

December 29, 2019

**From Fr. Jim . . .**

Please let me say thanks for all the ways you have gifted me and the pastoral staff this holy season with prayers, presents, cards, blessings and well wishes and yes, of course, bakery goods and Christmas cookies! Thank you so much.

Also I want to thank all of you for your generous giving of your time, talent and treasures to allow St. Leo to be and become the parish that God is calling us to be. God is truly uniting us in our diversity through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy and through the Eucharist. Our prayer is strong and beautiful when we are all together and participating as fully as we can. Thanks for your welcome of each other and the sharing of your faith. Thanks for supporting the work we do here and for considering St. Leo not just "my parish" but "our parish."

We are all members of God's family. We are brothers and sisters in the Lord. Today, on this Feast of the Holy Family, we celebrate the joy of God taking on our flesh and dwelling in us and how we are made aware of this incredible gift in and through our families. Our nature is and can be a holy one. As God shares in our nature we share God's holiness. As God used the Holy Family for the growth, development, and nurturing of God's merciful love, our Lord Jesus Christ, then all of our families are most holy because all of our families are places where God's mercy reigns – where mercy is received and given. I am so grateful for my own family and for God's family that we are truly becoming under the name of St. Leo. Thank you all so much for being God's holy family to your own families and to your church family.

I am so very grateful for the gift of partners and friends of St. Leo. Together we are accepting the call that it is not just your church or my church but our church together. It has been a blessing for St. Leo to be a beneficiary of the generosity of so many partners and friends. For our many physical needs and also for some of our spiritual needs, there is no way we could meet all of them without the help of others. I am also grateful for your willingness to share what we have been given in order to help others and to do our part in the partnerships. Our prayer ministry is a big help to others and many people count on our care for them in this way. During the Christmas Season, please keep all of our benefactors and partner parishes in your prayers in a special way. On each end of any partnership, giving and receiving are equally important for all participants. Again, thank you so much for understanding this and for your cooperation and collaboration in building the kingdom of God.

I especially thank Ivy Peppers and everyone who worked so hard to make our church so beautiful. I thank our maintenance men, Roger and Rick, for their hard work in keeping the church so clean.

It is easy to take our liturgical ministers for granted. But our prayer would be greatly diminished without the skills, prayer and faith of our servers, readers, communion distributors, and our music ministry. Thanks for taking your roles so seriously and for leading our prayer from week to week. May God continue to bless you in your ministries and service to your parish. Last but never least; I thank our wonderful parish leadership team (pastoral staff). St. Leo's is so blessed by their service, and their deep faith. They have all worked very hard during Advent and in these days leading up to the celebration of Christmas. In and through them, I continue to celebrate the Lord's coming to all of us in human form and shape. May the peace of God's love and care be with them always.

I and our great parish leadership team wish you God's every blessing for a peace-filled and Christ-filled New Year. You have our promise that you will remain in our prayers and we appreciate remaining in your prayers, too. May the Angel's announcement to the Shepherds be more of a reality for you and yours in 2020: "Peace on earth and good will to all!"

