

July 22, 2018

From Fr. Jim . . .

“Let the Children Come to Me” We are so blessed with the new life and growth that we are experiencing here at St. Leo. At one time, it could be said that St. Leo was an older parish with an older congregation. Yes, we are an older parish. We have been around for a long time but recently our congregation has grown with diversity and young to middle –aged parents. We have a lot of children now: infants, toddlers, primary school, high school and young adults. We have an active youth ministry now. We enjoy watching the children grow and mature and change from crawling on the floor and playing to receiving the sacraments, becoming ministers of communion, lectors, ushers, greeters and sharing their faith with us. We rejoice and are proud of their achievements in school. We are so grateful for the life, joy and love that they bring to our community and that we are able to help each other grow in faith and our relationship to the Lord. It is a joy to call them forward for the Liturgy of the Word, to see their smiling faces, to share their enthusiasm and to identify their hunger to know the Lord. As Church, we want to assist parents and families with their responsibility to raise their children especially in the faith and we are so glad that we can become another “home” for everyone. Thanks to parents, grandparents, teachers, and parishioners for welcoming them and caring for them and loving them with the Lord’s love.



Safety and respect: Often we spend time at Parish Council and Parish Staff meetings talking about the safety of our children during parish meetings and liturgies and respect for parish property and reverence for our prayer and liturgical art and objects. Some things that we have agreed upon are worth repeating occasionally. Children of all ages are most welcome to come with their parents to our liturgies and events and are encouraged to do so. For their safety do not leave them in your cars alone without an adult. An adult is someone 18 years and older. Especially in this hot weather, even if the windows are down, do not leave them in a car without an adult.

Also, when inside our buildings, children must be with a parent or an adult at all times. Parents, please, always accompany your children to the restrooms. If they need to play or crawl during our liturgies, it is best to do this in the back of church or in the room where the restroom is located. Please do not let them do this alone. Go with them and watch them. Unaccompanied children play on the front Church steps or in the stairwell to the church basement and sometimes slide down the rail for the chair lift. Children can hurt themselves playing on our steps and there is danger being so close to Baltimore Avenue. Children can really hurt themselves playing on the rail of the chair lift. And by sliding down the rail they damage the rail and it keeps the chair lift from working. The chair lift is the only way that we have to get some of our parishioners to the restrooms or parish functions in our basement. It needs to be in good working condition all the time. Also, we just do not have the funds to keep fixing it.

Unaccompanied children can leave our rooms extra dirty and messy or damaged especially in the restrooms. We have had to replace toilets, to unclog sinks of paper towels and remove “spit-balls” from the ceiling. Toilet paper must be flushed down the toilet but the paper towels to dry your hands must be placed in the basket. Here at St. Leo, we pride ourselves on hospitality and welcome. Keeping our facilities clean and respect for our property is good stewardship and a continuing gesture of welcome for all.

Also unaccompanied children do not always understand that religious objects and furniture are not toys to play with, especially our baptismal font. We need to keep our things for worship in good shape, dignified and worthy for worship. It is Archdiocesan policy that if you are watching more children than just your own you need to be VIRTUS trained. Please call us if you need this training.

Lastly, it is our hope that as children grow, they will need to play less and pray more with us. I trust that parents will invite their children to stay with them in the pews and pray with us as they are able. Always encourage them to participate as fully as they can with us in the liturgy - singing and giving the responses. Also watch for any interest and skills to participate in the liturgical ministries as they get older such as usher, lector, communion distributor, server, children’s liturgy of the word, music ministry. Always encourage them to share their gifts and talents with the community. As always, I appreciate your cooperation with these important concerns for the care and safety of our children. Thanks again for making St. Leo the welcoming, enjoyable, prayerful home of faith that it is!