

Pastor's Ponderings . . .

On behalf of the entire staff and parish of St. Leo the Great, I offer to you and yours a happy, prosperous and blessed New Year. We believe that each New Year is another opportunity for encountering and embracing the grace and holiness of the God who has come to us in human form and shape to liberate us and to set us free from all that enslaves us.

So, in the words of the prophet Isaiah and the words on the scroll that Jesus opened and proclaimed to the people in the temple, may this year be one in which all people know that Jesus has come "to bring glad tidings to the poor, to announce a year of favor from the Lord, recovery of sight to the blind and to proclaim liberty to captives." As we are thinking about making resolutions for the New Year, let us also resolve to become more aware of just how Jesus has come to build his kingdom in our lives and can we also resolve to help him build this kingdom in the lives of others and in the entire world?

At the beginning of each New Year, especially in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, the hearts of Catholic Christians turn to embracing and praying for the peace that only God can give. On the feast of Mary, the Mother of God, we have the option of using the Mass for Peace if we so choose. Isn't Mary the perfect model and example of one who has embraced the peace (Jesus Christ) that only God can give us? How can we be more open to welcoming Jesus into our lives and giving him a home in our hearts? In doing this, let us pray for the peace of his presence, of knowing his love for us, our love for him and our willingness to share his love in our homes, neighborhoods, and in a world still formed and shaped by wars and violence.

This month, we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany. The Magi from the East represent all the people of the entire world coming to pay homage to their king. At St. Leo's we give thanks for the graced privilege of being a place where nations from the world are welcomed and can give God praise together. Together, here, God has come to announce a year of favor and to proclaim liberty to captives and glad tidings to the poor. Here, together, we embrace the peace that only God can bring. Here, together, we celebrate our one faith and a New Year filled with the presence of our loving God and king.

With our prayer and worship and by living together the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, we hear and see the works of the Christ who is ever so present among us. Although we do these things to prepare for the second coming, we also do these things to celebrate Christmas every day of the year and to acknowledge



that our salvation has come, is come and will come again. We continue to build the kingdom that God has already started and handed onto us as we actively wait for God to come back and complete what Jesus started and what the church continues to do in His name.

We are so blessed by everyone (parishioner, partner, visitor) sharing their time, talent and treasure to build God's kingdom, to prepare the way for the Lord's return and to celebrate his presence among us now. God is always present in our love for one another. This new year, let us continue to hold each other in deep prayer and together let us pray for the peace that only God brings to our minds, hearts and homes as well as to the many troubles of our world. Let us work for peace and justice for all and for the respect and dignity that life on all levels deserves. Let us keep welcoming the infant in the womb, immigrants, refugees, and the elderly. May violence, harassment, bullying, and terrorism of every kind cease. It is a new year and it is time to once again announce a year of favor from the Lord and pray and work for the newness of God's reign to take deeper root in our lives, all people, nations and the world.

Thanks for building the kingdom of God. Thanks for all that you do to help make our joy complete and to help us live freely for the Lord and each other. Please come and celebrate with us anytime, won't you? Please know that you are always welcome and bring someone with you. Come all ye faithful, come. Come learn, celebrate and live the faith with us. With our lives, let us always sing, "Joy to the world, the Lord has come to save us!"

— 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>.