



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



**YEAR OF FAITH:**  
**OCT. 11, 2012-NOV. 24, 2013**  
"The 'door of faith' (Acts 14:27) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church."---Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter Porta Fidei for the Indiction of the Year of Faith.

December 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> 2012

The Second Sunday of Advent-Year C

Josefska 8, Mala Strana, Prague 1, 118 01

Tel: 257 530 556, 602 643 365

Fax: 257530556

# St. Thomas Church

## Reflection on the Gospel

Luke the evangelist may be criticized for his inattention to geography but not for historical detail. Today's gospel opens up with a list of political and religious personages some of whom were to figure prominently in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Certainly, Luke did not write his gospel to be a "history of Jesus" *per se* for what we now consider "scientific" historical research came into vogue much later toward the end of the eighteenth century. However, our evangelist does place Jesus' ministry squarely within the cultural, historical and religious context of his times. Recent scholarship would assign Jesus' nativity between the years 6 - 4 BC shortly before the death of King Herod 1 in 4 BC. BC (*Before Christ*) because of an error of computation made by the monk chronographer, Dennis Bxiguus, in the seventh century AD (*Anno Domini*- "Year of the Lord"). Jesus' death is now generally accepted to have occurred either in AD 26 or 27. The personages surrounding this narrative are historically verifiable. The Emperor Tiberius (from AD 14 to his murder in 37), Herod of Galilee (deposed AD 40), the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate (AD 26 to his deposition in 36) and the pontificate of the High Priest, Joseph Caiphas (AD 26 - 36) are obviously dateable. All gives that the hearer may ponder that "this Jesus" truly lived and ministered within a recognizable time frame. John the Baptist, too, enjoys historical respect. We know from the historian Josephus Flavins the circumstances of his ministry and shameful death at the hands of the same "Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee" mentioned above. As we advance toward Christmas we are accompanied by the admonitions of John the Baptizer to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ. Level off the rough edges of character through prayer and vigilance; smooth over our relationship with others who do not share our views in humility; fill up with charity what is lacking in our Christian practice. For the Lord who stepped into our human history will accompany

**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 Fr. Juan at [juan@augustiniani.cz](mailto:juan@augustiniani.cz). Please send at latest by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin

## Study of the First Reading

The prophetic book of Baruch was written to explain the Babylonian exile as God's judgement, to praise the wisdom of God's Law, and to foretell the restoration of Jerusalem. Today's passage is the final chapter of the book; it speaks of hope in God's mercy and justice.

In 9:1-4, Baruch sees Jerusalem as a poor person who is raised to royal status by God. The robe of mourning and misery is the exile; the splendor of God's glory are "royal robes." [1] Notice that the exile infers distance from God and the loss of God's reputation among the nations; Israel's return means intimacy with God and an increase in God's reputation (his glory) among foreigners.

God's growing reputation is imprinted upon a crown given to the person, Jerusalem. [2] God's name, "YHWH," is the focal point. As long as Jerusalem holds close to God's name, the Lord will return the favor and increase the reputation (the "splendor") of Jerusalem. [3]

How does Jerusalem remain close to God's name? To act in justice ("cloak of justice" in 9:2 and "the peace of justice" in 9:4) so as to give true worship (that is, free of corruption and full of compassion). Baruch links worship and acts of justice in the face of a corrupt Temple bureaucracy. In the author's eyes, a just society gave credence to its worship. If Jerusalem was just, its Temple (its "mitre" or crown on the top of its highest mount) would make its God and itself famous (increase its "splendor").

As the Temple would be a beacon for God's glory (to be seen), it would also be viewing point for the residence to coming worshipers, both Jewish and non-Jewish alike. God's word (either the prophetic word, the Scriptures, or both) would be the cause of return. [5-6] Even those who left in shame by the conquering Babylonians will return like royalty; this reflects the poor-rich schema of 9:1. [6] Even nature itself will "bow down" and "give shadow" to the returning exiles in response to God's command [7-8]. God commands the return of the exiles and the restoration of Jerusalem; the results are the glory (reputation), the mercy, and the justice of God. [9] All three are the same. And all three challenge the people to imitate them.

Even today, Christians give God glory primarily through acts of justice and mercy. Witness is not only commentary on these acts. In the season of waiting, let us not forget the less fortunate. Let us act with justice and mercy.

## Announcements and Ongoing Activities

\*We are looking for a **professional English teacher** to teach English to children from 3 till 7 years old. Please contact Fr. Juan if you are interested

\*Please, pray for the **Mission** in our Parish!

\***Bible Study** sessions are held each Tuesday evening at 6:30pm/18:00 in the Church office. All are welcome to join and reflect on the Word of God.

\*St Thomas' English Speaking Community now has a presence on **facebook**. Please 'like' our page and if you want to get more involved with the community, join our group!

\***The feast of Saint Nicholas**, from whom the legendary 'Santa Claus' is derived, will be celebrated this Sunday December 09, after 11:00 am Mass.

\* An **exhibition of art** in the crypt of the monastery. You can buy some pictures and collaborate with the project that we have in Congo helping children without families of the Augustinian center. Exhibition is open every day from 10a.m till 3 pm.

\* This Sunday from 10:00am till 6:00pm in our Monastery cloister will be a **Advent/Christmas event** with typical Spanish and Latin American food and drinks. There will be food from Spain, Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala and Peru... Something new to try for lunch!! There will be Christmas baskets with a collection of products from all booths and vouchers.

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### **The Christmas Schedule 2012:**

**Christmas Eve, Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> :**

18:30/6:30pm Christmas Mass

23:30/11:30pm Christmas Carols (Czech and English) followed by Midnight Mass in three languages. After Mass there will be the traditional procession to Bethlehem and the adoration of the Savior.

Next Sunday December 16<sup>th</sup> we will have a **join Mass** with the Czech and Spanish community. After Mass the Spanish community invites us for the advent tradition of "**Posadas**". Then will be a join lunch and in the afternoon several activities for children and adult. You are invited. Come to celebrate with us!

## **MISSION 2012/2013**

This reading is in support of the St Thomas mission to support the Year of Faith and the Holy Father's call for mission.

In the first third of the Pope's letter PORTA FIDEI or Door of Faith is a description of the joys, blessings, and beauty of faith and the fulfillment that can be achieved through this internal process of renewal.

Benedict quotes Pope Paul the VI, who called for such a mission in 1967. Paul VI thought of the mission as a solemn moment for the whole Church to make "an authentic and sincere profession of the same faith"; moreover, he wanted this to be confirmed in a way that was "individual and collective, free and conscious, inward and outward, humble and frank". He thought that in this way the whole Church could re-appropriate "exact knowledge of the faith, so as to reinvigorate it, purify it, confirm it, and confess it"

To further quote from the letter, the Pope states "Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy. It makes us fruitful, because it expands our hearts in hope and enables us to bear life-giving witness: indeed, it opens the hearts and minds of those who listen to respond to the Lord's invitation to adhere to his word and become his disciples.

Believers, so Saint Augustine tells us, "strengthen themselves by believing". The saintly Bishop of Hippo had good reason to express himself in this way. As we know, his life was a continual search for the beauty of the faith until such time as his heart would find rest in God.

Many of us, who proclaim faith still search. Many are not yet aware that they desire to search. Many of us fail to recognize the power and strength, which rises to comfort and protect us as we transition from "I believe" to "We believe".

In the bible we see many who demonstrate the absolute resolution of faith. Benedict has outlined examples for us in his letter:

By faith, Mary accepted the Angel's word and believed the message that she was to become the Mother of God in the obedience of her devotion

By faith, the Apostles left everything to follow their Master.

By faith, the disciples formed the first community, gathered around the teaching of the Apostles, in prayer, in celebration of the Eucharist, holding their possessions in common so as to meet the needs of the brethren

By faith, the martyrs gave their lives, bearing witness to the truth of the Gospel.

By faith, men and women have consecrated their lives to Christ, leaving all things behind so as to live obedience, poverty and chastity with Gospel simplicity.

By faith, across the centuries, men and women of all ages, whose names are written in the Book of Life (cf. Rev 7:9, 13:8), have confessed the beauty of following the Lord Jesus

Will your faith be visible to those around you? Have you put your faith away in a drawer to be taken out on Sundays and brought with you to church?

May we go forward in reflection on how we may strengthen our individual faith by sharing it with others. Letting it show in our daily lives and to those around us.

You can find out more about the mission and catch up on the readings online at <http://www.augustiniani.cz/en>.

Thank you for your attention and we welcome your prayers and active participation in this mission. God Bless.