

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS . . .

This month begins with the Season of Advent and ends with the Season of Christmas. This month is filled with expectation, waiting, awareness, preparation and celebration, fulfillment, presence (and presents) joy, gratitude, new life and birth. Yes, all these feelings are true and real this time of the year. Many things like immigration, jobs, economy, and foreign diplomacy need solutions and reform. Threats of a nuclear strike and terrorism still exist. Natural disasters have wreaked havoc on many parts of our country and the world and we remember and celebrate that Christ has been born in our midst, in human form and shape. Christ came and is coming with the gift of salvation. How can we become more aware of his arrival and prepare for his coming? How can we welcome him more into our lives, families, policies, politics, work and relationships and dealings with all others? How can we be more welcoming of our Savior into our hearts and homes? Will we not impede him and allow him to continue to save us?

What does it mean to prepare for Christ's coming into our lives? What does it mean to prepare for his return at the end of time? What does it mean to celebrate his presence in our hearts and to rejoice at his coming into the world in human form and shape? What does it mean to live in the hope of his coming again at the end of time? These are the questions that this great month of December brings to all Christians for their reflection, prayer, thanksgiving and celebration.

These are the questions that Christians try to answer with planning, inviting, shopping, decorating, feasting, celebrating, giving, forgiving, praying, welcoming, sharing, trusting and loving. These actions are strikingly different from similar actions in a secular world because they are guided by an awareness of the sacred and the holy and a deep faith and appreciation for the gift and birth of the savior and the divine into our lives. Christians engage in these actions with Christ at the center of their living and with a strong desire to share his presence with others and to gift one another as he has gifted each of us –

with his presence. There is no better gift, especially at Christmas.

With Mary, the Mother of God, aware of God's merciful love ever present in God who has made his dwelling in and among us, we sing:



My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for He has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the almighty has done great things for me and holy is his name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come! Come with your saving grace. Open our hearts to receive you and welcome you into every aspect of our lives now and always.



~ 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>.