



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



## Advent 2018

December 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018

The 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent. B

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# St. Thomas Church

### Reflection on the Gospel

The Church's year begins with the first Sunday of Advent and is divided into a three year reading cycle: year A covers Matthew; B, Mark; and C, Luke. John, the fourth evangelist, is read during the latter part of Lent, Holy Week and on certain feasts. This B year of Mark commences at the end of his Gospel, where in earnest, enigmatic often apocalyptic prose, he describes the finale of human history intertwined with contemporary events in a sweeping revelation "of what lies ahead". The apocalyptic genre itself is defined as "the uncovering of secrets concerning the end of time and the course of history through the medium of unusual natural settings or occurrences". This shortest gospel of only 16 chapters written about AD 70 uses the contemporary Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (AD 70) as a prelude to the beginning of the end marking the parousia or second coming of the Lord. The first and second readings from "Third Isaiah" (so named from the final editing) and First Corinthians respectively reinforce this sense of Mark's urgency. Isaiah, addressing God with the seldom used title "Father", begs for divine help in national tragedy while Paul hastens to assure his Corinthians of God's grace (or gratuitous goodness revealed through salvation in Christ) and peace (his given joy experienced by those embraced by Christ) amidst community tensions. Easily disturbed by these portents, the disciples are urged to be watchful: stay awake, watch with a sharp eye and be on guard. Of course, there will always be rumors of the Lord's imminent return. Beginning with the accepted letters to the Thessalonians (ca. AD 50), such dates have been posited by Montanus, the wild visionary, as AD 175, by the Cistercian Abbot, Joachim of Fiori for 1257, by John of Leyden for 1534 and by the Adventist Millerites for 1844. Lack of space spares further review of the Jehovah Witnesses claims for 1914 and 1977, Sun Moon, the tragic David Koresh of Waco or the deranged Jim Jones of Guyana each with their own prophecy of "the end". For us Christians, what really matters is that we be personally prepared so that whenever the Lord of history returns he will find us vigilant and awake. Let us be faithful to our vocation by prayerfully doing his work here on earth. Stay awake, the Lord is near!

### Study of Today's Readings

**FIRST READING:** We all have good times. And we all have bad times. Bad times give us a hint at the despair and desperation found in this reading. Several generations had passed from the return of the exiles in Babylon. Jerusalem and its Temple were being rebuilt. A sense of normal living had returned. Yet, the people were forlorn. Life was hard. And God seemed to be far away. The author of these passages (the so-called "Third Isaiah") spoke the prayer of the people. How long before God's people returned to glory? How long before God's presence shone before the nations? Note the prayer for divine intervention was mixed with self-examination. The loss of stature was not necessarily God's fault [64:5b-7]. Yet, note also the sense of hope. The petitioner called upon God as Father and asked for his return [63:16-17]. Like those who lamented in Jerusalem, we, too, may have times we feel cut off from God and his blessing. Yet, there is always hope. For the Lord is coming. Soon! When did you experience "bad times?" How did God give you hope?

**SECOND READING:** Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians addressed the controversies that tore the community apart. As explained in last week's reflection, Corinth was a cosmopolitan port city. Not only was the city known for its multi-cultural mix, it was also known for its cult to Aphrodite and its fertility rites. The title of "Sin City" for Corinth would not be too far off the mark. St. Paul wrote the letter with an eye toward the city's nature, as much as the infighting among the cliques in the community. St. Paul began all his letters with a standard greeting. While the salutation ("to" and "from") is not present in this reading (1:1-2), the greeting of God's "grace" (a reference of God's presence for the Greek Christians in his audience) and "peace" (a reference for the Jewish Christians) is listed. Then, Paul reminded his readers of their privileged position before God. God's grace created a reciprocal relationship among the believers; it "enriched" the knowledge and speech of the followers as it caused a "confirmation" of faith. In other words, grace causes people to believe and it deepens their faith commitment. In fact, the deepening of faith in some of the community causes more faith among others. This was all a gift from God. The "enrichment-confirmation" cycle grace created would sustain the Corinthians until the Final Judgment. And the Corinthians would stand innocent in this Judgment. Why? God gave them his gracious gift and he could be trusted. After all, God created a bond of fellowship between believers and their Savior, Jesus Christ. This brief introduction set up Paul's response to the first of many controversies addressed in the letter: the question of missionary authority. We, like the Corinthians, must never forget the power of God's gift. God's very life changed us and sustains us with hope, even in the bleakest times. It gives us faith and deepens that gift.

**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

## Advent Recollection:

Saturday, December 9, 2017  
9:30AM to 12:00, St. Thomas Refectory  
Followed by exposition of the Blessed  
Sacrament Confession  
Mass at St. Barbara's Chapel  
ALL ARE WELCOME!

## The Christmas Schedule:

### Christmas Eve, Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> :

18:30/6:30pm Christmas Mass  
23:30/11:30pm Christmas Carols (Czech and English)  
followed by Midnight Mass in three languages. After  
Mass there will be the traditional procession to  
Bethlehem and the adoration of the Savior.

### CHRISTMAS DAY, Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> MASS at 11am

### 26<sup>th</sup> December Saint Stephen's or Boxing Day.

09:30am Mass with Blessing of Grain ( in Czech).

## Feasts

### Feast Day *December 4*

**Saint Barbara** , known in the Eastern Orthodox Church as the **Great Martyr Barbara**, was an early Christian Greek saint and martyr. Accounts place her in the 3rd century in the Greek city Nicomedia, present-day Turkey or in Heliopolis of Phoenicia, present-day Baalbek, Lebanon. There is no reference to her in the authentic early Christian writings nor in the original recension of Saint Jerome's martyrology. Her name can be traced to the 7th century, and veneration of her was common, especially in the East, from the 9th century.

Saint Barbara is often portrayed with miniature chains and a tower. As one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, Barbara continues to be a popular saint in modern times, perhaps best known as the patron saint of armourers, artillerymen, military engineers, miners and others who work with explosives because of her old legend's association with lightning, and also of mathematicians. Many of the thirteen miracles in a 15th-century French version of her story turn on the security she offered that her devotees would not die without making confession and receiving extreme unction.

## Announcements and Ongoing

**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. 18 with a tag with the name of the child and code attached.

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

**Children's Mass** will be hosted this Sunday by the Post-Communion 1 class. Parents of kids in this class have already received info from Rita, so should follow her special instructions for the day.

The **Jesse Tree** is traditionally decorated at the beginning of Mass on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent. Kids interested in helping should come up to the front when called! We'll need help from kids of all heights so we can decorate the entire tree!

We have our **Advent Party instead of normal classes on Sunday** (please come downstairs to the Crypt at 9:30), and the whole family is invited! Working together as a family (not in class groups) you will make your Advent wreath for the season, and enjoy a couple other Advent activity stations as well. Everyone is welcome to bring food to share (no nuts, as we have serious allergies, thanks!), and we'll have hot chocolate and juice available as well. Wreaths are provided, but you're welcome to make a donation towards the cost if you wish. We'll also make extra wreaths to sell to the community after Mass, so please bring your best decorating skills and help make a few extra! The money raised will go back into the RE program.

**St Mikulas (St Nicholas) and his Angel helper will visit us this Sunday** at the end of 11:00am Mass! If you'd like your child to receive a gift from St Nick, please bring the gift to the Sacristy any time after 9:30am on Sunday and put it into the bags provided and seal it with a label with your child's first and last name (all gifts must fit in the bags to avoid competition/comparison). This is for ALL children; not just those in our RE program! Traditional gifts are small; treats like Mandarin oranges, gingerbread or chocolate, and maybe a small toy.