



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.

November 23<sup>rd</sup>  
and November 24<sup>th</sup> 2013

The Thirty Fourth Sunday  
in Ordinary Time – Year C

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# St. Thomas Church

## SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING

Tracing the evolution of the church's calendar would serve as interesting history. Today's solemnity of Christ the King is a case in point. As far as feasts go, it was placed on the Church's calendar only in 1925. After the first World War (1914-1918) that triad of competing ideologies: nationalism, national socialism (nazism) and atheistic communism (marxism) broke upon the international scene to haunt us ever since. The pope at the time, Pius XI (1922-1939), so challenged, unequivocally proclaimed the kingship of Jesus Christ. The preface of today's Mass reminds us that Jesus "as king claims dominion over all creation, that he may present to you, his almighty Father, an eternal and universal kingdom: a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice and peace." Such sentiments and ideals drawn out of Scripture when counter-proposed for the here were hardly countenanced by the likes of Hitler, Mussolini or Stalin.

Pope Pius XI, a single-minded man endowed with a direct laconic expression, purposefully exposed such ideological errors now accepted by or usually imposed on millions in Russia, Germany, Italy and other areas. In swift succession he first attacked National Socialism and its policy of eugenics, euthanasia and 'master race' vagaries on 14 March 1937. Five days later he took on atheistic communism with his letter, *Divini Redemptoris* with similar style. In 1938 he put himself in more immediate danger when he challenged and condemned Mussolini's own fascist regime now flirting with Hitler's racial doctrines. Toward the end of the year (1938), this tireless pope, while preparing a letter condemning anti-semitism, fell mysteriously ill, and died finally on 10 February 1939 in great pain.

For such prophetic figures as Pius XI, Jesus is *Lord*, who exercises *dominion: for his are the ages* despite the postures of temporary politics. Today's reading from Luke's gospel is both a lesson in God's merciful forgiveness and His claim to *universal* dominion. At the very end of his life the thief though roundly mocked by his criminal companion recognizes however vaguely, not only the means of salvation but its very attainment through faith in Jesus. He pleads and was given the assurance of paradise in this the very "first act of canonization." Does Christ's kingship provoke me to such an open profession of trust? Can I trust myself to Christ who has already experienced the brutal reality of human evil and death itself?

The earliest Christians identified Jesus with the predicted Messiah of the Jews. The Jewish word "messiah," and the Greek word "Christ," both mean "anointed one," and came to refer to the expected king who would deliver Israel from the hands of the Romans. Christians believe that Jesus is this expected Messiah. Unlike the messiah most Jews expected, Jesus came to free all people, Jew and Gentile, and he did not come to free them from the Romans, but from sin and death. Thus the king of the Jews, and of the cosmos, does not rule over a kingdom of this world.

Christians have long celebrated Jesus as Christ, and his reign as King is celebrated to some degree in [Advent](#) (when Christians wait for his second coming in glory), [Christmas](#) (when "born this day is the King of the Jews"), [Holy Week](#) (when Christ is the Crucified King), [Easter](#) (when Jesus is resurrected in power and glory), and the [Ascension](#) (when Jesus returns to the glory he had with the Father before the world was created). However, Pius XI wanted to specifically commemorate Christ as king, and instituted the feast in the Western calendar in 1925.

In the 21st century many Western Christians, Catholic and Protestant, celebrate Christ the King Sunday, including Anglicans and Lutherans. Unfortunately, in some mainline Protestant churches, "king" language is not popular, and the feast is downplayed. However, in a chaotic and unjust world that seems to scorn any kind of authority, many Christians proudly celebrate Christ the King Sunday, where the loving and merciful - and just - king of the universe is praised and glorified.

**November 25<sup>th</sup>. Catherine of Alexandria (+305)**, was a young woman known for her beauty, wealth and learning. Shunning marriage proposals from a rather persistent young man, she was accused and executed for her faith. St. Catherine was proclaimed the patroness of students and railroad workers since in life she successfully routed the wise of this world. It is said that her executioners tried to break her faith on a spiked wheel.

## Mission 2013

### The Mission's final word

A little more than a year ago, our Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI issued an apostolic letter entitled the PORTA FIDEI, or "door of faith". In this letter, he called on the church for a mission. He defined the mission as being an initiative for the rediscovery or reawakening of faith within the church and within each of us.

He did not ask people to think of the word mission only in terms of traveling to other parts of the world to spread the good news of Jesus. He asked us to think of definition of mission in the broadest possible terms.

He asked us to start with prayer and look at our own faith.

He asked us to travel down the path of rediscovery, explore our own emotions: Faith is not only about belief, but it serves as the emotional attachment that binds us together as a community.

By calling for this mission, he also asked us to examine ourselves as a community. Did we really feel bound to each other? Did we feel bound to our church? Most important did we feel bound to Christ? Were we still believers or were we just church attendees?

In the letter Pope Benedict calls for an examination of the liturgy.

By understanding our liturgy more, we can more fully celebrate the joy and pleasure of the gifts that we receive during mass: From the declaration of faith and confession of sin, to the renewal of our baptismal vows, or reciting the Apostle's Creed; thru the prayers of the faithful; and finally the strengthening of our body and spirit through the Eucharist.

He also asked us to examine the history of our church and the Catechism, and not to forget that we must consider the cultural context of both. How can we understand the true beauty of Jesus' teachings without knowing the social banishment of a Samaritan? Without the knowledge of the official role of the Pharisees? Just as today, in our busy, aggressive lifestyles we should not belittle or lessen the value of small acts of kindness and of charity.

With the examination of the history of the church, we become aware that our church and our liturgy are living. Jesus the Christ walked the earth in Roman occupied Galilee, Samaria, and Judaea some two thousand years ago. Shortly after, we celebrated the beginning of Christianity with the Pentacost and the conversion of over 3000 people to the Christ followers. St Ignatius of Antioch wrote a letter to Smyrnaeans in 110, where he used the term "Universal" Followers of Christ. The term was used to describe the various communities of followers springing up around the world. St. Augustine used this term in his two great works of theology "Confessions" (394) and "City of God" (410). The church had major splits in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and 11<sup>th</sup> Century; yet the term Catholic stuck to those who were loyal to the Bishop of Rome (The Pope).

It was in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century that the term Catholic became an official part of the church and used in official documents.

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## Ongoing Activities

❖ If you would like to receive a **copy of the bulletin by email**, please contact [osaprag@augustiniani.cz](mailto:osaprag@augustiniani.cz)

❖ We welcome all our guests and especially those who will be living and working in Prague during this coming year. All are invited to refreshments immediately after Mass in the monastery refectory

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

❖ **Religious education for adult** every Monday from 06:30

❖ **Parishioner's Prayer Intentions:** The English Community will now post prayer requests on the bulletin board designated for their use in the walkway. Anyone who would like prayers said is invited to post their needs and Father Bill will pray for these intentions throughout the week. You needn't identify yourself; your request is sufficient. For those who've had prayers answered we will also have a praise section.

❖ Please note: new of Fr. William's email: [wsfaix@augustiniani.cz](mailto:wsfaix@augustiniani.cz)

❖ Next week we begin **Advent** by blessing the *Advent wreath* and the *Jesse Tree* with the active participation of our children.

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Yes, the church has evolved. Our Cultural context is relevant. Who among us would wear sackcloth clothes into our church as a sign that we are sinners seeking the baptism of faith? Who among us would publically confess our sins to all in the congregation, declaring our humanity and our search for forgiveness to the entire community?

We don't do these things today. We accept ashes prior to Lent in order to publically display our faith and our status as sinners. We seek the sacrament of reconciliation, and we pray directly to our God in Christ's name for the forgiveness of sins.

Not one of us has all the answers. But we know that change has occurred in the past, and we should be ready to accept change even to demand it from our church in the future. The issues that plague us are known: War and Politics; Corruption, both in and outside the church; Women's roles in the church; Alternate sexuality in society; Celibacy of our priest; and a host of other social issues that affect our lives. The church is not an Island that is separate from society, but it often serves us as our sanctuary against the immorality of society, reminding us of our faith and commitment.

In fulfilling the request of the mission, we realize, we must cling to the Divine; absorbing as much of the truth of Christ words and teachings as possible, but reading these and knowing them are not enough. We must translate these into works.

We are not all meant to be Priest. We are not all meant to be Catechist, or to start a charity, which will feed millions. Some of us are meant to lend an ear, say a kind word, hold a hand, and provide a shoulder.

When asked to summarize what it means to be Catholic, one of my students said it best "To seek and accept the love of God and to Love our neighbors as ourselves." I hope the mission has made us all more willing to make this a part of our daily life.