

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

October 6, 2024



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Word of God: This 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, marriage is the theme. It is obvious that there are forces in society and culture that try to undermine the institution of marriage. Marriage and family are fundamental units of society and of the Church. The family is the “domestic Church.” Marriage is both secular and sacred; it belongs to both human and divine realms; it is a social/legal contract as well as a state of life that is willed by God from the beginning. Marriage is used as a metaphor for God’s relationship with His people and for Christ’s relationship with his Church. Even as God is fierce in his love and passion for the people, as Christ loves the Church totally, man and woman are called to a fierce and faithful relationship with each other in a lifelong union and communion. They are one flesh, not two. “What God has joined together, let no one put asunder.” In marriage, Christ’s love commandment is to be practiced in a unique way and Paul’s definition of love in action in I Corinthians 13 is to be put into concrete, practical ways. Jesus calls us in the gospel this Sunday to the original vision of marriage in God’s plan: that it is God’s desire that man and woman should stay together in love and fidelity for a lifetime of marital self-giving and commitment.

October 7: Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary: Saint Pius V established this feast as a way of thanking God for the victory of the war in Lepanto. The victory was attributed to the praying of the rosary and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As we pray the Rosary, we ponder the redemptive mysteries. We meditate on the mysteries of Jesus’ birth, death, resurrection, and other milestones in his life and mission. We keep our Blessed Mother close to these mysteries of Jesus. Mary is the disciple par excellence; she hears God’s word and practices it; she says yes to God’s will; she suffers with Jesus as he redeems the world and brings us new life. The Rosary is one of the simple and most efficacious devotions in our Catholic faith journey.

Friday, October 11: Feast of Saint John XXIII: This feast falls on the anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962. Pope John XXIII was born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli in Sotto il Monte, Italy, on November 25, 1881. He was elected Pope at the age of 76 on October 28, 1958. He died on June 3, 1963. He was beatified on September 3, 2000 by Pope John Paul II and canonized by Pope Francis on April 27, 2014. He had been a papal nuncio (Pope’s ambassador) to Bulgaria, Turkey, and France. He kept a meticulous diary from his youthful days, which was published as “Journal of a Soul: The Autobiography of Pope John XXIII,” a highly inspirational book I use regularly for my spiritual reading. He is best known for initiating the Second Vatican Council, which through “aggiornamento” (bringing up to date) brought the Church into a closer relationship with the modern world. The characteristics of his transformative papacy through the Vatican II Council was: to forge the Church’s relationship with the modern world through social justice and religious freedom; to promote ecumenism, and to renew the liturgy through its celebration in local languages. His initial address to the Council emphasized a pastoral and positive approach to the modern world. His humility and warmth earned him the name “the Good Pope.” His surprise pastoral visits to orphanages, prisons, and hospitals endeared him to everyone and reminded the world of the Church’s essential mission to the poor and the marginalized. His “Pacem in Terris” (Peace on Earth) in the height of the Cold War called the world to peace, justice, and the common good.

His legacy could be viewed in three areas: 1. Pastoral Concerns and Humanity: John XXIII will be forever remembered for his down-to-earth approach, his genuine love for people, and his efforts to make the Church more accessible, compassionate, and responsive to the needs of the time. 2. Justice and Peacemaking: His leadership during the Cold War and his efforts to promote peace through dialogue were foundational in shaping modern Catholic teachings on peace and human rights. 3. The Second Vatican Council: His greatest legacy remains Vatican II, which reshaped many aspects of Catholic practice, particularly in how the Church relates to the modern world, engages with other religions, and approaches issues of human dignity and social justice. Saint John XXIII will be cherished as a visionary leader who initiated profound and enduring changes within the Catholic Church, fostering a spirit of renewal and openness to the world.

Humor of Saint John XXIII: He was well-known for his wit and sense of humor, which endeared him to people around the world. His lightheartedness was a reflection of his deep humility and warmth, helping him connect with people from all walks of life. Here are some famous examples of his humor: 1. "How many people work at the Vatican?" When asked how many people work at the Vatican, Pope John XXIII reportedly replied with a smile: "About half of them." This playful response showed his awareness of bureaucracy and inefficiencies but with a humorous touch. 2. The Weight of the Papacy: Pope John XXIII was known for his robust figure. When a visitor once remarked on his weight, he replied: "Yes, the papacy is a very heavy burden." This quip subtly acknowledged his physical size while lightening the moment with a pun on his role as pope. 3. Before Bedtime: Pope John XXIII famously spoke about the responsibilities of being pope and how he managed the stress that came with it. He would often say: "When I go to bed at night, I say, 'Well, Lord, it's your Church, you take care of it! I'm going to sleep.'" This showed his deep trust in God and his down-to-earth perspective on his role. 4. An Unexpected Doctor's Visit: One time, when his doctor suggested that the pope lose some weight for his health, Pope John XXIII reportedly replied: "Look, my doctor has been telling me for a long time that I should lose weight, but I'm the pope, not a model!" 5. Referring to His Own Election: When John XXIII was elected pope, he humorously remarked about his surprise: "It often happens that I wake up at night and begin to think about a serious problem and decide I must tell the pope about it. Then I wake up completely and remember that I am the pope!"

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota