

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

January 12, 2025



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Baptism of the Lord. This Sunday January 12 is the glorious feast of the Baptism of the Lord. With this feast, Christmas season comes to an end. The Christmas tree and other decorations will be put away from the sanctuary area of churches and from our homes. After celebrating the heart-warming birthday of Jesus at Christmas, we meditated on the Holy Family and the Epiphany. Our families will do well in modeling themselves on the Holy Family. When Jesus is present in our families, we have everything, all the strength, grace, and courage we need to face anything. Epiphany prepared us for the conviction that Jesus is the Lord for all nations and cultures and that we are all called to help reveal Jesus to our families, neighborhoods, and the whole world. We are moving along briskly on the journey with Christ. Now we have come to the Baptism of the Lord as he begins his public ministry. In Luke's gospel today, as Jesus is being baptized we see the presence of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and the Heavenly Father who says, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Spirituality of the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord: At the baptisms I do at our parish, in the preparation session, I highlight the mystery of Jesus' baptism as central to the baby's baptism, on account of the revelation of the Trinitarian mystery. This baby about to be baptized is the beloved daughter or son of the heavenly Father, anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and called to discipleship by Jesus Christ. There are some insights that we could dwell on as we meditate on this significant event in the life of Christ. 1. Jesus is guided by the Holy Spirit and is always eager to do his Father's will. As disciples of Jesus, we are to follow Jesus in this regard. 2. Jesus did not need the baptism and yet he goes through it as a way of inserting himself into our humanity and vulnerability. Jesus' incarnational participation in our human nature begun at his nativity continues at his baptism. 3. Jesus is called, anointed, and sent by his Father to bring new life and hope to the whole world. We too are called to fulfill the purpose for which God has brought us into the world. 4. Each of us is God's "beloved son or daughter." God is "well pleased" with us. So let's not go about with the heavy burden of guilt or hopelessness. Our God is a happy God who is delighted with us, despite our sinfulness. It's precisely because of God's being "well pleased" with us that we can turn our ways around to his. 5. Like Jesus, each of us was baptized to walk a new journey of grace and holiness. How are we doing in that regard? Is our baptismal anointing and empowerment still active and strong in our lives? The Baptism of the Lord is an occasion for us to take stock of our lives.

New Year 2025: This Sunday, we will have spent twelve days of the New Year! We are still in the very early days of the New Year. How are we enjoying this New Year? Is this New Year treating us with kindness and gentleness? T. S. Eliot says, "For last year's words belong to last year's language; And next year's words await another voice." It would be a good idea to find this new voice and new language for this New Year. Perhaps we could take care of our body better. Maybe we could nourish our mind with truth and light and avoid preconceived, prejudiced, biased notions and ideologically loaded ways of thinking. Perhaps our hearts could become softer, gentler, kinder, lighter, and more joyful, to give and receive love. How about our soul? Is it infused with the radiance of God's presence and grace? What would it profit to gain the whole world if we were to lose our soul? We would then have everything except our soul. Without the soul, we are not spiritually alive. How could we open our soul as a dwelling place for God?... These are some of the things we could think about and act upon in the new year. May this new year, despite our struggles and anxieties about various things, be a time for peace and grace of God, which are God's precious gifts for our wellbeing.

Jubilee Year 2025: Please see the logo on the front cover of our parish bulletin. The theme is "Pilgrims of Hope." A jubilee year, also known as a "holy year," is a special year in the life of the church, currently celebrated every 25 years. Jubilee years have been held on regular intervals in the Catholic church since 1300, but they trace their roots to the Jewish tradition of marking a jubilee year every 50 years. According to the Vatican website for the jubilee, these years in Jewish history were "intended to be marked as a time to re-establish a proper relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation, and involved the forgiveness of debts, the return of misappropriated land, and a fallow period for the fields." (America magazine)

New Year Quotes: "The object of a new year is not that we should have a new year, but rather that we should have a new soul." -- G.K. Chesterton. "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." -- Mark Twain.

Humorous Bible One-Liners: 1. Who was the greatest female financier in the Bible? Pharaoh's daughter--she went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet. 2. What kind of man was Boaz before he met Ruth? Ruthless. 3. Where is the first tennis match mentioned in the Bible? When Joseph served in Pharaoh's court. 4. Why didn't Noah go fishing? He only had two worms. 5. Why was Adam a famous runner? Because he was first in the human race!

Wishing you God's continued blessings of health, safety, and wellbeing, for us and the whole world in 2025,

Your Friend and Pastor,

Fr. Charles Puthota