
Professor Tomáš Halík receives Templeton Prize

Professor Tomáš Halík receives Templeton Prize

On 14 May, priest of the academic parish and professor of the CU Faculty of Arts Tomáš Halík received the prestigious Templeton Prize, which is awarded for exceptional contributions to the development of the spiritual dimension of life.

The ceremony, held in the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in Trafalgar Square, was also attended by the Rector of Charles University, Professor Tomáš Zima, Czech Minister for Culture Daniel Herman and Cardinals Dominik Duka and Miloslav Vlk.

In his speech to the 600 guests present Halík, who is the rector of the university Church of the Holy Saviour, addressed general questions of faith, the necessity for religious dialogue and current political problems.

Amongst others, he also reacted to the recent declaration by British Prime Minister David Cameron that Britain was Christian country that should be more Christian. According to Halík such declarations, just like the declaration that 'Europe is a Christian continent', posed the question of how religion – and, primarily, which type of Christianity – can change the globalisation process into a culture of dialogue. In Halík's opinion, such a culture must have deeper foundations than the current multicultural society based on tolerance, where people live beside one another, but not together.

In his appearance, the 44th Templeton laureate also focused on the current political situation and warned against the dangers of not only Russian nationalism and 'imperial dreams', but also of current developments in Europe.

"If the dangerous temptation of national selfishness and isolationism were to triumph in Europe, leading to the tragic collapse of the European Union, the nation states of Europe would not acquire greater sovereignty, but instead would be exposed far more to the forces of chaos and destruction from within," said Halík.

Professor Halík shall use the financial endowment from the prize, amounting to GBP 1.1 million, to fund initiatives associated with dialogue between believers and atheists.

Prof. PhDr. Tomáš Halík, Th.D. , works at the CU Faculty of Arts, where he lectures on the philosophy and sociology of religion. Since 1990 he has been president of the Czech Christian Academy and rector of the Church of the Holy Saviour. Since 1 October 2004 he has been priest of the newly-established Prague academic parish.

The Templeton Prize is named after investor and millionaire John Templeton. Past laureates have included Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the Dalai Lama and Mother Teresa. The prize is awarded by the British Academy in London and is unofficially known as the Nobel Prize for religion.