



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.

March 2nd and 3rd 2013

The Third Sunday of Lent
-C

St. Thomas Church

Josefska 8, Mala Strana, Prague 1, 118 01

Tel: 257 530 556, 602 643 365

Fax: 257530556

The Reflection of the Gospel

Today's first reading is from *Exodus*, the second book of the *Pentateuch* or the first five books of the Bible. This sacred collection is most important as it contains the basic revelation of the Judeo-Christian- and Moslem- deposit of faith concerning the *Almighty God, the One*. As the first book, *Genesis*, reveals God as *Creator*, the second book, *Exodus*, reveals Him as *Savior, Deliverer* and *Giver of the Law* that brings us to the very heart of the first or Old Testament. The revelation to Moses, who fled Egypt to escape murder charges, brings us to the very mystery of God's ways. For the sake of an obscure band of oppressed Hebrew slaves, why should the Lord so dramatically choose a fugitive criminal to reveal his purpose?.

Notice the progression of the story. First, Moses was called in the midst of his menial task of tending sheep. Though not engaged in any particularly spiritual activity; he was as bored, perhaps, under a grueling, merciless Arabian sun, as anyone else in much less harsh circumstances. Once the Divine broke into this otherwise common scene, however, history was never to be the same. The "burning bush" so symbolic of the presence of God; the "angel of the Lord," a circumlocution for God Himself, were the forms through which this tremendous divine mission was conveyed. The scene was so stupefying that Moses upon command out of reverential fear quickly removed his sandals.

The conversation was of a piece. By identifying himself as the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," God was not, nor was He ever, a stranger to Moses and his kinfolk. Yet, Moses dares to ask God for identification. If someone should ask, the now frightened man inquired, whom should be the authority behind the message. The divine response was a solemn declaration that was to provoke both contemplative reflection and speculative discussion to the present day.

God acceded to Moses's request and tells the bewildered shepherd: *I am what I am* or in Hebrew *Yahweh asher yihweh* freely translated as *He causes to be what comes into being*. Over the centuries, some translated this tetragram as an evasive *I am Who am* which gradually evolved into a manageable *Jehovah*. This scholarly coinage emerged for lack of vowels in the Hebrew language. Thus, **YHVH**, the original base word was freely interspersed with the known vowels of **ADONAI**, another title of God. The added **A, O, A** now formed **JAHOVAH** or **JEHOVAH**, a title for God in the English world for centuries. Today most scholars agree that the more correct title should read **Yahweh** for which even the Jehovah Witnesses have conceded the semantic possibility. Once fortified with this knowledge, Moses bravely risked all, returned to Egypt and boldly confronted Pharaoh, the most powerful ruler at that time. As we progress with Jesus to Jerusalem for his *passing*, let us invoke the Name of God who is our help and our strength. Even those sudden tragedies which the Lord mentions in today's gospel should not prevent us from facing whatever is in store for *our help is in the Name of the Lord who made heaven and earth, of whom should I fear?*

Obviously, we can measure faith by the trust we have in God's will for us in the midst of change. But, change itself can be painful; for God's change can be found in the call to reform and the call to action. In the first reading, Moses had escaped from the Egyptians and had settled down in the quiet life of a shepherd. Then, Moses saw a strange sight and decided to investigate [2-3]. Moses witnessed the "burning bush" on Mt. Horeb [2], the same mount as Mt. Sinai. According to some traditions, Mt. Sinai meant the "mountain with the burning bush." The following dialogue had ritual overtones; God initiated while Moses reacted. As Moses approached, God called out and Moses responded [4]. God gave instruction (do not enter beyond the perimeter, remove shoes as a ritual cleansing, hear the name of the divine) and Moses hid his face (to avoid the terror of experiencing God directly) [5-6]. God witnessed to the people's plight and promised rescue (with Moses as leader in verse 10); Moses questioned his own ability [7-11]. God reassured him with his personal presence while Moses asked for the divine's name [12-13]. The dialogue stopped at this point; God now revealed his own name and it was an enigma. God said "YHWH" (which we translate "I am who am"). Original Hebrew script did not have vowels; they were added in the Middle Ages. In order to show respect for the divine name, it was spoken only at worship. Slowly over time, the name was spoken only by the priest, then only by the high priest, and was finally lost. All that remained were the consonants "YHWH." In many translations, the word "Lord" replaced the consonants. (As an aside, a monk or scribe from the Middle Ages took vowels for the Hebrew "Adonai," meaning "Lord" and placed them between the consonants "YHWH"; the result was the word "Jehovah!")

Hebrews believed that the name of something or someone revealed the power of the thing or individual; to know one's source of power meant power over that person. So, when Moses asks for God's name, he not only asks for a revelation into God, he seeks power over God. However, when he received God's name, he changed. The dialogue between God and Moses ended, and the mission of Moses began. God changed Moses through the power of the name, but Moses did not change God. Many times when we try to change God's will through prayer, we become frustrated. No wonder! Like Moses we seek God's power, only to find we are not in charge. God changes us; we do not and cannot change him. Like Moses, God changes us by calling us to do his will.

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!

*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!

*If you are interested in studying the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, a course run by the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, please see the website <http://brs-ccrs.org.uk> and contact Jim Willetts on jimwill@email.cz

*Looking for an English teacher to teach English every Tuesday from 8 till 9 am.

***DIVE CLUB "BARRACUDA"** Dive club "barracuda", associated to the parish, offers dive courses (system CMAS) and the possibility to dive. If you are interested, please contact Ramón 774 717 049 o Antonio 608 22 76 86

*During **Lent season** every Friday at 6pm in the church will be the Stations of the Cross.

* During **Lent season** every Thursday at 6pm will be a Eucharistic service in Saint Barbara's Chapel, with communion and possibility of confession.

*Annual **March for Life**: 23th March 2013. Mass: 1:00 pm. Svaty Jilji, Husova 8, Prague 1. March begins from there at 2:00pm.

(Mission 2013)

Biblical Reference:

Pope John Paul II referred to the scripture Mathew 19:12 which states "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

The discussion within Mathew 19 is a complex one, as it was a testing by the Pharisees in order to trick Jesus. This is the same chapter that tells us "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Our support for one marriage; and in verse 19 "Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

It is interesting to note, that the Holy Father John Paul II also stated "*Celibacy is not essential to the Priesthood*".

The modern church acknowledges that the demand for priest to be unmarried is not one of divinity, but one of interpretation and tradition. Let's have some facts:

- One does not have to be celibate to become a priest: Ordained individuals from other churches can petition to become priest in the Catholic Church and they are allowed to remain married.
- Ordained Priest in the Eastern Rites, Orthodox Greek, and other Catholic religious sects are allowed and even encouraged to be married (one cannot hold a senior position until one is married)
- Anyone wishing to be a priest can also petition the Holy Father for special disposition and in fact there are 110,000 married priests in the world today.

In the Latin Rite married priest are still priest, but they are not clerics. They lose their ability to hold offices of responsibility within the Catholic Church.

Will we address these issues with the New Holy Father? One can only hope. The real point is that if we are to be a living church, we need knowledge and debate. One cannot question the Christian Law of not committing murder nor of providing charity and love to those around us, these are of divine origin. Questioning the monastic ritual of celibacy and whether or not we would like to have married priest is one of responsibility.

Mission 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.

The man who called us to this renewal of faith, has this past week become our Roman pontiff emeritus or pope emeritus. The word "emeritus" comes from Latin. It's an adjective that means "retired" but it is also used to honor the position once held by the retired person.

The most common usage is with professors who are still professors even if they're not teaching any more. However, presidents, prime ministers and bishops also use the title.

We know that changing the Pope can mean a change for the church. If our church is to remain alive and relevant to us in our daily lives, then what might change bring?

Could we address some of the long debate issues of the church? Some Bishops have started to speak about issues such as Marriage of Priest, Woman's roles in the Church among others.

Is it sacrilege to talk about Priest being married? Women as priest? Let's explore:

First of all, we must separate what is divine and what is tradition. Divine, are those things given to us clearly by God in the Old Testament, or by Christ in the New Testament. We were given the "Commandments, the Our Father, the Eucharistic Rite, in the Last Supper, the command to love our neighbor as thyself, and to forgive as we would be forgiven."

From History we know:

- St Peter himself was married and Priests were allowed to be married for the first 1000 years of the church.
- in 366, Pope Damasus began the assault on the married priesthood by declaring that priests could continue to marry, but that they were not allowed to express their love sexually with their wives. The priests and people alike rejected this law.
- In 494 women's participation in the leadership of small communities came to an end when Pope Gelasius decreed that women could no longer be ordained to the priesthood. This legislation is perhaps the strongest proof we have of women serving as spiritual leaders in the early Church. Women's roles in the church diminished as popes and bishops aligned practices with the Roman authorities.
- In 1074, Pope Gregory VII legislated that anyone to be ordained must first pledge celibacy. He publicly stated that "...the Church cannot escape from the clutches of the laity unless priests first escape the clutches of their wives".
- In the year 1095, there was an escalation of brutal force against married priests and their families. Pope Urban II ordered that married priests who ignored the celibacy laws be imprisoned for the good of their souls. He had the wives and children of those married priests sold into slavery.
- The legislation that effectively ended optional celibacy for priests came from the Second Lateran Council under Pope Innocent II.