

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

January 11, 2026



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Baptism of the Lord: Following the celebrations of Christmas, the Holy Family, and the Epiphany, we reach a pivotal moment: the Baptism of the Lord. This event marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. As He emerges from the Jordan, the heavens open, the Holy Spirit descends like a dove, and the Father declares, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." What was hidden in Bethlehem is now revealed at the Jordan.

This feast is rich in meaning and offers five profound insights for our own spiritual journey. 1. **Divine Guidance:** Jesus' baptism reveals a life lived in complete openness to the Spirit. He does not act on his own initiative but allows himself to be led by the Father's will. Immediately after this moment, the Spirit will guide him into the desert and onward into his mission. For us, this feast is a reminder to pause and ask: Whose voice guides my decisions? In prayer, Scripture, and the quiet movements of interiority, the same Spirit continues to lead us today. 2. **Shared Humanity:** Jesus did not need baptism for repentance, yet he willingly stepped into the waters with sinners. By doing so, he fully embraced our human condition—its weakness, longings, and existential angst. Standing shoulder to shoulder with humanity, he sanctified our struggles and assured us that God meets us precisely where we are. 3. **Purpose and Mission:** At the Jordan, Jesus is publicly anointed for his mission: to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom to captives, and sight to the blind. This anointing reminds us that baptism is not merely a private blessing but a sending forth. Each of us has a unique role in God's saving work, whether in our families, workplaces, or communities. 4. **Beloved Identity:** The Father's words—"You are my beloved Son"—are spoken before Jesus performs any miracle or preaches a single sermon. Love comes first. In baptism, we receive the same identity. God delights in us not because of our achievements but because we belong to him. We are loved and cherished by God. This truth frees us from discouragement and restores hope. 5. **Renewal of Grace:** Our baptism marked the beginning of a lifelong journey toward holiness. This feast invites us to renew that grace, to rekindle faith, and to live more consciously as baptized missionary disciples. As we move forward, let us remember that when Jesus lives at the center of our lives, we are given the strength and grace to face every challenge with trust.

Ordinary Time Begins: Spirituality of the Ordinary Time in the Liturgical Year --- Focus on Jesus: The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord celebrated on January 11 brings the Christmas season to a close. The liturgical "ordinary time" begins from January 12 through February 17. Then the season of Lent begins February 18 with Ash Wednesday. The Ordinary Time in the liturgical calendar means that this time is outside the special seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. Though called ordinary, it is still a time when we walk with Jesus and meditate on his teachings, healings, skirmishes with the powers of evil, and the proclamation of the Kingdom in word and deed. Let's keep asking the basic questions: who is Jesus to me in my present stage of life? What does he say to me? What do I speak to him about? How does he enter my thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds? How does he relate to my joys and sorrows, my hopes and disappointments? Searching for answers to these fundamental Christological and existential questions would lead us to the discovery of meaning and purpose for our lives now and in the ultimate sense.

New Year Quotes: “For last year's words belong to last year's language, and next year's words await another voice. And to make an end is to make a beginning.” — T.S. Eliot. “We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day.”— Edith Lovejoy Pierce “May all your troubles last as long as your New Year's resolutions!” — Joey Adams. “Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year.” — Ralph Waldo Emerson. “Come, gentlemen, I hope we shall drink down all unkindness.” — William Shakespeare. “Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.” — Albert Einstein.

Think About It: A spiritual master was asked: “How does one find God in action?” He replied: “By loving the action wholeheartedly, regardless of the fruit it brings.” When this proved somewhat difficult for the disciples, he told them of a man who bought a painting for a million dollars, then framed the cancelled check. “What he really loved was not art, but status,” said the Master.

New Year Jokes: 1. A man who had too much to drink decides to walk home on New Year's Eve. A police officer stopped the man and asked where he was going. “I'm on my way to a lecture,” the man replied. The cop scoffed, “Who gives lectures on New Year's Eve?” The man answered: “My wife.” 2. A woman took an afternoon nap on New Year's Eve. When she woke up, she told her husband, “I just dreamed that you gave me a diamond ring for a New Year's present. What do you think it all means?” He replied, “Aha, you'll know tonight!” At midnight, her husband handed her a small gift-wrapped present. Excited, she opened it quickly, but was even more surprised: In it was a book titled “The Meaning of Dreams.”

Wishes and prayers for the Christmas blessings to accompany you every day of the New Year 2026,

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota