



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 9th and 10th 2013

The Fourth Sunday of Lent
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St. Thomas Church

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The Reflection of the Gospel

Today is called *Laetare Sunday*. In Latin, the word meaning *Rejoice!*, sets the tone or atmosphere for our Sunday liturgy. Last Thursday, we passed the halfway mark through the Lenten season. In two weeks we shall be celebrating Palm Sunday, Holy Week and the Resurrection. To encourage us on this last state of our penitential journey, the Church urges us to rejoice and take heart for "our salvation is near". Of course, we can conjure up at times, a myriad of excuses for basic indifference or disinterest in such a gospel message "of joy". To rejoice can be a chore! Today's gospel reading from Luke, the third evangelist, gives us motivation for being joyful in the Lord.

The story of the *Prodigal Son* was addressed to the Pharisees or professionally "holy observants of the Law" who prided themselves on being *the chosen ones*. Although addressed to hypocrites within earshot of those *sinners* thirsting for God's forgiveness, the parable could be entitled either a story of the *Merciful Father* or even more soberly that of an *Unforgiving Brother*. For a moment let us reflect on each of these qualities: prodigality, mercy and forgiveness. Set within the context of first century Jewish culture, a father before his death could make out a will in which the oldest son received twice the amount of the other son(s). But, for a son to request his inheritance *before* the father's death was a rank insult. What is further reprehensible in the younger son's behavior was his total disregard for all religious and ethical values. Driven by dire need he returns and is received immediately back into full grace and forgiveness by a merciful loving father "who runs out to meet him" upon his repentant return. The older son now becomes the focus of attention. His obstinacy and hard-heartedness are contrasted with the mercy of the father; even his industriousness stands out against his brother's spendthrift attitudes. The father, again, as with the youngest, goes out to his oldest son, his heir, and pleads not for some numb tolerance but for a spirit of understanding and forbearance.

The lesson is obvious. The Pharisees were so intent on doing good that they forgot the element of mercy that indelible sign of God's own attitude toward his creation. What Jesus proposes is that if we regard ourselves as sons and daughters of the One God than we must be prepared to imitate Him where there can be no feigning or cheap imitation of superficial religious attitudes. On this journey, therefore, let us put aside the pettiness, the hurts, the pained memories that so block our spiritual sights and "Be merciful as your Father is merciful". Can we or will we allow ourselves to be so divine?

The story of the Prodigal Son

- Typically, a son would receive his inheritance at the time of his father's death. The fact that the younger brother instigated the early division of the family estate showed a rebellious and proud disregard for his father's authority, not to mention a selfish and immature attitude.
- The father is a picture of the Heavenly Father. God waits patiently, with loving compassion to restore us when we return to him with humble hearts. He offers us everything in his kingdom, restoring full relationship with joyful celebration. He doesn't even dwell on our past waywardness.
- Reading from the beginning of chapter 15, we see that the older son is clearly a picture of the pharisees. In their self-righteousness, they have forgotten to rejoice when a sinner returns to God. Bitterness and resentment keeps the older son from forgiving his younger brother. It blinds him to the treasure he freely enjoys through constant relationship with the father.

Questions for Reflection:

Who are you in this story? Are you a prodigal, a pharisee or a servant? Are you the rebellious son, lost and far from God? Are you the self-righteous pharisee, no longer capable of rejoicing when a sinner returns to God? Maybe you've hit rock-bottom, come to your senses and decided to run to God's open arms of compassion and mercy? Or are you one of the servants in the household, rejoicing with the father when a lost son finds his way home?

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.

***Marriage Preparation**: The next one-day marriage preparation course (for the English speaking community) will be held by Fr. William on Saturday 16th March from 9:15am - 3pm at St. Thomas Parish for those who wish to participate.

*Please note that in two weeks, on March 24th, we will be celebrating **Palm Sunday** with the Czech and the Spanish community. The traditional blessing of palms will be held in The Infant Jesus of Prague Church from which the procession will begin and continue with Mass for the three communities in St. Thomas Church, at 11:00 am. Our English speaking Catholic community will sing the processional hymn *All Glory Praise and Honor to You Redeemer King*.

*Next Sunday March 17th we will celebrate **St. Patrick's day** with a Mass at 12:30 in St. Thomas Church.

Seeking a gap year experience? Interested in living with other young Catholics in community? Wanting to grow in your faith? Keen to discover and deepen prayer? Seeking opportunities for service and mission? If you would be interested in exploring the possibility of living in our Formation and Mission House, please get in touch: www.wellspringbrighton.org.uk

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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.

I would like to read from Mathew 19:

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" 4 And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

I had the privilege of knowing my grandparents on my Mother's side very well. I spent several weeks at their house in the summer's we lived in the same state and we went by for Sunday dinner after church, pardon the phrase religiously.

My grandparents were an exceptional couple from the hills of West Virginia and they were married for 60 years and had nine children. Both of these milestones are rare in today's world.

I took long walks with my grandfather through the mountains and we did such things as hunt copperhead snakes and dig up ginseng, while exploring the mountains around their small valley, or as they called it a holler.

On one of these long walks, once I was older and my attention had turned to girls I asked my Grandfather: "If a relationship is a 50 / 50 thing; then how does one know when he is giving his 50%."

My Grandfather thought about this one and began to laugh in what was one of the most unique and recognizable laughs that he was famous for.

He asked me, "Do you know what it is like to give 110% to something?" Being athletic and sports natured, I answered yes.

He then added "When you feel like you are giving 110% an then you reach down and give a little more; Your probably pretty close to that 50/50."

I have never forgotten that and as we walked he went on to explain to me that we never know just how much the other person is doing for us, we can never know all the frustration and the support that they give or even the things that they resist saying.

The same is most likely true of our relationship with God. We do not see or recognize all the things that he does for us every day, and then we find it hard to remain committed to him or we don't have the energy to observe our prayer or to come to Mass.

So here is to giving 110%, may we realize the joy in our relationships, as we get closer to 50%.

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