

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Spiritual Reflection from Father Charles Puthota

November 6, 2022



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Eternal Rest Grant Unto them, O Lord: As you know well, the month of November for Catholics is a time to think about life and death and to hold sacred the memory of those who have died from their families and communities. November 02nd is the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. As we cherish the memory of the dear departed with love, honor, and sadness, we pray for them that the good Lord may grant them eternal life and rest from all their labors. As we mourn the departed and renew our faith in their new life because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we hope to acquire a perspective on our present life. How we live, how we love, what we do with our time, how we pay attention to those things that really matter in the long haul, how we pass on authentic Christian virtues and human values to others, especially our children and grandchildren --- these are things to ponder as we think of death and everlasting life. Knowing that we are all made for the grandeur of eternity and immortality is what will give us purpose and perspective on what we have to do today and all the various choices we have to make on a daily basis.

Quotes on Death and Everlasting Life:

“Unable are the loved to die, for love is immortality.” --- Emily Dickinson.

“The immortality of the soul is a matter which is of so great consequence to us and which touches us so profoundly that we must have lost all feeling to be indifferent about it.” --- Blaise Pascal.

“All say, ‘How hard it is that we have to die’ --- a strange complaint to come from the mouths of people who have had to live.” --- Mark Twain.

“Death is a distant rumor to the young.” --- Andrew A. Rooney.

“Death may be the greatest of all human blessings.” --- Socrates.

“Honey, Don't be feared of them pearly gates... Honey, Go straight on to de Big House, An' speak to yo' God...” --- Sterling A. Brown.

“There's nothing certain in a man's life except this: That he must lose it.” --- Aeschylus.

My Recent Visit to Jordan: For the first time, I visited Jordan along with a group of pilgrims, for a three-day visit, before we made a land-crossing into Israel and Palestine. The population of Jordan is 10.5 million people. 80% of this country is desert. The main resources are phosphates, limestone, marble, and cement. It is not an oil-rich country. We landed in the capital Amman in our desire to visit the places connected with the Old Testament. We were delighted by a mountain-top castle in Kerak built by crusaders. At Madaba, the “City of Mosaics,” we visited St. George Church, which houses the oldest map of the Holy Land in mosaics on the floor of the church. Our next stop was Mount Nebo, which is mentioned in Deuteronomy 34, where Moses is believed to have been buried. From this mountain Moses could glimpse the promised land but he was not privileged to lead his people into it. Our visit to Petra, the “lost” city, a former capital of Nabataean Kingdom and a trading center, was memorable. It is featured in the movie “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.” This city is located among rugged desert canyons and mountains. Jerash is another place we visited, a city nestled in the mountains of Gilead, where the largest and most impressively-preserved sites of Roman architecture in the world outside Italy are located. After an enjoyable and enriching three-day tour of Jordan, we crossed the King Hussein Bridge, through strict security checks, into Israel, close to the town of Jericho, where we had lunch before driving to Tel Aviv on the Mediterranean coast for an overnight stay before visiting the holy sites of Israel and Palestine.

Word of God: Confirming the Conviction about Resurrection: As we come closer to the end of the liturgical time, in a metaphoric way, the end of time and the end of our lives on earth are evoked in the Word of God. The next few Sundays leading up to the Advent season will feature the “end things,” the eschatological realities. These are to do with death, judgment, heaven, and hell. The Gospel this 32nd Sunday in ordinary time renders a humorously hypothetical gospel story about seven brothers married to the same woman and the question about whose wife will she be at the resurrection. Jesus enlightens the Sadducees about life, death, and resurrection. The after-life will not be a continuation of how we live our lives here and organize our relationships. The life of resurrection will be completely a new reality, where we will all be fulfilled, not in the earthly sense, but in the way God would ordain it. Jesus also brilliantly argues that there is a reference already in the book of Exodus to resurrection, even though Sadducees would not accept that the first five books of their canon (the Torah) asserted any belief in the resurrection. God is the God of the living, not of the dead. The belief in the resurrection is also affirmed in the first reading from the Maccabees. The seven sons and their mother would be prepared to embrace any suffering on account of their belief knowing full well that they would all be raised up to a new life. The belief in the resurrection guides their decisions in the face of cruel persecution and death: “...you are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever...”

Looking Ahead: First Sunday of Advent is: November 27. Parish Advent Retreat: Saturday, December 03. Simbang Gabi Masses at 8:30a.m. from December 16 through December 24.

Insightful Stories to Ponder:

1. The disciple couldn't wait to tell the Spiritual Master the rumor he had heard in the marketplace. "Wait a minute," said the Master. "What you plan to tell us, is it true?" "I don't think it is." "Is it useful?" "No, it isn't." "Is it funny?" "No." "Then why should we be hearing it?"

2. Said a disappointed visitor, "Why has my stay here yielded no fruit?" "Could it be because you lacked the courage to shake the tree?" said the Spiritual Master benignly.

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota