

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

January 21, 2024



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Laudato Deum: You may be familiar with Pope Francis' encyclical "Laudato Si" of 2015 in which he had spoken about the climate change and its impact on ecological, social, and economic issues. In a follow-up apostolic exhortation, "Laudato Deum" (Praise God), the Holy Father issued on October 4, 2023 (Feastday of St. Francis of Assisi) calls for urgent action against the climate crisis and criticizes those who deny the climate change as well as the governments of the world that do little to counter the climate change. The Pope says that the planet is approaching a "point of no return" as global warming hurtles toward the maximum recommended limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) higher than the pre-industrial average." He adds: "Even if we do not reach this point of no return, it is certain that the consequences would be disastrous and precipitous measures would have to be taken, at enormous cost and with grave and intolerable economic and social effects." The Pope observes that the international organizations and conferences such as COP (Conference of Parties) since 1995 have not produced practical results. Science has been throwing clearer light on the crisis, but the nations and organizations have not been able to implement concrete measures to preserve and protect the earth. Pope Francis appeals to a renewed vision of community. He challenges Catholics to be prophetic in their solidarity with the poor and the disadvantaged. Jesus is at the heart of this enterprise. We are to collaborate with him in our awareness and action to care for our common home, the Planet Earth.

Word of God: Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Call of the Apostles: Jesus calls. The call is continuous and constant. Last Sunday we meditated on the call of the little boy Samuel and that of the disciples of John who follow Jesus and respond to the invitation to "come and see." The Word of God this Sunday speaks of the call of Jonah in the first reading and the call of the apostles Peter and his brother Andrew and John and his brother James. What is it that is so magnetic and mysterious about the call of Christ that the fishermen leave everything and follow Jesus on the shores of the Sea of Galilee? They give up what they have been doing, their families and fishing profession, and follow Jesus right away. They were unworthy, uneducated, and flawed, but Jesus sees great potential in them. Jesus sees not just who they are but what they could become if only they would generously collaborate with Jesus. Jesus is always looking at our reality and the potential. We are capable of all sorts of beautiful things for God and others. The call comes to us today, amidst our circumstances and situations. We need to hear that voice of Jesus in our hearts and souls. We need to be alert and discerning. That call of Jesus always entails, as T. S. Eliot would say, "costing not less than everything." If we have to find fulfillment and happiness in life, we have to heed the call of Christ and respond generously. Our response would truly give glory to God and place us at the service of God's people.

Thursday, January 25 Conversion of St. Paul: Reflecting on the theme of the call in the Word of God this Sunday, we might like to see in that context the call of Saul who became Paul. It would be worth our time to look up the Italian painter Caravaggio's two powerful paintings on the conversion of Paul. The dramatic conversion of Paul is one of the most stunning and consequential happenings in the religious history of the world. Paul who was a fierce persecutor of Christianity becomes the most ardent promoter of it. Thanks to his going beyond the Jewish fold to the gentiles, Christianity opened up in an incredible way to many nations and cultures. But before all that, Jesus claimed Paul to himself. Paul in his letters again and again insists on how unworthy he was and yet Jesus called him and entrusted to him the mission to the gentiles. He was a sinner and yet Jesus sought after him and chose him to be an apostle. We are all called too, despite our sinfulness and unworthiness. Where there is sin, grace abounds! Jesus needs present-day apostles to proclaim God's love and mercy to the world of today, starting with our own families and neighborhoods. It's the new evangelization!

Seeing --- Story to Ponder: A writer arrived at the monastery to write a book about the Master. "People say you are a genius. Are you?" he asked. "You might say so," said the Master with a smile. "And what makes one a genius?" asked the intrepid reporter. "The ability to see," said the Master. The writer was betwixt and between. Scratching his hair with one hand and rubbing his tummy with the other, he muttered, "To see what?" The Master quietly replied, "The butterfly in a caterpillar, the eagle in an egg, the saint in a selfish person, life in death, unity in separation, the divine in the human and the human in the divine."

Quotable Quote: "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader." --- John Quincy Adams, 6th President of U.S.A.

Humor: "I'm going to be standing outside. So if anyone asks, I'm outstanding." "I was chasing my dreams, but tripped over reality and busted my head on the truth." "Dear haters, I couldn't help notice 'Awesome' ends with 'me' and 'Ugly' starts with 'u'." "Right before I die, I'm going to swallow a bag of popcorn kernels to make the cremation a bit more interesting." "Sometimes I shock myself with the smart stuff I say and do. Then, there are times when I try to get out of the car with my seat belt on." "Men say that women should come with instructions. What's the point of that? Have you ever seen a man read instructions?"

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota