

# From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

January 18, 2026



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

**Word of God: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, year A:** In the Second Sunday of Ordinary Time the liturgy transitions from the Christmas season into the public mission of Christ. The readings center on the theme of vocation and witness, showing us that our identity is found in pointing others toward the Lord. First Reading (Isaiah 49:3, 5-6): The Prophet Isaiah describes the "Servant of the Lord" who is called from the womb. God declares that being a savior for Israel is "too little"; the Servant must be a "light to the nations" so that salvation reaches the ends of the earth. Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 40): We respond with, "Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will." This reflects the internal disposition of a disciple – replacing ritual sacrifice with an "open ear" and a heart ready for service. Gospel (John 1:29-34): John the Baptist sees Jesus and proclaims, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." John testifies that he recognized Jesus because he saw the Spirit descend and remain upon Him.

Ordinary time is not "plain" time; it is "ordered" time, where we learn to follow Jesus in the everyday. 1. Recognition through Prayer: John the Baptist did not know Jesus' true identity by sight alone, but through the Spirit. We, too, must cultivate a prayerful "eye of the soul" to recognize Christ's presence in our neighbors and in the mundane moments of our lives. 2. The Humility to "Decrease": John's greatness lay in his willingness to step aside. He defines his entire life by his relationship to the "One who ranks ahead of me." We are called to live with that same humility, using our talents not for self-glory, but to shine God's light into the world's dark corners. As we begin this season, let us ask: To whom am I being sent to say, "Behold, the Lamb of God"?

**Monday January 19: Martin Luther, Jr's Birthday:** Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday is observed as a U.S. federal holiday on Monday, January 19, 2026, the third Monday of January, honoring his January 15 birth. On this day, federal offices and many schools and workplaces close in national recognition. For Catholics, the occasion invites prayerful reflection on Dr. King's life through the light of the Gospel. Grounded in Scripture and inspired by Jesus' command to love one's enemies, Dr. King witnessed to justice, peace, and the inviolable dignity of every human person. His commitment to nonviolence mirrors Christ's own way of the cross, where love overcomes hatred and forgiveness dispels fear. Proclaiming that all are created in God's image, he challenged racism and exclusion with courage and hope. His vision of equality and solidarity resonates deeply with Catholic social teaching on the common good. Honoring his birthday calls us not only to remember his words, but to imitate his faith-filled pursuit of justice and peace.

**Wednesday, January 21, Feast of St. Agnes, Virgin and Martyr:** On the Feast of St. Agnes, we remember a young Roman martyr of the early fourth century, killed during the persecution of Emperor Diocletian around AD 304. According to ancient tradition, Agnes refused marriage because she had consecrated her life to Christ. Though threatened with shame and death, she remained steadfast, confessing Christ with remarkable courage. Her witness was so powerful that St. Ambrose and St. Augustine praised her faith in their writings. St. Agnes reminds us that true strength flows from fidelity to God. Her life challenges us to remain faithful to Christ amid trials, trusting that love is stronger than fear and death.

**Saturday, January 24, Feast of St. Francis de Sales, Bishop and Doctor of the Church:** On the Feast of St. Francis de Sales, we honor a gentle saint and great teacher of the faith. Born in 1567 in Savoy, he lived during the turmoil of the Protestant Reformation. As Bishop of Geneva, he patiently brought many back to the Church not by argument alone, but through kindness, clarity, and charity. Unable to preach publicly, he wrote pamphlets and slipped them under doors – an early use of the media for evangelization. Declared a Doctor of the Church, St. Francis de Sales teaches us that holiness is possible in everyday life and that hearts are won more by love than by force.

**A Story to Ponder:** Who is the real menace?: The Ministry of Agriculture decreed that sparrows were a menace to crops and should be exterminated. When this was done, hordes of insects that the sparrows would have eaten descended on the harvest and began to ravage the crops, whereupon the Ministry of Agriculture came up with the idea of costly pesticides. The pesticides made the food expensive. They also made it a hazard to health. Too late it was discovered that it was the sparrows who, through feeding on the crops, managed to keep the food wholesome and inexpensive.

**New Year Quotes:** “Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365-page book. Write a good one.” – Brad Paisley. “Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each new year find you a better man.” – Benjamin Franklin. “We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves.” – Edith Lovejoy Pierce. “Year’s end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on.” – Hal Borland

**Humor:** During a Sunday service, the pastor asked the congregation for their intentions. There were the usual requests to pray for sick people and the acknowledgments for those who helped when a parishioner died. The somber mood was broken when the last intention was heard. A woman stood up and said, "My granddaughter turned 16 this week and received her driver’s license. Let us pray for us all."

Your Friend and Pastor,  
Father Charles Puthota