



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.

December 15th and 16th 2012

The Third Sunday of Advent-Year C

Josefska 8, Mala Strana, Prague 1, 118 01

Tel: 257 530 556, 602 643 365

Fax: 257530556

St. Thomas Church

Reflection on the Gospel

Today is *Gaudete Sunday*, which in Latin means the "Sunday of Rejoicing." To express this note of hope and exultation, the priest even wears rose colored vestments as an exception to the usual somber violet. For within two weeks we will be celebrating the solemnity of the birth of Jesus Christ.

If we were to go to John the Baptizer and ask his advice on what to do the rest of Advent, we probably have the idea that he would tell us to make a novena or a retreat, fast every day and abstain from meat, wear a hairshirt, read large sections of the Bible daily, and give substantial contributions to designated charities. After all, John is not a mousy mystic or a half-hearted hermit. There is something fierce and fiery about his asceticism . . . unless everybody else was also eating grasshoppers in those days.

When we listen to the advice that John gives to the people who came to him asking, "What ought we to do?" John's answers are practical, specific, uncomplicated, and down-to-earth. He asks the crowds to share their clothes and food with those in need. He tells the tax collectors to be honest and not cheat taxpayers. He suggests that the soldiers show respect, be truthful, and be satisfied with their salaries.

John's Advent agenda is concerned with the basics of day-by-day responsibilities. He gets down to the grass roots of everyday existence. There are no Cloud Nine concerns for John. He is speaking with common folks, not with angels and saints. There is no point in talking about the higher realms of contemplative prayer or the finer distinctions of theological speculations when the audience is still looking for the ABC's of ordinary actions.

Given John's no-nonsense answers to his questioners in today's gospel (Luke 3:10-18), it is a safe bet that when we ask him, "What are we to do?" he will tell us to clean up our daily act, do a better job of doing our duties, and concentrate on the essentials. In other words, begin at the beginning.

Advent is a beginning, a fresh start. So we might as well get back to the basics. There will be time later to add the frosting on the cake. For the time being--the time being Advent--dessert comes before dessert.

Study of the First Reading

There is nothing more joyful as forgiveness. All the great moments in life, birth, sacramental moments, life's transitions, marriage, and death, have the potential to bring people together. When people are brought together in forgiveness, there is relief and peace. These are the cause for joy.

Beginning the passage of joy, Zephaniah symbolizes Jerusalem as a young girl who should be at a party. [14] Why should there be rejoicing? The danger has passed, the enemies are gone, and God is in their midst. [15, 17] And not only does the city have cause for rejoicing; the prophet loudly proclaims God's joy over the return of his people. [17-18] God and the people are together; they are reconciled. There is true joy.

How many times do people have parties only to complain about the company. It's unfortunate that people do not have reconciliation parties and celebrate joy!

Study of the Second Reading

We Christians expect Jesus to come soon. At this time of year, we expect him at Christmas and at the end of time. This expectation can be anxious or joy filled. Paul gave us this choice. The first way leads to all sorts of problems, especially in our relationships with others. The second way leads to peace with others, for joy is never assertive or destructive. Of course, such joy is a gift from God. It is based in a peace that transcends the limitations of the human mind and heart. But if we want to experience God's peace, we must turn away from anxiety and open ourselves up to his presence.

So take the time, slow down. Enjoy the season. Pray in the spirit of thanks for the season. Let God give you his peace.

Announcements and Ongoing Activities

*We are looking for a **professional English teacher** to teach English to children from 3 till 7 years old. Please contact Fr. Juan if you are interested

*Please, pray for the **Mission** in our Parish!

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

*St Thomas' English Speaking Community now has a presence on **facebook**. Please 'like' our page and if you want to get more involved with the community, join our group!

* An **exhibition of art** in the crypt of the monastery. You can buy some pictures and collaborate with the project that we have in Congo helping children without families of the Augustinian center. Exhibition is open every day from 10a,m till 3 pm.

The Christmas Schedule 2012:

December 24

Christmas Eve Mass 06:00 pm/18:00
Christmas Carols 11:30pm/23:30
Midnight Mass in *Czech Spanish and English*

December 25

CHRISTMAS DAY 11:00 am

December 26

St. Stephen *Boxing Day* 09:30 am
Traditional Blessing of Grain.Mass in Czech

December 31

New Year's eve 06:00pm/18:00

January 01

New Year's Day +2012 11:00 am



MISSION 2012/2013

This reading is in support of the St Thomas mission to support the Year of Faith.

What is faith? If we are to understand how to renew our faith, we must start by understanding the meaning of faith and the uses of the word in the Bible.

If you go to the dictionary you will find definitions such as:

Confidence or trust in a person or thing

Belief that is not based on proof

Belief in God

A system of religious belief (Christian Faith, Jewish Faith)

In the bible, the word faith is used in four distinct and separate manners:

It is used to describe for a personal belief, the mental acceptance of God and his existence: Some examples of this are:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1 King James)

We walk by faith not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7)

Faith is used to describe work or behavior that demonstrates the complete acceptance of God.

We show our faith by our works James 2:14

Just as repentance can be seen, so too "Faith can be seen" Mathew 3

Faith is used to show trusting or trustworthiness:

The story of Abraham, asked to take the life of his only son

Moses who was asked to lead the Israelites from the grips of all mighty Pharaoh

The forth way it is used in the bible is to describe the faith of the masses or a believe by many, as in the Christian faith

There is a funny story about faith:

A man was being chased by a tiger. He ran as hard as he could until he was at the edge of a cliff with the tiger in hot pursuit. The man looked over the edge of the cliff and saw a branch growing out of the side of the cliff a few feet down. He jumped down and grabbed the branch just as the tiger reached the cliff. The tiger growled viciously as the man sighed a great sigh of relief.

Just then a mouse came out from a crevice and began to chew on the branch. The man looked down to what was a drop of a thousand feet and sure death and looked to the heavens and yelled out, "Dear God, if you are there, please help. I will do anything you ask but please help."

Suddenly a voice came booming down from heaven, "You will do anything I ask?" it questioned.

The man shocked to hear a reply to his plea yelled back, "I will gladly do anything you ask, but please save me."

The voice from heaven then replied, "There is one way to save you but it will take courage and faith."

The branch began to weaken from the mouse and the tiger was still growling a few feet above the man, "Please, Lord, tell me what I must do and I will do it. Your will is my will."

The voice from heaven then said, "All right then, let go of the branch."

The man looked down to a fall of a thousand feet and certain death. He looked up at the hungry tiger a few feet away and he looked at the mouse still chewing on the branch. Then he looked up at the heavens and yelled, "Is there anyone else up there?"

Is your faith strong enough to walk without knowing the destination? To let go and fall without knowing where to land? Will you take the steps in your heart you know are right, when you risk scorn of those who do not believe?

and active participation in this mission. God Bless.