



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

# St. Thomas Church

## Today's Prayer

Say this Prayer Today:

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

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February 18<sup>th</sup> and February  
19<sup>th</sup>, 2012

The Seventh Sunday in  
Ordinary Time -B

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## Reflection on the Gospel

Jesus' contemporaries believed that *illness* and *sin* were directly linked; in consequence, misfortune in any form was- and had to be- attributed to some sin consciously or unconsciously committed by the sufferer (= "sinner") or his family. Concomitant pain, therefore, was regarded as "just due," compensation or atonement for the offense committed. Today's gospel reading openly refutes this belief. As a prologue to the healing itself, Jesus first admires the faith of the stretcher-bearers who are ingenious enough to lower their friend through a hole in the roof! Then, without any fanfare Jesus first heals the "inner man" by *releasing him from his sins*, much to the confusion of His adversaries. After all, ran the inexorable argument, how could anyone except God Himself forgive sins? Ignoring their growing dismay Jesus, solemnly on His *own authority*, heals the invalid and immediately dismisses him amidst the applause of the spectators. The effect was electrifying. The Pharisees and the Scribes (the religious lawyers and experts) reduced to silent confusion now wrestled with the dilemma as to why the saving God of Israel *apparently* delivered a "sinner" through the likes of this flippant "untaught" Galilean Jesus of Nazareth? Their question could be summed up: "Why would God bother with such a sinner receiving his "just deserts"? To acknowledge this "healing" wrought by Jesus seemed in their eyes to corroborate a blasphemy and, so, to explain this religious dilemma, Jesus' enemies now concluded that these "healings" were of diabolical origin and that Jesus was, indeed, a blasphemer. Later on in the course of His trial this charge of blasphemy for "identifying Himself with God" would once more be leveled against Him but with dire consequences. Only His death and resurrection would vindicate Him. The example of Jesus should encourage us not to fall away in despair when opposed for the good we do. After all, if our teacher, Jesus, was so treated, are we any better? The ancient maxim still holds true: *qualis rex, talis grex* or 'as with the teacher so with the disciple'.

## Study of the First

These passages were written when the best and brightest of the nation lived in exile. The Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem and had taken the leaders back to their distant capitol. After fifty years, exile had dashed the people's hopes. Even though Cyrus, the Persian conqueror, promised reform, the people survived in a state of permanent depression. This new prophet (whom we call "Second Isaiah") staged a mock trial in which the guilty of Judea were acquitted. God had forgotten their past, so should they. Instead, the nation would travel a new Exodus, for they would return home! Yet, exile had dulled their hearts. Wallowing in their self-pity, they had lost faith. They did not call upon the Lord. Their focus lay upon their own plight, not upon their immanent liberation. Without hope, they continued to sin. But God would not be denied His intervention or His reputation. God would forgive His people and free them, for His sake. Forgiveness and liberation had a purpose. Both would glorify God.

**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 "osaprag@augustiniani.cz Please send at latest by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin

### Upcoming Events

- 19 *Mesrop of Armenia* (+441), evangelized his people and composed an Alphabet still in use. He also composed a similar alphabet for the people of Georgia and the Albani of the Caucasus.
- 21 *Peter Bosnian* (+1072), a Cardinal and monk, his fearsome moral attitudes reflect the dire need for reform in the eleventh century.
24. -In 303, Emperor Maximilianus issues a general edict of persecution of Christians.  
-Mexico Flag Day  
-Estonia celebrates Independence Day (1918).

### Study of the Second Reading

St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians has been a mystery. Chapters 1-9 seem to be distinct from Chapters 10-13. In 2 Corinthians 10-13, Paul heavily criticized the community, as he announced his imminent visit. Yet, Paul tried to reconcile with the community in 1-9 as he avoided a visit to them. Many scholars have a theory of two letters were edited into one. In the 2 Corinthians 1:18-22, Paul explained that, even with changes in his travel plans, his ministry and character did not vacillate. Both were rooted in preaching the Gospel. Where did the power of the gospel come from? God! Take a close look at 2:21-22. Paul wrote "God" with four participles in which "God" is the understood subject. First, God put Paul and the Corinthians together in Christ. Second, God "anointed" (called) Paul to preach. Third, God "sealed" (fulfilled) Paul's preaching with results among the Corinthians. And, fourth, God gave the Spirit to Paul and the faithful as a sign of eternal life; implicitly, the Spirit confirmed the power of Paul's preaching. None of these activities showed vacillation. Neither did Paul (although Paul did use God and the other evangelists for cover!). Why did Paul change his travel plans? According to 2:3-4 and 7:8-12, Paul had an unpleasant encounter with someone in the congregation. He neither received an apology from his opponent nor the support of anyone in the community. Hence, he felt isolated (even rejected). The identity of Paul's opponent remains a mystery. Some have speculated Paul referred to the incestuous man he censured in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. But, can we connect that man to the one Paul forgave in 2 Corinthians 2:5-11? If we do, we must assume Paul visited the community between the time he wrote First and Second Corinthians to have the public disagreement. This might be too much speculation. Nevertheless, the point of the verses found in Paul's letter was simple. While he might have been trying to defend himself from the questions others had about his character, he ultimately had only one defense: God. 1:21-22 with its subject and four participles does ring with truth. God chose the weak and the sinner (like Paul) to spread the Good News, to build community, and to enjoy the presence of the Spirit.

### Announcements and Ongoing Activities

- ❖ The **season of Lent** begins ASH WEDNESDAY, 22<sup>nd</sup> FEBRUARY. Ashes will be distributed both on that day 06pm Mass and on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> February, after Mass. Catholics are urged to enter into the spirit of this holy season of conversion
- ❖ During **Lent season** every Friday at 6pm in the Church will be Stations of the Cross

**Ash Wednesday** marks the beginning of the Season of Lent. It is a season of penance, reflection, and fasting which prepares us for Christ's Resurrection on Easter Sunday, through which we attain redemption.

#### **Why we receive the ashes**

Following the example of the Nine vites, who did penance in sackcloth and ashes, our foreheads are marked with ashes to humble our hearts and reminds us that life passes away on Earth. We remember this when we are told

"Remember, Man is dust, and unto dust you shall return."

Ashes are a symbol of penance made sacramental by the blessing of the Church, and they help us develop a spirit of humility and sacrifice.

The distribution of ashes comes from a ceremony of ages past. Christians who had committed grave faults performed public penance. On Ash Wednesday, the Bishop blessed the hair shirts which they were to wear during the forty days of penance, and sprinkled over them ashes made from the palms from the previous year. Then, while the faithful recited the Seven Penitential Psalms, the penitents were turned out of the church because of their sins -- just as Adam, the first man, was turned out of Paradise because of his disobedience. The penitents did not enter the church again until Maundy Thursday after having won reconciliation by the toil of forty days' penance and sacramental absolution. Later, all Christians, whether public or secret penitents, came to receive ashes out of devotion. In earlier times, the distribution of ashes was followed by a penitential procession.

#### **The Ashes**

The ashes are made from the blessed palms used in the Palm Sunday celebration of the previous year. The ashes are christened with Holy Water and are scented by exposure to incense. While the ashes symbolize penance and contrition, they are also a reminder that God is gracious and merciful to those who call on Him with repentant hearts. His Divine mercy is of utmost importance during the season of Lent, and the Church calls on us to seek that mercy during the entire Lenten season with reflection, prayer and penance.