



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



750 let Augustiniánů v Čechách

1262–2012

S nadějí a radostí

**THE AUGUSTINIANS IN THE CZECH
LANDS: 750 YEARS IN SERVICE OF THE
GOSPEL.**

With Hope and Joy!

September 1st and September
2nd 2012

St. Augustine

St. Thomas Church

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THE SOLEMNITY OF SAINT AUGUSTINE,

*Church Father, the Patron and Founder of the
Augustinian Way of Life and Co-Patron of our Parish
Community.*

As an Augustinian parochial community we have reason to celebrate this feast of our father founder and parish co-patron. Augustine wrote a deceptively brief *Rule* consisting of some eight chapters on ten printed pages. Composed for a community of brothers he was leaving upon his appointment as bishop of Hippo Regius (mod. Annaba, Algeria) in 395 he stressed basic biblical principles drawn largely from the *Acts of the Apostles* and the *Gospels*. It is this same blueprint of life that the Augustinian community strives to live *one in heart and mind intent on God*. Augustine was born on 13 November 356 in the north African town of Tagaste (mod. Souk Ahras, Algeria) to a family of mixed race and religion. His mother, Monica, of aboriginal Berber and Phoenician (mod. Lebanese) stock, was Catholic and his father, Patrick, a hot-tempered Roman colonial official, was pagan. Raised in this mixed religious atmosphere, Augustine soon lost any scruples and took up with his girlfriend who bore him a son Adeodatus. Since Roman law did not recognize such unions he could not marry her but he did remain faithful. Later moved by the words and example of Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, he converted and was baptized in 387. Returning to his native Africa after his mother's death he lived in a monastic community and was pressed on to ordination and the bishopric of Hippo Regius (mod. Annaba, Algeria) in 395. From that time on he became the leading light of the Church torn by dissension. His surviving writings fill something like 35 closely printed tomes touching a myriad of topics. Yet, there is another side to this intellectual: his warm hospitality, fraternal concern and strong affections coupled with a thirst for truth reveals a vibrant sensitive human being. One of his most famous aphorisms *Our hearts are restless until they rest in God* still touches many.

Love And Do What You Will

Therefore once for all this short command is given to you:

"Love and do what you will."

If you keep silent, keep silent by love;

if you speak, speak by love;

if you correct, correct by love;

if you pardon, pardon by love;

let love be rooted in you, and from the root
nothing but good can grow.

St. Augustine

St. Augustine's ideals are still relevant today - the quest for happiness and community, the search for God, and impatience with the trappings of society.

You have called to me,
and have cried out,
and have shattered my deafness.
You have blazed forth with light
and have put my blindness to flight!
You have touched me,
and I have burned for Your peace.

Coffee, Cookies & Conversation follows Sunday's 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" Please send at latest by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin.

Announcements and Ongoing Activities

*If you would like to receive a copy of the bulletin by email, please contact osaprag@augustiniani.cz

*Our regular **organist** and pianist for the last few years will be leaving us at the end of June. If you can play the keyboard or guitar, even if only on an occasional basis, we would like to hear from you! Please contact the director of the choir Tim Young: tim@young.co.cz

* We will have a **parish counsel meeting**, Sunday, September 16th after Mass.

***Marriage Preparation:** The next one-day marriage preparation course (for the English speaking community) will be held by Fr. William on Saturday 15th September from 9:15am - 3pm at St. Thomas Parish for those who wish to participate.

Religious Education 2012/2013

Religious Education classes for children are starting the new year on September 16th – the first class of the year will begin with a short orientation for students and parents in the Refectory at 9:30, while class formally starts at 9:45 with a further short orientation for parents after that. We are very excited for some new developments taking place this year and we hope to see your child in RE this year! RE class sign-ups taking place now - please contact Mary Beth to sign up your child or for further details, +420 724 485 930, or email at marybeth@prague-stay.com or marybethwebster@hotmail.com!

We desperately need RE teachers, assistants and co-teachers – please contact Mary Beth for details and to volunteer, +420 724 485 930, or email at marybeth@prague-stay.com or marybethwebster@hotmail.com!

St. Augustine parish school is beginning a new school year on Monday, September 3rd at 8:30am. This year we will be educating 80 children from 3 till 10 years old. All are invited for this ceremony and to visit the school in Prague 4, Hornokřská street number 3.

The Family Ministry is pleased to present
Choosing Life in a Crisis: true stories of real people facing an unplanned pregnancy

*photo exhibition in the Cloister Gardens of St. Thomas
September 8th to September 16th.*

"Love life, cherish life, defend life from conception to natural death." Blessed John Paul II

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About St. Augustine

His Life

He did carry on the pretense of religion by going to church sometimes but (as he suggests) his main reason for going was to see girls. (Cf. *Confessions*, 3.3) He was in fact leading a double life, trying to act in a refined and sophisticated manner while being driven by his physical passions. (*Confessions*, 3.1) In this pretense he was eminently successful. He was perceived as a young man guaranteed a fine future in public service as long as he did not make some terrible mistake.

