

# Saint Leo the Great Catholic Church

Very Reverend Justin L. Ward, S.T.L, Administrator

January 31, 2021 **The Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B**

## Mass Intentions

**St. Leo Church**  
 Sunday January 31 8AM  
 10AM *Pro Populo*  
**St. Francis Church**  
 1PM

Please call the Church Office to submit your Mass intentions.

## Lector Schedule

	8:00AM	10:00AM
January 31	Kay Courtney	Joyce Weiss
February 7	Marti Waters	Brian Sellers
February 14	Diane Brooker	Joe Veres

A lector schedule has been published and sent to the lectors.

## Meetings

Men's Group will meet at 6pm on Tuesday, February 2.

Ladies Auxiliary Group will meet at 6pm on Wednesday, February 3.

## Contribution Statements

End of year contribution letters were mailed out this week. If you have any questions, please contact the office.

## Religious Education Schedule

- <b>CCD</b> Grades K-12 Sundays at 9:00 AM	- <b>Ladies Auxiliary</b> First Wednesday 6:00 PM
- <b>Women's Bible Study</b> Second & Fourth Wed 6:00 PM*	- <b>ChristLife</b> <b>Hispanic Ministry</b> Wednesdays 3:00 PM*
- <b>Confirmation</b> Grades 7th-12th Sundays at 5:00 PM	* <i>Lent Only</i>
- <b>Men's Group</b> First Tuesday 6:00 PM	
- <b>Campus Ministry</b> Tuesdays at 6:00 PM	

## Ash Wednesday Masses

Ash Wednesday Masses will be on Wednesday, February 17 at 6:30 AM and 8 AM.

## Rededication of the Church

The rededication of the Church has been rescheduled for Friday, March 12 at 6 PM.

## Lenten Pilgrimage

The parish will be offering a Lenten pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Ave Maria Grotto. The group will depart the morning of March 6 and arrive back in Demopolis that evening. The cost for expenses will be \$20, which will include lunch. The facilities will be large and social distancing measures will be taken. Sign up before February 5th by contacting the church office or email [DRE@stleo.info](mailto:DRE@stleo.info).

Last Week's Offertory 1/24/2021

**St. Leo \$3,496.00**

**St. Francis \$505.00**

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## O Lord, Our Governor

Of all the duties of priestly ministry, it is the *munus regendi*—the duty to shepherd, based on Christ's role as King—that is most likely to offend modern sensibilities. "Father" has authority? "Father" is a *king*? Come on! That's outdated chauvinistic patriarchy. We've moved beyond that. This is the 21st century, after all.

The reason for this all-too-common reaction is that we inevitably associate kingship and authority with abuse and oppression. The modern mind, steeped in democratic individualism, is trained to believe that all kings must be bad kings, and the only noble thing to do in the face of authority is rebel and challenge it.

And yet the fact remains that Christ is repeatedly described as a king, and his Church is constantly referred to as a kingdom. Seek first the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is among you. Christ is a true king, and his Church, ruled by his vicar, is indeed a kingdom as well.

The priest, too, possesses authority as the head of the parish, participating in and picturing the headship of Christ as an extension of the Bishop's ministry. But this authority is not a weapon to be wielded, but rather a mandate to serve. Priestly kingship is not forcing others to submit to your needs and wants. It is the exact opposite—it is washing his flock's feet.

Put another way, kingship means embracing the lowliest and most thankless tasks, even when there are those at the ready to read the roster of things that you could or should have done better. For some, nothing will ever be enough. It means listening and understanding other feelings and concerns, even when they are predicated on gross misinformation or past hurtful experiences that you are only cursorily aware of. It means patiently teaching through example and loving discipline. It means leading by example, never asking of others something you are not willing to do or have not done already. In short, it means laying down your life for those entrusted by God to your care.

As a new priest, how grateful I am that so many of you strive to love God according to an authentically Catholic understanding of the priest's role in Church governance. When you do that, the Church functions as it is meant to, and the priest is freer to fulfill his other responsibilities with joy. The fact is that an ordained priest, in a sense, is a king. Again, not using authority like a club, but rather in humble service in imitation of Jesus Christ. The priest is called to use the mandate of his authority to shepherd our families, lovingly, patiently and sacrificially.

Every so often I have a truly gut-wrenching exchange with someone who inadvertently reveals that they do not yet fully grasp, or at least agree with, the mind of the Church when it comes to the role of the priest in the parish. I confess that these encounters can be painful for a pastor of souls who takes seriously his three-fold charge of simultaneously being priest, prophet, and king for a struggling community. Our own recent trials reveal that some have not always fully grasped the divine plan for Church governance and the whole body must reap the consequences.

Often times, these exchanges reveal that a great deal of misunderstanding and hastily made assumptions are at the root of a conflict—nearly always proving to have been able to be avoided with a simple increase in the virtue of humility on the part of all.

Sometimes I fail, but I know that it is always my goal to be firstly the servant of our parish family, even and especially amidst the pains that are essential for our healing. Not everyone agrees with everything. And that is okay. It need not be a crisis so long as we are all committed through the bonds of charity.

As the excitement for our renovated Church builds, I reflect on how blessed I am to be among a flock that has by God's grace made such tremendous progress over the last year. We all still have room for growth, but those who choose to have eyes to see cannot help but admit that "zeal for the Lord's house" is indeed consuming us yet again. And there is room for more. There is room for all of you. Thanks be to God.

**Fr. Ward**

Contact [office@stleo.info](mailto:office@stleo.info) to request to receive this bulletin via email each week.