



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



Advent 2014

December 6th and 7th, 2014

The 1st Sunday of Advent. B

Josefská 8, Malá Strana, Prague 1, 118 01

Tel: 257 530 556, 602 643 365

St. Thomas Church

Reflection on the Gospel

The Church's year begins with the first Sunday of Advent and is divided into a three year reading cycle: year A covers Matthew; B, Mark; and C, Luke. John, the fourth evangelist, is read during the latter part of Lent, Holy Week and on certain feasts. This B year of Mark commences at the end of his Gospel, where in earnest, enigmatic often apocalyptic prose, he describes the finale of human history intertwined with contemporary events in a sweeping revelation "of what lies ahead". The apocalyptic genre itself is defined as "the uncovering of secrets concerning the end of time and the course of history through the medium of unusual natural settings or occurrences". This shortest gospel of only 16 chapters written about AD 70 uses the contemporary Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (AD 70) as a prelude to the beginning of the end marking the parousia or second coming of the Lord. The first and second readings from "Third Isaiah" (so named from the final editing) and First Corinthians respectively reinforce this sense of Mark's urgency. Isaiah, addressing God with the seldom used title "Father", begs for divine help in national tragedy while Paul hastens to assure his Corinthians of God's grace (or gratuitous goodness revealed through salvation in Christ) and peace (his given joy experienced by those embraced by Christ) amidst community tensions. Easily disturbed by these portents, the disciples are urged to be watchful: stay awake, watch with a sharp eye and be on guard. Of course, there will always be rumors of the Lord's imminent return. Beginning with the accepted letters to the Thessalonians (ca. AD 50), such dates have been posited by Montanus, the wild visionary, as AD 175, by the Cistercian Abbot, Joachim of Fiori for 1257, by John of Leyden for 1534 and by the Adventist Millerites for 1844. Lack of space spares further review of the Jehovah Witnesses claims for 1914 and 1977, Sun Moon, the tragic David Koresh of Waco or the deranged Jim Jones of Guyana each with their own prophecy of "the end". For us Christians, what really matters is that we be personally prepared so that whenever the Lord of history returns he will find us vigilant and awake. Let us be faithful to our vocation by prayerfully doing his work here on earth. Stay awake, the Lord is near!

Study of Today's Readings

FIRST READING: We all have good times. And we all have bad times. Bad times give us a hint at the despair and desperation found in this reading. Several generations had passed from the return of the exiles in Babylon. Jerusalem and its Temple were being rebuilt. A sense of normal living had returned. Yet, the people were forlorn. Life was hard. And God seemed to be far away. The author of these passages (the so-called "Third Isaiah") spoke the prayer of the people. How long before God's people returned to glory? How long before God's presence shone before the nations? Note the prayer for divine intervention was mixed with self-examination. The loss of stature was not necessarily God's fault [64:5b-7]. Yet, note also the sense of hope. The petitioner called upon God as Father and asked for his return [63:16-17]. Like those who lamented in Jerusalem, we, too, may have times we feel cut off from God and his blessing. Yet, there is always hope. For the Lord is coming. Soon! When did you experience "bad times?" How did God give you hope?

SECOND READING: Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians addressed the controversies that tore the community apart. As explained in last week's reflection, Corinth was a cosmopolitan port city. Not only was the city known for its multi-cultural mix, it was also known for its cult to Aphrodite and its fertility rites. The title of "Sin City" for Corinth would not be too far off the mark. St. Paul wrote the letter with an eye toward the city's nature, as much as the infighting among the cliques in the community. St. Paul began all his letters with a standard greeting. While the salutation ("to" and "from") is not present in this reading (1:1-2), the greeting of God's "grace" (a reference of God's presence for the Greek Christians in his audience) and "peace" (a reference for the Jewish Christians) is listed. Then, Paul reminded his readers of their privileged position before God. God's grace created a reciprocal relationship among the believers; it "enriched" the knowledge and speech of the followers as it caused a "confirmation" of faith. In other words, grace causes people to believe and it deepens their faith commitment. In fact, the deepening of faith in some of the community causes more faith among others. This was all a gift from God. The "enrichment-confirmation" cycle grace created would sustain the Corinthians until the Final Judgment. And the Corinthians would stand innocent in this Judgment. Why? God gave them his gracious gift and he could be trusted. After all, God created a bond of fellowship between believers and their Savior, Jesus Christ. This brief introduction set up Paul's response to the first of many controversies addressed in the letter: the question of missionary authority. We, like the Corinthians, must never forget the power of God's gift. God's very life changed us and sustains us

