

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

April 23, 2023



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Thank You, Archdiocesan Annual Appeal Donors! We have successfully completed 2023 AAA campaign. I am so grateful and delighted that we have been able to do it within a period of nine weeks since we launched it in the first weekend of February. We reached our goal by the Easter weekend. Special thanks to those who donated 1.33% (\$500 and more)! Please see the names of all donors for the last time for 2023 on the last page of the bulletin this weekend.

Easter Season, Different from Christmas Season: Having completed the long Lenten preparations, we arrived at the glorious season of Easter. The difference between Christmas and Easter is: this season provides the quiet and meditative atmosphere that we need. At Christmas time, we have all sorts of social obligations that can lead us to a hectic, even harried, time. Easter is a time to go deeper into ourselves and commune with the Risen Christ, who has been through a lot, but has overcome death and darkness. He has defeated evil in the world. He is taking away our sin and guilt. While Christmas time tends to take us out into many external things, Easter time has the power to take us into our heart and soul and help us explore what the Risen Christ might mean for us and our families today. We too can overcome. We too can hope. We too have a reason to live and love, to serve and share. Theologically and scripturally speaking, it was in the light of Easter that people looked at Christmas. It was from the vantage point of Jesus' resurrection that people viewed the birth, teachings, and the ministry of Jesus. It was the faith at the resurrection of Christ that led people like the gospel writers to "construct" the life of Christ starting from his birth. The gospels are not biographies or historical documents even though they contain the facts of the historical Jesus, but they are primarily about faith and how we might encounter the Risen Christ and come to new life. Jesus of Faith was the impetus for people to look at the Jesus of History. Hence the saying: "The gospels do not explain the Resurrection of Jesus; rather the Resurrection of Jesus explains the gospels."

Easter Quotes: "Jesus' resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about." — N.T. Wright. "Love paid a price so hope could become a reality." — Susan Gaddis. "If Easter says anything to us today, it says this: You can put truth in a grave, but it won't stay there. You can nail it to a cross, wrap it in winding sheets and shut it up in a tomb, but it will rise!" — Clarence W. Hall.

Word of God: The Fourth Sunday of Easter is traditionally known as the “Good Shepherd Sunday.” God shepherding his people in the Old Testament and Jesus being the good shepherd in the New Testament is the theme of the Word of God this Sunday of Easter. The Responsorial Psalm 23 is probably the best known psalm and a favorite one at funerals. Not only through the pilgrimage of life, but also through death into eternal life does God in Jesus Christ shepherd us. All we have to do is to allow the good shepherd to lead, guide, and protect us. In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Peter shepherds those gathered at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They are “cut to the heart” and ask Peter “What are we to do, my brothers?” Peter says: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...” That is the way Peter himself is guided and shepherded by the Risen Lord and Peter in turn is shepherding the gathering who will become the first of those converted to Jesus. In the Second Reading from the First Letter of Peter, he says memorably: “By his wounds you have been healed. For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.” The gospel reading gives us the account of Jesus calling himself the “gate to the sheep” and immediately following this Sunday’s passage in John 10, Jesus would call himself, “I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” Let’s pray about how we could allow Jesus on a daily basis to shepherd us. “Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life....”

This Good Shepherd Sunday, A Prayer for Vocations: We think about and pray for vocations. The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few. Here’s a prayer we might want to pray: “God our Father, we thank you for calling men and women to serve in your Son’s Kingdom as priests, deacons, and consecrated persons. Send your Holy Spirit to help others to respond generously and courageously to your call. May our community of faith support vocations of sacrificial love in our youth and young adults. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.”

An Insightful Story to Ponder---Joneyed and the Beggar: The holy man Joneyed, dressed in beggar’s clothes, entered the barber’s shop at a holy shrine. The barber, who was shaving a nobleman, left his wealthy customer to shave this beggar first. And not only did he not charge him for his services, he even gave him alms and sent him on his way. Joneyed was so impressed; he resolved he would hand over to the barber whatever he got in the way of alms that day. It so happened that a well-to-do pilgrim gave him a purse full of gold coins. Overjoyed, he ran to the barber’s shop and offered him the purse. When the barber understood why he was being given the gold, he was enraged. “What kind of a holy man are you,” he yelled, “I that you come to reward me for an act of love!” (TSOTB, ADM)

Religious Humor: 1. God: “Whew, I just created a 24-hour period of alternating light and darkness on earth.” Angel: “What are you going to do now?” God: “Call it a day.” 2. And did you hear about the bishop who hired a secretary who had worked for the Pentagon? She immediately changed his filing system to “Sacred” and “Top Sacred.” 3. In a booming voice, a cantor bragged to his congregation: “Two years ago, I insured my voice with Lloyd’s of London for \$750,000.” The crowded room was hushed. Suddenly, an elderly woman spoke. “So,” she said, “what did you do with the money?”

Wishing you the many blessings of this resplendent Easter Season,

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota