



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

Today's Prayer

Say this Prayer Today:

**The more we call on the Lord
the more we can feel His Presence.
Day by day He draws us closer
to His loving heart.**

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January 28th and 29th 2012

The Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time B

St. Thomas Church

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The Reflection of the Gospel

Today's gospel reading from Mark describes a "typical day" in the life of Jesus. Such a day was filled, according to the evangelist, with preaching and healing of various maladies including demonic obsession and possession. Difficult as it is for us to ascertain precisely the nature of such "demonic infestations," it is a fact that ancient peoples often discerned in unrestrained, bizarre or even anti-social behavioral patterns, an evident presence of unfriendly spirits thought to inhabit the visible and invisible world. But, why does Mark relate these rather unsettling incidents?

First, the evangelist Mark was a product of his time and cultural upbringing. Writing during the mayhem of the great Jewish rebellion (A.D. 66-72), he naturally interpreted the traumatic destruction of the temple and the loss of Israel's homeland to the Romans, as a prelude to the end time. From the very beginning of his gospel, he demonstrates that the pivotal point ushering in this dramatic finale was the mission cum message of Jesus of Nazareth. Although other contemporary prophets and wonder workers abounded on the religious-political scene, it was the word of God announced uniquely through Jesus that would effectively break the yolk of Satan. The healing of the obsessed and possessed, therefore, with simple commands without the accustomed elaborate rituals of exorcism (in Greek this means "a casting out") or magic meant that a new, definitively final era was now breaking into and redirecting the course of human events. Satan's days were numbered for the kingdom of God was near, in fact, it was now present through the person of Jesus. Mark relates that in their very moment of defeat the powers of evil were forced to confess that this Jesus was the "holy one of God."

Whatever Jesus did or said was meant not to startle or entertain: his message was and still is a challenge to believe so that "we may have life more abundantly."

Study of the First Reading

The book of Deuteronomy was "discovered" during the reign of King Josiah. Even before King Josiah was on the throne, the nation of Judah was reduced to the city-state of Jerusalem; the great powers of the time (Egypt and Babylon) treated Judah as a vassal state or as a no-man's land. With Jerusalem endangered of being conquered, there was a push to put the Law and the traditions of the Temple priests on paper. The book not only preserved the Law and traditions; the religious ethic of compassion and the collective wisdom of the nation's rulers were presented. [15] While the book saw a great prophet arising; the caveats below actually discouraged the prophetic tradition. Prophets were usually lower class, self-appointed critics of the religious hierarchy. Prophets always gain the wrath of the ruling bureaucracy. As Jesus commented, religious leaders erect monuments to prophets whom the ancestors of the leaders killed. Deuteronomy recognizes the power of the prophetic tradition, but raises the stakes by justifying the murder of the unpopular prophet (see 18:20) [16 & 18] Who is the great leader foretold? If the authors of Deuteronomy were bureaucrats, their vote would be for the king, a leader appointed by God to speak for God. The prophet king was a tradition that started with King David as the inspiration for the psalms. Even Jesus referred to King David as a prophet. During the Babylonian exile and afterwards, people desired the charismatic leader who had aspects of king and prophet. [19-20] There are two caveats: one against the revolutionary and one against the false prophet. The disobedient person who did not listen to God's words, also did not obey his Word found in the Law. This person was an outlaw, an anarchist. By definition, he should die. The second warning was against the false prophet who spoke in God's name or in the name of idols. This person set himself against the religious leaders. If the religious leaders spoke for the Law, then the prophet critical of the leaders stood outside the religious institution. He was no better than the anarchist; he, too, should die. But, what happened when there was no religious institution (as in the Babylonian exile)?

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 if you want to add announcements to the bulletin at "wfaix@yahoo.com" or contact Dias Fernando at Dias.Fernando@pbschool.cz Please send at latest by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin

Upcoming Events

01 Brigid of Ireland (+525) a disciple of Patrick and foundress of monastic centers, she is co-patroness of Ireland with Patrick and Columba

02 The Presentation of the Lord in the Temple. This feast, formerly called "the Purification," commemorates the offering of the Infant Jesus in the temple according to the prescriptions of the Law. It is also called the feast of the "Encounter" between Jesus and his people symbolized by Simeon and Anna as related in Luke 2:21-40.

