



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

Today's Prayer

The more we call on God
the more we can feel God's
presence.
Day by day we are drawn closer
to the loving heart of God.

February 15th and 16th 2014

The Sixth Sunday in
Ordinary Time – Year A

St. Thomas Church

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GOSPEL REFLEXION

Jesus commented on two, interrelated commands on oaths: 1) do not take false oaths and 2) keep an oath to the Lord. The majority of the discussion in 5:34-36 focused on the false oath, basing an oath on something that has no value (so the oath could be taken lightly). By relating creation and Jerusalem to God, Jesus basically asserted there is no such thing as an "oath taken lightly." Every oath is an oath made to God, so must be taken seriously. People are better off just answering "Yes" or "No" and meaning it than to make idle oaths.

What of serious oaths? Father Meier in his tome "A Marginal Jew, Volume Four" applied the injunction of Jesus to any oath made to God. He pointed out the almost weekly use of non-trivial oaths to God. According to Meiers, Jesus opposed such oaths, even those commanded in the Torah! Yet, St. Paul swore oaths to the Lord, even for his apostolic ministry (see Acts 18:18 and 21:17, for example). Why Jesus would oppose a common, but pious act remains a mystery. Personally, I cannot think of any theological reason to defend the "Yes, yes, no, no" injunction beyond the condemnation of false or trivial oaths.

Jesus' commentary on Torah precepts continue in 5:38-48 (Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A). As we continue the study, let's keep in mind the reason for the commentary in Matthew's gospel: Jesus sought to teach the purest notion of the Law. Such purity was meant to lead the adherent into a fuller relationship with God. These interpretations were idealistic, so they were meant as goal to reach.

How do you try to live out God's Laws? How has the effort brought you closer to God?

Please contact, Fr. William Faix, OSA if you want to add announcements to the bulletin at "wfaix@yahoo.com" or juan@augustiniani.cz Please send at latest by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin

STUDY OF THE SECOND READING

Sometimes, we post-moderns are swept up in our own hubris. We think we live in a golden time, or, at least a n enlightened time. "If people in the past only knew what we know," the logic goes, "they would have (fill in the blank)." The past was blind, but now we can see. We are so much wiser than they were, based upon our knowledge. We could never make the mistakes they made. We're superior. Of course, such prejudice is pure hubris. We might know more, but we are still blind, because we are ignorant of so much more. A truly wise person is humbled by the fact that the more he knows, the more he realizes what he doesn't know. He also realizes that contemporary knowledge does not automatically leads to a better life, either ethically or spiritually or psychologically. What we know does not make us better people.

In these short verses to the community at Corinth, St. Paul implicitly gave them that message. Information, even spiritual gnosis, along with spiritual charisms, does not make them superior people. In fact, Paul explicitly undercut any such argument by shifting to a Jewish notion of wisdom. The wisdom of the Living God could only be gleaned from his activity in the world. His ultimate revelation, his highest level of activity in the world was found in the presence, life, death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus was the WISDOM of God. This was the WISDOM Paul proclaimed to the community, to the elderly, even to the leaders of the age. Opposed to this dynamic revelation, the wisdom of the Greek age was found in whatever special knowledge they claimed to have. But that self-centered "wisdom" blinded them to the presence of God found in Christ Jesus. If the contemporaries of Jesus would have seen God's WISDOM (the true identity of the Christ), they would not have crucified him. But, how can they, or anyone, behold God's WISDOM? That insight is the activity of the Spirit which knows all things, even the depths of the divine.

What is a Catholic Marriage?

I remember registering stories of young couples while I was growing up. They would be planning their wedding and speak of marriage preparation classes. For the Protestants, this meant a few sessions, depending on their church, with the pastor in order to give the pastor a feeling that the couple was entering into the marriage with the best intentions. For Catholics it was something different. The Catholic couples were required at that time to attend a weekly course regarding marriage that lasted up to 1 year prior to that couple receiving permission to marry in the church.

So what does it really take to be married in the Catholic Church?

First, you should contact your Parish Priest, as soon as you are engaged and start talking about preparation requirements and available dates for the ceremony.

The couple should be baptized Christian; it is not a requirement for both members to be Catholic. Non-Christians cannot receive the sacraments. For a Catholic to marry a non-Catholic Christian, express permission is required from his or her bishop. A Catholic can marry an unbaptized person, but such marriages are natural marriages only; they are not sacramental marriages. The Church, therefore, discourages them and requires a Catholic who wishes to marry an unbaptized person to receive a special dispensation from his or her bishop. Still, if the dispensation is granted, a non-sacramental marriage is valid and can take place inside of a Catholic church.

You cannot be too closely related. This is normally covered in civil code (law) as well, and current guidance is that no one closer than a second cousin may be wed.

You must be free to marry, meaning that neither of the parties is currently bound by a marriage contract. If one of the partners, Catholic or non-Catholic Christian, has been married before, he or she is free to marry only if his or her spouse has died or he or she has obtained a declaration of nullity from the Church. The mere fact of a divorce is not sufficient to prove the nullity of a marriage. During marriage preparation, you must inform the priest if you have been married before, even in a civil ceremony.

You must be in good standing with the church. Meaning that you should attend service regularly and be free of scandal in your life. This is normally where the subject of co-habitation comes up. So, for instance, a couple who are living together may not be allowed to get married in the Church until they have spent sufficient time living apart. (There are exceptions—for instance, if the priest is convinced that the couple is not engaged in immoral behavior but is living together out of economic necessity.) Likewise, a Catholic politician who supports policies condemned by the Church (such as the legalization of abortion) may be denied a sacramental marriage.

Finally, what may have until only a few years ago, self evident, the two individuals requesting either a sacramental or non-sacramental service in the church must be of the opposite sex.

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**

****Eucharistic Ministers:** There will be a short training session for those who would like to serve the community as a Eucharistic Minister. The session will be on **Sunday, February 16** after mass at **12:15**. The training will be led by Fr. William.

****Looking for an au pair, near London.** We are looking for someone to come and stay for 6 m to a year. We would be able to give them £60/week, plus board and lodging for some help with my three (6,4 and 18m) and housework. It would be lovely to have a Catholic au pair. tom-za.hall@ubs.com

**** Please see the web pages of the parish for more information: www.augustiniani.cz/en**

**** No activities in the Church during this week!**

In his call for the Synod, Our Holy Father has asked bold questions about society and about how we should address these issues as a church. In the section titled “Marriage according to the natural law”, we find the following questions:

- a) What place does the idea of the natural law have in the cultural areas of society: in institutions, education, academic circles and among the people at large? What anthropological ideas underlie the discussion on the natural basis of the family?
- b) Is the idea of the natural law in the union between a man and a woman commonly accepted as such by the baptized in general?
- c) How is the theory and practice of natural law in the union between man and woman challenged in light of the formation of a family? How is it proposed and developed in civil and Church institutions?
- d) In cases where non-practicing Catholics or declared non-believers request the celebration of marriage, describe how this pastoral challenge is dealt with?

These are questions that we will have to deal with as a church and as individuals. The correct answers will only be known to each of us in our hearts. For myself, I share with you that one of my oldest and dearest friends, declared he is gay a few years after we graduated college. I had to make a choice, of loving him for the friend I had known for many years or to accept that he was who he was and if I was to be a friend, then I needed to accept him for all he was.

He has had the same partner for 15 years now, and recently they wed in the state of New York in a civil ceremony. They are both successful and solid members of the community, being charitable and caring in their lives.

They did not request a marriage in the church, but in today’s world, where registered partnerships and legal marriage between the same sex exists, it is a question that needs to be addressed.

For me, the decisions were simple; he is and will always be my friend. I do not have any friend with whom I agree with all of his or her opinions or how they live their lives. As for the decision on who goes to heaven or hell, I will side with Pope Francis and say it is not my place to judge.