

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

January 25, 2026



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Word of God: 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A: In today's Gospel, we witness the official "launch" of Jesus' public ministry. After the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus doesn't retreat in fear; instead, he moves into the heart of "the land of gloom." By settling in Capernaum – the region of Zebulun and Naphtali – Jesus fulfills Isaiah's prophecy: "*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.*"

Jesus' first message is direct: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This isn't just a call to feel sorry for sins; the Greek word *metanoia* implies a total "change of mind" – a 180-degree turn in how we see the world. We see the immediate fruit of this repentance in Peter, Andrew, James, and John. When Jesus says, "Follow me," they don't ask for a business plan or a salary range. They immediately leave their nets. Their "nets" represent their security, their identity, and their past. To follow the Light, they had to let go of the shore.

St. Paul, in our second reading, reminds us that this Light is meant to unite us, not divide us. He chastises the Corinthians for breaking into factions. When we focus on our "nets" – our personal preferences, politics, or egos – we create darkness. When we focus on the Call, we find unity. Today, Jesus is walking along the "shore" of your life – in your office, your home, or your struggles. He is the Light that dispels the gloom of our anxiety and the "yoke" of our burdens. What "nets" is He asking you to drop today so that you can walk more freely in His light?

Catholic Quotes for the New Year: St. Augustine of Hippo: "Let us sing a new song – not with our lips, but with our lives." St. John Henry Newman: "We shall have no success in life without self-denial and discipline, and this every new beginning especially demands." St. Teresa of Avila: "Every time we begin again, we are closer to God." St. John Paul II: "Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and 'Alleluia' is our song." Pope Benedict XVI: "Time is a gift entrusted to us, to be used wisely and responsibly." Pope Francis: "God is the God of new beginnings. He always gives us another chance." Thomas Merton: "Every moment and every event of every man's life on earth plants something in his soul."

Wednesday, January 28, Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, Priest and Doctor of the Church: On the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Church honors one of her greatest minds and a humble servant of truth. Born in 1225 into a noble family in Italy, Thomas became a Dominican friar against his family's wishes and devoted his life to the study of God. Living in the high age of Scholasticism, he helped shape a method that sought harmony between faith and reason, drawing deeply from Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and the newly rediscovered philosophy of Aristotle. In the universities of Paris and Naples, Thomas taught that reason, when rightly used, does not threaten faith but serves it. His masterwork, the *Summa Theologiae*, reflects the scholastic method: precise questions, careful objections, reasoned responses, and clear conclusions. Yet Thomas never reduced theology to intellectual exercise alone. For him, study was prayer, and truth led to worship. Near the end of his life, after a profound mystical experience, he called his writings "straw" compared to the reality of God. St. Thomas reminds us that learning is meant to deepen love, and that the ultimate goal of all knowledge is not argument, but holiness.

Saturday, January 31, Feast of St. John Bosco, Founder of the Salesian Order: On the Feast of St. John Bosco, we honor a 19th-century priest whose life transformed the care of youth. Born in 1815 in Castelnuovo d'Asti, Italy, John Bosco grew up during the social upheavals of the Industrial Revolution, when poverty, child labor, and moral neglect threatened many children. Ordained in 1841, he ministered tirelessly in Turin, opening oratories, schools, and workshops to educate and protect young people. In 1859, he founded the Salesians of Don Bosco, inspired by St. Francis de Sales' gentle approach, to continue his work. Using reason, religion, and loving kindness, he showed that faith and joy could guide hearts. St. John Bosco's witness teaches us that patience, creativity, and compassionate care can bring God's light to the most vulnerable, forming not only minds but souls for Christ.

Pilgrimage to Northern Ireland: I'll be spiritual director to a pilgrimage to Northern Ireland for 12 days from August 21 through September 1, 2026. Please see more information on the last page of the bulletin. If you are interested in joining, please contact 206 Tours at 800-206-8687. Email: sales@206tours.com

Archdiocesan Annual Appeal 2026: We'll be officially launching AAA 2026 at Masses on the weekend of March 1. The amount to be raised is \$34,588. Can you consider donating \$500, which is 1.4% of the total amount? I'll be writing a letter to each one of you in the next few weeks. I humbly ask again for your generosity and collaboration.

Holy Spirit Prayer of Saint Augustine (354-430): "Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, That my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, That my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, That I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, To defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, That I always may be holy."

Humor: The Logic of a Child: A Sunday school teacher was testing the children's knowledge of the Bible and asked, "Does anyone know why Joseph and Mary took Jesus with them to Jerusalem?" A small boy in the front row raised his hand and answered with total confidence, "I know! Because they couldn't get a babysitter."

Your Friend and Pastor,
Father Charles Puthota