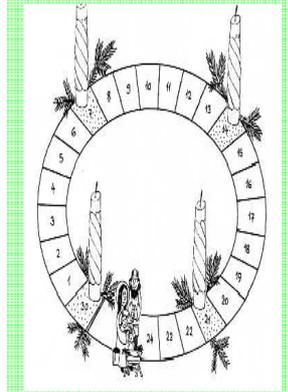




St. Thomas Church: established July 1, 1285 by King Vaclav II

**Today's Prayer**

The more we call on  
God  
the more we can feel  
God's presence.  
Day by day we are  
drawn closer  
to the loving heart of  
God.



December 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> 2010

The Third Sunday of  
Advent-Year A

# St. Thomas Church

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## THE THIRD ADVENTSUNDAY-A

Today is *Gaudete Sunday* which in Latin means the "Sunday of Rejoicing." To express this note of hope and exultation, the priest even wears rose colored vestments as an exception to the usual somber violet. For, within two weeks we will be celebrating the solemnity of the birth of Jesus Christ. After four weeks of meditating on the "last days" we now turn our meditative attention to Christmas, the historic "first coming" of the Lord among us some two thousand years ago. The readings from Isaiah and James speak for themselves. The first from Isaiah, the prophet, writing some 700 years before Christ, announces *what* God will effect for his people; James gives some implicit instructions as to *how* we are to receive the Lord. The gospel of Matthew, as it were, fulfills and reveals what these two readings preach through a request made by John, now a prisoner of political circumstance. With his execution close at hand, this last Old Testament prophet anxiously desires to ascertain Jesus' credentials. Indirectly answering *via* a messianic paraphrase of Isaiah,

Jesus answers John's inquiring disciples with one of the most beautiful passages in the New Testament: everything that God had promised his awaiting people is *now* being fulfilled. The gospel closes with a beautiful *eulogy*- as it were- of John's ascetical life and powerful ministry: *History has not known a man born of woman greater than John the Baptizer.*

As we prepare for Christmas accompanied by those commercial traps and mindless distractions, try each day to reflect on the question John once asked: *Who are you?* The answer can be tossed over by rote memory but more importantly does it lead us into the presence of Jesus? *Blessed are those who seek for they shall find.*

## *The First Reading*

Although rooted in first Isaiah, these passages rang true beyond their historical underpinnings. The verses portray eschatological hope, yet assume a dire situation. Notice the contrasts. The barren wilderness would rejoice in springtime bloom. The beauty of natural wonders would be given to the most desolate environs. God would reveal himself in lowest places. And these areas would respond in worship. [35:1-2]

Like the wilderness, the poor and weak would feel the saving touch of God. Those beaten down would be strengthened with a new courage. The ill would be healed. The blind would see. [35:3-6a]

Both the place and the people seem to be in ruin. Yet God would return their glory. In the mind of Isaiah and his contemporaries, this glory would signal a return to past heights for the monarchy. For Jesus' peers, the glory would look ahead to the end of days.

No matter whether we look back or forward for the "ideal" time, let us remember Isaiah spoke of God's initiative, not our own. God's initiative found its zenith in the birth of Jesus. Like Isaiah's audience (or Matthew's), we, too, look forward to the time God visits his people.

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

Please contact, Fr. William Faix if you want to add announcements to the bulletin at "[wfaix@yahoo.com](mailto:wfaix@yahoo.com)" or contact Dias Fernando at [diasfernando04@gmail.com](mailto:diasfernando04@gmail.com)

