



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

St. Thomas Church

Today's Prayer

Say this Prayer Today:

"Come to me all you who are
burdened
and I will give you rest"
Here I am, Lord.
I come to seek your presence.
I long for your healing power.

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February 10th and February
11th 2018

The Sixth Sunday in
Ordinary Time B

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Reflection on the Gospel

Leprosy in the New Testament- not to be identified with Hansen's disease- was loosely applied to any number of dermatological problems including baldness! Today's gospel reading generically describes some severe malady for which there being no cure consigned the victims to social ostracism. This expulsion was devastating not only physically but also psychologically since such maladies were directly attributed to God's disfavor. Purported cures had to be reported to the Temple priests or their representatives for verification before the patient could return to normal life in society. If not, the leper had to live hopelessly on the margins of society with bandaged face, carrying a bell warning those passing by with the cry "Unclean!" The most painful aspect of these precautions paled when recalling that such a victim was officially deprived of family support, adequate medical care, nourishment and above all designated a public sinner "struck by God" for "some sin".

Mark notes the compassion of Jesus for these outcasts. Disregarding all taboos, He allows them to approach Him, He authoritatively addresses them, cures them and sends them on to the priestly "board of health" for necessary verification of their healing. For the ancient peoples illness was Satan's preserve; hence, any healing wrought by Jesus would have been thought to come directly from God who is mightier than any evil. The description of this healing is gripping. Older manuscripts relate that Jesus *was moved by anger* against their dreadful state and putting aside all precautions, he reached out and curatively touched the leper. It is precisely this enslavement that so provokes Jesus to heal the unfortunate sufferer. By this incident, therefore, Mark our evangelist, teaches that evil in whatever form it takes has been rendered ineffectively powerless by Jesus' commanding presence and word. Hence, all the rituals which so effectively isolated and boycotted people are broken down by the healing merciful Word of God manifested through Jesus Christ. We may ask ourselves the question: "If God is open and merciful why are we so hesitant in our acceptance of others?"

Study of the First Reading

As you may have read in the gospel commentary, the disease translated as "leprosy" might not have been Hansen's disease (what we call "leprosy"). A close reading of Leviticus 13-14 revealed the sick were expected to recover (unlike the incurable, but treatable, Hansen's disease). Quarantine periods were temporary. A priest would inspect and impose the quarantine. Then he would re-inspect the sick at regular intervals to notice any improvement. Notice the power of the priest in Leviticus. He acted not only as a worship leader, he was also a civil leader, judge, and medical practitioner. This all-encompassing role gave the priesthood of Aaron extraordinary powers. 13:44-46 The infected took on mannerisms that warned others of the disease. Torn clothing, a lack of proper hygiene, and the call "Unclean! Unclean!" were meant to separate the community from those in quarantine. Not only did the infected live outside the community, they were expected to live as if they were in the wild. Appearance and warning gave the notion these lived outside civilization. As Americans, we pride ourselves on our unique individuality. We have the right to act different. Imagine if different behavior was not a right, but a social pressure. To the contemporaries of Jesus, the ruling of leprosy by a priest was like an unjust prison sentence: isolated lifestyle by infection.

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" by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin.

Exhibition of the “15 Stations”

by Alena Foustkova

Ambit of the Saint Thomas Monastery, Opening on Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2018, 5:30 pm
The exhibition will last until the Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018.

Visual artist Alena Foustková will introduce an exhibition of her assemblages of the Way of the Cross, which she named “15 stations”. The curator of the intimate reflections of the 15 stations is Ms Klára Burianová. She will introduce the exhibition with her opening word.

In her “15 stations”, Alena Foustková is trying to convey a dialogue between the past and present. She uses visual language of mundane objects which talk to us through humility and modesty. The artist works conceptually with symbols of the individual Stations. She does not show us a complex story line but through objects, photographs and words she refers to the canonized scenes in a symbolic way. Usually mundane things can thus acquire magical status in a situation when they remind us of the deep-rooted sceneries of the Way of the Cross. Thread-reels, paper pins, a fragment of a mirror or a paper box with disposable paper wipes would seem without the context only meaningless trifles placed under a glass display case. Just like small treasures which we hide as children to shoe-boxes under the bed. The author does not only refer to the past through the objects of our reality. She manages to get inside acute problems of the world and attempts to make the viewer contemplate situations like migration waves or terrorist attacks. In the eleventh station, which traditionally illustrates the nailing of Jesus Christ to the cross, we find instead printed numbers of victims who died in the terrorist attacks all over the world in one year. Jesus falling under the weight of the cross for the first time is introduced through a photograph of a Syrian father falling with his son during their flight from the war. The photograph which was seen all over the world had, however, a shocking story behind it. A Hungarian reporter tripped the refugee apparently to get more suggestive images of suffering and increase viewership of her story. To the traditional fourteen stations, the artist added one more, the fifteenth – Resurrection, which becomes a symbol of hope and transformation. Alena Foustkova's *The Way of the Cross* is her own reflection on values which we adhere to and existing themes which have always been and will be with us. The themes like belonging, helping others, compassion, but also cruelty, suffering and death. How we stand up to these challenges, it is only up to us.

Klára Burianová

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Announcements and Ongoing Activities

***Bible Study** sessions are held each Tuesday evening at 6:30pm/18:00 in Tagaste room. All are welcome to join and reflect on the Word of God.

***Religious education for adults** sessions are held each Wednesday evening at 6:00pm/18:00 in Tagaste room.

***Fr. William**, the pastor will be away for January 23rd till March 2nd month. Fr. Imann, OSA will be the ordinary pastor in his absence. In cases of emergency I can be reached either through Fr. Imann at 730817348.

***The season of Lent** begins ASH WEDNESDAY, 14th FEBRUARY. Ashes will be distributed both on that day 06pm Mass and on Sunday 18th 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 Stations of the Cross.

***Next Saturday February 17th marriage preparation** from 09:30.

* There will be **no Religious Education classes** on Sunday February 1th.

Help for Philippines!

The youth organization in our Augustinian Parish of Sto. Niño de Cebu in Philippines are asking for help.

They are planning to go to Naval, Biliran Leyte the area where typhoon "Urduha" devastated the region, this area is closer to Cebu. They started to gather school supplies and they are planning to share to almost 500 hundred school children as part of their apostolate this coming summer, 2nd week of May 2018, before school year opening.

These are the school supplies they needed; (Grades 1 to 6)

1. Notebooks
2. Elementary papers
3. Pencils/ball pens for grades 4 to 6
4. Crayons
5. Erasers

Thank you very much for your help.

The school supplies you can bring anytime to the monastery reception or on Sundays you can leave in Tagaste room. *More information with Fr. Juan*

Parish Pilgrimage to Holy Land.

St. Thomas Parish is organizing a trip to the Holy Land. It will take place from Monday April 30th to Wednesday May 9th. The itinerary includes visits to all the important biblical sites in the following areas: Jaffa, Galilee, Nazareth, Tiberias, Holy Mountain, Capharnaum, Judea, Jericho, Bethlehem, Ein Karem, Qumran, Jerusalem, Mount Zion, Gethsemane and Bethania.

April 30th –May 8th. If you are interesting please contact Fr. Juan at: juan@augustiniani.cz.

More information: www.augustiniani.cz

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