

September 16, 2018

From Fr. Jim . . .



**Two More Points of Gratitude about Our Special Celebration Last**

**Week:** First, I want to thank our staff and maintenance crew, volunteers, and everyone who helped and worked extra-hard to clean the pantry and the church for our celebration. There was a lot of work to be done to get our buildings ready and stay ready for this important celebration. There is an old saying, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." Here, at St. Leo, cleanliness is an important sign of hospitality that we show our guests and parishioners that they are always welcome at St. Leo and invited back. It also shows that we are good stewards of our gifts and resources and it shows respect and dignity for a good quality of human life that we all deserve. I received many complements about the cleanliness of our place and how this makes us stand out from other places. I think cleanliness is a way to evangelize because it makes people want to come and stay and come back to hear your message and to see what you have to offer. Thanks to all who work so hard to clean this place and help keep our place clean again, and again.

**A reflection about my time in El Paso, visiting immigrants on the border and participating in an interfaith prayer service:** The following is the ending of my homily that I preached in Spanish at our 6pm Saturday Mass last week. I didn't preach last Sunday because Bishop Binzer preached. The Gospel, last week, was about Jesus healing the deaf and mute man with the word Ephphata, "Be opened."

*I just returned from a conference in El Paso, Texas where many immigrants are being detained from entering our country and children have been torn from their families and living in cages and the immigrant is given no respect, dehumanized, and made a criminal to justify the injustice and inhumanity that they are receiving. There, a wall extends in both directions as far as the eye can see. It is a devastating wound on the border of our country, a barrier that condemns and punishes the just and divides and separates families. There, thank God, the Lord is opening the ears and mouth of the universal church of all faiths and denominations with the Diocese of El Paso to hear the pleas of the immigrants, to live in solidarity with their plight, to find their voice to speak the Gospel truth to our lawmakers and government leaders and to be the voice of the immigrant whose every right is being denied them and to be the voice of God's love to care for them and protect them.*

*There, I am hearing the cries of the immigrants for help and their longing to be treated with the dignity and respect that every human being deserves despite their circumstances in life. There, I am hearing God asking for our voices to pronounce in the name of the Lord, "Be Open. Be Open. Be Open." To the cages and camps – Be Open! To the wall – Be Open to those who have a right to be here and a right to flee their country from persecution and extortion. Be Open – to the lawmakers and government leaders to immigration reform and a pathway to citizenship. I am asking you to pray that we all can be open to being voices of positive change for our brothers and sisters on the border and transforming their lives in the completeness and hope of God's loving presence in their midst. Be Open. Be Open. Be Open. Now and forever, Be Open!*