

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota 01-31-2021



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Pandemic Musings: As I write this blog on January 28, there are over 100 million Covid cases in the world, over 26 million cases in the United States, and over 3 million cases in California. Covid-related deaths are over 2 million in the world, nearly half a million in the United States, and over 40,000 in California. In the Bay Area alone, the Covid cases are nearly 375,000 and deaths are over 4,000. Over 30,000 cases in San Francisco County with over 300 deaths. The world and our nation are still in the stranglehold of the pandemic, with no signs of letting up. Vaccines have arrived but not enough for everyone; and it's not easy to administer them efficiently. It's a year since the pandemic started and going to be almost a year since the lockdowns were put in place. The world as we knew it before is not in sight. Our work, travel, education, social life, religious practices---our day-to-day living---have all been affected like never before. The pandemic has caused loss of employment for millions in our nation and around the world. There is much anxiety, uncertainty, insecurity, and alarm. People are isolated and lonely. To add to these troubles, there is sadness and helplessness about the lack of unity in the political and social areas in our nation. We need God's grace and wisdom. There is no doubt about that. We need God's help for all of us---in the areas of culture, society, politics, economics, media---not to be driven by blind ideology but to be guided by truth, fairness, decency, and justice. May the good Lord give us all his presence and love and light so that we can embrace love of God and love of others and reject every form of hatred and discrimination.

Word of God: The responsorial psalm this Sunday invites us: "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Can we hear God's voice? How does God speak to us today, given our personal situations and the signs of the times? What are the obstacles in our minds and hearts to hearing God's voice? Is our life filled with so much noise, so many allurements and anxieties, so many clamoring, competing voices, that we cannot hear God's gentle, soothing, comforting voice? Is it possible that we keep hardening our hearts even when we are able to hear God's voice? Are we then hard-hearted rather than gentle, soft-hearted people? In the first reading from Deuteronomy, God assures that he will speak through the prophets. Who are the prophets in our times through whom we can hear God's voice? The greatest of those prophets is Jesus himself, who in the gospel reading, wages war with evil forces. "He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." How can we listen to the voice of Jesus in our lives today? He calls, he graces, he comforts, he challenges, he uplifts, he shepherds, he embraces, he forgives, he enlightens.

Can we hear the voice of Jesus in the midst of life and all our preoccupations?

Wednesday Mornings Mass and Devotions on Zoom: On Wednesday mornings, at 8:30, I celebrate Mass on Zoom and do the benediction accompanied with novena prayers of the Mother of Perpetual Help. This is followed by Rosary and the Divine Mercy devotion. Everyone is welcome. If you are interested in joining this Mass and devotions, please call or email the parish office for the link so that you can join on your device in the comfort of your home.

Archdiocesan Annual Appeal (AAA): I'll be sending a letter to each one of you in the next ten days or so. The goal for our parish to reach in 2021 is \$ 40,000. Please give generously and soon, so we can finish this drive by the end of April. If you are able to give 1% of the total amount, which is \$400, it would be wonderful, so that we can complete the campaign as quickly as possible.

Holocaust Memorial Day: This January 27, Holocaust Memorial Day, was the 76th anniversary of the liberation by the Soviet army of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz at the end of World War II in 1945. Just a year and a half ago, I visited Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland along with a group of pilgrims. I was crying all through the tour of the place. So was everyone else in our group. The crimes committed in that place and other concentration camps were horrendous and unspeakable. Man's inhumanity to man in those places, where over six million Jews and millions of other minorities were killed, cannot be fathomed for all time. The Holocaust Memorial Day is a reminder for us that such crimes start in the human heart in the form of hatred toward others, usually toward people of different race or color or background or ethnicity or religion or culture. We have to be vigilant against such tendencies. Every person is endowed with God-given dignity and identity and all people are created in God's image and likeness.

Lent on the Horizon: Ash Wednesday, a day of abstinence and fasting, is on February 17. Ash Wednesday Masses will be at 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Easter is on April 4.

Think About It: The Rule in a monastery was not, "Do not speak," but, "Do not speak unless you can improve on the silence."

Jokes: 1. Q: Why did Moses wander in the desert for 40 years? A: Even then men wouldn't ask for directions! 2. Doctor: "Your recovery was a miracle!" Patient: "PRAISE GOD. Now I don't have to pay you!"

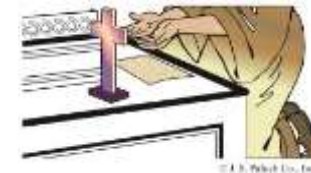
Sending you wishes for health and happiness, faith and freedom, peace and patience, love and laughter, even in the midst of the pandemic---for you and your families,

Your Friend and Pastor,

Fr. Charles Puthota

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time January 31, 2021

Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD
who made us.
— *Psalm 95:6*



FALSE PROPHETS, TRUE PROPHETS

In Deuteronomy today we hear that God's very words will fill the mouth of a true prophet, but a false prophet will, in a manner of speaking, put mere mortal words into God's mouth. In Mark's Gospel, we see Jesus teaching and healing as a true prophet, one filled with the authority of God's own voice, the Holy One of God.

The whole history of our church is filled with both true and false prophets. But in today's Gospel we learn that Jesus' fame spread because he taught with authority; he wasn't an authority because he was popular or famous. We also learn from him, in his desert temptation confrontations with Satan, that anyone can quote scripture, even against God's purposes. And today we hear that his authority was not like that of the scribes, who held the official positions of religious authority in his day. Our work is to do our best to discern the true prophets in our midst, and to be true prophets as well. The psalmist tells us how to do this: by not hardening our hearts when God speaks. If we truly listen to God, it will be God's very words filling our mouths.
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TODAY'S READINGS

First Reading — Moses spoke to all the people, saying: "A prophet like me will the LORD, your God, raise up for you" (Deuteronomy 18:15-20).

Psalm — If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts (Psalm 95).

Second Reading — Brothers and sisters: I should like you to be free of anxieties (1 Corinthians 7:32-35).

Gospel — The people were astonished at Jesus' teaching; he taught them as one having authority (Mark 1:21-28).
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Sunday Collection January 24, 2021

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Weekly Need: | \$ 5,000.00 |
| Sunday Collection | \$ 1,822.00 |
| Over/Under | \$ 3,178.00 |

If you make your offertory donation by check, without using parishioner envelopes, it would be most helpful if you placed your parishioner/envelope # in the "memo" section of the check. This helps us input your donation to the offertory data system.
We will not be responsible for donations not credited due to missing envelope numbers (or not having a Sunday collection envelope.)

MASS INTENTIONS

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Monday 8:00 am | February 1 † Jovito Cruz |
| Tuesday 8:00 am | February 2 † Edmund Lobo |
| Wednesday 8:00 am | February 3 † Antonietta Perata |
| Thursday 8:00 am | February 4 Sharon Soares (L) |
| Friday 8:00 am | February 5 † Bituin Yumul Ignacio |
| Saturday 8:00 am | February 6 No Mass Intention |
| 4:30 pm | No Mass Intention |
| Sunday 7:30 am | February 7 People of the Parish |
| 9:30 am | † Gianni Rossi |
| 11:30 am | No Mass Intention |

†Denotes deceased – (L) Living

Please note: All Mass times including Mass intentions were scheduled pre-Covid 19. Currently the only Mass will be Sunday at 10:00 am in the schoolyard parking lot. Weekday Masses are privately celebrated for Mass intentions.

End of Year Statements

We have closed the books on 2020. Please contact the parish office if you are in need of a year-end statement of your donations. We are able to provide statements to parishioners who have donated using **SUNDAY ENVELOPES**. Please note that any donations received after December 31st will be credited to 2021.

2021 Mass Intentions Available!

Please submit your 2021 Mass Intentions. As usual, due to the volume of requests, Masses cannot be reserved by phone or in person. Please submit your request in writing and mail to 449 Holyoke Street or by email: stelizabethchurchsf@gmail.com.

You will receive a confirmation letter once your Masses are scheduled. If your requested Mass is not available a alternate date or time will be chosen for you. The offering that has been suggested by our Archdiocese is \$10.00 per Mass.

New Office Hours

Beginning Monday February 1st, office hours are Monday through Thursday 8:00 am to 12:00 pm