



## **Values and critical thinking are pillars of dialogue in truth Forty delegates of Justice & Peace Europe gathered in Prague**

**Justice & Peace Europe discussed the challenges of disinformation and the contribution of Catholic Social Teaching to the renewal of an authentic public discourse. The forty delegates representing twenty European Justice and Peace commissions and several invited guests gathered from 20 to 23 September 2024 for the annual International Workshop and General Assembly in Prague. The theme of the International Workshop was “Dialogue in Truth is the only answer in time of instability”.**

The meeting was opened by H.E. Mgr. Václav Malý, Auxiliary Bishop of Prague and President of the Czech Justice & Peace Commission. The keynote speeches at the opening ceremony were delivered by Ms. Věra Jourová, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Values and Transparency, and H.E. Mgr. Tomáš Holub, Bishop of Pilsen. The EU Commission Vice-President emphasised the need to strike a balance between protecting the freedom of speech and countering disinformation, while promoting an evidence-based approach to truth and responsible fact-checking. Bishop Tomáš Holub underlined that Christians are seekers and not owners of the truth, and that politicians should combine realism and vision in their service for the common good.

In four workshops on Saturday morning, the European delegates had the occasion to meet witnesses of the Communist past and actors engaged in local charitable and humanitarian organisations. Attending the re-enactment of the battle of the White Mountain and a subsequent presentation about the propagandistic exploitation of this event by all sides allowed them to approach the theme of their meeting from an historical perspective.

The evening Mass in the Archabbey of St. Adalbert and St. Margaret, presided by Archbishop Antoine Hérouard, Co-President of Justice & Peace Europe, was celebrated in memory of late Archbishop Noël Treanor, the former President of the network. Presentations by Dr. Petr Janeček on rumours and myths, and by Mgr. Kateřina Hlaváčová on conspiracy theories, concluded the second day of the International Workshop.

After the Sunday Mass celebrated in the Basilica of the Strahov Monastery and a private visit to the Monastery's famous library, the participants pursued the exploration of the main theme with the help of Dr. Josef Šlerka who outlined in his presentation that intrinsic motivation and meaningfulness are essential to engage in critical thinking. This year's Symbolic Action consisted of a meditative walk focused on Prague's ecological, social and urbanistic wounds. Another regular feature of the International Workshop, the annual Justice and Peace Europe lecture, took place in the prestigious Václav Havel library and was delivered by two speakers: Dr. Petr Jan Vinš, Secretary of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the

Czech Republic, elaborated his views on strategic communication and hybrid warfare, and Prof. Petr Jandejsek elucidated the task for Christian social teaching in view of promoting forgiveness and reconciliation. The final day of the International Workshop ended with a reception offered by H.E. Mgr. Jan Graubner, Archbishop of Prague.

At the General Assembly of Justice & Peace Europe on Monday, 23 September 2024, delegates listened to activity reports from the Co-Presidency, national commissions, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and several invited guests. The Ukrainian delegate briefed the audience about the latest developments in his war-torn country. Several commissions and the Co-Presidency alluded to the suffering of the Armenian people who were forced out of Nagorno-Karabakh one year ago, and to the on-going war in the Holy Land. Justice & Peace Europe deeply opposes the constant disregard for human dignity in the many conflicts and wars all over the world, and renews its commitment for the promotion of justice and peace.

Bernd Hirschberger from the German and Pedro Vaz Patta from the Portuguese Justice & Peace Commission were elected as members of the Executive Committee. Furthermore, the General Assembly invited the Co-Presidency to support the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative and adopted a Statement "Jubilee 2025: Settle unjust and unpayable debts". Co-President Maria Hammershoy concluded the annual gathering of Justice & Peace Europe by thanking the hosting Czech Commission for the organisation and preparation of an enriching and informative programme.

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