

Rudolf Svoboda

ORDINARY INFORMATIVE PROCESS
ON JOHN NEPOMUCENE NEUMANN
IN THE DIOCESE OF BUDWEIS IN 1886-1888
AND EXAMINATION
OF HIS WRITTEN ESTATE IN 1891*

INTRODUCTION

John Nepomucene Neumann (1811-1860), the first male American saint, a native of Prachatice in southern Bohemia in the Diocese of Budweis,¹ and a member of the Congregation of the Redemptorists and Bishop of Philadelphia, is one of the most influential figures in American, Czech and German Church history in the nineteenth century. This fact is evidenced, among other things, by the considerable attention paid to his life and spiritual legacy in professional literature. As already mentioned in the study named “John Nepomucene Neumann and Europe. The current state and new perspectives of future research” (2021), some stages of

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* This article is published as an outcome of the project Z.02.2.69/0.0/0.0/18_053/0016975 “Rozvoj JU – Mezinárodní mobility II”.

¹ Bohemia (today the Czech Republic) was a part of the Austrian Empire not only during the time of John Nepomucene Neumann’s life but also after his passing until the end of World War I (in 1867-1918 it was called the Austro-Hungarian Empire). The Diocese of Budweis is now called the Diocese of České Budějovice and the city of Budweis is now České Budějovice.

Neumann's life and topics related to Neumann's legacy have not yet received sufficient attention.²

One marginally mentioned topic is the process leading to Neumann's beatification and canonization.³ In 1884, Adam Pfab, the postulator general of the beatification and canonization cases of the Redemptorists, decided to open a case of beatification and canonization of the Servant of God John Nepomucene Neumann (*Causam Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servi Dei apud Apostolicam Sedem*) and the necessary preparations began.⁴ The official beginning of the process is considered to be the beginning of ordinary diocesan informative processes in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Budweis in 1886. Both informative diocesan processes took place in parallel – in Philadelphia from 5th May 1886 to 24th October 1888 and Budweis from 15th October to 8th March 1888. Materials from both diocesan processes were then sent to Rome, where the so-called apostolic process began on 15th December 1896. Within its framework, two more subprocesses began to run in the dioceses: the Philadelphian from 25th October 1897 to 13th June 1902 and the Budweiser from 17th November 1897 to 2nd April 1901. Their conclusions were sent

² This study also presents key literature on the life and legacy of John Nepomucene Neumann [Svoboda 2021, 61-69]. Almost complete older bibliographies on Neumann can be found in *Spicilegium Historicum Congregationis SSmi Redemptoris* [Sampers 1963, 261-72; Idem 1976, 512-20]. For the latest updated list, see Owczarski 2022.

³ Pope Alexander III (1159-1181) began to reserve the cases of canonization to the Holy See. This reservation became general law under Gregory IX (1227-1241). Pope Sixtus V (1585-1590) assigned to the Congregation of Rites, one of the offices of the Roman Curia, the duty of conducting the processes of beatification and canonization. Pope Urban VIII (1623-1644) forbade the public cult of any person not as yet beatified or canonized by the Church. An exception was made only for those who were in possession of a public cult from time immemorial or for at least 100 years. For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that the use of the words "process" or "trial" is absolutely appropriate precisely because it is not a mere sequence of events over time leading to a result but, above all, a sequence of canonical investigations, which are based on the authority of the resident bishop, on the authority of the Congregation of Rites (*Sacra Rituum Congregatio*) and, last but not least, on the authority of the Pope himself. As part of this process, the candidate is incrementally declared a Servant of God (*Servus Dei*), Venerable (*Venerabilis Servus Dei*), Blessed, and finally a Saint. The legal basis of the whole process (within which partial subprocesses take place, for example, in the places where the candidate lived) is also evidenced by the fact that the word "case" (*causa*) is used as a synonym for the word "process" in the surviving documents.

⁴ Adam Pfab (1821-1906) was also the Redemptorist leader of the Roman province at the time of Neumann's trial.

back to Rome.⁵ Another milestone in the whole process of the beatification and canonization of Neumann was issuing a decree on heroic virtues on 11th December 1921, followed by the beatification on 13th October 1963 during the second session of the Second Vatican Council. The process ended with the canonization of John Nepomucene Neumann on 19th June 1977 by Pope Paul VI.

In general, the Neumann process has been described in detail in only one scholarly study by Nicola Ferrante (1976), the general postulator of Neumann's beatification and canonization at the time. Ferrante briefly mentions the beginning of the process at the diocesan level in 1886, but he only gives details of what was happening in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia [Ferrante 1976, 485-511; Idem 1977a, 348-74].⁶ Even in the most successful and, at the same time, most extensive monograph on Neumann's life, written by Michael J. Curley (1952), we find only a few sentences about the ordinary process in Philadelphia.⁷ Neumann's trial in the Diocese of Budweis is very briefly mentioned only by Ladislav Dvořák (1905) in a text on the history of the episcopal priestly seminary in Budweis [Dvořák 1905, 67] and Rudolf Svoboda (2021) in a book describing the history of the Diocese of Budweis, specifically in the chapter on the life and spiritual legacy of Budweis's bishops [Novotný 2021, 86-87].

The aim of this study is to present the hitherto uncharted topic of the ordinary informative process in the Diocese of Budweis in 1886-1888, including a subsequent investigation of Neumann's written estate in 1891 and other activities and events related to the Neumann's process, up to the beginning of the so-called Apostolic process in December 1896. It will, therefore, not focus on a mere description of ecclesiastical legal processes and procedures, but in their context, it seeks to show in a broader horizon the so-called second life of John Nepomucene Neumann in the Diocese of Budweis, which was associated with spreading his legacy.⁸

⁵ For an overview of this data, see *SHCSR* 24, 1976, no. 2:240.

⁶ For a version of the article in English, see Ferrante 1977b, 33-66.

⁷ The description of the process leading to the canonization of Neumann was completely at the fringes of Curley's interest. For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that Curley incorrectly dates the beginning of the apostolic process in Rome to 1897. See Curley 1952, 398 (or under the name *Ven. John Neumann*, Washington 1952). A brief overview of basic information about the whole Neumann process is provided by: Reimann 1960, 99-100, and Murphy 1977, 2-7, 112-15.

⁸ The basic sources for this study are the so-called *Procesní akta k blahořečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna* (Procedural Acts on the Beatifica-

1. JOHN NEPOMUCENE NEUMANN AND HIS NATIVE DIOCESE UP TO 1886

Neumann was born in Prachatice in South Bohemia in 1811. In the years 1823-1833, he studied in Budweis at the Piarist grammar school (1823-1829), at the philosophical lyceum (1829-1831), and the theological institute in the episcopal priestly seminary (1831-1833).⁹ In 1833-1835, he completed his theological studies at the University of Prague [Huber 1978; Idem 2005, 555-86]. After graduating in Prague, he returned to southern Bohemia, where the then Bishop of Budweis, Arnošt Konstantin Růžička (1816-1845), had so far refused to consecrate him due to their being too many candidates for priestly ordination. In early 1836, Neumann travelled to the United States as a missionary. Shortly after his arrival, he was ordained a priest, later joining the Redemptorist Congregation. He became Bishop of Philadelphia in 1852 and died in 1860.

In Bohemia, including the Diocese of Budweis,¹⁰ Neumann's missionary work became known after 1836, mainly thanks to several articles in the

tion and Blessing of J.N. Neumann, Bishop of Philadelphia), which are part of the archive fonds *Biskupský archiv České Budějovice* (Episcopal Archive České Budějovice), which is stored in the National Regional Archive in Třeboň in South Bohemia. Cf. State Regional Archive Třeboň [hereinafter: SOA Třeboň], *Biskupský archiv České Budějovice* (Episcopal Archive České Budějovice [hereinafter: BA CB], *Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J.N. Neumanna*, card. 947. At the time of the Bishop of Budweis Josef Hlouch (1902-1972, episcopate 1947-1972), part of Neumann's correspondence was excluded from the above-mentioned *Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna*. Along with other documents relating to the canonization of Neumann, another not-so-large archive fonds called *Neumanniana Budweis* was created, and stored in the so-called Budweis Diocesan Archive, which is located in the bishop's residence in Budweis [hereinafter: Budweis Diocesan Archive, *Neumanniana Budweis*]. Other interesting sources are Valuable sources of knowledge are also the priestly journal (the priestly bulletin) published in Czech and German as the *Ordinariátní listy Budějovické diecéze* or *Ordinariats-Blatt der Budweiser Diöcese* (Ordinariate Letter of Diocese of Budweis [hereinafter: OL]), *Acta curiae episcopalis Bohemo-Budvicensis* (ACEBB), and the official reports on the state of the Diocese of Budweis by Bishop Martin Josef Říha from 1888, 1892, 1896 and 1902, which he sent to Rome. See Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (AAV), Congregazione del Consilio, *Relationes Dioecesium* (fine sec. XVI – 1890 circa), Budvicen., Ceske Budejovice – Budweis (Bohemia), sign. 153, 40-116. Finally, it is necessary to mention the materials arising from the process conducted in Rome, which are stored in the AGHR Roma, *Neumanniana*.

⁹ Recently on this stage of Neumann's life see Svoboda 2023 (in press).

¹⁰ The Diocese of Budweis, with its main city of Budweis, was founded during the reign of Emperor Joseph II in 1785 and covered southern Bohemia. It was mainly an

Journal for Catholic Clergy¹¹ where his mentor Hermann Dichtl reported or otherwise mentioned his activities.¹² Neumann remained in contact with his family and friends from the time of his academic years, mainly due to relatively extensive correspondence.¹³ Neumann visited Europe only once after he departed for the United States when he arrived in Rome as Bishop of Philadelphia to attend the solemn proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception in December 1854. At the beginning of 1855, he also travelled to Bohemia, where he, among other things, met his family in Prachatice and a number of his friends from his studies. In addition, he was a guest of the then Bishop of Budweis, Jan Valerián Jirsík (1798-1883, in-office 1851-1883) in the city of Budweis for several days.¹⁴

agrarian region, poor in mineral wealth, which in the 19th century was far from being affected by the changes associated with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. Around 1815, about 700,000 people lived in the diocese; after 1830, there were almost 850,000 inhabitants; and after 1860 there were almost 1 million inhabitants. The Catholic Church had a dominant position in southern Bohemia. Almost all the inhabitants were Catholics. The history of the diocese is most recently described in specialized monographs: Svoboda 2014; Novotný, Svoboda, Martínková, et al. 2018; Novotný, et al. 2021.

¹¹ This journal was founded in Prague in 1828 and it was the most crucial ecclesiastical journal platform in the country. Its main goal was to inform and educate priests. For this purpose, it formed for many years the most important journal platform in Bohemia and Moravia. See *Časopis pro katolické duchovenstvo* (Journal for Catholic Clergy [hereinafter: *ČKD*]).

¹² See “O missionářswj.” *ČKD* 10, 1837, no. 3:421-45; “Missionář Neumann.” *ČKD* 11, 1838, no. 3:505-12; “Návěštj o českých wyslancjch wjry.” *ČKD* 18, 1845, no. 4:762-66. In the article *Missionary Neumann*, Dichtl retold Neumann’s letter of 4th June 1837 (Cayuga Creek). Other letters from Neumann to Dichtl date from 31st May 1839 (Tonawanda), 4th January 1940 (Tonawanda), 20th May 1853 (Philadelphia), 17th December 1854 (Rome) and 16th September 1856 (Philadelphia). See Budweis Diocesan Archive, Neumanniana Budweis; Chytil 1978; Huber 2005, 493-553.

¹³ The most extensive collection of Neumann’s correspondence, about 175 letters, can be found in the Redemptorist Archives of the Baltimore Province [hereinafter: RABP], St. John Neumann Collection, Neumann Letters, 1823-1860. The collection also includes copies of Neumann’s letters (so-called Rodler papers). The other copies are stored in the Budweis Diocesan Archive, Neumanniana Budweis. The Budweis Diocesan Archive, Neumanniana Budweis, also contains letters from members of Neumann’s family and Neumann’s friends and classmates. Czech translations of parts of these letters can be found in: Chytil 1978. Transcripts and copies of practically all of Neumann’s letters can be found in AGHR Roma, Neumanniana, Box 1.

¹⁴ Contemporaries could read about the course of this visit in the Budweis newspaper *Anzeiger aus dem südlichen Böhmen*, 1855, no. 5, 3. This newspaper took an article from the *Wiener Kirchenzeitung*, briefly describing Neumann’s life and the reasons for his stay in Europe. The text notes in particular that Neumann was staying with the Redemptorist Brothers in Vienna on the 21st of January 1855, in whose church Mar-

In the years following Neumann's death in 1860,¹⁵ his memory went practically unmentioned in the Diocese of Budweis. Maybe he was remembered in his hometown Prachatice and perhaps in Budweis. However, we cannot talk about some more general awareness of his life and spiritual legacy. Only his family, teachers and friends from Bohemia remembered him in the requested testimonies sent to the United States by John Nepomucene Neumann's nephew Johann Berger in the seventieth year of the 19th century.¹⁶ Berger, also a Redemptorist, was preparing a book about his life at the time. The book was published in German and English in the United States of America in 1883 and 1884 [Berger 1883; Idem 1884]. It has not been proven that its specimens reached the Diocese of Budweis before 1886. The beginning of the informative diocesan process by the bishop of Budweis in 1886 had to be surprising for the inhabitants of the diocese and meant a new acquaintance with John Nepomucene Neumann.

2. DIOCESAN INFORMATIVE PROCESS 1886-1888

On 9th July 1886, Adam Pfab appointed Franz Borgia Leitner, a doctor of theology and a Redemptorist from the Austrian ecclesiastical province based in Vienna, as postulator for the informative process in the Diocese of Budweis. He authorized him to initiate the opening of the informative diocesan process in Budweis and, if necessary, to appoint a representative, a subpostulator, to act on Leitner's behalf.¹⁷

iestiegen preached at 7 am. Neumann stayed in Budweis from 31st January to 3rd February 1855 and was housed in the bishop's residence. He then visited his hometown of Prachatice, where he met his very old father. On the way back – on 13th February – Neumann said goodbye to the bishop of Budweis, Jan Valerián Jirsík. He then remembered the meeting very nicely in a letter to his father dated 2nd March 1855. See Neumann's letter in the Budweis Diozesan Archiv; Chytil 1978, 108. For Jirsík's character, see Svoboda 2019.

¹⁵ The *Budweiser Wochenblatt* newspaper published a brief report on Neumann's death in early March 1860, as well as a description of his funeral from the *Oesterreichischen Volksfreund* no. 39 and 40 – including the final mention that there is a general belief among men that he was a saint and therefore that believers should pray to him for intercession. See *Budweiser Wochenblatt*, no. 9, Annex, dated March 3, 1860, unnumbered.

¹⁶ These testimonies are stored in RABP, St. John Neumann Collection, Berger Papers.

¹⁷ In some documents, Leitner is also referred to as a subpostulator in relation to

In a letter written in Budweis on 10th October 1886, Leitner then asked Bishop Martin Josef Říha (1885-1907)¹⁸ to initiate the informative diocesan process about the Servant of God John Nepomucene Neumann. His other requests included appointing persons in charge of the case in the Diocese of Budweis. From the content of the request and the dating of other documents, it is clear that Leitner's presence in Budweis was not accidental, and Bishop Říha had already been informed of the intention of the trial with Neumann.¹⁹ After all, the postulator Leitner had a good background in Budweis because there had been a Redemptorist residence there since 1885, which fell under the Vienna province. In a way, Leitner was "at home."²⁰

the general postulator. For example, see the Letter from General Postulator Pfab to Leitner dated 15th October 1886. *Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna*, fol. 13.

¹⁸ Martin Josef Říha was born in 1839 in Oslov (Woslaw) near Písek in southern Bohemia. He was ordained a priest in 1862 and went into pastoral practice. In 1869 he received a doctorate in moral theology from the University of Vienna. From 1871 he worked as a professor at the Episcopal Priestly Seminary in Budweis. In addition to moral theology, he also devoted himself to pedagogy. He was very gifted in linguistics, translating texts from French and Italian. He became the sixth bishop of Budweis in 1885. During his episcopal career, he travelled to Rome in 1888 and 1896 to visit ad limina. He conducted regular episcopal visitations and supported so-called folk missions and spiritual exercises, as well as the activities of religious associations, fraternities and religious congregations. He died in 1907. His life is most recently described by Rudolf Svoboda in the book *Novotný 2021*, 81-88. Nicola Ferrante, who mentions Bishop Říha in his study in connection with the diocesan process in Budweis concerning Neumann, refers to his name inaccurately as "Martino Giuseppe Ria". See Ferrante 1976, 487.

¹⁹ *Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna*, fol. 13-26.

²⁰ The Redemptorists were active in the diocese of Budweis from the 1870s. Above all, they organized so-called people's missions. During the time of Říha's predecessor, Franz de Paul Schönborn (in office 1883-1885), they were invited to settle in the diocese of Budweis. The official foundation of the Redemptorist residence in Budweis took place on 2nd October, 1885, i.e., during the episcopate of Říha. In 1898 the residence was promoted to a college in which 11 clergymen already lived 1899. Throughout this time, the Redemptorists from Budweis fell under the Austrian resp. the Viennese province of this congregation, and from there they also mostly came. On the conduct of folk missions in cooperation with the Redemptorists in the 1870s, see OL, 1873, no. 14:53-54; OL, 1876, no. 17:67; OL, 1877, no. 9:35; OL, 1877, no. 22:89; OL, 1878, no. 17:60; OL, 1881, no. 16:65. A total of 69 official folk missions took place in the Diocese of Budweis in the years 1871-1880, see OL, 1881, no. 5:18-19; see also *Zpráva o stavu budějovické diecéze z roku 1888*, fol. 44; *Zpráva o stavu budějovické diecéze z roku 1902*, fol. 105; Mereda 2001, 30-54.

There is no evidence that Bishop Říha was in contact with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia at this time, where the trial had been underway since 1884 and officially began on 5th May 1886. Not only the local the Redemptorists but especially Archbishop Patrick John Ryan (1884-1911) stood behind it. There is indirect evidence of contact with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in the form of a list of 238 questions printed in 1885 under the title "Philadelphiensis Causa Beatificationis Servi Dei, Joannis Nepomuceni Neumann, Olim Episcopi Philadelphiensis, et Alumni Congregationis Ssmi Redemptoris."²¹ At the beginning of this document, the Philadelphian Redemptorist and postulator Giuseppe Wirth asks to use this questions as a part of the diocesan process. The questions themselves were always asked in the same way, that is, so that the interviewer confirmed the veracity of Neumann's biographical data, his good qualities, Christian virtues, spiritual life or other events connected with his person. Both Berger's book and Neumann's autobiography were used in formulating the questions.²² The first 60 questions concerned the period before leaving for the United States of America, which could be answered mainly in his native diocese. Then followed questions concerning his priestly and episcopal work in the United States, his spiritual life, virtues and, last but not least, several cases of miraculous healing at his intercession. We do not go too far when we say that these questions were used in the Budweis ordinary process during the interrogation of individual witnesses. They were later also used in the so-called apostolic process.

In any case, Bishop Říha replied to Leitner in a letter dated 13th October 1886 that he agreed to initiate the diocesan process (Initium processus ordinarii seu informativi). At the same time, he informed him that he will personally conduct the process according to the rules given by the decrees of the Congregation of Rites (Sacra Rituum Congregatio) and the regulations issued by Pope Innocent XI. He also announced appointments to the

²¹ Philadelphiensis Causa Beatificationis Servi Dei, Joannis Nepomuceni Neumann, Olim Episcopi Philadelphiensis, et Alumni Congregationis Ssmi Redemptoris, Baltimore, Typis Kreuzer Fratrum, 1885, 48 p.

²² Neumann, Ioannes Nepomecenus. 1963. „Kurze Lebensbeschreibung (Baltimore, 27. März 1852)”. Illustravit et edidit Andreas Sampers. *SHCSR* 11, no. 1:83-104; Rush 1977. Neumann's autobiography was translated into Czech by the Czech Redemptorist Rudolf Chytil (1910-2004). At the time of communist totalitarianism, it came out in samizdat together with specimens of selected letters by Neumann, letters from his classmates, and family members. See Chytil 1978, 7-27.

following positions in the Neumann case: 1) *promotor fiscalis* (fiscal promotor) – Josef Hoffmann (doctor of theology, honorary canon, rector of the episcopal priestly seminary); 2) *notarius actuarius* (clerk of the court) – Adolf Rodler (episcopal notary, spiritual of the episcopal priestly seminary); 3) *cursor et nuncius* – Vojtěch Hajný (bishop's ceremonial office, episcopal consistory office); 4) *testis vocatus* (called witness) – Johann Trajer (bishop's notary, advisor to the bishop's consistory); 5) *testis vocatus* (called witness) – Václav Petr (vice-rector of the bishop's seminary).

It is already clear from the tasks played by the priests mentioned above in the Diocese of Budweis that Říha chose experienced and trustworthy persons. After the bishop, Josef Hoffmann was to have the main say in the management of the process. Adolf Rodler, as a notary of the trial, was responsible for the flawless course of the law. In his role, Vojtěch Hajný had the task of not only writing down but also passing on the discussed materials to the postulator in a flawless form and reporting on the course of the process. The two witnesses then had to sign to confirm the truth of what was written.²³

The diocesan information process was officially launched under Říha's leadership on 15th October 1886, at eight o'clock in the chapel of the bishop's residence in Budweis, where all the above gained their credentials, signed the required oaths and received the documents concerning the case. Leitner the postulator was also present.²⁴ The legally binding nature of these acts was confirmed by the chancellor of the episcopal consistory František Janský and the episcopal notary Antonín Roller.²⁵

²³ All appointments took place between 10th and 13th October 1886. See *Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna*, fol. 18-26.

²⁴ On 17th October 1886, Leitner wrote a letter to General Postulator Pfab about the course of the first session and the preparations for the following session, leaving us an insight into the background of the process. He said that the number of summoned witnesses was gradually becoming more apparent. From the original 14, the number was reduced to 13 due to the illness of Neumann's classmate Vojtěch Schmid. He also expressed doubts about the participation of another classmate, Leonard Ždiárský. He also mentioned that the first meetings of the process were to take place in Prachatice, but then moving to Budějovice was considered. In addition, he assured Pfab that it followed the instructions given by the Code of Canon Law. He also asked about formal issues, such as how the texts were to be revised. See Letter from Postulator Leitner to General Postulator Pfab from 17th October 1886, AGHR Roma, Neumanniana, Neumann – Documenti 1.

²⁵ Official protocol confirming the individual appointments and the very beginning of the case of 15th October 1886. *Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna*, fol. 8-12.

On 18th October 1886, the first session (*sessio*) of this process took place in Neumann's hometown of Prachatice because most of the witnesses on the list (*notula testium*) sent to the bishop by the postulator lived there. For the sessions and interrogations of witnesses held in Prachatice, the bishop appointed a local priest to temporary positions within the process: Julius Tomší held the position of cursor and nuncio, and the role of called witnesses (*testis vocatus*) were Jacob Sponar, Antonín Osen and Josef Pinc. He appointed Jan Raška (*notarius adiunctus deputatus*) as Adolf Rodler's Deputy Notary of the trial. Postulator Leitner also appointed his deputies, resp. subpostulators who were the Redemptorists of Budweis: Johann Aschbacher since 11th February 1887, and Josef Nedbal from 1st February 1888.²⁶

A total of 12 witnesses were heard, including Neumann's sister Johanna, religious name Karolina, a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of St Charles Borromeo.²⁷

The diocesan information process eventually had 32 sessions. The bishop officially terminated it on 8th March 1888.²⁸ It is listed as *Philadelphiensis seu Budvicensis Causa Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servi Dei Joannis Nepomuceni Neumann Prachaticensis, olim Episcopi Philadelphiensis et Alumni Congregationis SSmi Redemptoris*, which testifies to the existence of the current leadership process, in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

²⁶ A copy of Aschbacher's deed of appointment is stored in the Budweis Diocesan Archive, Neumanniana Budweis. Description of the deed of appointment of Nedbal is stored in *Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumannna*, fol. 173.

²⁷ The names of the witnesses were as follows: Carolina Neumann, Catharina (Kateřina) Berger, Ferdinand Hall, Karolina Kandl (Kandlová), Andreas (Ondřej) Griedl, Adalbert (Vojtěch) Koch, Jukub Jungwirth, Martin Zannmüller, Adalbert (Vojtěch) Hopfinger, Kar (Karel) Krbeček (Krbeczek, also Kerbeczek), Josef Höhenberger and Jan Šavel. For lists of witnesses, see Commemorative Letter to Neumann's Diocesan Trial, dated 15th October 1886 – 2nd April 1901, and *Depositio testium*, in Budweis Diocesan Archive, Neumanniana Budweis. The names of the witnesses and their testimonies can also be found in the minutes of the 32 sessions of this part of the Neumann trial. See *Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumannna*, fol. 8-292. The regional Budweis newspaper *Budivoj* also wrote about the process, see *Budivoj* of 24th October 1886, no. 85:2 and *Budivoj* of 17th April 1887, no. 31:3.

²⁸ *SHCSR* 24, no. 2:240.

Although Říha had the first materials from the ongoing process sent to the congregation as early as 1887,²⁹ he decided to deliver the complete documents to Rome in person on the occasion of an upcoming ad limina visit.³⁰ Before his departure, on 19th March 1888, he informed his diocese in a pastoral letter about the process in the diocese and his intention to hand over Neumann's file in person in Rome. He briefly introduced Neumann's life and his deeds as a member of the family, a priest, a missionary, a monk and a bishop – thus actually writing and publishing his first biography on Czech soil. Finally, he called on believers to pray for the success of the process so that the diocese would gain a new intercessor in heaven:³¹

“One more thing encourages me to travel to Rome. It is a nice and rare thing. In the last two years, our diocese has been investigating the life and virtues of our compatriot, native and diocesan, our Servant of God, John Nepomucene Neumann, who died as a bishop in Philadelphia, America, and died in the reputation of a saint.

I will take the testimonies of credible witnesses who have been called for questioning with me to Rome so that if God is so willing, based on our written records, as well as on the writings of Philadelphia from America to Rome, Servant of God John Nepomucene Neumann will be declared blessed and then a saint.

The cradle of the said Servant of God stood, like the once cradle of his patron, St. John Nepomucene, in our diocese, in the town of Prachatice. He was born there on 28th March, on Good Friday, 1811. Although his father emigrated from Bavaria to Bohemia, he had a special respect for the holy Czech patrons, so he gave his son his name John Nepomucene, and later the younger the name Václav.

²⁹ *Zpráva o stavu budějovické diecéze z roku 1888*, fol. 48.

³⁰ See *Zpráva o stavu budějovické diecéze z roku 1888*, fol. 48; OL, 1888, no. 8:31-32; OL, 1888, no. 15:60. For a transcript of the document submitted to the Congregation of Rites, see *Copia Publica Transumpti Processus Ordinaria auctoritate constructi in Curia Ecclesiastica Budvicensi super fama sanctitatis vitae, virtutum et miraculorum Servi Dei Joannis Nepomuceni Neumann e Congregatione SSmi Redemptoris Episcopi Philadelphiensis. Volumen Unicum*. Anno 1891. AGHR Roma, Neumanniana. Andreas Kössler, a Redemptorist from Budweis, also writes about the planned handover during the bishop's visit ad limina in a letter to Postulator General Pfab on 9th Marz 1888. See AGHR Roma, Neumanniana, Neumann – Documenti 1.

³¹ Ivo Prokop wrote in his study about the planned trip to Rome and the intention to testify about the life and virtues of Neumann gathered during the two-year diocesan process [Prokop 2012, 49-50].

John Nepomucene Neumann soon showed in his youth extraordinary signs of a pious and godly life, and he did not change when he had his high school studies in Budweis. Here in Budweis, he prospered in all virtues, and after graduating from high school, he entered the Budweiser seminary. After two years, he went to Prague to study theology. After completing these studies, he set out for America because he had a sincere desire in his heart from a young age to work for the honour and glory of God and the salvation of souls as a missionary, a secular priest. However, he soon became convinced that he could act much better as a religious priest, so he joined the Assembly or Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the Redemptorists. The members of the Congregation of the Redemptorists have a beneficial effect on missions; like you, dearest, it is known throughout our diocese.

As a missionary and a member of the venerable Redemptorist Congregation, the Servant of God worked with great success in various places and had an abundance of God's blessings in his many works. The LORD of heaven called him to a higher degree of work and worry and laid the burden of the episcopal office on his shoulders. After much reluctance, the Servant of God John Nepomucene Neumann became bishop of Philadelphia in America in 1852. In 1855, he went to Rome to visit the tombs of the Apostolic Princes and demonstrate his devotion and obedience to the Holy Father Pius IX. On that occasion, he visited Bohemia, his native country, and his hometown of Prachatice. A few years later, John Nepomucene Neumann died in the reputation of holiness, on 5th January, before the Feast of the Three Kings in 1860.

The entire Neumann family, numbering two sons and four daughters, has happily achieved its goal in the world and is now extinct.

Both sons: Servant of God John Nepomucene and Václav, were members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Václav Neumann, a lay brother in this congregation, is still alive.

One of the daughters was in the Order of Sisters of Mercy. She became a mother superior but later became ill and therefore resigned. When Filip Neumann gave his house to the Merciful Sisters, the same sister became superior in her native house and recently completed her godly life there.

The second daughter of Neumann's family was married and died as a wife without children with a very good reputation. The third daughter cared for her old father until his death, then stayed in her native house

and served God, being in the third order of St Francis Seraph, until his happy death.

The fourth daughter, finally and the eldest of all the children of the Neumann family is still alive at the age of 82 years old. She also spends her life in prayer in her hometown and prepares for a happy hour of death amidst the Sisters of Mercy, to whom she bequeathed her property. Her only son died as a Redemptorist missionary in America. Thus the whole family disappears, but its good deeds remain. The name Neumann in Prachatice disappears. Only the street in which Neumann's house stands will bear the name Neumannova street for eternal memory.

Dearest! Pray that this important thing will be brought to the goal that our diocese will have, in addition to St John Nepomucene, a second powerful intercessor in heaven. I have a firm belief that the Servant of God will not leave our efforts once without great retribution."³²

After returning from Rome, Říha issued a new pastoral letter in which he informed his diocese in detail about his *ad limina* visit. It states that, before a private audience with Pope Leo XIII on 17th April 1888, he submitted to the competent authorities both a report on the state of his diocese and files containing an "inquiry into the life and virtues of the servant of God John of Nepomucene Neumann" (*Acta processus ordinarii seu informativi*), which he considered to be the two priority tasks of his journey.³³ He wrote of the conversation with the pope: "On the beatification of the Servant of God John Nepomucene Neumann, the former bishop of Philadelphia in America, the Holy Father said that beatification is a very important matter and that in that cause everything will need to be prepared and discussed what must precede beatification."³⁴

3. EXAMINATION OF NEUMANN'S WRITTEN ESTATE IN 1891

Another shift in the case occurred in 1891 when a single witness was interrogated in Rome on 4th February, i.e., only on one day, at the legal level of the ordinary process. In the whole process, it is then mentioned as a "small process" or *processiculus*. In any case, it was Adam Pfab's last act

³² Pastoral Letter of Bishop Říha from 19th March 1888, OL, 1888, no. 8:31-32.

³³ Pastoral Letter of Bishop Říha from 19th May 1888, OL, 1888, no. 15:60.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

as general postulator. Claudio Benedetti (1841-1926) became the new general postulator of the Redemptorist beatification and canonization causes.

On 2nd August 1891, the *Decretum perquisitionis Scriptorum* was issued by the Congregation of Rites, announcing the beginning of an examination of Neumann's written estate.

On 15th October 1891, the prefect of this congregation, Cajetan Aloisi-Masella (1826-1902), sent a call to Bishop Říha to begin the process of examining Neumann's written estate in his diocese. These documents arrived in Budweis on 18th September.

The prefect of the Congregation of Rites obliged him to act in this matter according to the decrees of Pope Urban VIII. A new team was to be formed for this part of the case. All documents written or dictated by the person in question were to be collected. The exact instructions for the course of this part of Neumann's case under which the Augustinus Coproni, fidei promotor, was assigned were also sent. According to these instructions, the minutes of the meeting and copies of Neumann's written estate were to be made. There was also given the procedure on how to identify the origin and authenticity of the submitted documents. The finished file was then to be sent to the Congregation of Rites.³⁵

In a pastoral letter of 18th October 1891, Bishop Říha ordered the people in the diocese to collect and hand over to the episcopal ordinariate all documents concerning Neumann and to register all those who would know where other documents might be located.³⁶

Two days later, on 20th October 1891, Bishop Říha again appointed the required "commission" in the following composition:³⁷ 1) promotor fiscalis – Matyáš Vaňous (consistorial councillor and advisor); 2) notarius actuarius – Vojtěch Hajný (consistorial taxator and expeditor); 3) nuncius et cursor – Jaroslav Holeš (consistorial councillor and advisor); 4) testis vocatus – Johann Trajer (chancellor of the episcopal consistory); 5) testis vocatus – Václav Petr (vice-rector of the Episcopal priestly seminary).

³⁵ *Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna*, fol. 200-203.

³⁶ OL, 1891, no. 45:177-78; *Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna*, fol. 204-205.

³⁷ *Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna*, fol. 207-15.

It should be noted that people with experience from the episcopal office were selected for this part of the process – that is, with experience in the correct handling of official documents, their copies, verification and other formal acts, which was necessary for this part of the process.

The first meeting of this part of the process took place on 24th October 1891 in the bishop's residence in Budweis. In addition to the above-mentioned "commission" and the bishop himself, a Cistercian of Budweis, Štěpán Zach, was also present as bishop's notary. Josef Nedbal, a Budweiser Redemptorist, acted as postulator for this part of the process.

Finally, this part of the process had seven sessions (*sessio*) convened by the bishop, at which copies of Neumann's correspondence were made and witnesses were heard, who were asked 20 questions in turn to verify their identity, intentions and the authenticity of the documents handed over. The investigation was completed on 29th December 1891.³⁸ The final file, *Acta Processus, qui super juridica perquisitione Scriptorum, Servo Dei Joanni Nepomuceno Neumann, Congregationis S.S. Redemptoris Episcopo Philadelphiensi attributorum, in civitate Budvicensi anno 1891 est constructus* was sent to Rome via the Vienna nunciature at the end of 1891.³⁹

The *Decretum aperitionis Processus scriptorum in Curia Budvicensis adornati* was issued in Rome on 23rd March 1892, which began the examination of documents from the Budweis process. Those who were to deal with this were appointed at the same time (*Facultas deputandi Theologos Censores Scriptorum*).⁴⁰

³⁸ For the minutes of all 7 meetings, see *Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna*, fol. 196-350.

³⁹ The file also contained a set of thirty Neumann letters. Adolf Rodler, a spiritual father in the Episcopal priestly seminary in 1891, had these letters copied by reliable seminarians and notarized. His decision led to the already mentioned "Rodler papers" being created, with which, for example, Michael J. Curley worked. See Curley 1952, 493 and 495. They are part of a larger file of Neumann correspondence stored in RABP, St. John Neumann Collection. It is not without interest that Bishop Říha personally brought the file to the Viennese nunciature, which accepted it on 31st December 1891. See *Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna*, fol. 351-353.

⁴⁰ AGHR Roma, Neumanniana, Neumann – Documenti 1.

4. EFFORTS TO INITIATE THE APOSTOLIC PROCESS

A few months later, on 24th October 1892, Bishop Říha wrote a letter addressed to Pope Leo XIII, asking him to begin the apostolic process of beatification and canonization of John Nepomucene Neumann. First, he states that Neumann was born in the diocese of Budweis, where he lived from 1811 to 1836. Before leaving for America, he studied in Prachatice, Budweis and Prague. The bishop recapitulates the successful course of the informative diocesan process in Prachatice and Budweis in 1886 and 1887. He also mentions the personal delivery of the finished file to Rome in 1888 and the end of the examination of Neumann's written estate. Bishop Říha emphasizes that in the process, not only the facts about Neumann's childhood, youth and course of study were verified and witnessed, but also his piety, virtues and generally exemplary life. He also pays attention to the piety of Neumann's parents and siblings – here, he mainly emphasizes the spiritual vocations in this family. Finally, Říha gives two main reasons for initiating the apostolic process: first of all, it seems very appropriate for him to proclaim the apostolic process in the year celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of the new continent, where Neumann lived most of his life and became bishop of Philadelphia. As a second reason, he cites the current situation in the Diocese of Budweis, where people of two nationalities – Germans and Czechs – rival one another. John Nepomucene Neumann, son of a German father and a Czech mother, bearing the name of one of the patrons of Bohemia, St John Nepomucene, in the bishop's opinion, could be the ideal patron of the diocese, uniting the two parties with historical enmity.⁴¹

At the same time, Bishop Říha asked the postulator general, Claudio Benedetti, to pass this letter on to the pope at the appropriate opportunity.⁴²

Last but not least, Říha considered it necessary to mention the ongoing process in the report on the state of the diocese, which he sent to Rome in

⁴¹ *Petitio ad Sanctissimum Patrem in causa processus Beatificationis servi Dei Joannis Nepom. Neumann, episcopi Philadelphiensis anno 1892. Procesní akta k blahořečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna*, fol. 357-360.

⁴² A copy of Říha's letter dated 25th October 1892. See *Procesní akta k blahořečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna*, fol. 355.

the autumn of 1892. In this report, he asked Pope Leo XIII to begin the apostolic process officially again.⁴³

Interestingly, the Redemptorists published a short paper in Vienna devoted to Neumann's life, the first in the Czech language, in 1893.⁴⁴

Although the bishop of Budweis did not receive an answer from the pope, the whole process did not stop in Rome.

The prefect of the Congregation of Rites, Cajetan Aloisi Masella, published the official *Positio Super Introductione Causae* in 1894, which summarizes the results of ordinary processes (Budweis, Philadelphia, processiculus) and presents the life and virtues of John Nepomucene Neumann.⁴⁵

Pope Leo XIII issued a decree on 10th June 1895, ending the part of Neumann's process concerning his written legacy (*Decretum approbationis scriptorum*).⁴⁶

The communication between Rome and the Diocese of Budweis did not stop either. In 1896, Gustavo Persiani, the promoter of the faith, commented on shortcomings he had found in the diocesan trials in Philadelphia and Budweis and the *processiculum* in Rome.⁴⁷ In the acts of the trials conducted in Philadelphia (1886-1888) and Rome (1891), he found serious shortcomings of a formal and substantive nature, which had to be resolved. On the contrary, he did not find anything harmful in the ordinary process conducted in the Diocese of Budweis. He only asked for clarification of the circumstances of John Nepomucene Neumann's departure to the United States in 1836. This question was connected with questions

⁴³ *Zpráva o stavu budějovické diecéze z roku 1892*, fol. 66-67.

⁴⁴ *Jan Nep. Neumann z Kongregace Nejsvětějšího Vykupitele biskup filadelfijský. Životopisný nástin*. Vídeň [1893].

⁴⁵ *Sacra Rituum Congregatione. Philadelphien. seu Budvicen. Beatificationis et canonisationis Servi Dei Ioannis Nepomuceni Neumann e Congregatione Sanctissimi Redemptoris, Episcopi Philadelphiensis. Positio Super Introductione Causae*, Romae 1894. *Positio* contains the so-called *Informatio super dubio*, i.e., the most special summary of research into the life and virtues of John Nepomucene Neumann (71 printed pages, 136 paragraphs) and a much more extensive so-called *Summarium super dubio*, which forms an extensive thematically divided list of individual testimonies from the trials of Budweis and Philadelphia from 1886-1888, as well as from the Roman *processiculum* from 1891.

⁴⁶ See *SHCSR* 24, no. 2:240.

⁴⁷ See *Philadelphien. seu Budvicen. Beatificationis et canonisationis Servi Dei Ioannis Nepomuceni Neumann e Congregatione Sanctissimi Redemptoris, Episcopi Philadelphiensis. Animadversiones R. P. D. Promotois Fisedi Super Dubio*, Roma 1896, in *Philadelph. seu Budvice. Ser. Dei Joann. Nepom. Neumann. Positio Super Introductione Causae*, AGHR Roma, Neumanniana, Book SN1.

about his proper release from his native diocese of Budweis and obtaining higher ordinations. The required documents and testimonies were sent from Budweis to Rome by Bishop Říha on 5th June 1896.⁴⁸

In another report on the state of the diocese in the autumn of 1896, Bishop Říha repeated his request for an early initiation of the apostolic process. He probably mentioned the same during an audience with the pope during his second *ad limina* visit in the same year.⁴⁹ This perseverance of Říha, with which he called for the initiation of the apostolic process, eventually led to the Roman authorities and the prefect of the Congregation of the Council (*Sacra Congregatio Cardinalium Concilii Tridentini interpretum*) tactfully warning him not to be reminding them of the cause of the beatification and canonization of John Nepomucene Neumann because the process needed time.⁵⁰ The relativity of his statement was already shown on 15th December 1896 by Leo XIII, when he issued the *Decretum introducendae causae*, by which the apostolic process was officially initiated.⁵¹

CONCLUSION

In 1886-1888, an ordinary process examining the life and virtues of John Nepomucene Neumann took place in the Diocese of Budweis, which was one of the first steps on the official path to his canonization. This process was necessary because John Nepomucene Neumann had spent his

⁴⁸ See the copy of letter of 5th June 1892 signed by the bishop of Budweis Říha and witnesses. SOA Třeboň, BA ČB, Procesní akta k blahorečení a svatořečení filadelfského biskupa J. N. Neumanna, fol. 379-84; the original of the letter sent to Rome can be found in AGHR Roma, Neumanniana, S. Neumann – Miscelanea.

⁴⁹ For Říha's first and second visit *ad limina*, see AAV, Congregazione del Consilio, Relationes Dioecesium (fine sec. XVI – 1890 circa), Budvicen., Ceske Budejovice – Budweis (Bohemia), sign. 153, fol. 40-58, 81-94; SOA Třeboň, BA CB, Průvodní list biskupu M. J. Říhovi na zpáteční cestu z Říma, vystavený rakousko-uherským vyslanectvím ve Vatikánu, 1888, sign. II/6/b/6, kart. 16.

⁵⁰ Prokop 2012, 54-55; see also AAV, Congregazione del Consilio, Relationes Dioecesium (fine sec. XVI – 1890 circa), Budvicen., Ceske Budejovice – Budweis (Bohemia), sign. 153, fol. 99.

⁵¹ See *Decretum Philadelphen. seu Budvicen. Beatificationis et canonizationis Ven. Servi Dei Ioannis Nepomuceni Neumann e Congregatione Sanctissimi Redemptoris Episcopi Philadelphiensis*, AGHR Roma, Neumanniana, Book SN1; *Decretum introducendae causae*, AGHR Roma, Neumanniana, Neumann – Documenti 1.

childhood and study time in the Diocese of Budweis up to his departure for missions to the United States in 1836.

The process brought fundamental testimonies from the living witnesses of the so-called first category, i.e., from people who knew Neumann well personally. The very formal course of the trial and the individual interrogations of the witnesses, as well as the subsequent examination of Neumann's written estate in 1891, was conducted so professionally that even the promotor fidei, Gustavo Persiani, found no mistakes in their examination. The results of the ordinary process in the Diocese of Budweis could therefore serve well in the next phases of Neumann's canonization process. The spiritus movens of the ordinary process itself was Bishop Martin Josef Říha, who, even after its completion, contributed to spreading awareness of Neumann's life and his legacy in his diocese and repeatedly asked the pope to begin the apostolic process.

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**Ordinary Informative Process on John Nepomucene Neumann
in the Diocese of Budweis in 1886-1888 and Examination
of His Written Estate in 1891**

Summary

The process of the canonization and beatification of John Nepomucene Neumann began in 1886 in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Budweis. His canonization was completed in 1977. The study presents the as yet uncharted topic of the informative process in the Diocese of Budweis in 1886-1888, including a follow-up examination of John Nepomucene Neumann's written estate in 1891 and other activities and events related to the Neumann's process of beatification and canonization up to the beginning of the so-called Apostolic process in December 1896. This study seeks to describe in more detail the ecclesiastical legal process of the whole case; in addition to the context, it seeks to show in a broader horizon the so-called second life of John Nepomucene Neumann in the Diocese of Budweis, which was associated with the spread of his spiritual legacy.

Keywords: St. John Nepomucene Neumann; process; beatification; canonization; Budweis

**Proces informacyjny Jana Nepomucena Neumanna
w diecezji budziejowickiej 1886-1888 i badanie pisemnych spadków 1891**

Summary

Proces prowadzący do beatyfikacji i kanonizacji Jana Nepomuckiego Neumanna rozpoczął się w 1886 r. zarówno w archidiecezji filadelfijskiej, jak i w diecezji budziejowickiej. Proces zakończył się uroczystą kanonizacją w 1977 r. W opracowaniu przedstawiono niezbadany dotąd temat procesu informacyjnego w diecezji budziejowickiej w latach 1886-1888, w tym późniejsze badanie spuścizny pisemnej Neumanna w 1891 r. oraz inne działania i wydarzenia związane z procesem Neumanna, aż do okresu inicjacji procesu apostołskiego w grudniu 1896 r. Niniejsze opracowanie próbuje przede wszystkim opisać procedurę kościelno-prawną całej sprawy. W swoim kontekście ukazuje również tzw. drugie życie Jana Nepomuckiego Neumanna w diecezji budziejowickiej, co wiązało się z rozpowszechnianiem spuścizny jego życia.

Słowa kluczowe: Jan Nepomucen Neumann; proces; beatyfikacja; kanonizacja; Czeskie Budziejowice

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