

# From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

August 31, 2025



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

**Faith Formation: Mass on Sundays at 8:30 a.m. followed by Classes:** Starting next Sunday, September 7, Faith Formation students with their families will attend the 8:30 a.m. Mass on Sundays. Please would you be kind enough to make the front three or four pews on the right side (as you face the altar) available for them. Immediately following the Mass, the students will go to Cantwell Hall to continue their class requirements. Attending Mass will be part of their Faith Formation class every Sunday. I am heartened by the fact that the families and catechists are welcoming this arrangement with a lot of support. I thank the families and teachers for all their collaboration in passing on faith to students and their generosity with their time and talents.

**Word of God: 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C:** The theme of the readings is the virtue of humility – God's invitation to lower ourselves in a world that constantly urges us to rise above others. Sirach offers timeless wisdom: "Conduct your affairs with humility... you will be loved more than a giver of gifts." True greatness, the reading reminds us, isn't found in showing off, but in quiet wisdom, gentleness, and self-awareness. The humble heart draws God's favor because it is teachable, grateful, and open to others.

The Gospel brings this wisdom to life. Jesus observes how people scramble for the best seats at a banquet. He teaches, "Take the lowest place." In God's kingdom, honor isn't grasped; it is given by God to the humble. Even more striking, Jesus tells us to invite those who cannot repay us – the poor, the crippled, the outcast. This is Gospel hospitality: giving without calculating, loving without expecting return. It is a radical shift from social climbing to compassionate giving.

The Letter to the Hebrews places our humble journey in a majestic context. We are not approaching a fearful mountain but a heavenly celebration – "Mount Zion... the city of the living God." Our humble acts on earth prepare us for a joyful communion with saints and angels. The message is clear: God lifts up the lowly. Pride builds walls; humility opens doors. As disciples, we are called to seek the lowest place – not to be diminished, but to be raised up by the God who sees what is done in secret and blesses the humble with glory.

**From the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: The Church: Why is the Church the 'people of God'?** The Church is the 'people of God' because it pleased God to sanctify and save men not in isolation but by making them into one people gathered together by the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. **What are the characteristics of the people of God?** One becomes a member of this people through faith in Christ and Baptism. This people has for its *origin* God the Father; for its *head* Jesus Christ; for its *hallmark* the dignity and freedom of the sons of God; for its *law* the new commandment of love; for its *mission* to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world; and for its *destiny* the Kingdom of God, already begun on earth.

**Labor Day, Monday, September 1: A Theology and Spirituality:** Labor Day is more than a civic holiday; it is a spiritual moment to reflect on the dignity of human work. Catholic theology teaches that work is not merely about earning a wage, but about participating in God's ongoing creation. From the beginning, in Genesis, God placed humanity in the garden "to till and keep it." Work, therefore, is a vocation—an expression of stewardship, creativity, and service.

The Church reminds us that labor has primacy over capital because it involves the human person, created in the image of God. St. John Paul II, in *Laborem Exercens*, emphasized that through work, we not only transform the world but also grow in holiness. When done with love and offered to God, even the simplest task becomes a prayer.

Spiritually, Labor Day invites us to honor workers everywhere—especially the poor, the marginalized, and those whose labor is hidden or underpaid. It also calls us to examine issues of justice: fair wages, safe conditions, and the rights of workers. Ultimately, we remember that Jesus Himself labored as a carpenter, sanctifying human work by His hands. To celebrate Labor Day as Catholics is to see work not as a burden, but as a blessing, a path to holiness, and a way of building God's Kingdom.

**Feast of St. Gregory the Great, Wednesday, September 3:** St. Gregory the Great was one of the most remarkable popes in the history of the Church. Born in Rome around 540, Gregory first served as a Roman prefect but soon renounced worldly honors to embrace monastic life as a Benedictine monk. Known for his humility and love of prayer, he was unexpectedly called to the papacy in 590 during a time of famine, plague, and social unrest. As pope, Gregory organized charitable relief for the poor, negotiated peace with warring powers, and offered spiritual guidance with wisdom and compassion. He reformed Church governance and liturgy, promoted Gregorian chant, and strengthened missionary outreach, most notably by sending St. Augustine of Canterbury to evangelize England. Gregory's writings—especially his *Pastoral Rule* and homilies—shaped Christian spirituality for centuries. He died in 604. Remembered as "Servant of the Servants of God," he is honored as a Doctor of the Church and model of humble, holy leadership.

**Humor on Humility: 1. The Monk's Confession:** A young monk kept saying, "I am nothing, I am nothing" during prayer, trying to be humble. The abbot, hearing him, shook his head. Then the gardener walked in and also said, "I am nothing, Lord." Suddenly the monk whispered to his neighbor, "Look at him— who does he think he is, claiming to be nothing like me?" **2. St. Teresa's Prayer:** St. Teresa of Ávila used to laugh at herself when she made mistakes. Once she tripped in the convent hallway and fell flat on her face. Instead of being embarrassed, she prayed aloud, "Lord, if this is how You treat Your friends, no wonder You have so few of them!" Everyone laughed—including Teresa—reminding all that true humility is joy, not gloom.

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota