



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

Today's Prayer

Dear Lord as I come to
you today
Fill my heart and my
whole being
with the wonder of your
presence



December 12th and 13th 2015

The Third Sunday of
Advent-Year C

St. Thomas Church

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Study of the First Reading

There is nothing more joyful as forgiveness. All the great moments in life, birth, sacramental moments, life's transitions, marriage, and death, have the potential to bring people together. When people are brought together in forgiveness, there is relief and peace. These are the cause for joy.

Beginning the passage of joy, Zephaniah symbolizes Jerusalem as a young girl who should be at a party. [14] Why should there be rejoicing? The danger has passed, the enemies are gone, and God is in their midst. [15, 17] And not only does the city have cause for rejoicing; the prophet loudly proclaims God's joy over the return of his people. [17-18] God and the people are together; they are reconciled. There is true joy.

How many times do people have parties only to complain about the company. It's unfortunate that people do not have reconciliation parties and celebrate joy!

Study of the Second Reading

We Christians expect Jesus to come soon. At this time of year, we expect him at Christmas and at the end of time. This expectation can be anxious or joy filled. Paul gave us this choice. The first way leads to all sorts of problems, especially in our relationships with others. The second way leads to peace with others, for joy is never assertive or destructive. Of course, such joy is a gift from God. It is based in a peace that transcends the limitations of the human mind and heart. But if we want to experience God's peace, we must turn away from anxiety and open ourselves up to his presence.

So take the time, slow down. Enjoy the season. Pray in the spirit of thanks for the season. Let God give you his peace.

Reflection on the Gospel

Today is *Gaudete Sunday*, which in Latin means the "Sunday of Rejoicing." To express this note of hope and exultation, the priest even wears rose colored vestments as an exception to the usual somber violet. For within two weeks we will be celebrating the solemnity of the birth of Jesus Christ.

If we were to go to John the Baptizer and ask his advice on what to do the rest of Advent, we probably have the idea that he would tell us to make a novena or a retreat, fast every day and abstain from meat, wear a hairshirt, read large sections of the Bible daily, and give substantial contributions to designated charities. After all, John is not a mousy mystic or a half-hearted hermit. There is something fierce and fiery about his asceticism . . . unless everybody else was also eating grasshoppers in those days.

When we listen to the advice that John gives to the people who came to him asking, "What ought we to do?" John's answers are practical, specific, uncomplicated, and down-to-earth. He asks the crowds to share their clothes and food with those in need. He tells the tax collectors to be honest and not cheat taxpayers. He suggests that the soldiers show respect, be truthful, and be satisfied with their salaries.

John's Advent agenda is concerned with the basics of day-by-day responsibilities. He gets down to the grass roots of everyday existence. There are no Cloud Nine concerns for John. He is speaking with common folks, not with angels and saints. There is no point in talking about the higher realms of contemplative prayer or the finer distinctions of theological speculations when the audience is still looking for the ABC's of ordinary actions.

Given John's no-nonsense answers to his questioners in today's gospel (Luke 3:10-18), it is a safe bet that when we ask him, "What are we to do?" he will tell us to clean up our daily act, do a better job of doing our duties, and concentrate on the essentials. In other words, begin at the beginning.

Advent is a beginning, a fresh start. So we might as well get back to the basics. There will be time later to add the frosting on the cake. For the time being--the time being Advent--desert comes before dessert.

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 by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin

Announcements and Ongoing Activities

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

* 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 Christmas Schedule 2015:

December 24

Christmas Eve Mass 06:30 pm/18:30

Christmas Carols 11:30pm/23:30

Midnight Mass *in Czech Spanish and English*

December 25

CHRISTMAS DAY 11:00 am

December 26

St. Stephen *Boxing Day* 06:00 pm

Traditional Blessing of Grain.

December 27

Holy Family Day 11:00 am

December 31

New Year's eve 06:00pm/18:00

January 01

New Year's Day +2016 11:00 am

Year of Mercy

"Merciful like the Father"

Let us rediscover these corporal works of mercy:

1. to feed the hungry,
2. give drink to the thirsty,
3. clothe the naked,
4. welcome the stranger,
5. heal the sick,
6. visit the imprisoned,
7. bury the dead.

And let us not forget the spiritual works of mercy:

1. to counsel the doubtful,
2. instruct the ignorant,
3. admonish sinners,
4. comfort the afflicted,
5. forgive offences,
6. bear patiently those who do us ill,
7. pray for the living and the dead."

We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to a hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

Pope Francis

