



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

# St. Thomas Church

## Today's Prayer

Say this Prayer Today:

Dear Lord as I come to you  
today  
Fill my heart and my whole  
being  
with the wonder of your  
presence

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February 28<sup>th</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup>  
2015

The Second Sunday of  
Lent -B

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## Reflection on the Gospel

We have begun our Lenten journey with Mark, the evangelist, as guide and teacher. In last week's gospel reading he drew us into the desert experience of Jesus' first victory over diabolic opposition. Today's lesson has been termed a "transfiguration." Was this mysterious event some "post-resurrection" appearance or a theological reflection? It seems that Mark gives indication that it was, indeed, some sort of vision since the apostles, Peter, James and John, were said to be taken "aside," a phrase usually introducing a revelation or some ecstatic experience. And as with many such divine appearances in the Old or first Testament, this event, too, is set on a mountain traditionally identified with Mount Tabor in northern Israel. The personages involved are Jesus, bathed in extraordinary glory so indicative in the Old Testament of divine presence; and the figures of Moses, the lawgiver, and Elijah, the prophet, who serve as corroborating witnesses for Jesus' person and divinely mandated mission. The presence of these two preeminent pillars of Israel's religious tradition verify that the word of God mediated on Mount Sinai and vindicated on Mount Carmel is the same as the good news being proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth. Meanwhile the three frightened apostles-the core of the new community-are commanded, as Israel once was, to "listen to him." Peter, terrified at this phenomenon, offers to build three huts (or booths). In the second temple period (ca. 520 BC-AD 70), the religious feast of Booths, commemorating those desert years when Israel lived in tents, was popularly believed to be the moment of the Messiah's expected appearance. Elijah, in fact, was to reappear in Israel as the immediate precursor of the messianic age, which for Peter, James and John, was now. Dawning as the shekinah or cloud of glory seemed to confirm. But, that was to come later. For "looking up they saw no one, only Jesus." It is these final words that give us a clue to the passage. Perhaps, there were member of Mark's community who were still looking for extraordinary signs or were even tempted to reenter mainstream Judaism for reassured faith. Some may have even felt that "the gospel was not enough" in their quest for religious fulfillment or needed answers. It may be the same with us. Easily discouraged and callous in our practice of faith we can fall into a deadening routine with disastrous consequences. Exits from such perceived "blind alleys" via lucky charms, astrology, tarot cards, fortunetellers, mediums/spiritualists, board games or even satanism -naïve as all this may sound- often end in degrading superstition. In our questions and doubts, we, like the bewildered apostles, must look up and see only Jesus. Our Lenten journey ends in his resurrected glory.

## Study of the First Reading

God's call was one in a series. Even when God had given Abraham and Sarah a sign of his faithfulness in the birth of their child, God continued to call. Abraham's response was immediate. Human sacrifice was repugnant to the Hebrews, but was known in the ancient world. Sacrifice meant the offering of self to the gods, or the offering of great personal worth. A first born male represented the continuation of one's identity through a child and the most precious thing a man could have on earth, his son. Offering such to the gods was only second to self-sacrifice. The sacrifice of Isaac presented great moral problems to the reader. Why did God order Abraham to do what is clearly against his own Law? First, what was more important: God's Law or God's will? If we follow God's Law, we are "safe," but are we following God's will? If we follow God's will, how are we sure we are not fooling ourselves? Second, was God free from his own Law? Didn't that make God inconsistent, and imperfect? What did this act say about God? Like the problem of evil in the world, there are no easy answers, only more questions to vex one's faith.

**Coffee, Cookies & Conversation** follow Sunday Mass in the Monastery Refectory off the Cloister Garden. **All are invited, especially our visitors.** Please contact Fr. William Faix if you want to add announcements to the bulletin at "[wfaix@yahoo.com](mailto:wfaix@yahoo.com)" or contact Fr. Juan at [juan@augustiniani.cz](mailto:juan@augustiniani.cz) Please send at latest by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin

## Study of the Second Reading

In this slice of Paul's famous letter to the Romans, he used the theme of hope to move from the suffering of the present to the glory of the Second Coming. Romans 8:18-30 spoke of groaning in creation, ourselves, and life in the Spirit. According to Paul, these groanings were a foretaste of events to come. The last event, of course, was the Last Judgment. According to Jewish lore, angels would act as prosecutors against the evils of humanity in the divine court. Paul countered this notion with Christian hope rooted in an intimate relationship with God.

He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord Yahweh helps me; who will declare me guilty?

Paul asked rhetorical questions about charges ("debts" to be called in) by an imaginary prosecutor. Who would have been foolish enough to prosecute someone the judge favored and already forgave? [8:33] Why would God the judge condemn someone he had already forgiven, for whom his own Son intercedes? [8:34] These few verses revealed Paul's view of the Last Judgment. Christians had already received the gift of reconciliation and divine life in grace. Their status before God at the end of time was certain. Acquittal was the verdict even before the court convened. Paul's hope should be ours, in spite of daily struggles and the uncertainty of modern life. We have no fear before the Lord. After all, we are his favorites!

## Lenten Suggestions

During this season of Lent in preparation for the great feast of Our Lord's Resurrection, Christians are urged to participate in this great season through daily prayer, fasting and almsgiving to those in need. Here at Saint Thomas we recommend that

1. You participate in the Stations of the Cross each Friday at 6:00 PM.....
2. You avail yourselves of the sacrament of reconciliation (confession) after each Sunday Mass;
3. You attend a short Eucharistic service on Thursdays from 6:00 pm to 6:30pm. This service consists of a short gospel passage, quiet reflection, the recitation of the Our Father and the reception of the Eucharist. Confessions will be heard immediately afterwards for those who wish.
4. You attend the Adult Christian Education discussion group meeting each Wednesday evening at 6:30p in the Tagaste room.

Above all we warmly recommend that you read Sacred Scripture- particularly the gospel of Saint John. Saint Augustine once said: "If you cannot fast from food then fast from complaining, gossip and anger, impatience. If you cannot afford to give alms then thank others for what they do for you and even give a good word for those being talked about. And when you pray, thank God for the gift of change and newness that opens doors closed by monotonous routine and bad habits."

## Ongoing Activities

- ❖ We **welcome all our new parishioners** to St. Thomas Church. Please introduce yourselves, if you wish at refreshments after the 11:00 am Mass on Sundays or just call us or visit at your convenience.
- ❖ If you would like to receive a **copy of the bulletin by email**, please contact [osaprag@augustiniani.cz](mailto:osaprag@augustiniani.cz)
- ❖ Every Saturday at 9:00am feeding of the homeless, as a social service.
- ❖ Fr. William, the pastor will be away for January 27<sup>th</sup> till March 2<sup>nd</sup> month. Fr. Juan B. will be the ordinary pastor in his absence. In cases of emergency I can be reached either through Fr. Juan at 602684538.
- ❖ If you would like to serve as a lector or Eucharistic minister at the Sunday mass please contact Ann at [dalyaann@hotmail.com](mailto:dalyaann@hotmail.com). Training will be provided for those who have not previously served in these ministries.
- ❖ **Post-confirmation youth group:** For 14-17 year olds who would like to meet to discuss and share views on issues of faith today and enrich their own faith. The time and dates will be decided depending on those interested. Please contact Ann at [dalyaann@hotmail.com](mailto:dalyaann@hotmail.com) or see me after mass.

## Social Media at St. Thomas Church, Prague

Keep up with the Parish, Religious Education calendar, Parish Events, photos or the latest quote from the Vatican and Pope Francis. Follow us on Facebook at:

**St. Thomas Church - Prague's English-speaking Catholic Community**

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/St-Thomas-Church-Pragues-English-speaking-Catholic-Community/298895753494190?ref=hl>

So, please be sure to take the minute to join us on FaceBook – and be sure to share the photos you take at parish events and celebrations with others as well. Remember, we are only as good as the sum of our community --- so join in, helping to keep our Parish the welcoming and dynamic group that we are.

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**Lenten prayer:**

**“Jesus, make our hearts like yours”**

(Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus).