

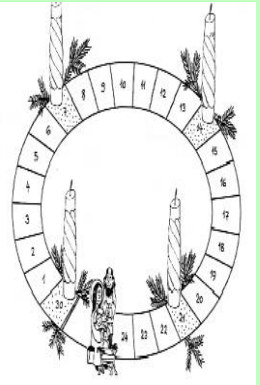


St. Thomas Church: established July 1, 1285 by King Vaclav II

St. Thomas Church

Today's Prayer

Dear Jesus, as I call on you today I realise that I often come asking for favours. Today I'd like just to be in your presence. Let my heart respond to Your Love.



November 30th and December 1st 2013

The First Sunday of Advent-Year A

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Reflection on the Gospel

Advent, a word derived from the Latin "coming", is that season of the year in which we not only celebrate the feast of Christ's nativity in Bethlehem but also two other equally important *comings* or advents. The wholesale marking of Christmas which means "the Mass of Christ" has dulled our religious perceptions as to the true inner meaning of not only Christmas but of Advent. The anomalous situation of shops blaring out *Silent Night* before Thanksgiving only confuses the issue. In order to appreciate the lessons of this beautiful time of quiet preparation we can divide Advent into two distinct time frames. The first extends from the first Sunday of Advent to December 16 and is followed by the last half from the December 16 to the Vigil of Christmas on December 24. The first half of the season is somewhat grim and foreboding. The Gospel readings remind us of judgment and urgent contingency measures in face of the Lord's sudden appearance. As in the past, these crisp gospel passages have been subject to endless interpretations both within and without the Church. The more recent Jehovah Witnesses, for example, had been forced to recalculate the final day "of reckoning" as occurring in 1875, 1915 and finally in 1975. The early Christian community of Mark the evangelist did believe that Jesus was on "his way" with the destruction of Jerusalem and wholesale deportation of Israel following the disastrous *Jewish War* (AD 66-72). The end did not come and the later evangelists (Matthew, Luke and John) now read back into Jesus' word; what they found was that he did enjoin watchfulness and prayer in face of the encroaching judgment. Neither the day nor the hour was the subject of discussion, prayerful vigilance was. But, there is still a third advent amidst the historical commemoration of Jesus and the dark day of the Last Judgment.

The Third advent is that which we experience in the reception of the sacraments, since it is Jesus who creates the community of the Church through and within the Eucharist. As we begin our Advent let us keep in mind all three comings of the Lord: in the past at Christmas, in the future through judgment and each day with prayer, the scriptures and the sacrament of the altar. May we never grow lax or indifferent "on the watch" no

Study of the Second Reading

Paul shared the early Christians' expectation of Christ's imminent return. He may have been one of the first apostles to proclaim this apocalyptic gospel drawn from late Jewish traditions. In this passage he urged the Romans to be unceasingly aware of the new order Jesus came to bring. They were to mirror his life in word and action. At the same time, as C.H. Dodd pointed out, the idea of the imminent "Day of the Lord" may have been fading in Paul's mind because this is the only passage in his Roman letter where he wrote of it. Instead he had begun to think those who believe in and follow Christ already live in the new Age. "The ethics of crisis," to adopt Dodd's phrase, "gave point to his moral exhortations." (Hodder & Stoughton. *Romans. The Moffatt New Testament Commentary*, 1932, 209.)

The contrast of light and darkness in vs.12-13 reflected the dramatic change of behavior and character which their newly acquired faith brought to those early Christians. Paul's earlier Letter to the Galatians 5:16-25 had made this same sharp contrast where Paul had compared the life of the Spirit and the life of the flesh.

In vs. 14 the phrase "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" may refer to the new garments put on the newly baptized as a symbol of the new spiritual life God had given them through faith in Christ. Paul used this favorite image several times in his correspondence. It meant simply following the moral example and character of Jesus into whose Body they had been mystically incorporated by baptism.

No less a saint than Augustine of Hippo confessed that this passage brought about his historic conversion. Christians still witness to the life-transforming experience of an encounter with Christ, though perhaps some do not experience it as dramatically as others.

Parish Council Meeting Minutes November 2013 – December 2014

Approved Decisions, Motions, and Resolutions

1. Appointment of Bear Midkiff as **Vice President** of the Council: Fr. William proposed that Bear serve as Vice President of the council, and the council agreed with unanimous consent.
2. Appointment of Bill Revellese as **Liaison to the Financial Committee**: Fr. William proposed that Bill serve as Liaison to the Financial Committee, and the council agreed with unanimous consent.
3. Appointment of David Manley as **Council Secretary**: Fr. William proposed that David serve as secretary of the council, and the council agreed with unanimous consent.
4. Appointment of Bear Midkiff as **Special Projects Committee Leader and Communications Director**: Bear volunteered to assume the above positions and the council agreed with unanimous consent.
4. Re-appointment of Mary Beth Hlavsa as **Religious Education Committee Leader and Family Outreach Committee Leader**: The council unanimously agreed to retain Mary Beth in the above positions.
5. Re-appointment of Fr. William as **Evangelization Committee Leader**: The council unanimously agreed to retain Fr. William in the above position.
6. Re-appointment of Michael Rainey as **Community Events Committee Leader and Liturgy Committee Leader**: The council unanimously agreed to retain Michael in the above positions.
7. Reorganization of **Social Justice Committee**: Fr. Juan proposed that Social Justice no longer be treated as a separate committee, but that opportunities for social outreach should instead be handled on a case-by-case basis. The council unanimously agreed to Fr. Juan's proposal.
8. **Welcome Books** from Riverside Academy: Bear suggested that the welcome books provided by Riverside Academy would be an excellent resource to provide to new members of the parish. The council agreed that Bear should approach Riverside Academy and discuss the possibility of advertising in the book in exchange for a certain number of free copies.
9. **Finance Committee**: The council unanimously agreed that the new Finance Committee should consist of Bill Revellese, Boris Braun, and Jose Fernando.

Points of Discussion

1. **Introductions**: Council Members introduced themselves. It was noted that Ann's experience and perspective as a teacher in one of Prague's best gymnasiums would be helpful to the Augustinian School in the future when it also becomes a gymnasium. The council members also discussed their personal experiences as Catholics living in a secular society which is often hostile to faith; and the challenges and opportunities that arise as a result.
2. **Leadership Role**: Fr. William explained that the leadership responsibilities of the English speaking community are difficult for one individual to handle and expressed his hope that an individual or individuals in the community will assume and/or assist with some of these leadership roles.
4. **Refresher Course** for Eucharistic Ministers: Members noted that a refresher course for Eucharistic Ministers is overdue. All present agreed that this should be a priority.

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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
- ❖ Please note: new of Fr. William's email: wsfaix@augustiniani.cz
- ❖ This weekend we begin **Advent** by blessing the *Advent wreath* and the *Jesse Tree* with the active participation of our children.

The Giving Tree. A Giving Tree is dedicated to fulfilling wishes of children who would otherwise go without gifts during the holidays. This is made possible with the help of generous individuals who donate gifts and energetic volunteers to make it work.

Are you interested in making a child's holiday wish come true? Our Parish is having their sixth annual Giving Tree. Here's how the Giving Tree works.

- Select a child from the list (it will have an orphan's age, gender, code and wish on it).
- Buy gift specified on ornament (new, not used).
- Bring unwrapped gift to the church in the refectory after Mass no later than Dec. 12 with a tag with the name of the child and code attached.

Please see Fr. Juan or Mary Beth after Mass every Sunday to be assigned to a child or deliver your gift.

St. Nicholas Visit follows Mass on 8th December. Parents are asked to bring a gift for your child (make sure name is on the gift) and a small gift for the orphanage. Gifts will be collected outside the Religious Education classrooms or in the Sacristy before Mass

5. Course for those interested in **Permanent Diaconate**: It was noted that some members of the parish have expressed interest in becoming Deacons, and it was agreed that the committee should explore a preparatory course or other support for these individuals.

6. **Restitution**: The council discussed the lack of an effective public relations campaign by the Diocese concerning the Restitution, and noted that there is almost no knowledge of it among the English-speaking community. It was agreed that a summary of the Restitution should be published in the parish-bulletin, which will include links to additional information already available on-line.

7. **Heating of the Church**: The council discussed the current status of plans to construct a heating system for the church. The council agreed that the parish should move forward with the plans to heat the church by approaching the Historical Review Commission, before making a final decision on renovation of the pews and other ancillary issues. Fr. Juan noted that he is ready to present to the Historical Review Commission as soon as he is provided with the necessary information.

8. **Social Media**: The council emphasized the need for improving communication with parishioners, through the use of multiple means of communication. Announcements at the end of Mass and within the bulletin should be supplemented by improving/expanding the email distribution list and increasing the use of Facebook. It was suggested that if the Facebook page was more actively used by the community, it could become a good resource for newcomers to Prague.

9. **The next Parish Council Meeting** is scheduled for 19 January 2014