



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

Today's Prayer

My soul longs for your presence, Lord.
When I turn my thoughts to you,
I find peace and contentment.



January 23rd and January 24th
2016

The Third Sunday in
Ordinary Time-Year C

St. Thomas Church

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The Reflection of the Gospel

This Sunday commences what is called in the liturgy "Ordinary Time." Ordinary meaning in this case that span of the Church's calendar which does not celebrate some specific feast or season such as Advent-Christmas or Lent-Easter. The gospel begins logically enough with the first days of Jesus' "public ministry" which lasted over a period of two year or more sometime between the years AD 24/25 and after. Today's gospel reading is a shortened description of his ill-fated return to his hometown of Nazareth. Initial admiration for his eloquent teaching soon evaporates into progressive dismay and murderous rage when this young upstart self-taught rabbi dares to insinuate the necessity for conversion of heart; worse, yet, when he dares to praise the pagan Phoenician widow and the Syrian general blessed by God for their faith. What today's gospel does not mention is the attempt on Jesus' life in consequence. Certainly, according to Luke, there was no openness of heart for these townsfolk. During the past week we had observed throughout the Church and in many Christian communities *Unity Octave Prayer for Christian Unity*. Originally initiated by Fr. Peter Paul of Graymore, Garrison, N.Y., the octave from the 18th through the 25th of January has been set aside as special days of prayer for the union of all believers in and through the Name of Jesus Christ. In today's world we can easily see the untold damage done by so-called "religious" or "pious" people. Often, common people are put off by violent religion. Memories of past conflicts not easily forgotten or forgiven remain to haunt the most tolerant. The Moslem will speak of the Crusades; the Jew of the Holocaust or *Shoah*; the Orthodox of 1204; the Catholic of Cromwell or Hitler. History can be compared to our common house of haunted memories. So before we write off the Nazarenes, how do we face up to our own prejudices? Do we shout so loud that we cannot hear the voice of conscience? As Jesus said: *A prophet is without honor in his/her own country.*

Blessed Stephen Bellesini, OSA (1774-1840)
(3rd February)

Meditation from the writings of Blessed Stephen.

"Teaching about duties towards God, self, and one's neighbor ought not to be paraded as grave obligation imposed under the threat of eternal punishment, but rather as a yoke that is sweet and light, thus imbedding in the children's hearts the principle that virtue consists in an uncompromising love for what is good and a constant rejection of what is evil. Instill and promote in them a true and solid piety toward God and an active love to neighbor. To study religion is to employ every possible means to advance further in the knowledge of God, in the knowledge of Jesus Christ: of his mysteries, his doctrine, his example and that of his followers who have been his most faithful imitators. It means gathering together all those flashes of light that can illuminate our path in the course of this present life, until that moment when the great day of eternity dawns. In a word, to study religion in nothing other than to study Jesus Christ"

Study of the First Reading

Sometimes our sadness turns to joy when people celebrate the good news of freedom. This edited version of the passage celebrates the re-institution of the religious and civil life in Jerusalem after the return of the exiles from Babylon and the rebuilding of the city walls. (Rebuilding of the walls was the first order of business, since the top priority of the city was defense.) Standing at an official height and surrounded by the city officials (edited out of the passage), Ezra addressed the people. [2-5] After Ezra's blessing, the people responded with approval in voice and posture. [6] Then Ezra read and commented on the Law; it is possible he translated the Law for those returning descendants who did not speak Hebrew, but Aramaic, the language of the Babylonians. [7] At hearing the Law, the people wept. [8] This is a social response to the devastation the city endured. It was seen as God's punishment for the nation's infidelity; weeping was a means of sorrow and repentance. But the city leaders declare a day of rejoicing, for the city is secure and the people are now free to practice their religion and way of life. [9-10] As Americans, we cherish our freedom and our way of life. Let us not forget they are gifts from God. We should not take them for granted or presume they are the fruit of our own hands. For many people in the world, they are good news!

Announcements and Ongoing Activities

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

* Every Saturday at 9:00am **feeding of the homeless**, as a social service

* **Bible Study** takes place every Tuesday from 18:30-19:30 in Tagaste room. Everyone is welcome to come and learn more about our sacred scriptures.

*Wednesday at 18:30. Tagaste room takes place **Adult Religious education**.

*St Thomas' English Speaking Community now has a presence on **facebook**. Please 'like' our page and if you want to get more involved with the community, join our group!

***Fr. William** will be in USA for the next month. Fr. Juan will be taking care of the community: 602684538

* The **season of Lent** begins ASH WEDNESDAY, 10 FEBRUARY. Ashes will be distributed both on that day(at 06:00pm) and on Sunday 14 February, after Mass. Catholics are urged to enter into the spirit of this holy season of conversion.

*During **Lent season** every Friday at 6pm in the church will be the Stations of the Cross.

Feasts

25 *The Conversion of Saint Paul* concludes the *Unity Octave or Eight Days of Prayer* for Christian Unity. Extend your hand to a brother or sister in Jesus. Invite them to Mass. Read the dramatic story of Paul's conversion in *Acts 9*.

26 *Timothy and Titus* (+1st c.) were disciples of Paul and later martyrs.

27 *Angela Merici* (1540) was foundress of the Ursuline community.

28 *Thomas Aquinas, OP* (+1274), eminent theologian, Doctor of the Church Proclaimed Patron of Schools and Scholars.

30 *-Martina* (ca.+304) was a Roman woman executed for her faith.

Year of Mercy

"Merciful like the Father"

Let us rediscover these **corporal** works of mercy:

1. to feed the hungry,
2. give drink to the thirsty,
3. clothe the naked,
4. welcome the stranger,
5. heal the sick,
6. visit the imprisoned,
7. bury the dead.

And let us not forget the **spiritual** works of mercy:

1. to counsel the doubtful,
2. instruct the ignorant,
3. admonish sinners,
4. comfort the afflicted,
5. forgive offences,
6. bear patiently those who do us ill,
7. pray for the living and the dead."

Pope changes Holy Thursday decree to include all people of God

"The reform of the Holy Week, by the decree *Maxima Redemptionis nostrae mysteria* of November 1955, provides the faculty, where counselled by pastoral motives, to perform the washing of the feet of twelve men during the Mass of the Lord's Supper, after the reading of the Gospel according to John, as if almost to represent Christ's humility and love for His disciples.

"In the Roman liturgy this rite was handed down with the name of the *Mandatum* of the Lord on brotherly charity in accordance with Jesus' words, sung in the Antiphon during the celebration.

"In performing this rite, bishops and priests are invited to conform intimately to Christ who 'came not to be served but to serve' and, driven by a love 'to the end', to give His life for the salvation of all humankind.

"To manifest the full meaning of the rite to those who participate in it, the Holy Father Francis has seen fit to change the rule by in the Roman Missal (p.300, No. 11) according to which the chosen men are accompanied by the ministers, which must therefore be modified as follows: 'Those chosen from among the People of God are accompanied by the ministers' (and consequently in the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* No. 301 and No. 299 b referring to the seats for the chosen men, so that pastors may choose a group of faithful representing the variety and unity of every part of the People of God. This group may consist of men and women, and ideally of the young and the old, healthy and sick, clerics, consecrated persons and lay people.

"This Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, by means of the faculties granted by the Supreme Pontiff, introduces this innovation in the liturgical books of the Roman Rite, recalling pastors of their duty to instruct adequately both the chosen faithful and others, so that they may participate in the rite consciously, actively and fruitfully."