



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

# St. Thomas Church

## Today's Prayer

Say this Prayer Today:

"Be still and know that I am  
God."

Lord, Your words lead us to  
the  
calmness and greatness of  
your presence.

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May 12<sup>th</sup> and May 13<sup>th</sup> 2018

Seventh Easter Sunday  
Or  
Ascension of the Lord

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## The Reflection of the Gospel

Once the horror of their Master's death had faded in resurrection light, the once despondent disciples regather in the peaceful assurances of their Lord. His final instructions are given and *he ascends and sits at the right hand of Almighty God*. Far from being a finale, Jesus' short earthly ministry *continues* through and within the ministry of his faithful now gathered as a Church. This inaugural moment yet awaits completion with the descent of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclet ("Intercessor") *who will recall to mind all that I have taught you*. As with such events Mark leaves much to the imagination. Leaning heavily on Old (First) Testament language he emphasizes that *the saving hand of God had worked these (recounted) deeds alone*. Little did this motley group of bewildered disciples realize what lay ahead! The world they knew was certainly not waiting for their message. Their faith - soon to be tested by those evils characterized as the devil, deadly serpents and poisonous potions - would prevail through the assurances of such signs as speaking in tongues, healings and exorcisms. Yet, powers such as these have been conferred on us in Baptism uneasy as that might seem to many Christians! Let me paraphrase a startling passage in *Mark* that warrants close reflection: *The Lord who continues to work through us is the One who confirms this message with signs that accompany us* (Mark 16:20). In brief, we, who have been baptized and thus armed with Christ's power, are called *into the world* to proclaim *his word* with confidence. The mystery is that for a variety of reasons we do not claim this authority. Awed by the authority "of the ordained" or constrained by either indifference or lack of conviction we fall into compromise. Let the priests "do that"; how about lay ministers and "all those 'church' people who revel in such activities? With the drop in vocations, lay ministry maybe closer than we think. Let this feast of the Ascension be a reaffirmation and recommitment to the handing on of the "good news"; let us hand it on with the assurance of God's promise: *I am with you always*.

## Study of the First Reading

Anticipation is a national disease. We Americans hate to wait; we want everything now! Yet, we spend more time and energy preparing to celebrate a major event than actually enjoying the event itself. The Christmas season clearly shows off our obsession with anticipation.

The first reading has an atmosphere of anticipation. The author of Luke's gospel and Acts (who we will refer by his traditional name "Luke") begins the history of the early Church with a note to Theophilus [1]. The first book, the gospel of Luke, put a light on Jesus and his mission. Now, the Church becomes the focus. Like a good writer, Luke drops hints to answer his friend's question: "What will happen next?"

Who is this "Theophilus?" We do not know who he was, or if this person even existed. The word Theophilus means "friend of God." It is a proper name; it can be a nick name or title. Because it could mean different things in different contexts, Luke could have been writing to a person or a group of people. Luke could have even been addressing the reader. You or I could be the "friend of God" to whom Luke writes.

To build up the anticipation, Luke summarizes the life of Jesus [3] and then adds the promise of the Spirit [4-5]. The disciples, however, are not satisfied with this answer. They still want to know when Jesus will return as Messiah [6]. Do they wait for the right event? Luke says, "No." The day and time, even the timing, are reserved for God the Father [7]. "Do not wait for things to be done for you," Luke seems to say. "Wait instead for God's Spirit, so God will give you the power to do it for yourself [8]."

As Jesus speaks, he disappears from view [9]. But, the disciples still don't get it. They stand there and wait for Jesus' return [10]. Yes, he will return, but don't waste your life in passive anticipation. There is work to be done! And God will send his Spirit to work through us, so we can continue the mission Jesus began.

## Ongoing Activities

\***Bible Study** sessions are held each Tuesday evening at 6:30pm/18:00 in Tagaste room. All are welcome to join and reflect on the Word of God.

\***Religious education for adults** sessions are held each Wednesday evening at 6:00pm/18:00 in Tagaste room.

\*Today **second collection** for Charity

\*Saturday May 19 **Marriage preparation** from 9:15am

\* May 20<sup>th</sup> is **FIRST HOLY COMMUNION SUNDAY**. Again we ask that you pray for these young parishioners as they approach the Eucharist for the first time.

\***May 13th**: Will be a huge Parish celebration day. Events are sort of all rolled into one:

*Before Mass*: Our last RE class of the year.

*During Mass*: Children's Mass

*After Mass*: Mother's Day, Fr William's birthday celebration (actual birthday is May 8th) and Parishioner's Day - please bring food to share, also please encourage parents of kids in your class to bring food to share as well!

Our party will continue until Spanish Mass is finished, at which point there will be a celebration of Fr Antonio's life and an unveiling of the bust made in his image & honour. His parents will be coming from Spain, and we encourage everyone to stay to honour his memory. His 50th birthday would have been May 6th, so it's a day of celebration for his incredible - but too short - life. The Spanish community will be providing further refreshments served after their Mass, and anyone who can help with set-up and clean-up (to lighten the load especially for the Spanish community on this important day, which will be emotional for them) will be greatly appreciated!

\*May 20<sup>th</sup> we will bless, after Mass, **the Roses of Saint Rita**. She helps in difficult situations in life.

### THE 15th PARISH FESTIVAL

## **We share joy!**

Saturday, June 2nd 2018 from 15:00-22:00

Mass

Games and activities for for all ages: Music for all around the world, photos of the history of the Church, dance...

Costumes of the Earth, Africa, Augustinian fraternity, games, Cooking Competition...

Theater

Program for children: games, ponies, castles, piñata...

Presentation of activities

And much more....

**Come to celebrate with us!!!**

## Study of the Second Reading

These verses from Ephesians cover many different theological themes: unity in the Church, the unity of God, the ministry of Christ, and leadership offices. The glue that holds these themes together was the image of Christ on high. The author (ghost writing for Paul the prisoner) urged peace within the community and an eager pursuit of the Spirit. Many times, the cause of dissension within the ranks could be a simple misdirection of sight. When Christians stop looking to God as the core of personal life and begin to look to themselves, gossip and rancor would result. When Christians did focus upon God, they should see unity: the uniqueness of divine nature (one God in the Trinity), the unique place of the Father (the one above all, through all, and in all), the unique mediator between God and humanity (Christ), and the unique power of God (the Spirit). The activity of God reflected his unity: one Church (the Body of Christ), one baptism, one hope God will act in the future. In other words, the author saw the ministry of the Church on earth as a mirror of God himself (not just his activities) in heaven. The unity of the Church was bound to the unity of God. Of course, when a local Church community was not united, not only did it take its sights from God, it sent mixed signals to the general culture. The Church must reflect God to show credible witness. Unity in the Church reflected the kind of God it worshiped. The core of Christian unity and the image of God the Church professed lay in the activity of the exalted Christ. He came to earth, died (represented by his journey to "the depths of the earth" in the tomb) and rose to glory. Unlike many other biblical authors, this writer saw glory as more than spreading reputation. He viewed it in cosmic terms. The exalted Christ was transcendent, able to fill the universe with his presence. Notice the parallel between God's presence in 4:6 with that of the risen Christ in 4:10. The risen Christ now had a divine presence (which led to the doctrine he shared in the divine nature). Both the image and activity of God in the Church were the result of the glorified Christ. Christ revealed God as one in nature and purpose. He charged the Church to carry out that singular message in peace and ethical living. How did the Church hope to accomplish its mission? Through the gifts of Christ. He gave the Church a leadership (not only in structure but in personalities) to guide the local communities into unity. But that was not the only goal for the leaders. They were to show the community the path to spiritual maturity. Again the glorified Christ was the model for such maturity. The author presented his image as the "total, complete man." He was the measure of spiritual growth. As his focus lay on the Father, so should the community lay its focus. The image of the glorified Christ and the various themes in these verses can seem daunting to us. Peaceful unity, like faith, is both a gift from God and a human struggle. Yet if we look to the risen Lord as our model and our strength, we may find that we can progress in the spiritual life. We can become more peaceful, gentle, forgiving. Just because he is.