



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.

February 2nd and 3rd 2013

The Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time - C

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St. Thomas Church

The Reflection of the Gospel

Today's gospel reading (*Luke 4: 21ff.*) is a continuation of last Sunday's lesson (*Luke 4:14 ff.*). As indicated last week, the Nazarenes were taken back by Jesus' powerful teaching. His audacious proclamation that the very fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy has taken place in their hearing. The consternation was tangible, judging from Luke's account. What precisely caused this sudden outrage? Some suggest that such resentment was fuelled by Jesus' own teaching skill; how could a carpenter's son be so adept in Scripture and where did he absorb such great learning? Other exegetes (scripture scholars or interpreters) would maintain that the Nazarenes were struck primarily by Jesus' own reputation that had preceded him. Performing miracles elsewhere (perhaps, the news of Cana's wedding feast was bruited about), prompted the question: *why is he not doing the same here in his own hometown of Nazareth?* Charity, after all, does begin at home! The response was clear. This message of salvation to the poor, the sick, the marginalized (as foretold by *Isaiah 61:1ff; 58:7 ff.*) was universal; all nations- yes, even the gentiles (=all non-Jews) were to share in this providential call that was being fulfilled here and now *in the person of Jesus of Nazareth!* The God of Jesus, whom he intimately called *Father*, was no longer a lone, remote figure whose very name was allowed to be pronounced once a year by the High Priest but only within the precincts of the Temple in Jerusalem. The merciful providence of God was released *in Jesus* who revealed divine love to those who accept him *in faith*. The whole passage concludes with a cold note: *He could not work any miracle there (in Nazareth) apart from curing a few... so much did their lack of faith distress him (Mark 6:5-6).* So, the brief public ministry of Jesus of some two and a half years began on an ominous note and concluded with his passion, death and resurrection. Let us not be discouraged by opposition: after all, it did happen to Jesus.

FIRS READING

Jeremiah preached before and during the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon. According to tradition, he was exiled to Egypt and died as a martyr. This passage describes the call of Jeremiah. Like many of the other prophets, Jeremiah is called by God in four steps: 1) commission of the prophet by God, 2) objection of the prophet, 3) God's reassurance to the prophet, and 4) God's sign to the prophet. Verses 4-5 describe the first step of the process, the commission of Jeremiah. Verses 17-19 refer to God's reassurance and sign (steps 3 & 4) that Jeremiah was given in a vision. Jeremiah's call speaks to our call as Christians. We are all called by God from the moment of our creation in the womb for one purpose: life with God. Witness through our words and actions is our "yes" to God's call. While we might not be called to be an international sign like Jeremiah, we are called to make a difference in our world. [4-5] Witness does require courage (i.e., girding one's loins) and honesty. We might shrink away from the demands of witness, like Jeremiah was tempted to do. But as he promised Jeremiah, God will not leave us devastated. Indeed, God will strengthen us for the fight, as he did Jeremiah, as long as we depend on him, for He is our salvation. [17-19]

SECOND READING

Chapter thirteen of First Corinthians is a favorite for wedding ceremonies. Yet, I wonder if the couple would choose this "ode" to love if they really knew the underlining intent of Paul. In the midst of Paul's diatribe against cliques that fought for turf in the Corinthian church, he presented the ideal virtue of the Christian community: charity. But he framed the ideal in a polemical way. First, he looked at the spiritual gifts that were the bragging points of his opponents: tongues, claims of spiritual knowledge, and prophecy. To this list he added almsgiving and self-sacrifice. While these were all admirable, they did not, in themselves, evangelize or promote the growth of the community. In and of themselves, they were useless. Second, Paul described the substance of charity in a quasi "A-B-A" structure. The positives ("A") highlighted the negative ("B") Charity was patient and kind. It endures the negative with faith and hope. Charity was not the activity of his opponents that spread their agenda. They promoted themselves, acted with arrogance, even engaged in shameful activities (backdoor politics?). As they sought personal gain, they provoked others, instilled animosities, and celebrated when others "lost face." These were not the hallmarks of Christian community. Third, against these attitudes and activities, Paul makes the most remarkable statement: charity never fails. This self-giving virtue would survive the last day and would define the Kingdom. When all other spiritual gifts faded away with the coming of the Lord, charity would remain. Prophecy and spiritual knowledge were, by nature, incomplete (imperfect and, so, lacking maturity). Their misuse could (and was) tearing apart the community. Charity, by nature, could never do this. Implicitly, charity could cause prophecy and spiritual insight to grow. The reverse was not always true. Paul concluded with his famous hierarchy of the theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. The greatest was charity. It defined the ideal of the Church. It defined life in the Kingdom. Like the Corinthians, we share the human frailties of turf possession, social climbing, gossip, obsession with control... Sometimes, I think parish life is defined by these sins. But, as many times as I see the negative, I see three times the positive. Charity does live in the community. As bad as we can be, we are challenged by those who act from the heart. They make the community truly Church.

Ongoing Activities

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

*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!

*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!

*Fr. William will be in USA for the next month. Fr. Juan will be taking care of the community: 602684538

*If you are interested in studying the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, a course run by the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, please see the website <http://brs-ccrs.org.uk> and contact Jim Willetts on jimwill@email.cz

***DIVE CLUB "BARRACUDA"** Dive club "barracuda", associated to the parish, offers dive courses (system CMAS) and the possibility to dive. If you are interested, please contact Ramón 774 717 049 o Antonio 608 22 76 86

* The traditional blessing of throats on St. Blaise day will be conferred after Mass on 3rd February. We ask the intercession of this Saint during these cold months

Feasts

03 *Stephen Bellesini, OSA* (+1840) was an Augustinian pastor who spent his life on behalf of his parishioners. He died tending the sick during a cholera plague.

-*Blaise of Armenia* (+316), the patron of those suffering from throat maladies is commemorated with the blessing of throats. This blessing will be conferred on Sunday, 31 January after Mass.

-*Ansgar (Oscar) of Hamburg* (+865), a French monk who spent his life evangelizing the northern peoples, is venerated as the Patron of Scandinavia.

04 *Gilbert of Sempringham* (+1189) is credited with the foundation of the only English order, appropriately entitled the *Gilbertines*.

-If Ash Wednesday falls on this day, (the earliest possible) Easter is on 22 March.

05 *Agatha of Sicily* (3rd c.) was a young woman of Catania horribly mutilated and murdered for her profession of Christianity.

-Finland observes the birthday of Johan Runeberg, its national poet

-Mexico celebrates Constitution Day.

06 *Paul Miki and his companions* were martyred for their faith in Japan (1597-1637). Some 12 Augustinians lost their lives in this savage persecution.

-*Dorothy of Caesarea* (+310), the patroness of our "side chapel of ease" is yet another one of those young martyrs for the Christian faith.

-Queen Elizabeth 11 celebrates her accession (1952)

-New Zealand marks *Waitangi Treaty Day* signed in 1840 by the Maoris and the European settlers.

07 *Anselm Polanco of Teruel* (+1937), an Augustinian bishop, was martyred during the last days of the Spanish civil war with his Vicar General.

Blessed Stephen Bellesini. OSA

February 3

Blessed Stephen Bellesini (1774-1840) was an Augustinian friar, teacher, minister and mentor to youth, and parish priest.

Luigi Giuseppe Bellesini was born November 25, 1774, in Trent, Italy. He entered the Augustinian Order, taking the religious name Stephen. He professed vows as an Augustinian in 1794.

During the difficult times in which Stephen lived, the government disbanded many religious houses, forcing the friars out of their communities. The Augustinians were not immune to these governmental actions, and Stephen found himself expelled from his monastery.

He went to live with his brother and became a teacher, hoping to be a Christian influence on the youth of his day. Stephen founded in his own home a free school for the poor children of the city, who otherwise would not have access to education. He gave food and clothing to the poorest of his students, and offered encouragement and friendship to all of them.

Even the materialistic local authorities came to respect his work. Eventually he was named Inspector of Schools in Trent.

When he had the chance to return to community life, though, Stephen resigned his important post in Trent and went to join the Augustinian community in Bologna.

Political leaders in Trent begged Stephen to return to his work in the schools there, offering to increase his pay. But Stephen refused, writing to them, "You would surely not ask me (to return to Trent) if you realized the unbreakable bond between a friar and his God, who is the King of Kings. Before his altar, I have solemnly promised to be faithful to those vows."

Stephen spent several years as Director of Novices, mentoring and teaching young Augustinians the principles of community life in the Order.

In his later years, Stephen served as parish priest in Genazzano. There his ministry included a special emphasis on the needs of the poor and of children. In January, 1840, while answering a call to care for a sick parishioner, he tripped and fell. A cut on his leg became infected, and he developed a high fever.

He tried to remain active for the next two days, but the fever never went away. He died February 2, 1840 in Genazzano. His remains are at the Shrine of Our Mother of Good Counsel in Genazzano.