



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



October 15th and October 16th
2016

The Twenty Ninth Sunday
in Ordinary Time – Year C

St. Thomas Church

Josefská 8, Malá Strana, Prague 1, 118 01

Tel: 257 530 556, 602 643 365

GOSPEL STUDY

A *parable* is a short story from which a moral lesson can be drawn. Today's gospel reading of the persistent widow is a lesson on persevering prayer. The widow in the ancient world stood on the margins of society, helpless as she was, after her husband's death. Charity would be her only recourse. Legally "voiceless" she could only appeal to the local judge who, as it turns out, is a mean spirited bureaucrat. Dismissing hopes for any pecuniary recompense "caring neither for man or God" he coldly avoids the widow's pleas. But she does not desist. In desperation the judge (possibly fearing physical assault) relents and grants her a favorable judgement. In brief the lesson is simple as profound.

Recall the first reading wherein Moses prayed "with outstretched arms" for his embattled people. As long as his arms remained aloft the struggle went in their favor; when lowered the tide turned against them. Persevering in prayer meant victory. With the widow we have the following lesson. If a cruel judge would hear the request of the bereft widow how much *more* would God hear the prayers of the needy and helpless? Is our prayer that persevering?

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

St. Magdalene of Nagasaki, O.S.A.

20th October

Magdalene was born and grew up during a period of open and undisguised hostility toward religion. Persecution was manifest to all. The types of "imaginative and original" torture used by the opponents of the faith show very clearly the hatred in the hearts of those who ruled.

Her parents, who are described by historians as "most virtuous and noble Christians," were martyred about the year 1620, when their daughter was in her early adolescence. The first Augustinians who arrived in Japan in 1623 were members of the Augustinian Order's observant movement: Fathers Francis of Jesus and Vincent of Saint Anthony. As an active and enthusiastic Christian, Magdalene made contact with them and though communication was difficult, she worked with them as an interpreter and later as a catechist. From the start she found herself well disposed to Augustinian spirituality, characterized as it is by the search for God, interiority, and the living of faith in communion with others.

In their work of evangelization the missionaries emphasized the promotion of religious associations and gave special attention to the Augustinian Third Order. However, it was quite difficult for Christians to live their faith publicly. To approach the missionaries for doctrinal and religious nourishment was risky for themselves as well as the friars. Following the example of many other Christians in similar difficulties, Magdalene took refuge in the hills and dedicated herself to baptizing converts and sustaining those who have grown weak in their faith.

The persecution made necessary all sorts of subterfuge, but Magdalene did not lose heart. She knew what she wanted and did not hold back in spite of the dangers: she asked to be accepted formally into the Augustinian Order. Her mind and heart were already Augustinian; in 1625, Father Francis admitted her into the Third Order of Saint Augustine.

In 1632 the Augustinian friars, who had been her spiritual counselors, were burned alive. This holocaust was recognized and solemnly proclaimed by Pope Pius IX in 1876. Magdalene kept alive the memory of these friars, and with it grew her own desire for martyrdom. Now her counselors in the struggle were two other Augustinians, Fathers Melchior of Saint Augustine and Martin of Saint Nicholas, who continued to nourish her spirit on the ideals and practices of Augustinian spirituality. When these two friars were also put to death, she turned to Father Jordan of Saint Stephen, a Dominican whose own profession was based on the Rule of St. Augustine.

The brave spirit and conviction of this Augustinian tertiary moved her to go voluntarily to the jailers and declare herself a follower of Jesus Christ. There were threats, tortures, promises of exposure to public scorn, taunts, ridicule all the usual procedures in such cases. But Magdalene had a clear knowledge of her faith and of the obligation which she had freely taken on. Attired in her Augustinian habit, she reached the end of her martyrdom on 16 October 1634, after thirteen days of torture, suspended upside down in a pit of offal. After death her body was burned and her ashes scattered in the bay of Nagasaki.

Three hundred and forty-seven years later, on 18 February 1981, in the city of Manila, Pope John Paul II honored Magdalene with the title of Blessed. Then on 18 October 1987, World Mission Day, she was solemnly canonized in Rome by the same Holy Father. Proclaimed with Saint Magdalene was a large number of martyrs from the Land of the Rising Sun, of various nationalities and states of life and of different religious orders. The life of Magdalene, martyr of Japan, honored for the firmness and courage of her faith, is a song in praise of heroism. To live the gospel as she did with fervent resolve, in a clear, complete, and radical way, without failing or yielding is the heritage of great souls.

An American Augustinian servant of God Fr. William Edward Atkinson, OSA

William Edward Atkinson was born on January 4, 1946, in Philadelphia, one of three sons and four daughters of Allen Atkinson and Mary Connelly. He attended St. Alice's Elementary School and Monsignor Bonner High School, and upon graduation, asked to join the Augustinian Order. He spent a year as a postulant at Augustinian Academy, Staten Island, New York, and then entered the Villanova Province's novitiate of Our Mother of Good Counsel in New Hamburg, New York, on September 6, 1964.

The following February 22, 1965, while recreating with several other novices on the novitiate grounds, the toboggan in which he was riding hit a tree, leaving Bill almost completely paralyzed from the neck down. Amazingly, he survived the accident, and following extensive rehabilitation, expressed his desire to continue as an Augustinian. He began again his novitiate year at Villanova, professing simple vows on July 20, 1970, and solemn vows on July 20, 1973. A care team of friars assisted Bill during his time in formation, and for many years beyond, as he moved about with the use of a motorized wheelchair. Bill completed his years of college and theological studies at Villanova, and with a special dispensation from Pope Paul VI, John Cardinal Krol ordained him to the priesthood at his hometown parish of St. Alice in Upper Darby, Pa., on February 2, 1974, almost nine years after the accident that left him a quadriplegic. He celebrated his first Mass at the Fieldhouse of Villanova University.

From 1975 until 2004, almost thirty years, Fr. Bill was stationed at St. Joseph's Friary, where he taught at Msgr. Bonner High School, was assistant school chaplain, senior class retreat coordinator, moderator of the football team, and the director of the after-school and Saturday detention program. He was known for his wonderful sense of humor, and was recognized as an excellent teacher, encouraging moderator, and compassionate confessor. Fr. Bill was the recipient of many awards and acknowledgements, among them an honorary doctorate from Villanova University in 2000.

In 2004, Fr. Bill moved to the Health Care Unit of Saint Thomas Monastery at Villanova University. He passed over to the Lord on Friday afternoon, September 15, 2006, surrounded by those who loved and cared for him. His funeral liturgy was celebrated on Tuesday, September 19, 2006 in Saint Thomas Church, Villanova University, after several hours of visitation. Fr. Bill was buried the following morning in the Augustinian section of Calvary Cemetery, West Conshohocken, Pa.

His reputation of holiness, already present during his lifetime, increased greatly after his death. The cause for his canonization was opened by the Augustinian Order on September 15, 2015, in Philadelphia.

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.

❖ 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 contact Ann at dalyaann@hotmail.com
A new schedule will be prepared soon.

❖ 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**.

❖ The **choir** is looking for new members. If you like to sing, we'd like to have you join us! Please contact Frank Jicha at frankjicha1@gmail.com for more information.

Parishoners Day - Sunday October 16th immediately following Mass

St. Thomas Church will hold its 7th Parishoners Day on Sunday October 16th, 2016. This is an opportunity to meet fellow parishoners, our Priests, Parish Council members and to learn more about "What's Happening" and how to get involved.

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."