

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS . . .



On the night before Jesus will be crucified, he tells his disciples, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Instead, he urges his disciples to have faith in him and faith in God. It appears as if Jesus wants to prepare his disciples for what is to come and the physical separation that will occur between them which he knows will trouble their hearts. Jesus assures them that he is preparing a place for them and that he will come back again and take them to himself so that where he is, they also will be. They will be one with the Father, Son and Spirit.

I believe that after the Lord's crucifixion disciples' hearts were truly troubled and when they saw the risen Lord and realized that they shared in the Lord's victory over sin and death, they began to understand better why Jesus said what he said to them on the night before he died. I believe that their faith soothed the trouble in their hearts. Knowing that they were to be one with God and not separated from God, that there were many rooms in God's kingdom and that Jesus was their way, truth and life, removed their fears, comforted their souls and gave them hope and strength, courage and newness of life to live the Gospel.

Whenever, I hear Jesus say, "Do not let your hearts be troubled," my first reaction is, "It is too late, Lord. I am already troubled!" Especially when we hear this Gospel proclaimed at a funeral and especially when people are demonstrating sometimes violently to go back to work and to go shopping with little regard and respect for what is healthy and safe. But whether we are already troubled or when trouble is wanting to overcome us, the Lord's response is always the same: "Remember, I am always with you. You are always with me. I am your way, truth and life." So, do not be afraid, be comforted, have faith and keep believing."

One of the greatest challenges of the earliest disciples of Jesus was the fact of the Lord's departure from their midst and their uncertainty as to when they would know the joy of his presence again. Thomas expresses his concern when he says, "Where are you going? How can we know the way?" and Phillip shows his concern when he asks, "Show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

To understand the support, comfort, faith, and presence that Jesus was offering them, the disciples had to learn the deeper meaning of Jesus' answer and their deeper call to faith.

The Father's dwelling is not so much a place as it is an experience of Jesus' presence and a relationship with Jesus, the Father and the Spirit, the Holy Trinity, that does not end. In this relationship of unending love, there is room for everyone and everything. All creation is one – one family, God's family. The way to this unity is Jesus. The Lord's followers were not alone or without direction, they were privileged to know the way, the truth, and the life. But the way that leads to union through, in and with God is not a path but a person. It is Jesus, himself, who communicates this to the disciples by revealing the truth and offering a share of his life.

We get to where Jesus is and we return to the Father by following the way, not along a road, or a map but by living as Jesus did, in loving relationship with God and with all God's people. We know Jesus, the way, the person: who he is, what he does, how he acts and loves, and we discover the truth, the divine, grace, the Trinity, eternal virtues, qualities, attitudes and life.

My friends, Jesus is with us today, just as he promised. Especially as we live through this time of pandemic, we are to know his presence and his person and live in union with him, his ways, and values. We are to feed one another, care for one another, work for mercy and justice, make sacrifices so others can live. We are to love others as God loves us. So, do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God. Jesus is our way, truth, and life. Now and forever.

~~ Fr. Jim



St. Leo's Prayer Wall

is a place where all, regardless of age, race or creed, are invited to sing God's praises, give Him thanks, and/or call upon His presence for help in times of need. The wall, a place of prayer for all peoples (much like the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem), captures the faces of the community, as well as peacemakers and saints who have inspired us through the ages.

The Wall is a place for staff and volunteers, youth groups, community meetings, and for individuals who pass through our parking lot on the way to work, school, etc., to pray, reflect and pause. We invite you to share in this special way of prayer, joy, and thanksgiving. Praise God! God cares about every need in your life and knows what you need even before you ask Him for help. Our St. Leo the Great parish community promises to remember you in our private prayer, as well as in our communal prayer, which is to say that we are praying for you all the time.



All prayer requests are held in strictest confidence. **Send your prayer request to:** Saint Leo the Great Church, 2573 Saint Leo Place, Cincinnati, OH 45225. You can also submit your prayer request online at: <http://saint-leo/WorksofMercy/PrayerWallMinistry.aspx>.