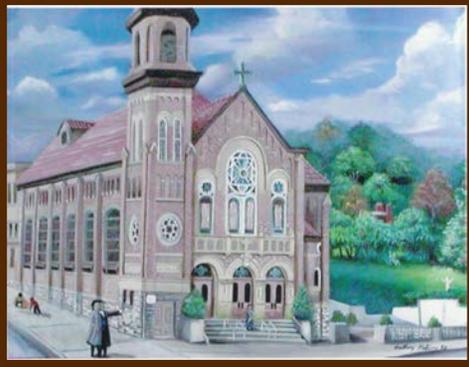


# Tour of St. Leo the Great Church

If you haven't been able to make a pilgrimage to St. Leo's during the Holy Year of mercy, here's an opportunity to experience part of it from where you are right now. Go slowly and try to visualize what is described and get a sense of those past and present who have served God in this place.

## First, a Little History...

St. Leo parish has been ministering in the Fairmount area for 130 years. It was established in the fall of 1886 by German immigrants and is being revitalized now by African and Central American immigrants and refugees.



A combination church/school/rectory was built in 1888. The present church was begun in 1904 and completed in 1911. The current rectory dates from 1899, and the St. Leo school building (now owned by the North Fairmount Community Council) was erected in 1927.

## The Tour Begins...

We start on the plaza in front of the church, at the corner of Baltimore Avenue and Saint Leo Place (formerly Trade Street). The bell tower rises 104 feet. In November of 1922, two new bells were added to the one already in the tower, the larger of the two being dedicated to St. Joseph.



The rose window high above the main entrance is of stained glass and wood frame. As you climb the center steps, you noticed the crosses etched in the windows of the doors.

## Coming into the Church...



You are now entering through the Holy Doors of Mercy. A *holy door or porta sancta has been used since the fifteenth century as a ritual expression of conversion. Pilgrims and penitents pass through it as a gesture of leaving the past behind and crossing the threshold from sin to grace, from slavery to freedom, and from darkness to light. Often these rituals are associated with prayer, pilgrimage, sacrifice, confession, and indulgences. But the door finds meaning only when the*

*believer associates the door with Christ. Jesus is the Door! In the words of Pope Francis, "There is only one way that opens wide the entrance into the life of*

*communion with God: this is Jesus, the one and absolute way to salvation. To him alone can the words of the Psalmist be applied in full truth: 'This is the door of the Lord where the just may enter' (Ps 118:20)."*

Push open the door to the church proper and you experience a sense of the openness and simplicity that mark the Romanesque-basilica style.



Standing just inside the church proper, you note:

- There are no pillars or columns to obstruct the view
- The arch effect is carried throughout the church (the painter who helped renovate the church for its centennial celebration in 1986 described the arches as symbolic of God reaching down and "hugging" the congregation)
- The ceiling of the church is reminiscent of the interior bottom of a ship: the church is often called the Barque or boat of Peter. And, the term "nave" used to designate the main body of a church, comes from the Latin term "naves" a ship.
- There are six stained glass windows on either side of the nave and four stained glass windows high in the sanctuary.

The Baptismal Font, in the rear of the church, reminds of us of our own Baptism, the Church's way of welcoming us to the community and embracing the grace of God. The Paschal candle stands nearby.

## Additions to the Old...

In the rear, to your left is the Bob Stocker room, named for the architect who, during his final days, designed the two newly built room additions and the new confession room. This room is used for education/meeting purposes.

On the wall of the Stocker room is the Chrism cabinet, and next to that is our book of prayer intentions. Feel free to write in your prayer intentions. Our St. Leo parish



community promises to remember you and your loved ones in our private prayer, as well as in our communal prayer, which is to say that we are praying for you all the time.



Just beyond the Stocker room on the left is found a recently refinished representation of the Pietà given to St. Leo's several decades. The Pietà statue recalls Good Friday when the dead Jesus was taken from the cross and placed in Mary's arms.

Our new reconciliation room is also found on the left side of the church. It allows for both face-to-face and anonymous confession.

To your right is the Noella room, named for a young woman whose deep faith carried her through a terminal illness and whose example inspired the entire parish. The room is used as a cry room/library/meeting space. The rest rooms are accessed through the Noella room.



Outside the Noella room is a painting by Father Jim Hasse, SJ that recalls the travelers on the road to Emmaus "recognizing Him in the breaking of the bread." Parishioners were used as models for the painting. Icons of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a

patron of our Guatemalan parishioners, and the flight into Egypt, symbolic of our refugees hang on either side of the painting.

Just beyond is a banner depicting Saint Teresa of Calcutta, given as a gift to St. Leo's.

### The Stained Glass Windows....

As you move down the center of the church, you will notice the detail of the windows:

On the left side:

- Angel with banner, representing St. Matthew
- Ox, representing St. Luke
- Dove, symbol of peace
- Sheaves of wheat
- Cherub
- Veronica's Veil, the woman who wiped Jesus' face

On the right side:

- Lion, representing St. Mark
- Eagle, representing St. John
- Book of Life, crown & cross
- Cluster of grapes
- Cherub
- Book of scriptures with tassels

Between the windows you will find the Stations of the Cross.

### The Sanctuary

The rounded apse, a part of a church that is shaped like a half circle, is in the sanctuary. The current crucifix is a gift from St. James Parish in White Oak. The apse is adorned with six columns, each with a cross at the top, and two primary columns, both adorned with 2 cherubs.

Moving forward you see stained glass windows and a painting in the center high in the sanctuary dome. The first window, upper left, focuses on devotion to Mary through the rosary. The second highlights Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. God the Father shows his approval from heaven as the Holy Spirit descends upon the Son. The portrait in the middle is of the church's patron, St. Leo the Great, who was responsible for strengthening the position and power of the papacy and who, according to legend, went out to meet Attila the Hun to persuade the Vandals not to destroy Rome. The painting, which was designed for the centennial celebration in 1986, depicts Jesus giving Leo the keys of authority, the keys he had given to Simon Peter. The third window depicts the Holy Family. The fourth illustrates Mary and her mother, St. Ann.



The altar and altar cloth, ambo, credence table, altar candlesticks have been on loan from Mount St. Mary Seminary since 2011, our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

If you turn around and look at the back of the church, you notice the choir loft and pipe organ. The colorful banners hanging from the choir loft are on permanent loan from St. Leo's Guatemalan community.

### The Present...

As you can see St. Leo's bears the marks of those who have gone before us and those who are here today. Though parishioners have changed the mission has remained the same through 130 years—to praise and serve God, to minister to God's people and to glorify God with our lives.

