



VĚSTNÍK

ČESKÉ KATOLICKÉ MISIE V KALIFORNII

SV. JAKUB V SAN DIEGU – SV. FRANTIŠEK V SAN FRANCISCU – SV. CYRIL A METODĚJ V LOS ANGELES

Special Issue – July 2026



Pohled na dům České misie tzv. Velehrad 344 Koch Ave., Placentia, CA 92870

Our Velehrad Always Blooms Again

The words of the well-known Cyrillo-Methodian song lead us to reflect on the future of the Czech missions in California and the future of the mission house in Los Angeles in Orange County in Placentia, which, following the example of the well-known pilgrimage site in Moravia, also bears the name “Velehrad”.

After the departure of Fr. Libor Švorčík from California, due to a work visa that could not be extended, the Czech missions in California remained vacant. Bishop Václav Malý, who was then in charge of the Czech missions abroad, decided that the spiritual administration in California would be taken care of by Czech priests from Chicago, where Fr. Libor Churý from the Olomouc Archdiocese was newly appointed to replace Mons. Dušan Hladík after his retirement.

Thus, for the first half of the year (in the fall and winter of 2025-26), spiritual service was first provided "at a distance", when every two months Fr. Churý flew from Chicago to California for two weekends. In between, Czech Masses in Los Angeles (LA) and San Diego (SD) were served once a month by a local priest from an American parish, Fr. Zdeněk Kříž, who is of Czech origin. In the spring of 2026, after handing over spiritual administration in Chicago to Fr. Churý, Mons. Hladík left for LA for a long term stay to take care of spiritual service to compatriots in California. At the same time, a way was

sought to continue with the local missions. Both methods of pastoral care showed that the occasional service of a priest who only commutes leads to stagnation and gradual decline, while the permanent presence of a priest maintains stability and can lead to the revival and further flourishing of the missions. For example, in LA, people come not only to the regular monthly Masses, but also to the extraordinary ones on Sundays when the priest is not traveling.

The past year has shown quite clearly that people in all three places – in Los Angeles, in San Diego and in San Francisco, are interested in Czech Holy Masses. They come to the services and actively participate in the program and the refreshments or lunches that follow. They are also interested in other cultural events that the mission organizes, such as picnics, family reunions, etc. It turns out that for the continuing and fully functioning life of the mission, it is essential for a priest to permanently reside here. Of course, in order for a priest to be here and for services and other events to be held, it is necessary for the mission to continue to have its own house.

A little history

Czech missions in California have existed for more than 60 years. They were founded and blessedly led for many years by Jesuit priests

from Canada, Fr. Popelka and Fr. Pelikán. After them, Fr. Petr Esterka took over the spiritual service. All this took place in the second half of the last century. Even though hundreds of people attended Czech masses and social and cultural events, they would always rent a suitable church or hall, and the Czech Mission was never officially established as either a church organization or an incorporation. The compatriots never built their own church or mission.

When Mons. Petr Esterka was appointed bishop in 1999 and entrusted with the spiritual care of our compatriots all over the world, he began to visit individual missions. He saw that where the parishioners did not have their own facilities, the community was declining, priests were leaving, and missions were closing. On the contrary, where the missions had some facilities – a church, a mission house, accommodation facilities, etc. – the activities continued there.

Based on this knowledge Bishop Esterka decided to establish facilities for the Czech Missions in California as well. Until then, he had lived in an American parish and held Czech Holy Masses mostly in community halls at American churches in individual places. The choice did not fall on building their own church, but rather on acquiring a mission house, where the bishop would reside, where visitors could be received and where smaller social events could be held. The house was to be near a church that the mission would rent for services and where there would be a hall for subsequent meetings and larger social events.

Bishop Esterka found a house at 344 Koch Avenue, Placentia, CA 92870 in Orange County, just a few blocks from the Polish Mission Center of Pope John Paul II. There was a church, a social hall, a dining room and kitchen, and above all, a large parking lot. The premises could be rented at any time. The aforementioned house on Koch Avenue was spacious and at that time quite well-preserved, and there was enough space for parking cars on the street around.

The sequence of events was as follows:

On April 28, 2006, Bishop Mons. Petr Esterka bought the house at 344 Koch Avenue, Placentia, CA from Americans Tim and Margaret Van Eck. The price was \$835,000. Bishop Esterka bought the house in his own name, because the Czech Mission as an official organization did not yet exist at that time. \$350,000 was given in cash, the rest was a loan from the bank – Mortgage remaining with Countrywide.

On February 26, 2007, the Mortgage remaining with Countrywide was paid off in the amount of \$395,380.55 from the NAPCCC (North American Pastoral Center for Czech Catholics) fund. Apparently, something else had already been paid off on the Mortgage before that. The NAPCCC fund was founded by Fr. Petr Esterka in 1991, when he was working in Minnesota, as a continuation of the St. Adalbert fund originally founded primarily to support the Nepomucenum Czech College in Rome. However, the NAPCCC had an expanded scope to various church and social projects around the world.

On December 2, 2007, the local Czech Mission was registered as a non-profit corporation with the State of California. The official name is VCCCM – Velehrad California Czech Catholic Mission Inc. According to the statutes, this corporation consists only of a Board – President and 4 directors and has no registered members.

Concurrently, there was a large campaign since 2006 when Bishop Esterka collected funds for a new mission house. A plaque with the names of donors and financial categories still hangs in the main hallway of the mission house.

On December 12, 2007, a loan was signed for the Czech Mission VCCCM from the NAPCCC fund in the amount of \$395,380 (this corresponds to the paid Mortgage on the house). According to the contract, the mission is to repay at least \$ 1,000.- per month.

On April 1, 2008, Bishop Petr Esterka transferred the house 344 Koch Ave., Placentia, CA to the Czech Mission VCCCM. Today, it is the legal and sole owner of the house. The title of the building is

written on VelehradCCCM and this is now documented by a current extract from the local land registry.

Current status of the mission house

For those who are not familiar with the mission house in Los Angeles - Placentia, at least some information. The house at 344 Koch Ave, Placentia, CA is classified as 4 bedroom, 2 baths + 1 shower, 2,467sqft. It was built in 1973. Bishop Esterka bought it in 2006, 20 years ago. It is a regular larger family home. On the ground floor there is a double and single garage, a kitchen with older equipment, a small living room next to it (now a common room), a toilet with a shower and a laundry room. The former dining room and large living room are now adapted as a chapel for 35 seated people. The chapel has a new altar, a tabernacle, a cross and pictures of saints.

On the 1st floor of the house there is a large bedroom with its own bathroom. It served as an apartment for the priest. There are also 3 smaller rooms. Two are guest bedrooms, the third is used as an office. There is a shared bathroom in the hallway.

The yard of the house is almost entirely concreted. On the south side, there is a massive wooden pergola, under which is a seating area around the tables usually for 40-50 people. On the east side the yard continues with a garden. There is a large swimming pool sunk in the ground about 30 x 15 ft, next to it is a spacious jacuzzi. The outer concrete wall around the entire plot is lined with very tall thuja trees, which form a dense green wall around it.

The house is generally in decent condition. However, the fact is that since it was built (more than 50 years ago), no major repairs have been done, only necessary maintenance. In the ground floor bathroom, a shower was installed 8 years ago. The whole house would need to be gradually renovated - kitchen, bathrooms, electrical installation, floors, painting and more.

Management and financial situation of the mission

On Saturday, June 20, 2026, the annual meeting of the VCCCM was held. The president is Mons. Dušan Hladík, the directors are the coordinators of the individual missions: Secretary Petr Peterka (SD), Treasurer Daniel Sputa (SF) and Directors Anna Dobešová (LA) and Jarmila Sauer (LA).

The mission's finances are roughly as follows:

	2024:	2025:	05-31-26:
Last year's balance:	108,841	92,754	52,729
Income:	75,790	18,679	7,664
Expenses:	91,877	58,704	18,194
Difference:	- 16,087	- 40,025	- 10,530
Ending balance:	\$92,754	\$52,729	\$42,199

The mission still owes NAPCCC about \$290,000.-

At this time, income is very limited. It consists of collections at Masses and contributions for refreshments after Mass, and proceeds from a picnic. Occasional donations are sent by mail or over the internet. There are no large donations, inheritances, etc. The current expenses are mainly for the normal operation of the house - electricity, water, gas, waste, insurance, pool maintenance, as well as the costs of priests' trips to church services - gasoline, airline tickets, church rental, costs for the Bulletin - printing, postage. Kitchen costs - food, drinks, dishes. This year, there were extraordinary expenses for repairs to the roof valley. Finally, there are also monthly loan payments.

Hence, with its current income, the mission is barely able to cover its current expenses (for the necessary operation of the house and provision of church services and the Bulletin) as well as minimum debt payments. With this income, the mission is not able to pay the salary and health insurance of a regular priest, it does not have the money to buy a car for the priest, and is absolutely unable to pay the remaining debt of approximately \$290,000.-

Overall conclusion

From what has been said, we can conclude: all missions – in Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco want to continue. People attend services, are interested in meetings and discussions with refreshments afterwards. In LA there is also interest in other events. Some organizations, individuals and families would be interested in using the mission house. Without a permanent priest all this will not be able to continue. Without a mission house, there will be no facilities for priests and events. All of this will not be possible without sufficient finances.

We will continue

A lot of thought was given to how to solve the situation, how to secure a priest, how to save the house. There were many proposals:

Sell the house, pay the debt and use the rest to finance the priest's travels and rent premises somewhere for services and other events. Or rent the house and use that money to finance everything. These options would probably lead to the rapid demise of the mission.

Mons. Dušan Hladík is familiar with the local situation and is willing to temporarily lead the spiritual administration in California until a permanent priest is sent here. In order to ensure the economic security of the mission in California, it was proposed that the Czech Mission in Chicago purchase the house of the Czech Mission in California (VCCCM) in long-term installments, thus supporting and maintaining the Czech Mission in California.

The proposal was approved by the Annual Meeting of the Czech Mission in Chicago and was submitted to the Committee of the Czech Mission in California – VCCCM and was as follows: The Czech Mission in Chicago wants to purchase the house of the Czech Mission in California (Velehrad – 344 Koch Ave, Placentia, CA 92870). The purchase would be made in installments, with a base amount of \$300,000. This would immediately pay off the debt to NAPCCC. Further, the Czech Mission in Chicago would annually pay the Czech Mission in California \$100,000 up to \$1,300,000 (the offered purchase price of the house). The Czech Mission in California would have the unlimited right to use the house free of charge during this period. The General Assembly of the Czech Mission in Chicago granted the Mission Board of the Czech Mission in Chicago full power of attorney to further negotiate this purchase.

The VCCCM Board accepted and approved this offer from the Czech Mission in Chicago at its Annual Meeting on June 20, 2026.

When deciding, there were 2 votes in favor and 2 directors abstained from voting. The chairman does not vote. In the event of a tie, he decides - he was in favor. The following were entrusted with further discussions: Petr Peterka, secretary, and Mons. Dušan Hladík, chairman.

The details of the contract for the sale of the house will be handled by a reliable real estate agency with its lawyers, so that everything complies with the state laws of California and Illinois.

The Czech Mission in Chicago has adequate financial cover for this transaction. The church property will remain in the ownership of the Church. The Czech missions in California can continue undisturbed and practically nothing will change. The guarantors of credibility are the Czech Catholic priests on both sides as presidents of the individual missions, Mons. Dušan Hladík in California and Fr. Libor Churý in Chicago, IL.

Dear friends, whether the Czech Missions in California will continue depends not only on the favorable conditions for the presence of the priest and financial security, but above all on all of you. It is important that our faith in God and in the Lord Jesus grows, so that we live spiritually - pray, educate ourselves in faith, live in sanctifying grace, go to Holy Mass and receive the Body of the Lord. We also need to grow in love for the people around us – in our family, in our

neighborhood, at work, among acquaintances, etc. It is also important that the Czech Mission – our Velehrad – becomes our second home. That we enjoy coming here for church services, but also for other events. That we invite our friends and acquaintances. That we offer to drive the elderly and sick. That we also take care of the mission and actively help here. That we come up with ideas for meetings and their content. These could be, for example, talks about faith, Bible lessons, preparation for confirmation (as I found out, many adults and elderly people have not yet been). The meetings could also be fun – games, music, singing, sports – there is table tennis and a swimming pool or a jacuzzi available. Group trips or pilgrimages and many other activities could also take place.

Now we have the summer vacation ahead of us and with God's help we will continue in September. Let us ask for help from our heavenly Mother, the Virgin Mary.

Monsignor Dušan Hladík, President of Velehrad in California

ČESKÉ MŠE SVATÉ BUDOU

San Diego - kostel sv. Maximiliana Kolbe 13. září 4.00PM

San Francisco - kostel Narození Páně 20. září 1.00PM

Los Angeles - Velehrad 27. září 1.00PM (oslava sv. Václava)