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

Activities

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

* If you would like to serve as a lector or Eucharistic minister at the Sunday mass please contact Ann at dalyaann@hotmail.com.

Training will be provided for those who have not previously served in these ministries.

* **Bible Study** takes place every Tuesday from 18:30-19:30 in Tagaste room.

*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!

* **Marriage preparation** course will take place Saturday January 17th, beginning at 09:15 am with lunch break and will conclude at 03:00pm.

* **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
- Buy gift specified on ornament (new, not used).
- Bring unwrapped gift to the church in the refectory after Mass no later than Dec. 14 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.

*Sunday December 14th we will have a **join Mass** with the Czech and Spanish community. After Mass the Spanish community invites us for the advent tradition of "**Posadas**". Then will be a join lunch and in the afternoon several activities for children and adult. You are invited. Come to celebrate with us!

*Today second collection for the **Seminary**.

The Christmas Schedule for Christmas Eve:

- 18:30/6:30pm Christmas Mass
- 23:30/11:30pm Christmas Carols (Czech and English) followed by Midnight Mass in three languages. After Mass there will be the traditional procession to Bethlehem and the adoration of the Savior. Refreshments will be served in the Summer Refectory immediately following the service.

CHRISTMAS DAY MASS AT 11am

26 December Saint Stephen's or Boxing Day.

- 09:30am Mass with Blessing of Grain.

European Taizé Meeting in Prague

The next European Meeting will be held in the city and region of Prague, from 29 December 2014 to 2 January 2015. The Taizé Community is preparing the meeting at the invitation of the Czech Bishops' Conference and the Council of Czech Churches. It will bring together several tens of thousands of young adults for the next step of the "pilgrimage of trust on earth" initiated by Brother Roger at the end of the 1970s.

Young people from all over Europe and beyond will be hosted by the people and local church communities of the region.

At the heart of Europe, the city of a thousand towers and a thousand steeples still brings together peoples and persons from different horizons, offering warm hospitality through its cultural treasures and its spiritual heritage.

We need some families to host young people. If you want to help, please contact Fr. Antonio. antoniorivas@augustiniani.cz



- 8 THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF OUR LADY. Mass will be celebrated in Saint Barbara's Chapel at 6 pm/18:00. Under this title Mary is venerated as the Patroness of the United States of North America
- 10 Our Lady of Loretto is venerated under this title as patroness of aviators and air travelers. -Human Rights Day was first proclaimed by the United Nations.
- 11 Daniel the Ascetic (+493), known for his penitential life style, is venerated in the east.
- 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe, so named from the place of her apparition to Juan Diego, an Indian convert in 1531, is proclaimed Patroness of the Americas.
- 13 Lucy (+304), the famous woman martyr, suffered terrible torments (including being blinded) before she was executed for her faith. Acclaimed patroness of the blind and mariners, who in Italy sing the popular folk song, Santa Lucia before their fishing fleets leave port. In Sweden, her feast is marked with processions and celebrations which last the 12 days until Christmas. Lucy's day was regarded as the shortest in the year as evidence by the rhyme: Lucy light, the shortest day and the longest night.
- 15 John of the Cross, OCD (+1591), mystic, writer and companion of Theresa of Avila (+1582), inaugurated and inspired the Discalced reform of the Carmelite order despite tremendous opposition..