

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota



September 15, 2024

Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Cantwell Parking Lot News: New asphalt was laid on this parking lot last Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. It's part of our way of not only securing the lot with a brand-new fence but also improving the quality of the pavement. Once this is over, we are hoping to take care of the interior of the Cantwell Hall with various jobs such as the floor, painting, windows, chairs, bathrooms, kitchen, etc. Thank you for your understanding and patience and collaboration. Please do continue to support our parish of St. Elizabeth with your prayers, participation, collaboration, volunteering, and the offerings. Do encourage your families and friends to join us week after week for the Eucharistic celebrations, which are central to our Catholic way of being Christian. Faith and service are what Jesus is calling us to.

Word of God: The gospel we read this Sunday is literally central to Mark's gospel. From this point on, Jesus moves inexorably toward the cross. Jesus asks: "Who do you say that I am?" People give all sorts of answers about Jesus as perceived by others. But Jesus is keen on our personal answer to this question. Our faith has been initiated and nourished by our parents, teachers, priests, nuns, friends, teachers, and others. But we cannot live on borrowed faith. We have to have a personal contact with Jesus and come to faith. It is like our tasting food for ourselves. We cannot taste food from others' descriptions, but we have to taste and see for ourselves. Jesus is to be tasted and experienced and encountered for ourselves personally and through the community we call the Church. Who do YOU say that Jesus is? What does he mean to you in your present circumstances? How would you describe him given your experiences? What names would you give him based on your personal life-journey? Does he make a difference in your life? Does he lead you to build up the Church and the world at large based on love and service? These are vital questions to answer if we have to live authentic Christian lives.

A Story to Ponder: Nesterus the Great, one of the holy Fathers of the Egyptian Desert, was one day walking in the desert with a large number of disciples who revered him as a man of God. Suddenly a dragon appeared before them and they all ran away. Many years later, as Nesterus lay dying, one of the disciples said to him. "Father, were you also frightened the day we saw the dragon?" "No," said the dying man. "Then why did you run away with the rest of us?" "I thought it better to flee the dragon, so I would not have to flee from the spirit of vanity later."

September 21: Feast of Saint Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist: When you have the time, please check out online the Italian painter Caravaggio's famous piece of art, "The Calling of St. Matthew." You could easily find the critical analysis of this painting online, especially on youtube. One of the favorite paintings of Pope Francis, it is found on the wall of the Contarelli chapel in the French church of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome. Pope Francis said about this painting in 2013: "Here, this is me, a sinner on whom the Lord has turned his gaze." In the painting, the hand of Jesus seems to resemble God's hand reaching out to Adam's hand in Michaelangelo's creation of Adam painting in the Sistine chapel. Jesus recreates Matthew, a tax-collector, by calling him as his apostle. Matthew pointing to himself seems to ask: "Me? Are you calling me? I'm a sinner. I'm just a tax-collector. I'm unworthy. You must be calling the wrong guy." It's a moment of spiritual awakening, a point of conversion for Matthew, a turning point. "Jesus saw him at the customs' post and called him and he got up and followed him." (Matthew 9:9). Matthew wrote the gospel, the story of Jesus. He as a Jew wrote the life of Jesus to persuade the Jews to accept Jesus. Hence his many references to the Old Testament as the promise fulfilled in Jesus, the Messiah. The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5 to 7 is a masterpiece of Jesus' teachings to be treasured forever. These are the values we are called to live by. Matthew 25 is the story of the last judgment: we will be judged on love, on what we did for the least and the lost. We could do two things as we celebrate the feast of St. Matthew. 1. We are to follow Jesus as Matthew did. We are the apostles and disciples of Jesus for the world of 21st century. 2. We could dwell on the gospel Matthew wrote (lectio divina), reflecting on the life of Christ and discovering the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith for the new life we are all offered in Jesus Christ.

Quotes about Life: 1. "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving." - Albert Einstein. 2. "Start each day with a positive thought and a grateful heart." - Roy Bennett. 3. "Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself." - George Bernard Shaw. 4. "I think I've discovered the secret of life - you just hang around until you get used to it." - Charles Schulz. 5. "Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life." - Steve Jobs.

Humor: 1. A minister in Florida lamented that it was difficult to get his message across to his congregation: "It's so beautiful here in the winter," he said, "that heaven doesn't interest them. And it's so hot here in the summer that hell doesn't scare them." 2. A six-year-old boy was overheard reciting the Lord's Prayer at a church service: "And forgive us our trash passes as we forgive those who pass trash against us." 3. A Faith Formation teacher asked her class: "Does anyone here know what we mean by sins of omission?" A little girl replied: "Aren't those the sins we should have committed, but didn't?"

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota