



Fr. Prof. Ignác Antonín Hrdina (1953–2022)

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Professor Ignác Antonín Hrdina (1953–2022): Life and work

Książd profesor Ignác Antonín Hrdina (1953–2022): życie i praca

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Abstract: This article is dedicated to the memory of Prof. Ignác Antonín Hrdina, who passed away on 22 April 2022. During the communist period in Czechoslovakia, when he was not permitted to complete his theological studies, he worked a civilian job as a lawyer. At the same time, however, he secretly entered the Premonstratensian Order and was covertly ordained as a priest in Krakow, Poland. What he was prevented from doing in the first part of his life, however, was fully developed after 1989, when he emerged from the underground to continue his spiritual work. He was involved in the renewal of monastic life at Strahov Monastery in Prague, where he served for many years as a parish priest and rector of the basilica. At the same time, he developed his academic career at the Faculty of Theology of the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, the Faculty of Law of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen and the Catholic Theological Faculty of Charles University in Prague. With his passing, the Church in Czech republic and the academic community have lost their leading expert on canon law; however, he did leave behind him a number of specialised publications that will continue to benefit future generations.

Key words: Ignác Antonín Hrdina; canon law; law on religion; Premonstratensians; Charles University in Prague; University of West Bohemia in Pilsen

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł jest poświęcony pamięci o. prof. Ignáca Antonína Hrdiny, który zmarł 22 kwietnia 2022 r. W komunistycznej Czechosłowacji nie pozwolono mu ukończyć studiów teologicznych, pracował więc jako prawnik. W tym samym czasie jednak tajnie wstąpił do zakonu norbertanów i potajemnie przyjął święcenia kapłańskie w Krakowie. Działalność duszpasterską rozwinął po 1989 r., kiedy to mógł w pełni ujawnić swoją tożsamość, podejmując służbę, której oddanie uniemożliwiono mu w pierwszej części życia. Uczestniczył w odnowieniu życia monastycznego w klasztorze na Strahowie w Pradze, gdzie przez wiele lat pełnił również funkcję proboszcza i rektora bazyliki. Równoległe rozwijał swoją karierę naukową na Wydziale Teologicznym Uniwersytetu Południowoczeskiego w Czeskich Budziejowicach, Wydziale Prawa Uniwersytetu Zachodnioczeskiego w Pilźnie oraz Katolickim Wydziale Teologicznym Uniwersytetu Karola w Pradze. Po jego śmierci Kościół w Czechach i tamtejsze wspólnoty akademickie straciły czołowego eksperta w dziedzinie prawa kanonicznego. Profesor I. A. Hrdina pozostawił jednak po sobie szereg ważnych publikacji naukowych, z których będą mogły korzystać również przyszłe pokolenia.

Słowa kluczowe: Ignác Antonín Hrdina; prawo kanoniczne; prawo wyznaniowe; norbertanie; Uniwersytet Karola w Pradze; Uniwersytet Zachodnioczeski w Pilźnie

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Introduction

On April 22, 2022, the Lord of Life and Death called for all eternity Prof. Ignác Antonín Hrdina, a leading Czech expert in the field of canon law, legal theory, legal history and law on religion. As an academic but also a purely practical man, he authored countless scholarly articles and publications and translated legal sources from Latin and German. For many years until his death, he was active in the ecclesiastical judiciary in the Czech Republic. At the same time, he helped his home monastic community of Premonstratensians after returning to the monastery in Strahov, Prague, contributing to restore monastic life as Provisor (chief economist) and lawyer. Moreover, for much of this period, he was active in spiritual administration as parish priest and rector of the basilica at the monastery in Strahov, a popular preacher whom people from all over Prague regularly came to hear. Last but not least, he was, to all his acquaintances, a kindly person and an excellent companion, full of humour and warm welcomes.

1. Biography

Born on 6 March 1953 in Prague to parents Antonín and Milada Hrdina, Ignác Antonín Hrdina graduated from grammar school in Prague Košíře nad Turbovou in 1972. He subsequently studied theology at the Roman Catholic Cyril and Methodius Theological Faculty in Litoměřice.

He entered the novitiate of the Strahov Premonstratensians in secret at a young age, taking his vestition in Milevsko on 23 July 1970, his temporary vows in Klučnice on 24 March 1972 and his solemn vows in Milevsko on 25 March 1977. Since the communist regime did not allow him to complete his theological studies and become a priest, he continued his spiritual formation in secret. For this reason, he received his ordination as deacon and priest in Kraków on 23 May 1977 (again confidentially). He celebrated his first Mass in the Camaldolese monastery in Bielany (now part of Kraków) on 24 May 1977.

Between 1975 and 1988, he worked at the Czech Catholic Charity, where he managed its business and production activities as head of the Temple Service, before acting as head of the legal department of Stře-dočeské dřevařské závody (Central Bohemian Timber Plants) between

1988 and 1990. During his employment, he graduated from the Faculty of Law of Charles University (1982–1987), where he also received a doctorate in law.

