



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

St. Thomas Church

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 6th and 7th 2017

The Solemnity of
Epiphany

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Reflection on the Gospel

THE SOLEMNITY OF EPIPHANY, THE MANIFESTATION OF JESUS

Early Egyptian Christians celebrated the Visit of the Magi (Matthew 2) as well as the baptism of the Lord (Mark 1:6-11) on January 6. From the fifth century this day has been celebrated throughout the eastern Churches as Christmas Eve since the Birth of Christ according to the Julian calendar is commemorated on 07 January. Throughout central Europe, door lintels are chalk-marked with the cipher of the year and the initials of the "Three Kings" (traditionally Casper, Melchior, Baltassar) who offered gifts to the Infant Jesus, i.e., 20+C+M+B+18. Perhaps, we can mark our own doors in faith.

The Epiphany Proclamation

Dear Sisters and Brothers, the glory of the Lord has shown upon us and shall ever manifest itself among us to the day of his return. Through the rhythms and changes of time, let us call to mind and live the mysteries of our salvation. The very center of the whole liturgical year is the *PASCHAL TRIDUUM OF THE LORD* crucified, died, buried and risen that will culminate in the *SOLEMN VIGIL OF EASTER* this year of grace 2018 with the dawn of 1 April. Every Sunday as in a weekly Easter, holy Church makes present that great and saving deed by which Christ forever conquered sin, death and hell. From Easter, our Christian Passover, comes forth all other days we keep holy. *ASH WEDNESDAY* the beginning of the Lenten season on 14 February; the *ASCENSION* on 10 May; *PENTECOST* on 20 May; *CORPUS CHRISTI* on 31 May; the *MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS* on 8 June and, finally, the *SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING* on 25 November. Likewise, on the feasts of the Holy Mother of God, the Apostles, the Martyrs, the Confessors, the Virgins and all holy Men and Women and in the commemoration of all souls, the pilgrim Church proclaims the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. To Him who was, who is and who is to come, the Lord of time and history, be endless praise with Father through the Holy Spirit, now and unto all ages, AMEN.

Study of the Readings

FIRST READING: This reading is found in the so-called "Third Isaiah" (chapters 56-66). Most Catholic biblical scholars agree that the book of Isaiah can be divided into at least two separate units (chapters 1-39 for the prophet Isaiah; 40+ for "Second Isaiah"). Scholars divide the book based upon language, writing style, and historical events mentioned in the text. While these scholars feel confident delineating the text into two units, they are more uncertain subdividing chapters 40-66. Third Isaiah discussed ritual, Sabbath, and the Torah. But chapters 60-62 stood out with their optimism. Many scholars who accept the "Third Isaiah" thesis claim these chapters were written in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (fifth century B.C.) when the zeal of the returned exiles had worn off. Locals now lived as subjects under foreign powers. Rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple had become tedious. So, the people needed a pep talk. In such a dark world, a light would shine: the glory of the Lord! The world would be dark, just as in the primordial beginning. Only the light of the Lord among his people would show the way. [60:1-2] Suddenly, the focus of the light shifted to the people (or a remnant among the people). Their rising (like the sun rise) would shed light on those in the darkness and would lead them forth, even the exiled faithful living in the Diaspora. [60:3-4] With the rising of the people would come renown (glory) and great wealth. The riches of the great nations would flow to Israel. The people would have power even over the sea! [60:5-6] These optimistic verses have messianic overtones, for they speak of an idyllic time in the future. Many Jews in the time of Jesus had these images in mind when they spoke of God's judgment. Yet, Matthew used these verses when he penned the arrival of the Magi. For the evangelist and Christians ever since, the Magi saw the glory of the Lord rise in Judea. But, the people and their leaders were blinded. This passage challenges us to see what the Lord is doing. To look beyond the tedious and the mundane. To see his glory shine. And to be led by the Lord.

