

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

June 9, 2024



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

A Spiritual Reflection

I ASKED FOR BUT.....

I asked for health, that I might do greater things; I was given infirmity, that I might do better things. I asked for riches, that I might be happy; I was given poverty, that I might be wise. I asked for power, that I might have the praise of people; I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God. I got nothing I asked for, but everything I hoped for. Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered. I am among all people most richly blessed. Author Unknown

Reflection: Desire is a fire. We seek things and go after them. Dreaming of these, we move heaven and earth to acquire them. We pray for them and wish that these desires would become a reality. When we do not get them, we may get angry, disappointed, frustrated, and depressed. Sometimes we might not even know what to ask for. We end up asking for the wrong things, things that do not necessarily lead to our happiness and fulfillment. We cling to people and things so passionately that we are unable to bring a balanced perspective (translation: common sense!) to life. Passion and desire, our cravings and clingings, our attachments and obsessions, blind us to the fundamental things that can pave the way for peace and harmony.

Consequently, there is a possibility that we are not free in our inner selves. We are bound and chained and fettered and enslaved --- with the result that we are unable to make free choices that God wants us to make. We may profess to be free in a free country, but we may be shackled --- in the spiritual sense.

We look upon Jesus and realize that he is a supremely free person because his desires are not geared toward what he wants to do, but rather what his Father wants him to do. As St. Paul says, Jesus did not cling to his position with God, but emptied himself and became obedient to God until death, death on the cross (Phil. 2:6-8). He did not cling to people and things in a way that hindered his happiness, which was to do his Father's will. Even when he struggled with temptation in the desert, at Gethsemane, and other occasions, he did not yield to it but rather surrendered to his Father's plan: "Not mine but your will be done." He taught that those bound in blind attachments would find it very hard to enter the realm of God ("It would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God"). He preached simplicity and poverty ("Blessed are the poor" in Luke; "Blessed are the poor in spirit" in Matthew) as well as practiced them. "Foxes have their holes, birds their nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Jesus is our supreme model in the way we relate to one another and in our use of the material things. He is the Way.

Jesus has shown us that the ways of God are different from ours. Jesus, the Son of God, the King of the universe, was born in obscurity and died a humiliating death. Yet God exalted him above everything. We tend to put our trust in wealth, position, power, glamor, prosperity, praise, and the like, but God calls us to a different set of values. Hence St. Paul's eloquent words: "God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God" (I Cor 1:27-30). Paul again exhorts us about inner, spiritual freedom: "For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1).

Action: Become deeply aware of your attachments. As you search and thirst for the things of this world, place these thirsts as part of the greatest thirst you have for God. See in each of your quests the Quest you have for God. Since nothing in the world can satisfy you entirely, let the small thirsts lead you to the great thirst for God. By thus connecting these two different thirsts, your longing for success and prosperity would find its direction and guidance from God and take you to Him. Whatever leads you to God is to be discerned and embraced; whatever does not lead you to God is to be questioned and avoided. "Our hearts are made for You, O God, and they will not rest until they rest in You" (St. Augustine).

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota