

# From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

December 15, 2024



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

**Advent Season:** We are steadily journeying through this season of hope. This is the season of the Lord's coming, the season of Advent. Deep down, through all our hectic activities, we perceive a person who is precious and beautiful, central and vital, to our lives: Jesus Christ. He came historically over 2000 years ago, but amazingly he comes into our lives now mystically---and mysteriously. Our spiritual awakening to the presence of someone who is intimate in our lives and yet all pervasive and transcendent brings us face to face with Christ, the giver of all gifts and blessings this holy season. Awake, my heart! Awake, my soul to Christ who has everything to do with my deepest and noblest longings and hopes! He it is who has brought us into life, he it is who has endowed us with blessings upon blessings, he it is who guides us through thick and thin, he it is who shines and smiles in our joys, he it is who comforts and consoles in our fears and anguish, he it is who shepherds us even after death---into life eternal. As we come closer to Christmas, we could keep humming in our hearts the longing-laden song: "O come, O come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel." There is joy and sadness, longing and hope---all rolled into one in this ancient hymn. Let the Lord come into our lives and families---and let him stand with us, walk with us, and gaze upon us with love and tenderness

**Word of God this Third (Rejoice) Sunday of Advent:** This Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent, is called Gaudete (Rejoice!) Sunday. As we draw closer to Christmas, the Church invites us to rejoice at the soon-awaited birth of the Savior of the world. The Responsorial psalm invites us "to cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel." In Zephaniah we read: "Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be Glad and exult with your heart, O daughter Jerusalem!" In the Second Reading, Paul urges us: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!" In the Gospel, with John the Baptist's arrival, there are signs of Jesus' advent. John exhorts people to be engaged in just and righteous relationships as a way of preparing ourselves for the coming of the Lord who is "mightier" than John and who would baptize us with the "Holy Spirit and fire." All these blessings are causes for joy. Are we ready to rejoice at the presence of Christ who is going to turn his abiding presence into a "coming" in our lives this holy season? Joy is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. If we are filled with this gift of joy, it would be an indication that we are in touch with the Spirit of Christ. We need to be filled with joy because Jesus is delighted with us and rejoices over us. He comes to dispel the darkness of sadness and gloominess, the state of our being trapped in situations we have no control over. He releases us from those circumstances that hold us in their power and control so that we could come into the realm of freedom and grace. Our most authentic joy this season would come from the personal experience of our God in Jesus who rejoices over us---and from the way we could share this joy with family and friends and all those we are called to help and serve.

**Notre-Dame Cathedral Reopening:** In its nearly 900-year-old glorious history of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, the bells began to ring again after a five-year interval, since the tragic fire engulfed it five years ago. It is a rebirth for this church that stands eloquently for God's presence in the famous city of Paris. It represents faith, art, culture, architecture, our reaching out to the highest aspirations, and our stretching out to what the human spirit could achieve. In the style of French Gothic architecture, Notre-Dame construction started in 1163 and opened in 1345. When I was studying French in Paris, in summer of 1996, I used to walk to Notre-Dame from the Jesuit Residence at Rue de Grenelle, passing by some beautiful landmarks in the city such as famous churches and fountains. Since then, there have been more opportunities over the years for me to visit Paris and pray in this church. The fire in the church was distressing, but I'm most heartened by the restoration of Notre-Dame. The French authorities and the artisans from around the world achieved what was considered impossible. I watched the coverage connected with the reopening events of Notre-Dame, especially the opening Mass. May the Blessed Mother, Notre Dame, Our Lady, look upon the city of Paris and the world and lead us all close to her Son Jesus whose coming we await this Advent and Christmas season.

**Christmas Mass Schedule:** Christmas Eve Tuesday December 24 Mass at 4:30 p.m. Christmas Day Wednesday December 25 Masses at 8:30 a.m. and 10.30 a.m.

**Simbang Gabi Christmas Novena Mass Schedule:** December 16 through 24 at 8:30 a.m. except on Sunday Dec. 22 which would be the 10:30 a.m. Mass. To plan, support, and sponsor, please contact Gloria Trinidad and her team.

**Parish Advent Confessions:** On Saturday, December 21 at 10:30 a.m. as a way of preparing ourselves spiritually for Christmas.

**Food for Thought: A Short Course in Human Relations:** The six most important words: "I admit that I was wrong." The five most important words: "You did a great job." The four most important words: "What do you think?" The three most important words: "Could you please. . ." The two most important words: "Thank you." The most important word: "We." The least important word: "I".

**Humor:** Two men are ice fishing on Sunday and feeling a bit guilty about not being in church. "I wouldn't have gone to church anyway," one man said to his friend, explaining, "my wife is sick in bed with the flu."

Wishing you the blessings of the Advent Season,

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota