

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

September 10, 2023



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Musings on 9/11 Anniversary: Some years ago, I visited the 9/11 Memorial & Museum in New York City and spent several hours going over the exhibits. Located at the World Trade Center, the museum tells the heartbreaking story of 9/11 through “media, narratives, and a collection of monumental and authentic artifacts, presenting visitors with personal stories of loss, recovery, and hope.” No one could come away without being deeply distressed. It’s not uncommon for people to break down and cry. The solemn silence in the museum is born of disbelief and profound sorrow. 9/11 is a reminder that the world is desperately in need of peace and justice. Hatred and animosity are to be eliminated and gentleness and kindness are to be embraced more and more. The unjust and unnecessary war in Ukraine has darkened the world. In our own nation, in politics, religion, law, government, culture, media and social media, are there signs of peace or anger? Are there signs of kindness or hostility? We have to confront honestly what is going on in the public square as well as in our own hearts. There is a great need for restoration of respect and compassion at all levels of society. Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, chapters 5, 6, & 7) is all the more relevant and urgent for our nation and the world at large. “Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.”

Word of God: The responsorial psalm is: “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” God speaks to us and reveals himself to us in a continuous way. He tries to get our attention in many different ways. He comforts, strengthens, and enlighten us. He calls us to conversion. His presence is everywhere, but it is subtle. Unless our hearts are soft, we cannot feel him. If our hearts are hard, we cannot hear his voice and open up to his love and grace.

Feast of St. John Chrysostom September 13: John Chrysostom warns against giving honor to Christ by adorning the Church building to the neglect of the poor and suffering members of Christ’s body, the Church in the truest sense. He makes a powerful connection between the Eucharist and the care for the poor. He says: “Do you want to honor Christ’s body? Then do not scorn him in his nakedness, nor honor him here in the church with silken garments while neglecting him outside where he is cold and naked. For he who said: *This is my body*, and made it so by his words, also said: *You saw me hungry and did not feed me, and inasmuch as you did not do it for one of these, the least of my brothers, you did not do it for me.* (Mt. 25: 34). What we do here in the church requires a pure heart, not special garments; what we do outside requires great dedication.”

Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross September 14: "O Cross, erected above the world, cross of our Savior King." Tradition holds that in the fourth century, Saint Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine, looking for the holy places of Jesus' life, found three crosses during an excavation in Jerusalem and the cross of Jesus was identified by its miraculous powers. The cross immediately became an object of veneration. Tradition also has long held that the Holy Sepulcher Church in Jerusalem is built over the place of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. I have had the privilege and blessing of celebrating Mass inside the tomb of Jesus and venerating the very place where the cross of Jesus stood. The cross, though a shameful means of death, became the holiest symbol of life, redemption, and reconciliation because of Jesus' death on the cross. We look upon Jesus on the cross and derive meaning and purpose for our own suffering. Through the cross to the resurrection. Through suffering to glory. This is the Christian way; the way of Christ.

Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows September 15: This feast day falls on the day after the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. The Blessed Virgin Mary is closely aligned with the life of Christ. Mary's suffering is intimately connected with the suffering of Christ. Mary suffered because her only son Jesus suffered. Our Mother Mary understands our suffering as well and shows us the redemptive meaning in suffering. The seven sorrows of Mary are: 1. The prophecy of Simeon. 2. The flight into Egypt. 3. The loss of Jesus for three days. 4. The carrying of the cross. 5. The crucifixion of Jesus. 6. Jesus is taken down from the cross. 7. The burial of Jesus.

A Story to Ponder: 1. The old rabbi had become blind and could neither read nor look at the faces of those who came to visit him. A faith healer said to him, "Entrust yourself to my care and I will heal your blindness." "There will be no need for that," replied the rabbi. "I can see everything that I need to." *Not everyone whose eyes are closed is asleep. And not everyone with open eyes can see.*

Quotable Quotes: "The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be."---Ralph Waldo Emerson. "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."---Mahatma Gandhi. "Your talent is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God."---Leo Buscaglia.

Birthday Humor: 1. It's my wife's birthday tomorrow. Last week I asked her what she wanted as a present. "Oh, I don't know," she said. "Just give me something with diamonds." That's why I'm giving her a pack of playing cards. 2. "When's your birthday?" "June 2nd." "What year?" "Every year!" 3. Forget about the past, you can't change it. Forget about the future, you can't predict it. Forget about the present, I didn't get you one. 4. Q: Why do we put candles on top of a birthday cake? A: Because it's too hard to put them on the bottom! 5. I like birthdays, but I think too many can kill you.

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota