



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

## Today's Prayer

Before all else, beloved, love God  
and then your neighbor, for these  
are the chief commandments  
given to us

May 21<sup>st</sup> and May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011

The Fifth Sunday of Easter  
– Year A

# St. Thomas Church

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### FIFTH EASTER SUNDAY -A

When reading the Scriptures there is much that “lies below the surface.” Today’s first reading from the *Acts of the Apostles* is one such example. Luke initially presents us with a rather glowing description of the post-resurrection Christian community and indicates that tensions soon rose to the surface. For one, the first “Church” was predominantly Jewish meaning that its prayer and practice would still have been centered around the great Temple and its feasts. After all Jesus had gone up to that sanctuary for worship, and had even defended its honor as *my Father’s House!* Yet in the first century Jews were in divided into four major groups: the Sadducees of priestly or aristocratic vintage; the Pharisees or the religious teachers who divided on the question of biblical interpretation comprised the two parties of Rabbi Shammai and Rabbi Hillel. The others were the exclusive Essenes who withdrew from Jewish religious life and the incendiary Zealots who believed in the violent overthrow of existing political structures. Meanwhile in the dispersion or Diaspora, many Jews heavily influenced by Greek culture and philosophy found themselves at odds with their more conservative co-religionists in Palestine. As converts came in to Christian movement, efforts were made by the apostles to reduce needless inequalities in assisting the poor. The seven “deacons” so appointed were meant to bridge the gap between these variant cultures which even baptism did not erase. After Stephen’s death the Greek speakers who had to leave Jerusalem the first missions in the history of the Christian Church. So, too, in our own lives. Often we look at the Church and wonder what plan God has for us or for our community -scandals, mistrust and the burden of unhealed memories can lead us into divergent camps. Let us look to Jesus who pointedly tells us in today’s gospel that ***I am the way, the truth And the life.*** If we could only learn that through trial there often comes the solution. Trust is what is needed. So, armed with his invitation let us put ourselves in God’s hands with confidence and faith.

### Saint Rita of Cascia. May 22

*St. Rita of Cascia is known and venerated throughout the world. You visit the cathedral in Budapest, Hungary, and you see a bas relief Saint Rita; you go into a church in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and you find a statue of Saint Rita; you go to Lebanon, and you discover a great devotion to this woman, Rita. Truly Rita has no boundaries.*

Rita was born in the year 1381 in the village of Roccapoerna, near Cascia, Italy. Her parents, Antonio and Amata Lotti, considered her birth a very special gift from God, because Rita was born to them when they were advanced in age. As a young girl Rita frequently visited the convent of the Augustinian nuns in Cascia and dreamed of one day joining their community. Her parents, however, had promised her in marriage, according to the custom of the day, to Paolo Mancini, a good man, though of a strong and impetuous character. Rita accepted her parents' decision, resolved that this was God's will for her.

The young couple was joined in marriage and soon twin boys were born to them. Rita found herself occupied with the typical concerns of a wife, mother, and homemaker of Roccapoerna, while Paolo was employed as a watchman for the town. In Cascia, as elsewhere, a great rivalry existed between two popular political factions, the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. As a minor official of the town, Paolo often found himself drawn into the conflict, and the strain which this caused probably accounts for the tension that he sometimes brought into the Mancini household. By her prayers, patience, and affection, however, Rita was able to ease the stress and worry her husband experienced, but she was not able to shield him altogether from the dangers to which society exposed him.

One day as Paolo was returning home from work he was ambushed and killed. The pain which this unexpected and violent death inflicted upon Rita was only compounded by the fear that her two teenage sons, moved by the unwritten law of the "vendetta," would seek to avenge their father's death. Rita's only recourse was to prayer and persuasion. As it happened, the death of both boys from natural causes a short time later removed them from spiritual danger. Despite her great burden she could still thank God that they had died in peace, free from the poison of murder to which hatred and revenge might have otherwise drawn them. /.

./ Now alone in the world and without family responsibilities, Rita once more turned her thoughts to the desired vocation of her youth, that of joining the Augustinian nuns of Saint Mary Magdalene Monastery. Some of the religious of the community, however, were relatives of the members of the political faction considered responsible for Paolo's death, and so as not to tempt the harmony of the convent, Rita's request for admission was denied. Fortunately, she was not to be easily dissuaded from following what she knew to be God's plan for her. She implored her three patron saints John the Baptist, Augustine, and Nicholas of Tolentino to assist her, and she set about the task of establishing peace between the hostile parties of Cascia with such success that her entry into the monastery was assured.

