

Fr. Charles Puthota's Blog

March 28, 2021

From the Pastor's Desktop



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Palm Sunday: Paul Grant and Marian Palmer sing: "Hey, King! Where's your crown, where's your Cadillac? I've never seen a king before - on a donkey's back." On Palm Sunday, we commemorate our King's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Henry Hart Milman says: "Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die; O Christ, thy triumphs now begin, O'er captive death and conquered sin." Jesus' triumphal entry will turn into dark, sad days of excruciating suffering and shameful death. But it will all pale in the resplendent glory that will dawn on Easter. The profound Christian insight is that it's always through the cross that we find our glory. Without suffering, there is no love, no redemption, no new life. Suffering is redemptive. Death is the way to resurrection. Let's look at the face of Christ this Holy Week. Let's look into his tender eyes. Let's place our hand on the heart of Christ. Let's seek to enter his mind and heart to know his thoughts and feelings.

St. Elizabeth Parish Holy Week Schedule in the Mail: I mailed last Tuesday March 23rd to each parishioner of St. Elizabeth Parish my Easter letter with the Holy Week schedule. Please see the schedule also in this weekend's bulletin. I invite you wholeheartedly to participate in the rituals and services of the Holy Week at our parish, with all the Covid-related protocols for safety in place.

One practical suggestion for the Holy Week: Can you choose one of the passion narratives from one of the four gospels? Every gospel, toward the end, has the account of Jesus' suffering and death. Go to a church or any other calm place. Sit quietly. Read slowly and prayerfully this passion narrative and try to be silent for a few minutes after reading it. It will only take about 20 minutes or so to do this. You will not regret spending some quality time on this simple form of prayer. If you feel inspired, speak to Jesus in your words. St. Ignatius of Loyola suggests in the "Spiritual Exercises" to stand before the cross and ask: "Lord, what have I done for you? What am I doing for you? What shall I do for you?"

Via Dolorosa: On my three visits to the Holy Land so far, one of the memorable devotions we practiced was to walk the holy route, Via Dolorosa, which in Latin means "the way of suffering". It's in the Old City of Jerusalem. Tradition has long held that Jesus walked through this way toward Calvary. This route winds through narrow streets with thousands of shops on either side. That is why we had to wake up early in the morning by 4:30 a.m. and get to this place and start the Way of the Cross by 5:30 a.m. so that we could complete our prayers by the time shops opened. Our Way of the Cross along this holy route ended with Mass at the Church of Holy Sepulchre. It was one of the most memorable walks of our life ever. We walked the same way Jesus did! We were filled with sadness for Jesus carrying the cross, but we were also filled with hope and gratitude for what Jesus brought for us through his ultimate sacrifice.

Word of God: This Palm Sunday, the Word of God is all about suffering. The first reading is from Isaiah about the suffering servant. He suffers a lot, but he places all his trust in God. The responsorial psalm is about: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” A very powerful sentiment indeed! How many times have we felt this way in our life? We sometimes feel that we are abandoned by everyone, including God. Jesus himself felt this way. He used these very words on the cross. Jesus knows our human frustrations and anguish because he himself has gone through those dark moments in his life. That’s the reason we can go to Jesus with great confidence. He knows exactly our struggles and sufferings. The second reading is the famous hymn from the letter to the Philippians, which celebrates Jesus’s humility, obedience to his Father, his dying on the cross, his exaltation by his heavenly Father above everything and everyone. The gospel reading, the passion narrative, is taken from Mark’s gospel. On Good Friday, the passion narrative will be from John’s gospel. As we go through these readings, the Lord will speak to us tenderly and give us the grace to enter more deeply the sufferings and death of Jesus so that we can rise with him to a new life in the glory of the resurrection.

500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines: Congratulations to all from the Philippines on this impressive milestone! Our parish is putting some plans together to celebrate it with great joy, faith, and gratitude. I shall keep you posted on the details as they are finalized.

Good Friday Quotes: “We adore you and we bless you, Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all the churches which are in the whole world, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.”--- St. Francis of Assisi • “Unless there is a Good Friday in your life, there can be no Easter Sunday.”— Fulton J. Sheen

I wish everyone at St. Elizabeth Parish a prayerful, reflective, and grace-filled Holy Week.

Your Friend & Pastor,

Fr. Charles Puthota