

## **Conference on Risks of Hospitality: Imagination and Reality**

From Friday 20<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May we held an international conference in Prague in conjunction with the Research Group Anthropos of KU Leuven.

There were in total some 40 participants, both from the Czech Republic and from Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Serbia / Italy, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. We were also delighted to be able to welcome Kari Storstein Haug, Tomas Sundnes Drønen, Nina Sundnes Drønen and Øyvind Hadland from our cooperating partner in Norway, the School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger, now the Faculty of Theology of VID Specialized University.

The conference began on Friday morning with an introduction from Professor Ivana Noble, establishing some of the parameters and problematics of the theme, and outlining the context and development of the conference. The first paper was by Ekaterini Tsalampouni of the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, on "Jesus as a stranger and refugee in the Gospels: an Early Christological Theme and its Relevance for the current discussions on hospitality", drawing on both biblical and early patristic material. The second morning session saw papers on particular historical experiences of otherness, with Professor Jiří Hanuš of the Masaryk University in Brno speaking on "The Medieval City and Its Rules of Life: Law, Freedom, and Risk", and the Revd. Professor Andrew Louth, Emeritus Professor of Durham University, looking at the experience of the Russian exile theologians in Paris after the 1917 Revolution.

The afternoon saw three different groups in which doctoral students and those who already have their doctorates were able to present short papers and engage in discussion. There were ten such papers on a diversity of topics related in different ways to the theme of the conference. The day finished with the viewing of a film, and a subsequent discussion of issues relating to the theme of hospitality.

Saturday began with two papers looking at some more philosophical contributions to the debate. Dr Tim Noble spoke on "Emmanuel Levinas and Vladimir Jankélévitch: the Possibilities and Limits of Hospitality", and Dr Vojtěch Mašek of the Centre for Theology, Philosophy and Media Theory of the Catholic Theological Faculty of Charles University asked "Can Levinasian Ethics be translated into the politics of hospitality?". The second morning session was presented by Professor Yves De Maeseneer and Dr Vaiva Adomaityte of the Anthropos Research Group, first addressing the topic of fear as a major obstacle to hospitality, and then illustrating an approach to hospitality as developed by Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche movement.

In the afternoon, we were able to listen to members of a panel of experts from the Czech Republic, speaking on their personal experiences of work with migrants and trying to deal with the issue in the Czech context. There was an introduction to the theme by Dr Alois Kříšťan the Director of Jabok Specialised High School for Social Pedagogy and Theology, and then Dr Zdenko Širka introduced the panellists. Magda Faltová, the director of Association for Integration and Migration, spoke on "Responses to the Refugee Crisis in the Czech Republic: Politics, Media, Society" and then members of five different groups spoke of their activities: Alena Fendrychová, head of the Program of Work with Migrants of the Diakonia organisation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren; Martina Tomanová, migration coordinator of Caritas Czech Republic; Zuzana Terry, of the Student Movement

for Solidarity; Mikuláš Vymětal, pastor for minorities of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, and Nikolay Savov from the Autonomous Social Center “Klinika”.

On Sunday morning the conference programme began with a liturgical celebration. This was followed by a key note address by Professor Michael Barnes SJ of Heythrop College, University of London, who spoke on 'The Virtues of Hospitality: on Being Host and Guest'. This was followed by a concluding panel discussion with Michael Barnes, Dr Kari Storstein Haug from the partner institution in Norway, Doc. Parush Parushev, Director of St. Trivelius Higher Theological Institute in Bulgaria, Dr Petr Jandejsek from Jabok Specialised High School and Doc. Davor Džalto from the American University in Rome.



Kari Storstein Haug, Øyvind Hadland, Ivana Noble, Tim Noble, Tomas Sundnes Drønen