

**FAMILY  
COUNSELLING CENTRE  
FAMILY GARDEN**

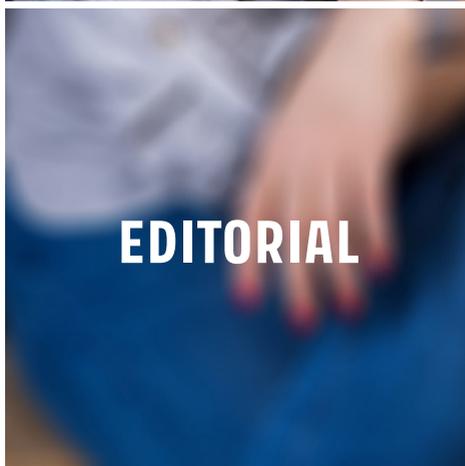


**Report  
on activities**



**January – December 2019**





## EDITORIAL

I find myself staring at a blank sheet of paper in front of me knowing that I am supposed to write an editorial. It doesn't seem to be going too well. As in previous years, I saved this part for last – it has always been something of a final full stop following our several-week-long effort working on an annual report summarising the previous year. It's 23 March 2020 – the first day of our new Slovak government being actively at work and the second week since several activities of our centre needed to become limited. The COVID-19 pandemic is raging all around us. We suspended our popular lectures in the basement of the church on Miletičova Street, there is no marriage preparation going on, educational programmes have been discontinued, and we even stopped seeing clients for individual counselling. Our premises in the Trnávka quarter went quiet. These days, we're not meeting up. With a mask on my face, I leave my house in the morning, get in the car, and then I do what I need to in the office and drive back home. So many things which we considered ordinary and commonplace until very recently are simply not possible right now and as a result, I can often feel various emotions getting ahold of me. I started flipping through my previous years' editorials, and their words reminded me very vividly and in colourful detail what my life looked like back then. So, what about the lines I'm writing right now – what would I like them to remind me of when I'll read them someday? I wish they would bring back the awareness that despite everything, we haven't lost hope. That we kept talking to those that needed us through our computer screens, that certain educational programmes were still happening online (and that, wonder of wonders, we managed to avoid technical glitches even though there were tons of people participating!). We kept on planning, consulting experts, and getting ready for new activities, all the while pondering what this new situation meant for us and praying in faith. I would also like to be reminded that I felt very strongly the presence of a huge number of friends and supporters gathering around us, or that we were given time to talk to each other, to build new relationships, and mend those that have been broken. I'd like to express a big THANKS to all of you who have been, both in 2019 and in these current days, part of Family Garden in any way. And last but not least I'd like to mention the following: For almost a year now, I've had a new coworker – my husband Kamil. Now, when I'm done writing, I'll walk to the office next door to see him, and when I'll come in, he'll smile at me the way he always does and say: "Don't worry, Katka, everything will be alright, we'll make it through." So, let me to extend these words to all of us right now: Let's not be afraid, let's keep the faith, we can do this; we got it! :-).

**WHO IS  
FAMILY  
GARDEN**

The term "Family" represents our target group – the family unit, which forms the basis of a society. The word "Garden" reflects the sense of ease and symbolises the possibility of drawing new strength.



The FAMILY GARDEN Counselling Centre is dedicated to supporting the healthy functioning of families, focusing first and foremost on married couples. A healthy and mature relationship between spouses provides the necessary ground for building a healthy and well-functioning family unit, able to tackle and respond to not only the needs of all its immediate members, but also of the people around them and the current times we live in. At the same time, a healthy and well-working family sets an example for next generations. However, the activities of our centre are also intended for engaged couples, individuals, as well as those single or lonely – for all those who consider well-functioning relationships to be important.

The term “Family” represents our target group – the family unit, which forms the basis of a society. The word “Garden” reflects the sense of ease and symbolises the opportunity of drawing new strength. The decision to go with an English name highlights the fact that the centre is here especially for young people who’ve either found their life calling or are currently going through the process of discerning their vocation. However, both these English words are simple and should be understandable to the older generation as well. As St. John Paul II said, while visiting Slovakia in 2003 and speaking in Banská Bystrica: “A family is a garden in which one is raised in freedom coupled with responsibility.”

Family Garden offers help in two main areas – counselling and accompaniment. In the area of prevention, it offers regularly scheduled marital testimonies, expert lectures focused on current topics related to family life, as well as marriage preparation, educational programmes, or coaching dialogues. In the area of accompaniment, those interested have the option to arrange an in-person appointment with a coach or other expert to talk about a topic in which they feel they need to make a shift.

The Family Garden approach to dealing with problem situations in marriages or in the life of individual family members is based on consistency and expertise, and follows the proven and globally accepted methods of the Salesian preventive education system. Family Garden offers a helping hand to everybody that expresses good intention and willingness to work on their problem, regardless of their faith or religion. The centre is staffed by laymen – Salesian co-operators, located on Miletičova Street in Bratislava. Several other experts are involved in the partnership effort, such as a gynaecologist, psychologist, a priest, a lawyer, financial adviser, as well as Christian coaches, married couples, and young volunteers.

# T

The Association of Salesian Cooperators (ASC) was founded by Don Boseo on May 9, 1876 in Turin. Aside from Salesian brothers SDB and Salesian Sisters FMA, the Salesian cooperators represent the third branch of the Salesian family. It is a public association of Catholic believers, both lay people and diocesan priests, dedicated to work with youth and apostolate among the faithful.

The Salesian efforts and activities in Slovakia started to unfold in the year of 1924 following the arrival of the first Slovak Salesians. Today in our country, there are more than 1,000 Salesian cooperators actively working in 27 centres.

Their core mission is the apostolate in their home parishes. Their main focus lies in the human and Christian upbringing of children and youth; however, they also work with the engaged, married couples, and families. Their wish is to serve to all those that need them – each according to their own abilities.



**SALESIAN  
CO-OPERATORS**

For more information about  
the ASC centre please see:  
[www.mileticka.sk/asc](http://www.mileticka.sk/asc)

## CONTACT

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You can find us  
in the Bratislava-Trnávka  
city district, on the premises  
of the Momma Margherita  
family centre on  
Pavlovičova Street.



FAMILY GARDEN Family Counselling Centre  
Pavlovičova 3  
821 04 Bratislava-Trnávka

mobile: +421 903 821 321  
e-mail: [bratislava@familygarden.sk](mailto:bratislava@familygarden.sk)  
web: [www.familygarden.sk](http://www.familygarden.sk)  
fb: [www.facebook.com/FAMILYGARDEN.sk](http://www.facebook.com/FAMILYGARDEN.sk)



## ELENA ŠTOFIROVÁ



## The Family Garden Team

Elena has been working in Family Garden since 2014. Her role is mainly administrative and organisational, i.e. designing and distribution of lecture-related flyers, managing orders, invoices, and dealing with grant-related billing issues, as well as preparing bookkeeping records for our accountant office and helping out during our training courses. Since the work of the centre is a joint effort of Salesian co-operators on Miletičova Street, she considers her involvement here an opportunity to continue in the active work of a Salesian co-operator, and a chance to help young people and families, both of which are close to her heart. Being retired, it makes her happy to continue to be useful even outside of her own family. She is the mother of four. Together with her husband, they take care of their home and garden, and in addition to helping out their own children and their families, when life allows them, they try to offer a helping hand in their parish as well.

## The Family Garden Team



Miriam has been working with Family Garden since 2016, after accepting the centre management's offer to help out with supporting the ever-expanding activities of the centre. In 2019, her role was that of an organizational support preparing and carrying out various regular and one-time activities of the centre.

As a coach, she's been offering her time to clients through coaching dialogues, and as an organizer and a lecturer, she's been involved in the Christian Coach training programme. She has pedagogical background and works as a professional software specialist and an internationally accredited coach.

**MIRIAM  
NĚMCOVÁ**



**KATARÍNA  
BAGINOVÁ**

## The Family Garden Team

Katarína has been with Family Garden from the very beginning of the centre's existence. She has background in teaching; however, on the initiative of Salesian brothers who came to her in 2012 with an idea to establish a centre for families, she decided to leave the education field behind and to devote herself fully to this endeavour. As the Family Garden director, she prepares and coordinates all the activities of the centre. In the area of prevention, her job is to manage expert lectures and testimonies of the married couples, and to put together educational trainings and teach the training participants. And last but not least, as an ICF-accredited coach, in counselling, she meets with the clients of the centre as well as anybody else who wishes to experience the power of the life-changing dialogue first-hand. For the past 28 years, she's been living in a sacramental marriage with her husband Kamil, and they are the parents of three adult children and one teenage son, and grandparents to one grandson. For the last 30 years, they have also been leading a Bratislava-based children's folklore group named Kremienok. The ensemble, in which she's been playing the role of a choreographer, has been home to more than seven hundred children mostly from Christian families over the years. Side by side with her husband, she's also been involved in marriage preparation courses and helping married couples that found themselves facing a crisis.

## The Family Garden Team

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Thanks to his wife Katarína, Kamil has been involved with Family Garden from the very first impulse to establish our centre. At first, he participated just as a volunteer, but in March 2019, he decided to quit his job as a telecommunication company manager and start working for Family Garden full-time. Family Garden allows him to draw fully on his previous experience in the area of company and project management, strategic planning, and fundraising.

You can find out more on the reasons why he decided to accept the offer to work for Family Garden full-time, and how he views his impact working at the centre on the next page.

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**KAMIL  
BAGIN**



# K

Kamil's background is in electrotechnical engineering and he has 25 years of managerial experience under his belt. Since 2009, he's been active as a Salesian cooperator. He's been living in a sacramental marriage with his wife Katarína for the past 28 years, and they have four children and one grandson together. For 30 years, they've also been leading the Kremienok children's folklore group, him in the role of a manager and her as an artistic director. In addition, for the last 15 years, they've been involved in mentoring married couples, and for more than 10 years, they've been actively helping with marriage preparation courses.

## **What was the reason behind you accepting the offer to work for Family Garden?**

I've been involved with the Family Garden centre since its launch, and even before, when there was only a vague idea to establish such a centre for families. Since my wife Katarína had been invited by the Salesian brothers to be a part of this project since its conception, and later on has been offered the opportunity to manage the family centre, I've been experiencing all of it alongside with her. And I mean that quite literally. For one thing, in the beginnings, we used to share problems and discuss what to do and how to go about it. This also allowed me to offer her and her coworkers at the time my practical skills and experience, although it's true that I had to do it in the evenings after coming home from my regular job. I consider our marriage to be a great gift of God, which we didn't deserve in any way. Katarína and I both see our active involvement in supporting marriages as our life mission and try to do so not only through various activities, but also through our personal example. Dur-



ing one of the meetings of our close work team, while reflecting strategically on the future of Family Garden, I was asked the question where I saw myself in about five years. I replied that I'd like to work for Family Garden full-time. After working for a corporate company for 25 years trying out various managerial positions, my cup was overflowing and I've simply had enough. Through God's providence, my wish came true not in five, but in one short year. That's when I started experiencing health problems, which could've been caused by the never-ending stress I've been under at work, and in that moment, it all became clear to me. My first step was to quit my job, then I let myself to have a little breather, and after that, I started working in Family Garden.

**I suppose switching from a managerial position in a telecommunication company to a work for a non-profit organization must've been a pretty big change.**

True, especially since now I don't have the sword of Damocles in the form of deadlines constantly hanging over my head. These were deadlines imposed by either my boss or other directors, and more often than not, they were absolutely impossible to meet. I've also become free of the pressure associated with having to let my co-workers go, which was something I needed to deal with every year as a manager. Not to mention the need to maintain a positive atmosphere in our team, which was getting slimmer year by year, while my colleagues were often forced to take on additional responsibilities of the people that had been fired. And last but not least – I feel huge relief knowing that I'm not limited in how many days off I can take in a year. Thanks to our various activities, I often used to use up all my holiday days at work by September. Now, I'm enjoying a relative freedom to decide what to take on and when. On the other hand, I feel greater responsibility for my/our decisions, since our team in Family Garden is much smaller than the team I used to be a part of at my previous job. However, what's probably the most important thing for me – I consider a huge blessing to be able to work daily side by side with my wife, and to have the opportunity to keep creating something new and working on something meaningful together.

**How do you see the first 10 months of your work in Family Garden?**

To me, it feels like a major cleaning. After coming aboard of Family Garden, I found out that several things, processes, and systems were not functioning as they should be. Many things were working just by force of habit so to speak... but from the perspective of our ever-growing centre, they wouldn't have been sustainable long-term. And since I'm a methodical person who likes to keep things in order and is fond of rules (I'm not saying there weren't any.), there were things I started adjusting and changing. At first, my co-workers (and by that, I mean first and foremost my wife!) were taken aback, but with time, they've gotten used to it. I've always perceived my role to be that of a project manager and that involves several different areas – from setting up the proper functioning of an organisation, through internal processes, activity, capacity, and resource planning, to setting up financial flows and fundraising. A big part of my job is dealing with current and future grants. As something that's a new area for me, I'm getting familiar with lecturing as part of our upcoming educational trainings. That still requires more prep and calls for „untying my hands” from other responsibilities I've got on my shoulders now. Another thing is the area of fundraising, where I'm still learning the slopes... With that said, I consider all of the above new challenges we're presented with and I'm looking forward to seeing where the Holy Spirit leads us.

**EXPERT  
GUARAN-  
TORS**

PhDr.  
**MARIÁN KUBEŠ**  
CSc., PCC (ICF)

don  
**MARIÁN VALÁBEK**  
SDB

MUDr.  
**MAREK DRÁB**  
PhD.

# W

With time, the Christian coaching in Slovakia is gradually taking on a clearer shape. Not only is the number of new graduates constantly growing, but our experience with where and how to utilize the Christian coaching principles is building up as well. More and more often, we're contacted by people interested in working with a Christian coach. However, there are several areas we still need to keep working on. The first one is the need to anchor this type of helping dialogue deeper into the teachings of the Church. Secondly, there is the necessity to communicate to our Christian communities what benefits Christian coaching has to offer. And last but not least, there is also the need to open up new options for using Christian coaching in the fields of education and training, accompaniment of married couples facing difficulties, and many-many others.

# F

For all of us in Family Garden, it's been another great year serving people not only in Bratislava, but also throughout the entire Slovakia region. However, we can't stop expanding and growing our mission... We need to continually look for means and possibilities to help people around us, as well as explore how to find our way in the environment in which we currently live in and which can't be considered Christian anymore! We are no longer living in a Christian world, since religious faith is often being crushed, laughed at, ignored, and mocked. These are the facts pointed out by Benedict XVI, who, announcing the Year of Faith in 2012, wrote the following: "Whereas in the past, it was possible to recognize a unitary cultural matrix, broadly accepted in its appeal to the content of the faith and the values inspired by it, today this no longer seems to be the case in large swathes of society, because of a profound crisis of faith that has affected many people" (Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio Porta Fidei*, 2). What he wrote is true, and it's also been confirmed by Pope Francis, whose efforts have been grounded in said *Porta Fidei* quote. That's why our mission is of a great importance, and why we need to keep looking for means to connect with people of our day with the goal of helping them navigate their way in the crises and difficulties they face and assisting them in making good decisions.

# W

We've been through a lot and managed to make quite a progress. However, in our medical offices, we keep encountering problems which reflect the state of our diseased society. The work on building common spaces in which we'd like to implement informational system or install educational monitors has been quite sluggish. In these times we live in, we're facing the crisis of vocations of any kind: from the spiritual and worldly ones to the life's calling of becoming a nurse. At the same time, we're going through a crisis of authority – everybody is allowed to do anything and everyone knows everything these days, and to top it off, we're lacking the virtue of self-sacrifice. Our desire here at the centre is to offer something different – to try to heal not only the physical bodies, but to touch people's souls as well. I'm writing these words in times of a pervasive pathogen attacking the entire globe. Namely, it is a virus from the Coronaviridae family and the Orthocoronavirinae sub-family, and it's a virus that's new among this family of viruses. It's been identified as SARS-CoV-2. The term "corona" means "crown". However, we know that this plague has no right to the crown, because the crown is something that always belonged, still belongs, and forever will belong to someone else. In the last year's report, I wrote about my wish to invite Enrico Petrillo to Slovakia. It hasn't worked out yet. However, I believe that when the world, and especially our beloved Italy, pulls itself together after this modern-time disaster, there will still be time to make our wishes come true.

## LECTURES

Both expert lectures and testimonies of married couples are happening regularly and are intended for the general public. The most often discussed topics include matters pertaining to marriage life or functioning of a family.

L

Lectures we've heard in 2019:

Slavomíra Brigantová, Mgr. et MTS

**Should I love, even though human love brings pain?**

Mgr. Mário Schwarz, PhD.

**How to improve communication in a relationship**

PhDr. Gabriela Herényiová, PhD.

**Let's bring up our children by example,  
not through material gifts**

Mgr. Lucia Drábiková, PhD.

**Forgiveness as a way to freedom**

JUDr. Miriam Staněková

**Legal relations within a family**

*„I especially like  
the choice of topics. Most  
of the time, they pique  
my interest and make me  
want to go see the lecture.“*





## MR. & MRS. HOLÚBEK

### **What led you to accept our invitation to present a talk?**

Back when we used to attend these talks still sitting in the audience, they really resonated with both of us. Now, we've graduated into the role of those giving the talk, and it was a big challenge for us. Not only it gave us an opportunity to enrich our relationship, ponder some things more deeply, and spend some time together giving each other undivided attention, but most importantly, we felt desire to pass on at least something of what we have to others. Our wish is to share what we've been given...

### **What has the talk given to you personally?**

It was a pleasant experience of seeing both familiar faces and meeting new people. Seeing that folks are interested in what we have to say and are eager to ask questions was equally rewarding.

### **In your opinion, what is the main purpose and benefit of these kinds of events?**

It is an opportunity to look for solutions to our problems, to draw inspiration and motivation, and to meet interesting people. We really appreciate that young and older people alike are still interested in working on their relationship and marriage trying to make it better.

# T

Testimonies we've heard in 2019:

Ing. Michal Kardoš, Ing. Martina Kardošová  
**How we've overcome our marital crisis?**

Ing. Martin Čeluch, PhD., Ing. Ivona Čeluchová  
**Are the differences between men and women  
a problem or a blessing?**

Mag. Pavel Chvojka, MMF, Mgr. Martina Chvojková  
**The importance of giving your spouse attention  
in marriage**

Bc. Peter Holúbek, Bc. Lucia Holúbková  
**What has miscommunication caused in our marriage?**

Mgr. Ľubomír Kotlárík, MUDr. Mária Kotláríková  
**Living sexuality in our marriage  
(and before we tied the knot).**

*„I really like that the married couples share from their own lives, and talk about what they've experienced first-hand...“*



Since 2018, Family Garden offered 84 different talks, out of which 45 were testimonies and 39 were expert lectures.

Mgr.  
**MÁRIO SCHWARZ,**  
PhD.

**What led you to accept our invitation to present a talk?**

I see that people are still interested in learning new things. It's true for family issues as well because answers to these questions continue to be relevant and needed. Simply put, people feel the need to work on their relationship. There are only a few organizations focusing on the area of education and prevention with regard to pro-family issues. And since Family Garden aims to fulfill this specific need people have, I've accepted their invitation to give a lecture at this centre as well.

**What has the talk given to you personally?**

It has brought me joy in seeing that people are hungry and want to improve the way they communicate in their marriage; they just often don't know how to go about it. If they learn to communicate effectively, they won't have such a burning need to go try solving their problems and misunderstandings in counselling later. We all know too well that focusing on prevention is always better than trying to tackle more complicated marital problems which only snowball into something more severe over time, because we didn't know how to talk about them effectively. Many problems in marriage can often be solved through appropriate communication. It also felt good knowing that if the couples will be familiar with the important principles of effective communication and will try to translate them into action, they might be able to communicate more effectively from now on and avoid hurting their partner.



**In your opinion, what is the main purpose and benefit of these kinds of events?**

I was really touched by the fact that if people are willing to attend these lectures, they're clearly motivated to work on their marriage and grow together in their relationship. I think that the greatest benefit of such talks lies in the fact that it gives spouses the opportunity to pause and look at their relationship and think about what they could do differently in the future, to ask themselves how they can communicate better and hurt each other less, thus building a good and a more stable marital relationship, since a good communication is an essential requirement of a good relationship. However, having the desire and willingness is often not enough; we also need to have the necessary knowledge how to do it. Following these lectures, I have hope that the couples will communicate better in their families and that their kids will pick up on that and will learn to communicate better through their parents' example.

# A

**As a radio editor working for the Lumen radio station, you've repeatedly attended our talks in the church basement on Miletičova Street. Why do you keep coming back?**

I keep attending because the lectures and testimonies offered by Family Garden are always presented by someone new and discuss interesting and relevant topics. Since among the things I do as part of my work at our radio station I've taken on the responsibility for the content of section on family and married life, the lectures and testimonies serve me as an inspiration not only in my personal life and my own marriage, but I find them helpful for my professional life as well.



**JÁN HERIBAN**  
radio presenter,  
**LUMEN** radio station

**We've noticed that a couple of times you brought your wife along. How are the talks helpful to you in your marriage relationship?**

My wife tags along when she finds a particular topic interesting and happens to be free. Since we listen to the talk together, it gives us something to talk about, which we usually do right away driving back home from the talk. We try to pinpoint what we've taken away from the lecture and how we can apply the newfound knowledge in our marriage. Of course, strengthening and nurturing a marriage is a life-long commitment. However, we consider crucial to keep reminding ourselves of certain topics important for a marital relationship and to deepen our knowledge of them, and Family Garden offers us opportunity to do just that.

**In your opinion, what is the main purpose and benefit of these kinds of events?**

Thanks to these lectures and testimonies, married couples have the opportunity to set aside time to do something for each other and for their relationship. Hearing testimonies of other couples is always encouraging. Thanks to those that found the courage to talk about their marriage in front of strangers, people in the audience can realise that they are not alone in dealing with their problem, that it's normal to face difficulties and that no matter how serious their problem might be, it's always possible to try to work on it and on themselves. The most important thing is the willingness to tackle it and to decide to do something about it. The testimonies in which couples openly talked about what they've had to go through are a living proof of that. Many times, they had to face profoundly serious issues, and it was their effort coupled with prayer and God's grace what helped them to ultimately restore their relationship. Today, no one would guess they survived such trials. These kinds of talks and testimonies are especially important because many couples nowadays think they don't need to work on their marriage and that things will continue to go great automatically without them doing anything about it. The other thing is that as a result of today's fast-paced world, they often don't even have time to pause and talk about the things that are important for their relationship and their family.

## **CHRISTIAN COACH TRAINING PROGRAMME**

Our centre has been running the training programme since 2014 with two runs per year – in the Spring and in the Fall. The project also includes other activities aimed at supporting the Christian coach community in Slovakia, such as the spiritual growth seminar for coaches, coach get-together, coaching conference, register of Christian coaches, regional groups uniting Christian coaches, etc.

# T

The programme entitled Christian coach – coaching basics for volunteers in helping professions is aimed at providing the programme graduates with the ability to coach and to utilise coaching methods while helping individuals, couples, or groups that found themselves in situations they can't deal with by themselves. Such situation may be a relational crisis, a problem, difficulty, unfulfilled ambition, unexpected life change, lack of determination, unsuccessful vocation quest, difficult decision, etc. A coaching method could prove to be successful if other methods failed to bring hoped-for results or aren't suitable. Christian coaching isn't supposed to replace other forms of work with a client; its role is to supplement them effectively. The programme is based on the Christian concept of a human person: each of us is called to be an instrument in God's hands in some way, and each of us can be a gift for someone who needs help.



The programme is intended for all those who work in various helping professions or feel to be called to such ministry and want to broaden their technique repertoire by adding coaching skills. It is meant for lay people, priests, religious, or married individuals. It can also be of benefit to those who've already had an experience with limitations in life and were forced to revise their attitudes, values, ideals, or perhaps are in such situation right now. This usually happens in middle age. Graduates trained in Christian coaching can effectively serve in parochial and other settings, family and counselling centres, etc. The need for such services is constantly growing, and possible areas of focus for these activities are inspirationally described also in the Holy Father Francis' post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (2016).

