

# Saint Leo the Great Catholic Church

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

February 14, 2021 **The Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B**

## 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 as reduced to \$15, however this should not be a barrier for someone who wishes to attend. The facilities will be large and social distancing measures will be taken. There are still some open slots available so please sign up if you are interested!

## Ash Wednesday Masses

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

## Lector Schedule

	8:00AM	10:00AM
February 14	Diane Brooker	Joe Veres
February 21	Jan McDonald	Casey Trusler
February 28	Kay Courtney	Petra Miranda
March 7	Marti Waters	Denise Duke

## Mass Intentions

### St. Leo Church

Sunday February 14	8AM	†Hugh Lloyd
	10AM	<i>Pro Populo</i>

### St. Francis Church

1PM

Please call the Church Office to submit your Mass intentions.

## Use of Incense in the Hall

As we have been celebrating Mass in the parish hall, I have not been using incense at the 10AM Mass in such small space. However, as we anticipate the return to the church, incense will again become part of the 10am principal Sunday liturgy. Some associate incense with only “special days” in the life of the Church, but the truth is that the Church has never made such a distinction. The principal Holy Mass which is offered each week in a parish is the same sacrifice on the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time as it is on Easter Sunday! The use of incense is therefore a solemn expression which has much more to do with celebrating the principal Eucharist on Sunday and Solemnities, than it does in what liturgical season is falls in.

So why do we use incense at Mass? Well, for a few reasons...

**It rises-** representing our prayers ascending to heaven, “Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice” (Ps. 141:2). (a traditional image is one that evokes the imagery of angels carrying our prayers to heaven.)

**It hides-** sacramentally concealing the mystery of what is taking place in the liturgy, thus contributing to a more sacred atmosphere. In the book of Leviticus we read, “He shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, and two handfuls of crushed sweet incense, and he shall bring it inside the curtain and put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the covenant, or he (the priest) will die” (Lev. 16:11-13).

**It reveals-** In the Old testament the “Glory Cloud” descending on the tent (tabernacle) of meeting that Moses would enter and pray in was a sign of God’s presence among his chosen people, “...and as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud” (Ex. 16:10).

**It repels-** We see incense used in the book of Tobit, as a means of driving away the demonic. Tobias remembered the words of Raphael, and he took the fish’s liver and heart out of the bag where he had them and put them on the embers of the incense. The odor of the fish so repelled the demon that he fled to the remotest parts of Egypt” (Tobit 8:2-3).

**It is pleasing to the smell-** it creates a sweet-smelling aroma. In ancient times the smell of the incense was a sign of the presence of the gods, persons of repute (in pagan cultures) who died would be incensed because in order to become like the gods one had to smell like the gods. In the Christian context, incense becomes a sign of Christ who became a pleasing offering to the Lord, we are called to also become a pleasing/aromatic offering to the Lord. In this sense, incense purifies/sanctifies/divinizes those it meets.

**It sacrifices-** As Christ offered his body on the cross offering every drop of his blood for the salvation of mankind, the incense is sacrificed for a sweet aroma to be given. Another, Christological connection it that not just *any* substance can be used in the making of incense but must only be the absolute purest substances.

**It heals/purifies-** Besides the sweet aroma, it has traditionally been associated with healing/purifying properties. Touched by the presence of God we experience the sweet-smelling healing power of God. In some Orthodox liturgies it is a common practice to first have the hands incensed before touching the Body and Blood of the Lord to purify the hands. In the Roman Rite, before the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the Altar and the gifts are incensed. In one sense the Altar is incensed in honor of the Altar’s representation of Christ, and the gifts/priest/people are incensed that they may be purified before the gifts become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. In the Book of Numbers, when the people sin before the Lord, “Moses said to Aaron, “Take your censer, put fire on it from the altar and lay incense on it, and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them” (Lev. 16:457).

**It prevents decay-** A sign of death and decay is the stench that follows. Death is the result of sin; we are called to follow the example of Christ who died yet did not experience decay/stench. We must die to ourselves daily and take on the aroma of Christ. The use of incense at funerals is out of honor to the person’s body present, but also to show that we are called to share in the power of Christ who has overcome the decaying power of death.

**It burns-** We are called to set the world ablaze with our Faith, as Jesus says, “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” (Lk. 12:49)

Perhaps these little insights will help us understand a little better the mystery that we enter into every time we celebrate the Holy Mass! Every symbol we use at Mass is meant to do just that!

- Fr. Ward

**2/7/21 St. Leo \$1,344.00**

**2/7/21 St. Francis \$2,530.00**