

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

March 26, 2023



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Archdiocesan Annual Appeal (AAA) 2023: Launch date was February 05, 2023. Goal to reach: \$37,462. Amount collected to date: \$27,462. Balance to reach: \$9797. 1.33% is \$500. Please see names of donors in the bulletin, including those who donated 1.33%. We have completed the four weeks of the annual campaign for reaching our goal of \$37,462. We are making good progress, but we have not still achieved our goal. I want to thank all those who have donated so far. Please find the names of donors in this week's bulletin as well. If you have donated and your names are not in the bulletin, please call the parish office ASAP. Some have told me that they are still getting their checks in. I thank you in anticipation of your participation. Those who have not given, please you still have time to give. The brochures are in the pews. Or you can put your donation in a regular envelope and mail it in. Please keep in mind that you may not be able to go preach directly within the Archdiocese and get involved in concrete ministries. But your AAA donation reaches those who are preaching the good news within our three counties and are engaged in all kinds of good works connected with the gospel.

Lent: We are in the Fifth week of Lent. Next Sunday is Palm Sunday. The Sunday after is Easter. We are drawing closer to the mysteries of our new life with God. These mysteries are directly related to the final events in the life of Christ. So let's listen to the voice of God, to the voice deep within, to prepare ourselves for these holy events that have everything to do with our happiness, peace, and fullness of life. Pope Francis says: "Lent comes providentially to reawaken us, to shake us from our lethargy." The Holy Father also wants us to reflect on good and evil: "Each of us has a vision of good and of evil. We have to encourage people to move towards what they think is good. Everyone has his own idea of good and evil and must choose to follow the good and fight evil as he conceives them. That would be enough to make the world a better place." May this holy season of Lent somehow help us become better persons, better Catholics, and better Christians.

Parish Lenten Retreat: Last Friday March 17, I preached a retreat to our parishioners on the theme of Spirituality. 35 people attended it. It started with the Mass at 8:30 a.m. followed by the Stations of the Cross. After an enjoyable breakfast in Cantwell Hall, I shared my reflections on some practical suggestions on spirituality and on the theological criteria for authentic Catholic spirituality. The Retreat ended with a splendid St. Patrick's Day luncheon, served with corned beef and cabbage. We sang hymns at the before and after sessions. There was a very cordial and happy atmosphere among the participants throughout. I would like to thank the volunteers, including Phil McCarthy, Sharon Soares, David Gemignani, Richard John, the Paduas, Luz Bansuelo, and others for their dedicated service in making this event not only successful but really enjoyable. Maybe, we could have a Retreat again next in Advent and again in Lent. Apart from the spiritual insights and inspiration, such events bring people together in a social setting and provide opportunities for people to work together as a team. It's service to God and God's people. It's one of the enjoyable ways in which we can keep building up our parish community and the Kingdom of God.

Revised Sunday Mass Timings starting on April 16, 2023: There will be two Masses on Sundays from April 16: at 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Let's try this schedule on an experimental basis for some weeks/months. I hope this arrangement would be more convenient for those who would like to come to an earlier Mass and to those who would prefer a later Mass. However, it's not possible to make everyone happy. People who need a late, late Mass could always come to Saturday 4:30 p.m. vigil Mass. I'm eager to see if this new Mass schedule would increase our average weekend Mass attendance. If it does, then these revised timings would have achieved a good purpose. Please do let your families and friends know about this new development. Going to Mass on Sunday (or Saturday Vigil) is a foundational practice in our faith journey. Do encourage your folks in your circles to come join us to celebrate the memory of Jesus and enjoy our faith-family being called, graced and sent out to do God's work.

Word of God: New Life in Christ: The gospel of John recounts the "sign" of the raising of Lazarus. This is connected with the "Third Scrutiny" of RCIA and with all of us who are seeking to be raised to a new life in Christ, as we move steadily toward the paschal mysteries. The last two Sundays the themes were the living water that Jesus gives to quench all our longings and the new vision/sight after having been healed of our various forms of blindness. Do we need raising from various forms of deaths? Is it possible that some parts of our lives, our minds, hearts are lifeless on account of the death blows they may have received? From the ashes, can the embers crackle and become a huge fire, the fire of love of God and others? Jesus can raise us up to a new life; he is the life and the resurrection.

Giving to Panhandlers---Pope Francis' View: On March 3, 2017, the NY Times editorial was dedicated to Pope Francis' comments taken from Catholic News Service about what to do when panhandlers ask for money. The Pope's recommendation is: Give them the money, and don't worry about it. Pope's advice is that giving to someone in need is "always right." When asked about the panhandlers possibly using the money for a drink, the Pope says two things for us to think about. The first is: "If a glass of wine is the only happiness he has in life, that's OK. Instead, ask yourself what do you do on the sly? What 'happiness' do you seek in secret?" Second, "recognize how you are luckier, with a house, a wife, children, and then ask why should the responsibility to help be pushed onto someone else." The Pope further challenges us about how to give to panhandlers. He says that we should not drop the money into a cup and walk away, but must affirm the dignity and respect of the panhandler whose life has the same dignity as our own. We should stop, take the time to look in the eyes of the person, and touch his or her hands and, if possible, have a conversation.

Humor: 1. A pastor was delivering a children's sermon on the proper management of time. He asked the little ones seated on the floor around him, "Can you think of ways in which you waste time? One three-year-old girl replied, "How about taking a bath?" 2. A little boy offered up this simple prayer: "God bless mommy and daddy, my brother and sister; and God, do take care of yourself because if anything happens to you, we're all sunk." 3. A small boy in Faith Formation class described how powerful God is: "God is more powerful than Batman, Superman, and the Lone Ranger put together."

Your Friend and Pastor,

Fr. Charles Puthota