## **WHAT WILL A PARTICIPANT LEARN IN THIS PROGRAMME?**

The programme prepares the participants for an independent coaching by teaching them the concept of a coaching dialogue and its techniques, as well as training them on how to apply this form of help in a community. It covers development of all competences required from coaches by the International Coach Federation (ICF). As an example, among other places, a skilled coach will be able to effectively work within a parochial community in close cooperation with priests, who are often approached by people in difficult life circumstances. A coach might be able to take over a certain phase of accompanying/guiding from the priest. This way, a coach complements other helping and personal development professions through the distinctive coaching approach.





## WHY THE TITLE “CHRISTIAN COACH”?

For Christians, God represents the focal point of their lives, and Christian coaching can and wants to respect this fact. It means that if we are helping a Christian, who found themselves in difficulties of any kind, is looking for answers for their various questions, and who wants to follow Christ in their life, this desire to follow Him is what becomes a key value, a foothold the coaching arises from. Subsequently, the coach's role in the framework of coaching dialogues is to help his client to either start out on such journey, or to enable them to walk it better. Here probably lies the greatest difference between a Christian and secular coaching. Therefore, it is completely natural for the coach to pray for their client, and to keep them in their prayers even outside of their sessions. During each meeting, a Christian coach is conscious of the fact that it's a child of God sitting across the table, and that at the same time, they are both children of God within the Church. If the coach learns to ask the right questions, it will be enough. Then they just need to let the Holy Spirit to do His work, and He'll take care of the rest.

# A

## ASKING OUR LECTURERS

Slovakia gained another 36 Christian coaches in 2019.

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when looking back at both the Spring and the Fall runs of our training programme?

What do you personally gain from lecturing in the Christian coach training programme?

### MIRIAM NĚMCOVÁ

I've had the unique experience of witnessing people changing and reshaping their personalities. Sometimes, these participants may even be coming with a certain amount of scepticism toward coaching, and yet they're leaving the programme completely changed. The reason for that is that coaching has the ability to grab and fascinate a person and it's a unique tool offering people the potential of new challenges and opportunities to reshape themselves.

I enjoy looking for new options and approaches on how to introduce others to the mysteries of coaching, as well as supporting and encouraging them on their journey that's not always easy to undertake.

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I feel deep satisfaction and profound, sheer, and heartfelt gratitude for this endeavour and for the fact that 36 individuals just went their separate ways into all the different parts of Slovakia with their souls changed and with the desire to serve, listen, and be available to others. That's a huge thing and I'm deeply convinced this is what our world truly needs today – the willingness to search with those searching, to sit with those burned out, to look for light with those in despair. The willingness to embrace couples that have lost the ability to understand each other and look for solutions to their problems together. And to do all of that with sympathy... To me, that's the real-world evangelisation in which coaching has its rightful place and has a lot to say.

### EVA RUŠINOVÁ

Without a doubt, it is a great and precious gift, which I keep unwrapping more and more with each new training seminar. My coworkers play a big role in all of that. Working with them and witnessing how they choose to approach their work gives me the opportunity to learn what exactly does it mean to devote oneself to this meaningful endeavour. I keep seeing what great personalities they have and how they're willing to share their own abilities, potential, and gifts they've been given, and do so selflessly and with a high-level professionalism. I can see, time and time again, that through teaching others, we ourselves grow and evolve side by side with our students. That's simply how it works, and it doesn't involve solely our mind and intellect. Through lecturing, all my integral parts get "washed", so to speak. I can see this growth in people graduating from our programme, and I perceive it in my own progress. Now tell me, what can I do other than enjoy all of this and to feel grateful, despite all the hard work involved?

## MARIÁN KUBEŠ

Perhaps first and foremost, I perceive that people long to feel closer to each other. This desire is embedded deeply in our hearts, even though most of the time, we seem to be acting in a way as if it weren't so. Seeing that for so many people coaching is one of the ways how to change their heart and witnessing their desire to help others on this journey assures me that God is still active and creative and keeps inviting us into fellowship with Him.

It's a school of God: whether during prep work trying to figure out how to make the seminar even better, or in exploring what place should Christian coaching have in the lives of today's Christians, in working with colleagues enthusiastic about teaching, in looking for answers to questions about myself...

## MARGITA KUBEŠOVÁ

When I look back at our last year's courses, I can see various challenges in our endeavour to make the basic training course more complete. I can see that the Christian coaching course is a living work in progress which didn't freeze in one place, but continuously keeps reflecting the needs of our clients. At the same time, I can also see a lot of strain and pressure, but there is always something new growing out of them... As Tomáš Halík says, "That what doesn't keep trembling, cannot be strong."

What I personally get out of this course? It's the never-ending awe of seeing God act and the feeling of gratitude that I get to witness it.

## KATARÍNA BAGINOVÁ

I realise that, once again, I was granted the gift of getting to know more wonderful people, each with their unique personal or professional stories. It was very interesting to witness how the way the participants communicated kept changing little by little: they started to listen differently, posed their questions in a different way, but most importantly, started seeing themselves in a whole new light.

Imagine you have or learn something precious, useful, and good, and have the desire to share it with others, simply to pass it on. As a former teacher, teaching is still very close to my heart and I love it... but with that said, I'd like to point out that I'm still the one that ends up learning the most during each training course.



Miriam  
Němcová

Eva  
Rušinová

Marián  
Kubeš

Margita  
Kubešová

Katarína  
Baginová

# M

More and more often, we're presented with a question what's the difference between a spiritual guidance and coaching. Let's look at this issue a bit more closely.

## **What is spiritual guidance and what is coaching?**

Spiritual guidance is a dialogue between a spiritual guide and the person they accompany. The spiritual guide, acting as a mediator between God and an individual, guides the person through encouragement, direction, instruction, or a counsel, with the end goal of facilitating spiritual growth. Looking at the life events and decisions of said individual, the spiritual guide tries to "decode" the work of the Holy Spirit.

Coaching is a specific kind of dialogue/series of dialogues conducted in a way that allows the client to discover their own resources, find their own solution, and to define action steps necessary for achieving it.

## **Goals**

A spiritual guidance deals with crucial areas of a person's spiritual life aiming at equipping the guided individual to form their soul and strengthen their Christian identity with the help of the spiritual guide. Therefore, its main purpose is not to solve a specific problem of the person guided, but to discover the God's plan for their life.

A coaching dialogue is aimed at the predefined purpose of the coaching session, focusing on various areas of a person's life – whether it's discerning, initiating a change, fixing something that doesn't work – all the while keeping in mind the client's long-term goal. The coaching dialogue may zero in on various life and work situations.

## **Session Frequency**

A spiritual guidance is characterised by regular, continuous meetings of the guide with the individual guided by them. A coaching dialogue may either be a one-time event, the sessions may be sporadic, or it may even be a series of sessions spread over a longer time period.

## **Emphasising the person**

In spiritual guidance, an important role is that of an experienced spiritual guide listening to the Holy Spirit active in a person. That's why spiritual guidance requires specific theological and spiritual competences. That doesn't mean that the guide should steal the initiative away from the individual guided; on the contrary, their role is to try to help them achieve autonomy and freedom.

In coaching, the emphasis is placed on a client looking for their own answers to posed questions or a problem. The client is the one discovering their own resources, being strongly supported by the coach and their questions. The coach is out of the picture, so to speak – not offering advice, recommendations, nor solutions. However, both the client and the coach are to remain open to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, both spiritual guidance and Christian coaching may present an important and necessary help during certain phases of a person's personal growth. Having de-

Mgr.  
**EVA RUŠÍNOVÁ**  
FMA

By defining the core differences between a spiritual guidance and Christian coaching, we can now move on to see what they have in common.

Both share an accepting and discreet approach based on trust and respect, whose goal is to make the client feel safe and allow them to open up.

A spiritual guidance and Christian coaching are both aimed at enhancing the quality of life of the entrusted person and achieving transformation in their life according to God's plan. That's why they're both conducted in the atmosphere of prayer in which God is present.

A Christian coach views the context of the client's words from the perspective of an unconditional love of God, loving every person just the way they are.

A Christian coach and a spiritual guide both try to cultivate their sensitivity to the Holy Spirit in order to be a useful instrument serving the interests of God's Kingdom.

The art of listening, closeness, the effort to discern the competences in relation to the person accompanied, the faithfulness to the teachings of the Church, personal sacramental life, prayer life and a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit are all common attributes shared by the spiritual guidance and Christian coaching.

*„Thanks to our session, we were able to take a closer look at our marriage and set our priorities in order. We came to understand where we had gaps and shortcomings, or in which areas we were wasting our energy.“*

*– Jana and Jaroslav –*

*„If a person is facing a problem weighing them down, they should do everything in their power to overcome it. This may be one of the ways leading to a solution.“*

*– Martin –*

# WRITTEN BY THE CHRISTIAN COACH

## EDUCATIONAL TRAINING

### PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS...

*„As a spiritual guide, I started learning to die to myself. I often used to burst with experience and loved to see solutions that were good and useful only for myself. Coaching taught me how truly diverse we all are and showed me that a successful accomplishment of a goal looks for each person differently. And then there is the art of posing our question the right way. It's interesting that we've never been taught how to ask questions properly, not at a pedagogical school, nor during theological studies. Yet a school is precisely a place where it's important to know how to ask the right questions, so that the young person wouldn't just fumble for an answer trying to recall it from their memory, but instead, would create new ideas while learning to be creative.“*

– Mgr. Juraj Ďurnek, PaedDr., piarist –

*„I've never before thought so intensely about what is it that I want and who I am. The first time I've done that was here. I've witnessed so much beauty in others. So many people with unique stories walk this earth! It's as if we were living a fairytale in which our individual stories can interlock and overlap anytime and in any way. And in this living fairytale, we ourselves hold the power to decide how we want to act. I came to realize how many times I've hurt others by passing judgement, condemning them, or by giving advice instead of offering understanding and acceptance. These precisely are the strong messages I'm taking away from this course. It's about acceptance and about leaving myself behind and devoting myself fully to the person coached!“*

– Mgr. Miroslava Valášková, lay person –

*I look forward to fulfilling this vocation and this form of serving others. Within a few months of training and dialogues both at home and in my work environment (since I am not really able not to apply the coaching approach anymore – not even while evaluating my own desires, efforts, and motives), I've repeatedly experienced God's goodness and mercy that can be extended through coaching. I am also looking forward to my own continual shifting and working on myself. To assessing truthfully my own motives, approaches, values, emotions, and haziness, which more often than not disguises laziness and shallowness. I've gained a huge reason to work on myself and to live my life story immersed even deeper in God.*

– Mgr. Martina Jokelová Ťuchová, lay person –

*I've walked a journey in which I've learned a lot and I consider it a great investment into my life. I don't know yet how I will manage this gift, or in which direction will it push me toward; that's something I'm leaving in the Lord's hands. In any way, while here, I've at least become more attentive to the Holy Spirit and learned to pay less attention to my own voice. I've been touched by the realization that every one of us – myself included – has inside their soul their own resources to overcome dire moments in life. The only thing is to discover them. It's the process of learning and discovering the path of mercy towards ourselves, other people, and God. Christian coaching opens up the gates of the soul.*

– Miroslava Tarajová, Salesian sister –

*Before coming to the seminar, I had no idea what a poor listener I am. Until now, I thought I perceived each person as a child of God, but now I know it wasn't the case. Truth to be told, everything used to be about me: I wanted to stand out and in this false limelight, I lost sight of the other person and their suffering. I feel as if a "new door" opened before me leading to a "new world". I've been looking for this door for a long time, praying for it to open. However, I've never expected this door to be coaching, since I've never given this method much thought. So, even though I was never looking for it, coaching itself found me.*

– Mgr. Peter Strojný, lay person –

*Our teachers nailed their job perfectly – each in their own way. Seeing this dynamic was truly inspiring for me. I understood the coaching method and fell in love with it, because it's full of humanity and God at the same time, and you can't not love God. However, I see my shortcomings as a coach, and I'm trying to work on them, but to tell the truth, it's not going as well as I'd like. At the same time, I also see the great responsibility that comes hand in hand with this vocation. It requires me to trust more, to find more courage, and to accept myself more fully just the way I am.*

– Mgr. Zuzana Žažová, lay person –

*Once again, coaching helped me to bare my hidden inner person and to draw the best out of myself. My fear and sadness turned into joy knowing that I'm able to change what needs to be changed in myself, thus helping not only myself but others around me as well. I'm glad I was able to participate in the Christian coach training seminar and would like to thank all our lecturers for their willingness to get involved in the programme. If anybody asked me if I recommend Christian coaching, my answer would be a resounding YES, even though I realise they would need to get to know themselves and bare their soul.*

– Mgr. Dušan Hricko, barefoot Carmelite brother –

*I view the Christian coach training programme as a gift from God. When signing up as well as during the training, I kept receiving signals supporting my conviction that this is where God truly wanted me to be. Thanks to coaching I came to understand that instead of giving advice to other people (especially unsolicited one), it is much better to offer them our listening ear and encourage them to look for their own solutions to their problem. The triad dialogues provided me with a precious time to think about relationships which are close to my heart and which I'd like to improve. I found answers to several questions of mine and made decisions which I've since already applied in my life.*

– Ing. Vladislav Brossmann, lay person –

*Over the course of four months, during which I was often experiencing the sinusoid of the Hamlet's TO BE OR NOT TO BE question, I came to realise a very significant fact: There is only one thing that's important, and that's GOD, connecting the two of us, the coached individual and myself, for this brief moment in time. God saw fit to let me serve the other person – using my ears so that he could listen, my mouth to ask questions, and my words to be able to talk to them. The same God can use even my „wrong phrasing“ and imperfect humanity to build up and grow the other person.*

– Mária Marková, PaedDr, Congregatio Jesu sister –

*I dare say that that, thanks to coaching as well as other related matters, I was 'born again' as a son of God. Once again, I've not only taken in this awareness of my sonship in God intellectually, but I've also experienced it emotionally and spiritually. I'm already talking to people applying the coaching principles. When somebody talks to me and I'm not clear on what they're saying, instead of trying to guess, I ask to clarify. Coaching helped me to put into words what I've known for a long time: the awareness that God has created me well. I've realised that a human person is very deep and there is a lot of what they're hiding, not only from the eyes of others, but also from themselves. As the Bible says, 'The human heart and mind are a mystery.' (Ž 64,7)*

– Mgr. Tadeáš Chřvala, Capuchin –

## **MENTORING OF ENGAGED COUPLES**

The mentoring of engaged couples and their preparation for marriage is a joint effort of married couples – members of the Association of Salesian Cooperators (ASC) and priests from the Mary, Help of Christians Catholic Parish located on Miletičova Street.

# O

don  
**PAVOL SEMAN**  
SDB

Over the course of the last two years, I've had the opportunity to help in mentoring three runs of marriage preparation courses for engaged couples preparing to enter into the Sacrament of marriage. I consider it a highly valuable experience as well as something of a great benefit to my personal growth in my priestly service. Side by side with a married instructor couple (twice, I joined forces with Mr. and Mrs. Mikuš, and once with the Horváths), I would walk into the anticipations, joys, and hopes of young couples. Approximately a third of them were young people from our Salesian centre and the rest came from every corner of Slovakia, and were living, studying, or working in Bratislava at the time. At our Mary, Help of Christians parish, we've decided to set up 9 weekly meetings, during which we offer young participants the opportunity to discuss topics from the Pastoral Plan Project.

