

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

February 25, 2024



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Lent: Appearance Versus Reality; Truth Versus Falsehood: We are in the second week of Lent. First of all, it's not a time of doom and gloom. Actually, it is a time of joy because we make another effort at renewing our lives with the soul-nourishing choices that truly bring us peace and fulfillment. Getting away from the superficiality of life, we try to go deeper into the meaning of our life and love. Often times, we are blinded or dazzled by appearances, but Lent is a time for us to go beyond--to the root of things, to the heart of the matter. Religions in general warn us about the dangers of living in a world of appearances rather than in a world of reality. We are bombarded with lies or half-truths constantly. We only have to watch television for a few minutes to know that we are sold all sorts of things and shown all sorts of appearances based on distorted, embellished facts. Often we are taken in by these falsehoods because they are presented attractively or in a clever manner. Lent is a time to get grounded in reality of our human existence; its purpose, its goal, its direction. On Ash Wednesday, in the Gospel, Jesus alerted us to the external show that we embrace rather than living from the reality and truth. When we pray, fast, or give alms, we are to do these not to blow our own horn but for the sake of the invitation from the Heavenly Father who sees everything inside and fulfills our dreams and desires. Ultimately, our lives have to be grounded in God who is the inner reality of our lives. He is the ground of our being, the foundation of our lives, the reason for our existence, the author of our lives, the source of our goodness, the origin of our love. If we are able to live a life united with God, then we are able to discern all sorts of shallow things that we need to get away from and all sorts of authentic things that we need to embrace in order to be true to ourselves. "To thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man," says Polonius in Hamlet.

Archbishop's Annual Appeal (AAA) 2024: We are beginning the last week of our month-long campaign for Archbishop's Annual Appeal. If possible please give 1.5% which is \$500. I thank Ron Borg for speaking at the three weekend Masses last week, encouraging everyone to give to AAA. Please see the last page of bulletin for names of donors and the latest numbers. We are making progress, but we need more people to come onboard and help. Thank you for your spirit of stewardship. The shortest definition of stewardship is that we are called to share God's blessings with others. The church needs your help to continue to do God's work for the people. So this last week of our campaign, please donate generously and quickly. We cannot even begin to count our abundant blessings. Why not become part of the evangelization and the works of compassion and charity and education that the Archdiocese does? A simple way of supporting the Archdiocese is by participating in the AAA. Let the gospel be preached in our own three counties of the Archdiocese. Let the fragrance of Christ's presence fill the minds and hearts of everyone in our Archdiocese, thanks to the support we lend to the Archdiocesan Annual Appeal.

Lenten Half-Day Retreat: Everyone is welcome to join this half-day retreat on Saturday March 02. It starts with the 8:30 a.m. Mass followed by coffee and snacks in Cantwell Hall. I'll give three talks and the retreat will end with lunch.

Lenten Quote: "Lent stimulates us to let the Word of God penetrate our life and in this way to know the fundamental truth: who we are, where we come from, where we must go, what path we must take in life..." ---Pope Benedict XVI.

The Word of God---Transfiguration of Jesus: This second Sunday of Lent, the gospel from Mark relates the event of the Transfiguration of Jesus. I am nostalgic. I have been on Mount Tabor four times in the past twenty years or so. I celebrated Mass up on the mountain in the beautiful church. The view all around the valley is impressive and the neighborhood is filled with historical significance. Jesus at the transfiguration is looking glorious like the Sun. His clothes became "dazzling white." Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus. They represent the law and the prophets. A cloud overshadows them. A voice from heaven says: "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." The true identity of Jesus is revealed, even if for a few brief moments. Jesus is the Son of Man and Son of God. He is both fully human and fully divine. The disciples get a glimpse into the true nature of Jesus. This Lenten season, we are invited to look more deeply into Jesus, who is our way, truth, and life. He is the new law giver and the prophet par excellence. He fulfills all the longings of the Old Testament and all the desires of human history. His Father affirms him as His beloved son and asks us to listen to him. Listening to him this Lent will be a fundamental thing for us to do. What does he say to us? How can we minimize the din in our lives that drowns Jesus' voice and be present to him with our hearts and minds open to him? As we look at Jesus' transfiguration, we can look at our own transfiguration, our transformation, our conversion and repentance---all of which would be our goals this holy season of Lent.

A Story to Ponder: A man was doing his Ph.D in philosophy. His wife, realizing how seriously he was taking his studies, one day said to him, "Why is it you love me so much?" Quick as a shot he replied, "When you say "so much" are you referring to intensity, depth, frequency, quality, or duration?" *The moral: "By dissecting the petals no one ever gathered in the beauty of the rose."*

Humor: 1. Who was the most popular actor in the Bible? Samson. He brought down the house. 2. When was medicine first mentioned in the Bible? When the Lord gave Moses two tablets. 3. Why is a church like a convention? Because families send just one delegate. 4. Why are the Ten Commandments so brief? Because they didn't come through a committee. 5. Why was Adam a famous runner? Because in the human race he was first.

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota