

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

March 23, 2025



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Archdiocesan Annual Appeal (AAA) 2025: The goal is \$36,292. In a month's time, we have raised \$31,025. It's wonderful news. We still have to collect \$5,267 to reach our goal. Please give early and generously so that we can complete our goal and don't have to worry or talk about it for the rest of the year. Thank you to all who have given this year to AAA 2025. Those who gave \$25 and above have their names in the bulletin. Some of you have given 1.4% (\$500) and a handful of people have given so much more than 1.4%. Thank you. The vision of AAA is the mission. The mission of Jesus Christ in our Archdiocese, to proclaim him and further God's Kingdom here in our own Archdiocese. I'd like to think of it not so much as a fund raiser as a faith-raiser. So please give now and soon!

Pray for Pope Francis: The Holy Father is still in Gemelli Hospital in Rome. Let's keep praying for his health. The Church is in great need of this shepherd to guide and lead us---and to speak up for the whole world in favor of truth, peace, and justice.

Season of Lent: This sacred season continues. We are in the third week of Lent. This season of spirituality and simplicity, of compassion and caring, of penance and perseverance, continues. I invite everyone to participate in the Masses and other devotional practices of this season as we move toward the paschal mysteries. Here's a Lenten Longing: "Late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved you! Lo, you were within, but I outside, seeking there for you, and upon the shapely things you have made I rushed headlong - I, misshapen. You were with me, but I was not with you. They held me back far from you, those things which would have no being, were they not in you." -St. Augustine

St. Patrick's Day last week: We celebrated the Feast of St. Patrick on March 17. Here's a famous prayer of St. Patrick, known as the Breastplate Prayer: "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me."

Word of God: This 3rd Sunday of Lent, we pray over God's burning bush that Moses sees in the desert. God's presence is revealed, and we realize that we stand on sacred ground in the world. Moses' encounter with God leads to his mission: he has to free those in bondage and bring them to the promised land. We reflect on God's call to repentance and his boundless mercy. The responsorial psalm sings: "The Lord is kind and merciful...He pardons all your iniquities, heals all your ills. He is slow to anger and abounding in kindness." The Gospel (Luke 13:1-9) presents Jesus' parable of the barren fig tree. The owner seeks to cut it down, but the gardener pleads for one more year to cultivate it, hoping it will bear fruit. This parable reveals God's patience. Like the fig tree, we are given time to grow in holiness. However, time is not infinite. Jesus urges us, "Unless you repent, you will all perish." True repentance is not mere regret but a transformation of heart. Lent is our "one more year." God nurtures us through His Word, Sacraments, and grace, calling us to bear fruit in love, forgiveness, and service. Are we using this time wisely? Or are we delaying conversion? Let us heed this call with urgency. Like the gardener, Jesus intercedes for us, offering another chance. May we turn away from sin and embrace a life of faithfulness, thus bearing fruit for God's glory and in the service of people.

Tuesday March 25, Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord: This great feast is placed on this day because it is exactly nine months before the birth of Jesus on December 25. This feast celebrates Mary conceiving Jesus by saying yes to God's will announced through Archangel Gabriel. There are gorgeous masterpieces by famous artists on the theme of Annunciation. Check out one of my favorites by Henry Ossawa Tanner! You might want to go online to explore! Happy hunting!

A Story to Ponder: The Moon Cannot Be Stolen: Ryokan, a Zen master, lived a simple life in a little hut. One evening, a thief entered his hut only to find there was nothing to steal. Ryokan saw him and said, "You have come so far to visit me, and you should not return empty-handed. Please, take my clothes." The thief, confused, took the clothes and left. Ryokan, shivering in the cold, looked at the moon and whispered, "Poor fellow. I wish I could have given him this beautiful moon." Moral: True wealth is not in possessions but in the ability to appreciate life itself.

Lenten Humor: 1. During Lent, I decided to give up procrastination... but I'll start next week! 2. During Lent, my friend said he was giving up chocolate. I caught him eating a brownie, and he said, "I'm just testing my willpower... and so far, I have none." 3. I told my priest I was giving up social media for Lent. He said, "That's great! But will you be okay without *posting* about it?"

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota