



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.

November 16th
 and November 17th 2013

The Thirty Third Sunday
 in Ordinary Time – Year C

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St. Thomas Church

GOSPEL STUDY

Today's gospel reading belongs to that genre of scripture termed variously for the tenor of its presentation as *crisis*, *persecution* or simply *apocalyptic* literature. Differing from classic "prophetic" scripture, it is more of an interpretation of some current event in the light of God's ultimate providential plan, so expounded as a message of hope.

For Luke's struggling Christian community, at once haunted by Roman imperial authorities and Jewish religious leaders, this passage was a solemn confirmation of what Jesus nearly a half century before had said and taught. The Temple of Jerusalem *had been* the center of the Jewish world. Of enormous proportions this "third Temple" whose reconstruction had been commenced by Herod the Great in 20 BC., was one of the finest buildings in the ancient world.

Wealthy and exempted from taxation by Emperor Augustus it was only completed in AD 63 or seven years before its wanton destruction in August AD 70. When Luke wrote c. AD 80/85, the Temple was a mourned memory bracketed with a sequence of plagues, wars and political upheavals. But, Jesus' words were and are apropos for us living centuries away from these debacles. Indeed, our own twenty first century already has *its own crises* awaiting interpretation in the full light of the gospel. From this light we cannot flee through craven fear, denial or indifference. Persecution may befall *some* of us, but for *each* of us the advice is the same: "You will be called on to act in a way that bears witness to your faithfulness to me and to what you will believe... if your faith is weak, you will be weak." Could anything be clearer?

For many years the main problem for religion in countries such as Britain was that of apathy. People could not be roused to have any interest in religion, which was deemed 'irrelevant'. But in this millennium, we have experienced a new hostility towards religion. Laws and education programmes are devised which offend the conscience of religious people, particularly of Christians. We hear horror stories such as of a nurse who was threatened with losing her job because she suggested to one of her patients that she would be praying for her!

There are many possible reasons for this. Perhaps some secularists are angry that religion is neither dead nor dying. Also, we must admit that many people, perhaps the majority, in modern Western society are almost completely ignorant of religion by now. The media in its soap operas present a world where religion has no place. Governments therefore try to push religion into the private sphere, and when it emerges in public life on consideration of sexual or life issues, become very hostile to its moral principles.

Jesus warns us that we will be persecuted as Christians. 'You will be hated on account of my name,' he said to his disciples. So they were. Their fellow Jews hated their new faith because they thought it was blasphemy to claim that a crucified criminal was Son of God, and threw them out of their synagogues. The Romans thought they were atheists because they refused to worship the Roman gods, and particularly the emperor, and threw them to the lions in the Colosseum.

Jesus was telling them not to bother to prepare their defence, because the Holy Spirit would inspire them at the time of their persecution. Perhaps we need to expound these words just a little! Surely Jesus did not mean that we should not prepare by knowing answers to the questions people ask about our faith. The First Letter of Peter tells us that we must prepare our answer and give a defence, an *apologia*, but with courtesy and respect (3:15).

'May God grant that I speak with judgment and have thought worthy of what I have received, for he is the guide even of wisdom and the corrector of the wise.'
 (Wisdom. 7:15)

Mission 2013

Coming to the end:

We are approaching the end of the "Mission" for the Year of Faith called for by the Emeritus Pope Benedict the XVI. In his apostolic letter entitled the PORTA FIDEI, or "door of faith". he called on the church for a mission; the Holy Father announced an initiative for the rediscovery or reawakening of faith within the church and within each of us.

We have spent many of the previous weeks and months, exploring various topics: from questions of faith to our liturgy; explanations regarding our traditions and holidays; world events and Pope decisions to resign and Pope decisions and statements about the future of the church.

What have we learned?

It is my great wish for these readings that we as a community have learned some small lessons and reminders about the traditions and foundations of our liturgy and how they came about.

I am hopeful that we recognize that in the house of God that we are all equal, we are all sinners and no single one of us here is above the other. We all struggle, we all have happy and joyous events in our lives, and we all have disappointments, failures and we suffer the pain that life can bring.

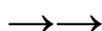
We are hopeful that through this recognition that we can search out the comfort and peace of God's grace, through prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our lives are ministries, they are testimonials for others, and often they are testimonials, even when we do not want them to be.

By declaring ourselves Christians and members of the St. Thomas community, those who are curious about Christianity and the Catholic Faith will look to you to see how you behave and if there is something about you and your life, which they do not have. They will wonder if you have found a secret to life that they do not have.

The need for the Church to reach out into new countries and continents with missionaries is not what it once was. The real battle is on the streets we walk every day. The battle for souls and the longing to know the love of God and his mercy are in fact "Catholic" or universal desires of man.

The beauty of our faith is that we receive this communion of faith through many different sources, yet it all springs from the one source of goodness and strength and we can all wield it with the same strength and clarity as Jesus himself.



Ongoing Activities

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

❖ We welcome all our guests and especially those who will be living and working in Prague during this coming year. All are invited to refreshments immediately after Mass in the monastery refectory

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

❖ **Religious education for adult** every Monday from 06:30

❖ **Parishioner's Prayer Intentions:** The English Community will now post prayer requests on the bulletin board designated for their use in the walkway. Anyone who would like prayers said is invited to post their needs and Father Bill will pray for these intentions throughout the week. You needn't identify yourself; your request is sufficient. For those who've had prayers answered we will also have a praise section.

❖ Today **second collection** for the charity of the archdiocese

❖ Please note: new of Fr. William's email: wsfaix@augustiniani.cz

St. Thomas Parish Dinner of Thanks

Where:

Archbishops Palace. Hradcanske namesti 16
Prague 1

When:

Saturday November 23th

Mass at 18:00

Dinner follows at 19:15

Tickets with Michael Rainey

I can be strengthened by the good word of appreciation from a member of the parish or a student. I can be motivated and encouraged by the teachings and example of Father William or Father Juan. The special music that is put together for us, by those who care enough to share their gift of song for the enjoyment of the community is uplifting. The refreshment and spiritual nourishment of the body and blood of Christ during our ceremony, is essential to overcoming the challenges of daily life. All of these are certainly from the love and grace of God.

The endless forgiveness, the love and blessing that come from our Father in Heaven are cause for celebration each day. This should excite us. I myself hear it in the excitement and joy, which comes from Father William's voice, when he proclaims, "Christ is risen"!

If you haven't heard him, then you are in for a treat. The Mission teaches us that we can also be this source of inspiration for others. God Bless!