At the age of thirty-six Rita pledged to follow the ancient Rule of Saint Augustine. For the next forty years she gave herself wholeheartedly to prayer and works of charity, striving especially to preserve peace and harmony among the citizens of Cascia. With a pure love she wanted more and more to be intimately joined to the redemptive suffering of Jesus, and this desire of hers was satisfied in an extraordinary way. One day, when she was about sixty years of age, she was meditating before an image of Christ crucified as she was long accustomed to doing. Suddenly a small wound appeared on her forehead, as though from a thorn from the crown that encircled Christ's head had loosed itself and penetrated her own flesh. For the next fifteen years she bore this external sign of stigmatization and union with the Lord. In spite of the pain she constantly experienced, she offered herself courageously for the physical and spiritual well-being of others.

During the last four years of her life Rita was confined to bed and was able to eat so little that she was practically sustained on the Eucharist alone. She was, nevertheless, an inspiration to her sisters in religion and to all who came to visit her, by her patience and joyful disposition despite her great suffering.

One of those who visited her some few months before her death, a relative from her hometown of Roccaporena, was privileged to witness firsthand the extraordinary things wrought by Rita's requests. When asked whether she had any special desires, Rita asked only for a rose from the garden of her parents' home. It was a small favor to ask, but an impossible one to grant in the month of January. Nevertheless, on returning home the woman discovered, to her amazement, a single brightly colored blossom on the bush where the nun said it would be. Picking it, she returned immediately to the monastery and presented it to Rita who gave thanks to God for this sign of love. Thus the saint of the thorn became the saint of the rose, and she, whose impossible requests were granted her, became the advocate of all those whose own requests seem impossible. As she breathed her last, Rita's final words to the sisters who gathered around her were, "Remain in the holy love of Jesus. Remain in obedience to the holy Roman Catholic Church. Remain in peace and fraternal charity."

Having faithfully and lovingly responded to God's many invitations to her in the course of her seventy-six years, Rita returned to God in peace on 22 May 1457. Her body, which has remained incorrupt over the centuries, is venerated today in the shrine at Cascia, which bears her name.

### **Saint Augustine's School**

*"A Comprehensive School with a heart open to wisdom"*

Hornokrčská 3, 140 00 Praha 4 – Krč

[www.skolasvatehoaugustina.cz](http://www.skolasvatehoaugustina.cz)

## **Ongoing Activities**

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

If you would like to receive a copy of the bulletin by email, please contact [osaprag@augustiniani.cz](mailto:osaprag@augustiniani.cz)

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

We are looking for a **English teacher** for our school in Prague. If you are interesting helping please contact Fr. Juan.

On Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> of May it will be the last Religious education classes. Next Sunday the **First communion** of our young parishioners. Please pray for them!

**The 14th Annual Marian Pilgrimage** to the Shrine of the **Gracious Madonna**, at sv. Dobrotiva-Zajecov, will be held on June 4<sup>th</sup>. We meet in front of St. Joseph's church on Josefská Street, at 08:30 am, Saturday morning, June 4<sup>th</sup>. If you do not have a ride please contact Fr. Juan Bautista for details. In keeping with our tradition, please bring a lunch, which you can share with another person on pilgrimage.

SIGN UP: In the sacristy of St. Thomas Church

## ***The 8th PARISH FESTIVAL***

### **4. June 2011. Monastery of St. Dobrotiva-Zaječov**

This year the Parish Festival will be in the monastery of St. Dobrotiva in Zaječov. In the morning we will have the pilgrimage and in the afternoon/evening we will celebrate with different activities for everybody. We will finish at around 10:00pm. Buses will be available to bring people back to Prague. Also in possible to stay over night in the monastery and come back on Sunday. Please reserve the date in your calendar and come to celebrate with us.

## **GREAT ART NOUVEAU FLAT WITH PRIVATE PATIO AS OF 20.06.2011**

65m2 totally refurbished flat in beautiful Art Nouveau building on Rehorova street, Praha 3 (featured in many books on Prague's architecture). Large bedroom, living room, kitchen and full bathroom with tub and shower. Ceilings 3.30m2 high with original moldings in many rooms. Bright flat with windows on both street and patio side of building. Flat is furnished with double bed, sofa sleeper for guests, washer, refrigerator, microwave, oven stove, dishes, utensils and much, much more. Private 25m2 private patio with teak garden furniture (no sharing with other tenants!) Excellent public transportation (trams 5,9 and 26, bus 135, metro C (hlavni nadrazi) as well as short walk 10-12 mins to Vaclavske Namesti or Namesti Republiky) Available as of 20.06.2011. 16000kc plus expenses (gas, electricity and telephone line) Only serious tenants with legal right to stay in the Czech Republic, please! Further information, viewing and photos available upon request at [estebandepraga@yahoo.com.ar](mailto:estebandepraga@yahoo.com.ar)