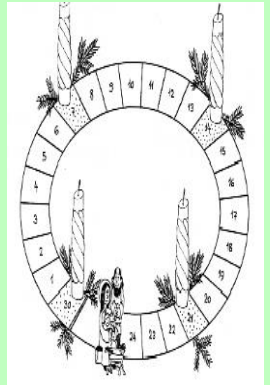




St. Thomas Church: established July 1, 1285 by King Vaclav II

Today's Prayer

The more we call on
God
the more we can feel
God's presence.
Day by day we are
drawn closer
to the loving heart of
God.



December 10th and 11th 2016

The Third Sunday of
Advent-Year A

St. Thomas Church

Josefska 8, Mala Strana, Prague 1, 118 01

Tel: 257 532 675,

602 643 365

THE THIRD ADVENTSUNDAY-A

Today is *Gaudete Sunday* which in Latin means the "Sunday of Rejoicing." To express this note of hope and exultation, the priest even wears rose colored vestments as an exception to the usual somber violet. For, within two weeks we will be celebrating the solemnity of the birth of Jesus Christ. After four weeks of meditating on the "last days" we now turn our meditative attention to Christmas, the historic "first coming" of the Lord among us some two thousand years ago. The readings from Isaiah and James speak for themselves. The first from Isaiah, the prophet, writing some 700 years before Christ, announces *what* God will effect for his people; James gives some implicit instructions as to *how* we are to receive the Lord. The gospel of Matthew, as it were, fulfills and reveals what these two readings preach through a request made by John, now a prisoner of political circumstance. With his execution close at hand, this last Old Testament prophet anxiously desires to ascertain Jesus' credentials. Indirectly answering *via* a messianic paraphrase of Isaiah,

Jesus answers John's inquiring disciples with one of the most beautiful passages in the New Testament: everything that God had promised his awaiting people is *now* being fulfilled. The gospel closes with a beautiful *eulogy*- as it were- of John's ascetical life and powerful ministry: *History has not known a man born of woman greater than John the Baptizer.*

As we prepare for Christmas accompanied by those commercial traps and mindless distractions, try each day to reflect on the question John once asked: *Who are you?* The answer can be tossed over by rote memory but more importantly does it lead us into the presence of Jesus? *Blessed are those who seek for they shall find.*

The First Reading

Although rooted in first Isaiah, these passages rang true beyond their historical underpinnings. The verses portray eschatological hope, yet assume a dire situation. Notice the contrasts. The barren wilderness would rejoice in springtime bloom. The beauty of natural wonders would be given to the most desolate environs. God would reveal himself in lowest places. And these areas would respond in worship. [35:1-2]

Like the wilderness, the poor and weak would feel the saving touch of God. Those beaten down would be strengthened with a new courage. The ill would be healed. The blind would see. [35:3-6a]

Both the place and the people seem to be in ruin. Yet God would return their glory. In the mind of Isaiah and his contemporaries, this glory would signal a return to past heights for the monarchy. For Jesus' peers, the glory would look ahead to the end of days.

No matter whether we look back or forward for the "ideal" time, let us remember Isaiah spoke of God's initiative, not our own. God's initiative found its zenith in the birth of Jesus. Like Isaiah's audience (or Matthew's), we, too, look forward to the time God visits his people.

Coffee, Cookies & Conversation follow Sunday 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" Please send at latest by the Friday of the week as it has to be added to the bulletin

Advent 2016

Project : Elementary and Secondary Education Assistance to Children of Poor Families in the Parish of Saint-Augustine of Poko.

The following project plans to help children 18 years and younger who belong to poor families within our own parish. The project hopes to ensure that these children have access to a basic education program.

This project is part of an effort to mobilize resources towards the creation of a youth ministry program. The program would encourage parents to create a Christian environment within their families and help establish a Christian leadership group with a social development focus.

Overall yearly cost: 2000 EUROS

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

General Objective

Ensure the yearly education of 10 school-aged children that belong to impoverished Christian families from Saint-Augustine Parish in Poko.

Specific Objectives

SO 1. To ensure the costs of educating 10 children in the area schools – 5 girls and 5 boys under 18 years of age.

SO 2. To ensure the travel of one child to Kinshasa so that he/she can attend a school in the Capital.

PLANS

1. To conduct a fundraiser campaign towards the education of children belonging to impoverished Christian families.

2. To pay the education expenses for the 10 children identified by the Parish of Saint-Augustin.

3. To ensure follow-up of the beneficiaries of this education program with their respective schools.

LENGTH OF THE PROJECT

The project covers a period of six years (starting in 2017) This period encompasses one complete cycle of primary and secondary education in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

MAINTENANCE OF THE PROJECT

1. The parents of the children benefitting from the program are organized under a small parish association that deals with the educational matters of parish youth.
2. Parents will contribute two pigs so that they can build communal pigsty
3. The funds generated by this pigsty will contribute to the local initiatives run by the priest and help all men and women of good will.

More information: www.augustiniani.cz/en or Fr. Juan at juan@augustiniani.cz

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.

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**.

Song books/Missals. On several Sunday's we have been short of song books for the congregation. A recent inventory showed that many books were unaccounted for. If you have one of the song books at home could you please bring it in when you are next at St. Tomas.

Song books/Missals- Please return the songbook to the back of the church at the end of mass. Thank you.

The Giving Tree. A Giving Tree is dedicated to fulfilling wishes of children who would otherwise go without gifts during the holidays. This is made possible with the help of generous individuals who donate gifts and energetic volunteers to make it work.

Are you interested in making a child's holiday wish come true? Our Parish is having their sixth annual Giving Tree. Here's how the Giving Tree works.

- Select a child from the list (it will have an orphan's age, gender, code and wish on it).
- Buy gift specified on ornament (new, not used).
- Bring unwrapped gift to the church in the refectory after Mass no later than Dec. 18 with a tag with the name of the child and code attached.

Please see Fr. Juan or Mary Beth after Mass every Sunday to be assigned to a child or deliver your gift.

Our CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE OF MASSES 2016:

December 24: Christmas Eve,

18:00/06:00 – Mass for Families and Children.

11:30pm/23:30- Christmas carols sung in Czech and English followed by the traditional Midnight Mass.

December 25 CHRISTMAS DAY, THE SOLEMNITY OF THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,

11:00 – Mass.

December 31,

18:00/06:00 – Mass to thanks for the year 2010

January 1,

Mass at 11:00 am