

# From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

February 1, 2026



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

**Word of God: 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A:** In today's Gospel, Jesus climbs the mountain and delivers the Beatitudes – the "Opening Statement" of the Kingdom of Heaven. To our modern ears, these words often sound like a gentle poem. However, to those listening on the hillside, they were a radical, upside-down manifesto. Jesus looks at the very people the world ignores – the mourning, the poor in spirit, the persecuted – and calls them "Blessed." The world tells us that happiness is found in strength, wealth, and self-sufficiency. But Jesus presents a "Blessed Paradox." He suggests that our "emptiness" is actually our greatest asset because it creates the space for God to fill. To be poor in spirit isn't about lacking talent; it's about recognizing our total dependence on God. To mourn is to have a heart soft enough to care about the brokenness of the world. To be meek is not weakness; it is "power under control."

As St. Paul reminds us in the second reading, God chose the "foolish" and "weak" of the world to shame the wise. We don't have to be perfect, wealthy, or powerful to be holy. We simply have to be available. The Beatitudes are not a "to-do" list to earn heaven; they are a map of the heart of Jesus. When we strive for peace or hunger for justice, we aren't just following a rule – we are becoming more like Jesus. As we continue our pilgrimage of life, let's look for the "lowly" places in our lives. Let's not fear our weaknesses, for it is precisely in those gaps that God's grace enters in.

**Monday, February 2, Feast of the Presentation of the Lord:** On the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, we celebrate Mary and Joseph bringing the infant Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem, forty days after His birth, in obedience to the Law. There, they encounter Simeon, who had been promised that he would not die until he saw the Messiah, and Anna, the prophetess, who recognized Jesus as the Redeemer. This feast, also called Candlemas, reminds us that Christ is the true light of the world, a light that shines in our darkness. Mary and Joseph's faithful offering of their child teaches us the value of surrendering our lives to God's will. Simeon's prayer of praise, "*Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace,*" invites us to recognize God's presence in our daily lives. Today, as candles are blessed and carried in procession, we are called to carry Christ's light into our homes, workplaces, and hearts, living with faith, hope, and love.

**Tuesday, February 3, Feast of St. Blaise, Blessing of Throats:** On the Feast of St. Blaise, we honor the fourth-century bishop and martyr, remembered for his care of the sick and miraculous healing of a boy choking on a fishbone. Today, the Church continues his witness through the **Blessing of Throats**, asking God's protection against illness and harm. As we receive this blessing, let it remind us of God's healing power, the importance of prayer, and our call to care for one another in body, mind, and spirit.

**Thursday, February 5, Feast of St. Agatha, Virgin and Martyr:** On the Feast of St. Agatha, we honor a courageous third-century virgin and martyr from Catania, Sicily, who suffered for her faith during the persecutions of Emperor Decius. Refusing to renounce Christ, she endured torture with unwavering courage. St. Agatha's witness reminds us that holiness often calls for sacrifice and steadfastness in the face of suffering. As we pray today, may her example strengthen our faith and inspire us to remain faithful to Christ, whatever the cost.

**Friday, February 6, Feast of St. Paul Miki and Companion Martyrs:** On the Feast of St. Paul Miki and Companions, we remember the 26 martyrs of Japan, crucified in Nagasaki in 1597 for refusing to renounce Christ. Paul Miki, a Jesuit seminarian, and his fellow missionaries and lay Christians showed extraordinary courage, forgiving their executioners even as they faced death. Their witness reminds us that faith often calls for radical fidelity and love in the face of persecution. Today, we honor their courage, praying for the grace to remain steadfast in our own faith, to forgive as Christ forgives, and to bear witness to Him in all circumstances.

**Museums of de Young and Legion of Honor:** In the last couple of weeks, I have visited these two museums. Looking at the various artistic creations can help stimulate our sense of beauty and bring us joy and put us ultimately in touch with the author of all beauty. In de Young, "Boom and Bust: Photographing Northern California," Leilah Bairye's sculptures, American Art from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Jolika Collection of New Guinea art, Textiles collection, and the 360-degree from the Hamon Observation Tower are worth visiting. In Legion of Honor, the Rodin sculptures, the classical paintings most of which are religious art, currently the exquisite "Manet and Morisot" (impressionist) exhibition are all a feast to the eye and the soul. I encourage you to visit such places of art and culture because "a thing of beauty is a joy forever."

**Quotes on Life:** "Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it." – Charles R. Swindoll. "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving." – Albert Einstein. "The purpose of life is a life of purpose." – Robert Byrne.

**Humor: The 23rd Psalm:** A Sunday school teacher asked her class to memorize the 23rd Psalm. One little girl was nervous about her turn to recite it in front of the congregation. When she got to the microphone, she panicked and forgot the words. She took a deep breath and blurted out, "The Lord is my shepherd... and that's all I need to know!" The congregation gave her a standing ovation because, in a way, she was absolutely right.

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota