

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

March 15, 2026



Dear St. Elizabeth Parishioners ,

Archdiocesan Annual Appeal 2026 (AAA): Our goal: \$34,588. Amount reached as of March 11: \$11,507. Amount needed to reach goal: \$23,081. We started the campaign on the weekend of February 28 – March 01, 2026. We have completed two weeks now in the month-long campaign. Please see the names of donors in the bulletin. There is an asterisk for those who have donated \$500 or more, our 1.5% Circle. I'd like to thank Ron Borg for speaking at all Masses last weekend, encouraging all to donate. Thank you for your generosity and good will toward St. Elizabeth Church and the ministries and services of the Archdiocese. Please give whatever you can give to help further the mission of Christ in our own Archdiocese. To those who have not given so far: would you please prayerfully consider supporting AAA? Please give early and generously.

Fourth Sunday of Lent: Laetare Sunday: This Sunday in Lent is called Laetare Sunday, which means Rejoice Sunday. As we go through the penitential and ascetical practices of Lent, journeying toward the sufferings and death of Jesus in the Holy Week, we are given a hint, a hope, of the joyful anticipation of the victory of Jesus at Easter. The name comes from the first words of the Entrance Antiphon for Mass, "Laetare Jerusalem" ("Rejoice, O Jerusalem"). This Sunday we stand at about the half-way point of the Lenten season. The altar may be decorated with flowers this Sunday. The liturgical color of the vestments is rose.

Word of God: Blindness and Sight: You may be aware that the OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) program for adults seeking to become Catholics. They go through a long process of preparation: Inquiry, the Catechumenate, Purification and Enlightenment, and Mystagogy. The Readings at the Mass we read this year, Year A, are related specifically to the catechumens journeying toward baptism at Easter. Not only for OCIA catechumens, but the process of faith and growth is meant for everyone. Last Sunday, the theme was the living water, as OCIA candidates as well as all of us thirst for the life in Christ, and that the living water is the Spirit of Christ poured into our hearts. This fourth Sunday it is about the new vision that we are all called to attain. Seeing is believing. To be able to see, as the man born blind does, is to be on the way to new life with Christ. What are our various versions of blindness that Jesus is waiting to heal? What are the things that block our vision for God and the world? How can we see as Jesus sees everything? Let's See, Judge, Act!

March 19, Feast of St. Joseph: In the Gospels, St. Joseph emerges as a figure defined not by his speech, but by his unwavering, righteous action. Though he never utters a single recorded word, his life serves as a profound testament to the power of a contemplative interior life. Matthew's Gospel identifies him as a "just man," a title signifying a rare harmony between strict adherence to divine law and a compassionate, merciful heart. As a carpenter, he dignifies the sanctity of manual labor, providing a stable, humble home for the Holy Family through the work of his hands. Joseph's obedience is most obvious in his response to the divine instruction through dreams, and each time, he rises to the occasion and without hesitation or complaint fulfills what is asked of him. Finally, his identity as a "Son of David" is a theological necessity, legally anchoring Jesus into the messianic lineage of Israel and fulfilling the ancient prophecies of a Savior from the house of David. Taken together, these biblical truths reveal a man of "creative courage" whose quiet strength and prompt obedience provided the earthly protection required for the mystery of the Incarnation to unfold in history.

Happy St. Patrick's Day, Tuesday, March 17: Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was a 5th-century missionary who spread Christianity across the Emerald Isle. Originally captured and enslaved as a teenager, he later escaped, only to return with a vision to convert the Irish people. He famously used the three-leafed shamrock to illustrate the Holy Trinity, cementing it as a national symbol. The feast of St. Patrick has blossomed into a global celebration of Irish culture and heritage. Today, the "Green Holiday" is marked by vibrant parades, traditional folk music, and lively *céilís*. From dyeing the Chicago River emerald to donning festive attire, the world embraces the "wearing of the green." It's a day of conviviality where everyone is a little bit Irish, sharing in hearty meals and spirited community.

Irish Blessings: "When I count my blessings, I count you twice. May God bless you." "Always remember to forget the things that made you sad. But never forget to remember the things that made you glad." "May your neighbors respect you, Trouble neglect you, The angels protect you, And heaven accept you." "May you live to be a hundred years, with one extra year to repent."

Irish Catholic Humor: 1. An Irishman arrived at heaven's gate. St. Peter asked, "Why should I let you in?" The man replied, "I went to Mass every Sunday." St. Peter smiled. "Anything else?" The Irishman shrugged. "I also stayed awake through Father's homilies – surely that counts." 2. After a long sermon, Father O'Brien asked, "Did everyone understand today's Gospel?" One Irishman replied, "Father, I understood the beginning and the end." The priest smiled and asked, "What about the middle?" The man shrugged, "That's when I was peacefully meditating." 3. An Irishman went to confession and said, "Bless me, Father, for I've sinned. I stole a rope." The priest asked, "Anything else?" The man sighed, "Yes, Father... the cow that was attached to it." Father paused and said, "Next time, confess the whole truth first."

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota