

ST THOMAS HISTORY



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The Augustinians Are Invited to Bohemia:

The arrival in 1262 of the Augustinians in Bohemia (or the "crown lands of St. Wenceslaus") marked one of the earliest attempts at implanting the Order of St. Augustine among the western Slavs. With zealous initiative friars at the newly founded Seemanhausen friary in Bavaria (sharing a common border with a burgeoning dynamic Czech principality) resolved to expand eastwards. An ancient tradition redacted during the baroque period attributes the founding of the monastery to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The chronicler relates that she requested Ulrich Zajic, an influential courtier at the court of King Premyslav Ottakar II, to build on his Ostrav or Insula estate "a church and monastery" dedicated to her Annunciation "for my servants (the Augustinian friars)." The power of such an attributed petition (dated to March 1260) was not lost on the friars and their patrons considering that the requested monastery was finished and consecrated posthaste by May 1262. Shortly after, in 1267, the monastery of Koruna Panni Marie ("Coruna Mariae Virginis") was founded in the northern Moravian town of Moravska Trebova, followed in 1268 by the monastery of St. Lawrence in Sopka, near Melnik, in northern Bohemia. The most important, however, of these and subsequent foundations was the royal church and monastery of Saint Thomas and Augustine situated beneath the kings' own castle in the burgeoning capital city of Prague.

Fortunately, the earliest documentary history of this Augustinian church and monastery, the Codex Tomaeus has somehow survived, mirabile dictu. This invaluable document describing the genesis of the Augustinian Order in Bohemia begins with an epilogue granting the fledgling Order of friars the twin assurance of papal support and protection. In quick succession three early rescripts were summarily issued specifically in favor of the Order's foundation in Prague.

Vaclav II, self-styled "the King of Bohemia and Margrave of Moravia" promulgated the first royal rescript, on July 1, 1285, soon followed by the document of the Benedictine Abbot Christian of Brevnov (August 09, 1286) and the third by Tobias, "the bishop of Prague" issued on August 13, 1286.

The royal rescript, issued by King Vaclav II, was among the first acts of this tormented young monarch once he attained his majority in 1283. His childhood, difficult even by then accepted rough medieval standards, was complicated by his premature accession to the Bohemian throne at the age of seven (1278). Following the tragic death in the battle of Moravske Pole (1278) of his immensely popular father, Ottokar II who had extended Bohemian influence from the Baltic to the Adriatic litoral, young Vaclav II spent his next seven years in confinement. As a helpless pawn in the hands of ambitious noblemen he was so psychologically and physically wounded by the experience that for the rest of his twenty-eight year reign he suffered

striking episodes of depression. Despite these handicaps he was a successful king. Marrying the Habsburg princess, Guta or Jitka in 1287, he was crowned King of Bohemia (1297) and King of Poland (1300). Conventionally pious according to the standards of his age, he, in addition to the Prague monastery of St. Thomas, gratuitously funded a monastic house in Domazlice (1288). His rescript in favor of the Prague friars was drawn up in the accustomed curial form wherein the King donator is solicitous that to "his cities...only those honest and outstanding in virtue should be invited to dwell." Apparently assured of their virtue, the invited Augustinian brothers or receptores were bound to remember the king's deceased father "before the face of God." To facilitate this obligation, Vaclav II bequeaths to them forever "the church of St. Thomas (donum) outside the walls of the New City below the Prague castle" on a site that he and a certain "Chunrad of Sacz" have agreed. The rescript concludes and the necessary royal seals were affixed in the presence of the witness, one "Welizlai, a canon of Prague and royal pronotary."

Otherwise, the rescript is rather spare. For example, it does not mention the chapel of St. Dorothy and the adjacent cemetery nor does it even acknowledge Benedictine proprietary patronage over the ecclesia beati Thom(a)e. The second or episcopal rescript, dated either on August 08 (or 13) 1286 and issued by Bishop Tobias of Prague, was more precise. In contrast to the king's simple donation of the church of St. Thomas in return for the friars' suffrages, the bishop now, in consultation with the Benedictine Abbot of Brevnov fleshes spells out such details crucial for the foundation of the "brother hermits of St. Augustine" in Prague. Once armed with the necessary royal, episcopal and abbatial approval for patronage of St. Thomas Church, its land and adjacent cemetery, the Augustinians were assured entrée into Prague's ecclesiastical and monastic circles. To ward off possible objections from the powerful monastic Breznov chapter, Bishop Tobias concluded his directives with a brief encomium lauding the "abbot's honorable men of the foresaid convent monastery (of Brevnov)." We can only guess whether such praise was intended to placate the monastic capitulars now under royal pressure to surrender their strategic Mala Strana benefice to such a motley group of non-descript friars. Bishop Tobias, too, in turn, may also have been pressured by Pope Clement IV who in the previous January "commanded that the priors and brothers of the Augustinian Order be allowed to live in cities, fortified areas and villages without hindrance." Whatever the reasons, this episcopal license supported both by royal decree and Benedictine compliance handed over the church of St. Thomas with adjacent properties to the Augustinian community.

The third rescript dated August 9, 1286 from Abbot Christian of Brevnov, frankly acknowledged the Saint Thomas property transfer as a fait accompli. Naturally, the "pious and humble petition" of King Vaclav, "the illustrious heir and lord of the kingdom of Bohemia and marquisate of Moravia," would

have moved Abbot Christian and his Benedictine chapter to action. And they freely voted in perpetuum, ownership and patronage "of St. Thomas church, its estate and cemetery" to the Augustinian friars hermits and their successors. Once passed this final adjudication, the Augustinians found their place in Prague, "the Mother City and Capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia."

The Church of Saint Thomas to the Year 1420:

When the Augustinians arrived in 1285, Mala Strana (the "Lesser Town") than comprised a closely parceled area nestled below the royal castle promontory or Hradcany ("sub arce" or "sub castro") and separated from the Staromesto or "Old Town" of Prague by the sinuous and unpredictable Vlatava river. So delimited by nature, Mala Strana once settled could never really expand and has maintained even to the present something of its picturesque yet changeless panorama. From its very beginning in the first decades of the thirteenth century through the first quarter of the fifteenth century it was a self-contained and, at times, consciously conceited "royal courtyard". Secure within a belt of protective fortifications ranging from around the royal castle to be bounded by the later Caroline ramparts to the river, the strana had its basic hub in what would be Malastranska namesti. Reduced over the centuries to a pedestrian transit point dominated by the baroque pile of sv. Mikulas and brooding seventeenth century palaces it is of interest to us as the site of the Augustinian church and monastery of St. Thomas, the Apostle.

Unfortunately, there is scant information about the architectural style and décor of the original church of St. Thomas and the adjacent chapel of St. Dorothy. According to recent archeological studies, the extant remains of a Romanesque structure with characteristic lancet windows carved in thick masonry still discernible within the south wall of the present chapel of St. Dorothy, can confidently be identified as the earliest remains of the original Benedictine church. Regarded as an invaluable heirloom of Czech architecture, this wall, now an integral part of St. Thomas's church, resembles some characteristic features of the neighboring St. Mary "under the Chain Bridge" Church dating from the late twelfth century. According to the ancient chronicle St. Thomas was dedicated in the year 1228.

At any rate, it was obvious that from the very beginning this cramped Benedictine structure was insufficient for these early Augustinian friars. Dedicated to preaching and pastoral ministry, the need for space was obvious and they soon embarked upon an expansion program on which they wasted neither time nor effort. According to the Codex Tomaeus building expenses were paid for in two ways. The first was realized through the

generosity of numerous citizens of Mala Strana, the Minor Civitas. Throughout the fourteenth century, a number of benefactors assisted the friars at St. Thomas in form of a property or head tax assessment (a census). Voluntarily levied by a proprietor on a person, a household or even a village with the express approval of the local magistrates or imperial chancery, the collected revenue was then given to the prior "for the convent of the monastery of St. Thomas." By any standard some of these benefactions were certainly munificent. The generosity of a certain Lord Bohuslav Svamberk of Mericia is a case in point. In 1342 he gave Nicholas of Launy, OSA, the local superior, a considerable sum of money "for the construction and furnishing of a new convent or college dedicated to the glory of God, his glorious Mother Mary and the sweet confessor, bishop and doctor St. Augustine." The same nobleman, quite apparently concerned for his salvation, even provided for the building of a cloister walk and directed that after his death all rents and full rights over the village of Lom be given the friars as their "inheritance forever." In 1391 Frenclzin, a householder of some means, on the other hand, offered a bequest that a light be kept burning perpetually before the image of Our Lady in that same cloister walk of St. Thomas monastery. Sifting through the evidence afforded by the Codex Tomaeus, it appears that the majority of such donations were made between 1351 through 1405 or that "golden age" which abruptly ended with the devastation of the Hussite wars beginning in 1420.

The second income came from the benefactions of the friar-friendly Luxembourg dynasty especially King John I "the Blind" (+1346), his queen, Eliska (+1330), their most generous son, Emperor Charles IV (1346–1378) and other numerous court prelates and retainers. This Luxembourg accession – regarded as pivotal in Bohemian political history – gained ascendancy with the extinction of the native Premyslid dynasty in 1310. Prague, their inherited seat and administrative center, now took on the air of an important European capital. As early as 1306 or some twenty-one years after their foundation in Prague, the Augustinians were released from a land tax paid to the Benedictine nunnery of St. George. They promised, in turn, to remember the Lady Abbess, a Premyslid princess by birth, and her community, in their suffrages. The year 1316, however, was even most memorable for the Order. On May 02, in the presence of King John I and his court, Peter von Aichspelt, the Prince Bishop of Mainz (the canonical Metropolitan of Prague) and Baldwin of Luxembourg, the Prince Bishop of Trier (a royal uncle), solemnly co-consecrated the recently completed Augustinian church of St. Thomas and St. Augustine. The edifice was richly appointed and, if extant descriptions are to be trusted, it must have been one of the most magnificent churches in fourteenth century Prague.

The Treasury of the Church of Saint Thomas Before 1420:

The inventory of vestments is carefully described in the Codex Tomaeus. From this detailed list we learn not only of the magnificent gifts of liturgical vesture and appointments but something of the structure of the church and the liturgical feasts celebrated by the Augustinians in the fourteenth century. Liturgical vesture enhancing the sacred atmosphere as befitting the dignity of God apparently was paramount for the Augustinians and their celebrations.

Each of the highest festivals (*pro summis festivibus*) feasts of the Church as Epiphany, Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, the Assumption, All Saints and Christmas had specified attire that, at times, could be quite elaborate and personalized. Jan Kluc, a knight, for example, had his personal coat of arms, "of a white dove emblazoned on a golden field embroidered with a cross of pearl." Nor were vestments the only donations. On the occasion Lord Henry of Rzedemburg's funeral in St. Dorothy's chapel, we read that a precious cloth "woven with a simple red lining" was given in his memory.

For the "greater" (*pro maioribus festivibus*) feasts of the Circumcision, the Ascension, the Nativity of Mary, St. Thomas and the death anniversaries (or requiems) of Henaslinus and his wife, Lady Margaret, who were buried below the chapter room, donors had stipulated the wearing of certain liturgical apparel. For example, on the foresaid requiems (or Masses for the dead) "vestments with matching dalmatics entirely woven in green, lined with red cloth with matching albs, stoles and maniples embroidered with the cross and images" were to be worn in memory of their noble donors. There is a notice in the Codex Tomaeus that Queen Anna of Bohemia (+1362), the third wife of Emperor Charles IV, had commissioned a set of red vestments embroidered with golden eagles to be worn on the "most solemn feasts" of the Church. Included in this list of festivals, incidentally, is the consecration date of St. Thomas on May 02nd. The friars often repaid their more generous benefactors such as Stephen, "the protonotary of the king" and Lady Margaret "whose ancestors were buried in the cloister" with interment in the monastic precincts. Hugwich, the attendant druggist and, perhaps, physican to the friars, was buried at the entrance to the sacristy while an otherwise unknown Gentensson was given sepulture in the chapel of St. Peter. The more celebrated as the Augustinian bishop Nicholas of Launy, imperial councillor and the first rector of the theological faculty at Charles University; Duke Alexander of Lithuania and his brother, Henry (who had been baptised in St. Thomas) and Hincón, the Augustinian auxiliary bishop of Prague, were buried in the choir.

Some specified "greater feasts" ("*majoribus festis*"): the Christmas morning Mass, the Circumcision of the Lord, the Purification, the Annunciation, the Ascension, the feasts of St. Augustine, St. Thomas, and the Christmas day

Mass had their own prescribed vestments. Other "certain feasts" (certa festa) of St. Stephen, the Mondays of Easter and Pentecost, St. John the Baptist, the Translation of the relics of St. Thomas, St. Michael and St. Lawrence were also suitably endowed. For such occasions was also included an undetermined liturgical parament given the friars "after the death of the most serene emperor, Charles (IV)" in 1378. The prior, Conrad, later interred "near the choir wall," had donated a vestment described as "red with green and gold flowers and lined with green silk." Nicholas of Orzech, the chamberlain of the queen of Bohemia, who had given a "vestment...embroidered with a cross on a red field," was repaid for his beneficence with burial in the chapel of St. Augustine. One Proczko, a courtier of Jan Henry, "the former Marquis of Moravia," who had donated a gray vestment to be worn on the above-mentioned feasts, was buried "under a marble stone in the middle of the church". Incidentally, the burial crypt of the Moravian marquises was in the Augustinian Church of Saint Thomas in the city of Brno.

Other non-specified Minora festa or Minora duplicia festa, "minor feasts of second class status" were celebrated with vestments described as either green or black. Thus, "Lady Ela, the wife of Andrew Rak, a citizen of the Old Town, who is buried with us ('quae est nobiscum sepulta')" had offered the friars a "green silk vestment, lined with gold cloth, decorated with white animals". For the commonplace Dies FERIALES or "days without any special commemoration or feast" vestments of the same somber colors (green and black) were generally worn.

Among the many noted treasures of the church were two magnificent canopies: one had been used for the imperial coronation of Charles IV at Rome (1355) and the other when he as newly preconized emperor ceremonially entered the city of Prague. Numerous carpets, antependia and altar cloths too, were donated but more frequently than not for some specific altar or chapel. It is from the wills of such donors that we learn something of the former beauty and sumptuousness of the Augustinian church. One such area was the still existant chapel of St. Barbara (formerly entitled Saints Philip and James). Originally built as a chapter room over the friars' burial crypt, it soon became a chapel of devotion adorned with three altars dedicated to Sts. Margaret and Agnes, Sts. Simon and Jude, Sts. Christicola and Bargarina, two young martyrs among the much venerated but legendary "Eleven Thousand Virgins". Adjoining the Church is the still existant gothic sacristy containing a single altar in honor of St. Catherine of Alexandria whose dedication title lives on in a much later seventeenth century interpretation. Opening directly into the church there were, as far as we ascertain, seven lateral chapels with altars dedicated to Corpus Christi; St. Augustine "behind the church"; Sts. Peter and Paul; St. Nicholas of Myra; St. Mathias; St. Anthony, the Abbot and the original chapel of St. Dorothy. Finally, there were seven other altars dedicated to

the Blessed Virgin, St. Augustine, the Holy Trinity, St. John the Evangelist with St. John the Baptist, the Visitation of the Virgin with St. Mary Magdalene, St. Wenceslaus with the Patrons of Bohemia, the Holy Cross, and St. Bartholomew with St. Andrew. Judging from such extant descriptions we possess, the Augustinians must have been fortunate in possessing many generous benefactors.

In addition to such outstanding pieces, the Church could boast of an astounding relic collection enshrined in monstrances, reliquaries and vessels of gold and silver magnificent even by late medieval standards. Especially treasured were putative relics of the holy cross, a portion of the seamless robe and the purple garment covering Christ in his Passion. The list continues with such astounding objects as a board from the table of the Last Supper, a vial said to contain some of the "lac beatae Mariae virginis" and even a strand of her hair. The catalogue continues with a notice of Emperor Charles IV's donation of "the arm of Saint Thomas containing... the finger of the glorious patron" which complemented the relic of that saint's sole previously given the Augustinians by the Benedictine abbot of Brevnov. The inventory relates further that a relic of the head of "St. Dorothy, virgin and martyr, had been donated by the illustrious King Vaclav II, the founder of this convent of St. Thomas in Prague and grandfather of the most serene Lord Charles, King of the Romans and Bohemia." Each of the altars once solemnly consecrated were endowed with indulgences in recognition of their many enshrined relics too numerous to mention here. Such a spiritual center certainly drew the faithful in their search for saintly intercession from all regions of the kingdom of Bohemia.

The Chapter hall because of the overflow of these relics was soon converted into the chapel of Saints Philip and James. The Codex Thomaeus gives some specific details that could explain the attractions and lure of medieval piety. As previously mentioned the Chapel possessed three altars dedicated to Saints Margaret and Agnes long venerated as patronesses of women in childbirth and young marriageable girls. The main altar of Saints Christicola and Bargaria will be described below while the third was dedicated to Saints Simon and Jude, whose cultus was associated with problems defying solution. The chapel was first consecrated on November 9, 1409 followed by the three altars on June 19, 1410. The Dominican auxiliary Bishop Vaclav of Prague, who consecrated the Chapel, granted an indulgence of 40 days to those who prayed before the altar-shrine of Saints Christicola and Bargaria, situated "in the middle of the chapel." The relics of these two virgin martyrs who suffered death rather than compromise chastity were enshrined in an imposing central altarpiece above the burial crypt of the friars. With these two Saints were interred the remains of the martyred Holy Innocents; the relics of the martyred virgins Sts. Benigna, Christina, Catherine and Lucy (especially invoked by those suffering with diseases of the eye), the tempted, students and scholars. Other relics of St. Mary

Magdalene, the patroness of penitents; two widows, Elizabeth and Ludmila, known for their charitable works on behalf of the poor and indigent shared a place of honor with such remains of the holy Apostles Peter, Paul, Andrew and Thomas, the patron of the Church. The Codex also notes the presence of the relics of the Five Holy Martyred Brothers or monks who been murdered by roving bandits, timely patrons, certainly, in the rough fourteenth century. Vaclav, the saintly father of the Czech nation, was also the patron of the nascent wine industry in his native land. Candid, (one of the 'Ten Thousand Soldier Martyrs) would naturally appeal to soldiers and military men as much as Paul, the first hermit, would be venerated by the Augustinian hermits. Lawrence, the deacon martyr of Rome, because of the circumstances of his cruel death on a gridiron, was in medieval times invoked by firemen, bakers and cooks as their particular patron.

For the Prague Augustinians, the fourteenth century was a period of slow but steady expansion that can be chronologically marked off in decades and scores. For example, in 1315 the sanctuary of the church was consecrated; in 1338 the cloister complex was completed followed in turn by the cloister brewery in 1358, the library in 1368, the main nave of the Church was consecrated in 1379 and the refectory was completed in 1398. By 1418 just before the devastation by the Hussites, the dormitory, the service areas (officina), the bakery and the great cellars were in full use. On April 17, 1379 Cardinal Pilaeus, accompanied by two archbishops and four bishops, solemnly consecrated the great nave of the Church under the patronage of the father and founder of the Augustinian Order, St. Augustine of Hippo, who now – after St. Thomas – became the secondary patron of the Church. The Augustinians had arrived.

The Hussite Wars and the Aftermath:

Following the death of Emperor Charles IV in 1378, the golden autumn of the Catholic Church and the Augustinian Order began to fade before the growing storm of Hussitism that was ever to haunt subsequent Czech history. As a movement Hussitism was born within the melange of late fourteenth century religious and political questions which at a distance do not lend themselves to easy analysis. The unwitting catalyst was Master Jan Hus, the earnest preacher and rector of the newly founded Charles University, who ardently worked for the reform of the Church on a platform suspiciously akin to that of the Oxford don and English reformer, John Wycliff. Though Wycliff's writings were condemned as subversive they proved to be a lodestone for much discussion and controversy and soon Jan Hus joined the fray gathering a loyal following attracted by his challenging and increasingly inflammatory sermons delivered in the Bethlehem Chapel.

The laxity of the clergy which neither the mediocre Avignon papacy (1305–1378) nor the "Great Western Schism" (1378–1417), its scandalous sequel,

adequately managed to address. The kingdom of Bohemia was a case in point. "Golden Prague," the effective seat of empire under the able rule of Emperor Charles IV (1347–1378), monumental in opulent ecclesiastical and monastic structures, was, as proverbial for its numerous and prominent clergy, who, more often than not, were caught in the double maze of politics and careerism. As a body, the clergy reflecting the customary social barriers of contemporary medieval society were divided into the "higher" and the "lower" clergy. The former drawn frequently from the wealthy, titled classes closest to the imperial court, comprised the influential hierarchy or ruling body of bishops and prelates. The latter or lower clergy, a species of a floating clerical proletariat (the *zakovstvo* or *vagi*) were often denied ordination for unavailability of benefice (a stipened position) or at least a prebend (a stipend). Naturally as the divide widened so did the discontent and those "non-beneficed" clerics, especially abounding in university cities like Prague, voiced strident criticism of their lordly (mainly) German speaking prelates.

But other factors, too, provided the fuel of discontent. A scandalously divided papacy, in particular, moved such preachers as Jan Hus to incite the Czechs into open rebellion. It would be too easy to blame Charles' incompetent son and successor, Vaclav IV, for these mounting religious tensions since the bi-focal Roman-Avignonese papal dilemma was beyond any political power to heal or control. Although carefully groomed by his father, Wencelaus IV fell far short of his father's ambitions and helplessly watched the growing ambitions of the restless Habsburgs. Less than seven years after his coronation (1385) he lost a great part of his kingdom and suffered the ultimate indignity of forced abdication in 1394. The following year, he was provisionally restored as king in face of Turkish incursions but failing the challenge, the hapless Wenceslaus was once more imprisoned (1397) this time in Vienna under Habsburgs surveillance who for final measure once more deposed him on August 22, 1400. Called, unjustly after his death "the Drunkard" for his alleged alcoholic bouts, Wenceslaus IV had also been implicated in the murder of the future St. John Nepomuk but mercifully died just on the very eve of the Hussite revolt in 1420. In retrospect one could say that this talented man was both victim of political circumstance over which he lost control as well as his own personality faults which he could not control.

The Augustinians on the eve of the Hussite revolt following the execution of Jan Hus in 1415, were, understandably, caught up in the eye of the resultant storm. So prominently situated under the shadow of the imperial palace, St Thomas Church and Monastery with all its obvious opulent imperial endowments, could hardly have escaped the ensuing carnage and the iconoclasm. But even before that date Augustinian opposition to such radicalism raged between the Austin friars and the eloquent, populist reformer, Konrad Waldhauser (+1369), a fiery Austrian canon and pastor

"of the Germans" at St. Mary Tyn Church who most vituperatively denounced the friars toward the end of his contentious career. Of course, The Augustinian friars did little to endear themselves to Waldhauser in whom they solemnly recognized as the AntiChrist. Not to be outdone in casting of appellatives, it should be noted that the Augustinians had been identified previously by John Wicliff as "a beast resembling a lion" (Daniel 7:4).

Carrying on in very much of the Waldhauser tradition was yet another radical priest and social reformer, Jan Milic of Kromer, who began his career as a Czech preacher in 1364 at sv. Mikulas Church across the square from St. Thomas Church and monastery. Toward the end of his life in 1374 he inherited Waldhauser's German ministry, pulpit and eager congregation in St. Mary Tyn Church. Personally poor and ascetical, he garnered the support of Prague's Archbishop Jan Ocko of Vlasim (+1379), a prelate truly concerned with the welfare of his people. Milic then took to gathering the poor, the reformed prostitutes and the socially marginalized into a community intentionally called Jeruzalem. His outspoken demands for a council to reform obvious abuses in the Church growing more strident, aroused such suspicion that Milic was whisked away to Avignon for a hearing during which he died in 1374.

But affairs would come to a dramatic climax with the charismatic Jan Hus (+1415), Master of Charles University. Like his predecessors, Milic and Waldhauser, he gathered a group of enthusiastic followers now openly vaunting their heterodoxy to a higher clergy confronted with the dilemma of a tripartite papacy. All the citizens of Prague, so it seemed, eagerly flocked to Master Hus's eloquent sermons now more tinged with Wicliff's jeremiads excoriating clerical wealth and privilege. Faced with growing suspicion of heresy yet steadfastly protesting his orthodoxy Hus, like the future Martin Luther, a full century later (1517) first attacked the teaching and preaching of indulgences in 1412. The imperial court of Zigismund, Wencleslaus IV's brother and successor, then promptly ordered Hus to recant some 45 perceived doctrinal errors. Hus, vainly appealing to Jesus Christ, was answered with a retaliatory decree in October 1412 ordering the demolition of his Bethlehem Chapel and his immediate banishment from Prague. The standoff was to end (1414) when Jan Hus accepted the Emperor Zigismund's fateful "guarantee of safe conduct" to the newly convened Council of Constance. There in spite of all convention, the emperor had him ignominiously arrested, degraded from the priesthood and burnt at the stake on July 06, 1415. Johannes Zacharias, the vicar of the Saxon Observantine Augustinians, who preached in St. Thomas Church, played such a role opposing Hus that the Catholic party at Constance dubbed him Husomatrix, or the Flagellum Husitorum ("the Scourge of the Hussites"). Obviously, such concerted anti-Hussite efforts did little to

endear Zacharias and his Augustinian brothers either to the Prague proletariat or to the Hussites in particular.

Master Jan Hus's tragic death, barbaric, indeed, though meted out according to the harsh penal code of the day, has become sine dubio one of those defining moments that was ever to haunt the collective Czech memory and Roman Catholic conscience to the present. Once the news of Hus's ignominious fate reached Prague sporadic violence became the order of the day. Once imperial authority buckled under this onslaught iconoclasm soon knew no bounds. With the initial success of the Hussite infantry successively led by the able Jan Zizka who in 1424 fell in combat to the death of his radical successor, Prokopius Holy (+1434), the priest- turned-general, Bohemia and its neighbors were subject to sporadic military forays targeting clergy and churches.

With the erosion of royal authority and increasing street violence the Augustinian community soon experienced the full brunt of Hussite fury. Responding to this growing anarchism a certain lord Cenek Vartenberg took the fateful step of quartering German troops in St. Thomas's monastery as early as 1419. Unable, however, to shore up his defenses he hastily retreated on November 04th to the Hradcany redoubt leaving the Augustinians and St. Thomas to the mercies of Mikulas Husi, a rabid Hussite demagogue. On May 09th 1420 within a year of its completion, a mob plundered and seriously damaged the church and monastery. The final blow was struck on June 14th when the same rioters returned and burnt the monastery and church to the ground. Those Augustinians who valiantly remained behind such as Augustine Smacky, Jan Block and Adam Putzen were severely beaten and Herman Schwab, the Augustinian auxiliary bishop of Prague, was murdered. As with nearly all the religious houses of Prague, the other Augustinian foundation in Prague, the nunnery of St. Catherine's in Novy Mesto, had also been fired earlier in May. The hapless Augustinian nuns now sought refuge among the Dominican nuns of St. Ann's convent (Stare Mesto) spared (according the rumor) through the intercession of the prioress, the putative aunt of John Zizka himself.

The Augustinians managed to return only in 1437 after the once invincible Hussites had been defeated in the decisive battle of Lipany. This finale, terminating a series of brilliant campaigns described as "a coordinated religious riot" rampaging through Poland, Bavaria, Saxony and Hungary, did, however, mark a tentative peace. Once back in Mala Strana the friars set about rebuilding the ruins of their gutted church and monastery with scarce expectation of help from an embittered Czech populace.

The prospects were indeed daunting and progress was slow. At first, the friars managed to restore enough of the sanctuary and choir as a place of public worship with some additional space for a humble downsized friary.

By 1497 with extensive help from unexpected benefactors the prior, Friar Augustine of Domazlic, rebuilt St. Thomas's Church with sufficient room for public worship; still later, he renovated extensive portions of the devastated monastery. This was quite a feat for the estimated three resident Czech and foreign friars who had to live in other accommodations for the duration of the construction. But their achievement was shortlived when in 1503 tragedy again struck with a disastrous fire which burnt out both Church and monastery. Undaunted the friars managed to rebuild by 1509 the cloister vaults and the sanctuary and this just in time for another dramatic mishap. On May 17th 1509, the feast of the Ascension, the Augustinians staged a striking paraliturgical biblical tableau with a dramatic finale. As an image of the Risen Lord was slowly lifted by pulleys from the sanctuary floor through a hole in the ceiling, royal trumpeteers blared out a fanfare much to the breathless edification of the attendant faithful. However, affairs got out of hand when a great crowd pushed its way into the upper galleries of the church for a better glimpse of the ceremonial. Unable to sustain this added weight, the galleries ominously sagged and suddenly collapsed killing six persons and seriously injuring many more in the aftermath. Nor was this the final woe. In 1516 a melee broke out outside St. Thomas Church. An initially trivial altercation between Hungarian and Lotharingian guardsmen had some tragic consequences when the local populace took sides in the ensuing pitched battle. Once order had finally been restored, there were 16 Hungarian casualties who by command of Louis of Hungary, the newly crowned King of Bohemia, were buried with full obsequies in St. Thomas Church.

