
CU rector: Insignia exhibition “a small miracle”

Visitors to the Czech capital and Charles University have an opportunity to see a unique exhibition on at the Carolinum until the end of January 2019. On view are some of Charles University’s rarest treasures, such as the university’s founding document and its historic seal and insignia. The exhibition is free.

Passers-by and history buffs have roughly a month and a half to see an exhibition unlike any other at the very heart of Charles University, the historic Carolinum building at Ovocný trh, across from the Estates Theatre, a stone’s throw from the Old Town Square.

Entitled Insignia Exhibition, the show gives attendees a rare chance to see some of the university’s most important documents and stunning artefacts.

At the vernissage on the eve of the opening, the university’s rector, Tomáš Zima confirmed that the exhibition was part of ongoing celebrations marking 670 years since the founding of the university and 100 years since the founding of Czechoslovakia.

“In a year [full of so many important anniversaries] this exhibition is a small miracle,” he said, describing valuable documents on view, including rare documents acquired earlier in 2018. Visitors - over the first three days only - will be able to see originals of immense historic value; these include the university’s founding document as well as a papal letter and a notarial instrument acquired earlier this year.

The papal letter dated January 26, 1347, is written on Italian parchment and features an attached lead papal seal depicting St. Peter and St. Paul on one side, and the name of Pope Clement VI on the other. The letter confirmed the pope’s consent for the founding of the university in Prague.

The originals can only go on display for a limited time for conservation purposes; as of Thursday, December 20, those who attend the show at the Carolinum will have to settle for copies.

On the eve of the opening, the exhibition’s curator, Vice-Rector Jan Royt, described the treasures as “evidence of historical continuity”, urging viewers not to miss seeing both the original documents but also the university seal, as well as other items of immense symbolic importance such as historic sceptres belonging to the office of the rector and individual faculties.

Dates and opening hours: 18.12.2018 – 31.1.2019, 10 am – 7 pm, closed on 24.12.2018 and 1.1.2019 open on 31.12.2018 from 10 am to 4 pm.