

Fr. Charles Puthota's Blog

January 10, 2021

From the Pastor's Desktop



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Baptism of the Lord: After celebrating the heart-warming birthday of Jesus at Christmas, we meditated on the Holy Family and the Epiphany. Our families will do well in modeling themselves on the Holy Family. When Jesus is present in our families, we have everything, all the strength, grace, and courage we need to face anything. Epiphany prepared us for the conviction that Jesus is Lord for all the nations and cultures and that we are all called to help reveal Jesus to our families, neighborhoods, and the whole world. We are moving along briskly on the journey with Christ. Now we have come to the Baptism of the Lord as he begins his public ministry. In Mark's gospel today, as Jesus is being baptized we see the presence of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and the Heavenly Father who says, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." There are some insights that we can dwell on. 1. Jesus is guided by the Holy Spirit and is always eager to do his Father's will. We could follow Jesus in this regard. 2. Jesus did not need the baptism and yet he goes through it as a way of inserting himself into our humanity and vulnerability. Jesus' incarnational participation in our human nature begun at his nativity continues at his baptism. 3. Jesus is called, anointed, and sent by his Father to bring new life and hope to the whole world. We too are called to fulfill the purpose for which God has brought us into the world. 4. Each of us is God's "beloved son or daughter." God is "well pleased" with us. So let's not go about carrying guilt or hopelessness. Our God is a happy God who is delighted with us, despite our sinfulness. It's precisely because of God's being "well pleased" with us that we can turn our ways around to his. 5. Like Jesus, each of us was baptized to walk a new journey of grace and holiness. How are we doing in that regard? Is our baptismal anointing and empowerment still working in our lives? The Baptism of the Lord is an occasion for us to take stock of our lives.

A Story to Ponder: Who is the real menace?: The Ministry of Agriculture decreed that sparrows were a menace to crops and should be exterminated. When this was done, hordes of insects that the sparrows would have eaten descended on the harvest and began to ravage the crops, whereupon the Ministry of Agriculture came up with the idea of costly pesticides. The pesticides made the food expensive. They also made it a hazard to health. Too late it was discovered that it was the sparrows who, through feeding on the crops, managed to keep the food wholesome and inexpensive.

New Year 2021: This Sunday, we will have spent ten days of the New Year! How are we enjoying this New Year? Is this New Year treating us with kindness and gentleness? T. S. Eliot says, "For last year's words belong to last year's language; And next year's words await another voice." It may be a good idea to find this new voice and new language for this New Year. Perhaps we can take care of our body better. Maybe we can nourish our mind with truth and light and avoid preconceived, prejudiced, biased notions and ideologically loaded ways of thinking. Perhaps our hearts can become softer, gentler, kinder, lighter, and more joyful, to give and receive love. How about our soul? Is it infused with the radiance of God's presence and grace? What does it profit to gain the whole world if we lose our soul? We would then have everything except our soul. Without the soul, we are not alive. How can we open our soul as a dwelling place for God?... These are some of the things we could think about and act upon in the new year. May this new year, in the midst of COVID-19-based isolation and anxiety, still be a time for deeper reflection and soulful living.

Our Donation to St. Anthony's Foundation: You may recall that, instead of annual collection of food items for Thanksgiving, this year, on account of COVID-19, we took up a collection at Thanksgiving Mass toward St. Anthony's Foundation. I sent in your donations of \$550.00 to them. Their grateful response is as follows: "You are the reason we are able to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, addiction recovery services, job training, access to technology and other critical resources. Your gift will be put to immediate, direct use in providing a lifeline to San Franciscans experiencing extreme poverty and homelessness. Thank you for your gift of \$550.00 for the Dining Room, gratefully received on December 15, 2020."

Your Support for St. Elizabeth Parish ministries: Please continue to support our parish ministries through your generous donations and volunteering. It's much appreciated. You are wonderful in your participation of the mission and ministry of our parish community.

Thinking of you with love and faith and sharing with you a sense of adventure in the new year for doing beautiful things for God and people and assuring you of God's continued blessings of health, safety, and wellbeing, for us and the whole world,

Your Friend and Pastor,

Fr. Charles Puthota