In the period between the great fire of 1503 and the conflagration of June 2nd 1541, St. Thomas monastery was reduced to an indigent dependency of the extensive Bavarian province then consisting of some 55 monasteries. Divided into nine distinct geographical districts (districtus) ranging from what is present day Belorus-Lithuania in the east to Bavaria-Austria in the west and from the Polish Baltic in the north to the Dalmatian Adriatic littoral in the south, communication with the distant provincial was precarious at best. This problem was somewhat alleviated with the appointment of resident vicars in certain designated territories. In Bohemia in the aftermath of the Hussite struggles and the later steady advance of Protestantism there was a pressing need in Mala Strana and in Prague itself (without an effective bishop from 1421 to 1561) for German speaking priests. As St. Thomas was the only Catholic parish in Mala Strana, this language problem became crucial with the influx of German Catholics at court during the reign of Emperor Rudolph II (1576-1612). Though many of the resident friars in St. Thomas were foreigners, none apparently felt confident enough in German. Priors often hardpressed in their quest for capable Catholic German preachers could be quite successful in attracting such luminaries as the famous priest chronicler and bi-linguist, Vaclav Hajek of Libocan, who brilliantly preached at St. Thomas from 1533 through 1547.

Although the Augustinians remained orthodox during the Reformation which was slowly gaining ground in Prague, an increasingly hostile atmosphere especially during the reigns of Maximilian II (1564–+1576) and Rudolph II (1576–+1612) exacted its toll on Catholic life and Augustinian observance. And Antonin Brus, Prague's first Archbishop since 1430, a member of the knightly Order of the Red Star or Krizovniki, was determined to stem the reform tide. In sharply worded but hardly diplomatic imperatives, he, at once, ordered the friars to a more intense pastoral ministry which included – despite the risk of public derision – the wearing of the habit. The Church of St. Thomas, still in a state of reconstruction after the fire of 1541 – the third such calamity in fifty years – had been providentially rescued by Emperor Ferdinand I (1556–+1564), a generous benefactor who covered most of the costs of restoration. In memory of his dead wife, the Empress Anna (+1547), he had given the Augustinians timely needed material for Church reconstruction four years before his own death. Not to be outdone, Ladislaus Lobkowitz, the royal councillor and judge of appeals, likewise, donated materials for the same purpose and was singled out as “munificent and generous” by the grateful friars.

The times were difficult. Emperor Maximilian II (1564–1576), despite his Catholic upbringing, openly sympathised with Protestantism and publically disdained Catholic practices. In an increasingly hostile Prague, the Augustinians even had to sell cloister property to support their community. Conditions did improve, however, with the accession of the eccentric Rudolph II in 1576 and relations with the imperial court even grew cordial when St. Thomas's Church, was regarded though unofficially as the *dvorni farni chram* or the court parish church. Parochial life too grew apace with the establishment of the Court Confraternity of Corpus Christi of Saint Thomas Church that was later endowed by Pope Sixtus V with many indulgences. Like his grandfather, Ferdinand I, Rudolph II proved a generous supporter of the Augustinians in times of need. Thus, in 1584 he even lent them the services of his architect Ulrich Aostalli to examine the fabric of the Church then reduced to the presbyterium or sanctuary and the side chapel of St. Dorothy. Aostalli, aside from the designs for a projected hall-like nave that would have lengthened the Church considerably, did little else. However, his Renaissance portals to and from the sanctuary as well as the portals leading into the sacristy, Saint Barbara's and Saint Dorothy's Chapels all date from Rudolph's reign (1576–1607). Most likely, the friars not having to pay for his services so gratuitously extended by the emperor, just as easily dismissed him. They then hired a certain di Alberto whose sudden death (1590) led to the commissioning of the energetic John Dominic de Barefis. He apparently accomplished so much in two years that the Papal Nuncio, Bishop Caesare Speciano of Cremona, on December 29, 1592 consecrated the Church under the double patronage of Saint Thomas and Saint Augustine. Some 17 years later in 1609 the same architect restored the choir and in 1610 the master-bricklayer, one Marco, repaired

the damage done to the Church by lightning. Succeeding architects included Dominic de Bossi and John Baptist Bussi de Campione who in 1617 executed the fine marble portal over the main and side entrances of the Church.

The Augustinians of St. Thomas during the previous century were for the most part Italian or Spanish friars then under the jurisdiction of a distant Bavarian provincial. In 1604 through the initiative of the Emperor Rudolph II, the Prior General, Hipolito Fabriani, then mandated Felice Milensio, the designated Vicar General for Germany in 1602 to take the final steps for the creation of a Bohemian province. During the Chapter beginning on December 01, 1604, the most obvious candidate, Jan Kritel Svitavsky (Kritl or Crystellius), then prior of St. Thomas was elected the first Bohemian provincial. During his four eventful and effective administrations as provincial (1605–1609; 1614–1623; 1633–+1637) the Church of St. Thomas, despite the constant threat of war and religious conflict, was slowly restored to something of its previous glory. Perhaps, one of his most memorable contributions was Svitavsky's commissioning Peter Paul Rubens for the paintings of Augustine and the Child and The Martyrdom of Saint Thomas the Apostle, which hung over the Main Altar until removed in 1968 to the National Gallery.

From 1656 through 1692 the monastery was completed in the form we see it today but was once more in need of reconstruction. The chronicler put it: *ruinosa ecclesia ac exterii deformis fenestrisque obscuris* ("the Church is in a ruinous state and the exterior is marred by unsightly windows"). It should be mentioned that a section of the building was already beginning to collapse when fate seemed to intervene. On July 26, 1723, just eight days after the state visit of the newly crowned Emperor-King of Bohemia, Charles VI (+1740), lightning struck the sagging edifice and killed the Augustinian friar Roch. Decisions now could not be delayed. The prior, Seraphin Melzer, a most able man, very much in the spirit of his industrious predecessor, friar Jan Kritel Svitovsky (+1637), was determined to rebuild and refurbish the Church. And much to his credit, he gave himself unreservedly to that singular task until taken by death June 21, 1737. Supported by generous benefactors he first reinforced the seriously weakened walls, installed a new floor and commissioned Vaclav Reiner (+1743) to execute the still extant frescos depicting the life and teaching of St. Augustine, the father of the Augustinian order.

Friar Serafin's other singular contribution was the hiring of the famous architect Kilian Ignac Dietzenhofer (+1751) who on April 26, 1727 verbally promised the Augustinians "to preserve the ancient structure of the Church, to restore where possible and to rebuild where needed." A scion of that prodigious family whose monumental churches and palaces still grace central Europe, Dietzenhofer undertook the task of remodelling the church in contemporary baroque style. He first lowered the soaring gothic ceilings,

constructed galleries over the side naves and then constructed a lantern atop the cupola over the sanctuary.

The Ceiling Frescoes:

Looking from the cupola to the main altar, the cupola, spanning the lower end of the sanctuary, first captures our attention. A masterpiece of painted artistry with its fanciful allegory of the four continents, is quintessential 18th century imagery at its best. Executed by Vaclav Reiner between 1728–1730 these ceiling frescoes depicting scenes from the Legend of Saint Thomas the Apostle fill four panels spanning the barrel-vaulted sanctuary:

1. Within the cupola itself is the majestic Appearance of the Risen Jesus to Thomas and the Apostles, as related in the gospel of John 20:24-29.
2. The second fresco portrays the Mission of Thomas in India. This apostle is regarded as the first Christian missionary to the sub-continent.
3. The third fresco or the Apostles at the empty tomb of Mary, regarded by many as Reiner's best, is a study in fluid body language so beloved by the baroque artists. The legend relates that Thomas – late as usual – arrived after the burial of Christ's mother, Mary. Requesting that the tomb be opened for one last glance, the apostles discover to their dismay an empty sepulchre filled with flowers as the Virgin herself hovers above the scene in glory.
4. In the last or fourth panel, is portrayed the Martyrdom of Thomas. According to the legendary account of his death, Thomas had incurred the wrath of a local ruler whose funds he had used to aid the poor of that land.

In the second set of five panels Vaclav Reiner depicted scenes from the life of Augustine of Hippo (+430), the secondary patron of the Church and founder of Augustinian community life. Starting from the back (over the organ gallery), the sequence runs:

1. Augustine is baptised by Saint Ambrose. Augustine was baptised in Milan on April 24, 386. The coat of arms is that of the Archducal House of Austria.
2. Augustine defends the truths of faith. Throughout his long career as priest and bishop, Augustine was the recognized champion of the Catholic faith in face of its adversaries here identified as Donatus, Pelagius and Manes. The coat of arms is that of the Kingdom of Bohemia.
3. Augustine washes the feet of Christ in the person of a pauper. According to a legend Jesus in the guise of a poor traveller appeared to Augustine who while washing his guest's feet (as was customary

for the host in ancient times) recognized the Son of God in this humble service. Underneath the fresco we can translate the Latin inscription as: O Great Father Augustine, today you merited to see the Son of God in the flesh, to you I commend my Church. The coat of arms is that of the Kingdom of Hungary.

4. Augustine, the Father of Monastic life, is depicted with his disciples. Under the mantle of the Saint are depicted a large number of friars, monks, canons and knights who follow the Rule of Augustine. Today some 140 religious orders and congregations of men and women form this spiritual family which has served the Catholic community for over 1,600 years on all the continents of the earth. The fourth and final coat of arms is that of the Holy Roman Empire ruled in 1729 – the date of the fresco's composition – by the pious Emperor Charles VI, who often prayed in Saint Thomas Church.
5. The fifth and final panel in the very center of the church depicts the Glorification or the Apotheosis of Saint Augustine. Having proven himself "the wise and prudent servant of the Lord" Augustine is now admitted into heavenly glory, the destiny of all who believe.

The Sanctuary and the Choir:

The Main Altar is dominated by the two huge copies of Peter Paul Ruben works *The Conversation of Saint Augustine* and *The Martyrdom of Thomas the Apostle*. Unfortunately, the originals commissioned in Antwerp by prior Jan Svitovsky, OSA, in 1637, installed in 1639 were taken from the Church in 1921 and never returned. The altar built between 1730–1731 on grand scale by Christian Kovar, a local artist, possesses in toto nine freestanding statues bracketed by two supporting angels. On the left is the large image of St. Nicholas of Tolentine, the "Augustinian Wonderworker", who, pointing to the star on his chest, intently looks to the tabernacle surmounted by a statue of the humble Immaculata, the Mother of Jesus Christ, in an attitude of prayer. To the right stands the companion image of the Spanish Augustinian friar, St. John of Sahagun. Likewise contemplating the tabernacle, he holds a chalice symbolizing Catholic belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. These three statues were executed by Filip Quittainer (+1729) a local Czech sculptor and teacher of Ferdinand Brokoff (+1731).

There are three smaller images on either side of the tabernacle. On the left from top to bottom are the statues of Saint Augustine, Saint Monica and Saint Vit; on the right in the same order are the statues of Saint Vojtech-Adalbert, Saint Ludmila and Saint Wenceslaus. Originally commissioned by the Countess Helena Martinitz nee Vrsovice in her last will (1680) as six large companion pieces to Saint Nicholas and Saint John Sahagun, they

were to be cast in silver by a local Prague artisan. Unfortunately, no suitable artist could be found and the work was to be done in Augsburg. However, in the midst of such arrangements, the Countess died (August 22, 1682) and her original bequest with the outbreak of the Turkish-Habsburg hostilities (1683–1699) was loaned to the imperial war effort. 40 years later in 1720 the Prior Tadeas Bauml, OSA, once more attempted to complete this long pending project but upon learning of the immense expense, he, too, postponed the project. Finally, Kilian Ignac Dietzenhoffer, the commissioned architect of the Church, understandably anxious to complete such an important detail as the main altar, suggested to the Prior Seraphim Maltzer in 1730 that he hire Ferdinand Brokoff. Well known for his work on the Charles Bridge, Brokoff with characteristic ingenuity and industry first reduced the size of the six images and with exemplary speed finished three (Saints Augustine, Monica and Ludmila) just before he died on March 08, 1731. Ignac Muller, his otherwise unknown protégé, finished the remaining Saints Adalbert-Vojech, Wenceslaus and Vit which (undoubtedly to the relief of many) were finally installed on the main altar in May that same year. In front of the main altar is situated the crypt of the Lobkowitz family with the date 1713.

On the left side of the sanctuary is the altar of Saint Sebastian, the Soldier Martyr, which was executed in 1767. The altar's patronal picture is the work of Bartholomew Spranger (+1611) a Belgian renaissance artist commissioned court painter for Emperors Maximilian II and Rudolph II. On either end of the altar table are statues of Saint Roch and Saint Charles Borromeo; below the altar is the recumbent image of Saint Rosalia, who, with the other three named saints, was particularly invoked in times of plague – a common enough occurrence in the 18th century.

The adjacent altar built in 1730 commemorates the Holy Trinity. The original patronal picture painted in 1644 by Karel Skreta (+1674) now inexplicably found in the Prague church of St. Henry, matches his other masterpieces such as the Crucifixion in St. Nikolas Church (Mala Strana) and the paneled Life of Saint Vaclav in the former Augustinian Church (na Zderaze, Praha – Nove Mesto). The monumental statues of Saint Athanasius of Alexandria and Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, typical of "baroque triumphal art" recall two Greek theologians who defended the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ in their writings. Enshrined in the center glass case is an indigenous carving of Our Lady of Guadalupe "Patroness of the Americas" donated by the Mexican community in Prague.

Across the sanctuary is found the altar of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and patronal picture also painted by Karel Skreta in 1644. The cartouche above the altar portraying the Blessed Sacrament in glory is a memorial to the Confraternity of the Lord's Body which before its suppression in 1785 by the relentless Emperor Joseph II was one of

Prague's oldest confraternities. Initially approved by Pope Gregory XIII in 1580 this religious fraternity or pious society devoted to the veneration of the Eucharist, was in turn endorsed by Pope Sixtus V in 1588 and Clement VIII who was inscribed as a member. Many other wellknown personages were counted among its devotees including Emperor Rudolph II (+1612) and Emperor Ferdinand III (+1657). A statue of Saint Augustine is found in the enclosed glass case.

The adjacent altar is that of Saint Roch, the patron of the infirm, with a picture of that saint painted by Frantisek Karel Pelka (+1767) that was installed in 1767. The two statues (attributed to Ignac Muller) of the "physican saints" Cosmas and his brother Damian – who for their free services were known as the "penniless doctors" – frame the altar. Dedicated to the "healing saints" these votive altars were erected in times of epidemics by fearful suppliants or in thanksgiving by grateful survivors. The plague column standing outside of Saint Nicholas Church in Mala Strana was one such a piece. Another more celebrated example was the Marian column that formerly stood in Stara Mesto until it was senselessly pulled down by a mob of vandals in 1920.

The wall of the sanctuary (the former choir) is punctuated by eight oratory windows covered with exquisite cast metal tracery executed and installed by Matthew Pucher in 1731.

The Nave or Main Body of the Church:

It would be good to situate all this art within its historical time frame. The Protestant reform injected profound changes in society at the beginning of the sixteenth century. At first dismayed and thrown into disarray by frontal assaults on such commonly accepted Catholic teachings as the Mass, the intercession of Mary, the saints and the teaching authority of the Church, Catholics in Bohemia particularly after the Battle of Bela Hora on November 08, 1620 responded with confident vitality. Such momentum was sustained in no small part to the vigorous implementation of the Council of Trent (1545–1563) whose decrees were enforced by a series of "in charge" pontiffs. Clearing away the cumulus of theological confusion and blatant abuses gave embattled Catholics a new sense of direction in a confessionally divided Europe. Poland, Hungary and Bohemia where the old faith had been so challenged now became the testing ground for new and often successful missionary endeavors spearheaded both by older reformed Orders such as the Capuchins and Discalced Augustinians and newer groups such as the Jesuits, the Piarists and the Ursulines. Encouraged by such Tridentine bishops as Antonin Brus of Prague (1561–+1590) the entire range of the arts – music, oratory, theater, architecture and the plastic arts was ably

mustered into Catholic service in what has been called the Catholic Reformation or Catholic renewal. At once presented and as ably defended, orthodox teaching (now defined at Trent) encompassing the entire gamut of Catholic belief and practice: the sacraments, particularly the Holy Eucharist, the Mass in its symbols and ceremonial, the depiction and the intercessory role of the saints and papal authority was twice impressed on the mind and senses via classic peroration and sumptuous art. Often called "the quintessential Catholic creation" Baroque art much like its Gothic predecessor at once defined as "an artistic catechism of the senses", intentionally lifted, as it were, the worshiper into the very presence of the heavenly glory. For clarity it might be said that as Gothic art raised the believer up to heaven, Baroque art brought heaven down to the believer. It is against such a historical and artistic tableau vivant that one can begin to understand the spiritual intent or force motivating the Augustinians at Saint Thomas. This is not, of course, to exclude extraneous political factors. By the beginning of the seventeenth century the Augustinian Church became an oasis of the ancient faith for the imperial court, the ambassadors of the Catholic powers, the Italian merchants, the Irish soldiery, the English recusants and all who professed Catholicism in a predominantly Calixtine and Protestant majority in Prague. Upon entering the Church the beholder would have been (and still is) struck both by its Catholic atmosphere of quiet grandeur reflecting in some fleeting way the infinite majesty of God. It is in only in such an attitude of acceptance we appreciate the significance of the Church and its artistic endeavors.

One of the most striking of such pieces is the grand pulpit situated to the left of the sanctuary and choir. Designed by the artist Philip Quittner and the workman Christian Kovar already noted for the construction and essential décor of the main altar of the church this triumphal masterpiece was completed in 1739. The baldaquin is graced with the four "Fathers of the Church" and their symbols. Ambrose of Milan holds the episcopal insignia with an accompanying beehive indicative of his "honeyed eloquence"; Gregory the Great is portrayed with the pontifical cross and a dove which purportedly alighted on his head during a papal election; Jerome, the ascetical monk holds a death's head, a symbol of passing vanities. The very pinnacle is graced with a mitred Augustine of Hippo offering a flaming heart. Adorning the sides of this structure are gospel-inspired panels depicting the "sowing of the seed/the word of God" and "the Good Shepherd" themes very dear to orthodox baroque Catholicism.

The confessional on the left wall of the side aisle dates from the eighteenth century and is surmounted with an oval portrait of the penitent Peter as a patron for the repentant.

Adjacent to the confessional stands the altar of Saint Ann and the Holy Family which was built in 1731 with some decorative pieces by Michael

Bruderle. As the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the grandmother of Jesus, Saint Ann enjoyed a particular veneration from the early fourteenth century on particularly as patroness of mothers, grandmothers, motherless wives and miners. Her intercession was widespread particularly in central Europe during the late medieval period as evidenced by the young Martin Luther, the son of a copper miner, who had invoked her aid during a fateful thunderstorm in 1526. Such devotees as Princess Ann, the daughter of Vaclav II, the founder of St. Thomas monastery, Empress Ann, the second wife of Emperor Charles IV, their gentle daughter of the same name and Ferdinand I's dead Empress Ann, were connected with the Church and remembered throughout its long history. Astride the patronal picture are two dramatic statues of Saint Augustine and Saint Vojtech-Adalbert executed by Andrew Quittainer as working models for the silver statues originally destined for the main altar. Augustine holds aloft the heart, a symbol of unity based on the love of Christ. Vojtech originally held in addition to his crosier or pastoral staff, an oar, the instrument of his martyrdom at the hands of enraged Prussian pagans in 997.

Across the aisle is the altar of the Nativity of the Lord. Of special interest are the four figures of the "Wise Men", (called variously "Three Kings", "Magi", or "Astrologers" see Matthew 2) by Quittainer. However, the Moor is so similar to one such figure in the Saint Francis Xavier group on the Charles Bridge that some would trace this work to the atelier of Ferdinand Brokoff. The patronal picture of the Madonna and Child dates from about 1731 and just below it in front of the tabernacle is a picture of Saint Anthony of Padua by an unknown artist also dating from the 18th century.

Moving across the aisle is the altar of Saint John Nepomuk from the atelier of Jan Unmuth dating from the year 1731. Executed by the same artist as a companion piece to the previously mentioned altar of Saint Ann, it was probably erected in the wake of John Nepomuk's canonization on March 19, 1729. The theme – better, the themes – of the patronal picture so dramatically elaborated depict the saint's "taking up the cross," the palm of martyrdom and his attitude of prayerfulness. As vicar general of Prague and personal representative of the Archbishop Jan Jenstejn at the imperial court, John Nepomuk was commissioned to rebuke the Emperor Wenceslaus IV for inappropriate behavior. Some later writers even assert that John was unsuccessfully challenged to reveal confidential confessional material here symbolized by an angel with a finger to his lips. Once he incurred imperial displeasure it was only a matter of time. After praying (it was said) in Saint Thomas Church he was ambushed on the Charles Bridge, viciously beaten, murdered and thrown in the Vlatava River in 1392. The iconographic attribute of five stars (held aloft by a putti), according to the hagiographers, appeared at the time and over the place of his death. This very "busy and vivid" picture attempts to incorporate all these elements – with some success.

Again Andrew Quittainer's "model statues" of Saint Vit (on the left of the viewer) with the rooster "of vigilance" and Saint Vaclav (on the right) holding the national banner with the shield of the Premyslid Eagle give further examples of the baroque aesthetic. The tympanum or alcove above the central patronal picture contrives in such limited space to render a moving Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, accompanied by an angelic audience. The picture on the altar table iconographically described as "the loving image of the Blessed Mother of help" (or "of Passau" or "Mariazell" from the places of origin) and represents a long history of Marian devotion in Saint Thomas Church. During the reconstruction of the Church after the excesses of Hussite iconoclasm, the "loving image of Our Lady of Consolation," executed in late gothic style (dated 1480), was sold by the Augustinians (c.1650) to Daniel Heiden, the pastor of Klasterec nad Ohri. This isolated town in the Chomutov region of the diocese of Litomerice fast became a pilgrimage center for those suffering from eye infections. Miracles (including the healing of the local military leader, Jan Egermann) were soon reported and the existing Church, housing the image of Our Lady was repeatedly enlarged from 1670 through 1760 to accommodate the large concourse of pilgrims. For many years this beautiful icon even in its new sanctuary was known as the "St. Thomas Madonna".

Crossing the side aisle once more and the mood changes. Encased on the altar within a glass reliquary are the remains of a Saint Boniface draped, as was the current fashion, in court dress. The present macabre appearance of these relics had been formerly (and mercifully) relieved by a deathmask that has long since disappeared. Unfortunately, despite the name and prayer inscribed over the reliquary the precise identity of the Saint still remains a mystery. The Roman Martyrology (or Official List of Recognized Saints) published in Venice (1759) lists ten saints with the name Boniface. The two most famous stand out through popularisation of their cult: the first, Boniface of Tarsus, commemorated on May 14 died as a mere youth in the persecution of the Emperor Diocletian (ca. 307).

The second is the Benedictine bishop, Boniface of Fulda, the "Apostle of Germany" martyred on June 05, 754. Both of whom, however, on the basis of contemporary evidence cannot be convincingly identified with the above mentioned relics. In the 16th century prompted by the Renaissance fascination with ancient monuments and spurred by the pioneer investigations of the Augustinian polymath, Fra Onofrio Panvinio (+1568), the "Father of Christian Archeology," interest was enkindled in the early Christian catacombs of Rome. These ancient cemeteries soon became the source of of a multitude of relics much to the disgust of the Protestant reformers. Partly in response to such Protestant objections addressed by the council of Trent (1545-1564) the veneration of the saints and the public cult of their relics, was once more reaffirmed by the Church. Early Church history now magisterially chronicled by Caesare Baronius approved and an

enthusiastic wave of devotion to the saints, Mary and those sacred moments in the life of Jesus now swept the Catholic world. Of course, this devotional surge supported by churchmen was abetted by many baroque artists, who, it seemed, vied with each other in portraying the most wrenching aspects of hagiographic murder and mayhem under the rubric of martyrdom. Ruben's splendid altarpiece portraying the dramatic circumstances of St. Thomas's death is such an example of baroque "realism." The aesthetic fashion of the day combined many aspects. On the glass relic case there is the inscription:

Beate Boniface, Martyr subscribe votisque tibi servi fundunt. Blessed Boniface, the Martyr, listen to the prayers your servants pour forth to you.

The four female saints (from right to left) are Rosalia of Palermo, Clare of Montefalco, OSA, Bridget of Sweden and Veronica of Binasco, OSA.

The last altar in the left nave of the Church was dedicated in 1725 with a portrait of Saint Charles Borromeo, who as archbishop of Milan, did much to relieve his people during the episodic plagues that struck his see city. He died in 1584 and after his canonization in 1610 he was widely venerated in the 17th and 18th centuries as a patron against epidemics. The figures of the four female saints attributed to Jan Michael Bruderle from right to left are Barbara, Veronica with the traditional veil imprinted with the face of Christ, Mary Magdalene and Thecla. A contemporary picture of Rita of Cascia (+1457), the "Saint of Impossible Cases," is in front of the tabernacle. Above the main or patronal portrait is a painting of St. Michael, the Archangel dating from the 17th century.

The Altar of All Saints to the left of the main portal dates from 1725–1730. Mounted above the main portrait is the symbol of the Most Holy Trinity surrounded by Adoring putti. The central painting (artist unknown) representing the principal saints venerated in Bohemia is flanked by two life-sized images (attributed to Jan Michael Bruderle) of Saint Roch with a dog that reputedly brought him food and Saint Sebastian as a young soldier pierced with arrows. Both of these saints as noted before were invoked against famine and plague. In the space below the central painting is set a baroque crystal cabinet containing a copy of the Bela Pieta from about 1740 by an unknown artist. The original now in St. Thomas monastery is the work of Franciszek Pacak. This case is surmounted by three symbols of the evangelists, "the head of St. Matthew", "the ox of St. Luke," and "eagle of St. John". The fourth "lion of St. Mark" has been stolen. Below the Altar is situated the crypt of the recusant Ogilvie family.

To the right of the main entrance under the choir loft, is the altar of St. Thomas of Villanova dominated by the portrait of the Augustinian saint

distributing alms to the poor. The painting (ca. 1671) is attributed to Karel Skreta who frescoed the Church. Erected in 1730 the altar is flanked by two statues of Saint Norbert and Saint Thomas Aquinas, the work of Francisek Ignac Weiss; Ignac Raab, SJ, executed the smaller rococo style portrait of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga sometime before 1740.

On the pillar opposite the Villanova altar is a 19th century copy of the famous Panna Maria Svatotomskla in a massive 18th century rococo acanthus frame. Of Italo-Byzantine provenance, the original 13th century icon donated by Emperor Charles IV in 1356 to the Augustinians of Brno, is still venerated as the Patroness of Moravia in the Order's Abbey of the Assumption.

The altar of Saint Apollonia, (mistakenly identified by some older authors as "of Saint Otilia") dedicated to a very popular saint invoked against toothaches and jaw infections was constructed in 1725. At the feet of the Saint lies a pair of pliers that according to her martyrdom account were used to extract her teeth. Four statues ranging from right to left represent Saints James the Greater, Paul, Peter and Thomas are the work of Jan Michael Bruderle. Above the altar is the framed portrait of Saint Francis Borgia, SJ. canonized in 1671 and on the altar table is a rather "busy" portrait of Saint Agnes of Prague painted in commemoration of her canonization in 1989. The picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help that previously occupied this space had been stolen.

The next altar "of the most Holy Cross" is dominated by a Crucifixion scene, a veritable masterpiece executed by Jan Jakub Stevens of Steinfels (+1730) that darling of eighteenth century artistic scene. On the altar table is situated a glass casket containing the remains of Saint Justus with the inscription:

Sanct Juste Martyr exaudi Vota Precesque nostras = 1734. Saint Justus, Martyr, hear our vows and prayers = 1734.

The four female saints from right to left representing Saints Ursula of England, Dymphna of Ireland, Casilda of Seville (Spain) and Catherine of Alexandria (Egypt), probably the work of Jan Slanzovsky, date from about 1730.

The last altar situated against the last pillar of the Church bordering on the edge of the sanctuary is dedicated to Saint Nicholas of Tolentine with an excellent portrait of that saint by Jan Jakub Stevens of Steinfels. On the pinnacle of the altar is an enframed picture of a priest possibly Saint Francis Xavier. The four statues (from right to left) are tentatively identified as Saints Elizabeth of Hungary, John Sahagun, Sigismund and Monica. On the altar platform is a smaller delicate painting of Our Mother of Good Counsel

in a rococo frame formerly accompanied by two angels one which had been stolen in 1998. Augustinian devotion linked to the picture of Our Mother of Good Counsel is traditionally traced back to Scutari in Albania whence it (according to legend) was brought to Genazzano, Italy, in 1467. Devotion to Our Lady under this title stands within the ancient Marian tradition of the Augustinian Order. From the mid-thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries Mary, the Mother of Jesus was greatly venerated among the Augustinians with the title "Our Lady of Grace" especially in their monasteries of Portugal, France and England. A "second stage" of Marian devotion was initiated toward the end of the sixteenth century in 1580 when Pope Gregory XIII reorganized and even enrolled himself in what was to be known as "the Archconfraternity of the Cincture of Our Mother of Consolation" in Bologna. This title characterized baroque Augustinian devotions and was soon propagated wherever the friars settled and preached. So much so that by 1700 one could say that almost every Augustinian Church had its Altar and Archconfraternity "of Our Mother of Consolation of the Cincture." In 1783, however, Emperor Joseph II arbitrarily outlawed all such religious brotherhoods with the "Third Orders" on May 22, 1783 and baroque Catholicism passed into history.

But, we are jumping ahead of ourselves. Once the Thirty Years War had formally concluded in 1648 and roads to and from Italy and its shrines were once more relatively secure, the Augustinians brought back to their various provinces the devotion to Our Mother of Good Counsel. Unlike the two previously mentioned devotions "of Grace" and "of Consolation" there was an identifiable picture. Further, the picture from about 1681 became the center of some captivating stories. Transported "by angels" or "by a cloud" from Albania to the mountain hamlet of Genazzano just 16 km southeast of Rome to escape Muslim profanation "it alighted" on the wall of an unfinished Augustinian Church on April 25, 1467. A later Pope, Blessed Innocent XI, crowned the picture in 1682 under the title "Mary of Good Counsel." Other popes particularly those named Pius were most generous to the Shrine. Pius V sent a votive offering before his death in 1572; Pius VI extended the feast of Our Mother of Good Counsel to the entire Order of St. Augustine in 1779. And to step out of our time frame for a moment, Pius XII consecrated his pontificate in 1939 under the patronage of Mary, Mother of Good Counsel and three of the last four popes (John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II) visited Genazzano. Such Saints as Aloysius Gonzaga (+1591), Benedict Joseph Labre (+1783) and Alphonsus Ligouri (+1787) were deeply devoted to Our Mother of Good Counsel and highly venerated her picture. Incidentally, the oldest picture of Our of Good Counsel in the Czech Republic is a fresco painted by Vacvlav Reiner in the former Augustinian Church of Saint Catherine, Prague. Once the strictures of Emperor Joseph II lifted, an Archconfraternity of Our Mother of Good Counsel was organized and widely popularized throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the zealous Augustinian preacher, p. Bernard Hejhal (+1927). In 1950 with

the advent of the Communist regime all such religious activities were banned.

The small votive Altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary or of the Infant Jesus stands against the sidewall of the Church before the entrance to Saint Dorothy's Chapel. The Blessed Virgin holding the Child Jesus looks upon the donor, Compagnonus de Corlis of Mantua. The Madonna resembles "the Saint Vitus Madonna" so named from a Marian picture in the Prague cathedral. The inscription in tribute to Our Lady and the donor's generosity is translated:

In honor of Almighty God and the most pure Virgin Mother Mary The Help of all who take refuge in her Compagnon de Corlis of Mantua cared to have this painted in the Year of the Lord 1619.

The rococo image of the Infant Jesus sculptured for the altar executed in 1760 was flanked by two adoring angels one of which was stolen in 1998.

Before the entrance to Saint Dorothy's Chapel is situated the splendid marble altar of Our Mother of Consolation, designed by the master architect, Ignac Dietzenhofer in 1744. The actual sculptor, Josef Lauermann had most likely executed similar pieces for the Norbertine Abbey in Doxany. Above the tabernacle the central picture of Our Lady giving the cincture to St. Monica, has been variously attributed to the Jesuit, Ignac Raab, and to Heinrich Beris, a Belgian artist, who had spent a short time in the Order's monastery in Bela. This Marian depiction was a characteristic devotional piece in most Augustinian Churches particularly after Pope Gregory XV richly endowed the Archconfraternity of the Cincture for the Augustinian Order in 1580. This altar is particularly rich in marble worked with an inlaid silver tabernacle executed by Jakub Ebner in 1768 surmounted with a striking Ecce Homo ("the Man of Sorrows") from the hand of Antonin Stevensen of Steinfel in 1670. Two adoring angels hold banners inscribed with appropriate biblical quotations proclaiming the redemptive power of Christ's death frame the altar.

The Chapel of Saint Dorothy:

The Chapel originally a small oratory aside the larger St. Thomas dates from the first half of the thirteenth century making it one of the oldest existing ecclesiastical structures in Mala Strana. The lancet-like windows on the south wall however, are all that remain of the earlier structure reworked over the centuries. This Chapel, originally the parochial church for Micro-praga to 1790, had been built in 1228 by King Premysl Ottakar I for the Benedictines of Breznov who at the request of King Vaclav II in 1285 ceded the foundation to the Augustinians. Within its precincts was formerly venerated from 1760 a lovely baroque image encased in a rococo glass cabinet of the Einsiedlin Madonna and Child – complete with moveable arms. For security reasons the statue is now in Saint Thomas monastery. Three altars dedicated to Saint Dorothy, Our Lady of Help and Our Mother of Good Counsel without any particular artistic value were dismantled in 1970.

The sanctuary is dominated by a gothic image of the crucified dated from the end of the fifteenth century. The Pieta, a replica of the Bela image executed by Frantisek Pacaka, dates from about 1740.

The centotaphs or commemorative funerary tablets are of Johann Mencil of Kolsdorf (1626), an imperial councillor; the Michs of Vacinov (ca. 1650) and the counts of Hartig.

Two seventeenth century lunettes on the north wall of the Chapel depict incidents from the life of St. Nicholas of Tolentine (+1308) an Augustinian friar, reknown for his miracles.

The Sacristy:

In the corridor between the north wall of the presbytery and the Sacristy are preserved the best- though mutilated remains of the original fourteenth century gothic Church, the presbytery of which had been consecrated on 2 May 1315 and the entire edifice on 17 April 1379. The corridor adjoining the sacristy, the initial gathering place of the friars before processing into the monastic choir, was an important meditative area before the celebration of the Church offices. The walls and ceiling with the groined arches dating according to some historians from 1499 mark the first restoration stages following the Hussite wars. Of paramount interest are the wall frescoes. On the south wall of the corridor adjoining the Church are the barely visible remnants of a crucifixion scene in what has come to be known as the Arma Christi. According to some art historians the central plastered area once contained a depiction of the Man of Sorrows accompanied by adoring angels

and saints. To the left is the Crucifixion scene portraying the Mater Dolorosa and the Apostle John now scarcely visible. At the bottom of the scene is a kneeling figure probably an influential personage and benefactor who was probably buried in the Church. To the upper right is depicted the Mystical Ladder or the ascent of the soul to God. Unfortunately, during the baroque reconstruction in the 17th and 18th centuries when a story was added above the sacristy door to facilitate access to the oratories facing the sanctuary of the Church much of the original late fourteenth century gothic frescoes were severely damaged when not obliterated. Over the Chapel of Jakub Curtius, the personal physician of Emperor Rudolph II, there are some mediocre renaissance frescoes representing the four evangelists painted in the vaults. The image of "the Gracious Madonna" of gilded wood dates from the late fifteenth century.

The sacristy is interesting both from the extensive wooden cabinets lining three sides of this large stone paved gothic hall supported by a central octagonal pillar and the frescoes on the north and south walls whose groined ceilings are gracefully supported by the central octagonal pillar. The cabinets are of oak wood dating from 1622. The first portrait on the south wall is a lovely depiction of the "Passau" or "gracious" Madonna. The second to the right of the door is that of Saint Nicholas of Tolentine. Amid a profusion of arcanthus on the west wall are the oval panels of two great benefactors, Jaroslav Borita z Martinic, an imperial army leader, best remembered for his undignified defenestration on May 23, 1618 that eventually led to the Thirty Years War. The second portrait is that of his wife, Helena Barbara Martinic (+1589), who generously provided for the construction of the Main Altar. On the north wall continuing from left to right are: St. Clare of Montefalco, Blessed Frederick of Ratsibon, St. Augustine, St. Thomas of Villanova and St. Monica. Below the window is a 17th century "Ecce Homo" by an unknown artist. Above the cabinets on the west wall is the valuable Presentation of Mary painted by Karel Skreta in 1645. There is also a copy of The Conversation of Saint Augustine and over the door of the sacristy hangs an eighteenth century votive portrait of the Kolowrat family that is of no particular value. The sole altar in the sacristy is that of St. Catherine and St. William donated by the Spanish ambassador, Don Guillen de S. Clemente, shortly before his death in 1608. This Catalonian grandee had fought in the famous battle of Lepanto (1571) and served his Catholic Majesty as ambassador successively to Flanders, Germany and Prague where he endlessly busied himself with local and international affairs-including his unwelcome appearance at the royal Polish election of 1587. He was buried at first near the door of the Church. Later his body was exhumed and reinterred in the Dominican monastery of Barcelona, Spain. The inscription on the base of the predella reads:

D. O. M (To the Greatest and the Best Lord). Don Guillelmus de S. Clemente, a Knight of the Order of Saint James de Spada, Legate of the

Catholic King Philip III to the Emperor Rudolph II had this monument of piety placed here in the year of Christ 1608.

The frescoes are most interesting. Since 1968 extensive investigation of this precious artwork has revealed that on the southern wall of the sacristy is depicted a kneeling Peter Jelito, bishop of Litomyšl (1368–1371), a great benefactor of the Church, with, probably, the prior of the monastery. The central figure now obliterated was that of St. Catherine of Alexandria, patroness of studies and favored saint of Emperor Charles IV during whose reign this fresco was executed (ca. 1370). On the north wall of the sacristy is preserved a remarkable portrait of the Silesian Saint Hedvig under a baldachin showing some Italian influences holding in her left hand an image of the Virgin and Child. In her right hand she holds a fragment of a rosary. Why this Silesian Saint? On 27 May 1353 Emperor Charles IV – twice a widower – married as his third wife, Anna, princess of Swidnice, where the memory of this holy woman was quite strong. In fact, the new Empress was even related to Hedvig. Premysl Ottakar II, the forebear of the Emperor, had assisted at the canonization of Hedvig and went on pilgrimage to her tomb in Trebnice in 1267. The connection between the imperial family and the Saint is obvious. Jan Stredy like the above-mentioned Peter Jelito, a bishop of Litomyšl (1353–1364), was a great benefactor of the Augustinians. It would have been natural for the friars to commemorate his patroness in their Church.