Upcoming Events

- 07 The *NATIVITY OF JESUS* is celebrated today in the Orthodox as well as in many Greek Catholic communities who still use the Julian (Old Style) calendar.
- 08 *Women's Day* in Greece. *Galileo Galilei* (+1642), *Robert Baden Powell* (+1941).
- 09 *Adrian of Canterbury* (+709) founded the first school on English soil. Today is also the birthday of *Karel Capek* (*1890) who coined the word *robot* and *Simone de Beauvoir* (*1908) who pioneered *feminism*.
- 10 *Kentigern of Glasgow* (+603) evangelized that city and its environs. Today died *Carolus Linnaeus* (+1778), the Swedish botanist and *Gabriel Mistral* (+1957), the Chilean diplomat-poet

Announcements and Ongoing Activities

- Every Saturday at 9:00am feeding of the homeless, as a social service.
- **Bible Study** sessions are held each Tuesday evening at 6:30pm/18:00 in Tagaste room. All are welcome to join and reflect on the Word of God.
Religious education for adults sessions are held each Wednesday evening at 6:00pm/18:00 in Tagaste room.
- Catechetical Instruction recommences next Sunday, 14 January, at 09:45am.
- Fr. William will be away on Order affairs beginning 23January to the end of February.
- We want to thank all who made many children so happy through contributions to the *Giving Tree* last Christmas. God bless!

Epiphany

6 January commemorates the manifestation of the glory of Christ to the Gentiles in the person of the Magi, as well as His Baptism and first miracle at Cana. Originating in the Eastern Church in the 3rd century, it soon spread to the West, where it is now commemorated especially for the apparition to the Magi. In England and many European countries it is popularly known as *Twelfth Night* (after Christmas) and is the occasion for the revival of numerous quaint customs. The feast is a holy day of obligation in England, Scotland, and Ireland. The office of the day is one of special beauty.

SECOND READING: At the time this letter was written, Ephesus was a major seaport on the west coast of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). At the mouth of Cayster River, the city had a long history. Ionic Greeks settled the area in the tenth century B.C. Ephesus was controlled by different major powers as a gateway to the Aegean Sea. In 133 B.C., the Romans conquered the seaport and controlled the area for the next millennium. Many biblical scholars have questioned the authorship of this letter to the city. The writing style and grammar of the letter did not match those of Paul's other writings. Ephesus was not mentioned in the salutation of the letter, unlike the Paul's other letters. And, one of Paul's major themes (the controversy over baptizing Gentiles into the community) seemed to be missing; the author spoke of a co-equal relationship between Jews and Gentiles (2:11-22). Many have speculated that the letter was written to a group of church communities in Asia Minor (Ephesus would have been the stand out), by one of Paul's disciples in 80-90 A.D. Since the ancient people had no sense of copyright laws and a critical view of history, writing in the name and spirit of a known teacher was not uncommon at the time. Chapter 3 focused upon Paul's role as the herald for God's revelation. God revealed a divine mystery to Paul and gave him a mission to share that mystery with others. The mystery was God's plan of salvation. In hindsight, Paul could see the unfolding revelation peak in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul shared his mission to evangelize with others (apostles and Christian prophets). The power that drove these men was God's very Spirit. As a result, Gentiles shared in the promise made to the Jews by God (co-heirs), they sat as equals at the table of the Lord with their Jewish brethren, and they shared the same hope in the coming of the Messiah. The Good News (a vehicle of God's "grace") was the means for faith. We evangelize others through our words and example. But have you ever considered evangelization as a vehicle for God's grace? After all, like St. Paul, our words and actions present the face of Christ to others. They reveal God's activity in the world. And they invite others to join us to the Christian life.

Mother of God

Title of Our Lady first used by Saint Elizabeth at the Visitation, "And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me," (Luke 1:43). Found in early liturgical prayers, according to Saint Cyril (5th century), this term *Theotokos* (bearing God) was perfectly familiar to the ancient fathers. It was employed by Saint Ignatius of Antioch (c.90) and Saint Athanasius (c.373) and finally sanctioned at the Council of Ephesus (431).