



St. Thomas Church: established July 1, 1285 by King Vaclav II



May 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 2016

Ascension Sunday - C

# St. Thomas Church

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The horrors of Jesus' passion and death fade in the light of his assuring resurrected presence. This precious time- symbolically encompassing "40 days"- is spent in first gathering, strengthening and instructing his once scattered disciples. Once that had been completed, Jesus now at his ascension takes his place in glory. Before he leaves them there are several reiterated themes. The first is the witness of Scriptures which for these first disciples and their immediate followers was the Hebrew Bible or *First Testament*. Our *New Testament* or *Second Testament* as we would recognize it received its final form, perhaps, a century (c. AD 150) later. Jesus' passion, death and resurrection "according to the Scriptures" were not "accidents" or "unforeseen incidents" that simply "happened"; on the contrary, they were in the ultimate plan of God to inaugurate his kingdom of peace and love (foretold by the prophets) *through Jesus Christ*. Interestingly, it is Jesus himself who "opens their minds to understand the Scriptures" ([Luke 24:45](#)).

The second theme is that of witness. Presumably, Jesus is speaking to the disciples and broadly to the Children of Israel who are to announce first in Jerusalem and then to a struggling world the *good news of God's forgiveness through repentance*. But, it does not end here- otherwise all the gospel readings would be nothing more than an impressive myth with a sacred denouement. The something more is the *You and Me* who have heard the *good news of repentance and divine forgiveness*. And like those first disciples we, too, are to be clothed with God's power in the Holy Spirit to give witness in daily life to the good things the Lord has accomplished. Luke's gospel opens with song. At his birth the angels sang; Mary, too, intoned her *Magnificat* in thanksgiving as did the pious Simon and Anna upon meeting Jesus in the Temple. And we, with the disciples, now give thanks to God- perhaps, not as eloquently, but let it emerge from the heart of our faith. St. Augustine says:

*Brothers and sisters we urge you to praise God. That is what we mean when we sing ALLELUIA. You are saying to your neighbor "Praise the Lord!" We are praising God now here in church; but when we go back to our daily lives and tasks it seems as if we cease to praise God. But provided we do not cease to live a good life, we shall always be praising God. You cease to praise God only when you swerve from justice and from what is pleasing to God.*

## First Reading commentary:

Words have consequences. Sometimes, these consequences are explosive.

These few verses described the end of the first Christian martyr, Stephen. Acts 6-7 narrated the witness of Stephen, one of the first deacons in the community at Jerusalem. Opponents conspired and had Stephen arrested. Before the judges of the Sanhedrin, Stephen implicitly answered the charge they made against Jesus himself in Mark 15:58 (Jesus would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days). He reviewed the early history of God's activity with Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon to point out who was really in charge of the people. While he was charged with blasphemy, Stephen accused the Sanhedrin of presumption. Clearly stated, Stephen equated the leaders with those who opposed the prophets when they crucified the "Righteous One" (7:52). They, not he, sinned, for in killing Jesus of Nazareth, they received the Law (that is, revelation) but did not understand or act on it. Stephen implied they replaced faith in God with their own brand of religion.

Then, Stephen made a profound statement. He witnessed to the end time vision: the Son of Man sat at the right hand of God. By equating Jesus with Daniel's Son of Man, he struck a nerve. The assembly rushed him, dragged him outside the city, and stone him to death. As a side note, Saul of Tarsus was introduced to the reader. Stephen prayed to Jesus for salvation and the forgiveness of his executioners. Then, he died.

Sharing our faith can be controversial, especially in these polarized times. The people who hear us can presume ideas and intents that we might not hold, but, nonetheless, use against us. The words "I follow Jesus" can make us friends, but they can also make us enemies. We cannot control the reactions of others. However, we, like Stephen, can remain true to ourselves, despite the consequences. If we remain true, we, too, will undergo death, but find God and eternal life.

Those consequences are worth the risk.

## Congratulations and thanks P . William!

The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fr. William's will  
be on Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> of May at 11:00am  
Mass.



***“Lord, give me what you ask of  
me and ask me what you will.”***

***St. Augustine***

When we see Father William, We see a young man's smile. He believes he is an instrument of God and that through him God provides some measure of help to those who seek it. Some are given strength, others relief, and still others peace and all are given the promise of God's Love, through Christ. Fr. William loves each of us; he gives unselfishly of his time and of his wisdom and extensive knowledge.

Let us celebrate today...Let us celebrate God's Grace and the Resurrection of Christ. Let us count our blessings, and today more than any other let us count among those, the gift we have in our Priest Father William Faix. Thanks be to God.

## Ongoing Activities

\***Bible Study** sessions are held each Wednesday evening at 6:30pm/18:00 in the Church office. All are welcome to join and reflect on the Word of God.

\*If you would like to receive a **copy of the bulletin by email**, please contact [osaprag@augustiniani.cz](mailto:osaprag@augustiniani.cz)

\* **St. John Nepomuk** festival will be celebrated on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May. Vesper oin our Church at 08:00 pm

\*May 15<sup>th</sup> is **Confirmation** Sunday in our Church at 11:00am Mass .

\*May 22<sup>nd</sup> is **FIRST HOLY COMMUNION SUNDAY**. Again we ask that you pray for these young parishioners as they approach the Eucharist for the first time.

\* Please note: on Sunday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, the Czech, the English, the Spanish speaking communities and other expatriate communities together will celebrate the feast of **Corpus Christi** which honours the Eucharistic presence of Christ. Mass for all our communities will be at 09:30 am. there will be no Mass at 11:00 am. Immediately after Mass the procession with the Blessed Sacrament through Malastrana

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## ***The 13th PARISH FESTIVAL***

Saint Thomas Church. Park Kampa from 10am  
till 08pm. 4<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Program for children; Program for families; Theater Dance, music; Presentation of the activities of the Church; BBQ for all; Raffle; And a lot of surprises...

## **Year of Mercy: "Merciful like the Father"**

**Let us rediscover these corporal works of mercy:**

1. to feed the hungry,
2. give drink to the thirsty,
3. clothe the naked,
4. welcome the stranger,
5. heal the sick,
6. visit the imprisoned,
7. bury the dead.

**And let us not forget the spiritual works of mercy:**

1. to counsel the doubtful,
2. instruct the ignorant,
3. admonish sinners,
4. comfort the afflicted,
5. forgive offences,
6. bear patiently those who do us ill
7. pray for the living and the dead."