

# *St. Leo The Great*

## **ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

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# Peace on Earth

### **NEW YEAR'S MASS TIMES**

Parishioners are reminded that New Year's in Canada (which is the Feast day of Mary, the Holy Mother of God) is a Holy Day of Obligation, which means that it is a sin to knowingly miss Mass on this day. In Canada there are only two Holy Days of Obligation – Christmas and New Year's, the Feast of Mary, the Holy Mother of God.

**Tuesday December 31 at 5 pm.**

**Wednesday January 1 at 11 am.**

### **In Praise of the Imperfect: Lessons Learned from a Christmas Tree**



What can we learn from old Christmas trees and tacky ornaments? According to Fr. Michael Cummins, we can discover how God does not abandon the imperfect. Today he recounts the liberating truth that God's grace shines through our weakness.

I am from a family of four boys. Usually around this time of year when we were growing up two of us would be given the task of getting the family Christmas tree down from the attic. For us this was no small feat. The tree was set in a large and heavy cardboard box. Our main technique in regards to this task was shuffling the box to the top of the stairs, putting the front edge over the top step, lifting up the back of the box and then just letting it go! The box would noisily slide down and come to a solid thump against the wall at the bottom of the stairway. We would then wedge it out the doorway and into the hall. This annual rite of retrieval gives an adequate portrayal of how this poor tree was treated over the years!

It was the only tree I remember from my earliest Christmases and it remained a holiday fixture in my family's home up until my first couple of years in college. The tree consisted of a metal base, a three-piece wooden "trunk" with slots for the branches which varied in length. The branches were made of a twisted metal with artificial, plastic needles comprising the greenery.

It was never that beautiful of an artificial tree to begin with and over the years it became even less so. One year a bird flew into the house immediately followed by our barking dog. The bird landed in the tree; again, immediately followed by our barking dog! This brought the tree down to a crashing thud, scattering

ornaments everywhere! The tree always had a bend to it after that year. The ravages of Christmas wore on the tree. After so many years there were just massive and solid wads of silver tinsel that could not be removed nor hidden. Some branches gained bare spots as the plastic needles melted away after coming too close to the hot and large multi-colored Christmas lights. At some point a couple of branches were lost. (How do you misplace branches of a Christmas tree?) It also did not seemingly help the cause that our parents made my brothers and I place tacky and not very attractive ornaments - made by ourselves as young children - on the tree each year. All this being said; it was a wonder that we were able to assemble anything that even remotely resembled a Christmas tree each year.

Yet we did and not only that, each year it somehow became quite beautiful. After everything had been thrown on the tree – the new layer of tinsel, the ornaments, the lights, colored garlands – we would turn off the lights and stand back and gaze in wonder at the beauty of our tree! When we were young, my brothers and I would lie under this very imperfect tree, with our heads touching the base and look up and it was beautiful – the lights, the ornaments, the branches... It was like looking into a different world!

Now that I am older I have come to realize something that my parents understood as they insisted that we not toss out the tree in favor of a "newer" and "more improved model". Our tree was made beautiful not in spite of its imperfections but because of its imperfections. Somehow the tacky ornaments, the burnt branches, and the gobs of tinsel came together to make something quite beautiful and even magical each Christmas.

This is a part of the great mystery; beauty and truth and goodness are found not in spite of our imperfections nor apart from them but in the very midst of our imperfections and even because of our imperfections. This is an aspect of the mystery we await each Advent. In the coming of Christ we realize that God does not abandon the imperfect. We can often think that the contrary is the case. Only when we are perfect will we then win affection and care! Only when we are perfect will we achieve fulfillment! The message so often told us, "Be perfect, or at least pretend to be, and abandon the imperfect!" Yet, what a cold, lonely and ugly world that creates!

God does not abandon the imperfect and because of this Christians cannot abandon the imperfect and this includes even our very selves. We are imperfect and God loves us. God loves us and yet (at least in this world) we remain imperfect. "My grace is made manifest in weakness," says the Lord. In other words, "God's beauty shines forth!"

There is a freedom and a joy found here that the world just cannot match and also that the cultured despisers of Christianity fear (although they are loath to acknowledge it).

When we deny the Messiah and the need for one then we all must become messiahs unto ourselves. We must be perfect! What an unbearable weight to carry!

When I acknowledge the Messiah, when I await his coming and realize my need then I realize that the job of "messiah" has already been filled. I do not have to carry that weight! I do not have to pretend to be perfect! I can learn to be comfortable in my own skin and in who I am! I can gain an authenticity that the world cannot afford because it is an authenticity rooted in the very fact that I am imperfect and yet I am beloved of the Father!

As a priest of eighteen years now I am beginning to understand a little of the subversive nature of the sacrament of reconciliation. In a time that cries out, "Be perfect! Abandon, reject and distance yourself from the imperfect!" the Church quietly in reconciliation chapels and confessionals around the world provides a space (maybe for some the only space) where we can honestly acknowledge that we are not perfect, that we make mistakes - sometimes quite painful ones - and that we are loved by God even in our imperfections. One fruit of true reconciliation is an authenticity that the world just cannot give.

God does not abandon the imperfect and because of this, goodness, truth and beauty can be found not in spite of our imperfections but even in their very midst.

*Fr. Michael Cummins is a Word On Fire blog contributor and serves as the Vocation Director for the diocese and Chaplain to Notre Dame High School and the Catholic Student Center at the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga. Fr. Michael is a member of the Community of Sant'Egidio.*

**MASS INTENTIONS**

- Tues., Dec. 31, 2013 – 5:00 pm – New Year’s Eve Mass
- Wed., Jan. 1, 2014 – 11:00 am – New Year’s Day Mass
- Thurs., Jan. 2, 2014 – NO MASS
- Fri., Jan. 3, 2014 – NO MASS
- Sat., Jan. 4, 2014 – 5:00 pm – Frank Utrosa+ Req. by the Utrosa Family
- Sun., Jan. 5, 2014 – 9:00 am – Special Intentions for the deceased  
Req. by Alan & Margaret McIntyre
- Sun., Jan. 6, 2014 – 11:00 am – Victor Comeau+ Req. by Isabelle Long

Nine Words – **LOVE** – Why is it important that God *loves* us first?



Searching for Answers?  
**View** is coming soon -2014

**The Catholic**

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For more information or to sign up as a Leader call Patrick Sullivan at 905-655-3286 ext. 103

**Weekday Masses will be cancelled on the following dates after Christmas, New Year’s and the week following. This allows Father Charles to catch up on some rest and take some holidays before the busyness of mid-January to June begins. The Wednesday Holy Hours for three weeks during this time are also cancelled.**

**THERE WILL BE NO MASS & HOLY HOUR:**  
Thurs., Dec. 26, Fri., Dec. 27, 2013 &  
Thurs., Jan. 2 & Fri., Jan. 3, 2014  
4-days of holiday: Tues., Jan. 7, Wed., Jan. 8,  
Thurs., Jan. 9 & Fri., Jan. 10, 2014

**Offertory Envelopes 2014**

The 2014 offertory envelopes are available for pick up from the tables in the Parish Hall. The envelopes are arranged in numerical order. If you wish to keep your same envelope number for 2014, please take your box this weekend. When you start to use your envelopes in January 2014, you must print your full name and address on the front of each envelope for the month of January. This allows us to enter the correct information in the parish database. Failure to do this will result in your not receiving a tax receipt for 2014.

For parishioners who have not used offertory envelopes before, and wish to do so, please complete a parish registration form at the Welcome Table in the church vestibule and there you will receive your box of envelopes.

Parishioners who are currently on the Pre-Authorized Plan pick up your envelopes at the Welcome Table. Parishioners who wish to join the Pre-Authorized Plan can do so by completing the PAP pamphlet found in the Church vestibule and your PAP envelopes will be assigned to you at the Welcome Table.

**St. Leo’s Card Party Schedule for 2014  
(Please note night change – NOW FRIDAY NIGHTS)**

Doors open at 6:15 pm. Parking available (behind church, enter from Carson Ave.) \$10.00 per person – 15 Games – Start at 7:00 pm **SHARP**. Euchre Dates for 2014 (First Friday of Every Month). January 3, February 7, March 7, April 4, May 2, June 6, July 4, August 1, September 5, October 3, November 7 and December 5. For more info. contact Donna at (905) 620-0724 or Jeananne at (905) 579-6118







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