

# *St. Leo The Great*

## ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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**Pastor: Rev. Charles T. Forget**

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*prepare the way...*

## AND SADNESS FLEE AWAY

These are the last words in our well-known Advent song "O Come Divine Messiah!" It's the last weekend - this Fourth Sunday of Advent - of our Advent Season, and as always Christmas follows closely on the heels of this last Sunday in the season of "waiting". There is no avoiding, I suppose, a sense of "let's get Advent out of the way to prepare for the 25th", but the wisdom of the Church in choosing its scriptures for this Sunday reminds us to continue to be ready, to make straight our paths to the Lord.

Aside from the four Sundays when the scriptures tell us to be ready and prepared for the coming of the Lord, this season of joyful preparedness can be a very difficult time for so many people: for those who are poor or marginalized; for those who have to face the holiday season alone with memories of better times and the loss of a loved one who is no longer with them; those who are experiencing the breakup of a relationship; those who are coping with an illness or poor health; those who are fearful, worried or faced with much anxiety. The holiday season can be the worst of times at a time that is supposed to be joyous, festive, celebratory and fun.

Now, it's not that I want to end this Advent season bulletin with a "downer" of an article, but I really feel, as I think we all do, for those who are sad, lonely, perplexed, vexed with the constant onslaught of too many things to do, but especially for those who are suffering from what can seem to be an immovable sense of sorrow, loss and relentless sadness at this time when everyone else can seem to have it all.

For me, if I should ever be sad, it is not mindless games that can shake me from my mood, but rather the work of the artist who can paint the scenes I see and feel inwardly, the poet who can speak of what I sense, the composer and the musician who can lead me to think that they know what it is to feel as I feel. I turn to that great poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow who wrote *Day Is Done*.

### DAY IS DONE

**The day is done, and the darkness  
Falls from the wings of night,  
As a feather is wafted downward  
From an eagle in his flight.  
I see the lights of the village  
Gleam through the rain and the mist,  
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me  
That my soul cannot resist:  
A feeling of sadness and longing,  
That is not akin to pain,  
And resembles sorrow only  
As the mist resembles the rain.  
Come, read to me some poem,  
Some simple and heartfelt lay,  
That shall soothe this restless feeling,  
And banish the thoughts of day.  
Not from the grand old masters,  
Not from the bards sublime,  
Whose distant footsteps echo  
Through the corridors of Time.**

**For, like strains of martial music,  
Their mighty thoughts suggest  
Life's endless toil and endeavor;  
And to-night I long for rest.  
Read from some humbler poet,  
Whose songs gushed from his heart,  
As showers from the clouds of summer,  
Or tears from the eyelids start;  
Who, through long days of labor,  
And nights devoid of ease,  
Still heard in his soul the music  
Of wonderful melodies.  
Such songs have power to quiet.  
The restless pulse of care,  
And come like the benediction  
That follows after prayer.  
Then read from the treasured volume  
The poem of thy choice,  
And lend to the rhyme of the poet  
The beauty of thy voice.  
And the night shall be filled with music  
And the cares, that infest the day,  
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.**

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

Ah, the music of words from the poets experience, perception, mind and pen. While sadness is real just as physical pain is real, they are not in and of themselves all powerful. We need to recognize them for what they are, temporary feelings and sensations that will pass in time. Here I am not talking about people who suffer from depression due to a chemical imbalance, as real and as awful as this can be, for these can sometimes be treated with therapy and medical treatment. But I am addressing those whose sadness comes from the helplessness of their life situations whose symptoms cannot be readily remedied with a pat on the back and a "there, there, now - everything's going to be alright". There is a need for those who are sad to face their pain and work through what they feel in order to one day be able to move on. When, for example, someone is suffering from the death of a life-partner in a husband, or wife, or in the death of a child, while grief is real it is something to journey through towards a sense of healing so that while the one we have lost and the loss we feel will never truly go away, time itself can bring about that healing with the aid, support and love of others who have been through the same things we have.

In the Christian context, suffering is not something to be avoided or swept under the carpet as if it were all in our minds: it is rather to be confronted. Sometimes in the face of great sorrow, sadness and grief, there is a tendency to think that if we just busy ourselves with other things and other thoughts and even other people, the sadness will go away and the pain will disappear. However, this is not true and avoidance is not healthy. If we bury things or deny them they still go somewhere and will no doubt surface again when our resistance is down. Christ tells us that in this life, in our human existence, we will experience sorrow and sadness, pain, suffering and grief, and that these will be real just as his suffering and death on the Cross were real. But Jesus also tells us that our "sorrow will be turned to joy"

as His was! Yet it is not “*pie in the sky when you die*” that Jesus addresses here, rather it is the truth that even in this life here on earth are we meant to experience the “abundant life” he spoke of. The abundant life is not a life of ease and mindless bliss that we might project into our thoughts of retirement, but it is living in and having the perspective and truth of what life really is all about, and having this truth touch the realities of the ups and downs of our lives.

As humans, unlike the animals, we live and are able to acknowledge past, present and future, and that is why we humans suffer far more than animals because much of our pain is what we are thinking and doing in the processes of our minds. If, for example, I experienced pain yesterday and am still feeling it today, I can then project into tomorrow that I will probably continue suffering this pain, which can intensify the pain all the more in this present moment, even if I won't actually be in pain tomorrow or the day after. Pain and sadness is not dispelled by putting on a happy face or merely thinking positive thoughts, nor is it simply crowded out by keeping ourselves busy, but our outlook does have a tremendous impact on what we may be feeling. Just as a nightmare can seem so terrifying as we are experiencing it and can even continue to disturb us somewhat once we have awoken from it, though it is not real except in our mind it can have a real power over us. We can console and reassure ourselves that while the dream was frightful, it was not real and we calm ourselves with that fact. So, too, do we do this with the real pain and sadness we might feel: we calm ourselves by trusting again in the promises of Christ, for Christ's promises are real and true and life-giving. He promised us that we would never be abandoned or alone and His abiding presence is proof of that. He promised us that He would never allow us to endure more than we can handle, and in this we know that His grace will take care of us - “God will never send you where His grace will not keep you”.

The real sadness of this world is found in those who do not know or will not allow the reality and presence of God and His plan for their lives now and always to penetrate their being. There is a new world coming and its truth is meant not only to touch but also colour our perception and understanding of this world that is, in fact, passing away. Love cannot eliminate pain but it certainly can soften it, and there is no other love that is like that of our God. We will only understand fully the redemptive character in pain and suffering when we are with the Lord forever in the fullness of the life that is to come, for then we shall say with the Suffi poet, Rumi,

***One day you will look back and laugh at yourself.  
You'll say, “I can't believe I was so asleep!  
How did I ever forget the truth?  
How ridiculous to believe that sadness and sickness  
Are anything other than bad dreams.”***

That “truth” we seek is personal and known in the love of Christ Jesus. Psalm 35:3 tells us that “the earth is filled with the glory of God.”

*(Blessed Advent! Fr. Charles)*

**MASS INTENTIONS – Dec 19 - 23, 2016**

Tue, Dec 20 8:30 a.m. Catherine Maureen Daly+  
Wed, Dec 21 8:30 a.m. Ernie Laton+  
John & Mary Fox+  
Thu, Dec 22 8:30 a.m. Alberto Ibanez+  
Fri, Dec 23 8:30 a.m. Henry Freve+  
Cala Dimitroff+

**CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR'S MASS SCHEDULE**

<b>Christmas Eve</b> <u>Sat, December 24<sup>th</sup></u> 5:00 p.m. 8:00 p.m.	<b>Christmas Day</b> <u>Sun, December 25<sup>th</sup></u> 9:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m.
<b>New Year's Eve Day</b> <u>Sat, December 31<sup>st</sup></u> 5:00 p.m.	<b>New Year's Day</b> <u>Sun, January 1<sup>st</sup></u> 9:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m.

*Please note that incense will be used at all the Masses.*

**2017 OFFERTORY ENVELOPES**

2017 offertory envelopes are available for pick up in the vestibule. Please do not use 2017 envelopes until the New Year. Please write your name and address on envelopes for the first few weeks of 2017 to confirm your contact information.

**VOCATION SEEDS**

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife... When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.” Are you willing to respond as Joseph did? If God is calling you to be a priest, deacon, brother or sister, **contact Fr. Chris Lemieux, Vocation Director, Archdiocese of Toronto at 416-968-0997 or email at vocations@archtoronto.org**

**ROSARY APOSTOLATE**

**The Rosary Apostolate in the Schools** is seeking volunteers (male or female) who have devotion to the Mother of God and who are willing to visit our elementary schools to pray the Rosary with the children once a month. Training will be provided. If you are interested please contact Judy at 905 655 0227.

**Fulton Sheen said...**


Every person is a precious mystery. An individual cannot be weighed by public opinion; he cannot be measured by his conditionings; he belongs to no one but himself, and no creature in all the world can penetrate his mystery except the God who made him. The dignity of every person is beyond our reckoning” (Lift Up Your Heart)




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