

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

February 15, 2026



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Ash Wednesday: February 18. Mass times: 8:30am and 6:00pm. Ash Wednesday, February 18: Let's get spiritually and psychologically ready for the season of Lent. How could this season of Lent help us as we try to nourish and nurture our body, mind, heart, and spirit? How could we rearrange our priorities and values according to the mind and heart of Jesus Christ?

Abstinence and Fasting in Lent: Everyone 14 years of age and older is required to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, each Friday of Lent, and Good Friday. **Fasting:** Those 18-60 years of age are to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. On these two days the law of fasting allows only one full meal a day, but does not prohibit taking some food during the day, as long as this does not constitute another full meal. Drinking liquids during the day is permitted. Please do not neglect to take your medications.

Stations of the Cross in Lent: Starting on February 20, on Fridays, immediately following the 8:30am Mass, there will be Stations of the Cross. Please do come join these spiritual devotions. If possible, catch a daily Mass during the Lenten season. It may be inconvenient, but that's the whole point: we would do well to do some inconvenient things during Lent in order for us to reflect and pray more deeply about such things as life, love, faith, and health.

Parish Lenten Retreat: Saturday, February 28: As part of our Lenten practices and observances, I'll be giving a retreat for half a day on Saturday, February 28. It will start with the 8:30am 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 are available in the Church and the parish office.

Word of God: 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A: On this Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Word of God invites us to go deeper – beyond appearances, beyond minimum requirements, and into the heart of discipleship. In today's Gospel from Matthew, Jesus tells us clearly: *"I have come not to abolish the law but to fulfill it."* He is not interested in relaxing God's commandments; rather, He radicalizes them by bringing them to their true purpose – conversion of the heart. Jesus contrasts external obedience with interior transformation. It is not enough, He says, simply not to kill; we must also confront the anger, resentment, and contempt that can kill relationships long before any physical harm is done. It is not enough to avoid adultery; we must purify our desires and intentions. In other words, Jesus calls us from a checklist religion to a relationship-centered faith.

The first reading from Sirach reminds us that God respects our freedom. *“Before you are life and death, good and evil, whichever you choose shall be given you.”* God does not force holiness upon us. He places before us a choice: to live according to wisdom or to settle for mediocrity. Holiness is not accidental; it is a daily decision. St. Paul, in the second reading, speaks of God’s wisdom – hidden, yet revealed to those who love Him. This wisdom is not the cleverness of the world but the wisdom of the Cross, where love goes to the very end. Only the Spirit can help us see and live this deeper righteousness that Jesus demands.

This Gospel can feel demanding, even unsettling. Yet it is ultimately good news. Jesus does not merely command; he empowers. He knows our hearts and offers His grace to heal them. The Lord wants more than correct behavior; he desires transformed hearts – hearts that forgive quickly, speak truthfully, love generously, and seek reconciliation. As we examine our lives today, the question is not simply, *“Have I broken the law?”* but rather, *“Have I loved as Christ loves?”* The Eucharist we celebrate strengthens us for this higher calling. Nourished by Christ himself, we are sent forth not to live by the bare minimum, but to embrace the fullness of life that flows from a heart rooted in God’s love.

Archdiocesan Annual Appeal (AAA) 2026: The launch date is the weekend of March 1. The amount to be raised is: \$34,588. If you could give 1.5% which is \$500, it would make us reach the goal quickly. My letter will be mailed to you next week and the same letter will also be published in our parish bulletin. The names of donors who give \$25 and above will be carried in the bulletin for weeks starting in the first week of March.

Suscipe Prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola: *“Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, All I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me. Amen.”*

Humor: 1. A guest is ordering at a restaurant. *“Do you think you could bring me what that gentleman over there is having?”* The waiter: *“No, sir, I’m very sure he intends to eat it himself.”* 2. Patient: *“Oh, Doctor, I’m starting to forget things.”* Doctor: *“Since when have you had this condition?”* Patient: *“What condition?”* 3. Wife: *“Honey, soon there will be three of us here. Isn’t that great?”* Husband: *“Oh, darling, that’s simply wonderful!”* Wife: *“I’m so happy you feel that way! I did tell my mom you won’t mind her moving in!”* 4. Dentist: *“You need a crown.”* Patient: *“Finally someone who understands me.”* 5. *“99.8% of people have problems with math.” “I’m glad I’m in the remaining 1%”.*

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota