



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

St. Thomas Church

Today's Prayer

"Be still and know that I am
God."
Lord, Your words lead us to
the
calmness and greatness of
your presence.

**"Our hearts are restless, O Lord, until they
rest in you."**

September 17th and
September 18th 2011

25th Sunday in Ordinary
time A

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TWENTY-FIFTH ORDINARY SUNDAY

Today's gospel reading is an extended *parable* which is commonly defined as *a short story usually allegorical with a moral or spiritual lesson*. The storyteller, in this case, Jesus of Nazareth, simply takes some situation in everyday life and molds it into a short tale with an implied spiritual or moral lesson. However, when listening to the gospel parables we must avoid trying the vain task of laboriously "identifying" all the story's pieces or details with some spiritual or moral value. In the same breath we should not hold up for cautious scrutiny the social or institutional language of the past for some "hidden" or "esoteric" teachings. Remember the basic purpose of the narrator is to clothe his teaching with the familiar only as an aid for the listener of good will.

Today's gospel lesson could be entitled variously as the parable of "the workers in the vineyard," "the generous employer" or the more contemporary "the affirmative action employer." The timeframe corresponds to the typical Hebrew "day" which began at six or the "first" hour. 12 noon was the "sixth" hour; 3 o'clock was computed as the "ninth hour" while 5 o'clock or one hour before six in the evening- the conclusion of the work day- was the "eleventh hour." It was within these time frames that the owner went out to hire workers and since he could not keep their salaries over night (*Leviticus* 19:13), there had to be an accounting before they were dismissed. The upshot of the matter was that all the workers hired at the various hours of the day were all equal in the eyes of the vineyard owner. In brief, Jesus tells us in biblical language that the *vineyard* refers both to the chosen people of Israel and to those other "outsiders" (see *Isaiah* 5:1 ff. and *Jeremiah* 12: 10). The same Lord repaying workers in his vineyard "at the end of the day" symbolizes the *eschaton* or *final reckoning* when each and everyone no matter when called will stand in judgment before God. It is not so much length of time in service as love expended *in service* that matters.

FIRST READING

Even before the return of the exiles from Babylon, religious thinkers within Judaism tried to reconcile two notions: First, the faithful "remnant," those who remained true to Jesus, were the Chosen. They were a proud sign of God's presence simply because they survived the "bad" times and the "bad" people.

Second, Jesus was the only God. Before the exile, the Jewish God was the national deity, one God among many. A strict relationship with Jesus precluded a relationship with any other god. But, during the exile, Jews were confronted with deities of the regional superpower, Babylonia. Because Jews were a conquered people, they were a weak nation, which reflected on the power of their God. In the face of such power and critique, Jews asked themselves the question: which god is God? Jesus! He was not only the God of the Jews. He was the only God. Not only did the other gods not matter, they did not exist! While this road to a pure monotheism took centuries, the Babylonian exile was a turning point from a parochial view of God among the Jews to a universal one.

SECOND READING

Like Paul, sometimes we might feel the weight of the world bearing down on us. Like Paul, we might feel "imprisoned" by people or events out of our control. We might desire life with God over our present circumstances. In these times, let us remember that we are not our own masters. We live for the Lord. If we find life closing in on us, let us reflect on our place in God's design. He wants us to be where we find ourselves, so we can serve others. In Buddhism, the bodistava is a monk that stands at the doorstep of Nirvana, but does not enter so he can help others to enter. Paul was like the bodistava; he desired a life with God, but remained behind to help his brothers and sisters come closer to eternity. How can we emulate Paul in our service to others? How can we postpone the prize so others can enjoy the fruits of our labor? In Buddhism, the bodistava is a monk that stands at the doorstep of Nirvana, but does not enter so he can help others to enter. Paul was like the bodistava; he desired a life with God, but remained behind to help his brothers and sisters come closer to eternity. How can we emulate Paul in our service to others? How can we postpone the prize so others can enjoy the fruits of our labor?

Roots of Augustinian Spirituality

Fundamental principles of the Augustinian spirituality of community life:

- **Mutual Charity** - To be a friar means serving God united with others in a community of hearts. Harmony, support of each other out of Christian love, forgiveness and fraternal correction when necessary, but always charitably motivated, are essential.

- **Poverty** - Common ownership of goods helps put the interests of Jesus Christ before the interests of the individual. The goods of the community should be neither overly rich nor overly poor. They should be sufficient to meet the needs of all. The sharing of goods in common, rather than individual seeking to acquire and possess, builds community.

- **Obedience** - This arises from the friar's agreement to be part of the community. It is accepted freely and directed by grace. It is necessary for peace and harmony. Love characterizes both the exercise of authority and obedient acceptance of it. Authority is seen as caring service.

- **Chastity** - Uniting oneself to the type of community envisioned by Augustine presupposes a renunciation of married life. Augustine demanded a purity of heart reflected in all external actions. Love of God and love of the community are sources of the strength that make this possible and permit spiritual delights to succeed to the place of carnal delights.

- **Humility** - This is an integral part of community harmony and peace. Augustine's monasteries welcomed rich and noble people as well as the very poor and those considered low class. Those with wealthy backgrounds were tempted to consider themselves somehow better than the rest. Those with backgrounds of poverty, on the other hand, were tempted to think that they were in some way superior to others of similar background because they were now considered the equals of those who had been rich. To eliminate this sort of vanity, Augustine advises a humility which honors God in one another, regardless of background, since each one has become God's temple. (2 Cor 6:16)

- **Prayer** - Both private prayer and community prayer are needed. Community prayer, from Augustine's time until today, usually includes singing the Psalms (called *Divine Office* or *Liturgy of the Hours*) and celebration of Eucharist. Augustine tells the friars to think in their hearts what their lips are saying. Augustine stresses that private prayer as well should come from the heart. One can pray continually from the heart even while doing other things. One can also keep a brief prayer in mind and heart and return to it frequently. One can practice prayer without words (contemplation, meditation) and prayer with words (vocal prayer). Augustine required that each monastery have a room where the friars could go during free time to pray without being interrupted or distracted by other activities.

- **Active and Contemplative Life** - For Augustine the friar is not so apart from the world that he never thinks of the welfare of his neighbor, nor so active in ministry that he no longer has time for prayer and reflection. Service and ministry on the one hand, and prayer and contemplation on the other hand, are essential to Augustinian life.

- **Study** - Especially recommended are the study of Sacred Scripture and things of God, but the study of human matters is also encouraged. The former bring us wisdom while the latter produce knowledge.

- **Labor** - Augustine required honest work of his friars. He wanted them to support themselves and not be a burden on others.

If you are interesting in knowing more about **St. Augustine and Augustinian spirituality come to the meeting that we are going to have every Tuesday at 06:30 pm from September 20th. More information with Fr. William OSA

osaprag@augustiniani.cz

Saint Alfonso de Orozco, September 19

Alfonso de Orozco, O.S.A. (also known as Alonso de Orozco) is the newest Augustinian saint. Pope John Paul II on the Feast of Pentecost, May 19, 2002, canonized this Spanish follower of Saint Augustine.

Alfonso de Orozco was born October 17, 1500 in Oropesa, Province of Toledo, Spain. His father sent him to study in Salamanca. There, inspired by the preaching of the Augustinian Thomas of Villanova, Alfonso entered the Order of St. Augustine in 1522.

In his *Confessions*, Alfonso recounts that during his formation, he was tempted to leave the Augustinians. The freedom of the times was very attractive, while he found difficult the solitude, the practice of obedience and other hardships of religious life. But he persevered, professing permanent vows and eventually being ordained a Priest.

He started a journey to Mexico in 1547 as a missionary. But a serious attack of arthritis during the journey made his return to Spain necessary.

Alfonso was a gifted preacher. He preached to Kings and simple people alike. For Alfonso preaching was a necessity inspired by the love of Jesus and done for the love of Jesus.

Alfonso was also a prolific writer. He had a dream in which the Mother of Jesus told him, "Write." So he began to write. He produced numerous books on Christian spirituality. At age 90, he was still writing.

Respect and love for the human person was a strong characteristic. Alfonso wished to remedy the needs and overcome the difficulties of everyone. The fact that he was not able to do this caused him great sorrow.

All this preaching, writing and caring for others flowed from Alfonso's prayer and contemplation. He felt a responsibility to transmit to others what he had received in prayer.

Alfonso's spiritual life was not without trials. For many years he battled scrupulosity and felt tormented by Satan. He overcame these difficulties with the strength that he found in prayer. He continued to seek God in prayer even when prayer brought him no pleasure.

At the age of 91, Alfonso became quite ill. It is said that at this time he became very aware of the presence of Jesus, Mary and St. Augustine helping him prepare for death.

Alfonso entered eternal life September 19, 1591. He was declared "Blessed" in 1882.

Announcements

* **Religious Education is starting from the 25th of September at 9:45am.** Information meeting for parents on 18st of September at 10am. If you wish to enrol your children please contact Monika Shaheen – mshaheen@iol.cz

*Every Saturday at 9:00am **feeding of the homeless**, as social service

*We are looking for an **English teacher** for our school. If you are interesting, please see Fr. Juan

* **Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers**

If you would like to serve the St. Thomas community as a lector or Eucharistic minister at the Sunday mass, please contact A. Daly at dalyaann@hotmail.com

www.augustiniani.cz