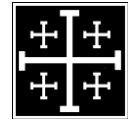


ST. LEO'S JOYFUL NOISE



SPRING 2024 EDITION

PASTOR'S CORNER

Beloved Friends, happy Easter! The Easter season avails us the opportunity to celebrate the new beginnings in our lives as a people when the April rain waters the grounds making it moist and fertile for the planting season. It is also a time when we, as a Community of Faith, bring people into the communal life of our Church through the Order of Christian Initiation of Adult (OCIA) process. What is the new beginning in your life since the celebration of Easter? Lately, I have received a lot of questions on how God guides us and whether there are any telltale signs of Him still guiding us today? The prevalent views among theologians and scripture scholars on how God has guided His people in the past and His promise to continue to guide us today will be the primary focus of this newsletter.

As a cradle Catholic, I was raised with the understanding that throughout history God, in His sovereignty, has always used everything at His disposal to guide His people “with” and “without” their conscious co-operation and promises to continue to do the same even to this present age. The scriptures are filled with vivid examples of God speaking directly to some historic figures like (a) Moses in the pillar of fire and cloud of smoke (Ex.13); (b) Jonah and Nathan; (c) the writing that appeared on King Belshazzar’s wall (Dan.5) and (d) indirectly through angels, dreams, visions and even casting lots. Understandably, the examples mentioned above only showcase how God has guided His people in times past and do not in any way tell us how He is going to guide us today or in the future. To assume that because God acted in a certain way in the past, we should expect or even demand that He acts in the same way today is a grave misnomer because it ignores the uniqueness of biblical narratives and their place in God’s overall plan for human salvation. The proper question we should be asking is not how God has guided His people in the past or how He can guide us today, rather, how He promises to guide us today with our conscious co-operation.

In the Scriptures, God promises to guide His people by sending them the gift of His Spirit (Ezk.36:26-27; Acts 2:33; Rom 8:5-7; Gal 4:6; Eph.2:18). In reading the Scriptures, God consciously guides us by speaking His Word directly to us while the Holy Spirit touches our hearts with the spoken Word to awaken in us a need to respond to God’s love. I would have loved to say that we

always listened attentively to the promptings of the Spirit from the inner recesses of our hearts inviting us to love God and our neighbor. Unfortunately, today many religious fanatics/extremists, for example, Fundamentalist Christians and Islamic Extremists, who falsely claimed that they are being guided by God, have used this pretext to commit all sorts of atrocities in the world. The problem with religious fanaticism is that they believe God is speaking to them, when as a matter of fact; they are projecting their own desires on God and drowning out His authentic voice. They fail to realize that every spiritual guidance must be evaluated for its consistency with the Scriptures.

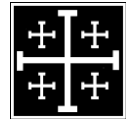
Furthermore, some scholars have argued that God still continues to guide us today through (a) various *circumstances* in our lives. For example, have you ever found yourself in a very terrible situation you really despised so much that you would not wish the situation on your worst enemy only to realize looking back later how God wove such a circumstance together to accomplish His will in your life? It happened to Paul and Silas in Philippi (Acts 16:16-34). (b) *Community*—By being a member of the community, God directs every spiritual guidance He gives us not primarily for our own sakes but for the sake others around us. (c) *Reason* – A proper discernment of God’s will can be greatly achieved when our reasoning is enlightened by Scriptures and done within the context of the Christian Community. (d) *Dreams and Visions* – whether we are sleeping or awake the Holy Spirit can still reveal God’s will to us through inspired visual images. For example, the visual image of the Divine Mercy to St. Faustina. (e) *Divine whispering* – God spoke to Elijah in the whispers of the wind (1 Kg 19:11-12) . Without discountenancing that the Spirit can still speak to us today, we need to listen attentively to the whispers of the Spirit so as not to misinterpret what we heard or mistake our own inner voices for the voice of God. (f) *Spiritual Direction* – In spiritual direction, the Holy Spirit guides us through various actions and directions in our lives that He wants us to take. Extra caution needs to be exercised so that we would not be so absorbed in ourselves that we forget why we are in doing the spiritual direction (God’s guidance) and for whose benefit it is (ministering to others).

Finally, irrespective of what you and your family are going through right now, do not forget that



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God has not abandoned you or your family. He promised to send the Holy Spirit on His people, whom His Son, Jesus suffered, died and rose from the dead on Easter Sunday morning to save. May the same God continue to bless, guide and protect you and your family always. Thanks so much for your prayers, support and thoughtfulness. Be assured of my continuous thoughts and prayers. Remain blessed. ~ Fr. Alfred U. Obiudu

NEW PARISHIONERS

St. Leo's is delighted to have Tod Chappuis, Leslie & Devin Paskewich, Charles Hall, Josh & Elizabeth Wright, Janet Opp, John Giaconia & Karen Synowiec, Victoria Sarap, Crystal Lemus & Alexander Zamora, Stacy Dennis, Lisa & Mike Stroud, Ann & Charles Sager, and Kathy & David White join the parish. Welcome to our parish family.

NEWLY BAPTIZED

Welcome to our newest members: Matthieu Dominic Anderson baptized on April 6th and Massimo Salvatore Martinez baptized on March 31st.

NEWLY WED

Congratulations to Brenda Jones and Clyde Pendleton united in marriage on April 20th.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to Danny & Linda Wright celebrating their 50th Wedding Anniversary on April 21st.

FIRST COMMUNICANTS

Please continue to pray for our First Communicants: Isabella Daniel, Aidan Haney, Nick Howard, Ella Hugas, Felix Hugas, Eric Hugas, Sofia Santos, and Laiden Slezak. They receive the Holy Eucharist on May 5th.

UPCOMING EVENTS

First Communion – May 5
Ordination of Deacon Dave Torlone – June 7
Deacon Dave Torlone's First Mass – June 9
4th Annual Car & Truck Show – September 21

FEATURED MINISTRY

Scouting

BSA Troop conducted several events in recent months, including a three-day, two-night winter camping weekend, merit badge university at Hagerstown Community College, a Court of Honor, event support, and are currently planning a Gettysburg weekend with visits to multiple museums and the battlefield. The Scouts continue to work on advancement and skills. Scouts BSA is open to 11- to 17-year-old males at St Leo.

Cub Scout Pack 23 recently completed a Blue and Gold Awards Banquet and the Pinewood Derby. Regular meetings are being held weekly, in the hall, for the Troop (ages 11-17) and the Pack (K-5th grade) on Wednesday evenings, starting at 6:30pm. Pack 23 is a family Pack, allowing both male and female participants.

The goal of Scouting is to help youth make ethical decisions and grow in a structured and outdoor setting. Focus includes youth leadership development, citizenship, and skill building. Scouting is outing!

We are always in need of adult volunteers to help provide these youth with a positive example. We are in need of a female adult to work with youth female Scouts at the Pack/Den level. A husband-and-wife team would also be welcome for this role. If anyone would like further information, please feel free to contact Mr. John Phillips at jrpsps@yahoo.com.

RCIA CANDIDATES

Congratulations to our RCIA Class of 2024 brought into the church at the Easter Vigil: Louis Lee, Sue Jones, Emily Knox, Misty Marlowe, Kent Nagy, Devin Paskewich, Brett Stuart, Johnny Stuart and Elizabeth Williams. So glad you joined the St Leo family.

NEWSLETTER TEAM

Got some scoop? The editors of **Joyful Noise** are Sheri Lincecum and Karen Bageant. Email us at joyfulnoise@stleo.com.