



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

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.



November 28th and 29th 2015

The First Sunday of Advent-Year C

St. Thomas Church

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Reflection on the Gospel

Advent, a word derived from the Latin "coming", is that season of the year in which we not only celebrate the feast of Christ's nativity in Bethlehem but also two other equally important *comings* or advents. The wholesale marking of Christmas which means "the Mass of Christ" has dulled our religious perceptions as to the true inner meaning of not only Christmas but of Advent. The anomalous situation of shops blaring out *Silent Night* before Thanksgiving only confuses the issue. In order to appreciate the lessons of this beautiful time of quiet preparation we can divide Advent into two distinct time frames. The first extends from the first Sunday of Advent to December 16 and is followed by the last half from the December 16 to the Vigil of Christmas on December 24. The first half of the season is somewhat grim and foreboding. The Gospel readings remind us of judgment and urgent contingency measures in face of the Lord's sudden appearance. As in the past, these crisp gospel passages have been subject to endless interpretations both within and without the Church. The more recent Jehovah Witnesses, for example, had been forced to recalculate the final day "of reckoning" as occurring in 1875, 1915 and finally in 1975. The early Christian community of Mark the evangelist did believe that Jesus was on "his way" with the destruction of Jerusalem and wholesale deportation of Israel following the disastrous *Jewish War* (AD 66-72). The end did not come and the later evangelists (Matthew, Luke and John) now read back into Jesus' word; what they found was that he did enjoy watchfulness and prayer in face of the encroaching judgment. Neither the day nor the hour was the subject of discussion, prayerful vigilance was. But, there is still a third advent amidst the historical commemoration of Jesus and the dark day of the Last Judgment.

The Third advent is that which we experience in the reception of the sacraments, since it is Jesus who creates the community of the Church through and within the Eucharist. As we begin our Advent let us keep in mind all three comings of the Lord: in the past at Christmas, in the future through judgment and each day with prayer, the scriptures and the sacrament of the altar. May we never grow lax or indifferent "on the watch" no

Study of the First Reading

Jeremiah, a prophet of priestly dissent, lived through the reign of three Judean kings: Josiah (627-609 BC), Jehoiakim (608-598 B.C.), Zedekiah (597-587 B.C.) As he matured, Jeremiah railed against the political intrigue in Jerusalem and royal alliances with Egypt against the Babylon. He was politically influential enough to escape a royal death sentence for his public critiques. Hence, he was imprisoned. In jail, Jeremiah wrote these verses of hope. Yes, the kingdom would fall. Jerusalem would be left desolate. But these events would not stop God's plan to restore the nation and the royal line. In fact, the righteous king would be the source of national revival. True to his vision, Jeremiah witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C. But Jeremiah would not live to see God's people return to their homeland. Nonetheless, his words gave the people hope. God would restore the royal line, the king would rule justly, and the nation would be renewed. This, however, would happen in God's time and in God's way.

Study of the Second Reading

In one of the earliest books in the New Testament canon, Paul wrote to the Church at Thessalonica between 50-54 A.D. At the time of letter, the city was a major seaport to the east of Greece proper. It was the seat of Roman administration with a diverse and prosperous population. The Church at Thessalonica was mixed between Gentile and Jew. This letter revealed that despite a strong opposition from the Jewish synagogue, Paul had a strong affection for the community because they were steadfast in their faith. Nevertheless, after Paul explained his efforts to see those in the church, he exhorted them to live chaste lives. The verses in this study form the bridge between his explanation and his exhortation. These verses used a simple question to create this bridge: How should the Christian live? Paul's answer was as simple: love the way you have been shown to love. 3:12-13 was a prayer that the community grows in the love that Paul and his fellow missionaries showed the community. 4:1-2 remind the community to grow in the Christian life and devotion to God. This life and devotion were again found in love. Indeed, in these verses, Paul could reduce the tradition he claimed to receive from Christ himself in one simple word: love. Christian love is the basis for missionary work and morality. May we grow in love for each other and in the Christian life, just as Paul wrote in prayer and encouragement.

Feasts

- 30 *Andrew* the first called apostle is particularly venerated as the special Patron of Scotland and the Ukraine. Legend has it that he was crucified on an X shaped cross in Patras, Greece.
- 01 *Edmund Campion*, an English Jesuit priest, was cruelly murdered for the profession of faith during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.
- 03 *Francis Xavier*, the famous Jesuit missionary, who died on the frontier of China, is the Patron of Missions.
- 04 *Barbara of Nicomedia* is celebrated as the Patroness of our Chapel. In her honor Mass will be offered at 06:45am and at 12:15 pm.
- 06 *Saint Nicolas*, the patron of children and mariners

Religious Education Advent Party! RE families, please join us at 9:30am on Sunday, Nov 29th for our Advent Party – the whole family is welcome! We will be decorating Advent wreaths, doing crafts, learning about Advent symbols and more. Please bring a snack to share; hot chocolate will be provided. If you would like to buy a wreath, please contact Mary Beth Hlavsa at marybethwebster@hotmail.com to reserve one, or bring your own wreath for your family to decorate. Wreaths will be blessed at Mass. Thank you and we hope to see you at the party!

Saint Mikulas Day will be celebrated on Dec 6th! As per Czech tradition, Saint Mikulas and his angel helpers will visit our parish at the end of Mass on Dec 6th. Parents are welcome to "arrange" for a gift to be given to their child (ask Kara McCalister or Mary Beth Hlavsa for details), all gifts must fit into the bags provided (available at the Advent Party on Nov 29th and before Mass on Dec 6th) and bags must be labelled with the child's name.

Saint Mikulas Donations welcomed! Children all over the Czech Republic are looking forward to a visit from St Mikulas this Dec – please help make their day special by donating a small toy or treat! The Post-Communion 3 RE class will be making up donation St Mikulas bags for needy children in and around Prague. Please bring items for donation to the Tagaste Classroom on Nov 29th or Dec 6th between 9:30am-10:45am. Ask class teacher Kara McCalister for details, or contact Mary Beth Hlavsa at marybethwebster@hotmail.com. Thank you for your generosity!

Announcements and Ongoing Activities

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

* **Lectors and Eucharistic ministers:** If you would like to be a **lector** or Eucharistic minister at mass on Sundays please sing up with after mass in the court yard or e mail Ann at dalyaann@hotmail.com

* Every Saturday at 9:00am **feeding of the homeless**, as a social service

* **Bible Study** takes place every Tuesday from 18:30-19:30 in Tagaste room. Everyone is welcome to come and learn more about our sacred scriptures.

*Wednesday at 18:30. Tagaste room takes place **Adult Religious education**.

*We welcome all our new parishoners to St. Thomas Church. Please introduce yourselves, if you wish at refreshments after the 11:00 am Mass on Sundays or just call us or visit at your convenience.

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. 13 with a tag with the name of the child and code attached.

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

* **Christmas Market *** Free Admission *****

Saturday, December 5 10:00 - 16:00

InterContinental Hotel, Pařížská 30, Old Town

Over 40 Vendors - Children's Corner - Amazing Raffle Prizes - Used items and books sale - Baked Goods

Please join the International Women's Association of Prague at their Christmas Market benefiting Vítěj (Welcome <http://www.vitej.com>), providing much needed services and programs for young adults with Autism and their families and Cesta domů (Homecoming <http://www.cestadomu.cz>) offering hospice services to families with the terminally ill.

***Professional translator** (English, Czech and Italian) and language teacher (English, Italian and Czech) is looking urgently for a job. Please send an email at ApolinarieRubesova@seznam.cz or phone 732 380 481