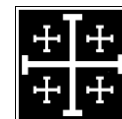


ST. LEO'S JOYFUL NOISE

WINTER 2024 EDITION



PASTOR'S CORNER

Happy New Year! My prayer is that this year will be a year of many blessings to all of us as we strive to serve God more faithfully this year than last year. Suppose someone was to ask you about the most widely used word in the entire human vocabulary; what would you say? Understandably, some might say the word is 'Love' (because of the sporadic and overrated use of the word, Love); others would opine that it is 'Faith' (because our lives would be meaningless without faith in God and others). As a person of Faith, what is your answer? Have any of these words, 'Favor', 'Gift', 'Blessing', and 'Kindness' ever crossed your mind? Is this not what the word, 'Grace' (taken from the Greek word, *charis*) is all about – an unmerited 'gift', 'blessing', 'favor', and 'kindness' from God given to us out of God's unconditional love for our sanctification and salvation? As we begin our journey this new year with this first edition of our newsletter, I would like to explore the topic of Divine Grace.

The topic of Divine Grace is of paramount importance in our world today because many times the popular culture erroneously populate into our consciousness that everything we have been able to accomplish in life is due in large part to our hard work and dedication; hence, leaving out the most essential element of our existence – the Grace of God. What could we have accomplished in our lives without the special, undeserving and unmeritorious grace of God? The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines Divine Grace as the free gift of God's love given to us through the power of the Holy Spirit out of God's love for us. By giving us the unmerited gift of His Grace God hopes that when we realize how much He 'has loved us' and 'continues to love us', even to the point of sending us His Only Begotten Son, we would thankfully accept His grace into our lives and use the same grace we have received to serve Him and help others. God 'gives', 'continues to give', and 'sustain' us in His grace because as weak creatures we are always in need of God's grace to heal us of our sins; to sustain, guide and mold us into the image that God wants us to be. Though many theologians have identified different types of Divine Graces, namely: (a) *Adopting Grace* (given by God becoming our spiritual Father and including us as members of his family, the Church);

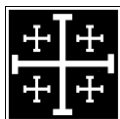
- (b) *Common Grace* (God's kindness to everyone irrespective of whether they acknowledge Him or not);
- (c) *Justifying Grace* (offered through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for us to be pardoned or justified);
- (d) *Glorifying Grace* (enables us to be fully conformed to the image of Christ in the New Creation);
- (e) *Miraculous Grace* (happens when God enables signs, wonders and miracles to accompany His people);
- (f) *Preached Grace* (the grace of preaching the gospel made possible by the Holy Spirit who releases the power to transform sinners into saints);
- (g) *Prevenient Grace* (enables us to prepare our hearts and minds to hear and receive the Word of God);
- (h) *Provisional Grace* (Through His Provisional Grace, God provides for all our needs);
- (i) *Sanctifying Grace* (God's presence in our souls that destroys Original Sin and reunites us to God);
- (j) *Saving Grace* (Grace God gives to sinners to influence their hearts and turn them to Christ); and
- (k) *Sustaining Grace* (Grace that is always available and adequate, and it is ours for the taking).

The Catholic Church recognizes two types of Grace:

(a) *Actual Grace* is that special help given by the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds, inspire and guide our wills to do good, put God first in our lives and avoid evil in particular situations. For example, those nudges that God uses to get our attention so that we might enter into a deeper relationship with him - a revelatory moment of God's presence during prayer, a timely phone call, or answer to a prayer, etc.

(b) *Sanctifying Grace*, which is the habitual experience of God's love (for example, reception of the Sacraments of the Church, especially the Eucharist) to help our soul to grow and increase in virtue, charity, avoid sin and live in a deeper communion with God.

Many people began last year with us but are no longer with us today. How is it you and I are still here and have not joined the ranks of those who have died? We are not better than those who have died. Do you not realize that we have been blessed and given a special privilege by God to live another second, minute, hour, day, week and month? What are your plans to making these seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks and months you have this year to count for something better and bigger than last year?



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I hope that our reflection in this newsletter has exposed you to the realization that our lives are meaningless without the grace of God and various ways God's grace works in our lives. What are your plans this new year to explore and utilize the Divine Grace in your life? I know that the year has just begun and we are looking forward into the new year with great excitement and optimism. In the midst of the craziness of our lives may we not forget to take out time to recognize and celebrate the grace of God in our lives each day.

We are nothing without Divine Grace and Blessings! May God continue to bless, guide and protect you and your family as we strive to serve Him more this year. Thanks so much for your prayers, support and thoughtfulness. Our parish family could not have done it thus far without your prayerful, thoughtful and financial support. Be assured of my continuous thoughts and prayers.

Remain blessed.~~ Fr. Alfred U. Obiudu

NEW PARISHIONERS

St. Leo's is delighted to have Elaine Larison, Stacy Dennis, Mike Stroud, and Eric and Nida Kase join the parish. Welcome to our parish family.

NEWLY BAPTIZED

Welcome to our newest member, Rudee Marshal Koscianski, baptized on December 2, 2023.

NEWLY WED

Congratulations to Donald Shaner and Amanda Giuliani, married on November 11, 2023.

FISH FRY IS BACK!

After taking a winter break our Fish Fry is back starting with the first Friday of Lent, February 16th. This will be offered every Friday through Lent. Fried haddock dinners are \$15, combo of fish and shrimp \$20. Mark your calendar and come out and support this monthly event.

FEATURED MINISTRY

Homeless Ministry

The Homeless Ministry, along with the Knights of Columbus and the KC Ladies Auxiliary, will be joining the Cradle Club under Mary's Refuge with a generous donation of \$1000. Mary's Refuge is a Pro-Life maternity home in Martinsburg. There are many ways to get involved in Mary's Refuge. Visit their website for more information at marysrefuge.com.

After the last Food Distribution, the pantry was bare! The pantry really needs the following:

- Shelf milk (found at Dollar Tree)
- All sorts of canned meats (i.e., small hams found at Walmart, Big Lots)
- Pasta Sauce/Pasta
- Potatoes
- Gravy
- Stock (Chicken, Beef, or Vegetable)
- Soup
- Peanut Butter/Jelly
- Tuna Pouches, Fruit Cups, Granola Bars (These are used in the Faith Feeding Freedom bags distributed monthly.)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Lenten Fish Fry – Feb 16, 23, March 1, 8, 15, 22

St Patrick's Day Party – March 17

Easter – March 31

First Communion – May 5

EMPTIES4CASH

St Leo received \$73.00 for the empty printer cartridges collected. If you own a printer and don't know what to do with the ink cartridge when you have to replace it, St Leo's will take them off your hands. *Empties4Cash* provides another easy source of income for the church.

NEWSLETTER TEAM

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