



# Toward a More Catholic Church

*An interview with Msgr. Tomáš Halík*

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Msgr. Halík says that by 1968, it was “still necessary for Christianity to get a ‘human face’” for him. Particularly for a Czech writer at this time, Halík’s choice of phrase is compelling—“socialism with a human face” was a key phrase associated with the liberalizing reforms of the Prague Spring. What is at stake in this phrase? What does Christianity with a “human face” look like? Does this vision reflect your own religious experience?
2. Much of Halík’s written work focuses on his experience as a priest in the underground Church. How should the Church—both in Rome and our own communities—relate to the experience of its “underground” arm? What does solidarity look like in our communities? Internationally, how do you evaluate the Vatican-China deal, for instance?
3. Halík explains that “our postmodern age is a call to ‘afternoon Christianity,’ to greater maturity and depth.” How might our Christianity be “immature” or lacking in depth? How do we make this observation without succumbing to elitism? What role could synodality play in this process?
4. Is “afternoon Christianity” just beginning, or do we have to start thinking about “evening Christianity” too? To play with the metaphor, is it 1 p.m. or is it 4 p.m.? What is the endpoint of our maturing Christianity, and is it presumptuous to assume that the “afternoon” of postmodernity *will* bring maturity and depth?
5. Halík argues that the Church today “can be a school of re-reading and re-lecture...of a new attentive approach to reality, a deeper interpretation of God’s speech, of God’s self-sharing.” What exactly are we re-reading and re-lecturing? And by what principles are we re-reading?
6. Discussing the ordination of women, Halík suggests that “decentralization of the Church and multi-speed reforms will probably be necessary.” For those who believe the ordination of women is an expression of universal values (e.g. women’s equality), is this an adequate answer? Insofar as liberalism purports to be universalistic, is it consistent with synodality’s emphasis on decentralization and local decision-making?
7. Halík suggests that Pope Francis’s encyclical *Fratelli tutti* “could play a role in the twenty-first century similar to that played by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in the twentieth century.” Can the Church credibly speak beyond itself in the twenty-first century? Or is it trying to speak as an “integrating force” or “common language” that it simply isn’t anymore?

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

Santiago Ramos, “Conversion & Revolution,” June 2020, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/conversion-revolution>

Margaret O’Brien Steinfels, “Rereading Havel,” November 26, 2019, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/rereading-havel>

Massimo Faggioli, “The End of the Synod...,” November 13, 2024, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/end-synod>

Cathleen Kaveny, “Can We All Agree to Dignity?,” June 2024, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/can-we-all-agree-dignity>