

Pastor's Ponderings . . .

The idea for a St. Leo Cultural Fest was born a number of years ago when the Guatemalan Community at St. Leo the Great wanted to invite the entire parish to an outdoor concert of spiritual music in order to thank the parish for welcoming and accepting them to St. Leo. Different Latino groups from various parishes shared their music in praise of God and the crowd feasted on fruit and tacos.

It was great for our parish because it was a party for everyone hosted by the Guatemalan Community. The diversity of St. Leo Parish was well represented – Burundians, Guatemalans, African Americans and Americans – dancing, singing, sharing Mexican/Guatemalan cuisine and thanking God for bringing us all together.

This year the festival was July 5. It is mostly a festival of prayer: singing, dancing, preaching, praying and sharing good food. We take our faith to our parking lot and the sound of our praise and worship echoes throughout the neighborhood.

The theme of the Fest was: "We are all one in Christ."

Like the Good Samaritan and the victim in the gospel story, St. Leo Parish depends so much on the help of Good Samaritans. We must beg a lot for others to share their time, talent and treasure with us and we pray that people won't pass us by. Our Cultural Fest is an indication that people do not pass us by, parishioners and non-parishioners alike, and we give thanks for their generosity and for the healing, and growth that we receive.

It is also clear that St. Leo Parish is being called to be Good Samaritans to others. Certainly, some of our Burundian and Guatemalan parishioners have been treated horribly in the past. Some bear the beatings of an oppressive government and some have witnessed killings of their family members. St. Leo is a new home for them where they can have some of the freedoms that they have been denied and rightly deserve. They can share their faith and minister to others and care for others with the same care from God that they have received. They pray for us and they love us, and they love this country. They want so much to become law-

abiding citizens and contribute to the common good. The culture fest is a way for them to share

their goodness with us and to pray for growth in being one with God and each other. They continue to show us that they are Good Samaritans and good neighborhoods.



St. Leo has always been a beacon of light and hope in the North Fairmount neighborhood that has suffered from economic depression for years. As a Good Samaritan, we aid with rent and utility bills when we are able. We are actively involved with planning and development of our neighborhoods for affordable and diversity housing. Our food pantry serves between 700 to 800 people a month and over half of them are children or seniors, about 300 families. Our parish has come to new life by focusing on the spiritual and corporal works of mercy to which the Good Samaritan is a great example. We want to bless and love others as we have been blessed and loved. This year's culture Fest was a prayerful celebration of God's love for all of us and our love for God and neighbor.

It doesn't matter where someone is from, or what they look like or the color of their skin; we are all one in Christ Jesus. We are all one family. We are brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. We find our home in Him here at St. Leo with each other and for all others, serving the needs of all with the love of God. We are all one in Christ.

This is our blessing. This is our salvation. This is our joy and thanksgiving. This is our continual prayer for the church and the world.

— 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>.