

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

April 2, 2023



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord: On Palm Sunday, we commemorate our King's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Henry Hart Milman says: "Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die; O Christ, thy triumphs now begin, O'er captive death and conquered sin." Jesus' triumphal entry will turn into dark, sad days of excruciating suffering and shameful death. But it will all pale in the resplendent glory that will dawn on Easter. The profound Christian insight is that it's always through the cross that we find our glory. Without suffering, there is no love, no redemption, no new life. Suffering is redemptive. Death is the way to resurrection. Let's look at the face of Christ this Holy Week. Let's look into his tender eyes. Let's place our hand on the heart of Christ. Let's strive to enter his mind and heart and dwell on his thoughts and feelings.

St. Elizabeth Parish Holy Week Schedule in the Mail: I mailed last Tuesday March 28 to each parishioner of St. Elizabeth Parish my Easter letter with the Holy Week schedule. Please see the schedule also in this weekend's bulletin. I invite you wholeheartedly to participate in the holy rituals and services of the Holy Week at our parish. All these mysteries we celebrate are intimately connected with our life, death, and eternal life.

Archdiocesan Annual Appeal (AAA): Our goal is \$37,462. 1.33% is \$500. So far we have made \$29,065. The balance to reach is \$8397. Please donate as early and as generously as possible to assist our Archdiocese in carrying out their mission, ministry, and services.

A Practical Suggestion I'll make for the Holy Week is this: Can you choose one of the passion narratives from one of the four gospels? Every gospel, toward the end, has the account of Jesus' suffering and death. You may go to a church or any other quiet place or your living room or kitchen. Turn the TV and cell phone off. Sit quietly. Read slowly and prayerfully the passion narrative and be silent for a few minutes after reading it. It will only take about 20 minutes or so to do this. You will not regret spending some quality time on this simple form of prayer, Lectio Divina. If you feel inspired, speak to Jesus in your words. St. Ignatius of Loyola suggests in the "Spiritual Exercises" to stand before the cross and ask: "Lord, what have I done for you? What am I doing for you? What shall I do for you?"

Via Dolorosa: On my four visits to the Holy Land so far, one of the memorable devotions we practiced was to walk the holy route, Via Dolorosa, which in Latin means “the way of suffering”. It’s in the Old City of Jerusalem. Tradition has long held that Jesus walked through this particular route toward Calvary. This path winds through narrow streets with hundreds of shops on either side. That is why we had to wake up early in the morning by 4:30 a.m. and get to this place and start the Way of the Cross by 5:30 a.m. so that we could complete our prayers by the time shops opened. Our Way of the Cross along this holy route ended with the Mass I celebrated at the Church of Holy Sepulchre, my most favorite church in the whole wide world, the church of veneration of Jesus’ death and resurrection. It was one of the most memorable walks of our life ever. We walked the same way Jesus did! We were filled with sadness for Jesus carrying the cross, but we were also filled with hope and gratitude for what Jesus brought for us through his ultimate sacrifice.

Morning Prayer: During the Holy Week, please do join the Morning Prayer on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday at 8:30 a.m. There will be no Masses on those three days. Please see the Holy Week schedule for all the services of the Holy Week.

Donating Easter Lilies: If you are able to donate Easter lilies, you are most welcome to do so. Please bring them sooner than later to church during the morning Mass timings (8:00 a.m. through 9:00 a.m) or leave them in the parish office during office hours (Monday through Thursday 8:00 a.m through 12:30 p.m.)

Good Friday, A Day of Fast and Abstinence.

The offering taken up on Good Friday is called Pontifical Good Friday Collection, which goes toward supporting the holy shrines, parishes, and ministries (liturgical, ecumenical, communications, educational [Terra Sancta Schools], pastoral, social, & charitable works) in the Holy Land entrusted to the Franciscans. Please donate generously.

Word of God: This Palm Sunday, the Word of God is all about suffering. The first reading is from Isaiah about the suffering servant. He suffers a lot, but he places all his trust in God. The responsorial psalm is about: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” A very powerful sentiment indeed! How many times have we felt this way in our life? We sometimes feel that we are abandoned by everyone, including God. Jesus himself felt this way. He used these very words on the cross. Jesus knows our human frustrations and anguish because he himself has gone through those dark moments in his life. That’s the reason we can go to Jesus with great confidence. He knows exactly our struggles and sufferings. The second reading is the famous hymn from the letter to the Philippians, which celebrates Jesus’s humility, obedience to his Father, his dying on the cross, his exaltation by his heavenly Father above everything and everyone. The gospel reading, the passion narrative, is taken from Matthew’s gospel. On Good Friday, though, the passion narrative will be from John’s gospel. As we go through reflect on readings, the Lord will speak to us tenderly and give us the grace to enter spiritually the sufferings and death of Jesus so that we can rise with him to a new life in the glory of the resurrection.

I wish everyone at St. Elizabeth parish a reflective, prayerful, and grace-filled Holy Week,

Your Friend and Pastor,
Father Charles Puthota