

Fr. Charles Puthota's Blog

January 31, 2021

From the Pastor's Desktop



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