



St. Leo the Great Parish

June 2019 Newsletter

Pastor's Ponderings . . .

June 16, 1979 I was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. It has been forty years! I remember a part of the ordination ceremony like it was yesterday. Although I was hardly fully aware of what it all meant, it had significant importance for me then and it still does today. In preparation for Archbishop (Cardinal) Bernardin to impose his hands on me and anoint me with the sacred chrism, I and my classmates (there were nine of us) were invited to prostrate ourselves on the floor of the cathedral sanctuary while every one present (the cathedral was full) stood and sang the Litany of Saints. Reflecting on this in these forty years, the significance of this part of the ritual is becoming clearer to me.

It was a moment of surrender for me and an invitation to a way of life of learning how to lay down my life so that others can have life. It was an invitation to a life of service that I heard from the singing of the saints in heaven and the saints in the church pews. It was a loving gentle reminder that Jesus came "to serve and not to be served." I shivered and my whole body shook as I was stretched out, face down on the cathedral floor in front of the Archbishop and hundreds and hundreds of people. Secular feelings of humiliation, unworthiness, doubt, and great fear of the unknown and worry with unreadiness were being overcome with sacred feelings of humility, mercy, forgiveness, faith, hope, trust and an incredibly deep love and union for and with the God of love and the God of our salvation.

My former life and future life were passing before my eyes and being surrendered and exchanged one for the other. My life was changing truly as I was most familiar with it and little was I aware of how it would continue to change in ways beyond my imagining. After we stood up, I remember feeling lighter as if a heavy burden had been lifted from me. I couldn't name it clearly then, but I was still shaking and not from fear and worry. Now, I can say I was shaking gently from a strength from something healthy and new and from an excitement and joy of being loved, accepted and chosen in my unholiness for a most holy purpose.

Reliving this in my prayer, I am often reminded to let the Lord wash my feet so I can wash others' feet. I am asked to keep believing and trusting that there will never be surrendering without receiving, human weakness without divine grace and strength, falling without getting up again and again. I need the Lord to remind me to let him do the exalting and the raising up and to get out of God's way and let God be God and to forever rejoice and be glad because living the Paschal Mystery with the Lord and God's people will always lead to resurrection.

Therefore, I am so ever grateful to all of you. I celebrate you and give thanks to God for all of you. You show me every day that God is good all the time and all the time God is good. You feed me at your tables, and you invite me to humble service. You ask me to join your families at very important times in your life: birth, marriage, sickness, celebrations of life and celebrations of death. You are patient with me, and you forgive me, and you challenge me. You are the growing explanation and significance of my ordination experience. As I like to say jokingly, all of you have kept

me working for forty years!!! For many reasons, I am forever grateful to you. I wouldn't want it any other way and God has brought us all together to live as the Body of Christ and to preach his Gospel of forgiveness, mercy and unconditional love.



I am so grateful to my family for their love and support and their prayers and I am grateful for all my assignments in these forty years. My family, parishioners, pastors, friends, staffs and priests whom I have had the pleasure of ministering to and with, and who have also ministered to me, continue to show me that an abundance of God's life always comes from a surrender of self. I am particularly grateful to the good people of Corpus Christi and Saint Agnes in Dayton, for instilling in me a great love for city and inner-city ministry, for showing me how to welcome the stranger and how there is unity in diversity. My fifteen years in Dayton have prepared me well for my present assignment, at St. Leo the Great where the parish is growing and being rebuilt around immigrants from Guatemala, Central America and refugees from Burundi and the Congo, Africa. Thanks to everyone for being the joy of my priesthood and for giving me the joy of the Gospel. May the peace and love of the risen Lord be with you always. With much gratitude to God, you will remain in my heart, love and prayers.

— Fr. Jim



Congratulations

to Fr. Jim on his

40th Anniversary

of Ordination to the Priesthood

All are welcome to celebrate with Fr. Jim

at 10:30 am Mass

June 16, 2019.

Reception to follow in Centennial Hall