

## *Church Safety and Security*



We live in a world of ever-increasing risks. No House of Worship or workplace is immune from threats of violence. Risks threaten Staff and Parishioner safety and can impact our ability to ensure and establish a safe and faith filled environment for our Parish Family.

Like “Jesus” we are shepherds of our Flock. Our responsibility is to keep our families safe. Many believe Church to be a safe haven. Every effort should be taken to keep our Church safe. A way to fulfill that mission is to educate our Families about two distinct topics: education on *Church Safety and Security* to raise awareness of potential security issues, and recognizing and responding to a person who is displaying suspicious behavior. Praying that no one will choose Saint Leo’s as a target is a delusion. There is a call to action, to educate and empower our Families and this needs to happen before an incident occurs. In short, to be proactive rather than reactive

Some threats are intentional acts, such as sabotage and violence. Others are caused by natural disasters or manmade accidents. No matter the threat, all Parishioners have a responsibility to help protect other members of the Parish Family as well as our facilities. As a loving and nurturing Parish, we have a responsibility to feed, guide and care for the flock. Caring is, in part, protecting and the reality of what that could mean is wrenching. Attacks at places of worship, while drawing understandably massive public attention, are exceptionally rare. But

that said, we could be a target and this is enough to prompt us as leaders in our Parish to be proactive.

Security and emergency preparedness are everyone's responsibility. Response efforts require a coordinated approach that can best be achieved through prevention, protection, response and recovery efforts. Preparedness plans require a coordinated effort among Staff, Parish Families and local emergency First Responders. As a way to educate our Families, we are going to publish various articles pertinent to Church safety, so that all our Families will know what to do in the event of an emergency.

Our goal as a welcoming Parish Family is to greet all Parishioners before and/or after the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass or any Church services. Law enforcement officials instruct us that face to face greetings are a strong deterrent to potential individuals seeking to do harm. As a result, we are making changes to all our Church Entrances and Exits. From this point on, we will utilize only two entrance/exit points into and out of the Church: the front doors and the parking lot elevator. All other entrances/exits are for emergency use only and will have signs indicating **emergency use only**. All other doors will be alarmed so as to alert people not to use them.

We will be expanding our Welcoming Ministry and will be soliciting Family volunteers to serve as Greeters prior to the start of Mass. As a Parish Family we would like to have families engaged in the practice of welcoming those who come here to worship.

We ask for your prayers and support so that this new Welcoming and Safety procedure will give all who worship with us the feeling of love, a welcoming embrace and a feeling of security.

Yours in Christ,

Reverend John T. Folchetti, Pastor

Mr. Joseph Manzi, Parish Administrator