

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

February 9, 2025



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Archdiocesan Annual Appeal (AAA) 2025: I'm giving you a heads-up on the letter I'm putting in the mail on February 11 for each parishioner of St. Elizabeth about this year's concerted campaign to raise \$36,292 in support of the Archdiocesan ministries. Next weekend, February 15-16, at Masses I'll be speaking about AAA and officially launching our annual drive. I humbly seek your support in making this drive successful as quickly as possible. Thank you for supporting it whole heartedly the last four years and I'm hoping this year too you will support it with the same enthusiasm and fervor.

Parish Lenten Retreat on Saturday, March 22: As you know, Lent starts with Ash Wednesday on March 05. As part of our Lenten practices and observances, I'll be giving a retreat for half a day on Saturday March 22. It will start with the 8:30 a.m. Mass, followed by light breakfast and coffee in Cantwell Hall. Then there will be three sessions with intervals in between. It will end with lunch about 1:00 p.m. Registration fee: \$15. Registration forms will be made available next week.

Word of God, Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time: Isaiah has an awesome vision of God in the temple which leads him to the deep realization of his sinfulness. The angel of God purifies him. God's grace has now claimed him to be his prophet, and Isaiah says: "Here I am, send me."

Paul includes himself among those who met the Risen Christ. Acknowledging that he persecuted the church, Paul calls himself "the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle." He quickly adds though: "But by the grace of God I am who I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective." Where is Paul the fierce persecutor of the church? He is now the most ardent promoter of the same church.

At Jesus' word, Peter puts out into the deep, after a night's failed effort. The abundance of fish fills him with the divine presence of Jesus. Deeply aware of his unworthiness, he says, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." But Jesus has other plans for him. Peter now has to become the catcher of people for the Kingdom of God.

A pattern emerges in these accounts. With a personal experience of God in Jesus, we become acutely aware of our sinfulness, but God calls us all the same, graces us, and uses us for his work. Charles C. Morrison says, "The Christian Church is a society of sinners. It is the only society in the world in which membership is based upon a single qualification: that the candidate be unworthy of membership."

The Word of God this Sunday is a perfect vocation promotion material. The Church needs young women and men for God's service in religious life and priesthood. In the wake of their personal encounter of Jesus, their rising sense of sinfulness will not be an insurmountable obstacle. Jesus has the power to purify and grace them. But they have to rise to the occasion and say, "Here I am, Lord. Send me."

A Story to Ponder: A man went to see a psychiatrist and said that every night he was visited by a twelve-foot dragon with three heads. He was a nervous wreck, could not sleep at all and was on the verge of total collapse. He had even thought of suicide. "I think I can help you," said the psychiatrist, "but I must warn you that it will take a year or two and will cost three thousand dollars." "Three thousand dollars!" the man exclaimed. "Forget it! I'll just go home and make friends with it."

A Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas: Grant me grace, O merciful God, to desire ardently all that is pleasing to You, to examine it prudently, to acknowledge it truthfully, and to accomplish it perfectly, for the praise and glory of Your name. Amen.

Oscar Wilde Quotes: 1. "To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all." 2. "Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much." 3. "Be yourself; everyone is already taken." 4. "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars." 5. "A good friend will always stab you in the front." 6. "Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future." 7. "I am not young enough to know everything." 8. "Hearts are made to be broken." 9. "The very essence of romance is uncertainty." 10. "Who, being loved, is poor?"

Humor: 1. The Preacher and the Bus Driver: A bus driver and a preacher arrive at the gates of heaven. St. Peter welcomes them both but gives the bus driver a higher place in heaven. The preacher protests, "Why does he get a better spot than me? I devoted my life to God!" St. Peter replies, "Reverend, when you preached, people slept. When he drove, people prayed." 2. The Confession Surprise: A man goes to confession and says, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. I stole a rope." The priest asks, "And what did you do with the rope?" The man replies, "Well, Father... there was a cow attached to it." 3. God Alone Knows: The smart-alec seminarian thought he had pulled a good one. On the final exam, which asked students to delve into the complexities of theology, he simply wrote: "Only God knows the answers to these questions!" Grading the paper, the professor wrote, "Nice proposition. If true, God gets 100. You get a 0."

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota