



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

## THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

„ My children cannot be sold as slaves“

(Leviticus 25)



Advent 2011

November 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, 20118

The 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent. B

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# St. Thomas Church

### Reflection on the Gospel

The Church's year begins with the first Sunday of Advent and is divided into a three year reading cycle: year A covers Matthew; B, Mark; and C, Luke. John, the fourth evangelist, is read during the latter part of Lent, Holy Week and on certain feasts. This B year of Mark commences at the end of his Gospel, where in earnest, enigmatic often apocalyptic prose, he describes the finale of human history intertwined with contemporary events in a sweeping revelation "of what lies ahead". The apocalyptic genre itself is defined as "the uncovering of secrets concerning the end of time and the course of history through the medium of unusual natural settings or occurrences". This shortest gospel of only 16 chapters written about AD 70 uses the contemporary Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (AD 70) as a prelude to the beginning of the end marking the parousia or second coming of the Lord. The first and second readings from "Third Isaiah" (so named from the final editing) and First Corinthians respectively reinforce this sense of Mark's urgency. Isaiah, addressing God with the seldom used title "Father", begs for divine help in national tragedy while Paul hastens to assure his Corinthians of God's grace (or gratuitous goodness revealed through salvation in Christ) and peace (his given joy experienced by those embraced by Christ) amidst community tensions. Easily disturbed by these portents, the disciples are urged to be watchful: stay awake, watch with a sharp eye and be on guard. Of course, there will always be rumors of the Lord's imminent return. Beginning with the accepted letters to the Thessalonians (ca. AD 50), such dates have been posited by Montanus, the wild visionary, as AD 175, by the Cistercian Abbot, Joachim of Fiori for 1257, by John of Leyden for 1534 and by the Adventist Millerites for 1844. Lack of space spares further review of the Jehovah Witnesses claims for 1914 and 1977, Sun Moon, the tragic David Koresh of Waco or the deranged Jim Jones of Guyana each with their own prophecy of "the end". For us Christians, what really matters is that we be personally prepared so that whenever the Lord of history returns he will find us vigilant and awake. Let us be faithful to our vocation by prayerfully doing his work here on earth. Stay awake, the Lord is near!

### Study of Today's Readings

**FIRST READING:** We all have good times. And we all have bad times. Bad times give us a hint at the despair and desperation found in this reading. Several generations had passed from the return of the exiles in Babylon. Jerusalem and its Temple were being rebuilt. A sense of normal living had returned. Yet, the people were forlorn. Life was hard. And God seemed to be far away. The author of these passages (the so-called "Third Isaiah") spoke the prayer of the people. How long before God's people returned to glory? How long before God's presence shone before the nations? Note the prayer for divine intervention was mixed with self-examination. The loss of stature was not necessarily God's fault [64:5b-7]. Yet, note also the sense of hope. The petitioner called upon God as Father and asked for his return [63:16-17]. Like those who lamented in Jerusalem, we, too, may have times we feel cut off from God and his blessing. Yet, there is always hope. For the Lord is coming. Soon! When did you experience "bad times?" How did God give you hope?

**SECOND READING:** Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians addressed the controversies that tore the community apart. As explained in last week's reflection, Corinth was a cosmopolitan port city. Not only was the city known for its multi-cultural mix, it was also known for its cult to Aphrodite and its fertility rites. The title of "Sin City" for Corinth would not be too far off the mark. St. Paul wrote the letter with an eye toward the city's nature, as much as the infighting among the cliques in the community. St. Paul began all his letters with a standard greeting. While the salutation ("to" and "from") is not present in this reading (1:1-2), the greeting of God's "grace" (a reference of God's presence for the Greek Christians in his audience) and "peace" (a reference for the Jewish Christians) is listed. Then, Paul reminded his readers of their privileged position before God. God's grace created a reciprocal relationship among the believers; it "enriched" the knowledge and speech of the followers as it caused a "confirmation" of faith. In other words, grace causes people to believe and it deepens their faith commitment. In fact, the deepening of faith in some of the community causes more faith among others. This was all a gift from God. The "enrichment-confirmation" cycle grace created would sustain the Corinthians until the Final Judgment. And the Corinthians would stand innocent in this Judgment. Why? God gave them his gracious gift and he could be trusted. After all, God created a bond of fellowship between believers and their Savior, Jesus Christ. This brief introduction set up Paul's response to the first of many controversies addressed in the letter: the question of missionary authority. We, like the Corinthians, must never forget the power of God's gift. God's very life changed us and sustains us with hope, even in the bleakest times. It gives us faith and deepens that gift.