03 Stephen Bellesini OSA(+1840), an Augustinian pastor who was known for his charity to the poor and cholera victims.

Blaise of Sebaste, Armenia (+300) a bishop martyr who is invoked against illnesses of the throat. Throats will be blessed on his day after Mass next Sunday, February sixth.

Ansgar or Oscar (+865) the bishop of Bremen and apostle of the Scandinavians.

04 Agatha (+251) a young woman martyred for her profession of the faith in Sicily.

Study of the Second Reading

This study continues last week's reflection on detachment. But, in these verses, Paul stressed the practicality of the single life. Implicitly, Paul reflected on his own situation. He was free to travel and preach the Good News without relationship attachments. He was spiritually ready for the return of the Lord. Despite the Roman law mentioned in the note above, the freedom of the single life in the ancient culture allowed for such possibilities with little personal cost. If one could withstand the gossip, rumor, and even slander of neighbors and family, one could devote time and energy to prayer and evangelization. For Paul, this was the ideal. Obviously, the single life both then and now has real advantages. But take away the expectation for the immanent return of the Lord, and Paul's argument was one-sided. While he focused upon the undivided attention a single Christian can make to the Lord, he failed to mention the advantages the married state added to a life of holiness. Married life may distract the husband or wife from their devotion to the Lord (even that of Aquila and Prisca mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:19?), but the sacrifices of compromise and devotion made to spouse and children can certainly open up the heart to the Lord. Married life was a proper way to God. We must realize that Paul wrote from his life experience and his personal expectations. While his advice was (and still is) solid, there was another view point he did not address. Yes, a community of single people can focus clearly on the Lord. The cares of the world demanded by the married state do interfere with that focus. But even the distractions of married life can and do strengthen one's spiritual life. Single or married life depends upon the call of the Lord.

Announcements and Ongoing Activities

- Every Saturday at 9:00am feeding of the **homeless**, as a social service
- Fr. William, **the pastor** will be away for the next month. Fr. Juan B. will be the ordinary pastor in his absence. In cases of emergency he can be reached through Fr. Juan at 602684538
- Please be prompt in bringing children to **Catechetical instruction** on Sunday mornings which begin at 09:45 am. Thank you for your attention to this matter.
- **Parish dance** on the Archbishop palace on February 17th from 7:00pm. A good opportunity to celebrate together with the other members of the community. Tickets and information with Michael Rainey.

Presentation of the Lord. February 2nd

The feast was first observed in the Eastern Church as "The Encounter." In the sixth century, it began to be observed in the West: in Rome with a more penitential character and in Gaul (France) with solemn blessings and processions of candles, popularly known as "Candlemas." The Presentation of the Lord concludes the celebration of the Nativity and with the offerings of the Virgin Mother and the prophecy of Simeon, the events now point toward Easter.

"In obedience to the Old Law, the Lord Jesus, the first-born, was presented in the Temple by his Blessed Mother and his foster father. This is another 'epiphany' celebration insofar as the Christ Child is revealed as the Messiah through the canticle and words of Simeon and the testimony of Anna the prophetess. Christ is the light of the nations, hence the blessing and procession of candles on this day. In the Middle Ages this feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or 'Candlemas,' was of great importance.

"The specific liturgy of this Candlemas feast, the blessing of candles, is not as widely celebrated as it should be, except of course whenever February 2 falls on a Sunday and thus takes precedence. There are two ways of celebrating the ceremony, either the *Procession*, which begins at a 'gathering place' outside the church, or the *Solemn Entrance*, celebrated within the church."

Things to Do:

*Ask your parish priest to bless the candles that you will be using on your home altar this year.

*Have a family Candlemas procession.

*Read Luke 2:22-35, the account of the presentation including the Canticle of Simeon.

*Meditate on the constant *fiat* of Our Lady of Sorrows, who embraced the will of God even as Simeon predicted that a sword would pierce her heart.