

meet with card Duka to discuss the best ways to help victims of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, and has marked his criminal report as threatening.²²

At present, the ČBK does not intend to conduct any research or compile any statistics regarding the cases of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic, because there is no need to do it. Card. Dominik Duka is convicted that only an independent state court judgment could determine with certainty who is a real victim and who is a real perpetrator.²³

In October 2019, Jiří Kylar, Jiřina Kočí and few other victims and their supporters founded the Association named “Někdo Ti uvěří” – “Somebody will believe you” with the goal to help the victims and their families and to promote education in the matter of the sexual abuse especially in the religious background.²⁴ After the broadcasting of the series with Jiřina Kočí, in the short time about 30 victims contacted the association.²⁵

So far, the Czech Catholic Church claims it not to be necessary to provide any historical survey of cases of sexual abuse by catholic priests. It is said that the number of cases is much lower than in the other parts of the world and these are only failures of individuals.²⁶

2. Education

In the Czech Republic, there are three absolvents of the Diploma in Safeguarding, the study program founded by prof. Hans Zollner SJ at the Pontifical Gregorian

²² See https://www.christnet.eu/clanky/6399/chtel_jsem_spolecne_hledat_cesty_pomoci_obetem_dockal_jsem_se_odmitani_a_trestniho_oznameni.url (21.01.2022).

²³ See for instance <https://plus.rozhlas.cz/je-nicnedelani-bohuliba-cinnost-8114080>; https://www.christnet.eu/zpravy/29899/cbk_podala_trestni_oznameni_kvuli_moznemu_sexualnimu_zneuzivani.url; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4xYK51Pkx4&t=1s>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K596WNZS-ew&t=51s>; <https://www.dominikduka.cz/rozhovory-menu/rozhovor-pro-server-hlidaci-pes/> (21.01.2022).

²⁴ <https://www.nekdotiuveri.cz/> (21.04.2022). The Facebook Page of the Association is highly followed.

²⁵ See <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/mam-deti-ve-veku-kdy-jsem-byl-sam-zneuzity-i-proto-jsem-promluvil-167757> (21.04.2022).

²⁶ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K596WNZS-ew&t=49s>; <https://www.vaticannews.va/cs/vatikan/news/2021-09/o-ochrane-deti-pred-zneuzivanim-rozhovor-s-jaroslavem-sturmou.html>; <https://denikn.cz/718031/zjisteni-jsou-zranujici-v-cesku-ale-pro-podobne-vysetrovani-neni-duvod-reaguje-cirkev-na-zneuzivani-ve-francii/> (21.01.2022).

University in Rome.²⁷ These three people have helped the victims of sexual abuse in the Church even before their study and now are helping them by organizing conferences and education programs, publishing texts and other educational material such as podcasts and videos, by therapies, spiritual direction and legal assistance.²⁸

Sr. Theresien and Fr. Marek prepared one study day for the Bishop's conference here in Czech Republic and Fr. Marek personally helped also to have a study day for the Bishop in Slovak Republic. Both were invited to give lectures to the priests of three dioceses.

Sr. Theresien and Fr. Marek organized five conferences and seminars on the topic of sexual abuse, trauma and its consequences. They organized three conferences for seminarians of both seminaries in the Czech Republic, several conferences and seminars for professionals: nurses, teachers, priests, religious, and for the public. They also have cooperated with their colleagues from Slovakia.

Since 2018, Fr. Marek has run courses on Safeguarding in the Catholic Theological Faculty of the Charles University in Praha leading to a certificate of completion, and two-days seminar for religious. He also prepared the extended course but because of the pandemic situation, since 2021 these courses have been impossible to open.²⁹

Sr. Theresien and Fr. Marek participated in several interviews and shows for the Catholic media such as the Catholic newspaper "Katolický týdeník". Together with Sr. Theresien they spoke in the Catholic TV, Noe.³⁰

Martina Vintrová in 1999 led a lecture for members of Church Tribunals and courses for priests, permanent deacons and pastoral assistants of the Diocese of Plzeň. She also provides the Facebook page "Oběti sexualizovaného

²⁷ Sr. Theresien Martina Bartoňová SCB absolved in 2017, Fr. Marek Drábek O.Praem absolved in 2018, Martina Vintrová absolved in 2019.

