

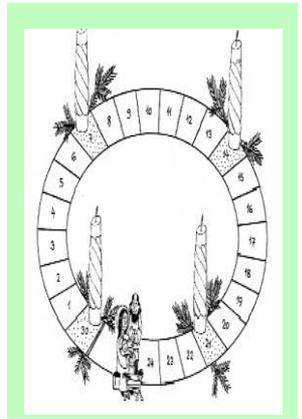


St. Thomas Church: established July 1, 1285 by King Vaclav II

# St. Thomas Church

## Today's Prayer

Dear Jesus, as I call on you today I realise that I often come asking for favours. Today I'd like just to be in your presence. Let my heart respond to Your Love.



December 07<sup>th</sup> and 08<sup>th</sup> 2013

The Second Sunday of Advent-Year A

Josefska 8, Mala Strana, Prague 1, 118 01

Tel: 257 532 675, 602 643 365

Fax: 257530556

## THE SECOND ADVENTSUNDAY-A

The figure and message of John the Baptizer was harsh and yet attractive. Living a solitary existence John emerged from the desert (now in Transjordan), clothed in the rough garb reminiscent of the ancient prophets, preaching a startling simple message: *Reform your lives because the reign of God is at hand!* Unpolished, straightforward as his criticism of contemporary society, John's spreading reputation *from Jerusalem, all Judea and the Jordan region* certainly challenged and shook his listeners. Noting that members of the religious establishment, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, approached him for the ceremonial cleansing or *baptism*, on them John vented his full prophetic indignation. In contrast to the usual repeatable purification rituals- often perfunctorily performed- John's baptism was to be a sign of *inner conversion of heart*. But, this was to be only a beginning, a preparatory rite. Indeed, the gnarled prophet at once foresaw the advent of *one more powerful* than himself who would *baptize in the Holy Spirit and fire*. This "powerful one" would glean, sift, winnow and clear ground, all prophetic images of judgement, depicting, however feebly, the inevitable coming judgement of the Lord.

This is not a popular theme in any religious tradition and can easily be dismissed in favor of something more congenial. However, we all stand before the Word of God in its stark demands for a true conversion. The word, *conversion*,\_scripturally derived from the Hebrew word *shubh* and translated by the Greek *metanoia*, means "that one has taken a wrong path and being aware of this detour, the individual returns to God." The Greek *metanoia* "not just a static remorse but a dynamic and determined, positive commitment to a new way of life; it is not just a human response but a human response to the prior initiative of God." How do we stand before the prospects of this coming judgment of God?

## ***The Story of the Jesse Tree***

The Jesse Tree is named from Isaiah 11:1: "A shoot will spring forth from the stump of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots." It is a vehicle to tell the Story of God in the Old Testament, and to connect the Advent Season with the faithfulness of God across 4,000 years of history. **The Branch** is a biblical sign of newness out of discouragement, which became a way to talk about the expected messiah (for example, Jer 23:5). It is therefore an appropriate symbol of Jesus the Christ, who is the revelation of the grace and faithfulness of God.

The Israelites through the descendants of Abraham were chosen by God to be a light to the nations. When they were imprisoned by the Egyptians, they cried out to God for deliverance from their oppression. And God responded: "I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt, and I have heard their cry . . . I have come to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them to a good land" (Exod 3:7-8). And so He entered history in a marvelous way to deliver them and bring them into a place where they could worship God and serve Him in peace and joy instead of serving Pharaoh in hard service. God promised to be with them and to be their God, and they would be His people.

But as they settled into the land that God had given them, "they forgot God, their Deliverer, who had done great things in Egypt" (Psa 106:21). As they grew secure in the land, they began to believe that "my power and the strength of my own hand have gotten me these things" (Deut 8:17). Even though God had raised up godly leaders like David, later kings and religious leaders served their own interests, and the people began to worship the false gods of the land. They even gave offerings to the idol ba'al, supposedly the god of rain and fertility of the land, thanking him for the prosperity they enjoyed.

**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

## **Synod: Family and Evangelization**

The mission of preaching the Gospel to all creation, entrusted directly by the Lord to his disciples, has continued in the Church throughout history. The social and spiritual crisis, so evident in today's world, is becoming a pastoral challenge in the Church's evangelizing mission concerning the family, the vital building-block of society and the ecclesial community. Never before has proclaiming the Gospel on the Family in this context been more urgent and necessary. The importance of the subject is reflected in the fact that the Holy Father has decided to call for a Synod of Bishops, which is to have a two-staged itinerary: firstly, an Extraordinary General Assembly in 2014, intended to define the "status quaestionis" and to collect the bishops' experiences and proposals in proclaiming and living the Gospel of the Family in a credible manner; and secondly, an Ordinary General Assembly in 2015 to seek working guidelines in the pastoral care of the person and the family.

See more information at where you can reflex of a series of questions that allows the particular Churches to participate actively in the preparation of the Extraordinary Synod, whose purpose is to proclaim the Gospel in the context of the pastoral challenges facing the family today:

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20131105\\_iii-assemblea-sinodo-vescovi\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20131105_iii-assemblea-sinodo-vescovi_en.html)

### **Restitution of Church properties (1)**

Under the law on state-church property settlement, that took effect in January 2013, 16 churches are to get back over the next 30 years some real estate confiscated from them by the Czechoslovak communist regime in 1948–89, worth 75 billion -CZK, plus 59 billion CZK in compensation for unreturned property that is to be raised by inflation. Simultaneously, the state will gradually cease financing churches. After that it will be a independence between Church and States.

This restitution is a question of justice. The properties that the Church has for many year were used to maintain the life of the monasteries, charity, education and reconstruction of Church historical monuments.

Between the properties there are some artist works. This week The National gallery of Prague decided to return nine 14-century panel paintings by Master of the Vyšší Brod Altar to the Cistercian Order and two Baroque paintings by Peter Paul Rubens, St Augustine and The Torture of St Thomas, to the Augustinian Order ( from our Church of Saint Thomas).

## **Ongoing Activities**

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

•**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

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

•**The Giving Tree.** A Giving Tree is dedicated to fulfilling wishes of children who would otherwise go without gifts during the holidays. This is made possible with the help of generous individuals who donate gifts and energetic volunteers to make it work.

Are you interested in making a child's holiday wish come true? Our Parish is having their sixth annual Giving Tree. Here's how the Giving Tree works.

Select a child from the list (it will have an orphan's age, gender, code and wish on it).

Buy gift specified on ornament (new, not used).

Bring unwrapped gift to the church in the refectory after Mass no later than Dec. 12 with a tag with the name of the child and code attached.

Please see Fr. Juan or Mary Beth after Mass every Sunday to be assigned to a child or deliver your gift.

•**St. Nicholas Visit follows Mass on 8<sup>th</sup> December.** Parents are asked to bring a gift for your child (make sure name is on the gift) and a small gift for the orphanage. Gifts will be collected outside the Religious Education classrooms or in the Sacristy before Mass

•Today **Second Collection for the seminary.** Thanks for your generosity!

•Next Sunday the Spanish Community invites all of us for the typical **Pastorela**, a Mexican Advent celebration. Will be a join Mass at 11:00am follow by the pastorela. After that all are invited for lunch at the monastery!