

## Pastor's Ponderings . . .

I hope and pray that your celebration of Easter so far, is joyful and glorious and alive with a renewed faith in the undying love of our Lord and Savior. I hope and pray that the remaining days of the Easter Season (a total of fifty days until the celebration of Pentecost) are full of new life and signs of resurrection for you, your families and all whom you meet. My prayer and blessing for you is also from our wonderful staff and parishioners who hold you in prayer constantly and who give your intentions and concerns an honored place in our prayer wall. I mean to say that we pray for you and think of you always and it gives us great pleasure to know that you are experiencing the joy of Christ, risen and alive in our midst, in this Easter time.

*The Old Becoming New Again* is the inherent theme in every Easter season. In this time of Easter, new life is abundant for us and we are singing God's praises with great Alleluias. We pray that you, too, can see how the Lord is making the old become new in your lives as you accept the Lord's invitation to share in the life of his resurrection.

Experiencing the joy of the risen Christ who makes the old become new or who renews the old is evident in ministry and in living as the Body of Christ for one another. Recently, Judie, our youth minister and I had the experience of accompanying a young couple and their two children to the Homeland Security Office. This family is from Guatemala and they traveled to the United States by various means of transportation. It took them fifteen days. They are fleeing from danger to their lives and are trying to apply for asylum. They have relatives in Cincinnati who attend St. Leo. Upon their arrival, they always needed to go to the local Homeland Security Office to receive an ankle bracelet to track their whereabouts and be assigned a case worker with whom they meet regularly until it is time to be deported. Because of the number of cases, this can be a long process and eventually they are able to work. They can also get a lawyer, during this time, and apply for asylum.

The waiting area in the Homeland Security building was not very big. The area continued to fill up with immigrants. There wasn't a line to wait in or a number system to know who was next but the immigrants themselves were most kind to each other and acknowledged the next person to be served. There was a lot of nervous energy in the room and the atmosphere was not as welcoming as it was imposing. No one was given instructions. Everyone had to wait until a worker came to a door and announced: "Who is next?"

The family that we accompanied had a one-year old son whose name is Hugo. Hugo had just discovered that his two little legs could move and if he moved them correctly, he could walk with the help of his mom or dad holding his hands. It did not matter how many people were in the room, Hugo, with a huge smile on his face equal

to the smiles on the faces of his mom and dad, giggled his way in around all the people while holding onto the hands of his father.

That same day, we had to go to another place to complete the process and there was another long wait, but the environment was more hospitable, welcoming and organized. There was ample seating and a larger waiting area with plenty of open space that allowed Hugo to make his first solo runs. He broke from his father's hands and quickly tiptoed his way and threw himself into his mother's arms. He turned around and made his way back to his dad only to throw himself into his dad's arms. I bet he did this about twenty to thirty times. Hugo's innocence, joy and freedom captivated all the other immigrants in the room and all of us who were waiting.

Hugo's joy was contagious. He united all of us in the room and, in his own way, he gave us all the risen Lord's Easter greeting to the fearful disciples who were locked up in a room: "Do not be afraid. Peace be with you." Our hearts and spirits were renewed. We were given hope that all life is to be treated with respect and dignity.

Later that day, I reflected that the Christ child was an immigrant who, with his parents shortly after he was born, fled for his life to Egypt. Did he, too, take his first steps and learn how to walk in a foreign land? Without a doubt, Jesus showed us how to surrender our lives to the Father and transcend and fulfill the law of the land with selfless, unconditional, everlasting love. "See, I will make all things new." Indeed!

"O God of new life; God of glory, who by raising your Son, Jesus from the dead have brought all people, creatures and creation together united by your love and grace. Through your Son's dying and rising, you have shown us that true life and the fullness of life are always given and received when others so generously and selflessly lay down their own lives that others may have life. In this Easter time, we, your people, who sing Alleluia give you praise and thanks for removing death's sting; for offering us salvation and giving us a share in the eternal glory that you have given to your Son. We thank you and bless you for the hope that we have of living with you forever and for the gift of eternal life. We thank you especially for the many wonderful examples of your gift of new life and the activities of saving grace that are so evident and present among your people day to day. Amen.

— 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>.