**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

## **Pepsi, Anyone?**

Pro-lifers often refer to the legalization of abortion as a “slippery slope” implying that the moral evil inherent in this procedure would only increase over time. Forty years ago, abortion was justified solely on a “woman’s right to choose”. Now it has become a means by which one enterprising business seeks to improve their market share.

In August 2010, PepsiCo decided to enhance its products by using stem cells extracted from the fetal remains of aborted children. The world famous maker of soft drinks agreed to pay \$30 million to Senomyx for the development of artificial high-potency sweeteners for its beverages. When a pro-life group wrote to the two companies urging them to use a non-objectionable, viable cell line listed in their patents, PepsiCo replied that using cell lines derived from aborted fetuses, would produce “great tasting, low-calorie beverages”, despite the fact that its own Code of Conduct boasts that they “deal with customers, suppliers, the public and our competitors in an ethical and appropriate manner.”

PepsiCo has obviously lost the moral capacity to understand that using stem cells of aborted children to enhance a soft drink is obscenely wrong. Unfortunately, the outcry necessary to alter their plans is not likely to happen any time soon. Abortion has been with us for so long that’s it has muted our moral outrage. We will no doubt continue to tolerate what constitutes the cannabilization of the youngest members of our human family to enhance the quality of our own lives. But the consequences of this collective descent down the slippery slope will be grave indeed and the cost of justifying moral evil and permitting it to leech into our communities will be dare I say will end badly for all of us.

[www.lifesitenews.com](http://www.lifesitenews.com) Oct. 26/11.

For further information see [www.cogforlife.org/pepsiboycott](http://www.cogforlife.org/pepsiboycott)

## **Feasts**

- 30 *Andrew* the first called apostle is particularly venerated as the special Patron of Scotland and the Ukraine. Legend has it that he was crucified on an X shaped cross in Patras, Greece.
- 01 *Edmund Campion*, an English Jesuit priest, was cruelly murdered for the profession of faith during the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1.
- 03 *Francis Xavier*, the famous Jesuit missionary, who died on the frontier of China, is the Patron of Missions.
- 04 *Barbara of Nicomedia* is celebrated as the Patroness of our Chapel.

## **Announcements and Ongoing Activities**

\* This Sunday after Mass there will be a meeting of the Parish Council at approximately 12:30 PM. All the members of the council are expected to be present for this important meeting; the members of the Financial meeting are also urged to be present.

\*This Sunday also a **bazaar** of clothes in the refectory to help handicaps children

\* **The Giving Tree.** A Giving Tree is dedicated to fulfilling wishes of children who would otherwise go without gifts during the holidays. This is made possible with the help of generous individuals who donate gifts and energetic volunteers to make it work.

Are you interested in making a child’s holiday wish come true? Our Parish is having their sixth annual Giving Tree. Here’s how the Giving Tree works.

- Select a child from the list (it will have an orphan’s age, gender, code and wish on it).
- Buy gift specified on ornament (new, not used).
- Bring unwrapped gift to the church in the refectory after Mass no later than Dec. 18 with a tag with the name of the child and code attached.

Please see Fr. Juan after Mass every Sunday to be assigned to a child or deliver your gift.

\* Tuesday, 06 December, the Feast of Saint Nicholas, in the church of Saint Nicholas, at 06:00 PM Mass will be celebrated for the intentions of our children and young people by the Cardinal Miloslav Vlk.

\***St. Nicholas Visit follows Mass on 4<sup>th</sup> December.** Parents are asked to bring a gift for your child (make sure name is on the gift) and a small gift for the orphanage. Gifts will be collected outside the Religious Education classrooms or in the Sacristy before Mass

We thanks to all whom assisted to the **thanksgiving dinner** in our School last Sunday.

Sunday December 11<sup>th</sup> we will have a **join Mass** with the Czech and Spanish community. After Mass the Spanish community invites us for the advent tradition of “**Posadas**”. Then will be a join lunch and in the afternoon several a activities for children and adult. You are invited. Come to celebrate with us!