



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

St. Thomas Church

Today's Prayer

The more we call on God
the more we can feel God's
presence.
Day by day we are drawn closer
to the loving heart of God.

February 1st 2nd 2014

The Fourth Sunday in
Ordinary Time – Year A

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The word *beatitudes* is a translation of the Greek word *makarioi* meaning “blessings.” As taught by Jesus, Matthew lays down these eight “beatitudes” as prerequisite for membership in the kingdom of God. Matthew’s own predilection for Old Testament prototypes even locates this pivotal teaching on a mountainside just as Moses, the great lawgiver of the first testament, received the Ten Commandments (or *Decalogue*) on Sinai’s heights. These eight beatitudes or blessings are divided into two distinct groups. The first four deal those who *internally* yearn for the kingdom of God: the *poor in spirit* (not necessarily confined to the economically deprived); the *sorrowing* (just not the unhappy or dissatisfied); the *lowly* (not only the “underdog” or down and out) and those who *hunger and thirst for holiness*. They will be satisfied. The second four beatitudes (built on the first four) are those who *actively* seek to bring about the advent of the kingdom of God through vital engagement. Hence Jesus sets forth *those who show mercy*, the *single-hearted* (or “pure-hearted”), the *peacemakers* and the *unjustly persecuted* as being guaranteed a place in the kingdom of God. Much can be said of these blessings but the ultimate challenge is, do we seriously take and make them our own?

Blessed are the poor in spirit, the kingdom of God is theirs. 2. Blessed are the sorrowing; they shall be comforted. 3. Blessed are the lowly; they shall inherit the earth. 4. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall be satisfied. 5. Blessed are the merciful; mercy will be theirs; 6. Blessed are the single-hearted; they shall see God. 7. Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called sons and daughters of God. 8. Blessed are those persecuted for holiness’ sake; the kingdom of God is theirs.

FEASTS AND ANNIVERSARIES:

February “is the shortest but the worse of all the months.”

03. *Brigid of Ireland* (+525) called also “of Kildare” and “the Mary of the Gaels,” *Patrick* (+461) and *Columba of Iona* (+597) are the three Patrons of the Irish people. According to Irish tradition, the eve of this saint’s day was the last day of winter.
04. ***THE FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD IN THE TEMPLE.*** Called variously *Candlemas day* or *Gromniczna* recalls the presentation of the Lord by Mary and Joseph in the Temple. There the infant Messiah is recognized by Simeon and Anna as “salvation” and “light” of the world.
Today candles are blessed and lit at home during times of danger and devotions.
06. *Stephen Bellesini, OSA* (+1840) was a Tyrolese Augustinian friar, who after many vicissitudes managed to reestablish Augustinian monastic life following the suppressions of the French Revolutionary regime in Italy.
-*Blaise of Sebaste, Armenia* (+300) was a bishop known for his healing power. On this his feast day there will be blessing of throats immediately after Mass there will be blessing of throats for those who wish. Some medieval medical advice reads: *Evil for the throat- mustard, lying on one’s chest, pepper, angry words, things roasted, overindulgence in carnal pleasure, much working and too much rest, much drink, old cheese and all things sour.*
-*Ansgar of Hamburg* (+865), was a French monk who initiated the evangelisation of the Scandinavian countries.
07. *Gilbert of Sempringham* (+1189)
08. *Agatha* (+280), a young Christian woman of Sicily, was terribly tortured for her Christian faith. A proverb reads: *St. Agatha defends thy house and family same, from fire and fearful flame.*

Basis of Marriage

This reading is in support of the call of our Holy Father, Pope Francis for a Synod regarding family issues. It is an attempt to bring to light the current pressures and realities of the world we live in. It is not a discussion to pass judgment but rather to highlight the issues, which will be discussed during the upcoming Synod.

We discussed last week the major changes occurring in marriage. Divorce rates are 50%, People are waiting longer to get married, A large percentage of couples are living together prior to getting married and these marriages are statistically more prone to divorce. The results are that in the U.S. and the EU, 40% of today's children are born without their parents being married, in the UK the rate is 48% and expected to go over 50% by 2016

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10172627/Most-children-will-be-born-out-of-wedlock-by-2016.html>)

With that in mind: How does the Church influence our lives as Married Couples? What are the divine principles? How has this developed over time and what role does the church play in family life?

In Genesis we witness the creation of woman: (Genesis 2:22 – 24) **22** And the Lord God built the rib, which he took from Adam into a woman: and brought her to Adam. **23** And Adam said: This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. **24** Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh.

In Mark and Mathew, this message is repeated almost verbatim, although both authors add the verse "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

Marriage predates written history. With a wife being among the most valuable things a man could have. She was therefore looked after and protected. There are many references to wives having a tent of their own (a real luxury in the tribal nomadic days) and later the innermost tent was the realm of the wife.

Modern marriage and ceremony traces its roots to the middle ages. If you were to get married in the middle ages, you would have to declare to the priest, that you intended to get married, normally a complete moon cycle (month) ahead of time. Many times the decision to wed was made by the families and not the betrothed, but that is another subject.

The priest placed a notice of your intentions on the Church as an announcement to the community. Each week your upcoming wedding plans would be announced, in order to provide ample opportunity for protest. Inquiries would be made to ensure that there were no reasons the couple should not be married.

On the wedding day, the couple would stand outside the church, the man on the right in deference to the rib taken from the left side of man to create woman. Vows were exchanged and a ring was given before entering the church. The placement of the ring is on the fourth finger, in deference to the trinity.

Ongoing Activities

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

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

****We are looking for a **English teacher** for our parish. More information with Fr. Juan**

****Eucharistic Ministers:** There will be a short training session for those who would like to serve the community as a Eucharistic Minister. The session will be on **Sunday, February 16** after mass at **12:15**. The training will be led by Fr. William.

****Looking for an au pair, near London.** We are looking for someone to come and stay for 6 m to a year. We would be able to give them £60/week, plus board and lodging for some help with my three (6,4 and 18m) and housework. It would be lovely to have a Catholic au pair. tom-za.hall@ubs.com

The ceremony then moved inside the inner sanctum, where prayers were made and the Eucharist was celebrated. It was a ceremony that most of us would recognize.

Later, the priest would accompany the newlywed couple to their home, where he would bless the bed and explain the solemn commitment under God to be together. It was clearly explained that a woman must make herself available to the man, whenever he wished. Further, that the man must make himself available at the wish of his wife. The act of love was considered sacred and it promoted family stability. The reinforcement of unity and of deepening love for one another was considered a natural and holy part of the marriage bed.

Contrary to popular rumor, it has never been Church doctrine for this act to be "only" for the sake of procreation. Although in the middle ages, there were days during the year when the act was forbidden. These were feast days and at times three days prior to taking communion. Thank God that communion was only given a few times a year in those days.

During the Middle Ages there was a growing movement of those who believed that the right way one to pursue a relationship with God was the Monastic life. This movement grew in numbers and in power within the leadership of the church. This culminated in Gregory I being named the first Pope, which had come from a monastic background. The search for redemption had become more focused on self-denial, sacrifice, and chastity. Church tradition slowly elevated the procreation function of this matter above all in order to explain more clearly its position on contraception. They are presented as equal in today's teachings as they were in the beginning. The Church recognizes both equally today officially in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2362 – 2367)

In the next reading, we will review the ramifications from the break-up of the traditional family and the influence of religion.

God Bless.