

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

March 12, 2023



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Lenten Musings: Appearance Versus Reality; Truth Versus Falsehood: We are immersed in the season of Lent, journeying toward Easter. First of all, Lent is not a time of doom and gloom. Actually, it is a time of joy because we make another effort at renewing our lives---and that truly brings us peace and fulfillment. Getting away from the superficiality of life, we try to go deeper into the meaning of life and love. Often times, we are blinded or dazzled by appearances, but Lent is a time for us to go beyond---to the root of things, to the heart of the matter, to see clearly with the heart and mind. Various religions warn us about the dangers of living in a world of appearances rather than in a world of reality. We are bombarded with lies or half-truths from different directions. For example, the media often times present distorted or embellished facts. Often we are taken in by these falsehoods because they are presented attractively or in a clever manner. Lent is a time to get grounded in reality of our human existence; its purpose, its goal, its direction. On Ash Wednesday, in the Gospel, Jesus challenged us that when we pray, fast, or give alms, we are to do these not to blow our own horn but for the sake of the invitation from the Heavenly Father who sees everything in a hidden way and fulfills our dreams and desires. Ultimately, our lives have to be grounded in God who is the inner reality of our lives. He is the ground of our being, the foundation of our lives, the reason for our existence, the author of our lives, the source of our goodness, the origin of our love. If we are able to live a life united with God, then we are able to discern all sorts of shallow things that we need to get away from and the new things we need to embrace in order to be true to ourselves. "To thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man," says Polonius in Hamlet.

Ten Years As Pope: Pope Francis was Elected Pope on March 13, 2013: Congratulations to Pope Francis who completes ten years of pontificate! Pope Francis' name was Jorge Mario Bergoglio before he became the Pope. He was born on December 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He is the first Jesuit Pope, the first Latin American Pope, the first Pope from the Americas and the first non-European Pope in more than 1,000 years. Pope Francis can speak Spanish, Italian, and German. Francis rises at around 4:30 a.m. and spends the next two hours praying, meditating on the Scripture readings for the day and preparing his morning homily. He delivers it off-the-cuff at the 7 a.m. Mass in the chapel of the Vatican's Casa Santa Marta where he lives. Throughout his public life, Francis has been noted for his humility, emphasis on God's mercy, international visibility as pope, concern for the poor, passion for the protection of the planet earth, and commitment to interreligious dialogue. He is convinced that the measure of greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty; that the only war that we must all fight is the one against evil; that to be saints is not a privilege for the few, but a vocation for everyone.

Pope Francis' Writings: The three Encyclicals are: *Lumen Fidei* (in 2013 on faith), *Laudato Si* (in 2015 about environment), *Fratelli Tutti* (in 2020 about global social relationships). Among his much-appreciated Exhortations are: *Evangelii Gaudium* (in 2013 on proclamation of gospel in today's world), *Amoris Laetitia* (in 2016 on love in the family), *Gaudete et Exsultate* (in 2018 on call to holiness in today's world). His first words after election as Pope on March 13, 2013: "Brothers and sisters, good evening. You know that the duty of the conclave was to give a bishop to Rome. It seems that my brother cardinals went almost to the end of the world to get him."

Pope Francis' Famous Quotes: "I am a sinner. This is the most accurate definition.

It is not a figure of speech, a literary genre. I am a sinner." "The thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds. ... And you have to start from the ground up." "The Eucharist is not a prize *for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.*" "We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love. Be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace."

Happy St. Patrick's Day: March 17: "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me." (From St. Patrick's famous Breastplate Prayer).

Irish Blessings: "May your neighbors respect you, Trouble neglect you, The angels protect you, And heaven accept you." "May you live to be a hundred years, with one extra year to repent." "Always remember to forget the things that made you sad. But never forget to remember the things that made you glad." "When I count my blessings, I count you twice. May God bless you."

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota