

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

September 3, 2023



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

The Synod on Synodality: Theme: Communion, Participation, Mission: As you well know, Pope Francis has called the universal church to be engaged in a synodal discernment process from October 2021 to October 2024. The Synod on Synodality is a three-year process of listening and dialogue that began with a solemn opening in Rome on October 9 and 10, 2021. The synodal process will conclude in 2024. Each individual diocese in the whole world has gone through a process of preparation for the Synod. The Synod is both an event and a process in which the whole People of God are called to walk to gather together toward what the Holy Spirit helps it to discern as being the Lord's will for his Church. Pope Francis has invited the entire Church to reflect on a theme that is decisive for its life and mission: "It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium. This journey, which follows in the wake of the Church's "renewal" proposed by the Second Vatican Council, is both a gift and a task: by journeying together and reflecting together on the path that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through Her experience which processes can help Her to live communion, to achieve participation, and to open Herself to mission." The 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will be held in two sessions. The first one from October 4 to 29, 2023. The second session will be in October 2024.

The Word of God: This 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Word of God speaks movingly of what it means to be a follower of Christ and the consequences of discipleship. Jeremiah in the first reading speaks some of the most memorable lines with utter vulnerability: "You duped me, O Lord, and I let myself be duped." He speaks to God as if to another person in real life. The prophet's enemies are arrayed against him, mocking him viciously and seeking to destroy him. Even though his prophetic message invites cruel vengeance from his listeners, he cannot help himself speaking God's word. If he thinks of not speaking in God's name, "it becomes like a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones...I cannot endure it." Are we all called to be God's prophets? Are we all called to be "missionary disciples"? Speaking God's message and standing up for God's ways of truth and justice can have serious implications. The responsorial psalm could be our constant prayer: "My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God." It's what St. Augustine prayed: "Our hearts are made for Thee, O Lord, and they are restless until they rest in Thee." In the Gospel, Jesus cannot accept Peter's insistence that Jesus should not suffer: "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." Then Jesus speaks about following him: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." He says that if we lose our life for his sake, we'll save it. Even if we gained the whole world, what use would it be if we lost our life. "What can one give in exchange for his life?" The purpose of our Christian journey is to be a pilgrim follower of Christ with the consequences and implications, with the joys and sufferings, that accompany discipleship.

A Story to Ponder: Joneyed and the Barber: The holy man Joneyed, dressed in beggar's clothes, entered the barber's shop in Mecca. 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, "that you come to reward me for an act of love!"

Quotable Quotes from Poets: "Some cause happiness wherever they go; others whenever they go." --Oscar Wilde. "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time." --T. S. Eliot. "Don't think, just do." -- Horace. "In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: it goes on." --Robert Frost. "Let the beauty of what you love be what you do." --Rumi. "Beauty is a fragile gift." --Ovid. "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought." --Percy Bysshe Shelley. "The only journey is the one within." --Rainer Maria Rilke. "Let us be grateful to the mirror for revealing to us our appearance only." --Samuel Butler. "Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars." --Khalil Gibran.

Humor: 1. A: "Hey, man! Please call me a taxi." B: "Yes, sir. You are a taxi." 2. Student: "Would you punish me for something I didn't do?" Teacher: "Of course not." Student: "Good, because I haven't done my homework." 3. A: "Why are you crying?" B: "The elephant is dead." A: "Was he your pet?" B: "No, but I'm the one who must dig his grave." 4. Principal: "I've had complaints about you, Johnny, from all your teachers. What have you been doing?" Johnny: "Nothing, sir." Principal: "Exactly." 5. Little Johnny: "Teacher, can I go to the bathroom?" Teacher: "Little Johnny, MAY I go to the bathroom?" Little Johnny: "But I asked first!" 6. "What did the Buddhist monk say to the hot dog vendor at the ballpark?" "Make me one with everything."

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota