

March 1, 2020

From Fr. Jim . . .

**Lenten Reflection:** I have a piece of art by a Mexican artist who makes sculptures out of clay and then paints them with bright colors – yellow, orange, blue, red, purple, green. All of the sculptures he calls “The Tree of Life.” Many of these sculptures have secular themes and many have biblical themes that image the Tree of life in the Garden of Eden and tell the story of creation and salvation.

The piece that I have, as it keeps its shape of a tree, tells the story of Noah’s ark. In the midst of all the beautiful flowers, fruit and abundant life, animals are safely on the ark enjoying the life of salvation and there are animals climbing up the side of the ark to get into the boat of life and salvation. It’s as if the life in the Garden of Eden is being restored for all creatures and things are returning to the way they were at the beginning of creation.

Jesus suffered, died and rose for all of us that we might know the salvation of God and join with all creation in being restored to a fullness of life with God. We are in the boat of salvation. God wants and desires for us through Jesus and with their Spirit to live in union with the life of God now and forever.

The forty days of Lent can be like a retreat for the whole church where the people of God examine this reality and grow together more deeply in understanding and appreciating the life, love and salvation that God so generously shares with us. As we understand and accept this reality, Lent becomes a time when we strive to live more closely in union with what we believe and with the life we know God is giving us.

God has given us a promise that God will never push us out of the boat and that we always have a place in it no matter what. When we feel otherwise, more than likely, the attractions of the world and selfishness have lured us back into the troubled waters of sin and death or we are blinded to see the place that God has prepared for us or deaf to God’s call to take our rightful place.

Lent, then, is a wonderful opportunity for us to repent and to seek God’s forgiveness and mercy, to turn away from sin and remain as faithful to the Gospel as we possibly can. It is a time for us to walk with catechumens and candidates for full communion with the church and to examine our lives and our faith journey together with the Lenten Gospels. It is a time for prayer, fasting and giving alms (works of mercy and charity). We do all of this not to earn our place back onto the boat of salvation or to convince God to keep us on the boat but solely as a response to being saved and to being in union with the life of God. Quite frankly, this is what is expected of us as branches on the Tree of God’s Life. We pray, fast, forgive, and live in charity with one another because God has truly saved us from sin and death.

So, what do we want to do this Lent in order to celebrate our place on the Tree of God’s life? How will living with God’s forgiveness and mercy, prayer and the rituals of the church, fasting and giving alms help us to do this? The boat is sailing. Praise God that there is a place for us.

**The Light Is On for You:** “The Light Is On for You” is an initiative of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati to invite all Catholics, especially those Catholics who have not received this sacrament for a long time, to experience the love and mercy of God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Confession is a wonderful opportunity to turn away from our sinfulness and to experience the grace of reconciliation with God and with others in our lives. In the Archdiocese of Cincinnati every parish will be celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation by offering private confessions on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 from 7:00pm – 9:00pm. Every parish church will have their doors open for you.

**Parish Communal Reconciliation Service:** March 21, Saturday, 1pm at St. Leo there will be a Communal Reconciliation Service in Spanish. There will be five Spanish speaking priests, including me, to

hear confessions. We will begin with a prayer service that includes a Liturgy of the Word and preaching and/ or teaching on the Sacrament of Reconciliation, examination of conscience

and act of contrition. Then the priests will hear individual confessions. English speakers are more than welcome. The priests are bilingual.



Our Lady of the Rosary Church, 17 Farragut Road, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45218 is hosting a parish reconciliation service, Saturday, March 7, at 10am in Spanish. I will be one of the confessors there and St. Susanna Parish is having a parish reconciliation service in Spanish on Saturday, March 28 at 10am and I also will be there. Everyone is welcome at any of the three services.

**Fridays of Lent** there is the Way of the Cross at St. Leo in church, 7pm. Everyone, all languages, welcome.

**RCIA/RCIC: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and Children** has been in process for most of last year and ongoing to the present. There are thirteen adult catechumens who are seeking Baptism and full initiation into the Catholic Faith at the Easter Vigil this year and two candidates who have been baptized in other faiths and are seeking full communion with the Catholic faith also at the Easter Vigil. This Sunday (today) at our 10:30 am Mass there is the Rite of Sending to the Archbishop for the Rite of Election – being chosen by God through the Church to celebrate the Easter Sacraments at 7:30pm Sunday, March 3, 2020 (today). There will be other rituals that we will celebrate with them at our 10:30 Mass throughout Lent as they prepare to receive these Sacraments. We journey together with them as we prepare to renew our baptismal promises at Easter.

Many thanks to our St. Leo Food Pantry Monthly Overhead Sponsor for March: Generous Anonymous Donor

#### Youth Program

**Teen Bible Study:** Feb. 23, Mar. 1

**March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31: Homework Help/Tutoring Program,** 4:30-7:00pm, Centennial Hall

**First Communion Class:** Mar. 8, 29, April 5<sup>th</sup> Rehearsal, **First Communion:** Sunday April 19, 2020

We are looking for a secretary/clerk for the office to begin as soon as possible. Hours are 2 or 3 days a week, 9am-3pm, answering phones and working on office projects involving computer/typing and some bookkeeping. Since the hours will be less than 20 per week, the position does not include benefits. It is an opportunity to be involved directly in the mission of St. Leo’s. If you or anyone you know is interested, please send information to [stleocinti@aol.com](mailto:stleocinti@aol.com) or call Stephanie at 921-1044x20.

**St. Leo Food Pantry will be CLOSED for inclement weather** when Cincinnati Public Schools are closed.

**Health Day at St. Leo’s,** Sponsored by Su Casa Hispanic Center, **Thursday, March 5, 2020, 11:00 am to 3:00 pm, All services are free and open to the public.** UC Health Mammography Mobile screening services for insured women age 40 and up. To register, call 513-672-3731. The Healthcare Connection will assist individuals and families in signing up for the health insurance that is right for them, whether it be Medicaid or private plan. Breastfeeding consultation. Free produce and P&G Cleaning Products and much more.