



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



**YEAR OF FAITH: oct. 11, 2012-NOV. 24, 2013**

"The 'door of faith' (Acts 14:27) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church."---Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei* for the Indiction of the Year of Faith.

May 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> 2013

Ascension Sunday - C

Josefská 8, Malá Strana, Prague 1, 118 01

Tel: 257 530 556, 602 643 365

# St. Thomas Church

The horrors of Jesus' passion and death fade in the light of his assuring resurrected presence. This precious time- symbolically encompassing "40 days"- is spent in first gathering, strengthening and instructing his once scattered disciples. Once that had been completed, Jesus now at his ascension takes his place in glory. Before he leaves them there are several reiterated themes. The first is the witness of Scriptures which for these first disciples and their immediate followers was the Hebrew Bible or *First Testament*. Our *New Testament* or *Second Testament* as we would recognize it received its final form, perhaps, a century (c. AD 150) later. Jesus' passion, death and resurrection "according to the Scriptures" were not "accidents" or "unforeseen incidents" that simply "happened"; on the contrary, they were in the ultimate plan of God to inaugurate his kingdom of peace and love (foretold by the prophets) *through Jesus Christ*. Interestingly, it is Jesus himself who "opens their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45).

The second theme is that of witness. Presumably, Jesus is speaking to the disciples and broadly to the Children of Israel who are to announce first in Jerusalem and then to a struggling world the *good news of God's forgiveness through repentance*. But, it does not end here- otherwise all the gospel readings would be nothing more than an impressive myth with a sacred denouement. The something more is the *You and Me* who have heard the *good news of repentance and divine forgiveness*. And like those first disciples we, too, are to be clothed with God's power in the Holy Spirit to give witness in daily life to the good things the Lord has accomplished. Luke's gospel opens with song. At his birth the angels sang; Mary, too, intoned her *Magnificat* in thanksgiving as did the pious Simon and Anna upon meeting Jesus in the Temple. And we, with the disciples, now give thanks to God- perhaps, not as eloquently, but let it emerge from the heart of our faith. St. Augustine says:

*Brothers and sisters we urge you to praise God. That is what we mean when we sing ALLELUIA. You are saying to your neighbor "Praise the Lord!" We are praising God now here in church; but when we go back to our daily lives and tasks it seems as if we cease to praise God. But provided we do not cease to live a good life, we shall always be praising God. You cease to praise God only when you swerve from justice and from what is pleasing to God.*

## First Reading commentary:

Words have consequences. Sometimes, these consequences are explosive.

These few verses described the end of the first Christian martyr, Stephen. Acts 6-7 narrated the witness of Stephen, one of the first deacons in the community at Jerusalem. Opponents conspired and had Stephen arrested. Before the judges of the Sanhedrin, Stephen implicitly answered the charge they made against Jesus himself in Mark 15:58 (Jesus would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days). He reviewed the early history of God's activity with Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon to point out who was really in charge of the people. While he was charged with blasphemy, Stephen accused the Sanhedrin of presumption. Clearly stated, Stephen equated the leaders with those who opposed the prophets when they crucified the "Righteous One" (7:52). They, not he, sinned, for in killing Jesus of Nazareth, they received the Law (that is, revelation) but did not understand or act on it. Stephen implied they replaced faith in God with their own brand of religion.

Then, Stephen made a profound statement. He witnessed to the end time vision: the Son of Man sat at the right hand of God. By equating Jesus with Daniel's Son of Man, he struck a nerve. The assembly rushed him, dragged him outside the city, and stone him to death. As a side note, Saul of Tarsus was introduced to the reader. Stephen prayed to Jesus for salvation and the forgiveness of his executioners. Then, he died.

Sharing our faith can be controversial, especially in these polarized times. The people who hear us can presume ideas and intents that we might not hold, but, nonetheless, use against us. The words "I follow Jesus" can make us friends, but they can also make us enemies. We cannot control the reactions of others. However, we, like Stephen, can remain true to ourselves, despite the consequences. If we remain true, we, too, will undergo death, but find God and eternal life.

Those consequences are worth the risk.

## *Saints Alypius and Possidius, bishops*

### **May 16**

**Alypius** was born in the middle of the fourth century in Tagaste, Africa, to parents who were influential citizens of that city. He studied law in Rome, but first met Augustine while at school in Carthage. Augustine praised Alypius, whom he called "the brother of my heart", for his honesty, sincerity and sense of justice. Like Augustine, Alypius was at one time a Manichean. The two friends were both converted to the Catholic faith and were baptized together by Saint Ambrose in 387. Alypius was a member of Augustine's first monastery in Tagaste. When Augustine was ordained a priest in Hippo, and founded a community in that city, Alypius joined him there, and was subsequently ordained bishop of Tagaste around 384. He once traveled to the East, where he met the great biblical scholar Saint Jerome. He took part in the African Councils of the Church during his time as bishop, and was chosen along with Possidius and Augustine to represent the Catholic bishops at the famous meeting with the Donatists in Carthage in 411. He took part in the Council of Milevi (Numidia) in 416 and composed a written report on this Council for Pope Innocent. Alypius travelled to Italy several times as part of his opposition to the Pelagian heresy. He carried Augustine's writings with him in order to present them to Pope Boniface. It is believed that he was present at the death of Augustine in 430. Alypius died shortly thereafter, probably later in the same year.

**Possidius**, the first biographer of Augustine, was born in northern Africa, and became a member of Augustine's first monastic community in Hippo, along with Saint Alypius. He was named Bishop of Calama (Numidia), where he faced opposition from the Donatists. Possidius narrowly escaped death on one occasion when Donatist extremists set fire to a house where he was visiting. Twice he went to Italy to defend the rights of the African Church. He was present at the Councils in Carthage in 403 and 407, and was chosen along with Alypius and Augustine to represent the Catholic Bishops at the famous meeting with the Donatists in Carthage in 411. He also took part in the Councils of Malevi (416) and Carthage (419) which treated of the Pelagian heresy. When Calama was conquered by Vandal invaders in 429, Possidius took refuge with Augustine inside the walls of Hippo and was with Augustine at the latter's death in 430. Possidius returned to Calama, but in 437 was exiled by King Hunmeric, who suppressed Christianity and forced Arianism on the territories that he conquered. During this time of exile, Possidius completed his famous book, *The Life of Augustine*. He died in exile around the year 437.

The Order has celebrated the feasts of Alypius and Possidius since 1671. Clement X confirmed devotion to them on August 19, 1672. The memory of these two saints is closely tied, both as monks and bishops, to that of Saint Augustine. They are, in fact, the two greatest representatives of his monastic legacy. However, it is not for this reason alone that history remembers them. They were dedicated Christians, religious and shepherds of the Church in their own

## 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)

\* St. John Nepomuk festival will be celebrated on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May. Vesper in our Church at 08:00 pm

\*May 19<sup>th</sup> is **Confirmation** Sunday in our Church at 11:00am Mass .

\*May 26th is **FIRST HOLY COMMUNION SUNDAY**. Again we ask that you pray for these young parishioners as they approach the Eucharist for the first time.

\* Please note: on Sunday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Czech, the English, the Spanish speaking communities and other expatriate communities together will celebrate the feast of **Corpus Christi** which honours the Eucharistic presence of Christ. Mass for all our communities will be at 09:30 am. there will be no Mass at 11:00 am. Immediately after Mass the procession with the Blessed Sacrament through Malastrana

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## *The 10th PARISH FESTIVAL*

Mission festival

Saint Thomas Church

Park Kampa from 10am till 10pm

1<sup>st</sup> . June 2013

Program for children; Program for families; Theater Dance, music; Presentation of the activities of the Church; BBQ for all; Raffle; And a lot of surprises...

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## Fr. William's 50<sup>th</sup> Priest anniversary

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fr. William's Priest ordination will be on Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> of June at 11:00am Mass. For more information, ideas or how to collaborate, please see Monika Shaheen, Michael Rainey or Fr. Juan