



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

Today's Prayer

At any time of the day or
night we can call on
Jesus.

He is always waiting,
listening for our call.
What a wonderful
blessing.



June 25th and June 26th 2016

The Thirteenth Sunday in
Ordinary Time – Year C

St. Thomas Church

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GOSPEL STUDY

Most of us have encountered ,at least occasionally, pronounced hostility to religion from a variety of people. Often enough a non practicing Catholic will conjure up memories of some repressive parent, teacher or priest who, under the guise of religious authority, enforced discipline with guilt-inducing effectiveness. Some are confronted with thorny ethical issues; others struggle with a lifestyle at variance with Catholic teaching, and there are those growing numbers who have never been catechized or even catechized properly. Frequently, it is persons like these who acidly challenge our own often complacent religious presuppositions over a coffee table or at a cocktail party hour. We cannot, of course, refer to these instances as "persecution"; for me they are an examination of the collective Catholic conscience.

I myself had witnessed instances of harassment and persecution when working in communist ruled Poland during the seventies and eighties. For example, army conscripts were subjected to periodic strip searches to determine whether they were wearing or carrying any religious symbols (crosses, rosaries or medals). Should such objects be found the soldier was subjected to withering ridicule and severe punishment. In the former Czechoslovak Socialist Republic marriages, baptisms and instruction of the young was punishable by dismissal from work and barred access to higher studies. In China, I understand that a Chinese Augustinian Recollect friar has been imprisoned for over 35 years for having instructed children in the faith.

Persecution is still a specter in some parts of the world. But, when the author of today's gospel wrote not only his community{probably located in Syria) but Christians everywhere were experiencing the full effects both of Roman hostility and Jewish excommunication. Harsh experiences in this instance gave the fledgling, at times disheartened followers of Christ, not only a sense of solidarity, but also of identity with their Master. The cross, imported from Persia, that ghastly, needlessly cruel form of execution soon became a beloved symbol. To accept the full implications of the cross meant just this: Jesus was and always will be the center not only of community but of our lives.

First Reading:

Immediately after Elijah realized the presence of God in the faintest whisper of wind, he received a mission: anoint two kings and a prophet. The prophet would become an apprentice. But eventually, the apprentice would replace Elijah. This apprentice was Elisha, a farmer of some means (the number of oxen and the plough indicated Elisha had some success in his livelihood).

With the call, Elisha took his leave from his extended family and his livelihood. With the sacrifice of the oxen and the destruction of his plough, Elisha cut all ties. He was now free to follow God's call as a prophet and live as a nomadic preacher.

God calls everyone to a mission. Trust in him and his divine providence. Encourage others to do the same. We might not all be called like Elisha to become prophets on the road. But God does expect us to have faith and not be too concerned about our own self interests.

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

June Feasts and Commemorations

29. SOLEMNITY OF THE APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL, martyred in Rome, they became the symbol of the unity of faith in Jesus Christ.

30. The First Martyrs of Rome(+64) those early Christians and immediate disciples of Peter and Paul who gave their lives for the faith.

01. Junipero Serra, OFM(+1784) Spanish missionary and founder of many of the California missions.

-Canada Day (1867)

03. SOLEMNITY OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE AND PRIMARY PATRON OF OUR PARISH COMMUNITY. His feast will be celebrated Sunday at 11:00 am.

Year of Mercy: "Merciful like the Father"

Let us rediscover these corporal works of mercy:

1. to feed the hungry,
2. give drink to the thirsty,
3. clothe the naked,
4. welcome the stranger,
5. heal the sick,
6. visit the imprisoned,
7. bury the dead.

And let us not forget the spiritual works of mercy:

1. to counsel the doubtful,
2. instruct the ignorant,
3. admonish sinners,
4. comfort the afflicted,
5. forgive offences,
6. bear patiently those who do us ill
7. pray for the living and the dead."

Ongoing Activities

- ❖ We **welcome** all our new parishioners 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.
- ❖ We wish all our families a wonderful, restful summer and look forward to welcoming you back at our Sunday School in September
- ❖ If you would like to receive a copy of the bulletin by email, please contact osaprag@augustiniani.cz

Second Reading:

What does it mean to be free? A lack of enslavement or the prerogative to act? In these verses, Paul tried to answer these question in the light of grace. Grace frees us. But, what does it free us from? What are we to do with this freedom?

Paul's opponents insisted that conversion to Judaism preceded salvation in Christ. For only Jews could be saved by a Jewish Messiah. And salvation could only be realized in a life faithful to the Law.

Paul rejected this logic. For salvation was universal. Only faith in Christ was required. This meant that God acted beyond the Law, so that people would be free from its duties. They could realize they were acceptable to God through a faith relationship in him. Simply following the rules was not enough for people to justify themselves. They needed to trust God.

Trust in God was a freeing experience. No longer was a believer weighed down by obligation. He or she could act based upon a different interest. But was that interest self-serving (i.e., desires of the flesh)? Or, was that interest that of the Spirit? The question beyond salvation was simple. Whom did the believer live for?

Paul posed these questions in the context of community. Life in the Spirit meant a life of service for others, where their interests were equal to one's own. When self interest became primary, however, life in the Christian community suffered. Indeed, the backbiting, the gossip and the slander could devour a community, just as Paul's cannibal analogy implied. Pure self interest and the Spirit opposed each other. For, pure self interest was the root of sin. But, life in the Spirit was self giving, just as Christ gave himself on the cross.

The Law only defines evil. It is not the source of evil. We Christians are free from the Law, but not from the influence of sin. But salvation is far more than freedom from rules and regulations. It is life in God's Spirit. For with the Spirit, we can see and act in ways that transcend our limited human nature. We can see and act for the good of others. We are free to be for others.