²⁸ Sr. Theresien has been working with victims as psychotherapists, Fr. Marek works with victims and perpetrators as spiritual advisor, Martina Vintrová as a canon lawyer has mediated between victims and church superiors to explain and defend their rights. All of them have given lectures.

²⁹ See <https://www.czv.ktf.cuni.cz/CZVKTF-150.html>; <https://www.czv.ktf.cuni.cz/CZVKTF-52.html>; <https://www.czv.ktf.cuni.cz/CZVKTF-142.html> (21.01.2022).

³⁰ See for instance <https://www.katyd.cz/clanky/jak-resit-zneuzivani-v-cirkvi.html>; <https://www.tvnoe.cz/porad/17551-kulaty-stul-sexualni-zneuzivani>; <https://zpravy.proglas.cz/13/premonstrat-drabek-mnichovska-zprava-o-zneuzivani-je-vyzvou-jak-se-poucic-z-minulosti/> (21.01.2022).

násilí nejen v katolické církvi” – “Victims of sexualized violence not only in the Catholic Church” trying to spread information about the topic and so to change people’s thinking on it.³¹

All three together with Jiří Kylar and other cooperators and members of the Association “Někdo ti uvěří”, have provided various lectures and courses for parishes, consecrated persons, students etc. Fr. Marek, at the request of the Ecumenical Council of Churches, in the Czech Republic led a seminar for superiors on non-catholic Christians Communities in the Czech Republic and together with the Association cooperated with with Christians of the other denominations in cases of sexual abuse in their communities. All these are their private initiatives organized at the invitation of interested parties, not the official Catholic Church Events.³²

Recently, Don Libor Botek, the judicial vicar of the Dioceses of Ostrava and Olomouc, has prepared the course for members of the diocesan tribunals and other authorised person through St Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology in Olomouc with the name “Šetření sexuálních deliktů v katolické církvi” – “Investigation of sexual crimes in the Catholic Church,” which should start in 2022.³³

Also the Catholic media: weekly newspaper “Katolický týdeník”, “Radio Proglas” and “TV Noe” have published interviews, articles and informations on the topic.

Fr. Marek was one of the speakers of The Conference of the Church in Central and Eastern Europe “Safeguarding God’s Children” held on 19–22 September 2021 in Warszawa.³⁴

³¹ See <https://www.facebook.com/Ob%C4%9Bti-sexualizovan%C3%A9ho-n%C3%A1sil%C3%AD-nejen-v-katolick%C3%A9-c%C3%ADrkvi-113625493675599> (21.01.2021).

³² These activities are not presented in the official interviews or only marginally although the Catholic church does not provide any official instructions or courses. See <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/aktuality/211007biskup-wasserbauer-radi-bychom-vice-spolupracovali-s-obetmi>; <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/aktuality/211011vyvoj-cirkevni-legislativy-v-otazce-zneuzivani-nezletilych> (21.01.2022).

³³ See <https://www.cmtf.upol.cz/studujte-u-nas/celozivotni-vzdelavani/#c57525> (21.01.2022).

³⁴ See <https://ochronadzieci.eu/en/#prelegenci> (21.01.2022).

3. Publications

There are some very good professional and popular publications about sexual abuse of minors and about safeguarding available in the Czech Republic. There were also two books – testimonies of victims – published in the Czech translation.³⁵

As far as the church environment is concerned, Fr. Marek has published educative videos and videos with testimonies of victims on his videochannel.³⁶

Fr. Marek and Martina Vintrová participated on the content of the special number of the journal “Salve”.³⁷

In the Official Bulletins of the Czech and Moravian Dioceses, there was published a two-page text about sexual abuse of minors, safeguarding and safe conduct of priests.³⁸ The ČBK has published the translation of the publication of the Italian Bishops Conference “Le ferite degli abusi and distributed it to the parishes” available on its website.³⁹

4. Church Documents and Official Contacts

The person responsible for the topic of sexual abuse in the ČBK is Mons. Zdenek Wasserbauer, the auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Praha.⁴⁰

In 2015, the ČBK and the Conference of the Major Superiors of Religious in the Czech Republic adopted a directive named “Společná směrnice ČBK a Konferencí vyšších řeholních představených v ČR pro postup v případech trestných činů pohlavního zneužití osoby mladší 18 let duchovním či laikem v rámci

³⁵ SCHERER Danielle, *Personne ne te croira*, see <https://www.databazeknih.cz/knihy/nikdo-ti-neuveri-pribeh-zeny-zneuzivane-knezem-317855> (21.01.2022); PITTET Daniel, *Mon Père, je vous pardonne*, see <https://www.databazeknih.cz/knihy/otce-odpoustim-vam-408738> (21.01.2022).

³⁶ See <https://www.youtube.com/c/MarekOPraem> (21.01.2022).

³⁷ See <https://salve.op.cz/archiv/zneuzivani> (21.04.2022).

³⁸ See for instance the Attachment of the *Acta curiae episcopalis Pilznensis* 7–8/2014.

³⁹ See <https://tutelaminori.chiesacattolica.it/online-i-primi-due-sussidi-del-servizio-nazionale-per-la-tutela-dei-minori/>; <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/aktuality/211220zraneni-zpusobena-zneuzivanim-knizni-pomucka-pro-formatory-vychovatele-a-pastoracni-pracovniky> (21.01.2022).

⁴⁰ See <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/cbk-komise> (21.01.2022).

činnosti církve” – “The common guidelines of the ČBK and the Conference of the Major Superiors of Religious in the Czech Republic for the procedure in cases of sexual abuse of a person under the age of 18 by a clergyman or layman in the context of the activities of the Church.”⁴¹ In January 22, 2021, these guidelines were been replaced by “Instrukce o postupu biskupů a vyšších představených při předběžném šetření některých trestných činů proti 6. přikázání Desatera na území ČR” – “Instruction on the procedure of bishops and major superiors in the preliminary investigation of certain crimes against the 6th commandment of the Decalogue in the territory of the Czech Republic.”⁴² The updated directive contains past experiences and speaks more about the cooperation with the state law enforcement authorities. The guidelines have been updated on 8 December 2021 in connection with the amendment of the Book VI of the CIC.⁴³

On the website of the ČBK there is a section called “Ochrana nezletilých v církvi” – “Safeguarding of Minors in the Church”, where some information from the Czech Republic and worldwide as well as the actual guidelines and contacts are published.⁴⁴ The ČBK on 1 May 2019 established the official contact point whose aim is to provide care and assistance to minors and vulnerable persons who had been victims of sexual abuse by a cleric or lay person in the context of the work of the Church. It shall provide professional spiritual and social care, including therapeutic and psychological support, and legal advice. It does not provide for the initiation of a church trial or a police investigation, but offers their mediation. Regarding the reporting of cases, it refers to the general vicars of single dioceses.⁴⁵ There are no data or results about the functioning of the contact point and such information are not included in the Annual Reports or other informational documents of the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic.

⁴¹ See https://cbk.blob.core.windows.net/cms/ContentItems/20618_20618/smernice-cbk-7-2-2019-revidovany-finalni-text.pdf (21.01.2022).

⁴² See https://cbk.blob.core.windows.net/cms/ContentItems/32323_32323/2021-instrukce-ve-zneni-1-novely-schvaleno127-fin.pdf (21.01.2022).

⁴³ See <https://zpravy.proglas.cz/udalosti/cesti-biskupove-zprisonili-instrukce-pro-setreni-pripadu-zneuzivani/>; <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/aktuality/211011vyvoj-cirkevni-legislativy-v-otazce-zneuzivani-nezletilych> (21.01.2022).

⁴⁴ Including interviews and pastoral letters of the Czech bishops (except the one of the Pilsen Bishop Mons. Tomáš Holub). <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/zneuzivani-v-cirkvi>; <https://www.bip.cz/cs/novinky/2019-03-pastyrsky-list-biskupa-tomase-proti-hrichu-je-treba-jednoznacne-vystoupit> (21.01.2022).

⁴⁵ <https://www.ochrananezletilych.cz/> (21.01.2022).

The only numbers were presented by the press agent of the ČBK for Radio Proglas on 16 June 2021. She declared that during the two years of its existence, the contact point was contacted by around thirty persons by phone and around fifty persons by web form. Less than ten people got contact with therapists and other counsellors, the rest of the callers did not ask any help. Some persons expressed doubt over the usefulness and professionalism of the contact point. The functioning of the contact point was investigated by journalists and the Church vowed to fix the detected weak points.⁴⁶

The Diocese of Plzeň is the only diocese which publishes detailed information on its website about the topic and publishes policies for reporting abuse and names its contact persons. The information is victim-friendly.⁴⁷ The Archdioceses of Praha and of Ostrava link to the website of ČBK and of the Contact Point, as well as both Conferences of Major Religious Superiors.⁴⁸ The other dioceses also published information on their website about the establishment of the Contact Point but have no special information section or link.

The Religious Congregation of the Salesians of Don Bosco published on its website the policies for the cases of sexual abuse by their members or in their facilities, and the principles of prevention. The Salesian Province of Praha has issued the guidelines of prevention of misconduct for its organizations.⁴⁹

Also, the Province of Capuchins in the Czech Republic has published on its website their own guidelines.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ See <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/vyrocní-zpravy-cbk>; <https://farnostvmyto.cz/2020/09/23/stahnete-si-aktualizovanou-brozuru-katolicka-cirkev-v-cr/>; <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/aktuality/190430katolicka-cirkev-otevrela-kontaktni-misto-na-pomoc-obetem-sexualniho-zneužívání>; <https://zpravy.proglas.cz/13/13-duvera-empatie-naslouchani-na-pomoc-obetem-zneužívání-v-cirkvi/> (21.04.2022).

⁴⁷ See https://www.bip.cz/ochrana_osob (21.04.2022).

⁴⁸ See https://apha.cz/kontakty_a_dokumenty; <https://www.ado.cz/cemu-se-venujeme-pomoc-v-problemech/ochrana-nezletilych/>; <https://www.rehole.cz/> (21.04.2022).

⁴⁹ See <https://www.sdb.cz/prevence-zneužívání/> (21.04.2022).

⁵⁰ See <https://kapucini.cz/domains/kapucini.cz/index.php/provincie/dokprovinc/1324-ochrana-nezletilych> (21.04.2022).

5. Prayer

Since 2018, Fr. Marek has organized the celebration of the Holy Mass for victims of sexual abuse, their families, friends and helpers, on November 18, the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. He has been joined by the parishes in Plzeň and Cheb. The diocesan bishop of Plzeň personally celebrated this mass on 2020 and 2021. The ČBK in 2018 published the information about this event in Praha, Plzeň a Cheb and informed about prayer for victims in many particular churches on the Holy Friday 2021. But there was no special day chosen by the ČBK to be observed as the annual National Day of Prayer for Victims and Survivors of Abuse with the community of faithful, as it was asked by Pope Francis to all particular Churches.⁵¹

On Palm Sunday 2019, the religious sisters prayed for the victims of sexual abuse in the Church.⁵²

The diocesan bishop of Hradec Králové Mons. Jan Vokál, on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of St. Francisco Marto of Fatima, invited the faithful of his diocese to celebrate the days from 7–14 April as a week of penance for the sins against minors and vulnerable persons.⁵³

In 2019, the Diocese of Plzeň printed the prayer leaflets called “Prayers for help in cases of sexual abuse”; the leaflet contains prayers for Church superiors, victims, abusers, believers and persons helping the victims persons.⁵⁴ In 2021, Fr. Marek wrote the text of the Way of the Cross of the Victims of Sexual Abuse.⁵⁵

⁵¹ See <https://www.tutelaminorum.org/first-friday-of-lent-churches-to-mark-day-of-prayer-for-victims-and-survivors-of-abuse/>; <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/aktuality/181108msea-obei-sexualniho-zneuzivani>; <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/aktuality/210219prvni-postni-patek-modlitba-za-obei-zneuzivani> (21.01.2022).

⁵² See <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/aktuality/190408reholnice-se-budou-modlit-za-obei-sexualniho-zneuzivani> (21.01.2022).

⁵³ See <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/aktuality/190404biskup-jan-vokal-vyzval-k-tydnu-pokani-za-hrichy-proti-nezletilym-a-zranitelnym> (21.01.2022).

⁵⁴ No available on-line.

⁵⁵ See <https://www.nekdotiuveri.cz/clanky/krizova-cesta-zneuziteho-krista> (21.01.2022).

6. Specifics of the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic

Speaking about specific situation of the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe, Fr. Hans Zollner said that besides the general heaviness to speak about sexuality, there are specific phenomena arising from the region's history that set an additional dampener on the people's ability to speak about and report abuse.