The Chapel of Saint Barbara:

Formerly dedicated to Saint Philip and Saint James, the Apostles, in 1338, this chapel was magnificently endowed by Stephen of Tetin, a great benefactor of the Order. Originally the chapter or meeting area of the Augustinian community it was transformed into a lovely gothic devotional chapel of ease as described above before the Hussite wars. Because of the unsettled political and religious atmosphere after the Hussite wars had ended in 1437 the Augustinians could only gradually return to St. Thomas. Reconstruction of the ruins could only substantively begin in 1497 under the able prior administrator, Augustine of Domazlice. By 1499 such progress was made that the newly renovated chapel now rededicated to Saint Barbara, the virgin martyr of Nicomedia, was reopened for services. The small sanctuary added to the chapel in 1410 was redone in the ascendant renaissance style and two portals, again of renaissance provenance were erected with the following inscriptions:

*HAEC EST DOMUS DEI ET PORTA COELI . 15 . FERes CASTlus CIVIS
MEDIOSis . 96 . This is the House of God and the Gate of Heaven Feres
Castlus, a Milanese citizen. 1596*

The second door reads:

*DOMUS MEA DOMUS ORATIONIS VOCATUR . 15 . FERes CASTELLus CIVIS
MEDIOSis . 96 . My House is called a House of Prayer Feres Castellus a
Citizen of Milan. 1596.*

The present main altar of imitation marble erected much later in 1709, encases the picture of Saints Barbara and Catherine in Sacred Conversation with the Holy Family. Painted ca. 1600 by the Swiss born artist, Josef Heinitz, court painter to Emperor Rudolph II, St. Barbara is portrayed with the attribute of the chalice since she was invoked against a sudden death without the benefit of the sacraments. To her right stands St. Catherine of Alexandria holding the sword of her execution with the remnants of a spiked torture wheel underfoot. At the pinnacle of the altarpiece is an oval portrait of St. Mary Magdalene in ecstasy.

The chapel contains some extant examples of consecration crosses that since 1968 have been restored. The overdone painted groins in the gothic ceiling date from the renaissance period (1551–1600). On the north wall there is a lovely fresco of the Pieta dating from about the end of the fifteenth century. This religious motif of the sorrowing mother holding the body of her dead son became a Catholic symbol of reparation for the wholesale iconoclasm of the Hussite era.

There are ten cenotaphs in the chapel comemorating the life and deeds of some illustrious men and their families who for their benefactions were granted the privilege of being buried in the monastic precincts. Some 73 years of service (1564–1637) extending through the reigns of Maximilian II, Rudolph II, Mathias and Ferdinand II are here represented. Beginning from right to left there is an Italian military man, a lawyer from Speyer, a German Latin secretary, a Moravian negotiator, an imperial councillor, a Venetian merchant, an Austrian banker, one Moses Krause without any identifying profession and a funerary tablet under benches extolling one "Ruland, a noble and outstanding Dutchman". The recently uncovered and beautifully preserved cenotaph before the main altar, likewise, extolls the deeds of still another courtier who died in the late seventeenth century.

The Cenotaphs in the Cloister Walk:

There are some twentythree cenotaphs in various stages of legibility in and around the cloister walk. Perhaps one of the best known is that Elizabeth Joan Weston, a famous Latin poetess in her day. Born in Elizabethan England to a noble Catholic family who had to flee to Bohemia to escape persecution, she married, bore seven children, buried four and died herself at the age of 30 years on November 23, 1612.

The other tablets dedicated to court officials, city politicians, merchants, Venetian musicians, architects, a lady-in-waiting, town councillors, an imperial cousin, a lawyer, a royal steward, a physician, a noblewoman who died in childbirth give some idea of the diversity of St.Thomas's congregation through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Cenotaphs in the Church:

In the Church and the Curtius Chapel adjacent to the sacristy there are about 36 cenotaphs in various stages of legibility. It would be beyond the scope of this short monograph to describe all in detail so we will confine ourselves to the more important.

At the very entrance of the Church is found the well-preserved cenotaph of the above mentioned Don Guillen de S. Clemente who died in 1608. Interestingly his gravestone contains a heraldic Star of David perhaps, in allusion to some Jewish antecedents. To the left before the Irish or Patrons' Altar there is the commemorative tablet to Esther Anna Ogilvi who married one of the scions of an Irish family who fled Ireland the previous century. Each year on 17 March, the feast of St.Patrick, the Patron and Apostle of the Ireland, the Irish community of Prague gathers here for a commemorative observance of all their countrymen and women Irish who sacrificed themselves for their culture and faith. In front of the Altar of Saint Boniface there is found the cenotaph of Gall Mach (+1612), the mayor of Mala Strana. Before the first Altar directly in front of the high pulpit there is a commemorative cenotaph for Godfried Steeger, the personal physician of Emperor Rudolph II, marking his death on 10 April 1609. In the choir or sanctuary is the cenotaph of the Morzin family who were the patrons of the composer Franz Josef Haydn (+1809) and in 1705 the founders of Vrchlabi, the last Augustinian monastery founded in Bohemia. Directly before the Main Altar is the cenotaph and remains of the Lobkowitz family in a crypt dated 1733. In front of the Ecce Homo Altar is the cenotaph of Dominic Bossi, one of the architects of the renaissance period, who died 11 August 1599. In the south aisle (leading to St.Dorothy's Chapel) is found the cenotaph of Ferdinand Visconti of the aristocratic Milanese family and

distant relative of the Augustinian Prior General, Philip Visconti (1649–1655). Adjacent to the sacristy is found the cenotaph of Jakub Curtius and his wife, AnnaMaria. Curtius was a *fac totum* for Emperor Rudolph II in formulating his foreign diplomacy.

The Organ:

The first mention of an organ at St. Thomas is from the year 1414 when the Augustinian friar Frater Matteus of sv. Dobrotiva was named organista choralis at the Church. Further information about the restoration of the organ following the disastrous fire of 1503 leads historians to believe that was probably the same organ still in use during the reign of Emperor Rudolph II (1576–1607). After the major restoration efforts under the aegis of the energetic Friar Jan Krtitel Svitavsky (+1637) the Augustinians found that the old organ proved inadequate for the changing musical style and had it replaced in 1668. This new organ constructed by the master craftsmen, Matthias Kehler and Jinrich Mundt who had successfully built the organs in Saint Mary pred Tynem and Saint Nicholas in Staro Mesto proved equal to expectations. For its time it must have been a grand instrument possessing 21 stops and 1242 pipes. Unfortunately, its all too brief use was cut short on 8 June 1723 when lightning fired the Church, destroyed the organ and killed Brother Roch Sandrich. With the installation of the new organ and a rising dynasty of talented Augustinians and laypeople St. Thomas's Church was assured a place in Prague's ecclesiastical musical scene. Such artists as Peter Hallaczek (+1666), Jakub Hunle (+1697), Frantisek Tentscher (+1747) laid the foundations of a great music tradition which has continued through Vaclav Rosenkranz (fl. 1854), Adolf Cmiral (organist 1901–1909) and such contemporary organists as Antonin Brcak, Stepan Svoboda and the regenschori Paul Verner of the Chorus Antiquus S. Thomae or the Sbor Svatotomasky. Before leaving the topic it should be noted that this choral tradition was further enhanced in the early eighteenth century with the separation of organist or organista choralis from the duties of choir director or regens chori. And a further – almost unheard of step on the eighteenth century musical scene – was taken by the Augustinian sponsored revival of Gregorian chant. Initiated by the friars Antonin Tauchman (1747–1760) and Arnost Papstmann (1766–1774), it too has taken root among the people of St. Thomas, Mala Strana.

After the destruction of the old organ in 1723, the Prior Serafin Melzer signed a contract on 2 September 1728 with Jan Frantisek Fassmann to build an organ consonant with the newly designed baroque dimensions of the Church. This instrument containing 24 stops and 1350 pipes completed in 1730 with some minor alterations served Saint Thomas Church to 1923. The 197year old instrument then considered "outmoded and useless" was wantonly broken up for floorboards and the pipes were sold as scrap metal. Fortunately, the original eighteenth-century organ cabinet miraculously

survived. In 1924 a pneumatic instrument was installed by Bohumil Pastika of Stara Boleslav which with some alterations in 1968 has remained in use to the present day. Time has taken its toll, however, and under the committee direction of Dr. Martin Stransky (chairperson), Mgr. Marek Cihar, Dr. Jaroslav Elias and Dr. Antonin Brcaak steps are being taken to completely renovate the organ in keeping with the general restoration of the Church on its sevenhundred and seventy-fifth anniversary. The choir stalls date from the seventeenth century and donated for the members of the Archconfraternity of the Blessed Sacrament which met for devotions at the Altar of the Assumption in the sanctuary of the Church.

The Facade:

The façade of the Church is typical of Kilian Dientzenhofer's artistic reveries. In such a cramped space afforded the Church the architect literally "rolled" the façade in wave-like frozen motion. The west or main portal, one of the largest of its kind in Prague's church architecture, represents one of the more beautiful examples of renaissance architecture. Two massive doric pillars frame the metal door encased in dark red marble above which stands the statue of Saint Augustine. This statue of the saint holding the iconographic attribute of heart and book comes from the atelier of the Mala Strana sculptor, Jerome Kohl, who inscribed on the basis of the statue the words:

*MAGNUS S. P. AUGUSTINUS ANNO MDCLXXXIII 15. APRILIS GREAT
HOLY FATHER AUGUSTINE IN THE YEAR 1683 15 APRIL.*

On top of the very pinnacle of the Church directly above the choir window there formerly stood a statue of the Saviour. The projected south tower was never completed. The current bells replace those stolen during the first world war in 1914–1918. Over the south door of the Church facing Josefska street is the statue of Saint Thomas, the Apostle with the attribute of his spear of martyrdom, also by the same artist, Jerome Kohl. The inscription on the base of the statue reads:

SANCTUS THOMAS APOSTOLUS SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE.

The portal below this resembles the west portal in its detailed metallic workmanship.

Epilogue:

Before taking leave of the Church one should note the memorial tablet of lovingly dedicated to the memory of an Augustinian hero and martyred pastor of Saint Thomas, **FATHER AUGUSTINE FRANZ SCHUBERT, OSA.** Born in Zizkov-Prague on May 14, 1902, he attended the school at sv. Stepana, Prague 2 and entered the Order upon completion of his philosophical studies at Charles University in 1925. Ordained on a record freezing day, 20 January 1929, he was successively elected subprior and prior in 1933. His ministry as pastor was spent in great part with the young to whom he endeared himself for his wisdom, wit and kindness. During the wartime occupation he publically protested against Nazi injustice and ideology for which he was summarily arrested and murdered in the Dachau death camp on 28 July 1942. Steps for proposing him as a saint have been taken by the Augustinian community and their parishoners in 1999.