



ST. LEO THE GREAT
PARISH & SCHOOL

News & Views

75

Parish kicks off big year

Most of the names of the men and boys in the photo on the right are probably lost to antiquity. Their names probably do not appear in any modern directory of St. Leo the Great Parish.

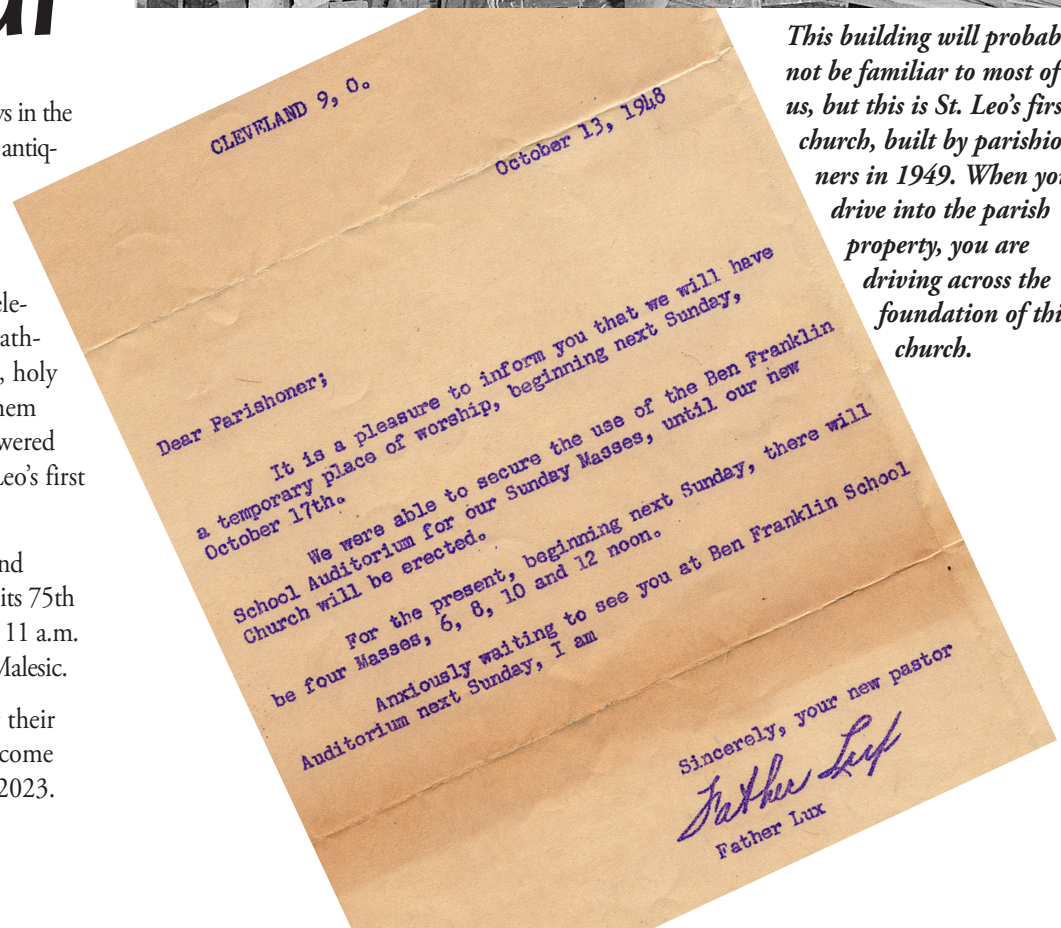
But they are the builders and we celebrate their memory each time we gather to pray and worship on Sundays, holy days and weekdays. We celebrate them because they and their families answered the call from Fr. Sylvester Lux, St. Leo's first pastor, to be community builders.

St. Leo Parish will remember them and their work as the community begins its 75th anniversary year October 11 with an 11 a.m. Mass celebrated by Bishop Edward Malesic.

And we will continue to remember their spirit among us during the year to come and the anniversary celebration in 2023.



