



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



750 let Augustiniánů v Čechách

1262–2012

S nadějí a radostí

**THE AUGUSTINIANS IN THE CZECH
LANDS: 750 YEARS IN SERVICE OF THE
GOSPEL.**

With Hope and Joy!

September 08th and 09th 2012

**23rd Ordinary Sunday
-B**

St. Thomas Church

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The Reflection of the Gospel

The gospel reading gives a summary report of Jesus' work among the *gentiles*. The word *gentile*- the Latin for people-was and still is a term used by Jews to denote a "non-Jew" or one "of the peoples of the earth". The implication of such classification being that those *not* of Abraham's stock- therefore not sharing the promises made to Israel- should best be avoided since they stood outside the pale of salvation. Matters so remained until the advent of Jesus. Mark tells us that his missionary excursions took him far afield from the Land of Israel into the very vicinity of gentile paganism such as Tyre and Sidon so excoriated by the prophets for their idols and wealth. It was to these "deaf and dumb" that Jesus came to announce the good news of healing and salvation. First heralded among the Jews, it was now announced among the pariah gentiles.

Jesus' actions are significant and Mark's account of his curing of the stammerer should be read carefully. The prophet Isaiah foretold that the former deaf would usher in the messianic age and dumb who having heard the word now break into song. Touching the ears and putting spittle on the tongue of the dumb man were not unique to Jesus. Contemporary physicians apparently used similar methods in their treatment of such cases. Further the means that Jesus took in healing are noteworthy. First, he took the man "aside" from the gaping crowd: this was not to be a "magic act" orchestrated to entertain. Second, he used "sacramental" acts as it were in this healing. Certain gestures "were vehicles that communicated the intangible, otherwise invisible and ineffable activity of God in Jesus Christ. By looking up to heaven" Jesus showed his closeness to the Father; his power came not from below but from God above. Jesus' groaning or sighs could be interpreted either as his longing to heal or a vocal element employed in such healings. The terse word *ephphrata=be opened* (soon to become part of the baptismal ritual for early Christians) concluded the rite. Even though Jesus counseled silence, the healed person, unable to contain his joy, went forth to proclaim his healing. The crowd's response, "He did all things well" paraphrasing God's own praise of creation in Genesis links Jesus with a new messianic age through his miracles. Significantly, it is the gentiles who first recognize and spread the good news of God's merciful acts.

Study of the First Reading

Tell those who have a fearful heart, "Be strong. Don't be afraid.

Behold, your God will come with vengeance, God's retribution.

He will come and save you.

Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.

Then the lame man will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing;

for waters will break out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

The burning sand will become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.

Grass with reeds and rushes will be in the habitation of jackals, where they lay.

As the old adage goes, the prophet's job is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. In the midst of the later (castigating the rich and powerful), the prophet gives comfort.

This passage is part of a great liberation poem. The broken people (represented by the frightened, the blind and the deaf, and the crippled and the speechless) would be restored to wholeness. The land of the people would be fruitful; springs would turn desert into lush farmland. The passage describes a time of divine restoration.

Coffee, Cookies & Conversation follows Sunday's 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" Please send at latest by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin.

Announcements and Ongoing Activities

*If you would like to receive a copy of the bulletin by email, please contact osaprag@augustiniani.cz

*Our regular **organist** and pianist for the last few years will be leaving us at the end of June. If you can play the keyboard or guitar, even if only on an occasional basis, we would like to hear from you! Please contact the director of the choir Tim Young: tim@young.co.cz

* We will have a **parish counsel meeting**, Sunday, September 16th after Mass.

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

*We need **English teacher** for the activities of the parish. Please see Fr. Juan if you have time and would like to give your time to the Parish!

Religious Education 2012/2013

Religious Education classes for children are starting the new year on September 16th – the first class of the year will begin with a short orientation for students and parents in the Refectory at 9:30, while class formally starts at 9:45 with a further short orientation for parents after that. We are very excited for some new developments taking place this year and we hope to see your child in RE this year! RE class sign-ups taking place now - please contact Mary Beth to sign up your child or for further details, +420 724 485 930, or email at marybeth@prague-stay.com or marybethwebster@hotmail.com!

We desperately need RE teachers, assistants and co-teachers – please contact Mary Beth for details and to volunteer, +420 724 485 930, or email at marybeth@prague-stay.com or marybethwebster@hotmail.com!

The Family Ministry is pleased to present
Choosing Life in a Crisis: true stories of real people facing an unplanned pregnancy

*photo exhibition in the Cloister Gardens of St. Thomas
September 8th to September 16th.*

"Love life, cherish life, defend life from conception to natural death." Blessed John Paul II

About St. Augustine

His Life

Both intellectually and morally he was still a distance from conversion to Christianity. He was in a period of vacuum. The only thing he knew for sure was that he was unhappy. He had nothing to substitute for his long-held Manichaeism but the dream of going off somewhere to seek wisdom with like-minded people. He and some friends took steps to form such a philosophic community but the plan fell apart when they suddenly realized that those who were married would never get the necessary permissions from their wives. (*Confessions*, 6.14)

Looking at Augustine's life from the outside it seemed that he was about to achieve his goals. But as his professional life became more ordered, his spiritual life had become more and more torn. Under the influence of Ambrose's preaching he was coming to see that the spiritual meaning of the Sacred Scriptures was not as simplistic as he had thought. However the moral challenge of Christianity to change his life was still beyond him. It took almost thirty years for him to come to believe in Catholic Christianity. It took him three more years before he could muster the strength to act on it. Finally, when he was 33 the conversion of his will occurred. He made the decision to give up his bad habits and try to live a moral life. In the Spring of 387 he and his son Adeodatus were baptized by Ambrose in Milan. The first part of his restless journey was over.

Augustine spent the last forty years of his life trying to be true to his baptism. He returned to North Africa in 388 and set up a small community of dedicated Christian laymen in Tagaste. Its purpose was the study of Scripture and mutual service while living a life somewhat withdrawn from the hurly-burly of the world. This peace and quiet was not to last very long. In 391 he made the "mistake" (as he calls it) of going to Hippo to interview a candidate for his little community. Seeing him in the church one day, the people demanded that he be ordained their priest. He accepted on the condition that he could continue his community there in Hippo. This he did and from that community he began his service of the people of Hippo. In 395 he was consecrated their bishop and in that position he spent the last 35 years of his life.

They were years of intense activity filled with preaching to his own people every day and teaching through his writings the world of Western Christianity. In the course of those thirty years he combatted (more or less in succession) the powerful challenges of Manichaeism, Donatism, Pelagianism and (at the very end of his life) Arianism. He tried to describe how God works in the individual soul through his *Confessions* and how God works in history through his *City of God*. In his voluminous correspondence and smaller books he commented on the events of the day and how a human is meant to cope with them. He tried to understand the origin of the universe through his commentaries on Genesis and tried to understand the destiny of humans through his commentaries on the writings of St. Paul and St. John.

In the midst of these intellectual battles, Augustine witnessed the growing spread of the barbarian invasions which seemed to threaten civilization itself. Rome fell in 410 and soon after the Vandals invaded North Africa. Augustine lived with their threat through the last years of his life, and as he lay dying he could hear the pounding of the barbarian armies at the gates of his beloved Hippo. To a person without faith it could easily have seemed that a lifetime of effort had been wasted. But Augustine was a person of faith and hope and with such support he was able to die happily despite the turmoil in the world outside. His death occurred in 430 in his monastery at Hippo. His contemporary biographer, Possidius, describes the scene as follows:

He died with his body intact. He could still see and hear and his mind was clear to the very end. As we looked on and prayed for him he passed in sleep into the land of his ancestors, well-nourished in good old age. --

Possidius, *Life of the Bishop St. Augustine*, 31