It seemed to those around him that he made such a mistake when he fell in love. There is no record of the woman's name but apparently she was the daughter of a freed slave. Formal marriage would thus have been an obstacle to Augustine's career plans, but Augustine apparently truly loved her. He lived with her for eleven years (an extraordinary commitment for those days) and by her had a son, Adeodatus. This ended his leisurely academic life. Now he had to find work to support his family while still pursuing his studies. He was nineteen.

It was about this time that the direction of his academic interests changed. While still pursuing his career in rhetoric, he now (through the influence of Cicero's book *Hortensius*) became excited about philosophy and its claim to wisdom. From being a manipulator of words he now dreamed of understanding reality. At first he turned to the Bible for answers but found that the stories and language that had so entranced him as a child at the knee of Monica seemed crude and unsophisticated now that he was a student of literature. Like many of his compatriots among the intelligentsia of Carthage he turned to Manichaeism, that mysterious cult from the East that promised both an easy explanation for the wild passions of humans and the phenomena of nature. Augustine was to remain connected with this sect for nine years, at the very end attached more by its political advantage than by any deep-seated conviction.

In 375 Augustine was forced to leave Carthage and return to Tagaste to find work. He was by this time a truly dedicated and proselytizing Manichaean and Monica initially refused to have anything to do with him. Eventually she relented, but Augustine was not destined to stay long in Tagaste under any circumstances. A friend of his died and so overcome was he with grief that fled back to Carthage to escape the places of Tagaste that brought back painful memories of shared experiences. (*Confessions*, 4.4)

For eight years (376-84) he tried to support his family and further his career in Carthage. It was a difficult period in his life. He was becoming increasingly doubtful about the truth of Manichaeism. For a time he was intrigued by astrology and the writings of magicians but turned away from them also. At 26 he wrote his first book, but no one bought it, a truly depressing experience for one who believes that they have mastered the nature of truth. He was always able to get enough students to support his family, but he found the Carthaginian scholars disruptive. With his weak voice and his tendency to be distracted, Augustine was fair game for young stalwarts more interested in love and wine than logic and wisdom. Indeed, Augustine discovered that there were very few denizens of Carthage with whom he could hold an intelligent conversation. The leaders of the Manichaeans were no better than the novices in providing answers. All in all it was not a propitious place to be, either to pursue his career or to develop his mind. He decided to leave North Africa and go to Rome. Monica was dead-set against his plan. By this time Patrius had died and she had taken as her remaining life-work the conversion of her wandering son. She was certain (considering his past history) that to be alone in pagan city without the protection of family and friends would destroy him. But Augustine had made up his mind and tricked his mother into believing that he would stay while instead he left on the evening tide.

Augustine arrived in Rome without money or a job in 383. He became deathly ill and only survived through the kindness of Manichaean friends. While he had begged for baptism when he was near death as a boy, now as a young man the thought never entered his mind. He thought as a Manichaean, not as a Christian, and was dependent financially and emotionally on his Manichaean companions. Indeed, it was through the recommendation of the Manichaean Symmachus, Prefect of Rome, that in 384 Augustine reached the pinnacle of his secular career. He was appointed professor of rhetoric for the city of Milan, the city of the Imperial Court.

By this time he had given up all belief in the Manichaean doctrines. For a time he lived as a skeptic but found that wanting too. He still had a residual belief in Christ and an intuition that there was something more to being human than being a body. This intuition was confirmed through the influence of the Neoplatonist, Plotinus. Through his reading of the "Platonists" he was able to perceive the intellectual validity of asserting the existence of a world of spirit and of a human soul within which one could possibly even survive death. However, his belief in spirit still did not mean that the spirit controlled his earthy passions. He seemed to have all other aspects of his life under control. His new position in Milan gave him the assured income necessary to support his family. Soon he was joined in Milan by his wife, his son, his mother Monica, his brother Navigius, and assorted cousins and friends.

Meanwhile Augustine was faced with a difficult personal decision. He had reached a point where his career demanded a proper marriage into a respected Roman family. Such a marriage would bring both added finances and added influence at the imperial court. Augustine's love of eleven years was an obstacle. She consented to return to Africa (leaving Adeodatus with Augustine), and Augustine, with the encouragement of his mother (who hoped that the stability of marriage might be a step towards her son's baptism) became engaged to a young daughter of a noble family. However the girl was too young for an immediate marriage and Augustine was unable to wait. He himself describes what happened:

I could not wait patiently for the required two years. I was not a lover of marriage. I was a slave of my lust. And thus I began an affair with another woman. --*Confessions*, 6.15
years of his life.

To be continue

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