

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

March 8, 2026



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

AAA: Archdiocesan Annual Appeal (AAA) 2026: The amount to raise is \$34,588. 1.5% Donation is \$500. Please see in the bulletin the names of those who have donated so far to AAA 2026. The asterisk indicates the 1.5% donors. Last weekend (February 28-March 01) we launched this annual appeal, a monthlong drive. I preached at the three weekend Masses, connecting the Word of God about Abraham's call to leave everything and go on a journey and Jesus' Transfiguration. The reason for this campaign is simple: the Archdiocese is entrusted with a mission to preach the good news and to provide all necessary ministries and services to the parishes within the Archdiocese. Without our assistance, at the Archdiocesan level they could not be doing what they are called to do. So we feel privileged to help and collaborate in their work. Also, let us keep in mind that we are not apart from the Archdiocese. We, our parish and all other parishes, make up the Archdiocese. When we strengthen the Archdiocese, we are actually strengthening our own St. Elizabeth Parish. So please give generously and early so that we can complete this campaign within a month. Would it be possible for you to belong to "1.5% Circle" by donating \$500 or more toward AAA? Some of you have given in the past way more than 1.5%. Your spirit of stewardship and generous donations are much appreciated.

Parish Lenten Retreat: Last Saturday, March 28, I preached the retreat---my last one at St. Elizabeth---to our parishioners on the theme of Vatican II. 53 people attended. Some came from other parishes from the Archdiocese. It started with the Mass at 8:30 a.m. followed by a light breakfast in Cantwell Hall. In the first session, I reflected on the socio-politico-religious context that directly or indirectly led to Vatican II. In the second session, I reflected on the content of the 16 documents and the way the 7 popes, starting from John XXIII to the present Pope Leo XIV, contributed to the practice of Vatican II. In the third session, I reflected on the relevance of Vatican II and what we need to do to carry the torch forward. Beyond the spiritual benefits, these retreats bring us together to foster deeper personal connections. The retreat ended with a delicious lunch. I'd like to thank the sacristans and the volunteers for their great arrangements with the food and the hall.

Word of God: Third Sunday of Lent: In today's readings, we move from the physical desert to the spiritual well. In Exodus, the Israelites grumble in the wilderness, testing God because of their parched throats: "Is the Lord among us or not?" Their physical thirst blinds them to the reality of God's providential care. St. Paul reminds us in Romans that our hope is not found in temporary relief, but in the "love of God poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit." This is the "Living Water" Jesus offers the Samaritan woman at the well. Lent is the season to stop digging broken cisterns of superficiality – wealth, status, or distractions – and return to the Source. Jesus meets us in our exhaustion, looking past our "appearances" to the heart of the matter. When we drink from His grace, our parched isolation ends. We become, like the woman, witnesses who leave our heavy jars behind to lead others to the Truth.

Season of Lent: Rediscovering the Heart: We are currently immersed in Lent, a purposeful journey toward the light of Easter. Contrary to the "doom and gloom" stereotype, this is a season of profound joy rooted in renewal, peace, and fulfillment. It is an invitation to retreat from superficiality and dive deeper into the authentic meaning of life and love. Too often, we are blinded by a world that prioritizes the aesthetic over the substantial. Lent provides the space to look beyond these distractions, training us to see clearly with our hearts rather than just our eyes. While modern life bombards us with half-truths and distortions, this season serves as a "grounding" period, stripping away falsehoods to reveal our true purpose. True spiritual growth, as Jesus taught, is never performative. Our practices – prayer, fasting, and almsgiving – are not for public validation but are intimate responses to a Father who sees what is hidden. Ultimately, a meaningful life must be anchored in the "ground of our being." By living in union with the Divine, we gain the discernment necessary to be true to ourselves and, consequently, true to one another.

Pope Francis' Famous Quotes: 1. "I am a sinner. This is the most accurate definition. It is not a figure of speech, a literary genre. I am a sinner." 2. "The Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak."

A Story to Ponder: Husband: "I'm going to work hard, and some day we are going to be rich." Wife: "We are rich already, dear, for we have each other. Some day we may have money."

Tech Humor: 1. "My sister gave birth in a state-of-the-art delivery room,' said one man to another. "It was so high-tech that the baby came our cordless." 2. Son to his father as they watch television: "Dad, tell me again how when you were a kid you had to walk all the way across the room to change the channel." 3. Department store automatic answering machine: "If you are calling to order or send money, press 5. If you are calling to register a complaint, press 6 4 5 9 8 3 4 8 2 2 9 5 5 3 9 2. Have a good day."

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota