



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

### Today's Prayer

"Be still and know that I am  
God."  
Lord, Your words lead us to  
the  
calmness and greatness of  
your presence.

**"Our hearts are restless, O Lord, until they  
rest in you."**

September 10<sup>th</sup> and  
September 11<sup>th</sup> 2011

24th Sunday in Ordinary  
time A

# St. Thomas Church

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## TWENTY-FOURTH ORDINARY SUNDAY

This week's gospel reading is a continuation of last week's passage dealing with the problem of the sinning brother or sister. Last week's reading spoke about the recalcitrant sinner and those communal or public remedies employed by the Church which would both "objectify the sin" and draw forth repentance. This week's reading concentrates on the spirit and the personal quality of forgiveness: how and how often does *the one wronged* forgive *his offender* within the community; is there a realistic limit to Christian forgiveness?

In the Old or First Testament there is no one single word for "sin." Yet, behind the various terms used the descriptive notion can be summed up as "a failure, in part as irregularity or crookedness, in part as infringement of the psychic totality of the soul." While Jesus did not speak of specific sins, he was aware of those offenses which cried out for the need of God: "self-centered confidence, arrogance and the lack of compassion." While not conscious of any personal sin (John 8:46), He identified with and accepted the name of "sinner" (John 9:16); nor did he summon anyone to self-contempt rather "he drew them (i.e., sinners) to himself."

Thus, Peter's question about the "number" of times that one is expected to forgive a brother, is answered in that memorable parable of forgiveness which is not so much interested in quantity as in the *quality of forgiveness*. The hyperbole abounding in the story (ten thousand talents= "billions") serve only to emphasize the trusting, boundless mercy of the "king" in contrast to the narrow selfishly cruel "servant" who could not forgo a mere pittance. The lesson is straightforward. We all stand in need of the merciful forgiveness of God who will forgive us as we forgive others. The Lord's Prayer sums it up:

*"Forgive us our trespasses (sins) as we forgive those who trespass (sin) against us."* This is the basic condition for our own entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

## First Reading

Jesus ben Sirach wrote this book of wisdom about 180 B.C. This book (also known as Ecclesiasticus) was a text for the education of wealthy young men in Jerusalem just before the Hasmonean revolution (167-164 B.C.). Sirach revealed the tensions in the city: the rifts between rich and poor, between the local populace and their foreign rulers, between male and female. How does a righteous Jew live in such a culture of tension?

Maintaining friendships would be especially difficult in this environment. The temptation to "sell out" a friend for gain was great. But the repercussions would be greater. For example, slander injured the victim, the slanderer, and the person who believed the lie. In such an atmosphere, how does one repair damage?

Sirach gave the key: forgiveness. This virtue heals hearts and egos, restores relationships and peace. Forgiveness is a cornerstone upon which the just society is built. Yet, as we all know, forgiveness was not (and is not) a popular virtue. It's too easy to nurse anger and a vengeful spirit. "I'm sorry" and "I forgive you" seem to be the most difficult words to say.

Sirach reminded his contemporaries, just as the Nazarean told his followers, that to forgive others was the first step in realizing the forgiveness of God.

*What emotional or spiritual wounds do you nurse? How can you forgive those who caused your pain? How can you place your pain and those who hurt you before the Lord?*

## Roots of Augustinian Spirituality

### **Promotion of Justice, Unity, Harmony, Peace and Reconciliation**

Augustinians are called to contribute to the promotion of justice. Augustine wrote, *"You give bread to a hungry person, but it would be better if no one were hungry"*. We are challenged to address the root causes of hunger and other injustices of society.

Basic principles of Augustinian life include unity in diversity, respect for the dignity of each and every person, the promotion of the common good and the sharing of all God's good gifts among all people.

Hatred and violence will grow as long as people continue to be forced to live in extreme poverty, oppressed by many forms of injustice. All around us, people live in despair and hopelessness.

While many are looking for revenge, we Augustinians can give witness to the Gospel values of unity, harmony, dialogue, peace, reconciliation and justice.

### **Apostolic Service**

The Augustinian Order is a Christian Apostolic Fraternity. As such, we are dedicated to serving the Church in a variety of ministries.

Our friars work as active contemplatives in preaching and teaching, in spiritual direction and counseling; in parish, campus and hospital ministries; in theological research, and in the arts and sciences. We also serve as missionaries in Peru and Japan. We minister in high schools and universities, and are also involved in retreat work.

Where there's a need, we'll share our life as community in witness to the love of Christ.

**\*\*If you are interesting in knowing more about St. Augustine and Augustinian spirituality** come to the meeting that we are going to have every Tuesday at 06:30 pm from September 20<sup>th</sup>. More information with Fr. William, OSA

## Announcements

\* **Religious Education is starting from the 25<sup>th</sup> of September at 9:45am.** Information meeting for parents on 18<sup>st</sup> of September at 10am. If you wish to enrol your children please contact Monika Shaheen –[mshaheen@iol.cz](mailto:mshaheen@iol.cz)

\*Every Saturday at 9:00am **feeding of the homeless**, as social service

\*We are looking for an **English teacher** for our school. If you are interesting, please see Fr. Juan

\*Parish Council meeting. Sunday September 4<sup>th</sup> at 12:15 pm

### **\* Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers**

If you would like to serve the St. Thomas community as a lector or Eucharistic minister at the Sunday mass, please contact A. Daly at [dalyaann@hotmail.com](mailto:dalyaann@hotmail.com)

## **Saint Nicholas of Tolentine**

**September 10**

Nicholas of Tolentine (1245-1305) was a simple priest and Augustinian Friar who touched the lives of many.

His spirit of prayer, penance, austerity of life and devotion to the Holy Souls were notable. His preaching brought many to Christ.

Nicholas Gurutti was born in 1245 in Sant'Angelo, Pontano, Macerata, Italy. His family was rather poor.

He joined the Augustinian Order while a young man, after hearing the inspired preaching of Reginaldo da Monterubbiano, Prior (local superior) of the Augustinian monastery in Sant'Angelo.

As a priest and religious, he was full of charity towards his brother Augustinians as well as towards the people to whom he ministered. He visited the sick and cared for the needy. He was a noted preacher of the Gospel. He gave special attention to those who had fallen away from the Church. People considered him a miracle worker.

He often fasted and performed other works of penance. He spent long hours in prayer.

The story is told that, one day, having fasted for a long time, Nicholas was physically weak. While at prayer, Jesus told him to eat some bread marked with a cross and soaked in water in order to regain his strength. Thus arose the Augustinian custom of blessing and distributing Saint Nicholas Bread in his memory.

Another story relates that Nicholas, while asleep in bed, heard the voice of a deceased Friar he had known. This Friar told Nicholas that he was in Purgatory, and urged him to celebrate the Eucharist for him and other souls there, so that they would be set free by the power of Christ. Nicholas did so for seven days. The Friar again spoke to Nicholas, thanking him and assuring him that a large number of souls were now with God. Because of this Nicholas was proclaimed patron of the souls in Purgatory.

He is also considered the patron saint against epidemic disease and against fires.

During most of his adult life, Nicholas lived in Tolentine, Italy. There he died September 10, 1305. Canonized in 1446 by Pope Eugene IV, Nicholas is the first Augustinian Friar to be canonized after the Grand Union of the Order of St. Augustine in 1256.

The remains of St. Nicholas are preserved at the Shrine of Saint Nicholas in the city of Tolentine

