

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota



August 4, 2024

Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

My Personal, Private Retreat at the Jesuit Retreat House, El Retiro, Los Altos: I made my personal retreat last week at the Jesuit Retreat Center named “El Retiro San Iñigo” in Los Altos. It was a time to be “alone with God,” a time for tranquil reflection and intimate connection with God. El Retiro retreat house provides a uniquely conducive atmosphere for a personal or group retreat. The “38 beautiful acres of ecologically diverse hillside land” with almost a 100-year old tradition on the Los Altos hills provides charming trails to walk and the various shrines to visit. Along the trails under the canopy of the trees and bushes are the Stations of the Cross and the Mysteries of the Rosary. At various points along the routes there are shrines to Jesus and Mary. The bookstore has a well-stocked collection of spiritual books. I took the opportunity to buy two books: “The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola” and “The Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola.” The three-meals-a-day supplemented by various fruits and refreshing juices were enjoyable. The mood of serene silence and deep prayer that prevails in the retreat house has been highly helpful for the experience of God and the journey into one’s own inner space. I highly recommend this retreat center for your individual or group retreats. If a group from our parish of St. Elizabeth would like to make a retreat there for two or three days or longer, please would you let me know. I would love to accompany you through your spiritual journey there by celebrating Mass with you and being available for Confessions and spiritual direction. Or you could go on your own as individuals or couples to make your retreat there. I can assure you that you’ll return having had a pleasant and memorable experience of closeness to God and a sense of renewal. As you know, this Jesuit Retreat Center specializes in the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola based on his famous *Spiritual Exercises* (whose feast was on July 31, on the occasion of which I wrote a whole blog for our bulletin on the various insights of St. Ignatius). Please do take a look at the possibility of a spiritual retreat that you might want to make at El Retiro San Iñigo.

Word of God, 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time--Jesus the Bread of Life: Starting from last Sunday, for five consecutive Sundays, we read from John chapter 6, which is the memorable chapter on the Eucharist. Last Sunday, we prayed over the multiplication of five loaves and two fish. Jesus feeds a large crowd. All he is given is five loaves and two fish. He blesses it and breaks it and gives it to them and they all eat to their satisfaction. Years ago in my theology courses, I remember reading some articles by the late Julius Nyerere, former president of Tanzania, a devout Catholic. I was touched by his sincerity and desire to help and serve selflessly. I would paraphrase his reflections as follows: “It’s not that we do not have enough resources for everyone; it’s that people do not want to share. All our poverty and hunger may be attributed to the fact that we do not place our five loaves and two fish at the service of everyone. God will turn our generosity into an overflow of blessings for everyone so that no one will go hungry or without the basic necessities.” This Sunday, as is the style of John’s composition of the gospel, the long discourse follows the miracle. Jesus says: “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.” I invite you to reflect and pray over the invitation to allow Jesus to be our bread of life. We feed on his Word and his Body so that we might have life and have it abundantly.

From the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: What is the importance of the Old Testament for Christians? Christians venerate the Old Testament as the true word of God. All of the books of the Old Testament are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value. They bear witness to the divine pedagogy of God's saving love. They are written, above all, to prepare for the coming of Christ the Savior of the universe. **What importance does the New Testament have for Christians?** The New Testament, whose central object is Jesus Christ, conveys to us the ultimate truth of divine Revelation. Within the New Testament the four Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John are the heart of all the Scriptures because they are the principle witness to the life and teaching of Jesus. As such, they hold a unique place in the Church.

A Story to Ponder: Said a traveler to one of the disciples, "I have traveled a great distance to listen to the Master, but I find his words quite ordinary." "Don't listen to his words. Listen to his message." "How does one do that?" "Take hold of a sentence that he says. Shake it well till all the words drop off. What is left will set your heart on fire."

Quotable Quotes: "Obsessed is just a word the lazy use to describe the dedicated" --- Russell Warren. "The price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it" --- Henry David Thoreau. "The more I want to get something done, the less I call it work" --- Richard Bach. "To avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing, be nothing" --- Elbert Hubbard. "What we fear doing most is what we most need to do" --- Tim Ferriss. "If there is no struggle, there is no progress" --- Fredrick Douglass. "Do what you can, where you are, with what you have" --- Teddy Roosevelt.

Humor: A Rare Book: A collector of rare books ran into an acquaintance who told him he had just thrown away an old Bible he found in a dusty, old box. He happened to mention that Guten-somebody-or-other had printed it. "Not Gutenberg?" gasped the collector. "Yes, that was it!" "You idiot! You've thrown away one of the first books ever printed. A copy recently sold at auction for half a million dollars!" "Oh, I don't think this book would have been worth anything close to that much," replied the man. "It was scribbled all over in the margins by some guy named Martin Luther."

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota.