

Abstract

This thesis is focused on the life stories of four nuns of St. Vincent de Paul during the period of communist administration in Czechoslovakia. Between the years 1948 and 1989 the communist government persecuted all orders, whether male or female, confining their members in internment camps where they often were not provided even the most basic needs. The communist regime also prevented the orders from their activities and forbade them to accept new members. The most important part of this paper consists of the four life-stories of nuns – stories which tell us why they decided to join the order during this particular period which was so very unfavorable for the orders, then they depict how the regime was treating them and how they were actually able to survive these difficult times. To be of aid to others is among the highest priorities for nuns, and thus, they were able to endure this period without a single hateful word against their occupiers. They accepted it as their destiny, knowing that they had to work in terrible working conditions and were forced to do strenuous physical labor. This thesis uses the method of oral history – interviews with the nuns of St. Vincent. The opening chapters serve as a supplement to this information and were compiled on the basis of available literature. Last but not least my personal archival study was also employed. The paper provides a complex view on the issue of the persecution of the female monastic orders in the region, including the case of the priest Jan Hutýra, as well as the four emotional life stories of certain nuns. These stories can serve as the basis for further interviews concerning other monastic orders which survived the years 1948–1989.

Key words: Persecution of female monastic orders, the years 1948-1989, The Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, oral history