



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

# St. Thomas Church

Josefska 8, Malá Strana, Prague 1, 118 01

Tel: 257 530 556 602 643 365

Fax: 257 530 556

## Today's Prayer

Say this Prayer Today:

Dear Lord as I come to you  
today  
Fill my heart and my whole  
being  
with the wonder of your  
presence

In this issue:

Gospel Reflection	1
Study of the 1 <sup>st</sup> Reading	1
Upcoming Events	2
Study of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Reading	2
Announcements and Ongoing Activities	2

January 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> 2012

The Third Sunday B in Ordinary Time

## Reflection on the Gospel

The book of Jonah, short, enigmatic, is for many challenging to both common sense and faith. However, the writer of this short piece- far from expecting his readers or listeners to accept every word at face value- wrote it more as a didactic lesson for his narrow minded compatriots. Using as his protagonist the historic prophet Jonah who died *ca.* 743 B.C., or some five hundred years before, the author in this vivid story challenged his countrymen for their stifling nationalism that so delimited God's merciful providence. As described, Jonah was bitterly resentful of God's forgiving invitation to the pagan Assyrians. Fleeing from his mission to the Ninevites, the peevish prophet sailed to parts unknown vainly attempting, thereby, to escape God's command. While at sea, tragedy struck: Jonah was thrown overboard and swallowed by the celebrated "whale" ("ketos megale"- the Greek for "big fish"). Eventually spewed forth on dry land, the prophet (somewhat chastened by the experience) traveled on to Nineveh which to his surprise took God's word to heart and converted. The prophetic book- really a didactic lesson cast in allegorical form- abruptly ends with a divine appeal directed not to the repentant pagans but to a cynical prophet (and his ilk) so adamantly impervious to the message of divine mercy.

Mark relates that the basic elements in Jesus' preaching were repentance and faith. Like John the Baptist and the prophets of the Old or first Testament, the intent of this message was not to induce guilt or shameful regret for sins committed; rather the reception of the "good news" should lead to personal conversion. *Conversion* literally means "a radical change of heart, a complete about face, a resolve to reorient one's entire being... a renunciation of all that would deter one from total commitment and attachment to Jesus Who makes present God's reign or kingdom." Are we ready for this change of heart?

## Study of the First

A century before the Babylonian exile, the northern kingdom of Israel was swept off the face of the earth by the ruthless Assyrians. Nineveh was the Assyrian capitol. The Israelites of the north were taken into captivity or intermarried with the Assyrians and adopted their pagan culture. The resulting religion of the area was questioned by the Jews. The area became known as Samaria, named after a city in the province. The book of Jonah was written about the fifth century B.C. when the Jews returned home from the Babylonian exile. The Jews, seeing the destruction of Jerusalem, despaired and became withdrawn. The Jews began to dissociate themselves from their pagan neighbors. They saw themselves in exclusive terms ("The Chosen People") and the other nations as unclean. The book of Jonah stood that belief on its ear. God commanded Jonah not only to mingle with these barbarians, but to become a prophet in their own capitol city. Like the Jews in the fifth century B.C., Jonah was skeptical and cynical of his mission. [2] When the author refers to the Assyrians, the words "great" and "large" used several times. This follows the Semite tradition of exaggeration to make a point. Yes, the enemy was powerful, but the God of the Jews was all-powerful. [4-5] Jonah does not even complete the mission, but only preached for one day. But, to Jonah's surprise, one day was enough. The Assyrians took the message to heart and believed. [10] While it is not part of the reading, Jonah went outside the city and waited for the coming of God's wrath on the city. Yet, God relented because the Assyrians believed. Like many people, Jonah believed in God but not in other people, especially his enemies. The message of the story tells of the great mercy and love of God for everyone and the possibility of redemption.

