

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

January 4, 2026



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Epiphany of the Lord: Sunday, January 4: As we celebrate this Sunday the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord, we come in spirit with the three wise men to the manger. Like them, we approach the Christ Child bearing our own gifts – the gift of who we are, our faith and doubts, our joys and wounds, our longing for meaning and hope. The word *Epiphany* means manifestation or revelation. This feast proclaims a profound truth: Jesus is not the Savior of one nation or one people alone, but the Savior of the whole world. The Magi, foreigners guided by a mysterious star, remind us that God's saving light reaches beyond every border, culture, and tradition. After encountering and adoring the newborn King, the wise men return to their homelands carrying astonishing news – the Messiah has been born. In this way, they become the first messengers of the Gospel, spreading the good news to distant lands. At the heart of the Epiphany, therefore, lies a message and an invitation for us today: to make Christ known to the world through our faith, our love, and our way of living. We are invited to ask ourselves: What can I say or do to reveal Jesus to others? What values must shape my life so that Christ may be born spiritually in our world now?

The Epiphany story also challenges us to examine our readiness for the journey. Are we willing to leave our familiar “places” – our comfort zones, fixed opinions, habitual ways of thinking and acting? Following Christ often requires a journey of spiritual, intellectual, and inner transformation. Are we attentive to the “star” God places before us? What is that guiding light in our lives today, and how does God speak to us in our present circumstances? Often, God’s guidance comes through simple and unexpected means: family members, friends, the faith community, and the Church through its sacraments, teaching, and witness. Sometimes the star shines most clearly through the poor and the vulnerable, with whom Jesus identifies so closely, as we hear in Matthew 25. God speaks through the signs of the times, if only we are attentive. May we have the courage to follow the star, the grace to recognize Christ in people and events, and the humility, like the Magi, to return “by another way” – living with renewed vision, deeper purpose, and hearts transformed by the light of Christ.

Christmas lingers: I hope your Christmas has been a blessed and heartwarming one, bringing you closer to the One who is closer to us than we are to ourselves. The beauty and glory of Christmas continues, not just for a day or a few days, but through each day and throughout our lives. The heart of Christmas is the mystery of the Incarnation: that of God becoming one with us, entering our history, our flesh and blood, our human family, and all that we are engaged in life, love, and growth, our pains and joys, our triumphs and travails, our ambiguities and anomalies. Jesus lives inside of our lives. He is Emmanuel, God who is with us, every moment of our lives. So, long live the mystery and majesty of Christmas, and well into the New Year 2025!

The Conclusion of the Great Jubilee Year of Hope: The most significant spiritual milestone for us in early 2026 is the Closing of the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica on January 6, 2026 (the traditional date of the Solemnity of the Epiphany). This concludes the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope. The Spiritual Shift: As the "Year of Grace" officially ends, the focus shifts from *receiving* extraordinary mercy to *living* it. The Call: Pope Leo XIV has emphasized that while the doors may close, the "door of the heart" must remain open, carrying the renewed hope found during the Jubilee into daily life.

Quotes on the New Year: . "I have the opportunity, once more to right some wrongs, to pray for peace, to plant some trees, and sing more joyful songs." - William Arthur Ward. "Ring out the false, ring in the true." — Alfred Lord Tennyson. "And now we welcome the new year, full of things that have never been." -- Rainer Maria Rilke. "What the New Year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the New Year."-- Vern McLellan.

The Moveable Feasts of 2026: Around this time in the Liturgical Year, the Church follows an ancient custom of announcing the dates of movable Feasts for the coming year. This proclamation has been used in connection with the blessing and distribution of calendars. We are reminded of these movable Feasts in the new year as a way of looking forward to celebrating these divine mysteries. In the new year 2026, Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18. After five Sundays of Lent, Palm Sunday falls on March 29. Holy Thursday is on April 2. Good Friday is on April 3. Easter is on April 5. After six Sundays of Easter, the Ascension of the Lord is on May 17 (though traditionally on May 14). Pentecost Sunday is on May 24. Holy Trinity is on May 31. The Body and Blood of Christ is on June 7. Christ the King is on November 22. The First Sunday of Advent falls on November 29.

Short Humor: 1. A man tells his doctor, "Doc, help me. I'm addicted to Twitter!" The doctor replies, "Sorry, I don't follow you..." 2. What kind of exercise do lazy people do? Diddly-squats. 3. What did the Buddhist say to the hot dog vendor? Make me one with everything. 4. What did the pirate say when he turned 80? Aye matey. 5. Why can't you explain puns to kleptomaniacs? They always take things literally.

Happy New Year! Thinking of you with affection and sending you warm wishes for the Christmas blessings to follow you each day of 2026.

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota