



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

St. Thomas Church

Today's Prayer

Say this prayer today

I remind myself that I am in
your presence O Lord.

I will take refuge in your
loving heart.

You are my strength in times
of weakness.

You are my comforter in
times of sorrow.

In this issue:

Gospel Reflection 1

Study of Readings 1

Flash Points 2

Human Trafficking 2

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28th Sunday of Ordinary
Time A

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The Reflection of the Gospel

Today's gospel reading of the *Wedding Banquet* is the last of Saint Matthew's three controversial parables. As in the two preceding parables of the *Two Sons* and the *Vineyard Workers*, Jesus delivers an admonishing moral lesson to his implacable opponents, the chief priests, the elders and Pharisees. *Parable* from the Greek "to compare", by definition, is cast in allegorical form meaning that the narrator uses persons, things or occurrences to impart some spiritual or moral lesson. Today's parable of the *Wedding Banquet* serves as a case in point. This lesson, consisting of an invitation (verses 1-10), rejection (verses 11-13) and a second invitation symbolizes that gratuitous invitation of grace extended by God ("the king") to the chief priests, the elders and the Pharisees ("the busily disinterested") to his kingdom ("the wedding banquet"). However, the invitation creates its own tension. This gracious message of repentance ("the wedding invitation") delivered by the prophets ("the royal messengers") is meant with violence and murder which Jesus' audience would have recognized as the fate of many prophets. But, then, after this period of discarded grace there arrives the moment of justice when the patience of the insulted king ends with *his armies* executing judgment on these ingrates and *burning down their city*. Many scholars see in this passage an editorial reference to the fearful extermination of the Jewish people and the destruction of their temple and city of Jerusalem during the upheavals of the great Jewish War (AD 66 - 72). The second section or aftermath of this parable is equally unsettling. Once the initially called chief priests fall from grace, again *messengers* (the apostles and their disciples) go forth this time announcing a *universal invitation* (the gospel) to the *good and bad alike* (the diversity of the baptized) now gathered within the *banquet hall* (the Church). Again there is a crucial moment when the *king* upon arrival once more *judges* some of his invited as *unworthy of his presence* and orders them to be *cast out into outer darkness where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth*. The oft-quoted aphorism in contemporary Jewish literature, *many are called but few are chosen*, is a salutary warning for us all. While it is easy to condemn the chief priests and Pharisees for their ultimate rejection of Jesus Christ we, who are seated in the banquet hall of the Church, should not be so presumptuous as to presuppose that God will take no notice. *Those who have ears, says Jesus, should listen.*

Study of the Today's Readings

FIRST READING

When we read the prophets, especially Isaiah, we forget their timeless messages found a beginning in social and political crises. In the book of Isaiah, Assyria had swept the northern kingdom of Israel away. Now it rode from the north and endangered Jerusalem. Little did the city realize that the seeds of Assyria's destruction lay in her expansion. The impending crisis had a "silver lining." These verses share the hope of the changing situation. Through the prophet, God announced a time of celebration in Jerusalem and an end to the desperation that covered the city "like a veil." God was liberating Mount Zion (upon which the city was built) from danger and was restoring the reputation of the city and the people. Hope in the light of vindication and liberation. The message of Isaiah still rings true today as it did so many centuries ago.

SECOND READING

In 4:10-11 and 1-18, Paul thanked the community at Philippi for their generosity. When Paul had a need for material support, believers in this church responded. Paul showed his appreciation, but also used the opportunity to teach his audience the secret to a happy life. Paul lived on the road and suffered for his missionary efforts. He had seen his fortunes turn from good to bad and back. He seemed to anticipate this cycle of scarcity and abundance to occur over and over. Yet, that prospect did not deter the apostle from his preaching, for he had a source of strength greater than his own fortitude. God had given Paul this ministry, and he gained power from that call. As he was emboldened and empowered by God's call, he expected others to be urged on. Because the Philippians shared faith and fellowship with Christ, they, too, could live through the bad times and enjoy the good times as blessing. For Paul, the secret to a happy life lay in the hands of God. We, too, will find happiness when God's calling becomes *our passion for living*.

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

Please contact, Fr. William Faix, OSA if you want to add announcements to the bulletin

ST. THOMAS PARISHIONERS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

In commemoration of the European Union's Anti-Trafficking Day that will be held October 18, 2011, I would like to highlight the urgent need to raise public awareness of human trafficking as an increasingly disturbing phenomenon in Europe, a horrible crime against humanity that has devastating consequences for the victims, the majority of whom are forced into prostitution, pornography, domestic servitude, labor exploitation, and/or organ removal. Recently, several reports, including reports from the Czech Republic highlight the urgent need for all members of civil society to get involved in raising public awareness of human trafficking, including the faith-based (church) community who can play an effective role in eliminating this crime through committed prayer and fasting, funding advocacy work, and through the creation of church-sponsored social justice events.

WHY THE CHURCH MUST ACT NOW?

Globally, we are facing one of the worst crime epidemics of our times brought on by economic globalization resulting from unprecedented openness in the trans-national trade, travel, and communication sectors. Simply put, globalization has progressed faster than the public and private sector's ability to monitor and regulate these markets, thereby creating massive opportunities for exploitation by sophisticated criminals. It is in these unregulated-unguarded sectors that human trafficking will continue to increase. This human trafficking phenomenon has taken on such unprecedented proportions that it can be described as a new form of slavery. It treats human beings as a commodity to be bought and sold.

WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Trafficking in human beings consists of a combination of three basic components, as defined by the UN convention: the **action** of "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons"; **by means of** "the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person"; **for the purpose of** exploitation, which includes "at a minimum, the exploitation of the others for prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, and removal of organs".

THE VICTIMS

The number of innocent human victims caught up in all forms of human trafficking is heart breaking. The European Union's criminal intelligence agency "Europol" estimates that there are hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children being trafficked into and within Central and Western Europe annually. Victims are very often trafficked from poorer countries towards richer countries. All are desperate to make a living, only to have their lives ruined by exploitation. Victims are frequently lured by adverts in their home countries for jobs abroad as fashion models, waiters, and household employees, etc.

THE PROFITS

The illicit profits from human trafficking is staggering, ranging from 31 to 32 billion dollars per year. Vast loads of undocumented cash that is being generated from human trafficking is fuelling corruption and infiltrating business and government, thereby hindering and undermining governance and weakening the public justice system.

WITHOUT YOUR HELP WE CANNOT BRING JUSTICE TO THOSE IN NEED

Please consider investing your time, talents, and money to help our congregation raise public awareness of this human rights tragedy, including funding the advocacy work I am doing to eliminate human trafficking in Europe. Please contact me at charlie.lamento@ghni.org or by mobile at 420 774 974 945 if you are interested in becoming involved in this social justice project.

In Relentless Pursuit of Change,
Charlie Lamento

osaprag@augustiniani.cz

Announcements

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

*We are looking for an **English teacher** for our school. If you are interesting, please see Fr. Juan

CALLING ALL YOUNG CATHOLIC ADULTS!

If you are interested in joining a group of young Catholic adults to meet monthly for friendly conversation, faith sharing, group outings, and more, please contact Carrie Brown at carolynbrown402@gmail.com. Carrie is new to St. Thomas parish and has previous experience leading young Catholic adult groups. If you ever feel alone in your faith as a young adult, this group is for you! "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe." 1 Timothy 4:12

40 daysforlife!

In an effort to end abortion in the Czech Republic I will be present at U Apolinarska Hospital on Apolinarska Ulice near Karlovo Nam. each Wednesday morning , from 8 to 9, for the next 6 weeks, to witness to abortion's two victims, the wounded woman and the death of her unborn child.

I encourage others to join me!
Suzanne Formanek, Family Ministry

Flash Points Vol. #4 No. 6

Should the Church not Change?

This was the question posed by Pope Benedict the XVI on the occasion of his recent visit to Freiburg, Germany. In his speech to the German citizens he recognized that there has been an increasing number of the baptized who are drifting away from church life. It seemed therefore an opportune occasion to ask whether it would be appropriate for the church to "adapt her offices and structures to the present day, in order to reach searching and doubting people."

In a speech considered as pivotal the Pope stated that in fact the Church must change but NOT in the direction of the world. He described the unfortunate "tendency" of the Church to become "self-satisfied, settled down in this world, becoming self-sufficient and adapting herself to worldly standards." However, in "order to accomplish her true task adequately, the Church must constantly renew the effort to detach herself from this tendency towards worldliness and once again become open towards God."

He sees the present secular persecution of the Church as a liberating purge. "Secularizing trends – whether by expropriation of Church goods or elimination of privileges or the like – have always meant a profound liberation of the Church from forms of worldliness", he observed.

"Once liberated from material and political burdens and privileges, the Church can reach out more effectively and in a truly Christian way to the whole world."

He challenged his German audience and all of us who consider ourselves Catholic "to discover the right form of detachment from the world" and to "move resolutely away from the Church's world."

As elections are slated this fall in different countries, it was appropriate that Pope Benedict VXi address the issue. He has done so in many speeches before and during his pontificate and is consistent in clarifying how Catholics should involve themselves in politics and thus how they should vote. As "far as the Catholic Church is concerned," he has stated "the principal focus" for political involvement is around the "non-negotiable" matters of life, family and parental rights in education.

The Catholic Church's focus of her interventions in the public arena is: - protection of life in all its stages, from the first moment of conception until natural death;

- recognition and promotion of the natural structure of the family - as a union between a man and a woman based on marriage - and its defense from attempts to make it juridically equivalent to radically different forms of union which in reality harm it and contribute to its destabilization, obscuring its particular character and its irreplaceable social role; - the protection of the right of parents to educate their children. Hopefully, Catholics will listen!

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