



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

# St. Thomas Church

## Today's Prayer

Say this Prayer Today:

"Come to me all you who are  
burdened  
and I will give you rest"  
Here I am, Lord.  
I come to seek your presence.  
I long for your healing power.

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February 11<sup>th</sup> and February  
12<sup>th</sup> 2012

The Sixth Sunday in  
Ordinary Time B

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## Reflection on the Gospel

Leprosy in the New Testament- not to be identified with Hansen's disease- was loosely applied to any number of dermatological problems including baldness! Today's gospel reading generically describes some severe malady for which there being no cure consigned the victims to social ostracism. This expulsion was devastating not only physically but also psychologically since such maladies were directly attributed to God's disfavor. Purported cures had to be reported to the Temple priests or their representatives for verification before the patient could return to normal life in society. If not, the leper had to live hopelessly on the margins of society with bandaged face, carrying a bell warning those passing by with the cry "Unclean!" The most painful aspect of these precautions paled when recalling that such a victim was officially deprived of family support, adequate medical care, nourishment and above all designated a public sinner "struck by God" for "some sin".

Mark notes the compassion of Jesus for these outcasts. Disregarding all taboos, He allows them to approach Him, He authoritatively addresses them, cures them and sends them on to the priestly "board of health" for necessary verification of their healing. For the ancient peoples illness was Satan's preserve; hence, any healing wrought by Jesus would have been thought to come directly from God who is mightier than any evil. The description of this healing is gripping. Older manuscripts relate that Jesus *was moved by anger* against their dreadful state and putting aside all precautions, he reached out and curatively touched the leper. It is precisely this enslavement that so provokes Jesus to heal the unfortunate sufferer. By this incident, therefore, Mark our evangelist, teaches that evil in whatever form it takes has been rendered ineffectively powerless by Jesus' commanding presence and word. Hence, all the rituals which so effectively isolated and boycotted people are broken down by the healing merciful Word of God manifested through Jesus Christ. We may ask ourselves the question: "If God is open and merciful why are we so hesitant in our acceptance of others?"

## Study of the First Reading

As you may have read in the gospel commentary, the disease translated as "leprosy" might not have been Hansen's disease (what we call "leprosy"). A close reading of Leviticus 13-14 revealed the sick were expected to recover (unlike the incurable, but treatable, Hansen's disease). Quarantine periods were temporary. A priest would inspect and impose the quarantine. Then he would re-inspect the sick at regular intervals to notice any improvement. Notice the power of the priest in Leviticus. He acted not only as a worship leader, he was also a civil leader, judge, and medical practitioner. This all-encompassing role gave the priesthood of Aaron extraordinary powers. 13:44-46 The infected took on mannerisms that warned others of the disease. Torn clothing, a lack of proper hygiene, and the call "Unclean! Unclean!" were meant to separate the community from those in quarantine. Not only did the infected live outside the community, they were expected to live as if they were in the wild. Appearance and warning gave the notion these lived outside civilization. As Americans, we pride ourselves on our unique individuality. We have the right to act different. Imagine if different behavior was not a right, but a social pressure. To the contemporaries of Jesus, the ruling of leprosy by a priest was like an unjust prison sentence: isolated lifestyle by infection.

**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

## Flash Points Vol. #5 No. 2

US Catholic Church needs our prayerful support. Religious freedoms everywhere are increasingly at the mercy of a host of countries and all of us who profess the Catholic or Christian faith need to be concerned about it. Hell, health insurance, and a man's soul (BY ARLAND NICHOLS)

([HLIAmerica.org](http://HLIAmerica.org)) - "The Obama administration has just told the Catholics of the United States, 'To Hell with you!' There is no other way to put it. To Hell with your religious beliefs. To Hell with your religious liberty. To Hell with your freedom of conscience." With unusually strong language, Bishop David Zubik of Pittsburgh alerted his flock to a new threat to the Church.

The Obama administration has directly and deliberately attacked our fundamental right to religious freedom, and in a most patronizing way. His Department of Health and Human Services has mandated that contraceptives and abortion inducing drugs be part of every health care plan, free of charge. With this decision, Catholics and Catholic institutions such as hospitals, universities and social agencies will be forced to pay for and provide contraception, sterilization and abortifacient drugs.

With a veritable pat on the head, the administration has given Catholics a year to comply with the ruling. Cardinal-designate Timothy Dolan, president of the U.S Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote, "In effect, the president is saying we have a year to figure out how to violate our consciences."

As Catholic citizens, we cannot let this unjust mandate and unprecedented violation of our beliefs stand. It is, as Bishop Paul Loverde has described, "a truly radical break with the liberties that have underpinned our nation since its founding."

It might not be so radical if the conscience was mere social construct, superficial conviction, or personal wishes and tastes. But conscience is much more. Cardinal Newman understood conscience to be the "perceptible and demanding presence of the voice of the truth of God within the person." Conscience involves one's inner inclination to do good and avoid evil, and then recognize the good that must be done in a particular situation.

We must never act against a certain conscience that has been well-formed. The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it this way, "Man has the right in conscience and freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters" (CCC 1782). Yet, this is precisely what the Obama administration is demanding.

To follow the dictates of one's conscience is essential to the dignity of man. Further, to act freely and knowingly against one's certain conscience is a mortal sin. Saint Thomas More understood this well, and is an exemplar of how Catholics should respond to this threat to our consciences and religious freedom.

Robert Bolt's famous play "A Man for All Seasons," tells the story of Saint Thomas as he faced the tyrannical acts of Henry VIII, who destroyed the Church in England so he could marry Ann Boleyn. Imprisoned, Thomas faced his accusers including his one-time friend, the Duke of Norfolk, who beseeched him "But damn it Thomas, look at these names. Why can't you do as I did and come with us for fellowship?" Thomas responded, "And when we die and you are sent to Heaven for doing your conscience and I am sent to Hell for not doing mine, will you come with me, for fellowship?" The administration has placed Catholics in an equally precarious situation. Condemnation is the reward for acting against a certain conscience (CCC 1790). Yet the Obama administration says we have no choice.

How will we respond? How will you respond? Is there a "proper response"?

I confess that I do not yet know the answer to such questions. But I do know that we cannot buckle over as this administration asks us to lose our very souls so that we might gain health coverage for our families and employees.

Following the announcement, Bishop Loverde wrote, "I urge the faithful of Northern Virginia and all citizens of good will to understand what is at stake in this unavoidable confrontation, which has been thrust upon us, and to be prepared to engage in a strong defense in the civil arena of the basic human right of religious liberty."

This much is certain: It does not profit a man to gain health insurance, and to lose his soul. Recognizing what is at stake, we must be willing to defend our freedom of religion and conscience. So, let us unite with our Bishops for fellowship and for Truth.

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## 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

There will be no **Religious Education classes** on Sunday February 19 for "winter break". Classes will resume on March 26th.

**Bulletin** - If you would like to receive the bulletin by email, please send an email to [osaprag@augustiniani.cz](mailto:osaprag@augustiniani.cz)

## St. Thomas Parish invites you to: **AUGUSTINIAN PARISH BALL**

**Date:** 17. 2. 2012

**Place:** Sál kardinála Berana - Arcibiskupský palace  
(Cardinal Beran's Hall - Archbishop's Palace)

**Time:** 19:00 - 24:00

**Cost:** 120 Kč – tickets can be purchased on the spot or earlier, from Michael Rainey

### What can you expect?

Music – "Zavřel band"

Dance - from blues to tango

Learning circle dances

Tombola

Entertainment

Meeting with friend

Buffet

and much more...



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