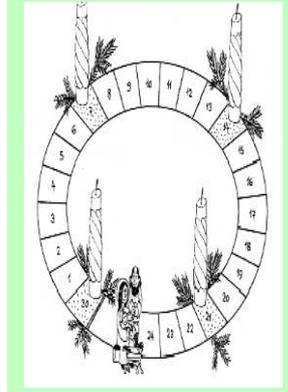




St. Thomas Church: established July 1, 1285 by King Vaclav II

### Today's Prayer

Dear Jesus, as I call on you today I realise that I often come asking for favours. Today I'd like just to be in your presence. Let my heart respond to Your Love.



November 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> 2016

The First Sunday of Advent-Year A

# St. Thomas Church

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### Reflection on the Gospel

*Advent*, a word derived from the Latin “coming”, is that season of the year in which we not only celebrate the feast of Christ’s nativity in Bethlehem but also two other equally important *comings* or *advents*. The wholesale marking of Christmas which means “the Mass of Christ” has dulled our religious perceptions as to the true inner meaning of not only Christmas but of Advent. The anomalous situation of shops blaring out *Silent Night* before Thanksgiving only confuses the issue. In order to appreciate the lessons of this beautiful time of quiet preparation we can divide Advent into two distinct time frames. The first extends from the first Sunday of Advent to December 16 and is followed by the last half from the December 16 to the Vigil of Christmas on December 24. The first half of the season is somewhat grim and foreboding. The Gospel readings remind us of judgment and urgent contingency measures in face of the Lord’s sudden appearance. As in the past, these crisp gospel passages have been subject to endless interpretations both within and without the Church. The more recent Jehovah Witnesses, for example, had been forced to recalculate the final day “of reckoning” as occurring in 1875, 1915 and finally in 1975. The early Christian community of Mark the evangelist did believe that Jesus was on “his way” with the destruction of Jerusalem and wholesale deportation of Israel following the disastrous *Jewish War* (AD 66-72). The end did not come and the later evangelists (Matthew, Luke and John) now read back into Jesus’ word; what they found was that he did enjoy watchfulness and prayer in face of the encroaching judgment. Neither the day nor the hour was the subject of discussion, prayerful vigilance was. But, there is still a third advent amidst the historical commemoration of Jesus and the dark day of the Last Judgment.

The Third advent is that which we experience in the reception of the sacraments, since it is Jesus who creates the community of the Church through and within the Eucharist. As we begin our Advent let us keep in mind all three comings of the Lord: in the past at Christmas, in the future through judgment and each day with prayer, the scriptures and the sacrament of the altar. May we never grow lax or indifferent “on the watch” no

### Study of the Second Reading

Paul shared the early Christians’ expectation of Christ’s imminent return. He may have been one of the first apostles to proclaim this apocalyptic gospel drawn from late Jewish traditions. In this passage he urged the Romans to be unceasingly aware of the new order Jesus came to bring. They were to mirror his life in word and action. At the same time, as C.H. Dodd pointed out, the idea of the imminent “Day of the Lord” may have been fading in Paul’s mind because this is the only passage in his Roman letter where he wrote of it. Instead he had begun to think those who believe in and follow Christ already live in the new Age. “The ethics of crisis,” to adopt Dodd’s phrase, “gave point to his moral exhortations.” (Hodder & Stoughton. *Romans. The Moffatt New Testament Commentary*, 1932, 209.)

The contrast of light and darkness in vss.12-13 reflected the dramatic change of behavior and character which their newly acquired faith brought to those early Christians. Paul’s earlier Letter to the Galatians 5:16-25 had made this same sharp contrast where Paul had compared the life of the Spirit and the life of the flesh.

In vs. 14 the phrase “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” may refer to the new garments put on the newly baptized as a symbol of the new spiritual life God had given them through faith in Christ. Paul used this favorite image several times in his correspondence. It meant simply following the moral example and character of Jesus into whose Body they had been mystically incorporated by baptism.

No less a saint than Augustine of Hippo confessed that this passage brought about his historic conversion. Christians still witness to the life-transforming experience of an encounter with Christ, though perhaps some do not experience it as dramatically as others.

**Coffee, Cookies & Conversation** follow Sunday Mass in the Monastery Refectory off the Cloister Garden. **All are invited, especially our visitors.**

## Advent with Augustine: 'God's promises are Given Through His Son'

God decreed a time for making promises and a time for the promises to be fulfilled. The time for making promises was the time of the prophets, ending with John the Baptist, the last prophet. From then until the end is the time for the fulfilment of promises.

God is faithful. He has made himself our debtor, not by receiving anything from us but by promising us so much. The promise alone was not enough for him: he wanted it in writing, so that he could be held to it, practically entering into a contract with us that listed the promises he was making. In that way, when he began to fulfil his promises, we could see the order of their fulfilment by looking in Scripture. Therefore the time of the prophets was (as I have said so often) the time of making promises.

He promised us eternal salvation and an unending life of blessedness with the angels, and an imperishable inheritance, the joy of seeing his face, a dwelling-place with him in heaven, and the fear of death removed from us through the resurrection. This is, if you like, his ultimate promise. We look forward to it, and when we reach it, we will want nothing more. But as to how this final end is to be reached, he has also told us in promises and prophecies.

He has promised to men that they will be like God; to mortals he has promised immortality; to sinners, righteousness; to the lowly, glory.

Indeed, brethren, because what God promised seemed incredible to men - that from mortality, decay, weakness, lowliness, dust and ashes they should become equals of the angels of God - he did not only sign a contract with them to convince them. He sent, not just any prince, not just any angel or archangel, but his only Son. The road by which he was to lead us to the end he had promised us - through his Son he would show us that road.

Even so, it was not enough for God to send his Son to point out the way - he made his Son the way itself, so that we can go on our journey guided by him as he walks along his own way.

So the only Son of God was to come to men, to take on humanity, and thus to die, to ascend to heaven and sit at the right hand of the father, and so to fulfil what he had promised among the nations. After that promise to the nations had been fulfilled, he would fulfil his other promise, to come, to demand the return of what he had given, to separate the vessels of anger from the vessels of mercy, to give the wicked what he had threatened and the righteous what he had promised.

All this had to be prophesied and foretold. It had to have its coming announced. It could not come suddenly and unexpectedly, causing terror and alarm: people had to be awaiting it with faith.

St. Augustines reflection on Psalm 109

## Ongoing Activities

❖ We **welcome** all our new parishioners to St. Thomas Church. Please introduce yourselves, if you wish, at refreshments after the 11:00 am Mass on Sundays or just call us or visit at your convenience.

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

❖ **Lectors and Eucharistic ministers:** If you would like to be a **lector** or Eucharistic minister at mass on Sundays please contact Ann at [dalyaann@hotmail.com](mailto:dalyaann@hotmail.com).

A new schedule will be prepared soon.

❖ **Bible Study** takes place every Tuesday from 18:30-19:30 in Tagaste room. Everyone is welcome to come and learn more about our sacred scriptures.

❖ Wednesday at 18:30. Tagaste room takes place **Adult Religious education**.

❖ **Song books/Missals.** On several Sunday's we have been short of song books for the congregation. A recent inventory showed that many books were unaccounted for. If you have one of the song books at home could you please bring it in when you are next at St. Tomas.

❖ This weekend we begin **Advent** by blessing the *Advent wreath* and the *Jesse Tree* with the active participation of our children.

❖ **St. Nicholas Visit follows Mass on 8<sup>th</sup> December.** Parents are asked to bring a gift for your child (make sure name is on the gift) and a small gift for the orphanage. Gifts will be collected outside the Religious Education classrooms or in the Sacristy before Mass.

**The Giving Tree.** A Giving Tree is dedicated to fulfilling wishes of children who would otherwise go without gifts during the holidays. This is made possible with the help of generous individuals who donate gifts and energetic volunteers to make it work.

Are you interested in making a child's holiday wish come true? Our Parish is having their sixth annual Giving Tree. Here's how the Giving Tree works.

- Select a child from the list (it will have an orphan's age, gender, code and wish on it).
- Buy gift specified on ornament (new, not used).
- Bring unwrapped gift to the church in the refectory after Mass no later than Dec. 12 with a tag with the name of the child and code attached.

Please see Fr. Juan or Mary Beth after Mass every Sunday to be assigned to a child or deliver your gift.