



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

Today's Prayer

Say this Prayer Today:

I pause for a moment and think of the love and the grace that God showers on me: I am created in the image and likeness of God; I am God's dwelling-place...



January 18th and 19th 2014

The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time -A

Josefska 8, Mala Strana, Prague 1, 118 01

Tel: 257 530 556, 602 643 365

Fax: 257532677

St. Thomas Church

Reflection on the Gospel

TODAY WE BEGIN again the Sundays in the Ordinary Season of the year. On most Sundays, we will be following the gospel of Matthew. However, today's Gospel reading is from John.

Our readings speak about two things:

- the identity of Jesus, and
- the mission of Jesus.

We need to know who Jesus is, if we want to be his disciples. We also need to know what his mission is, if we want to be good disciples. Because a good disciple is also an apostle. By definition, a disciple is a follower; an apostle is the bearer of a message from a superior. The Christian disciple not only follows the Gospel of Jesus but also helps others to hear and accept it.

Who is Jesus?

Who is Jesus? We see him today simultaneously in the role of Lord and Servant. Today's Gospel speaks about Jesus being baptised by John the Baptist. As Jesus approaches, John announces to some of his own disciples: "There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Why is Jesus called by this strange title, the Lamb of God? It refers back to the origins of the great Jewish feast of the Passover. According to the tradition, God had been urging the Pharaoh to let God's people leave Egypt. There had been a series of plagues but each time Pharaoh reneged on his promise to do so. The final and most terrible plague involved the slaying of every firstborn child in Egypt.

In order that the Israelites might not be punished, they were told to smear the doorposts of their houses with the blood of a lamb. When God's angel struck, he passed over the blood-painted houses of the Israelites and their children were spared. They had, in effect, been saved by the blood of the lamb.

Pharaoh acknowledged defeat and finally said he would let the Israelites go. (He will go back on his word once more and with disastrous results for him.) On the night before the Israelites left, under the leadership of Moses, they had a final meal which included the eating of a roast lamb. (The same lamb whose blood had been painted on the doorposts of the house.) The lamb then becomes the sign and symbol of the liberation of God's people from slavery and oppression.

This great event of the Exodus, the Going Out, was and is commemorated in the Passover meal which Jesus celebrated with his disciples at the Last Supper and which is still celebrated by Jews worldwide. (The Passover meal is now also being observed unofficially by many groups of Catholics and other Christians during Holy Week.)

Jesus the eternal Lamb

But for us – and this is John the Baptist's meaning – Jesus is the new Lamb which brings freedom and liberation from the oppression of evil and sin. He sacrifices himself to take away our sins.

Through his death he liberates us. It is no coincidence that Jesus' sacrificial death took place at the Passover. He is the new Pasch; he is the Lamb who both sacrifices himself and is sacrificed to liberate us. And it is his Blood poured out that is the sign of our salvation.

Jesus can do this because he is at the same time our Lord and our Servant. Because he is our Lord, he can take away our sins; because he is a servant, he sacrifices his life for us. And he is not only our servant, he is our friend. As he told his disciples at the Last Supper, the greatest love a person can show is to sacrifice one's life for one's friends and he insists that his disciples are his friends not servants. Even more, Jesus is our Brother.

Jesus and John

John the Baptist also speaks of Jesus in the same way. He says: "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me." Now we know that John and Jesus are related. And we know, from Luke's gospel, that John is older than Jesus by about six months, yet he says that Jesus ranks above him and existed before him.

John appears first proclaiming the Kingdom of God. But Jesus precedes John in dignity and status. Because, before John was even conceived in his mother's womb, Jesus, the Word of God, already existed.

So John says, "I did not know him". How come he does not know his own cousin, although he makes clear statements about him? Why does he not know his cousin? Of course, he knows Jesus while at the same time he does not know him. For at first he did not know the real identity of Jesus. Jesus is not only his younger relative. Jesus is his Lord and his God.

Son of God

When did John know? When, he says, he "saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself [at first] did not know him but the one who sent me to baptise with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptises with the Holy Spirit'."

And then he makes his declaration of faith: "I myself have seen and have given witness that this is the Son of God." Jesus is Lord and God. (In this first chapter of his gospel, John gives all of Jesus' titles: Word, Son of the Father, Lamb of God, Son of God, Messiah [the Christ], Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Joseph, King of Israel, Son of Man.)

And yet, this Jesus Lord is standing in the river water, together with many sinners. He is God but he has come to serve us, to love us, to liberate us, to mingle with us, to be one of us. And he asks us to work with him in the same way – to be in the world and to serve the world, to serve all as brothers and sisters.

Let us pray that God will help us to work together with Jesus to establish his Kingdom in the whole world and especially in that part of it where we live out our lives.

FEASTS AND ANNIVERSARIES: January

18. **Maria Teresa Fasci, OSA** (+1947) Augustinian nun known for her works of charity in post-war Italy.
-Today the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** begins. Let us pray that all be one in the name of Christ.
-**Margaret of Hungary** (+1270) A Hungarian princess known for piety and charity.
19. **Henry of Finland** (+1160) The Apostle of the Finnish people.
20. **Sebastian** (+288) Milanese soldiers who refused to deny his Christian faith and were martyred.
21. **Agnes of Rome** (+303) Roman teen age girl who would not compromise her faith or her chastity was so brutally abused that she died in prison.
-Vladimir Lenin (+1924) the architect and perpetrator of some of the most heinous actor the Russian revolution.
22. **Vincent of Zaragoza** (+ca.300) Spanish deacon who suffered for his faith under Diocletian.
-**Josefa Maria de Santa Inez, OSA** (+1696) Spanish Augustinian sister beloved for her intercessory prayer and charity.
-Queen Victoria of Great Britain (ruled from 1837 to 1901) Gave her name to her age and its mores.

Parish assembly

23. 1. 2014

07:30 p.m.

Saint Thomas Monastery

An opportunity to meet with all the parishioners of St Thomas and have the opportunity to do an evaluation of our pastoral work. Your voice is important!

Program

1. – Welcome prayer

2. – Liturgy:

*Join masses

*homily

3. – Community

* Collaboration between communities

*Parish retreat

4. – Economy

*Projects: roof of the church- reparation of the church organ- projects in Africa

5. – Information in the parish

*www.augustiniani.cz

*others

6. – Discussion

Ongoing Activities

- If you would like to receive a **copy of the bulletin by email**, please contact osaprag@augustiniani.cz
- On Sunday 19th after Mass meeting of the Parish council in Kasiciaco room.
- Please note: new of Fr. William's email: wsfaix@augustiniani.cz

***Coffee, Cookies & Conversation** follow Sunday Mass in the Monastery Refectory off the Cloister Garden. **All are invited, especially our visitors.**

St. Augustine on Evil

Augustine knew that evil was real. Independent evidence (natural theology) was enough to convince him that God existed and that everything He created would be good. Evil, then, must be something real, but not a "thing" in the conventional sense. Evil is not a created thing, but spoiled goodness made possible by the free moral agency of rational creatures. Evil is not something present, but something missing, a privation.

The challenge that God could have created a world of free-will creatures immutable in their goodness is answered by the notion of plenitude, the greatest good. The possibility of evil also makes a greater good possible. God made a world in which true moral decision-making and development of virtues is possible in humans, manifest by persons whose character is formed through growth and struggle.

There's a sound reason why God has allowed evil. It doesn't conflict with His goodness. God is neither the author of evil, nor its helpless victim. Rather, precisely because of His goodness He chooses to co-exist with evil for a time.