



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

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.

**"Our
hearts are
restless, O
Lord, until
they rest in
you."
St. Augustine**

October 15th - 16th 2008

29th Sunday of Ordinary
Time A

Josefska 8, Mala Strana, Prague 1, 118 01

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St. Thomas Church

**Reflection on the
Gospel**

His adversaries, the Pharisees and the hitherto unmentioned Herodians, confront Jesus. The **Pharisees** (from the Hebrew word "the separated") historically were those Jews committed to the most orthodox and exacting interpretation of the *Torah* (the Law of Moses). Matthew, writing some sixty years after Christ's ministry in the aftermath of the Jewish rebellion against Rome (AD 64-72), grew so hostile to pharisaism that everything a Christian or Christian leader *should not be* was now immortalized by the hypocritical Pharisee, the implacable enemy of Jesus. The **Herodians**, a political party expediently collaborating with the pro-Roman Herodian dynasty, were even enlisted-pharisaic scruples set aside- to act in common cause against Jesus.

The controversial question of Roman tax payments is now used as a clever ruse to trap Jesus on the horns of a classic dilemma. The Romans levied a poll or head tax (called in Greek "*kensos*" and in Latin "*census*") to be paid by every non Roman citizen, whether man, woman or slave, between the ages of 12 and 65. For most Jews, including Jesus and even the Pharisees themselves, it was probably paid as one of those inevitable burdens of empire. At the very heart of the controversy, however, was the *denarius*, or coin of tribute itself. This rather unimpressive piece of currency, worth about a day's wage, featured the imperial visage with the inscription: "Tiberius Caesar, Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus, High Priest." Pious Jews, like the Pharisees, because of this divine attribution condemned not only its possession but also physical contact with the coin as idolatrous. Jesus' response was as incisive as sharp. His request to see the disputed coin of tribute, now hurriedly produced by the Herodians, came as a backhanded rebuke to the Pharisees for associating with such idolatry. All agree that this coin does, indeed, belong to Caesar: after all, he minted it and expects it back as tax. Jesus delivers his most stinging verdict to "repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar," and, lest there be any doubt, to "give to God what belongs to God." Stunned with embarrassment, both the Pharisees and the Herodians, once allied in pursuit of Jesus, now cannot wait to leave his presence.

**Study of Today's
Readings**

FIRST READING: Many times God enters the lives of people in the most unlikely ways. Some of the faithful expect God to "empower" them, make them the instrument of his justice and salvation. But, God doesn't work that way. He likes to surprise his people. In these brief verses, Second Isaiah spoke to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. How could God save them, when they lived so far from home? The prophet's answer: by means of a power greater than Babylon itself, the great Cyrus and his Persian army. More important than this message was a simple reminder. The God of the Jews was greater than even Cyrus and his gods. God was in control. He would call on the great Persian to do his bidding; He would guide Cyrus in his role. Abraham's God would receive glory through a pagan! Where do we look to see God in our lives? Many times we look in the wrong places. We search for him where we think he should be, doing things we expect him to do. But, we should heed the words of Second Isaiah. God works for our good in the most unlikely ways and from the most unexpected directions. To truly see God working does require faith, for sometimes it tests our preconceived expectations.

SECOND READING: Northeast of the Greek landmass in Macedonia, Thessalonica lay along a major trade route and at the mouth of the Thermaic gulf. As a

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.

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

***Do we want a Thanksgiving Dinner** in November? Is anyone interested? Please see the Social committee (Michael Rainey), which, by the way, could use some volunteers.

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 days for life!

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

Rule of St. Augustine

Chapter Three

14. Subdue the flesh, so far as your health permits, by fasting and abstinence from food and drink. However, when some are unable to fast they should still take no food outside mealtime unless they are ill.

15. When you come to table, listen until you leave to what it is the custom to read, without disturbance or strife. Let not your mouths alone take nourishment but let your hearts too hunger for the word of God.

16. If those in more delicate health from their former way of life are treated differently in the matter of food, this should not be a source of annoyance to others or appear unjust in the eyes of those who owe their stronger health to different habits of life. Nor should the healthier brothers or sisters deem them more fortunate for having food which they do not have, but rather consider themselves fortunate for having the good health which the others do not enjoy.

17. And if something in the way of food, clothing, and bedding is given to those coming to the monastery from a more genteel way of life, which is not given to those who are stronger, and therefore happier, then these latter ought to consider how far these others have come in passing from their life in the world down to this life of ours, though they have been unable to reach the level of frugality common to the stronger brothers and sisters.

18. And just as the sick must take less food to avoid discomfort, so too, after their illness, they are to receive the kind of treatment that will quickly restore their strength, even though they came from a life of extreme poverty. Their more recent illness has, as it were, afforded them what accrued to the rich as part of their former way of life. But when they have recovered their former strength, they should go back to their happier way of life which, because their needs are fewer, is more in keeping with God's servants. Once in good health, they must not become slaves to the enjoyment of food which was necessary to sustain them in their illness. Those who are better able to endure want should think of themselves as richer on that account; for it is better to need little than to have much.

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