Please send at latest by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin

## The Second Reading

The book of James is one of the more misunderstood books of the Bible. Many believe James faced off against Paul in the "faith vs. works" controversy. However, a closer inspection of each author reveals shades of meaning and emphasis. Paul chose faith in Christ over the duties (i.e., the "works") of the Law; in this sense, Paul believed Christianity provided a means for salvation that mere observance of the Law could not achieve. More bluntly, Paul held one could not "earn" his or her way into heaven. Salvation required a personal relationship with Christ. In his writings, Paul seemed to address not only his audience, but also his Jewish critics. James, however, was not concerned with Jewish foes or Jewish-Christians that insisted on strict adherence to the Law. James seemed to focus on the cohesion of the community itself. For James, faith was more a matter of professing creed than a dynamic trust relationship with the Lord. For James, works were acts of charity that brought the community together. Notice how James wove his definition of faith and works together in these few verses. The doctrine of the Lord's return still held great currency among those in his audience. Here, James counseled patience, even using an agricultural analogy. As the community waited, however, how should they act? Implicit in the critic of James lie the realization that the community's unity around an anticipation of the Second Coming was wearing thin. Many members of the community began to take their vision from the coming of the Lord; these were now gossips, back-biters, and rumor mongers. Cohesion in the community was breaking down. While James may have counseled patience, he also reminded his audience (especially critics within the community) that they could not rest easy. Any act that tore at the unity of the assembly would come before Christ at the end of time for judgement. Times may be tough, James seemed to say, but that was no reason to be tough on others. Instead, the doctrine of the Second Coming should be a reason for community building and unity of believers. James was famous for saying "faith without works is dead" (James 2:17). Indeed, we should be patient for the coming of the Lord, but patience does not mean distraction. A distracted faith is a dead faith, for it does not lead to action. As we wait for the coming of the Lord at Christmas, let us keep in mind that HE IS COMING, but in his own time and his own way. We need both patience and focus to truly prepare for his arrival.

### **Saint Augustine's School**

**A Comprehensive School with a heart open to wisdom**

Hornokřská 3, 140 00 Praha 4 – Krč

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Augustinian-style teachers and schools overcome timid learners' fear by helping them to develop a confident will.[38] In response to the request of the preacher/teacher Deogratias for ways to deal with learners who lacked the will to learn, Augustine identified good habits that could act as building blocks for developing the right will needed for learning.[39] These can be summarized this way:

- When learners are tired, a teacher should help them build up the good habit of a cheerful attitude.[40]
- When learners are discouraged, a teacher should help them build up the good habit of patience.
- When learners are bored, a teacher should help them build up the good habit of finding excitement in learning.
- When learners are sad, a teacher should help them build up the good habit of finding joy in learning.
- When learners are unmotivated, a teacher should help them build up the good habit of finding energy for learning.
- When learners are tense and fearful, a teacher should help them build up the good habit of trusting.

## Ongoing Activities

To **everyone!** The new rota for refreshments is on the notice board in the refectory. Please sign up for a week - it's easy and a great way to meet other parishioners! Any questions see Jim Willetts

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

**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.

### **New Times for Confession:**

Every Monday from 06:30 pm in St Barbara's Chapel and any time upon request

### **Prayer & worship**

Each Sunday we are beginning with a prayer & worship from 10a.m. till 11a.m. in St. Barbara's Chapel. We will also be seeking people who would be willing to come and play an instrument while we worship and/or pray. We pray that the Lord moves more of our members to take action in prayer and worship, as there is much to pray for.

Sunday December 12<sup>th</sup> the Spanish Community invites all of us for the typical **Pastorela**, a Mexican Advent celebration at around 01:30 pm in the Refectory of the monastery

Today **second collection** for the Seminary!

### **Our CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE OF MASSES:**

**December 24:** Christmas Eve,

18:00/06:00 – Mass for Families and Children in St. Dorothy's Chapel.

11:30pm/23:30- Christmas carols sung in Czech and English followed by the traditional Midnight Mass.

**December 25** CHRISTMAS DAY, THE SOLEMNITY OF THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, 11:00 – Mass.

**December 26** the feast of the Holy Family. There will be the consecration of our Families at Mass. 11:00am – Mass.

**December 27**, the feast of St. John the Evangelist 12:15 – Mass. There will be the blessing of wine at the.

**December 31**, 18:00/06:00 – Mass to thanks for the year 2010

**January 1**, Mass at 11:00 am