

ST. LEO CHURCH

A Jesuit Parish

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April 12, 2011

Archbishop J. Peter Sartain
Archdiocese of Seattle
710 9th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Archbishop Sartain:

As the pastoral council of St. Leo Parish, we are writing to share with you our observations and concerns about the proposed implementation of the new liturgical translations, intended for use beginning in Advent of this year. Our comments reflect not only the views of the council members but also feedback that we received from fellow St. Leo parishioners through a parish-wide process of shared prayer, reflection, discussion and discernment.

We are very grateful to our pastor, Fr. Steve Lantry, and to the parish staff for offering us such a prayerful and thoughtful introduction to the new Roman Missal. We were given the opportunity to look carefully at the ways that we currently worship together and to consider the potential ramifications of these proposed changes, in a way that respects the sense and the voice of the faithful.

Our parish five-year plan, produced in 2008 through a similar parish-wide discernment process, reflects our shared values and goals, rooted in the Gospel as we know it and seek to live it. The first goal of that plan states: "St. Leo will build a more welcoming and inclusive community." The second adds, "St. Leo will celebrate and seek the transforming power of God's presence in our midst through word and sacrament." Our vision statement claims, "We seek to reduce all barriers in the celebration of the Liturgy." In praying the new translation at worship, we found that it produced some real barriers in our celebration. Parishioners called the language "distancing," "clunky," "cumbersome," and not reflective of our experience of ourselves as a worshipping and welcoming community.

St. Leo is a community with a deep appreciation for language, and for the power of language in prayer. It should be no surprise that proposed changes in our language of prayer should draw strong reactions. But strong reactions were not limited to the language itself. There are deep reservations about the theology reflected in the language of the new Missal, citing, for example from Eucharistic Prayer II, the idea of Christ's blood poured out "for many" instead of for all, as we have always understood. We also take exception with the process by which the changes are being imposed, with


parishioners calling this process “a step backward, away from Vatican II,” and citing a lack of transparency in the overall process.

Change is often seen as threatening, and even positive change can create pastoral harm when it is not done well. While we are grateful that our pastor and parish staff have made heroic efforts to prepare our community, we fear that these proposed changes are not necessarily positive ones, and may even pose a threat of pastoral harm to the St. Leo community and the wider church.

We thank you for allowing us to share our deeply felt concerns. We ask and encourage that you consider flexibility around the implementation of the new Roman Missal. We do not presume to speak for other parishes in the archdiocese; we recognize that our experience is our own, rooted in our communal tradition and history. But we are a part of the wider Church and we suspect that our sisters and brothers in other parishes may well benefit from a similar reflection process prior to implementing these liturgical changes. We look forward to your decision.

In peace,

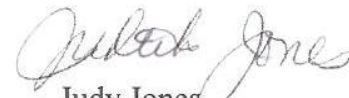
St. Leo Parish, Pastoral Council


Judy Adams


Mike Hoag

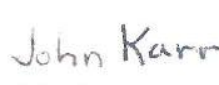

Robin McIlvaine


Lunette Birrenkott

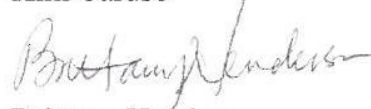

Judy Jones

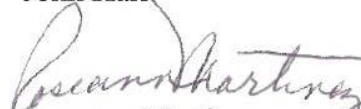

Martha Spieker

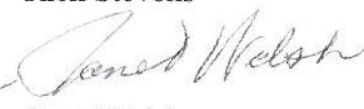

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Rich Stevens


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