



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 22nd and 23rd
2012

The Fourth Sunday of
Advent-Year C

St. Thomas Church

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Reflection on the Gospel

Some fifteen years ago a new language was discovered. It was called "Body Language." Communication experts called our attention to the way we talk with our eyes, our eyebrows, our hands, our arms, our shoulders, our legs, our whole body. We can be saying one thing with words but giving a different message by the way our body is speaking in a nonverbal way.

The Language of Christmas

We Christians realize, however, that there is nothing new about body language. It has been around a long time. In fact, this is the special language of Christmas. Our second reading today (Hebrews 10:5-10) reminds us that the coming of Jesus into the world, the ultimate communication between God and us, was accomplished by means of a body. Jesus gives us the precise preview of Christmas when he tells God, "A body you have prepared for me."

God Chooses a Body

What a wonderful way for God to choose to work in the world! God who is so big chooses a body that is so small, so weak, so fragile, so prone to break and bleed, wear out and dissolve into dust. The mystery and history of Christmas center on a body--or rather on bodies, plural.

Bodies Jumping for Joy

Today's gospel (Luke 1:39-45) tells us that Mary's body carries the body of her baby to a town of Judah. There they meet the bodies of Elizabeth and the baby in her body. They do not need a Body Language Dictionary to know what to say or how to say it. They do what bodies naturally do when they are excited, happy, thrilled with good news--they jump for joy. Oh Boy!

Our Oh-Boy Joy

Their joy is our joy, the Oh-Boy Joy of Christmas. Christmas is God's Body Language telling us and showing us the cause of our joy: "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all" (second reading)

Study of the Second Reading

The author put the words of the psalmist into the mouth of Jesus. And, the author made two changes to the psalm verse. First, "thou hast given me an open ear" became "a body you prepared for me." For the author, the body of Christ was the instrument of sacrifice. Second, "Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God" was shortened to "Look, I come to do your will, God." The verb "delight" was dropped to give the speaker a sense of mission. Instead of enjoying doing God's will (i.e., fulfilling the Law), the speaker now just simply sought to do God's will. With these changes, the author highlighted the difference between the sacrifices at the Temple and self-offering of Christ on the cross. As the feast of Christmas approaches, we may be tempted to overlook the most important question about the season. Why did Jesus come?

With a little creative editing, the author of Hebrews tried to answer that question. But his answer was in the context of his vision. The author placed the adapted verse from Psalm 40 into his outlook on righteous worship. More to the point, worship acceptable to God. The author shared a world view common to his contemporaries. The home of God was the heavens (reflected in the sky); the home of humanity was the earth. To appease or align themselves to God (or their idea of a god), people would create ceremonies and build temples that duplicated what they thought was the worship and structure of heaven. When King Herod had the Second Temple rebuilt in the time of Jesus and the early Church, he and the builders tried to capture sense of heaven in the building itself. When the priests in the Temple offered sacrifice, they strove to do so as if they were before the Almighty himself. But about the time the author wrote the letter to the Hebrews, the Romans destroyed the Temple and reduced Jerusalem to rubble. With the Temple gone, Jews and Jewish Christians mourned. The Temple was nothing more than a pile of stones and the priesthood was scattered. Critics might have called the worship in the Temple a failure.

The author picked up on that criticism to advance his vision of Christ, the eternal High Priest. The priesthood of Aaron was a failure, because it was repetitive and ineffective. But the Christ came to offer his body as a way to do God's will. The author framed Psalm 40:6-8 as an opposition between the old and the new, so that he could justify his claim. We are saved by Christ when he said "Yes" to God and offered himself up.

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!

* 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.

The Christmas Schedule 2012:

December 24

Christmas Eve Mass 06:00 pm/18:00

Christmas Carols 11:30pm/23:30

Midnight Mass in *Czech Spanish and English*

December 25

CHRISTMAS DAY 11:00 am

December 26

St. Stephen *Boxing Day* 09:30 am

Traditional Blessing of Grain. Mass in Czech

December 31

New Year's eve 06:00pm/18:00

January 01

New Year's Day +2012 11:00 am

Merry Christmas 2012



Children of 2nd class. Saint Augustine school. Prague

Christmas Wish

* On behalf of the Augustinian community and the Parish Council, I wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a most happy, healthy and blessed New Year. Once again, thank you very much for all your gifts, benefactions, donations and contribution to our weekly collection. God bless you all as we prepare to begin our eleventh year as the *English Speaking Catholic Community* gathered in the Name of Christ here in Prague. **DEO GRATIAS!**

A + TENTH + CENTURY + CHRISTMAS + PROCLAMATION

In the 5,199th year of the Creation of the world, from the time when Almighty God in the beginning created the world; in the 2,957th year after the Flood; in the 2,015th year from the birth of Abraham; in the 1,510th year from Moses and the Exodus of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt; in the 1,032nd year from the anointing of David as King; in the 65th Week according to the prophecy of Daniel; the 194th Olympiad; in the 752nd year from the foundation of the City of Rome; in the 42nd year of the reign of emperor Gaius Caesar Octavian August, all the world being at peace

JESUS CHRIST

The Eternal God and Son of the Eternal Father, desirous to sanctify the world by his merciful coming among us, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, nine months after his conception, was born in Bethlehem in Judah during the last years of the reign of King Herod and was made man of the VIRGIN MARY. Thus, was the Nativity of OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST according to the flesh, to Him be glory forever and ever with the FATHER in the unity of the HOLY SPIRIT.

Giving Tree

On Monday December 17th we successfully delivered the last of the Giving Tree gifts to 60 orphans who the community helps during. All the children were very excited to have been remembered and were very appreciative!! Thank you for your support and generosity.