



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



Advent 2014

December 13<sup>rd</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> 2014

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent. B

# St. Thomas Church

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## Reflection on the Gospel

Considering the enormous impact of Jesus Christ on history, his brief public ministry, which is now estimated to have taken place from AD 25 to 27, is remarkable. Palestine, then a subject territory of the Roman Empire (since 63BC) was divided into three administrative regions.

The first, Judea, was governed by a Roman prefect or procurator; Galilee and Peraea (now Jordan) by Antipas, a son of King Herod I and Philip, his half-brother, ruled the tetrarchy of Ituraea and Trachonitis in the north east. For the pious this state of affairs could not last.

Following the decadent rule of the Hasmonaeans (140 – 37 BC), the dreadful reign of Herod I (37 – 4 BC), followed by a series of corrupt Roman prefects or procurators (AD 6 – 66), dreams of liberation now ripened. Fuelled by such apocalyptic expectations as are found in the Book of Enoch and the mysterious Son of Man visions of Daniel 7, it was only a matter of time before an appeal through conversion and baptism to prepare for the advent of the one among you whom you do not recognize (John 1:26). The priests, the Levites, the Pharisees, the militant messianic Zealots as well as the Qumram community- all sought the Messiah but in the wrong place and person. What an indictment but then, do we even search? Are we interested?

**FIRST READING:** In the generations that followed the return of the exiles from Babylon, Jerusalem was rebuilt and its Temple was rededicated. But those events did not stop the many local people from returning to the ways of their sinful ancestors. Some people began to mix religious practices, offering Yahweh sacrifice in the Temple, while practicing the private rites of foreign gods. The faithful reacted with horror, fearing God's wrath as before. What would happen next? The words of the so-called "Third Isaiah" answered those concerns. "Our God is great! Greater than any other dreamt by man," third Isaiah seemed to say. "He could not be contained by a Temple or a city. Yet, because of our God, the city and its holy place will be a sign of his power. So take comfort in the city." Our God is great. Greater than the signs and symbols we use to worship him. Yet, he uses these things to communicate his presence. Hence we should take comfort in them, but not use them to limit God.

**SECOND READING:** How do we live as Christians, even as we anticipate the coming of the Lord? Paul wrote to a favored community, the Thessalonians. This church had grown strong facing fierce opposition from the Jewish synagogue and the pro-Roman city fathers. Despite his correction concerning the fate of fellow Christians who had died before the Second Coming, Paul wrote in admiration of their faith and hospitality. In his concluding remarks, Paul reminded his readers about the essence of Christian living. A positive attitude and prayer life. An openness to God's calling, yet with healthy dose of the common sense. Paul also reminded his audience of their standing before the Lord. God had already made them holy. May they be faithful to that holiness, even when Jesus returned! We should take Paul's words to heart. Be open to God and pray always. Be honest, but live with hope. And thank God for all we have. That should keep us busy for a long time.

This Sunday December 14<sup>th</sup> 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 a activities for children and adult. You are invited. Come to celebrate with us!

### **The Christmas Schedule:**

#### **Christmas Eve, Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> :**

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.

**CHRISTMAS DAY. Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> MASS** at 11am

**26<sup>th</sup> December Saint Stephen's or Boxing Day.**

09:30am Mass with Blessing of Grain.

### **European Taize 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 ( we have 8000 young people taht they haeve not a place to slee during the meeting). If you want to help, please contact Fr. Antonio. [antoniorivas@augustiniani.cz](mailto:antoniorivas@augustiniani.cz)



### **POSADAS**

Typically, each family in a neighborhood will schedule a night for the Posada to be held at their home, starting on the 16th of December and finishing on the 24th. Every home has a nativity scene and the hosts of the Posada act as the **innkeepers**. The neighborhood children and adults are the pilgrims (*los peregrinos*), who have to request lodging by going house to house singing a traditional song about the pilgrims. All the pilgrims carry small lit **candles** in their hands, and four people carry statuettes of Joseph leading a donkey, on which Mary is riding.

The head of the procession will have a candle inside a paper lampshade. At each house, the resident responds by refusing lodging (also in song), until the weary travelers reach the designated site for the party, where Mary and Joseph are finally recognized and allowed to enter. Once the "innkeepers" let them in, the group of guests come into the home and kneel around the Nativity scene to pray (typically, the **Rosary**). Latin American countries have continued to celebrate this holiday to this day, with very few changes to the tradition. In some places, the final location may be a church instead of a home.

Individuals may actually play the various parts of Mary (María) and Joseph with the expectant mother riding a real donkey (**burro**), with attendants such as angels and shepherds acquired along the way, or the pilgrims may carry images of the holy personages instead. Children may carry **poinsettias**.<sup>[6]</sup> The procession will be followed by musicians, with the entire procession singing posadas such as **pedir posada**.<sup>[4]</sup> At the end of each night's journey, there will be Christmas carols (*villancicos*), children will break open star-shaped **pinatas** to obtain candy and fruit hidden inside, and there will be a feast.<sup>[4][7]</sup> Pinatas are traditionally made out of clay. It is expected to meet all the invitees in a previous procession.

### **Advent**

**Advent** (from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming") is a season of the Christian church, the period of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus; in other words, the period immediately before Christmas. It is the beginning of the Western liturgical year and commences on the first Sunday of Advent. The Eastern churches begin the liturgical year on 1 September. The Eastern Christian equivalent of Advent is called the Nativity Fast but it differs both in length and observances.