



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

St. Thomas Church

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Today's Prayer

Say this Prayer Today:

I pause for a moment and think of the love and the grace that God showers on me: I am created in the image and likeness of God; I am God's dwelling-place.

In this issue:

Gospel Reflection	1
Study of 1 st Reading	1
Study of 2 nd reading	2
Upcoming Events	2
Ongoing activities	2

March 14st and March 15nd
2015

The Fourth Sunday of Lent

The Reflection of the Gospel

The setting of this gospel is straightforward. Nicodemus, a preeminent Jewish rabbi (who appears later on at the end of John's gospel) comes to Jesus by night "for fear of public opinion" with some personal queries. Some of Jesus' bolder teachings concerning salvation disturbed him. For one, how can a believer possibly do God's will as outlined in the *Torah* (the Law contained in the first five books of the First or Old Testament) and follow Jesus' "religious accommodations." Jesus' response is cast in typical rabbinic fashion. In responding to a biblical question one had to use a biblical citation in response. Here he draws on the incident of the *bronze serpent* related in the book of *Numbers* (21:6-9) for an example. In brief, the Israelites complain to God in the desert when the provided food became monotonous and "the wilderness closed in on them" in the form of a poisonous viper infestation. Quickly chastened by this dread plague they cried for salvation that came in strange form when Moses ordered the image of a bronze serpent mounted on a pole as a healing totem for those simply looking upon it in faith. This incident out Israel's sacred history so fraught with symbolism was neither lost on Nicodemus or on anyone seeking the truth. The serpent, a symbol of wisdom among many ancient peoples was thought also to cure. The analogy was clear. One Christ, the Messiah, had been "lifted on the cross" and "raised up from the dead" those who look upon him "with faith" will be saved. Again, the example of Abraham who was willing to part with his only beloved son, Isaac (*Genesis* 22:1-9) in obedience. So, Jesus, in obedience to his Father *was sent into the world and to give his life that the world might be saved*. In these examples there is no condemnation, each one stands before God with the gospel revealed through Jesus Christ before him/her. Are we ready to look upon the cross for light that reveals and healing that saves?

Study of the First Reading

14-16 These short passages described the last days of the kingdom in Judea, the Babylonian exile, and the return of the faithful. The author blamed both the priests and the people for infidelity and abuse, in spite of the prophets sent to preach repentance. 19-23 In the end, the nation forced God's hand against them. And Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. The Temple was blasphemed and destroyed. The best of the nation were taken to Babylon to serve their new masters. But, hope was not completely lost. After 70 years (a time span that indicated fulfillment of divine will as a Sabbath rest), a new hero emerged: Cyrus the conquering Persian. He proclaimed a royal edict for the people of Judea. Israelites should return and rebuild the Temple. Politically, this was a wise move on the part of Cyrus. As the most western province of the Empire, a strengthened Judea would face another regional power (Egypt). By repatriating the Jews and enriching them to rebuild Jerusalem, the Persian created a defensive buffer. Sometimes wisdom requires a view of the larger picture. Cyrus could see this vista. The Temple priests in the time of Jesus could not. One needs a selfless spirit to obtain this wisdom. The common good outweighs personal enrichment. Others' needs are sometimes greater than mine.

Coffee, Cookies & Conversation follows Sunday's 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" or contact Fr. Juan at juan@augustiniani.cz. Please send at latest by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin