

November 3, 2019

From Fr. Jim . . .



Memorial of St. Leo the Great: The memorial of St. Leo the Great, Pope and Doctor of the Church is Sunday, November 10. It has been our custom not only to claim this day as our parish feast day but also to remember the founding of this parish. Our parish was founded in the month of November in 1886, this is our 133rd year. We were founded by German immigrants and today, we like to say, that we are being renewed and reshaped still by immigrants but from other countries.

One of the many acts of God, with the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, is to welcome the stranger. Isn't it great that from the moment of its founding until the present, St. Leo has been a place where God has been welcoming the stranger and bringing forth new life? Let us give thanks for God's goodness to us through the years and celebrate the new life that we have in the Lord and in the faith that we are so blessed to share with each other.

Something about our Patron Saint: St. Leo was born in Rome in the fifth century. He died in 461. It is ironic that the life of our parish is centered in welcoming the stranger when as Pope, St. Leo spent much of his time keeping the stranger out of Rome! There was much turmoil during his time as pope. Invasions by barbarians were frequent and St. Leo was known for protecting Rome from being ravaged by these invasions. Once, St. Leo was even able to divert Attila the Hun from attacking Rome. He was also very good at defending the faith against numerous heresies and offering the new life of faith pastorally to others. Let us ask St. Leo to intercede to God for us with protection for the evils that still attack and plague our church, neighborhood and world. Let us ask him to intercede to God for us with growth, dependence and faithfulness to God's will and way of love.

Since the Memorial of St. Leo, the Great is on a Sunday this year, the memorial defers to the Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time. We will be using the prayers, and readings for the Sunday.

We also welcome our Children's choir who will be making another appearance on November 10 to help us pray and sing.

About the Gospel: Zacchaeus, short in stature, had to climb a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus. Jesus sees him and tells him to come down because salvation is coming to his house. It is so important for us, like Zacchaeus, to search for Jesus and to find him and see him in our lives and in our world. When we "seek, see and find" Jesus, salvation comes to all our houses – family, church, workplace, government and the world.

Last week, I was privileged to accompany a couple in the birthing process of their first child. The labor and the waiting with the families was long - about a day and a half. Everyone knew that Baby Isabelle was going to have a difficult birth and even if she survived the act of giving birth, she would not remain in this world very long. A physical condition determined that she would only have some hours to be cared for by her wonderful parents and meet her grandparents and aunts and uncles.

We continued to support the baby and her parents with a prayerful presence and all of us celebrated the rite of Baptism with her and took turns holding her and assuring her of the great love and faith that her parents modeled for her and showed her from the moment of conception, nine months and for about eight hours after she was born.

Through it all, Baby Isabelle, with physical signs of struggle and imperfection, appeared to me to be at peace. She was beautifully radiant with a peace and calm and confidence of knowing her Savior and not ever having to leave her Creator's embrace. The joy in her parents' faces and their acceptance of loving her with the love of God shared her peace and confidence. Our faith allowed all of us to seek, see, and find the Lord in their witness. Like the holy family of Mary, Jesus, and Joseph, this modern-day family, parents and their child, put their faith into action and loved their daughter through danger into life. Through them and, of course, Baby Isabelle, our faith, confidence and peace increases because surely, "today, salvation has come to this house."