

- In 1628 the Church of Our Lady Victorious in Prague was given a very special gift from a Czech noblewoman of Spanish heritage: a tiny statue of the Infant Jesus, which had passed through her family and had been given to her as a wedding gift by her mother.
- After being widowed the noblewoman gave the statue to the Carmelite friars who ran the church with the words, "I am giving you what I most esteem of my possessions. Keep the sculpture in reference and you will be well off."
- This statue has since become known as the Infant of Prague.
- As many of you know, this Christmas our parish has received a very special gift: a statue of the Infant of Prague, which will be blessed at Midnight Mass.
- As tonight we are celebrating the birth of our Infant Lord, it is most fitting that we pay homage to this beautiful and popular devotion in the Church.
- While the precise origin of the famous statue of the Infant Jesus in Prague is not known, there are many who believe that it was once in the possession of St. Teresa of Ávila before making its way to Prague.
- Devotion to the Infant Jesus was widespread in Spain during St. Teresa's life. Her own devotion to our Infant Lord began when she came down the steps of her convent one day and saw a beautiful little child who asked, "Who are you?"
- When Teresa responded, "I am Teresa of Jesus; who are you?", the little child responded in turn, "I am Jesus of Teresa!" From then on, whenever St. Teresa founded a new convent, she always took with her a statue of the Infant Jesus.
- Shortly after the statue was given to the Carmelites in Prague, the Church of Our Lady Victorious was pillaged by Saxons in the 30 Years War, and the Infant's hands were broken off and the statue was left upon a pile of debris for many years.
- When the Carmelites were finally able to return and reclaim their church in 1638, a young priest by the name of Fr. Cyril found the statue, cleaned it up, and returned it to the church for veneration.
- One day while praying before the statue, Fr. Cyril heard the Infant say, "Have pity on Me and I will have pity on you. Give Me My hands and I will give you peace. The more you honor Me, the more I will bless you."
- After begging our Lady for the resources to fix the broken statue, the statue was repaired and returned to the church for veneration. Soon miracles began to happen as people came to pray before the Infant, and devotion to it increased rapidly.
- Though the city of Prague suffered through more wars and unrest in the following years, the statue and the Church of Our Lady Victorious were left unharmed.
- Over the centuries, many extraordinary events and miracles have been attributed to the Infant of Prague, and this devotion has spread throughout the Christian world.
- In our own parish, when we were running short on funds to pay for our mural, I made a yearlong novena to the Infant for the necessary funds. As we raised the necessary funds in just six months, I spent the 2nd 6 months praying the novena in thanksgiving.
- Trusting that the more we honor our Infant Lord, the more He will bless us, I thought it both prudent and proper for us to have an image of the Infant of Prague in our church, and He will be located permanently in our narthex.

- Of course we do not come to venerate this image of our Infant Lord superstitiously or as a sort of good luck charm. The power of answering prayers or granting miracles does not lie in the statue as if it were some sort of idol.
- Statues and images and other types of art in a church point to greater realities. They are meant to put flesh and bone on the invisible realities of our Faith. Our images and icons testify to what we believe!
- You see, our faith is incarnational by its very nature! Our beautiful works of art are not simply decorations to enhance the aesthetics of a church building. Beautiful art that is truly sacred makes the invisible, visible.
- Sacred art and architecture serve to remind us not only of the particular mysteries of our faith, but that God Himself became man. In the person of Jesus, God became something that can we perceive with our senses.
- And that is precisely what we celebrate every year with this joyful feast of Christmas: that God is not an abstraction or some grand figment of the collective imagination of mankind. God is real!
- And tonight we see His glory: the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth!
- Our blessed Lord became flesh and dwelt among us not simply to prove that He is real, but so that He could deliver us from our sins through His death on the cross. In short, Christ was born for us so that He could die for us.
- But in His generosity, it was not enough for our Lord to live and die for us. His incarnation was not only a gift to those who lived at the same time as He. Jesus is Emmanuel, God-with-us, and He is with us even now!
- We hear Him speaking to us through His Word contained within Sacred Scripture. In His mercy and goodness our Lord becomes present for us again at every Mass in the miracle of Eucharist.
- So as we begin our parish's devotion to the Infant of Prague, I pray that our statue of the Infant Jesus will be both a reminder that God is real and that He is very much with us.
- May we honor our Infant Lord and King with great devotion and love, trusting that in honoring Him as we should, we will reap great blessings from Him – most especially the blessing of eternal salvation.