



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



This is the logo for the Holy Year of Mercy, which opens Dec. 8 and runs until Nov. 20, 2016.

October 31st and November 1st
2015

All Saints Sunday in
Ordinary Time-Year B

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St. Thomas Church

The Reflection of the Gospel

Today is the solemnity of all Saints. Originally, November 01 was the beginning of the ancient Celtic “first of winter” or *Sambain* observed as the *feast of the dead* similar to the contemporary Mexican *Dias de los Muertos* or *day of the dead*. The Christian calendar is more celebratory with its consecutive feast of all saints (01 November) and the commemoration of all the dead (02 November). I personally opt for yet a third commemoration of “all those now living on the earth” which would be seen as a sign of our solidarity not only with those who have triumphed but also with those who struggle in circumstances so casually reported or ignored by the news media. The festival of all saints reminds us of those who had endured the present travail for the sake of the future promises of Christ just as the commemoration of all the dead reminds us of our own fragility and immortality. These two festivals do, indeed, complement one another. Paul repeatedly urges to be imitators “of Christ” who is the source of sanctity. “Sanctity” itself is open to all shades of misinterpretation. As much as the fortitude of martyrs, the chastity of holy men and women, the patience of those called to exalted missions in life inspire, all of us- saints included- are unfortunately faced with “highs” punctuated by the tedious, the monotonous, well, the boring. The true path of sanctity, therefore, is found in the imitation of that steadfast fidelity revealed through Jesus Christ. Everything in our faith should be evocative of that vocation to faithful discipleship, to that learning experience which lasts as long as we live and breathe. In this quest it is so easy to pass blame: the pope, the local bishop and priest(s), the parish or parishioners certainly have been and, perhaps, are at fault for not creating that authentic atmosphere of the primitive church and its fluid charismatic appeal. True enough, we must concede. But, how about the example of my own life? How about the attention/inattention I pay to my own family, my work and my own spiritual needs (prayer, scripture, and attendance at the Eucharist)? How do I stand before God and his saints who triumphed?

Study of the First Reading

What is heaven like? While we might have images of winged angels who sit upon clouds and play harps, early Christians saw the afterlife and the end of time as liturgy. Heaven was eternal worship in the presence of God. These verses from Revelation describe the gathering of the saved before the throne of God. The scene began in the royal court of heaven. Everyone, the faithful, angels, the elders, and the four creature (in concentric circles beginning with the creatures flowing outward?) stand before God. The faithful, “144,000” in 7:1-4 are the same as the uncountable masses in 7:9. The difference between the two descriptions (144,000 were from the tribes of Israel; the uncountable masses were from every nation and race) was symbolic only. Christianity introduced a new wrinkle to the notion of the saved; since the Savior of Israel extended his mission to all people, the saved remnant would also extend to all people. Through the universal mission of the Church, the notion of “Israel” no longer just applied to a particular nation or race and not be particular plot of land. All peoples would even celebrate the holidays of the Chose People; the image of the palm branches in 7:9b evoked the feast of Tabernacles, a joyous celebration of the harvest and the presence of God with his people in the Exodus. The marks of the saved were the seal on their foreheads and the white robes. The seal represented the royal imprimatur, a sign of an official document. The seal of the Living God was to be placed on living beings; the seal of faith (a baptismal anointing?) signified those who would live out their lives as followers of the Nazorene. They were to be “martyrs” in the fullest sense of the word, living “documents” of the Living God; they would proclaim God’s message by their lives. The white robes (7:9, 14) were baptismal garments symbolizing a life born again in purity. Washing the robes in the blood of the Lamb (7:14) showed the intimate connection between baptism and Eucharist; the life of the Lamb (symbolized by the Blood) that was given to the saved washed them clean. The statements of the saved and the angels spoke to the two types of language used in worship: prayer and creed. The saved proclaim their salvation from God and the Lamb (7:10); the angels (and the saved? in 7:10) praise God with superlative attributes. Prayer has always helped to form faith statements; creedal statements have been reasons for praise and worship. The first point made in the passage is the last one to be mentioned. The saved suffered through the “Great Tribulation.” Take away the reference to the End Times and the saints still stand out for their perseverance in times of public or personal tragedy. Holiness is meant to be tested and proven in life. Holy people are as much survivors as they are believers. The mark of a saint is not necessarily the quality of their certainty, but of their faithfulness. The faith of the saints is not to be found simply in adherence to doctrine, but making that doctrine come alive through their life’s commitment.

Letter from our mission in Congo!

Dear Father Juan,

I'm in Europe these days. I take the opportunity to send you the report of the past school year and the beginning of the new one.

As promised, I went to Dungu to try to clarify many things. Because of the level of partners we collaborate with, it wasn't easy. We start first to organise the list of the children. Many have gone back to their village, other disappear, other became pregnant, other died, ... Now we have 22 children left from the first group. To them, we add one who is albino, Yvette Kahindo. Some other albinos can be added. You know, albinos are very discriminated. They are seen as sorcerers and often rejected by the family. If you don't mind, we can insert them in the list.

The situation of the long war of Congo, since 1996, has consequences even in Kinshasa which didn't directly experience it. Many families came because it was the only place more or less safe. Coming from very far, by foot or by small boat, those families generally have hard time in the big city. They have left their land of origin and all the activities - small trading or agriculture - which were helping them to survive. They live in a new situation. They came with children and most of them have grown. Those families have problem to educate and to take care of them. Many of them start to work early. In fact, the rate of children working is very high in Congo - around 8.000.000 children. In this situation, the girls are very in danger. They can start prostitution.

We found, in Kinshasa, some of this situation. As we had some money left from the last amount sent, we thought to help some of those girls with. The help consists in making them study and offering some health care if necessary - one is diabetic and another one suffered of tuberculosis. It was really a need and we couldn't do anything from the Vicariate. I want to know what you think about because I should have asked you before taking that decision. But, as I said, it was really a need and it's difficult not to do anything.

As you can see from the account, we still have 500\$. The expenses in the next days are the living and the medicines of Francine. In January, there will be the second rate of this year.

In the beginning of the new year, at Dungu, we bought what the children wanted to start. I send you some photos too.

I thank you for all you're doing.

Fraternally,
Georges, osa

Announcements and Ongoing Activities

*If you would like to receive a copy of the bulletin by email, please contact osaprag@augustiniani.cz

* **Lectors and Eucharistic ministers:** If you would like to be a **lector** or Eucharistic minister at mass on Sundays please sing up with after mass in the courtyard or e mail Ann at dalyaann@hotmail.com

* Every Saturday at 9:00am **feeding of the homeless**, as a social service

* **Bible Study** takes place every Tuesday from 18:30-19:30 in Tagaste room. Everyone is welcome to come and learn more about our sacred scriptures.

*Wednesday at 18:30. Tagaste room takes place **Adult Religious education**.

*We welcome all our new parishoners to St. Thomas Church. Please introduce yourselves, if you wish at refreshments after the 11:00 am Mass on Sundays or just call us or visit at your convenience.

***Deceased Family Members and Friends:** There will be a book available in which you may write the names of deceased family members and friends so that prayers may be offered for the repose of their souls during the month of November.

***DINNER OF THANKS.** End of November. JOIN IN! EAT and DRINK! CELEBRATE! More information and volunteers please see Michael Rainey.

***Marriage preparation** will be on November 21st from 09:15 till 15:30 in the Refectory of St. Thomas Monastery. More information with Fr. William, OSA 602643365

* Meeting and discussion about the situation and our experiences with **Refugees** will be on Thursday November 12 at 07:30 pm in the Monastery refectory at Josefská 8. Prague.

***Professional translator** (English, Czech and Italian) and language teacher (English, Italian and Czech) is looking urgently for a job. Please send an email at ApolinarieRubesova@seznam.cz or phone 732 380 481