He then began working publicly as a priest after the fall of the communist regime; he was appointed parish priest of the Roman Catholic parish of the Church of the Assumption of the Our Lady in Strahov on 1 June 1990, a position he held until 1 July 2006. Furthermore, he was appointed Provisor of the Royal Canonry of Premonstratensians at Strahov on 16 January 1991. In this capacity, he was responsible for the legal, economic, personnel and other operational matters of the monastery. He resigned from the office of Provisor in 2018.

He also pursued an academic career from the mid-1990s onwards, beginning his teaching work in 1995 at the Faculty of Theology of the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice and the Faculty of Law of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, teaching at the Catholic Theological Faculty of Charles' University in Prague from 2002. He primarily focused on canon law, law on religion, Roman law, legal theory and legal history. He obtained a licentiate degree in 2000 and a doctorate in canon law in 2004 from the Catholic University of Lublin. In 2002, he was appointed Associate Professor of Historical and Legal Sciences at Charles University in Prague. At the recommendation of the Scientific Council of Palacký University in Olomouc, he was appointed Professor of Theology by the President of the Czech Republic in 2008.

He also practised canon law. On 15 December 1996, he was appointed judge of the Interdiocesan Church Court in Prague. He was then appointed Judicial Vicar and President of the newly established Metropolitan Church Court of the Archdiocese of Prague on 1 July 2009. In addition to making sure this institution ran like clockwork, attending to legal and purely practical matters alike and maintaining an extraordinarily friendly atmosphere, he also introduced the practice of annual judicial seminars in Hradec Králové, which representatives from all the courts in the Bohemian and Moravian provinces were happy to attend. He served as Judicial Vicar until 30 June 2019, when he resigned the position for health reasons, although he remained First Vice-Official from 1 July 2019 until his death.

2. Personality

He spent his childhood holidays in Kuks in East Bohemia, and he fell in love with Kuks for life and was always happy to return there. Indeed, he said, with some exaggeration, that he was “mad about Kuks.” Whenever he went to East Bohemia, which he considered to be the most beautiful part of the country, on a day out, a holiday or for some other occasion, he would roll down the window of his car on the border of the Hradec Králové region to “take in the East Bohemian air.” Kuks, and particularly its owner, Count František Antonín Špork, were the subject of his several publications. He was very fond of walking in the countryside, especially that of East Bohemia, and he loved the beautiful Czech countryside in general, considering himself to be a patriot. Among other things, he was also an enthusiastic and learned mushroom picker.

His hobbies included reading professional literature and belles-lettres and fiction covering a wide range of genres, and he was able to recite domestic and world poetry by heart. He particularly admired Baroque art, architecture, painting and sculpture. Incidentally, he also knew his way around music, which he listened to quite often. He was particularly fond of classicist and romantic music, was a connoisseur of opera, and, in particular, an enthusiastic admirer of the works of Richard Wagner; however, he also liked simple songs from the hymnal. During his time as parish priest at the monastery basilica in Strahov, he took great care of and promoted the elevation of church music, making the basilica renowned and popular for its level of organ music or, on more festive occasions, the church choir and its fine musical accompaniment.

He had perfect command of German, passive English, and Latin, in which he could write and deliver fluent speech; the way he presented Latin made it seem like it was far from being a “dead” language. He put this knowledge to good use in his scientific work and in countless translations, of which he was a prolific author.

In his youth, as far as his health allowed, he also played sports. He liked playing football, but also completed parachute training and had several jumps under his belt. He was also an avid chess player who played at the Central Army House in Dejvice; he fondly recalled having taken part in a chess simul with one of Czech grandmasters. Indeed, he

claimed that he learned logical thinking from a textbook, *The Theory of Modern Chess*.¹

He had many friends in various circles, from those with little education to those with great scientific minds. Indeed, he enjoyed spending time with his friends in restaurants over many good drinks and delicious meals. He was an excellent companion and an attentive, generous and gracious host. He was able to talk to everyone at their own levels without ever implying that he was intellectually superior to them; in fact, he always emphasised what he did not know, considering himself a simple man. He had a remarkable and original sense of humour, something that stayed with him, even in his most difficult moments. He knew an incredible number of jokes and was great at telling them. His great gift for words was written and spoken. He was an excellent orator and a sparkling and engaging lecturer – one of the many reasons he was so popular with his students.

3. Scientific activities

Professor Hrdina was the author of numerous publications, articles and translations in several languages. Among his work² are the following: a text for teaching the basics of secular law at the Faculty of Theology of the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice (*Učební text k výuce základů sekulárního práva na Teologické fakultě Jihočeské univerzity v Českých Budějovicích*), 1995; Canon Law: Special Part (*Kanonické právo: Zvláštní část*), 1996; Canon Law: History, Theory, General Part (co-authored with Stanislav Balík; *Kanonické právo: Dějiny, teorie, obecná část*), 1997; Fundamentals of the Theory and General Part of Canon Law (*Základy teorie a obecná část kanonického práva*; habilitation thesis), 1997; Texts for the Study of Canon Law (*Texty ke studiu kanonického práva*), 1998; Syllabus of Roman Private Law (*Sylabus římského práva soukromého*), 2002; Canon Law (*Kanonické právo*), 2002; Religious Freedom in the Law of the Czech Republic (*Náboženská svoboda v právu České republiky*), 2004; Texts for the Study of

¹ Pachman, Luděk. 1955–1959. *Theorie moderního šachu I, II, III, IV*. Praha: Sportovní a turistické nakladatelství.

