



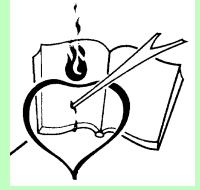
St. Thomas Church: established July 1, 1285 by King Vaclav II

# St. Thomas Church

## 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.



February 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 2018

The First Sunday of Lent

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## Reflection on the Gospel

Deserts can be fearful places. An inhospitable climate; a variety of fauna such as serpents, spiders, lizards, disease-bearing flies, mosquitoes; and loneliness, all pose threats to survival. Yet, deserts can be as fascinating for us today as they were to ancient people who thought them to be the habitat of benevolent and malevolent spirits. *Only beasts and gods can live alone in the desert*, ran an old adage. *Mark*, the second evangelist, writing between the years AD 66 – 76, conveyed the theological concerns of his community in utilizing a variety of images and literary figures drawn from oral history, legend and popular apocalyptic works. When we read that the Spirit drove Jesus into the desert the implication is that the mission, the ministry of Jesus, was inaugurated not by personal or human whim but by the *direct* coercive action of the Holy Spirit. Once Jesus goes into the desert - used here as a synonym for the demesne of Satan (Hebrew for *the adversary*) - He experienced first hand the full enticing force of temptation. Indeed, was it hunger, a desire for power, or rash presumption of God's protection that posed the worst temptation? It seems that *Matthew* would relate all three in active collusion during this forty-day experience. Yet God willed that Jesus though tempted was to be abandoned there in the desert neither to His adversaries nor later during His earthly ministry in Israel. *For the angels came to minister to Him* was Mark's assurance that Jesus of Nazareth, first designated by the powers of darkness as *the Holy One of God*, had passed through His first trial and temptation. With this assurance He went on to His destined vocation vindicated by the power of the cross and resurrection.

## Study of the First Reading

[9-11] Noah's covenant marks the second one God made with humanity. The first covenant God made with Adam. The first humans broke that alliance, sin increased in the world, and God turned nature against humanity. Noah's covenant was the result of the great flood. The flood itself was seen as a re-creation of the cosmos; the new covenant was God's re-alliance with humanity. Since Noah and his family were the only righteous people on earth, God promised Noah (as the representative of humanity) never to destroy humanity by a flood again. This covenant became the basis for the Jewish belief in the righteous Gentile, a non-Jew who honors the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There are a few examples of these people in the New Testament. Since all people had a covenant relationship with God through Noah, all could be saved. Even nature was part of God's plan for salvation. [12-15] The sign of the rainbow. In the flood, the ancient people believed that it was not only a great rain, but that the heavens literally collapsed (and the ark became a submarine). As God re-created the world, the waters in the heavens and those on earth were re-separated by the appearance of dry land. The rainbow acts as a shield to keep the heavens from collapsing again. In this way the rainbow is not only a sign, but a physical barrier.

**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](mailto:wfaix@yahoo.com)" or contact Fr. Juan at [juan@augustiniani.cz](mailto:juan@augustiniani.cz) Please send at latest by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin

## Study of the Second Reading

In this slice of Paul's famous letter to the Romans, he used the theme of hope to move from the suffering of the present to the glory of the Second Coming. Romans 8:18-30 spoke of groaning in creation, ourselves, and life in the Spirit. According to Paul, these groanings were a foretaste of events to come. The last event, of course, was the Last Judgment. According to Jewish lore, angels would act as prosecutors against the evils of humanity in the divine court. Paul countered this notion with Christian hope rooted in an intimate relationship with God.

He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord Yahweh helps me; who will declare me guilty?

Paul asked rhetorical questions about charges ("debts" to be called in) by an imaginary prosecutor. Who would have been foolish enough to prosecute someone the judge favored and already forgave? [8:33] Why would God the judge condemn someone he had already forgiven, for whom his own Son intercedes? [8:34] These few verses revealed Paul's view of the Last Judgment. Christians had already received the gift of reconciliation and divine life in grace. Their status before God at the end of time was certain. Acquittal was the verdict even before the court convened. Paul's hope should be ours, in spite of daily struggles and the uncertainty of modern life. We have no fear before the Lord. After all, we are his favorites!

## Lenten Suggestions

During this season of Lent in preparation for the great feast of Our Lord's Resurrection, Christians are urged to participate in this great season through daily prayer, fasting and almsgiving to those in need. Here at Saint Thomas we recommend that

1. You participate in the Stations of the Cross each Friday at 6:00 PM.
2. You avail yourselves of the sacrament of reconciliation (confession) after each Sunday Mass;
3. You attend a short Eucharistic service on Thursdays from 6:00 pm to 6:30pm. This service consists of a short gospel passage, quiet reflection, the recitation of the Our Father and the reception of the Eucharist. Confessions will be heard immediately afterwards for those who wish.
4. You attend the Adult Christian Education discussion group meeting each Wednesday evening at 6:00pm in the Tagaste room.

## Ongoing Activities

- ❖ We **welcome all our new parishioners** 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.
- ❖ If you would like to receive a **copy of the bulletin by email**, please contact [osaprag@augustiniani.cz](mailto:osaprag@augustiniani.cz)
- ❖ **Fr. William**, the pastor will be away for January 23<sup>rd</sup> till March 2<sup>nd</sup> month. Fr. Imann, OSA will be the ordinary pastor in his absence. In cases of emergency I can be reached either through Fr. Imann at 730817348.

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## **Parish Pilgrimage to Holy Land.**

St. Thomas Parish is organizing a trip to the Holy Land. It will take place from Monday April 30th to Wednesday May 9th. The itinerary includes visits to all the important biblical sites in the following areas: Jaffa, Galilee, Nazareth, Tiberias, Holy Mountain, Capharnaum, Judea, Jericho, Bethlehem, Ein Karem, Qumran, Jerusalem, Mount Zion, Gethsemane and Bethania.

April 30<sup>th</sup> –May 8<sup>th</sup>. If you are interesting please contact Fr. Juan at: [juan@augustiniani.cz](mailto:juan@augustiniani.cz).  
More information: [www.augustiniani.cz](http://www.augustiniani.cz)

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## **Exhibition of the "15 Stations"**

by Alena Foustkova

Ambit of the Saint Thomas Monastery, Opening on Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2018, 5:30 pm  
The exhibition will last until the Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018.

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Above all we warmly recommend that you read Sacred Scripture- particularly the gospel of Saint John. Saint Augustine once said: *"If you cannot fast from food then fast from complaining, gossip and anger, impatience. If you cannot afford to give alms then thank others for what they do for you and even give a good word for those being talked about. And when you pray, thank God for the gift of change and newness that opens doors closed by monotonous routine and bad habits."*