People who grew up in the Eastern Bloc could retain certain freedoms only if they did not really trust the authorities and law enforcement. Christians were the enemy to the government and law enforcement, there was no independent justice system and the media was inclined to enhance any stories about allegations of misconduct in the Church. Another aspect is that psychology and psychiatry were employed to punish those who opposed the communist government. These elements of repression led the people in Eastern and Central Europe to mistrust state authorities, the media, and psychiatry.⁵⁶

During the Conference of the Church in Central and Eastern Europe "Safeguarding God's Children" held on 19–22 September 2021 in Warszawa, Prof. Tomáš Halík spoke about specifics of the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic in detail during his lecture called "In animo contrito" and about the phenomenon of abuse in a wider context. The problems he named were: the panic response of the Church on the sexual revolution in the 1960s and inadequate spiritual and psychological preparation of future priests for a life of celibacy; insufficient reflection of development of biological and sociological sciences, the maladies of the system: the relations between Church and power, clergy and laity, and others. There are tendencies to say that the problem of sexual, psychological and spiritual abuse is the problem of the "corrupt West".

The tendency to cover up and downplay these phenomena in the churches of the post-communist world has a number of specific causes. The main cause was "clericalism" and "triumphalism", the abuse of power and authority. In post-communist countries it had a number of specific reasons. The communist régime have often sought to discredit the Church and inconvenient priests by falsely accusing them of sexual abuse. The outside persecution of the Church had caused the great solidarity and unity. There had been a lot of real heroes among Christians. And so, there had been not much willingness to see "dark shadows" in their own ranks "and to admit that the reality is usually not simply black and white." After the fall of Communism, there had been tendencies to see the Post-Communist Church as a pure "Sleeping Beauty", the church of martyrs which can give moral lectures to the "corrupt West". The facts about

⁵⁶ See <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2021-09/protection-minors-warsaw-conference-europe-hans-zollner.html> (21.01.2022).

the Church causing suffering itself did not fit the image of the suffering Church of the martyrs. It was the seductive self-illusion which took hold for many reasons. One of them was the fact, that after the fall of communism, many Christians could not live without the enemy. The “corrupt liberal West” was the ideal surrogate enemy. There was also the concept of messianism, the concept of the “chosen ones” (the image of the suffering messiah and the suffering people) helped the churches in times of persecution to help compensate for inferiority complexes towards the West. In the history of the country, there has been a long tradition of anticlericalism. After a brief religious revival before and after the fall of Communism, when the Church enjoyed great sympathy in society, it became clear that the Church was unable to respond adequately to the challenges of the new era, and it led to frustration and looking to the cause of this situation, but outside the Church.⁵⁷

7. Conclusion

The Catholic Church in the Czech Republic drew up guidelines and set up a contact centre for the cases of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable people by its clerics, religious and lay cooperators. Until now, there are no central statistics available, no central prevention programs, no central system of education and training. The single activities have been provided by a few committed people.

After completing her study on the CCP at the Pontifical Gregorian University and with two brave previous alumni, the author of this article believed that it would be able in her particular church to start to solving the problem of sexual abuse in a proper way using knowledge and experience already gained in the Catholic Church. From her experience, it seems that even the local church has to go through the same phases as the other particular churches worldwide. The reactions that she experienced mirrored the seven stages of grief which are present in reaction to a loss and connected with mourning as the outward expression of the loss of a loved one. The seven emotional stages of grief are usually understood to be shock or disbelief, denial, bargaining, guilt, anger, depression, and acceptance/hope. Symptoms of grief can be emotional, physical,

⁵⁷ See <https://www.vaticannews.va/cs/vatikan/news/2021-09/in-animo-contrito-fenomen-neuzivani-v-sirsim-kontextu.html>; <https://ochronadzieci.eu/en/aktualnosci/msgr-tomas-halik-in-animo-contrito-the-phenomenon-of-abuse-in-a-wider-context/#prelegenci> (21.01.2022).

social, or religious in nature.⁵⁸ “It turns out to be difficult to process the fact that although the Church was oppressed and persecuted by the regime of the time, there were people in it who committed abuses and thus also oppressed and destroyed the lives of others.” (Fr. Marek, during the Conference in Warszawa).⁵⁹ May the grief of the Catholic Christians over the fact of existence of sexual abuse within their own ranks will also end with acceptance and hope/eagerness to solve the problem in a proper way.

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⁵⁸ See for instance https://www.medicinenet.com/loss_grief_and_bereavement/article.htm (21.01.2022).

⁵⁹ <https://zpravy.proglas.cz/13/premonstrat-m-drabek-je-tezke-prijmout-ze-i-v-utlacovane-cirkvi-dochazelo-k-zneuzivani/> (21.01.2022).