



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

Today's Prayer

The more we call on God
the more we can feel God's
presence.
Day by day we are drawn closer
to the loving heart of God.

February 08th and 09th 2014

The Fifth Sunday in
Ordinary Time – Year A

St. Thomas Church

Josefská 8, Malá Strana, Prague 1, 118 01

Tel: 257 530 556, 602 643 365

GOSPEL REFLEXION

Salt was, and still is, one of the most valuable foods. It is used to preserve food and in some cases employed as a medication (to gargle, for example). In ancient times, new born children were often rubbed down with salt as a precaution against disease; soldiers and workers were often paid in salt hence our own word “salary” is derived from *salarium* (literally the Latin for “a salt block”).

Today’s gospel reading brings to mind some of these connotations. Discipleship entails being “the light of the world” and “the salt of the earth”; our faith in Jesus Christ is not a private or totally “personal matter.” We should be a “light” or at least a directional signal for others. Should they not be able to identify us as followers of Christ, what good are we? What good is salt “should it lose its flavor?” As always we are to look to Jesus for “the way.” Some become so distraught over the imminent advent of the kingdom of God that they forget that this rule or kingdom is already established among us through and in Jesus Christ.

Please contact, Fr. William Faix, OSA if you want to add announcements to the bulletin at “wfaix@yahoo.com” or juan@augustiniani.cz

STUDY OF THE SECOND READING

All of us like to hear a great speaker, a person who can instruct, entertain, and enlighten all at the same time. Many times we have high expectations when we go to see a well-known speaker. And, many times we come away from a talk disappointed. The speaker might not have fulfilled all three criteria for a good presentation.

Imagine if a speaker was proud of the fact he was not inspirational or entertaining. Paul was. In fact, Paul claimed he was not good at delivery, nor did he claim to have great insight. (We do not know if Paul was a good orator, but he was very insightful. So his claims were far too modest for his ability!) Instead, Paul insisted his ministry and message were based on the activity of God. Such a claim was rooted in his calling. Paul did not aspire to preaching; he claimed it was God’s will for him. Indeed, his charism might not have laid in oral delivery but in the work of the Spirit (healing, speaking in tongues, prophecy, etc.) Nevertheless, Paul held he did not try to promote himself. He always preached “Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

Some share their faith (“Jesus” small talk or the jewelry they wear) as a form of self-promotion. They would like known as “good” Christians. Others share their faith from their hearts. The former share what they want others to know about them. The latter share what they think others need to hear. Some use Jesus as a means of self-promotion. Others promote Jesus. Depth and sincerity really reveal the intention of the person who shares their faith.

What about the children?

This reading is in support of the call of our Holy Father, Pope Francis for a Synod regarding family issues. It is an attempt to bring to light the current pressures and realities of the world we live in. It is not a discussion to pass judgment but rather to highlight the issues, which will be discussed during the upcoming Synod.

Our Holy Father Francis has elevated the issues of family life within the church. With the new lifestyles and falling rates of church attendance, the reality is that in America and the Czech Republic a full 40% of newborn babies are born to parents who are unwed. In the UK, that figure is 48%. The types of living arrangements and status of their relationship can vary, from cohabitation to complete separation.

Does this have an affect on our children? Is it necessary for two people who love each other and create a child from that love to live together and raise the child to live a successful and fruitful life? Many attribute marriage to simply be a piece of paper, or a ring to wear. They claim they are just as committed to each other in wedlock or out of it. So why does the church want us to wed? Is it really important?

If we leave the theology aside for a moment, there are many credible studies that examine the social impact of marriage and divorce, it is fitting that we start there.

One of the most comprehensive studies conducted over the last decade, and it is often quoted, is the Why Marriage Matters: Thirty Conclusions from the Social Sciences, 3rd edition, which is a publication of the Institute for American Values (www.americanvalues.org). I want to point out that this is not an advertisement for the organization nor is it an affirmation of their values. I quote their findings, because they are based on a wide variety of scientific studies that were sponsored by several government and academic institutions. They did not conduct the studies themselves, but rather drew conclusions from other's work.

I am being selective in the findings I have chosen, because of time, not that all of them are not valuable.

Marriage increases the likelihood that fathers and mothers have good relationships with their children. I imagine that this is self evident, as living apart and tension between couples cannot help build a loving relationship.

Married couples seem to build more wealth on average – With the cost of divorce, separate households, support payments, etc... I guess that one makes sense as well.

Married men earn more money than do single men with similar education and job histories – There you go single guys... Strangely enough this applies for cohabitation as well. This means married men consistently make more than do men who are cohabitating or single.

We cannot determine if living outside of marriage leads to poverty or if poverty leads to living outside of the marriage bonds; but 71% of households living below the poverty line in the U.S. are not married.

Ongoing Activities

****Coffee, Cookies & Conversation** follow Sunday Mass in the Monastery Refectory off the Cloister Garden. **All are invited, especially our visitors.**

****If you would like to receive a copy of the bulletin by email, please contact osaprag@augustiniani.cz**

****We are looking for a **English teacher** for our parish and school. More information with Fr. Juan**

****Eucharistic Ministers:** There will be a short training session for those who would like to serve the community as a Eucharistic Minister. The session will be on **Sunday, February 16** after mass at **12:15**. The training will be led by Fr. William.

****Looking for an au pair, near London.** We are looking for someone to come and stay for 6 m to a year. We would be able to give them £60/week, plus board and lodging for some help with my three (6,4 and 18m) and housework. It would be lovely to have a Catholic au pair. tom-za.hall@ubs.com

**** Please see the web pages of the parish for more information: www.augustiniani.cz/en**

The statistics clearly reflect that the more education the person has, the more likely they are to be married and even further to remain married.

A woman who is cohabitating when she gives birth is 3X (65% vs 24%) more likely to separate from the father by the time the child reaches 12.

Parental divorce reduces the likelihood that children will graduate from college and achieve high-status jobs.

This subject area has gotten a great deal of attention, especially in the academic community. The numbers vary from study to study but the truth is the following:

A child growing up in a single parent environment is significantly (more than 2X) likely not to go to college, to have problems with drugs and alcohol and to experience parental separation themselves (divorce or separation).

The scariest statistics about children being born into "Complex or non traditional" families are psychological. The studies of child abuse and neglect indicate that only 3.2 % of the children who experiences physical, sexual, or emotional abuse comes from a family of married biological parents. A full 96.8% of abused children come from a non-traditional relationship and cohabitation is responsible for 40% of these instances.

Finally, Married people, especially married men, have longer life expectancies than do otherwise similar singles.

The walk down the aisle has obvious benefits for our children; our wallets; and in the end even on our lifespan. What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder...

God Bless.