

Pastor's Ponderings . . .

Another Fourth of July is here. It is a great time to get together, in a truly American way, for a good old fashion summer cookout. I heard this phrase used recently to advertise an event but on this national holiday and as we celebrate our country's independence, we can describe our cookouts as "Grills Gone Wild!!"

I hope and pray that however you celebrate this great holiday, it will be a time of great fun, enjoyment and relaxation for you, your friends and your families. In addition to the Grill Master in your family working magic on all the hotdogs, hamburgers, BBQ chicken, ribs, corn on the cob, and "veggies" what other great American past times, events or games do you enjoy on this day in celebration of our country's freedom? Have fun. Have lots of fun.

Let's pray for our country, our government, all political leaders and all in the military who are working and fighting to preserve and protect the many freedoms upon which our country has been established. Let's pray for a deeper respect and appreciation for these freedoms and better stewardship of them.

Let's especially be thankful for the freedom of religion and the importance of faith in our lives. As Christians, we know that our true freedom rests in our relationship with our Lord and being united in God's unique way of loving and forgiving us and our ability to share this love and forgiveness with others. At this time when it seems that religious freedom is being challenged on many levels, let's pray for religious liberty for all people.

Let's pray for peace in our hearts, homes and throughout the world. Let's pray for the privilege to pass through and enter other countries freely and visit our country and other countries freely. Let's pray for an end to violence, hatred, prejudice, terrorism and anything that disrespects life and hinders the freedom that all life on all levels deserves. Let's pray for all those who are studying and preparing to become American citizens, especially our parishioners from St. Leo. Let's pray for all those who are in the

military services. Let us pray to always walk the higher road and to exercise charity that sets our hearts free.

Let us keep praying for a path to citizenship for immigrants and refugees who really want to be here, who love this country and who want to live here and raise a family here and who will contribute to, enjoy and respect the freedoms that only this country can provide. Let us pray for unity in diversity that immigrants and refugees can provide and who make-up the back bone of our country.

Once, we asked our parish staff, parishioners, volunteers and clients whom we serve in our food pantry to answer this question: "What meaning do the freedoms of our country have for you? For me, the freedoms that our country gives to us have to be connected and flow from the freedom to love and be loved by God. In this way we can reach the deepest and fullest possible level of freedom that each of our country's freedoms offers us. For example, with "freedom of speech" how much freer are we when we speak charitably or when we lovingly confront or when we tell the truth? Maybe another way to say it is, "How does telling the truth enhance our right to speak freely? Could speaking charitably always be included in one's freedom to speak? What difference does it make when we learn to confront lovingly?"

As we celebrate our country's independence, let us keep celebrating the Lord's freedom for us over sin and death. Now this is the epitome of freedom! Happy Fourth of July, everyone!

—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>.