This building will probably not be familiar to most of us, but this is St. Leo's first church, built by parishioners in 1949. When you drive into the parish property, you are driving across the foundation of this church.



Fr. Lowe, Fr. Vesely

May the angels lead you into Paradise

By John Sabol

During August and July, St. Leo the Great lost two priests who left an indelible mark on the parish—Fr. Russell Lowe, pastor from 2004-2013, and Fr. James Vesely, who lived at St. Leo during his retirement in 2005 until moving to Mt. Alverna Village.

Fr. Lowe, St. Leo's sixth pastor accomplished some major changes during his 10 years, including a partial renovation of the church sanctuary, where he oversaw the replacement of the carpeting with marble flooring. He also added stained glass windows acquired from the now-closed Blessed Sacrament Church on Fulton Road. These include four windows in the nave, two at the front of the church and one large round window in the right transept.

Fr. Lowe oversaw the renovation of the Marian shrine behind the Community Center and worked to get parish finances solvent, a task he accomplished before moving on as pastor of Our Lady of Angels.

In the school, Fr. Lowe was able to purchase new TVs and DVD players for all classrooms with donations from the school parents group PRIDE. Also purchased for the school were four Smart Boards, interactive educational equipment.

It's an old story but worth repeating that Fr. Lowe received the phone call assigning him to St. Leo while he was on the golf course. His passion outside of parish work was golf, a topic that frequently arose during his homilies.

Fr. Lowe was an avid reader of histories and biographies, especially books about ancient Rome and US history from the post-Civil War period through the 1960s.

Ordained in 1992, Fr. Lowe's first assignment was parochial vicar at St. Charles Borromeo, moving on as parochial vicar to St. Albert



Fr. Russell Lowe

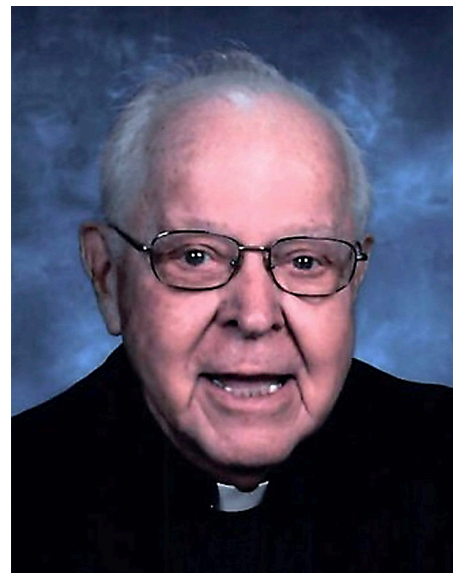
the Great, St. John Vianney and St. Thomas More before his St. Leo assignment. In 2007, he took on the additional pastorship of Corpus Christi Parish on Pearl Road until the parish closed in 2009.

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St. Leo parishioners attending weekend Masses could always be assured of an uplifting experience if Fr. James Vesely was the celebrant. With a resonating, booming voice (and an often off-the-cuff sense of humor) he could be sure that he had their attention.

He was allegedly retired, but more than 60 years of experience gave him a sense of authority and a dash of humility that endeared him to many as he approached his liturgical responsibilities with avuncular gregariousness—an attitude St. Leo parishioners appreciated.

Fr. Vesely grew up in St. Michael Parish on Scranton Road and graduated from Holy Name High School on Broadway before the seminary and ordination in 1954. He served as an associate pastor at St. Clare, Ascension, St. John Nepomucene, St. Charles Borromeo, and Our Lady of Lourdes before being named as pastor



Fr. James Vesely

of St. Procop Parish, and eventually St. Thomas More, where he served until his 2005 retirement.

Fr. Vesely joked that Cleveland bishops must have looked at his Czech surname and assigned him to three out of the six Bohemian parishes in the diocese. "The only Czech I know is knedliky i zeli [dumplings and sauerkraut]," he joked.

His life as a parish priest was not without excitement. He once took a group of altar servers to Cedar Point. When it was time to leave, one boy was missing. After a search of the amusement park, the boy could not be found. Finally, one of the men had to leave, and to his surprise, he found the boy two miles from the park, walking home. He thought he had missed the bus, and this was the only way he would get home that night.

Besides the Litany of Thanksgiving, which Fr. Vesely led at almost every weekend Mass, he was known for singing a favorite of his, which was also sung at his funeral—Going Home. And, assuredly, Fr. Vesely has gone to his home with God.

The trip of a lifetime

Holy Land 'pilgrims' almost speechless

By Chris Rath

For a group of St. Leo parishioners and a few others, it was the trip of a lifetime as they explored sites and symbols of the lifetime of Jesus on earth in the historic Holy Land. The May trip left the St. Leo "pilgrims" awestruck but not speechless as they gathered their thoughts to share their impressions.

The pilgrimage began at the Church of the Annunciation, on the site where the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, and where remnants of her home can be seen next to the altar. The church also contains mosaics and sculptures from many countries honoring this event, including one from the United States made of recycled soda cans. A short walk away was the home of Joseph, where he and Mary lived during the childhood (silent) years of Jesus.

In Bethlehem the Church of the Nativity, where Jesus was born, is also the location for a cave that had held bones of infants thought to be the Holy Innocents martyred by Herod. This church is said to be the oldest church in

the world, and members of the group were able to touch the actual site where Jesus was born. Hundreds of oil lamps inside the church are suspended by chains, originally used to light the cavernous space. The nearby milk grotto, where Mary went to have some privacy to nurse baby Jesus, is lined with stones said to have been turned milk white because of this event. They are also said

to have healing properties, and women with fertility issues have had healings leading to the birth of their children.

The Church of the Visitation in the hill country of Ein Karem sets at the top of a 160-step climb, and in the Shepherd's Field in Bethlehem an enterprising 10-year-old boy dressed like a shepherd and carried a lamb.

The splendidly beautiful Mount of Beatitudes includes gardens and an outdoor setting for Mass under "young" (only a few hundred years old) trees, and nearby is the Church of All Nations, where Jesus taught the disciples the Lord's Prayer, and where He ascended to heaven.

Each time the pilgrims celebrated Mass (at the Church of the Beatitudes, Basilica of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem etc.), St. Leo Pastor Fr. Jim Schmitz would start the readings by saying "here in this place." "That would just take our breath away," said one member of the group

A boat ride on the Sea of Galilee was enhanced by the raising of the American flag and the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner, and a trip to the Jordan River included a surprise baptism, and the renewal of baptismal promises.

The pilgrims also visited Tiberias, which contains ruins of an ancient Roman arena and

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Holy Land trip a lifetime journey

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the place where St. Paul was brought for trial before he was sent to his execution in Rome.

With temperatures at 91 degrees the group visited the Dead Sea, lowest place on earth at 1300 feet below sea level. Some braver souls went into the water and mud, which are extremely salty. However, the minerals there are said to make the skin “soft as a baby and lasts for 21 showers afterwards.”

The climax on the second last day was a visit to the Via Dolorosa (Way of the Cross). Arising extra

early to avoid crowds the pilgrims walked the narrow, alley-like streets with closely packed shops along both sides. Going early in the morning before the shops opened, the group navigated the small space more easily praying at the stations along the way.

An olive tree in the Garden of Gethsemane is said to be two thousand years old, a mere

sapling when Jesus was there. At least three popes have planted trees there, and the Church is where the agony in the garden occurred, marked by a huge stone in front of the altar.

