

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

March 24, 2024



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion: On Palm Sunday, we commemorate Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Henry Hart Milman says: "Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die; O Christ, thy triumphs now begin, O'er captive death and conquered sin." Jesus' triumphal entry will turn into dark, sad days of excruciating suffering and shameful death. But it will all pale in the resplendent glory that will dawn on Easter. The profound Christian insight is that it's always through the cross that we find our glory. Without suffering, there is no love, no redemption, no new life. Suffering is redemptive. Death is the way to resurrection. Let's look at the face of Christ this Holy Week. Let's look into his tender eyes. Let's place our hand on the heart of Christ. Let's seek to enter his mind and heart and be close to his thoughts and feelings.

St. Elizabeth Parish Holy Week Schedule in the Mail: I sent the Easter letter last Monday March 18 to every parishioner of St. Elizabeth Parish. The letter includes the Holy Week Schedule. Please also see the schedule in this weekend's bulletin. I invite you wholeheartedly to participate in the holy rituals and sacred services of the Holy Week at our parish.

Archdiocesan Annual Appeal (AAA): Our goal was \$32,089. 1.5% was \$500. As of last Sunday March 17, we reached our goal. It took only seven weeks for us to make it. We had launched the campaign for 2024 on February 3-4 weekend. I'd like to thank all those who donated for your good will and generosity in your support for the ministries of the Archdiocese. I'm so glad that those who generously donated \$500 and more helped reach our goal quickly. Those of you who are still considering to give, please do because the excess amount will be returned to our parish by the Archdiocese so that we could utilize it to continue to do God's work at our own parish.

Morning Prayer: During the Holy Week, please do join the Morning Prayer on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday at 8:30 a.m. There will be no morning Masses on those three days. Please see the schedule for all the services of the Holy Week.

Good Friday, A Day of Fast and Abstinence.

Donating Easter Lilies: If you are able to donate Easter lilies, you are most welcome to do so. Please bring them sooner than later to church during the weekday morning Mass (timings (8:00 a.m. through 9:00 a.m.) or before the Sunday Masses or you may leave them at the parish office during office hours (Monday through Thursday 8:00 a.m through 12:00 noon.)

Pontifical Good Friday Collection: The offering taken up on Good Friday in all the Catholic parishes around the world is called the Pontifical Good Friday Collection. It goes toward supporting the holy shrines, parishes, and ministries in the Holy Land. It includes the liturgical, ecumenical, communications, educational (Terra Sancta Schools), pastoral, social, & charitable works, all of which in the Holy Land are entrusted to the care of the Franciscans. Christians in the

Holy Land rely heavily on the help that comes to them from this worldwide collection. In the context of the war going on now, this collection is all the more urgent. Please donate generously.

Can you think about a simple meditative prayer called “Lectio Divina” for the Holy Week?: You may choose one of the passion narratives from one of the four gospels. Read slowly and prayerfully this passion narrative and try to be silent for a few minutes after reading it. Pause whenever an inspiration touches you or affects you deeply. If something moves you, do stay with that feeling. If you feel inspired, speak to Jesus in your own words. St. Ignatius of Loyola suggests in the “Spiritual Exercises” to stand before the cross and ask: “Lord, what have I done for you? What am I doing for you? What shall I do for you?”

Via Dolorosa: On my four visits to the Holy Land so far, one of the memorable devotions I practiced along with the fellow-pilgrims was to walk the holy route, Via Dolorosa, which in Latin means “the way of suffering.” It’s in the Old City of Jerusalem. Tradition has long held that Jesus walked through this way toward Calvary. This route winds through narrow streets with thousands of shops on either side. That is why we had to wake up early in the morning by 4:30 a.m. and get to this place and start the Way of the Cross by 5:30 a.m. so that we could complete our prayers by the time shops opened in the bazaar. At the end of the walking along this holy route, I celebrated Mass at the Church of Holy Sepulcher. It was one of the most memorable walks of our life ever. We walked the same way Jesus did toward his crucifixion! We were filled with sadness for Jesus carrying the cross, but we were also filled with hope and gratitude for what Jesus brought for us through his ultimate sacrifice.

Word of God: This Palm Sunday, the Word of God is all about suffering. The first reading is from Isaiah about the suffering servant. He is subjected to excruciating suffering, but he places all his trust in God. The responsorial psalm is about: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” A very powerful cry indeed! How many times have we felt this way in our life? We sometimes feel that we are abandoned by everyone, including God. Jesus himself felt this way. He used these very words on the cross. Jesus knows our human frustrations and anguish because he himself has gone through those dark moments in his life. That’s the reason we can go to Jesus with great confidence. He knows exactly our struggles and sufferings. The second reading is the famous hymn from the letter to the Philippians, which celebrates Jesus’s humility, obedience to his Father, his dying on the cross, his exaltation by his heavenly Father above everything and everyone. The gospel reading, the passion narrative, is taken from Mark’s gospel. On Good Friday, the passion narrative will be from John’s gospel. As we go through these readings, the Lord will speak to us tenderly and give us the grace to enter more deeply the sufferings and death of Jesus so that we could rise with him to a new life in the glory of the resurrection.

I wish everyone at St. Elizabeth Parish a prayerful, reflective, and grace-filled Holy Week.

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota