

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

May 5, 2024



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Easter Reflections: Recognizing Jesus in our lives and in the present world: During the Easter season, the gospel readings present us with the anecdotes of Jesus encountering his incredulous disciples and revealing himself again and again. There is a common thread that runs through these apparitions of the Risen Christ: the apostles and others to whom Jesus appear do not easily recognize Jesus. It takes time for them to awaken into the identity of Jesus. Jesus does all sorts of gentle and kind things to encourage them into the reality of his resurrection. Mary Magdalene, for example, thinks that Jesus is a gardener. Others at times think that he is a ghost. The two Emmaus disciples do not recognize him. Something keeps their eyes from recognizing him. They finally see him as Jesus only in the breaking of the bread, though their hearts were burning when he interpreted the scriptures. At the resurrection of Jesus, something is the same, something is different. He is a new being. He can appear inside the locked rooms. He has body but his body is so different that they cannot see him as Jesus immediately: they are startled and terrified. Those who were very close to him face this situation again and again.

What about us? Over 2000 years later, can we recognize the risen Christ? Something is preventing us from seeing him in our lives. Are we afraid, terrified, and startled like the apostles? Do these fears keep us from recognizing Jesus? Or are we being just plain busy with so many other things that Jesus cannot rise in our minds and hearts? We have a bigger challenge than those faced by the early apostles. We have never seen Jesus with our physical eyes. We can feel, touch, recognize, and encounter Jesus only through the spirit. We have to allow our minds and hearts find Jesus. It's the inner seeing that can lead us to the risen Christ. It is the way Paul saw Jesus spiritually and completely surrendered to him and promoted him for the rest of his life. It would take quietness and peace---and plumbing our inner depths. Are we ready to recognize this person who has fascinated the world for over 20 centuries? Are we ready to look at the Jesus of History and Christ of Faith and come to the conviction that Jesus who lived a couple of thousands of years ago is truly living now in our lives and in the world? Can we be adventurous enough to try to remove all sorts of obstacles that prevent us from recognizing him, loving him, and following him here and now?

First Holy Communion: Six of our Faith Formation children are receiving First Communion this Sunday at the 10:30 a.m. Mass. Congratulations to the children and families! It's a joyful and memorable spiritual event in our parish that uplifts the spirit of the community into the heavenly heights. We, the grown-up folks, long for their innocence, faith, sense of wonder, simplicity, gratitude, and their excitement. We wish we could recapture a bit of their state of mind and heart in our practice of faith. The Communion--- the Body of Christ---they receive today for the first time makes them princes and princesses of our parish and our whole neighborhood because they have Jesus with them as their most precious gift and treasure. Let's keep these children and their families in our hearts and prayers. May this sacrament be a source of renewal of life for them and for our entire parish as well.

Word of God: 6th Sunday of Easter: Invitation to Mysticism: The gospel passage continues the theme from the parable of the Vine and the Branches we read last Sunday in which we meditated on the intimate and unbreakable connection we the branches need to have with Jesus the vine if we have to bear any fruit, while the Father, the vine grower, prunes and purifies us for the most effective mission we are called to fulfill for his Son Jesus Christ. Sometimes we might mistakenly think that mysticism is only for a few rare saints, but Christian spirituality entails the gift of mysticism for every baptized person. It's this mysticism that is at the heart of the gospel this Sunday. The Father loves the Son; the Son loves us the same way the Father loves the son. We need to remain (abide, stay, live, dwell) in Jesus' love. By keeping Jesus' commandments we will remain in his love exactly as Jesus remains in his Father's love by keeping the Father's commandments. Loving one another in the same sacrificial way as Jesus loves us is the commandment that will make us abide in Jesus' as well as the Father's love. This will bring us joy and that joy will be complete. Is this not pure and unadulterated and exhilarating mysticism? John in the second reading reinforces the mystical life Jesus is inviting us to. Love is of God and so we know God only through love. This is mysticism that we are called to live on a daily basis. Keep loving God and others in a selfless, self-sacrificial, joyful, generous, and grateful ways is the surest way to practice this mysticism. Are we excited about this simple formula for the mystical life Jesus is calling us to?

May, a Month Dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary: Hail, Holy Queen: Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O merciful, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Amen.

Humor for the Tax Season: Father O'Malley answers the phone: "Hello, is this Father O'Malley?" "It is." "This is the IRS. Can you help us?" "I can." "Do you know a Ted Houlihan?" "I do." "Is he a member of your congregation?" "He is." "Did he donate \$10,000 to the church?" "He will."

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota