



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

St. Thomas Church

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Today's Prayer
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;



February 27th and 28th 2016

The Third Sunday of Lent
Year C

Reflection on the Gospel

Today's first reading is from *Exodus*, the second book of the *Pentateuch* or the first five books of the Bible. This sacred collection is most important as it contains the basic revelation of the Judaeo-Christian- and Moslem- deposit of faith concerning the *Almighty God, the One*. As the first book, *Genesis*, reveals God as *Creator*, the second book, *Exodus*, reveals Him as *Savior, Deliverer* and *Giver of the Law* that brings us to the very heart of the first or Old Testament. The revelation to Moses, who fled Egypt to escape murder charges, brings us to the very mystery of God's ways. For the sake of an obscure band of oppressed Hebrew slaves, why should the Lord so dramatically choose a fugitive criminal to reveal his purpose?

Notice the progression of the story. First, Moses was called in the midst of his menial task of tending sheep. Though not engaged in any particularly spiritual activity; he was as bored, perhaps, under a grueling, merciless Arabian sun, as anyone else in much less harsh circumstances. Once the Divine broke into this otherwise common scene, however, history was never to be the same. The "burning bush" so symbolic of the presence of God; the "angel of the Lord," a circumlocution for God Himself, were the forms through which this tremendous divine mission was conveyed. The scene was so stupifying that Moses upon command out of reverential fear quickly removed his sandals.

The conversation was of a piece. By identifying himself as the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," God was not, nor was He ever, a stranger to Moses and his kinfolk. Yet, Moses dares to ask God for identification. If someone should ask, the now frightened man inquired, whom should be the authority behind the message. The divine response was a solemn declaration that was to provoke both contemplative reflection and speculative discussion to the present day.

God acceded to Moses's request and tells the bewildered shepherd: *I am what I am* or in Hebrew *Yahweh asher yihweh* freely translated as *He causes to be what comes into being*. Over the centuries, some translated this tetragram as an evasive *I am Who am* which gradually evolved into a manageable *Jehovah*. This scholarly coinage emerged for lack of vowels in the Hebrew language. Thus, **YHVH**, the original base word was freely interspersed with the known vowels of **ADONAI**, another title of God. The added **A, O, A** now formed **JAHOVAH** or **JEHOVAH**, a title for God in the English world for centuries. Today most scholars agree that the more correct title should read **Yahweh** for which even the Jehovah Witnesses have conceded the semantic possibility.

Once fortified with this knowledge, Moses bravely risked all, returned to Egypt and boldly confronted Pharaoh, the most powerful ruler at that time. As we progress with Jesus to Jerusalem for his *passing*, let us invoke the Name of God who is our help and our strength. Even those sudden tragedies which the Lord mentions in today's gospel should not prevent us from facing whatever is in store for *our help is in the Name of the Lord who made heaven and earth, of whom should I fear?*

Obviously, we can measure faith by the trust we have in God's will for us in the midst of change. But, change itself can be painful; for God's change can be found in the call to reform and the call to action. In the first reading, Moses had escaped from the Egyptians and had settled down in the quiet life of a shepherd. Then, Moses saw a strange sight and decided to investigate [2-3]. Moses witnessed the "burning bush" on Mt. Horeb [2], the same mount as Mt. Sinai. According to some traditions, Mt. Sinai meant the "mountain with the burning bush." The following dialogue had ritual overtones; God initiated while Moses reacted. As Moses approached, God called out and Moses responded [4]. God gave instruction (do not enter beyond the perimeter, remove shoes as a ritual cleansing, hear the name of the divine) and Moses hid his face (to avoid the terror of experiencing God directly) [5-6]. God witnessed to the people's plight and promised rescue (with Moses as leader in verse 10); Moses questioned his own ability [7-11]. God reassured him with his personal presence while Moses asked for the divine's name [12-13]. The dialogue stopped at this point; God now revealed his own name and it was an enigma. God said "YHWH" (which we translate "I am who am"). Original Hebrew script did not have vowels; they were added in the Middle Ages. In order to show respect for the divine name, it was spoken only at worship. Slowly over time, the name was spoken only by the priest, then only by the high priest, and was finally lost. All that remained were the consonants "YHWH." In many translations, the word "Lord" replaced the consonants. (As an aside, a monk or scribe from the Middle Ages took vowels for the Hebrew "Adonai," meaning "Lord" and placed them between the consonants "YHWH"; the result was the word "Jehovah!")

Hebrews believed that the name of something or someone revealed the power of the thing or individual; to know one's source of power meant power over that person. So, when Moses asks for God's name, he not only asks for a revelation into God, he seeks power over God. However, when he received God's name, he changed. The dialogue between God and Moses ended, and the mission of Moses began. God changed Moses through the power of the name, but Moses did not change God. Many times when we try to change God's will through prayer, we become frustrated. No wonder! Like Moses we seek God's power, only to find we are not in charge. God changes us; we do not and cannot change him. Like Moses, God changes us by calling us to do his will.

A Small Lenten Fast!

St. Thomas is encouraging each of its parishioners to fast on the following Fridays of February by eating a bowl of rice and with the money you save, making a donation to the church which will then pass it along to the most needy! It's an easy way to fulfill a Lenten obligation and to savour the satisfaction that someone has benefited from your corporal work of Mercy. How pleased Holy Father Pope Francis would be with those of us who have taken the theme of this year, **the Year of Mercy** and made it part of our Lent.

Thank you in advance and at Sunday's Mass we'll let you know where you can contribute! And for those who can't fast on the following Friday, you can do it on another Friday in Lent!

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."

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.

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

*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**: The next one-day marriage preparation course (for the English speaking community) will be held by Fr. William on Saturday 12th March from 9:15am - 3pm at St. Thomas Parish for those who wish to participate.

*During **Lent season** every Friday at 6pm in the church will be the Stations of the Cross.

How to have a merciful Lent?

3. Lenten week

Gospel : The Barren Fig tree –Luke 13, 1-9

Main idea: To be patient

Spiritual work of mercy for this week:

Bear patiently those who do us ill

What can I do?:

Patiently wait for slower.

Listen to anyone who needs something to tell us. Patiently deal with the sick, the elderly and any other or people

Wait patiently - in queue, for the bus ...

Have time for others and make good use of your time