

# Fr. Charles Puthota's Blog

January 23, 2022

From the Pastor's Desktop



## Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

**Parish Survey in Response to Pope Francis' Synod of Bishops:** A survey is being distributed in our parish in response to the Holy Father's call to prepare for a Synod of Bishops. Please take a copy and fill it out prayerfully and return it to a volunteer at the Masses or drop it in the parish office mailbox.

On Sunday October 10, 2021, Pope Francis launched a two-year worldwide consultative process that could change the way the Catholic Church makes decisions. The initiative is called "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission." Some people see this as an opportunity to review the Church's structures of authority and give a greater voice to lay Catholics, including women, and people on the margins of society. At a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis said Catholics should have an open mind about the process. "Are we prepared for the adventure of this journey? Or are we fearful of the unknown, preferring to take refuge in the usual excuses: 'It's useless' or 'We've always done it this way'?" he said in his homily.

In the first stage, Catholics in parishes and dioceses around the world will discuss issues such as whether the Church is able to listen to young people, women, minorities, and those on the margins of society. They also will discuss how to identify stereotypes and prejudices in their local communities and what type of Church they think God wants in today's world. Following discussions at national and continental levels, bishops will meet at the Vatican for a month in 2023. They will prepare a document and then the pope will write an Apostolic Exhortation giving his views, suggestions and perhaps instructions on various issues. "Let us not soundproof our hearts; let us not remain barricaded in our certainties. Let us listen to one another," the pope said at the Mass attended by about 3,000 people.

Pope Francis has said that while there should be more consultation and mutual listening among the various parts of the Church, only popes can take the ultimate decisions on doctrinal matters. In his homily at the Mass on October 10, 2021, he said synodality, which comes from the Greek and means roughly walking together on a common path, could not become "a Church convention, a study group, a political congress or a parliament, but rather a grace-filled event, a process of healing guided by the Holy Spirit." (Source: Reuters)

**Word of God:** In the Gospel Jesus reads in the Nazareth synagogue a passage from Isaiah. It is a towering statement of prophecy that is fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus says that “this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” The Spirit of God anoints Jesus to proclaim the good news to the poor and to bring liberty to those in bondage, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. Jesus’ mission is being fulfilled in our own lives today. To us who are poor (those who depend on God for everything in life), Jesus brings the glad tidings. We will be blessed, graced, upheld, empowered, and healed. Our areas of blindness to truth, peace, love, and justice, Jesus will dispel and give us a new sight, a new vision. To us who are oppressed by various forces and situations, to us who are in bondage of various powers, addictions, and attachments, Jesus brings freedom and joy. He wants us to be free with the inner freedom that the children of God deserve. He wants us to be able to see clearly and deeply into life. Unless we enjoy these blessings, we cannot help others in their journey. Jesus’ mission is being fulfilled in our lives and families, in the Church and the world.

**January 25---Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul:** When you have the time, google for two famous paintings by Caravaggio entitled “Conversion of St. Paul” and “Conversion on the Way to Damascus” both of which deal with the theme of the feast day we celebrate on January 25. St. Paul’s conversion marked a momentous turn for the early Church which till then had been a small sect within the Jewish religion. Paul took the gospel to the non-Jewish people like the Romans and Greeks. He became the apostle to the gentiles. That’s how Christianity spread quickly beyond narrow geographical and religious confines. Thanks to St. Paul, our ancestors embraced the faith and that’s how we are all Christians today. St. Paul was an unlikely candidate for the mission, given the fact that he was eager to wipe out the early Christians. A persecutor became the most ardent promoter. A sinner was called to grace and entrusted with the sacred task of making Christ known to the world. The question to ask is: what do we do to make Jesus known and loved in the world?

**A Story to Ponder:** When Calvin Coolidge was President of the United States, he saw dozens of people each day. Most had complaints of one kind or another. One day a visiting Governor told the President that he did not understand how he was able to meet so many people in the space of a few hours. “Why, you are finished with all your visitors by dinner time,” said the Governor, “while I am often in my office till midnight.” “Yes,” said Coolidge. “That’s because you talk.”

**Quotable Quote:** “Don’t believe everything you think.”

**Religious Joke:** During a Sunday service, the pastor asked the congregation for their intentions. There were the usual requests to pray for sick people and the acknowledgments for those who helped when a parishioner died. The somber mood was broken when the last intention was heard. A woman stood up and said, "My granddaughter turned 16 this week and received her driver’s license. Let us pray for us all."

**Your Friend & Pastor,**

**Fr. Charles Puthota**