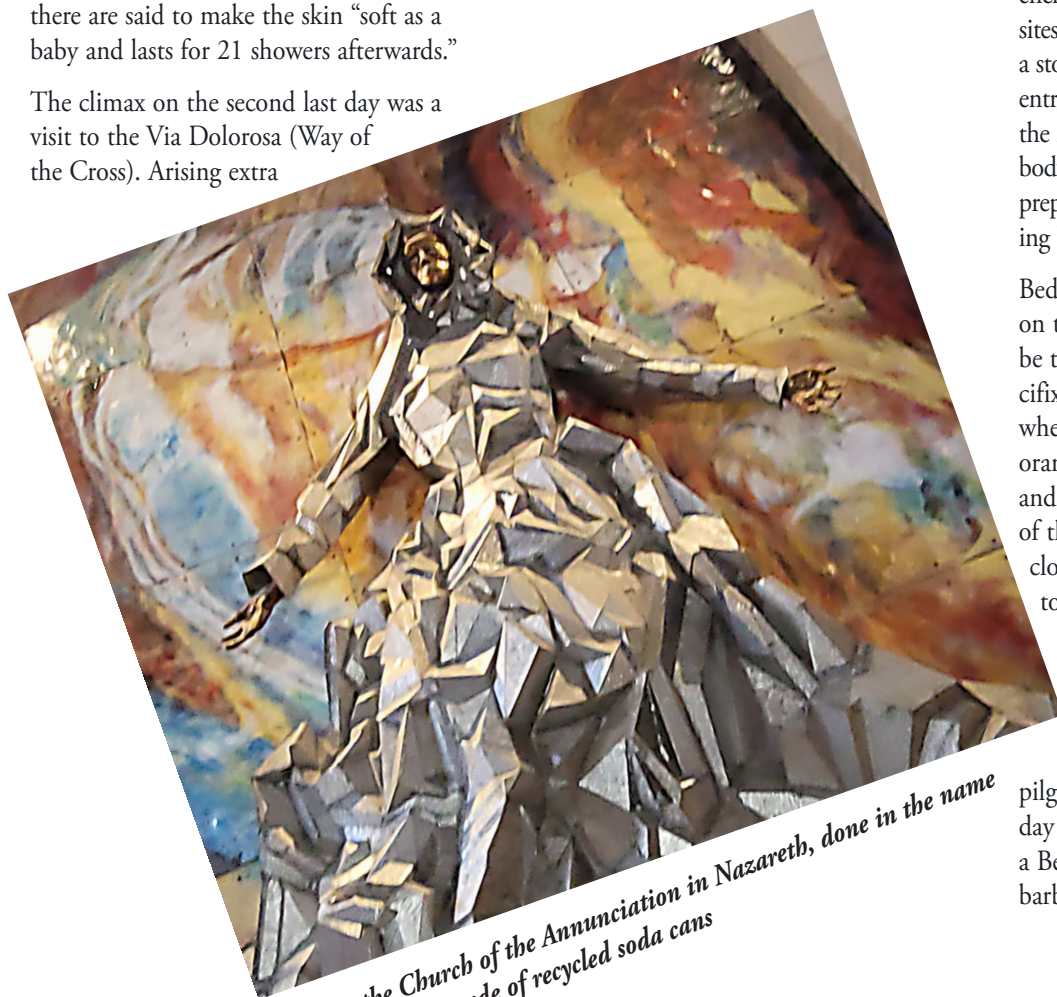
By far the high point was the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, built where Gospel accounts say Jesus was “buried in a garden near-by” the site of the crucifixion. This vast building encloses both sites, marked by a stone slab at the entrance, said to be the rock where Jesus’ body was placed for preparation and anointing before His burial.

Bedrock encased in glass on the lower level, is said to be the original mount of crucifixion. Under the actual spot where Jesus died, the rock is stained orange from His precious blood, and the tomb’s interior displays a remnant of the stone that closed off the tomb.

Following a visit to the Western Wall, the pilgrimage’s last day also featured a Bedouin style barbecue.



At the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, pilgrims venerate the stone.



Mary at the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth, done in the name of the USA and made of recycled soda cans



At the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, a pilgrim touches the stone.



At the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, several St. Leo pilgrims touch the slab where Jesus' body lay for anointing.



At the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the altar built over the site of the anointing stone.



At the Church of the Nativity, Allen Morinec kneels at the place of Jesus' birth.



Fr. Jim Schmitz, St. Leo pastor, baptizes a South African woman in the Jordan River.

'Amazing! Phenomenal! Inspiring! Adventure of a lifetime!'

Here are some of the reactions St. Leo pilgrims had on returning from their 10-day trip to the Holy Land May 17–26. In between were some of the most intense, spiritual, and fascinating experiences we could have imagined.

Fr. Jim Schmitz, St. Leo pastor, who led the group—"I guess the one word that I would use is 'memorable.' Perhaps too common of a word, but this experience will remain in my memory longer than other trips I have made, I am sure. My one regret is that I didn't do this sooner as it gives me a very different perspective that would have been helpful to me in my ministry and in my preaching. I wish I had done this years ago, sometime soon after ordination. The highlight for me was the last day, celebrating Mass on the very tomb of Jesus, the place where He was buried and where He rose from the dead. I can't think of a more important or sacred place on this earth, or even in the universe."

Joan Berigan—"It's awesome to think that I could walk on the same land as Jesus, to step into the Jordan River where He was baptized and to go on a boat ride in the Sea of Galilee where He went fishing, to visit the many churches and celebrate Mass on the place where He gave us the Beatitudes, and to renew our wedding vows where He worked His first miracle at the Wedding Feast of Cana. The number of highlights make it difficult to wrap my head around all of them. If I had to narrow the experience down to one word, it would have to be 'overwhelming.'"

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Here's what they said ...

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Deacon Pat Berigan—"It was the trip of a lifetime. The number of holy places we visited and celebrated was overwhelming. The entire group of pilgrims was wonderful to spend time with. The ultimate for me was the last day, from the Via Dolorosa to the slab where Jesus' body was prepared for burial, to the empty tomb. It was on that last day that I found myself more of a pilgrim and less of a tourist. It was an incredible experience."

Cora DeJelo—"The trip to the Holy Land was a lifelong dream, memorable to say the least. The Mass at the Chapel of Angels—where we crammed together before visiting the tomb where Jesus was laid and where He resurrected—was life-changing to actually stand where He rose from His tomb."

Michelle (Shelley) Aigner—"If I have to describe my experience in one word, it would be 'emotional.' To think that I walked where Christ walked is very emotional to me. One of my favorite experiences was when Fr. Jim baptized Cindy from South Africa when we were at the Jordan River. I left Israel thinking how sad it is that such a holy place could be in such turmoil."

Bob and Barb Ceccarelli—They were one of eight couples who had a chance to renew their marriage vows. The couples were arranged according to the number of years married, and the Ceccarellis were the longest with 49 years. Pat and Joan Berigan came in second with 47 years, and the others ranged all the way down to "newlyweds" with only 22 years. Fr. Jim presided over the touch-

ing ceremony, where the couples received official certificates, as if they had just been married (again).

Pete and Advia Terlop—"To know

all the stories we read in the Bible so often that we were actually 'in this place.' They added, "At the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where Jesus was crucified, buried and rose again, (there were) so many moments that took our breath away.

We started the day praying the Stations of the Cross on the Via Dolorosa—very moving as we walked along the road and sang 'Jesus, Remember Me' and 'Were You There (when they crucified my Lord).' Every time I say the Rosary I have a real visual and I think about the actual places where it all happened."

Chris Rath—"The land itself is so very different from anything here. I kept feeling like Dorothy telling Toto, 'We're not in Ohio anymore!' The landscape is very hilly,



At the church in Cana after eight couples renewed their marriage vows.

very dry, as most of it is desert. They irrigate many farms and orchards to produce olives, dates, mangoes, bananas, and other fruits that are grown for export. Since it was watermelon season, we didn't see farms for that, but we had watermelon at the buffet dinners every night.



Taking a break in the hotel in Nazareth.



Fr. Jim outside the Shepherd's Field entrance in Bethlehem.

It's back! Live and in-person!

St. Leo Festival returns October 21 and 22

Is the third time the charm?

Due to COVID concerns in 2020 and 21, the St. Leo parish Festival was whittled down to the main raffle, carry-out food orders, Honey Hut ice cream, and gift baskets. Despite the limitations, people turned out by the hundreds to take home favorite Festival foods like corned beef sandwiches, sausage sandwiches, and pork dinners.

The St. Leo Festival Committee decided unanimously to present a complete Festival for 2022. "People are looking forward to the way the Festival used to be," said one Committee member.

On hiatus for the past two years, the game room, kiddie games, and instant bingo will

be back along with freshly squeezed lemonade, popcorn, cotton candy and other carnival fare.

No need to rush home with your dinner since the dining area will be open with beverages, live music, and dessert. Look for new additions to the menu like empanadas and fully loaded "Polish boys." Of course, there will be gift baskets, Honey Hut ice cream, and the main raffle. Speaking of raffle tickets, you still have time to get your tickets in for the \$5,000 main raffle.

When asked about the Festival, Fr. Jim Schmitz, St. Leo pastor, said, "I am so excited for the return of our FULL fall

festival this year! I always enjoy seeing the people of the parish—as well as visitors—come together to enjoy each other's company. And I am excited for everyone to see the new windows in our cafeteria—with air conditioning coming next year hopefully—as well as the new glass block windows on the north side of the gym with south side windows being installed next summer.

It's a good time to improve the looks and efficiency of our buildings, especially as we begin to celebrate the parish's 75th Anniversary. We look forward to Bishop Malesic's first visit with us on Sunday, October 9 at the 11 a.m. Mass. I am proud to show you off to him.

Thanks so much for your help in selling the raffle tickets, and please invite your neighbors and friends to join you for the festival."

We hope to see you on October 21 and 22.

Blessed events

September 14—Seniors Group Meeting

September 14—Respect Life, 1 p.m.

September 17-18—St. Vincent de Paul food collection at all the Masses

September 28—Seniors Group Meeting

October 1—Pet Blessing, 11:30 a.m.

October 5—Bereavement Sharing Group, 2 p.m.

October 7—Eucharistic Adoration, 9 a.m.—5 p.m.

October 9—75th Anniversary Year Mass with Bishop Malesic, 11 a.m.

October 12—Seniors Group Meeting

October 15-16—St. Vincent de Paul food collection at all the Masses

October 19—Respect Life, 1 p.m.

October 21—Parish Festival, 6–10 p.m.

October 22—Parish Festival, 5–10 p.m.

October 26—Seniors Group Meeting

November 1—All Saints Day, see Bulletin for Mass Schedule

November 2—Bereavement Sharing Group, 2 p.m.

November 4—Eucharistic Adoration, 9 a.m.—5 p.m.

November 6—Daylight Savings Time Ends

November 8—Election Day

November 9—Seniors Group Meeting

November 11—Veterans Day

November 12-13—St. Vincent de Paul food collection at all the Masses

November 16—Respect Life, 1 p.m.

November 23—Seniors Group Meeting

November 24—Thanksgiving Day Mass, 9 a.m.

St. Leo fun fact



Before the first frame church was built (see page one) St. Leo's Sunday Masses, including this early First Holy Communion Mass, were celebrated in the auditorium of Benjamin Franklin School on Spring Road. Needless to say, these Masses were not live-streamed.

St. Leo milestones

March–August 2022

Baptisms

Nellie Ferguson
Ava Berlekamp
Christopher Finnegan
Grace Kupchella
Brinley Woody
Lily Ann Piechowski
Keira Hruby

Funerals

Katherine Belle Canaly
William Rebello
Theresa Lucas
Joan Dregne
Johanna Kinder
Walter Pasela
Joseph Hadacek

Kathleen Kravetz
Suchocki
Pamela Harmon
Liz Hurko
Nenita Wilde
Nadine Skulina
Kathleen Haines
Alan Ballauer

Fr. James Vesely

Theresa Kowal
Norma Janiak
Wedding
Kay Rama & Anel Saaverdra
Confirmation
Francesca Castro

New Parishioners

Robert Bura
Timothy & Kathleen Gus
Ruth Dela Cerna
Jonathan Goodfellow
Michelle Meskill
Cheryl & Peter
DiGiacomantonio

Alexander Veltre
Gerald & Michelle Varsa
Ashlee Schirripa
Taylor Laski
Joseph Dylun
David & Patricia Ripley