² The complete list of his publications (original titles) can be found here: <http://www.historyoflaw.eu/czech/Hrdina-bibl.pdf>.

Ecclesiastical Law I–III (*Texty ke studiu konfesního práva I–III*), 2006–2007; Relations between the State and the Church in the Czech Republic 1990–1999 (*Vztahy státu a církve v České republice v letech 1990–1999*), 2007; Sources for the Study of Canon Law (*Prameny ke studiu kanonického práva*), 2007; Overview of Roman Private Law for the Comprehensive State Examination (co-authored with Petr Dostalík, *Přehled římského práva soukromého ke státní souborné zkoušce*), 2010; Canon Law: History of Sources, Theory, Applicable Law (*Kanonické právo: Dějiny pramenů, teorie, platné právo*), 2011; The Heresy Trial of Count F. A. Špork in a Legal-Historical and Theological Context (co-authored with Hedvika Kuchařová, *Kacířský proces s hrabětem F. A. Šporkem v právně historickém a teologickém kontextu*), 2011; Chrestomathy for the Study of the Philosophy of Law (co-authored with Zdeněk Masopust, *Chrestomatie ke studiu filosofie práva*), 2011; Abecedarium of the General Theory of Law (*Slabikář obecné teorie práva*), 2013; Why was Count Špork Kept in a Prison for Debtors?: A Legal Historical Analysis of a Dispute Between Count Špork and Lawyer Neumann (*Proč hrabě Špork seděl ve vězení pro dlužníky: Právně historická analýza jednoho sporu hraběte Šporka s advokátem Neumannem*), 2013; Historical Library of Kuks Hospital and its Romanesque-Canonical Fund: a Historical-Legal Study (co-authored with Jindřich Kolda, *Historická knihovna Hospitalu Kuks a její romanisticko-kanonistický fond: Historicko-právní studie*), 2014; Documents of the Council of Trent: Latin Text and Translation into Czech (*Dokumenty tridentského koncilu: latinský text a překlad do češtiny*), 2015; The Mysteries Surrounding the Marriage of Anna Kateřina Šporková: A Historical-Legal Study in Matrimonial Law (co-authored with Hedvika Kuchařová, *Záhady kolem sňatku Anny Kateřiny Šporkové: Historicko-právní studie z manželského práva*), 2017; Theory of Canon Law (co-authored with Miloš Szabo, *Teorie kanonického práva*), 2018; P. Vladimír Matějka: Priest of the Hradec Králové Diocese (*P. Vladimír Matějka: kněz královéhradecké diecéze*), 2018; An attempt to provide a brief history of the town of Dvůr Králové, which contains XXX documents (*Pokus o stručné dějiny města Dvora Králové, v nichž je obsaženo XXX listin*; translation), 2020; Count Špork, his Kuks, and the Dvůr Králové area: The Špork and Kuks miscellanea (*O hraběti Šporkovi, jeho Kuksu a Královédvorskou*), 2020; Annexes to the Constitutions of the Order of the Canonry of Premonstratensians (*Konstituce Řádu premonstrátských řeholních kanovníků: Přílohy*; translation), 2021; and Spiritual Directory of

the Premonstratensian Order (*Duchovní direktář Premonstrátského řádu*; translation), 2021. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the publication of his translation of the life of visionary Maxmilian Zásnecká (1655–1718, a Premonstratensian sister at the monastery in Doksany), which he completed in 2021, and the monograph *History of the Sources of Canon Law (Dějiny pramenů kanonického práva)*, which was published in 2023.

His articles were mainly published in the following periodicals: *Revue církevního práva* (Church Law Review), *Právník* (Lawyer), *Dialog Evropa XXI* (Dialogue Europe XXI), *Právněhistorické studie* (Legal Historical Studies), *Vlastivědné čtení o Královédvorskú* (Local History Reading about the Dvůr Králové Area), and *Bibliotheca Strahoviensis*.

He contributed to the Encyclopaedia of Czech Legal History with the following entries: The Compact of Basel (1433/1436); Bula Industriae tuae of Pope John VIII (880); Decrees and Canons of the Council of Trent (1545–1563); Concordat with the Austrian Empire (1855); Separation of Church and State, Particular Canon Law, Trials of Count Špork, Recourse in Canon Law, The College of Consultors, Salt Treaty and the Cassa Salis (1630); Treaty with the Holy See – unratified (2002), Ecclesiastical Courts, Religious Freedom, The “Concordat of Šacka Mountain” on the Status of the Church in Bohemia (1221/1222).

The book *Melior est aquisitio scientiae negotiatione argenti: in honour of Prof. Ignác Antonín Hrdina, O. Praem* was published on the occasion of his 60th birthday in 2013, with contributions from his friends and colleagues from various faculties and the Strahov Monastery. Unfortunately, the collection *Deus providebit* (2023) dedicated to his (late) 70th birthday already had to be published in memoriam.

