

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

March 3, 2024



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Reflections on Lent: We are progressing steadily through the season of Lent and find ourselves in the third week. There are five Sundays this Lent followed by Palm Sunday (March 24) followed, of course, by Easter Sunday (March 31). It would be fruitful for us and our families to continue reflecting on the meaning of Lent. Jesus lived in the desert for forty days, prayed to his Father, felt guided by the Spirit, did penance, overcame temptations, reflected on his life, drew up plans for his public ministry, and opened his mind and heart to the possibility of opposition and suffering leading up to his crucifixion. Jesus felt the need for this desert experience. We look upon Jesus and realize that we too need the "desert" experience---to think about what is going on in our lives and reorient ourselves towards God, family, and faith. Lent is that desert experience, a time for repentance and awareness of our mortality. Our fasting, abstinence, and devotions continuously remind us of the meaning of this season and the need for some practical decisions we need to make. For example, is my life rooted in love or selfishness? Is my life marked by giving or hoarding? Is my life guided by the Spirit of God or by my own desires and passions? Do I feel connected to Jesus or not? What are the values of Jesus that I practice or don't follow? Am I humble like Jesus or do I put myself at the center of the universe in adoration of myself? Do I understand that love means respect, kindness, forgiveness, and sharing? How am I connected with the faith community I call the Church? What do I do to others in terms of service and compassion? Do I keep in mind those who are fragile, vulnerable and on the margins of society and culture? We could examine ourselves along these lines and enter more deeply into the meaning and purpose of this Lenten season. Happy searching for meaning! Happy hunting for faith! Happy journeying to the heart of Christ!

What to Give Up for Lent: As we are engaged in the Lenten practices of fasting, praying, and almsgiving this Lent, we could think about these sad things that we need to give up as part of our Lenten observances. Give up complaining ... focus on gratitude. Give up pessimism ... become an optimist. Give up harsh judgments ... think kindly thoughts. Give up worry ... trust Divine Providence. Give up discouragement ... be full of hope. Give up bitterness ... turn to forgiveness. Give up hatred ... return good for evil. Give up negativism ... be positive. Give up anger ... be more patient. Give up gloom ... enjoy the beauty that is all around. Give up jealousy ... pray for trust. Give up sin ... turn to virtue. Give up giving up ... hang in there.

Archbishop's Annual Appeal (AAA) 2024: We need to raise \$32,089 as our commitment toward the Archdiocese this year. Please see in the bulletin the names of all donors so far to AAA 2024. We have collected so far \$ 15,653.00. The balance we need to raise is \$16,436.00. We do not consider it a burden but a privilege; not a problem but an opportunity. The purpose of this fundraiser, which is actually a "faithraiser," is for the Archdiocese to continue do God's work that they are called to do.

Even as our parish runs with the offerings you give from the pews weekend after weekend, the Archdiocese runs from the offerings that come from all the parishes in the Archdiocese through the AAA. We do this campaign in our parish for only one month. This Sunday we are completing this monthlong campaign. If everyone participates, this can be a success quickly. We are making progress, but we need more people to come onboard and help. While I thank all those who have donated, I request everyone else to give and exercise the spirit of stewardship. Last weekend at all Masses, David Gemignani spoke persuasively about AAA and his personal connections with our parish and the Archdiocese. If everyone could give a tax-deductible donation to AAA, it would indeed be wonderful and highly helpful in our support for the Archdiocese. If possible, can you give 1.5%, which is \$500? Please consider this donation prayerfully as part of our Lenten giving.

The Word of God: The gospel from John is about Jesus cleansing the temple. He drives out all those who sell the animals and says, "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace." Jesus is angry. His raw emotions are on display. He uses this as an opportunity to warn people about his own death and resurrection: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." Opposition to Jesus is hardening, but he will move inexorably toward the cross. Our Lenten journey merges with the journey of Jesus himself toward the cross and resurrection. The cross and the accompanying humiliation and brutality may seem like failure in the eyes of the world, but in the eyes of God, through those terrible realities new life will come to the world. By dying, Jesus saves us from sin, death, and evil. We are made free for love, joy, and service. The cross becomes a plus sign; a source of life, not death. This truth Paul expresses eloquently in the second reading: "For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength."

Pope John the 23rd's Wit and Wisdom: What did John XXIII expect from the Second Vatican Council? "The Council?" he said as he moved toward the window and made a gesture as if to open it. "I expect a little fresh air from it... We must shake off the imperial dust that has accumulated on the throne of St. Peter since Constantine." If the Eternal Father says to me, 'Roncalli, you need to be harsher and more strict at times,' I will say, 'Eternal Father, it is you who sent your Son to give me a bad example!' As Nuncio in Bulgaria, Roncalli once said: "This morning, I must receive cardinals, princes, and important representatives of the government. But in the afternoon, I want to spend a few minutes with some ordinary people who have no other title save their dignity as human beings and children of God."

Lenten Prayer: "O Lord, make this Lenten season different from the other ones. Let me find you again. Amen." --- Henry Nouwen.

Quotable Quote: "Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud." --- Maya Angelou

Be well! Stay swell! Be healthy and happy! May this Lent bring peace to our hearts and harmony with others! May everyone and the whole creation enjoy God's blessings!

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota