



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!

April 28th and April 29th
2012

The Fourth Sunday of
Easter- B

St. Thomas Church

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The Reflection of the Gospel

Strike the shepherd and the flock will scatter runs an ancient proverb. Today's gospel reading drawing from the familiar parable of the *Good Shepherd* seeks to identify Jesus with his faithful in a very intimate way. True, in order to understand all the implied nuances one would have to be acquainted with some elemental pastoral practices of first century Palestinian shepherds. One point is certain: security was *the* overriding concern. To protect their flocks, herdsmen would corral them in a primitive enclosure consisting of a circle of stone about two feet high with an opening across which the shepherds would lie during the night. The safety of the sheep was thus guaranteed by the very life of the shepherd who had to face nocturnal, hungry predators.

After a restive night, the shepherds would enter the enclosure at dawn and call or whistle for their sheep. This is in sharp contrast to modern methods of animal husbandry which rely on horses, and/or specially trained dogs *to drive* their sheep *before* them. Ancient shepherds, themselves *led* their sheep out in search of pasturage and water. It is this image of the "leading" shepherd that Jesus uses so effectively in his parable.

All this was said in face of self-serving Pharisees, the contemporary religious leaders, who excelled all others in knowledge and observance of the Law. Jesus, in his appropriation of the *Good Shepherd* image, leads his people, *his flock*, by teaching and healing rather than by stringent commands. Further, he lays down his life for the very flock that so shamefully scattered at his trial. Yet, many, in fact, like these early disciples, feel squeamish about this decision of Jesus for inevitable death. But, the evangelist John does not try to "explain it away"; he demonstrates that the death of Jesus cannot be understood or separated from his glorious resurrection-ascension or return to the Father. Each of these moments of death, resurrection and ascension belong to the very mission of Jesus that cannot be treated in isolation to the exclusion of the others.

What does all this mean? As the Good Shepherd teaches so does he rescue us from needless fears. St. Peter says *When the Good Shepherd appears you will win the crown of glory*. Let us wait in confident hope in him *who has gone before us*.

Vocation

Lastly, all of this is intimately linked with the second theme of this Sunday. Not only is it Good Shepherd Sunday, it is also "Vocations Sunday". On this day we are especially asked first of all to pray that the Church may be provided with the leaders needed to do its work of spreading the Gospel. We know that at the present time there is a critical shortage of such leaders, at least in the traditional sense – priests and religious. But, while we may earnestly pray that our Church be supplied with the leaders it needs, there can be a tendency among us to pray that OTHERS may answer that call. We do not see ourselves as included. We may pray earnestly for more young people to offer themselves as priests and religious but clearly exclude our own children.

But the problem is a wider one. We have for too long given a much too narrow meaning to the word 'vocation'. We tend to limit it to a calling to be a priest or a member of a religious institute. But, in fact, every single one of us has a vocation. For most of us, probably, it is what we are now doing be it as spouses, parents, teachers, doctors, civil servants, running a business, salespersons... or whatever.

Nevertheless, each one of us should be asking ourselves today: Is what I am spending my energies on every day my real vocation? Is this what God wants me to be doing with my life? How is what I am doing giving witness to my Christian faith? What contribution am I offering to making this world a better place for people to live in? To what extent am I a spreader of truth, of love, of justice, of freedom, of tolerance and acceptance...? And, if I am in a position which would be difficult to change (as a spouse or parent or holding a particular job), how, within that situation, is God calling me to greater service of my Church and my community? Am I giving something through my life or am I just using society (and even the Church) to get what I want? God is calling every single one of us to work for the Gospel. For a small number it may be as a priest or religious – and that call can come at any time in one's life. But there are hundreds of other ways of serving the Church and helping to build up the Christian community. Where is God calling me to make my own unique contribution based on the particular talents God has given me? If every single one of us were to answer that question sincerely and to act upon it, I am confident that our Church would have all the leadership it needs.

Friends for St. Augustine

“There were other things done in their company which more completely seized my mind: to talk and to laugh with them; to do friendly acts of service for one another; to read well written books together; sometimes to tell jokes and sometimes to be serious; to disagree at times, but without hard feelings, just as a man does with himself; and keep our many discussions pleasant by the very rarity of such of such differences; to teach things to the others and learn from them; to long impatiently for those who were absent, and to receive with joy those joining us. These and similar expressions, proceeding from the hearts of those who loved and repaid their comrades’ love, by way way of countenance, tongue, eyes and a thousand pleasing gestures, were like fuel to set our minds ablaze and to make one out of many.”

Confessions, Book IV 8:13 6

The **15th Annual Marian Pilgrimage** to the Shrine of the Gracious Madonna, at sv. Dobrotiva-Zaječov, will be held on May 19th. We meet in front of St. Joseph’s Church on Josefská Street, at 08:30 am, Saturday morning, May 19. If you do not have a ride please contact Fr. Juan Bautista for details. In keeping with our tradition, please bring a lunch, which you can share with another person on pilgrimage. Whatever is left over (if you so will) is given to the poor. There is a brochure, which explains the origins and traditions behind this beautiful 700-year pilgrimage, which has been renewed after forty years of communism.

Icon workshop at St. Thomas the Apostle, Prague-

Monday July 2 to Saturday July7, 2012 6 days
9:30 to 4:30 one hour for lunch.

Limited to 10 participants.

Workshop/retreat given by Fr. Richard G. Cannuli, OSA

The workshop/retreat consists of painting an icon of St. Augustine of Hippo, 11 h X 9 w. It will be in the Byzantine Russian tradition using panel, egg tempera and 22 k gold leaf. All supplies and notes will be provided.

The workshop/retreat will give participates time to reflect on the spirituality of the "icon" as it applies to its place in the Church and the symbolism that is used in the process. At the end of the workshop/retreat participates will leave with a finish icon.

The cost for the workshop/retreat is \$420.00 US dollars. Very important **NO ARTISTIC TALENT NECESSARY** only a desire is required.

Announcements and Ongoing Activities

*Every Saturday at 9:00am feeding of the homeless, as a social service

*We are looking for an **English teacher** for next school year for our School in –Prague 4. If you are interesting, please contact with fr. Juan juan@augustiniani.cz

*We are organizing a pilgrimage to Poland, Czestochowa, **25.5. – 27.5. 2012. Price 1500.- CZK** For concrete information ask Fr. Juan. Juan@augustiniani.cz or 602684538.

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

* **Marriage Preparation:** The next one-day marriage preparation course (for the English speaking community) will be held by Fr. William on Saturday 12th May at St. Thomas Parish for those who wish to participate.