

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

August 11, 2024



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Thursday August 15, A Holy Day of Obligation, Masses at 8:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.: In the Catholic imagination, our Blessed Mother Mary occupies a vitally prominent role. She is the mother of Jesus. She brought the savior and redeemer into the world. Her role, therefore, is extremely significant. In the gospels we see that she was filled with grace, that she said yes to God, that she listened to God's word and observed it, and that she was at the foot of the cross. Michaelangelo's Pieta (at St. Peter's Basilica) represents most poignantly the suffering of Mary as the dead body of Jesus is placed on her lap. There was no one closer to the mystery of Jesus than our Blessed Mother. Because of her momentous role in the history of our salvation, because she is the mother of God's own son, she was protected from sin and decay from the moment of conception (when Mary's mother Anne conceived her in her womb, which is the mystery of the Immaculate Conception) until she breathed her last. The Catholic way of viewing her last moment in this world is that she did not die, but she slept into eternal life by being assumed into heaven. Her soul was never tainted by sin; her body was never stained by decay. She was gloriously assumed into heaven and crowned queen of heaven. She is our tender-hearted mother who always wants us to be happy and love Jesus her son. The same way she is mother of Jesus, she is our mother. What a privilege it is! Let's celebrate the feast of the Assumption of our BVM with great joy, faith, and gratitude. As William Wordsworth says, the BVM is "our tainted nature's solitary boast."

From the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church: In what sense is the Blessed Virgin Mary the Mother of the Church? The Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of the Church in the order of grace because she gave birth to Jesus, the Son of God, the Head of the body which is the Church. When he was dying on the cross Jesus gave his mother to his disciple with the words, "Behold your mother" (*John 19:27*). **How does the Virgin Mary help the Church?** After the Ascension of her Son, the Virgin Mary aided the beginnings of the Church with her prayers. Even after her Assumption into heaven, she continues to intercede for her children, to be a model of faith and charity for all, and to exercise over them a salutary influence deriving from the superabundant merits of Christ. The faithful see in Mary an image and an anticipation of the resurrection that awaits them and they invoke her as advocate, helper, benefactress and mediatrix. **What kind of devotion is directed to the holy Virgin?** It is a singular kind of devotion which differs essentially from the cult of adoration given only to the Most Holy Trinity. This special veneration directed to Mary finds particular expression in the liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and in Marian prayers such as the holy Rosary which is a compendium of the whole Gospel.

Word of God: 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time: Have you ever noticed that there is much reference in our Catholic church to the activity of eating? The Eucharist is itself to do with eating. It is the sacred bread, the Body of Christ. It is also the bread in the form of the Word of God because “one does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” The Word of God this Sunday asks us to eat so that we might have life and everlasting life. In the first reading from 1Kings, Elijah is fed with a cake and water, so that he would be able to walk the long journey with strength. The responsorial psalm is about our “tasting and seeing” that the Lord is good. This prompts honest questions: Have we ever experienced God personally in our lives? On our life journey, have we learned to “taste and see” God, his love and presence, his goodness and grace? Sometimes in religion, we might be tempted to take the easy road of being on autopilot and do things in an impersonal way and not really personally see our connection with God. In the gospel, we have the most daring call from Jesus that we must taste him because he is the bread that came down from heaven. If we eat of his body and drink of his blood, he assures us that we will have eternal, everlasting life. That is why coming together for Eucharist is essential and vital for Christians. That is why we need to open our minds and hearts so that we could more actively and continuously share in the life of Christ. Let’s continue to celebrate the mystery of the Eucharist with joy and active participation.

Feast of Saint Maxmillian Kolbe, Priest and Martyr, Wednesday August 14: Some years ago, while on a pilgrimage to Poland, I had the memorable experience of visiting the places connected with this most amazing saint. At Auschwitz, in the cell where he was made to die, first from starvation and then by lethal injection, there is a picture of the saint with a candle burning next to it. Also, I visited the Franciscan priory in Niepokalanow (42 miles from Warsaw) where he had been a friar and a museum dedicated to the life of the saint. He was educated in Rome and received a doctoral degree, established a printing press that published the largest circulated Catholic magazines and leaflets in Poland, and went to Japan to establish new Franciscan foundations. As you well know, he gave his life away in the Concentration Camp so that a fellow prisoner Franciszek Gajowniczek could be spared. St. Maximillian is a man for others following in the footsteps of his Master. Jesus’ words echo in his powerfully: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13).

Fishing Joke: When the preacher approached the boy who was fishing in the park pond, he said, “Young man, do you know the parables?” “Yes sir,” the lad quickly replied. “Which do you like best?” The boy looked up and, grinning, replied, “The one where everybody loafs and fishes.”

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota