

## UPF Prague, Czech Republic Discusses: Quo Vadis, Religion?

Juraj Lajda  
April 21, 2021



Prague, Czech Republic - The Czech chapter of UPF held a webinar titled "Quo Vadis, Religion?"

More than 30 participants joined the online conference on April 21, 2021, in which four panelists presented their views on the future of religion.

The speakers were:

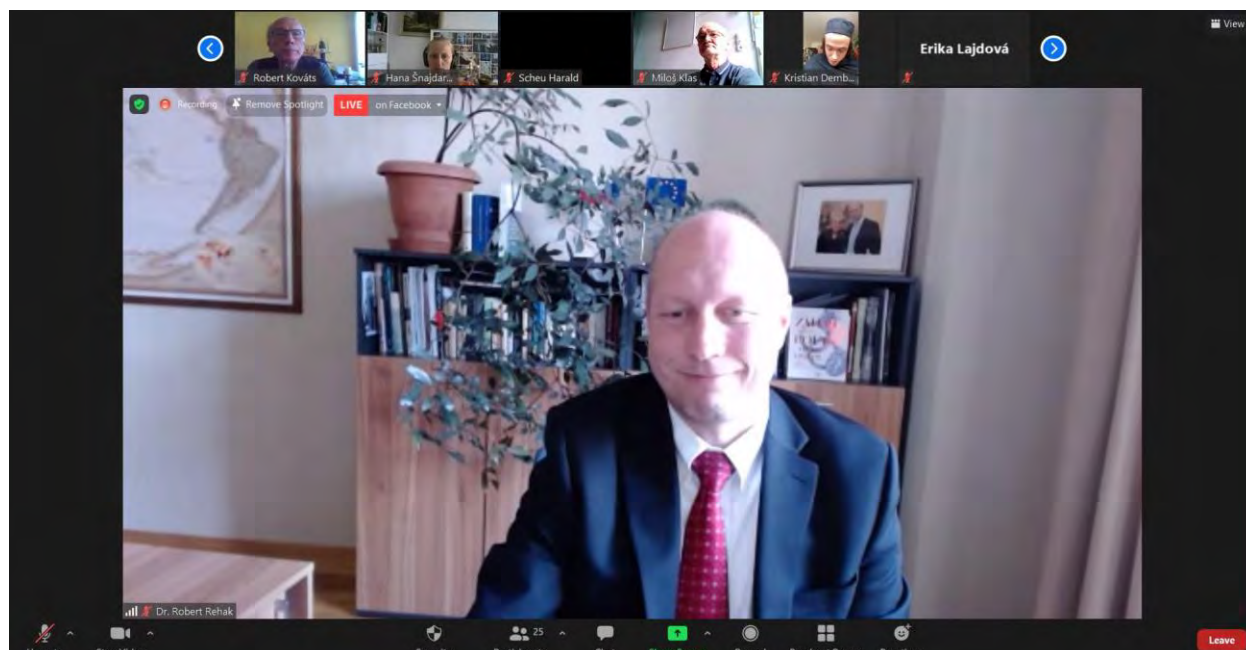
Dr. Robert Řehák, PhD, special envoy for the Holocaust, interfaith dialogue and freedom of religion or belief, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Professor Dušan Lužný, PhD, chair of the department of sociology, andragogy and cultural anthropology, Philosophical Faculty of the Palacký University, Olomouc

Kristian Dembický, a Muslim student activist

Dr. Eva Vymětalová, ThD, theologian, Hussite Theological Faculty, Charles University

The moderator was Jana Lajdová, a UPF staff member. She reminded the participants that this conference followed two previous UPF webinars, on January 21 and February 11, that focused on religious dialogue and cooperation.

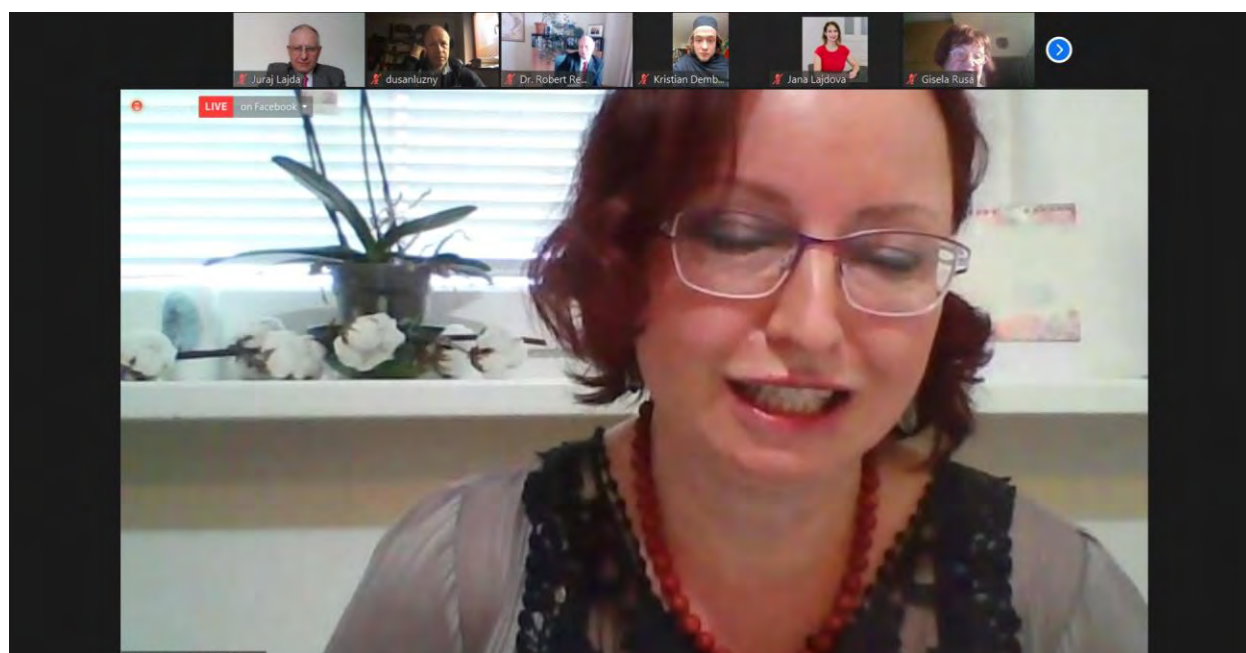


Dr. Robert Řehák explained a timeline of the development of world religions. Religion can help in solving conflicts and forming prevention; it also can be a source of conflict, he said. The Czechs are considered to be the least religious nation in Europe. According to statistics, the number of declared

believers dropped by one million every decade. The role of religion is important, and religion should have greater influence in society, he said. Dr. Řehák mentioned also the so-called religious ignorance or illiteracy in which believers have very little knowledge about their own religion and in fact no knowledge about other religions. Religion can address people today, he concluded.

Professor Dušan Lužný introduced his speech with a secular prediction that the importance of religion will decrease by natural development in the course of time. However, this prediction proved to be false in the 1970s and 1980s. Religion has a global dimension, he said. Statistics show a decline of religious people in the long run. In the year 1921, basically every citizen in the Czech Republic was a believer. Recent statistics show that only 34 percent of the Czech population is affiliated with a church or religious community, in comparison with Poland (94 percent), Slovakia (77 percent), and Germany (77 percent). Still, 70 percent of Czechs believe in something. According to the speaker, there are two ways in which religion is maintained. One is the reproductive one, in which the religious tradition is inherited in the family by the young generation, and the other is to cultivate the religious tradition and culture. These two levels should be interconnected, Professor Lužný suggested.

Kristian Dembický said that religion has a future and plays a key role in society. Education in religion is important, he said. Often believers do not understand their own religion enough. If Muslims really studied the true Islam, there would be no terrorists, Mr. Dembický said. Religion is an integral part of society, he said. People are often confused, and religion can show them moral values and teach them what is true and what is false. In the West one could speak about the post-religious era, but in other parts of the world it is not like that. Many people find in religion an anchoring and a way out of chaos. Different religions should cooperate, building bridges and participating in social projects, he said.



Dr. Eva Vymětalová mentioned that even today religion is addressing young people. People are still searching for God, especially young people. They are searching in their families, in the church, at school, etc. It is not important to be anchored in some religious institution, but the genuineness and truthfulness of our faith are important, she said. Today there is a tendency for people to leave institutionalized religion, choosing individualized religion or spirituality. People prefer meditation, happy enjoyment and a good spiritual experience, she said. According to Dr. Vymětalová, it is personal faith and personal engagement that matter. Jesus said that according to their fruits you will recognize them, she concluded.

In his closing remarks Dr. Juraj Lajda, president of the Czech chapter of UPF, appreciated all the panelists and pointed out that religion helps to develop the internal and spiritual aspects of a human being and leads us to some ideal. Religion can offer values that are important in our life, he said. There are different religions with the same goal. Therefore, interfaith and interreligious cooperation is important, especially today. Today's online conference can be a small contribution to this goal, he said.

All the panelists appreciated the conference and in conclusion answered some questions from the audience.

QUO VADIS, RELIGION?

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLW7RJOq6aEandt=103s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLW7RJOq6aEandt=103s)