**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 [Dias.Fernando@pbschool.cz](mailto:Dias.Fernando@pbschool.cz) Please send at latest by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin

### Upcoming Events

23. **Feast of the Espousals of Mary and Joseph.** Traditional date ascribed for the wedding of Mary and Joseph. We pray for all our married couples and those preparing for matrimony.
24. **Francis de Sales** (+1622) Bishop of Geneva, indefatigable preacher and patron of Catholic journalists.
25. **Conversion of St. Paul** (ca. A.D. 33) One of the most important events in the history of the Church, see *Acts of the Apostles*, 9. Today we conclude the Unity Octave devotions.
26. **Timothy and Titus** (+ ca. A.D.) Early disciples of Paul and fellow missionaries.  
-Australia Day (1788)
27. **Angela Merici** (+1540) Pioneer in the education of women and foundress of the Ursuline Order.  
**-George Matulaitis** (+1927) a Lithuanian bishop and refounder of the Marianist missionaries.
28. **Thomas Aquinas OP** (+1274) is, after St. Augustine, one of the most prominent thinkers in Catholic theology.

### Study of the Second Reading

Much has been written about 1 Corinthians 7. St. Paul urged his followers to remain unchanged, for the world around them would change. Much of the confusion over these verses occurred when tradition turned Paul's attitude into institutions. When he wrote about marriage and the single state, Paul simply stated celibacy could be a sign of the end times (an "eschatological" sign). But, unlike many of those who have used these verses in an attack upon or a defense of celibacy in the ordained and religious life, Paul had a greater vision. And, hence, a greater urgency. In his eyes, the world was coming to an end. Christians should be primarily concerned about the coming of the Lord, not upon their daily existence. Paul lumped the practice of marriage together with the joys and pains of daily living. And with the daily necessities of commerce. Paul wrote about detachment. The urgency found in the Christian message could be more easily addressed if the person were detached from the daily routine. Notice, Paul did not deny the necessities of daily living. He warned against obsessing over them to the point of blindness. Nothing was certain in this world. Everything was changing. In such a world, Christians needed to keep the long view. Detachment was the spiritual sight for the long view. Detachment did not deny emotional attachments. It placed limits on those attachments. And it gave those attachments a priority. God and the Good News were first. Everything else was second. All in its place. The words of St. Paul ring true today, even when the urgency of his message has lost some steam. Despite the delay in the Second Coming, God calls us to place the cares, concerns, and routine of daily living into a context. And to remember Who is first in life. Our daily existence, with all its stress, should not get in the way of that priority.

### Announcements and Ongoing Activities

- Fr. William, the pastor will be away for the next month. Fr. Juan B. will be the ordinary pastor in his absence. In cases of emergency he can be reached through Fr. Juan at 602684538
- Please be prompt in bringing children to Catechetical instruction on Sunday mornings which begin at 09:45 am. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

### Parish assembly

26. 1. 2012\*\*\*\*\* 07:30 p.m.

Monastery Crypt - Saint Thomas Monastery

**An opportunity to meet with all the parishioners of St Thomas and have the opportunity to do an evaluation of our pastoral work. Your voice is important!**

#### **Program**

1. – Welcome prayer
2. – Liturgy:
3. – Community
4. – Economy
5. – Information in the parish
6. – Discussion

### **Flash Points Vol. #5 No. 1**

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his Pro-life legacy:**

Recently the United States honored Martin Luther King Jr. for his ultimate sacrifice on behalf of black Americans in their long and bitter struggle for civil rights. The model which he left the world has been copied many times over by others seeking to establish the legitimacy of human rights where they have been either absent all together or severely curtailed. Certainly his work has inspired the pro-life movement as it continues to advance the cause of the unborn child's right to life.

Dr. King Jr.'s victory for the civil rights of American Blacks stands in stark contrast to void of human rights for American preborn children. This human right's abuse is maintained in part by a collective refusal to debate the abortion issue, with many fearing that to do so would somehow constitute an infringement on the separation of Church and State. Perhaps some fear that religious leaders might compromise the State. However recent celebrations of Dr. King Jr. refute that argument. In fact, it was precisely because of the Christian pastor's moral authority and the religious convictions of his followers that the State redrafted the law to include black Americans. In this secular age it seems that people have forgotten that when he said, "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal" he was referring to the transcendent truth of religion rather than the mutable law of the State.

The prolife movement takes comfort in the great pastor's words. It gives them the sure confidence that eventually the right to life of unborn children will be recognized. Ultimately, when the country's laws reflect the reality that medical science already confirms, today's denial will give way to full legal protection. For the sake of the unborn may it come soon!