

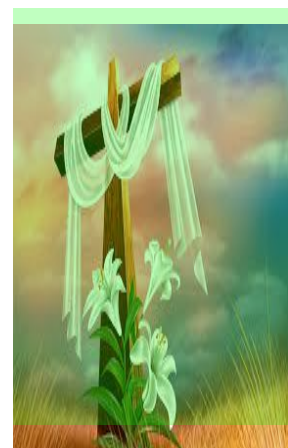


St. Thomas Church: established July 1, 1285 by King Vaclav II

Today's Prayer

Say this Prayer Today:

Dear Jesus, I come to you today
longing for your presence.
I desire to love you as You
love me.
May nothing ever separate
me from You.



Fourth Easter Sunday

April 25th and 26th 2015

St. Thomas Church

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Reflection on the Gospel

Strike the shepherd and the flock will scatter runs an ancient proverb. Today's gospel reading drawing from the familiar parable of the *Good Shepherd* seeks to identify Jesus with his faithful in a very intimate way. True, in order to understand all the implied nuances one would have to be acquainted with some elemental pastoral practices of first century Palestinian shepherds. One point is certain: security was *the* overriding concern. To protect their flocks, herdsmen would corral them in a primitive enclosure consisting of a circle of stone about two feet high with an opening across which the shepherds would lie during the night. The safety of the sheep was thus guaranteed by the very life of the shepherd who had to face nocturnal, hungry predators.

After a restive night, the shepherds would enter the enclosure at dawn and call or whistle for their sheep. This is in sharp contrast to modern methods of animal husbandry which rely on horses, and/or specially trained dogs *to drive* their sheep *before* them. Ancient shepherds, themselves *led* their sheep out in search of pasturage and water. It is this image of the "leading" shepherd that Jesus uses so effectively in his parable.

All this was said in face of self-serving Pharisees, the contemporary religious leaders, who excelled all others in knowledge and observance of the Law. Jesus, in his appropriation of the *Good Shepherd* image, leads his people, *his flock*, by teaching and healing rather than by stringent commands. Further, he lays down his life for the very flock that so shamefully scattered at his trial. Yet, many, in fact, like these early disciples, feel squeamish about this decision of Jesus for inevitable death. But, the evangelist John does not try to "explain it away"; he demonstrates that the death of Jesus cannot be understood or separated from his glorious resurrection-ascension or return to the Father. Each of these moments of death, resurrection and ascension belong to the very mission of Jesus that cannot be treated in isolation to the exclusion of the others.

What does all this mean? As the Good Shepherd teaches so does he rescue us from needless fears. St. Peter says *When the Good Shepherd appears you will win the crown of glory*. Let us wait in confident hope in him *who has gone before us*.

Our Mother of Good Counsel

April 26

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, under the title *Mother of Good Counsel* has a special place of honor among the Augustinians. A fifth-century church in Latium was named *Saint Mary of Good Counsel*. Pastoral care of its people was entrusted to the Augustinians in 1356.

The original painting entitled *Mother of Good Counsel* is in the Augustinian Church in Genazzano, Italy. This picture portrays Mary holding the child Jesus. Her veil is around Jesus' shoulders, and Mary, caring mother that she was, is giving some good counsel to her son.

An ancient legend says that this fresco was miraculously transported to Genazzano from its former home in Albania. The fresco came to rest on a narrow ledge inside the then unfinished Genazzano church, according to this legend, and it remains in the same place today.

During a restoration of the church begun in 1957, however, scientific tests gave evidence of the true origins of the small (12 inches by 17 inches) fresco. It was probably painted sometime between 1417 and 1431 by the Italian artist Gentile de Fabriano. It appears to have been part of a larger fresco that covered most of the church wall.

The unfinished church was used, even though more construction remained to be done. The wall with the fresco was later covered with other decorations, and even later was painted over. Years later a widow named Petruccia promised to pay for additional construction in the church. During this construction, the original painting of mother and child was revealed, perhaps by falling plaster or peeling paint. Its unexpected appearance was considered by some to be a miracle. Thus the legend grew.

The Genazzano church became a popular place of pilgrimage. Numerous cures took place there. The Augustinian Friars were invited to minister to the spiritual needs of the pilgrims. They continue to serve there to this day.

Most Popes, shortly after their election to that office, visit the shrine of Our Mother of Good Counsel to pray for wisdom.

The image of the Shepherd in the Old Testament which is realized in Jesus

i) In Palestine, the survival of the people depended on the cattle breeding: goats and sheep. The image of the shepherd who guides his sheep to the pasture was known by everyone, just like today we know the image of the bus driver. It was normal to use the image of the shepherd to indicate the function of the one who governed and guided the people. The prophets criticized the kings because they were shepherds who were not concerned about their flocks and did not guide them to the pastures (Jr 2,8; 10,21; 23, 1-2). This criticism of the bad shepherds increased and reached its summit when the people were deported into exile because of the fault of the king (Ezk 34, 1-10; Zc 11, 4-17).

ii) In the face of the frustration which they had to suffer because of the way the bad shepherds acted, the desire arose to have God as the shepherd, a desire which is very well expressed in the Psalm: "The Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing I shall want (Ps 23, 1-6; Gn 48, 15). The prophets hope that in the future, God himself will come to guide his fold, like a shepherd (Is 40, 11; Ezk 34, 11-16). And they hope that this time the people will know how to recognize the voice of their shepherd: "Today listen to his voice!" (Ps 95, 7). They hope that God will come as a Judge who will pronounce judgment among the sheep of the fold (Ezk 34,17). The desire and the hope arise that one day, God will arouse good shepherds and that the Messiah will be a Good Shepherd for the People of God (Jr 3, 15; 23, 4).

iii) Jesus fulfils this hope and presents himself as the Good Shepherd, different from the bandits who, before him, had robbed the people. He also presents himself as the Judge of the people who, at the end, will issue the sentence as the shepherd who separates the sheep from the goats (Mt 25, 31-46). In Jesus the prophecy of Zechariah is fulfilled, which says that the good shepherd will be persecuted by the evil shepherds, annoyed by his denunciation: "Strike the shepherd, scatter the sheep!" (Zc 13, 7).

iv) At the end of the Gospel of John, the image is extended and Jesus at the end is everything at the same time: gate (Jn 10, 7, shepherd (Jn 10, 11) lamb and sheep (Jn 1, 36)!

Coming soon:

17.5.2015: First Communion Sunday

24.5.2015: Confirmation Sunday

29.5.2015: The Night of the Churches from 18: 00 till 00:00

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

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.

Lectors and Eucharistic ministers : If you would like to support the community as a lector or Eucharistic minister at mass on Sunday's please contact Ann at dalyaann@hotmail.com

I would also like to hear from those who took part in the training session for Eucharistic ministry last February.

This Sunday meeting of the **Parish council** after 11:00am Mass in Casiciaco room.

THE 11th PARISH FESTIVAL

We share joy!

Kampa park -Saturday, June 6th 2015

11:00am-08:00pm

Mass

Games and activities for for all ages: Music for all around the world, photos of the history of the Church, dance...

Costumes of the Earth, Africa, Augustinian fraternity, games,

Cooking Competition...

Theater

Program for children: games, ponies, castles, piñata...

Clown Roberto

Presentation of activities

And much more....

Come to celebrate with us!!!

The 18th Annual Marian Pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Gracious Madonna, at sv. Dobrotiva-Zaječov, will be held on May 16. We meet in front of St. Joseph's Church on Josefská Street, at 08:30 am, Saturday morning, May 19. 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. Whatever is left over (if you so will) is given to the poor. There is a brochure, which explains the origins and traditions behind this beautiful 700-year pilgrimage, which has been renewed after forty years of communism.