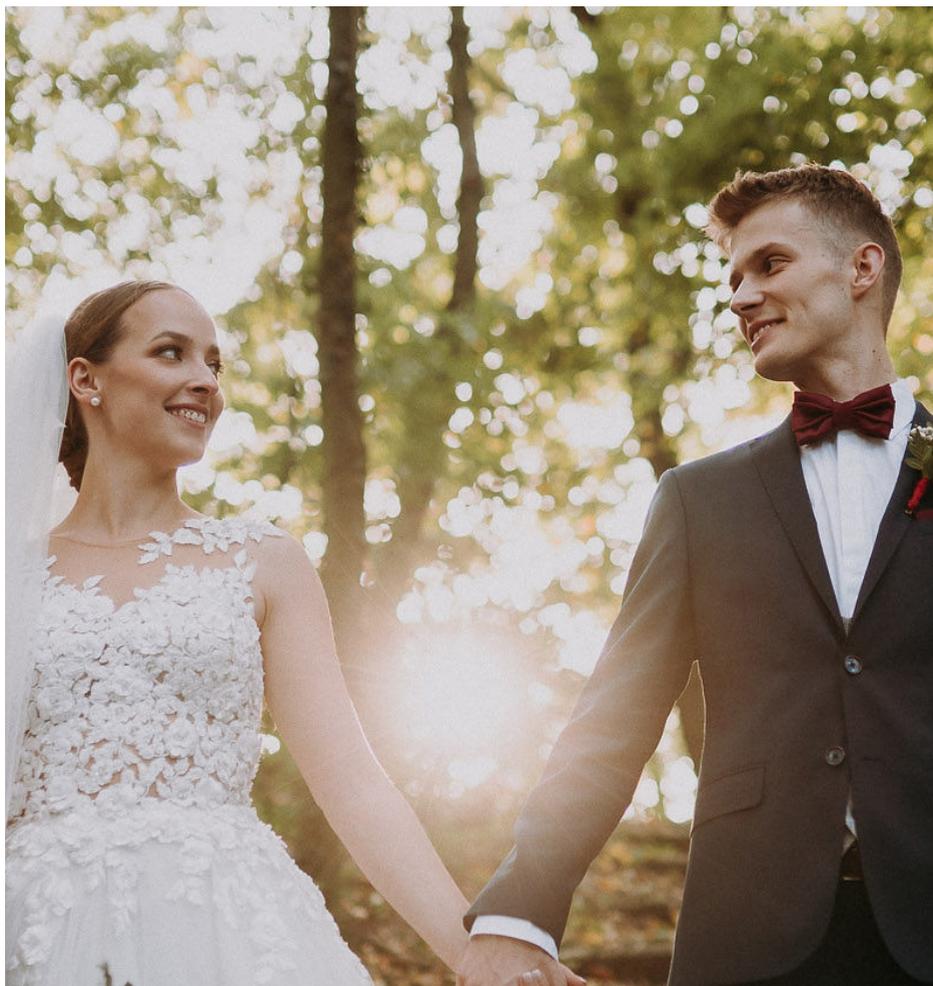
It's very heart-warming to see what progress these young people make. To witness them talking with their partner not only about the issues important for their lives and their hopes and plans, but also about the potential difficulties of their future joint life in marriage; to witness how they're willing to share their experiences and questions in front of the entire group. More often than not, both the young lady and the young man are believers, however, we also encounter instances when that's not the case. In particular, I remember one couple in which the young man hadn't even been baptised. Nevertheless, he deeply respected the entire study content

of the course and conscientiously participated in the dialogues with his fiancé. I truly appreciated his deep humanity and thoughtfulness.

I also view very highly our cooperation with the married couples participating in our marriage preparation courses. During all three runs of our marriage preparation, we were meeting in a meeting room on Miletičova Street, but our last, tenth meeting took place in the home of our instructor couple where we all got to meet their family.

We, members of the Salesian family, vividly remember the words spoken by Don Bosco: "The goal we all work toward is the good of all people, including those that don't share our conviction of faith." I remember another instance in which a young man fell in love with a girl who was a believer. She then helped him to initiate the faith-seeking process which continued through the catechumenate and ended with him being baptised and confirmed. Then they completed marriage preparation together, and today, the young man is zealous for faith and eagerly witnesses to others side by side with his wife.

I'm grateful to God and also to you, Renátka and Jaro, Janka and Majo, as well as to all of you, young people who took part in our marriage preparation gatherings for this beautiful experience. May the Lord bless your sacramental marriages!



## MR. & MRS. ILKOVIČ

Our marriage preparation was a very nice time for us. The topics we focused on included useful advice for day-to-day married life and at the same time, they showed us how we can invite God into our marriage. It was very helpful and enriching for us to get to hear more about life in marriage from a seasoned, inspirational, and not to mention honest married couple. A marriage isn't something you can get ready for in one weekend. This way, we were able to spend the time in between the meetings talking and get to know the other's vision of our life together. We wholeheartedly recommend marriage preparation done through a series of meetings.

In 2019, we teamed up in the marriage preparation courses with Fr. Jozef Zachar. It was the 14th group of engaged couples to counsel for us. From the very start of our involvement up until now, we've been doing the portion of meetings run by the instructor couple at our home.

Even though the space in our city flat is limited, so far, we've always been able to fit in everybody. We view these get-togethers at our home as a very blessed time, even though we're often tired after working all day or following our other activities.

Between the walls of our home, we try to create an accepting, safe, and trusting environment for our engaged couples. We perceive our role not as of someone magisterially explaining what to do and how to do it; rather, we try to partner with them and reveal to them not only the beautiful, but also the darker side of our marriage life together. When it comes to serious issues, we try to lighten up the atmosphere through humour, which we both love.

The couples' feedback shows us that they view this form of marriage preparation as interesting, valuable, and enriching, which in turn gives us the sense of purpose and recharges us going into the future.



**MR. KAMIL & MRS. KATARÍNA BAGIN**

# W

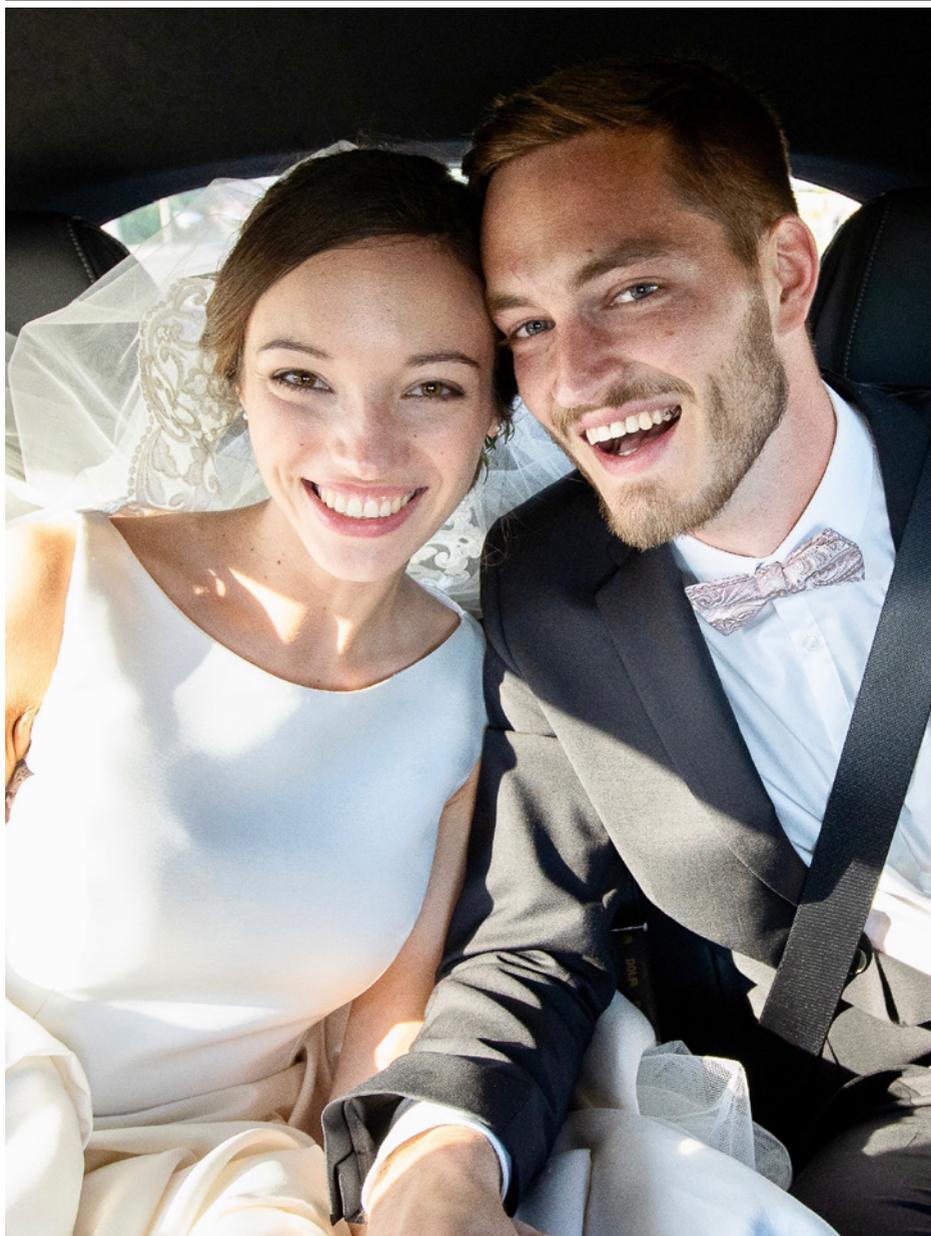
Working with engaged couples has become very close to our hearts. A marriage preparation done in the form of nine weekly meetings is our time-proven way how to establish a nice community among the couples which then often lasts even after they all get married. We view the marriage preparation led in tandem by priests and married couples as an important mission which benefits all the people participating, as evidenced by the anonymous questionnaires filled out by the couples at the end of the marriage prep course. The couples appreciate the time we've given them and us sharing our lives is a valuable testimony to them. We're thankful to be a part of the team active at the Miletičova Street centre, as well as for the opportunity to lecture on the subject of responsible family planning within other Bratislava-based groups.



**MR. JARO & MRS. RENÁTA MIKUŠ**

The marriage preparation period was a beautiful time for us. Side by side with a priest, a seasoned married couple, and other engaged couples, we had the opportunity to talk in depth about various marital issues and problems which just the two of us probably wouldn't have discussed otherwise. We were very much looking forward to each and every meeting.

**MR. & MRS.  
KOTULA**





**MR. & MRS.  
SENDERÁK**

What was great about our marriage prep was the fact that it was run by a wonderful married couple teamed up with a priest. We very much appreciated the extreme openness of our animators and their willingness to share their personal experiences. It was heart-warming to see the example of their beautiful marriage. We're also glad to have been able to meet with other couples and engage and share with them. Our gatherings always had a great atmosphere. For us personally, the issues talked about in our meetings used to spark off deeper conversations between the two of us which was helpful. We'd definitely recommend the marriage preparation at the Miletičova centre.

# A

As of now, my husband and I have been involved in marriage preparation for more than 15 years. Seeing the ever-increasing generational differences between our engaged couples and ourselves, we're starting to wonder whether we still have something to say which they'd consider relevant. However, our personal experience as well as the experience of our close married friends tells us that even though our times are evolving and changing, there are things in life that remain the same. Since from experience we know them to be true, we're passing them on. At least for the duration of our meetings, we try to create a genuine, open community with those coming to meet with us to allow them to see that even in today's world, it is possible to live a deep, beautiful, and lasting relationship (even though the media is trying to convince us otherwise). Last but not least, we ourselves are gaining a lot from the wisdom, and often a very deep faith of those coming to us for advice. And in contact with non-believers, we admire their openness and willingness to break down prejudices.



**MR. PAVOL & MRS. MONIKA KOTULA**

Lectures, seminars, individual sessions,  
as well as mentoring for those interested  
in learning about selected methods  
of natural family planning and their  
correct evaluation.

**FERTILITY CLINIC**

*„I felt like I didn't have what it takes and I wasn't able to get to know my body. Visiting the Fertility clinic gave me the courage to give this method a try and it boosted my faith that something like this could work for me too.“*

*- klientka -*



**MUDr.  
RENÁTA MIKUŠOVÁ**

Over the course of 2019, our fertility clinic offered its services to both engaged and married couples. To engaged couples, I've given 7 lectures entitled "Responsible family planning and natural methods of regulating fertility", and my two talks "Does a Christian marriage today still need natural fertility-regulating methods?" were intended for married couples. In 24 individual sessions, I've met with engaged couples, brides-to-be, married couples, and wives, and explained the principles and practical rules of the Symptothermal method of fertility awareness with the goal of determining a fertile window in a woman's cycle. Through e-mail communication, I've also evaluated 20 cycle records of young girls/women who started tracking and recording their fertility signs following our individual sessions.

0

**VOLUNTEERS**



Photographer

## MARTIN ONDRUŠ

I work for Family Garden, because I see meaning in what it does as a counselling centre. Many young people don't realize the importance of prevention and mentoring in the area of relationships in particular. That's why I try my best to make the pictures for Family Garden as awesome as possible, because sometimes, through the outer form, people may later discover the true essence of things :)



## JANA GAVALDA BELLANOVÁ

### Preparation of printed materials

I've been working with Family Garden for a couple of years now and I'm glad for that. At the beginning, the reason behind my cooperation with them was primarily my belief that this project is needed and meaningful. I trusted the people standing behind its formation and I agreed with the ideas and intentions they were basing the Family Garden project on. The time has shown that their initial ideas were correct. The positive example of lay people's active engagement has become widely recognised not only in Slovakia, but also abroad. The Family Garden counselling centre gained respect and recognition in Church circles as well as among professionals. It's an honour for me to be able to work with the people from the centre. I believe the Lord will bless this endeavour so that it will continue to manifest the true Christian values and why they're important in today's society.



Lecture invitation  
design and social  
network management

**MR. JOHNY & MRS. LUCIA  
MRÁZEK**

Both my husband and I are Salesian cooperators. That's one of the reasons why the work done in Family Garden is so important to us and why we consider our service to be our mission within the Salesian family.

We're very happy to be able to help a little to advance this endeavour and through it, to assist families and individuals that need help.



## **PATRIK GOBOŇA**

I started to work for Family Garden when I was still a university student. I liked the main message of the centre which then led me to the decision to lend a helping hand with the technical support during lectures and testimonies given by married couples. Helping out also allows me to listen to the talks, which I probably wouldn't be able to otherwise.

Technical support  
during lectures

# T

**THANK YOU**



**VIEW FROM THE OUTSIDE**



**JÁN HOLUBČÍK**  
SDB  
Delegate  
for Youth Ministry

**A**

**As of now, our counselling centre has been in existence for seven years. What's your view on Family Garden after this time?**

I've noticed that over the course of those seven years, Family Garden has seen an incredibly fast growth. I meet a lot of people from various communities and environments who are familiar with Family Garden and have been greatly helped by it. As it usually is with godly projects, the beginnings were not easy, but today, we've built a well-known, solidly established, and functioning counselling centre.

**Is there something that sets Family Garden apart from other counselling or family centres? In your mind, what are some of its defining characteristics?**

The Family Garden centre is specific by its Christian understanding of man and its approach to people. I personally appreciate its originality stemming from the Salesian charisma.

**Is there anything Family Garden should focus on or on the contrary, something that we should leave behind, so that we would still be able to be here in another ten years?**

The message and the remit of the centre is brilliant. I think it's very important for the centre to stay true to its original message and for the employees and other people involved not to get discouraged by present difficulties, other people's problems, and seemingly unsuccessful outcomes. Although it might seem that we don't see any light on our journey anymore and our effort doesn't bear fruit, it's crucial to keep moving forward.

# PETER KERTYS

ASC

Member of the Provincial Council  
of Salesian Cooperators in Slovakia



# W

**What prompted your decision to start making regular monthly contributions to the Family Garden account? You've been sending us a financial donation for more than two years now.**

I think it's a very beneficial project which directly supports building up and maintaining families. I don't know of any other similar project that would, in such a direct way, work on behalf of the good of families.

**In your opinion, what is the greatest purpose of the existence of our centre?**

I see it in connecting clinical experts holding true values in a mission to serve others. The centre offers a wide range of support options for various life situations, and if someone were to approach me needing or wanting this kind of help, I can confidently recommend its services.



**TIBOR REIMER**  
SDB  
Director  
of the Salesian community  
in Bratislava-Trnávka

**What's your view on the activity and impact of the centre after seven years of its existence?**

I've been noticing it most intensely in the last few years since I've started working in the Trnávka city district, because I get to meet regularly with the people from the centre and we also get to work together every now and then. I think that ever since the centre has been residing in the Momma Margherita Family Centre, its activities have been stabilised and keep expanding. And last but not least, I'm glad we've also developed an unusual cooperation between Family Garden and our Domino Children and Youth Community football team in the area of coach formation.

**In your opinion, what is the hallmark of Family Garden setting it apart from other counselling or family centres?**

I'd say that one of the centre's main characteristics could be the fact that Family Garden covers a relatively wide range of activities. Apart from the usual counselling services offered to individuals and couples alike, Family

Garden is thus able to participate in or even design activities and services which are welcome and useful in some way. A good example would be the training seminar for Christian coaches, the centre's efforts in the area of public talks or formation of engaged/married couples, or the above-mentioned formation for our football coaches.

**What should Family Garden start focusing on or what should we leave behind, so that we would still be able to be here in another ten years?**

I don't dare to pinpoint what's necessary to start or cease doing; that's always the question of how to best respond to the needs of our time. However, there is always another important question to consider as well – how to engage new people in our current activities, so that they would be able to continue cultivating the activities Family Garden does now going into the future. Each and every Salesian endeavour can be characterised by creating space for shared responsibility and cooperation. This is definitely something we need to cultivate so that Family Garden would be able to continue evolving and expanding going forward.

**OUR ACTIVITIES  
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR**

On Friday, **18 January 2019**, six young men accompanied by three Salesian brothers led by Fr. Dušan Vilhan visited our Family Garden centre.

Again in 2019, as in previous years, they completed a year-long programme entitled "Discerning vocation in the Salesian way" enabling young men to discern their calling. The topic of our meeting in Family Garden was the vocation to married life, and the testimony about life in marriage was given by Mr. and Mrs. Kamil and Katarína Bagin.

# J





As part of the „National Marriage Week” event happening in **February**, Mr. and Mrs. Kamil and Katarína Bagin accepted an invitation to give a talk in the Senec parish, managed by Jozef Dúc as the parish priest. The topic of their testimony was meeting spouses' needs in a marriage.



In **April**, as part of our involvement with the Bratislava Hanus Days (BHD) city festival, we welcomed an American marriage and family psychotherapist Tim Long at our centre. In our lecture hall, he delivered a talk „Acceptance or Pride”.



**A**



At the **end of May**, our Family Garden centre welcomed a distinguished guest – Fr. Eusebio Muñoz, Delegate of the Rector Major for the Salesian Family, accompanied by Fr. Pavol Grach, the provincial delegate for the Salesian family in Slovakia. Among other things, Fr. Muñoz said:

*„Lay people are finally starting to do what they should, because the call to the lay vocation is complementary to that of a priest or a consecrated person. In fact, a priest isn't able to fully realize his vocation without a lay person. Therefore, they not only complement each other, but they maintain and support each other, giving each other incentives and inspiration for carrying out their vocation. Way to go; keep it up, Family Garden.“*

His words stand as a call to action not only for our centre, but also for all other people working in the area of family and marriage pastoral care.



In the month of May, our fellow worker Miriam Němcová gave a talk on the topic of *“Active Listening”* to the teachers of the De la Salle Combined Primary and Secondary School located in the Petržalka city district.



In **May** of 2019, our centre organised an already well-established event which holds a significant relevance especially for the community of Christian coaches, since it concerns their spiritual growth. This run of the Spiritual growth Seminar for Christian Coaches took place in a new location – in the Klokočov Visitation House, nestled in a beautiful nature setting of the Kysuce region. Regarding the authors of the project, there has been a partial change compared to the previous year:

Dr. Lucia Hidvéghyová, who has proved herself to be a great leader last year, teamed up with an Augustinian brother Milan Hermanovský, OSA. An interesting culmination to the coaches' group work was a spontaneous prayer, inspired by the participants themselves.

During the month of **June**, we carried out a few trips to various Slovakia regions, laying the groundwork for regional groups of Christian coaches in the cities of Trenčín, Nitra, Žilina and Košice.

The focus of these groups lies mostly in:

- building a community and offer each other encouragement while serving as Christian coaches in their local environment;
- assisting each other in the effort to build the atmosphere of trust and cooperation with the local church or priest;
- trying to gain publicity within the regions through the means of regional press/TV coverage, flyers, and parish announcements, while being involved in the activities of the local church;
- supporting each other professionally and strengthening their qualifications and competences through sharing their newly-acquired skills and experiences.



# J



# A

**On 31 August**, more than 30 Christian coaches from the entire Slovakia region got together in a beautiful setting of the Krížovany nad Dudváhom presbytery to participate in the third year gathering of the Christian coaches. The goal of the meet-up was not only to add more tools to their coaching toolbox, but, most importantly, to create and nurture a continually vibrant community united in serving others.





# S

**In September**, the Family Garden centre carried out the first out of the series of five workshops for the coaches of the Domino Children and Youth Community Football Team in Bratislava-Trnávka. The workshops which took place between September 2019 and May 2020 during the regular work meetings of the coaches with the club management focused on developing key competences necessary for working with pupils, such as effective communication with children and parents, conflict and emotion management, individualised approach to pupils, evaluation, team coaching, the Code of Ethics for Coaches, etc.

In the month of **September**, the Register of Christian Coaches has seen the light of day on the Family Garden website. It contains the names of all the coaches that met the demanding entry criteria and are thus able to guarantee a sufficient level of knowledge and expertise necessary for accompanying and assisting clients within Slovakia. The register offers a directory of the coaches organised by their respective regions as well as detailed information about them. Its main goal is to ensure that Christian coaching services are available for anybody interested in this kind of personal help.

**RKK**  
**REGISTER**  
**KREŠŤANSKÝCH**  
**KOČOV**



At the end of **November**, we welcomed a special guest at our centre. Sister Anna Bissi, the superior of the Brotherhood of Transfiguration in Italy, provided two different seminars at our centre over the course of two days. >>>



The first workshop was intended for nuns and intrigued the participants with its interesting topic of "Emotional life in a community". Nuns belonging to six different monastic congregations located throughout the entire Slovakia arrived to participate in the event.

The second seminar led by sister Anna was dedicated to Christian coaches. She spoke about emotions which may arise in the coached client, as well as those emerging (and sometimes even long-time-persisting) in the souls of the coaches themselves.

The beautiful pre-Christmas atmosphere was made even more special by the already traditional get-together of the employees working at the Momma Margherita Family Centre. As usual, the greatest credit for the event is due to the brothers of the local Salesian community providing all the provender, and especially their delicious traditional sauerkraut soup. The entire late-afternoon gathering was characterised by an accepting and friendly atmosphere, intensified by the profound personal testimonies given by the individual employees (physicians, nurses, teachers...) talking about their day-to-day work.

# D



# HOW WE'VE MANAGED OUR RESOURCES



Material Costs	15 327,99 €
Energy Costs	908,09 €
Presentation Costs	1 996,55 €
Other Services	81 130,40 €
Wages	3 671,19 €
Statutory Social and Health Insurance	1 222,87 €
Other Taxes and Fees	428,30 €
Exchange Losses	16,44 €
Other Expenses	587,76 €
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>105 289,59 €</b>

Gifts Received	7 730,00 €
Contributions from Natural Persons	41 140,00 €
Contributions from the Share of Tax Paid	3 573,60 €
Subsidies	44 744,00 €
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>97 187,60 €</b>



## **IN ADDITION TO OUR CENTRE'S ONGOING ACTIVITIES INCLUDING:**

# 2

- expert lectures and testimonies of married couples,
- marriage preparation classes provided in tandem with the Mary Help of Christians Parish on Miletičova Street,
- sessions with a Christian coach offered to all interested parties,
- training of additional Christian coaches through the Christian Coach Educational Training Programme,
- cultivating and coordinating of the Christian coach community in Slovakia,
- running and further growth of the Fertility Awareness Clinic,

## **WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES IN THE WORKS FOR 2020:**

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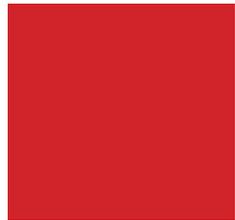
- providing new educational courses for selected target groups, such as married couples, members of religious orders, and coaches/teachers. Among the topics we plan to offer as part of our educational efforts will be the subject of gentle communication, conflict-solving skills, crucial aspects of married life, the art of education in the current times, and working with emotions,
- establishing systematic support as well as creating specific activities within the area of marital and family pastoral care, spanning from marriage preparation for engaged couples, through help with potential emerging problems at the beginning of married life, to mentoring and accompaniment of married couples and families facing a crisis,
- offering support and sharing experiences – whether in the process of establishing new family centres or through practical cooperation with the existing centres both in Slovakia and abroad,
- expanding our team by recruiting new external coworkers (lecturers, coaches...) as well as volunteers and interns, with the goal of doing what we already do better, while focusing on the needs of today's families..



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Daniela Koronthály

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Jana Gavalda

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