

# From the Pastor's Desktop

## A Message from Father Charles Puthota

August 20, 2023



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

**Faith Formation Catechists Meeting:** Last Saturday August 12, I had called for a meeting of the catechists of the Faith Formation program as we look forward to the start of classes on September 9. I listened to their experiences and suggestions. I spoke to them about the vision of the program and expressed my expectations. Among other things, I have encouraged them to gear all their classes and their activities toward inspiring the children to come to experience Jesus in a personal way. Jesus asks: "Who do you say that I am?" Christianity and particularly our Catholic faith is primarily the person of Jesus Christ. Our faith, prayer, our sacraments and rituals, and our moral life---all need to converge on the person of Jesus Christ. I have requested the teachers to somehow find creative ways to awaken children into a love of Christ, knowledge of Christ and an excitement about the presence of Jesus Christ in their lives. They could become more familiar with: What did Jesus say and do? What did Jesus stand for? What are his values and vision? What did he proclaim? What are his parables about? How did he relate to his Father and others, especially those in need? How's the mystery of Jesus Christ connected with us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? If we could focus on some of these things, our Faith Formation program could have a life-changing and lifelong impact on the children and their families. We grown-up parishioners, too, could keep exploring our personal encounter and experience of Jesus as central to our faith journey.

**Word of God: 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time:** Our God is a God of all nations and peoples. In Isaiah, God invites the "foreigners who join themselves to the Lord" to hold on to the covenant because God's "house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." People of good will, no matter what culture or religion, are to unite to give glory to God. This would be God's will and purpose. The psalm proclaims: "O God, let all the nations praise you." Paul, apostle to the gentiles, in Romans, is convinced that both Jews and gentiles have received the call of Jesus Christ because "the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable." The Gospel reading gives us the story of the Canaanite woman who doesn't give up her faith in Jesus Christ: "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters." Jesus heals her daughter, praising her: "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." Looking at all the readings, we joyfully recognize that the whole human family, with all its diversity, belongs to God. God's purpose is for every human person to attain the destiny for which God has created each person, in every country and culture and race and religion. God shows no partiality!

## **Ecological Musings: What is the Connection between Meat Consumption and Environment?:**

There is a lot of research leading to an emerging consensus about meat production which accounts for 57% of the greenhouse gas emissions of the entire food production industry. Experts say that reducing meat eating would contribute toward reversing the climate change, which is bringing about all sorts of natural disasters, including the current heatwaves in many parts of the world and the recent wildfires in Maui, Hawaii. “Meat agriculture is one of the major drivers of greenhouse gas emissions,” said Shaun Larcom, Cambridge University Land Economy researcher. “If the Pope was to reinstate the obligation for meatless Fridays to all Catholics globally, it could be a major source of low-cost emissions reductions.”

How does eating less meat reduce greenhouse gases? For example, grazing animals requires a lot of land, often created through deforestation. Livestock also produce large quantities of methane, a particularly harmful greenhouse gas. Eating less meat or forgoing meat one day a week could considerably reduce the carbon footprint, researchers have found. It certainly helps the environment. With over 1.3 billion Catholics around the world, what we do as a church could make a big impact on environment.

The following may be considered as benefits deriving from reducing or forgoing meat one day a week, perhaps on Fridays: 1. It would be a practice of devotion and penance. Friday has for centuries been a day of penance, as it is believed Jesus died on a Friday. It would be a way of active remembrance of and strong connection with Jesus. 2. It would be a step in the right direction toward reducing greenhouse gases and helping the environment. 3. It might be helpful as part of our efforts toward personal and physical health. 4. It might be a way for us to practice restraint, discipline, and renunciation. 5. It would be a way to empathize with millions of people who cannot afford to eat food, let alone eat meat. 6. It would create a sense of solidarity with Catholics all over the world engaged in the same effort of caring for our “common home.” 7. It might have a “witness” value to other churches and religions that the Catholic church is genuinely concerned about the global warming/boiling and the Church’s determination to do something concrete about it. No one is saying that the Church should institute a church law to prohibit meat eating one day a week. If at all, people could take upon this practice on themselves on a purely voluntary basis as one of the ways of protecting and preserving the planet earth.... Think about it! Go online and read about it and do your own little research to keep yourself informed.

**Jokes:** 1. Patient: “Doctor! You've got to help me! Nobody ever listens to me. No one ever pays any attention to what I have to say.” Doctor: “Next please!” 2. “Excuse me. Do you know the way to the zoo?” “No, I’m sorry I don’t.” “Well, it’s two blocks this way, then one block to the left.” 3. Teacher: “Do you have trouble making decisions?” Student: “Well...yes and no.” 4. Man: “I could go to the end of the world for you.” Woman: “Yes, but would you stay there?” 5. Man: “I offer you myself.” Woman: “I am sorry. I never accept cheap gifts.”

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota