

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

January 14, 2024



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

COP28 (Conference of the Parties)---U.N. Climate Change Conference, November 30 to December 12, 2023: The followers of Christ are called to do everything to protect and preserve the planet earth and be wise and prudent stewards of the planet earth. The COP28 (Conference of the Parties) met and deliberated in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), from November 30 through December 12. COP28 was the first international conference in which any explicit reference to moving away from fossil fuels has made it into the final decision text. Pope Francis has been passionate about the stand the Catholic Church and the whole world need to take---and the radical changes needed to avert the disaster and preserve our common home. He was to address this conference but was unable to because of illness. His message, however, was read by Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Parolin. The Holy Father in that wide-ranging statement called for an end to coal, oil and gas and the necessity of lifestyle changes to save the planet. He said, "the destruction of the environment is an offence against God....With the money spent on arms and other military expenditures, let's establish a global fund that can end hunger, carry out works for the sustainable development of the poorer countries and combat climate change." He also asked for debt forgiveness of poorer countries hit by climate change. The United States Catholic bishops too have called for international climate policies that promote justice.

This is the crisis: the world is getting warmer because of emissions of fossil fuels used by us, like gas, oil, and coal. Consequently, extreme weather events are happening, including heatwaves, floods, forest fires, water shortages, drought, crop failures, ecosystem collapse. The past decade has been the warmest on record and so the nations agree that urgent action is needed. When you have the time, please do read up on technical terms like "Net Zero," "1.5 degrees Celsius target," and "Greenhouse gases." Knowledge is power!

Word of God: January 14, Second Sunday in Ordinary Time: This Sunday the Word of God invites us to the deepening of a personal relationship with God. In the first reading from the first book of Samuel, we read the memorable story of God speaking to the little boy Samuel. At the suggestion of the prophet Eli, the boy now is able to perceive that it is God himself who is speaking to him. So he says to God: "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." God speaks to each one of us in unique and special ways. We are not all lumped together in an impersonal way. God loves each one of us as if we were each the only one that existed. Uniquely loved, we are called to form communities of love and service. The gospel reading too invites us to a personal relationship with Jesus. The disciples say to him: "Where do you live?" Jesus says to them: "Come and see." We have to come and see for ourselves and experience Jesus in our lives. Without the experience of Jesus, Christianity is mostly a theoretical construct. With the experience of Jesus at the heart of Christianity, our faith comes alive because we have seen and heard the Lord for ourselves. Are we ready for a personal experience of Jesus in our lives? Do we let our liturgical, pious, devotional activities all lead us to a personal experience of Jesus? Do we allow our daily activities of relationships, work, play, service, joys, struggles, etc. to bring us into a personal encounter with Christ?

New Year Jokes: 1. A woman took an afternoon nap on New Year's Eve. When she woke up, she told her husband, "I just dreamed that you gave me a diamond ring for a New Year's present. What do you think it all means?" He replied, "Aha, you'll know tonight!" At midnight, her husband handed her a small gift-wrapped present. Excited, she opened it quickly, but was even more surprised: In it was a book titled "The Meaning of Dreams." 2. A man who had too much to drink decides to walk home on New Year's Eve. A police officer stopped the man and asked where he was going. "I'm on my way to a lecture," the man replied. The cop scoffed, "Who gives lectures on New Year's Eve?" The man answered: "My wife."

New Year Quotes: "For last year's words belong to last year's language, and next year's words await another voice. And to make an end is to make a beginning." — T.S. Eliot. "We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day." — Edith Lovejoy Pierce "May all your troubles last as long as your New Year's resolutions!" — Joey Adams. "Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year." — Ralph Waldo Emerson. "Come, gentlemen, I hope we shall drink down all unkindness." — William Shakespeare. "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving." — Albert Einstein.

Think About It: A spiritual master was asked: "How does one find God in action?" He replied: "By loving the action wholeheartedly, regardless of the fruit it brings." When this proved somewhat difficult for the disciples, he told them of a man who bought a painting for a million dollars, then framed the cancelled check. "What he really loved was not art, but status," said the Master.

Humor: During a Sunday service, the pastor asked the congregation for their intentions. There were the usual requests to pray for sick people and the acknowledgments for those who helped when a parishioner died. The somber mood was broken when the last intention was heard. A woman stood up and said, "My granddaughter turned 16 this week and received her driver's license. Let us pray for us all."

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota