



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 31st February 1st 2015

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 juan@augustiniani.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.

06 The Japanese Martyrs (+1597-1637) a multitude of missionaries and their converts who underwent horrendous tortures and death rather than deny Christ.

Dorothy (+305) was a young martyr in what is now modern Turkey. She is patroness of our chapel of ease for children. New Zealand celebrates Waitangi Day.

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 imminent 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.

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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 January 27th till March 2nd month. Fr. Juan B. will be the ordinary pastor in his absence. In cases of emergency I can be reached either through Fr. Juan at 602684538

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

If you would like to serve as a lector or Eucharistic minister at the Sunday mass please contact Ann at dalyaann@hotmail.com. Training will be provided for those who have not previously served in these ministries.

Post-confirmation youth group: For 14-17 year olds who would like to meet to discuss and share views on issues of faith today and enrich their own faith. The time and dates will be decided depending on those interested. Please contact Ann at dalyaann@hotmail.com or see me after mass.

We invite you to the Refectory after Mass to enjoy coffee, goodies and fellowship – and to help us give a warm St. Thomas welcome to **Fr. James Halstead, OSA** visiting us this month from Chicago!



Social Media at St. Thomas Church, Prague

Keep up with the Parish, Religious Education calendar, Parish Events, photos or the latest quote from the Vatican and Pope Francis. Follow us on Facebook at:

St. Thomas Church - Prague's English-speaking Catholic Community

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/St-Thomas-Church-Pragues-English-speaking-Catholic-Community/298895753494190?ref=hl>

So, please be sure to take the minute to join us on FaceBook – and be sure to share the photos you take at parish events and celebrations with others as well. Remember, we are only as good as the sum of our community --- so join in, helping to keep our Parish the welcoming and dynamic group that we are.

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