

Saint Leo the Great
(Pope and Doctor)
10 November



About Saint Leo

Saint Leo was born in Etruria, which covered the region that now comprises Tuscany and part of Umbria. He was elected pope in the year 440. He was a true shepherd and father of souls. He defended and taught the two-fold nature of Christ: human and divine, which was affirmed at the Council of Chalcedon. He was also known for his eloquent preaching and for the prayers he composed for the Roman Liturgy. He promoted uniformity with regard to liturgical practice and the correction of clerical abuses.

In addition to his liturgical work, he also repelled barbarian invasions or prevented their effects, by persuading Attila the Hun not to march on Rome in the year 452, and he also prevented the invading Vandals (Germanic invaders) from massacring the population of Rome in the year 455.

He died on 10 November 461.

What can we learn from Saint Leo's life?

Saint Leo seems to be one of those rare people who can combine faith with their work in the world. He was able to bring necessary reform to the Church and prevent a couple of major disasters happening to the city of Rome. Had Attila the Hun or those German Vandals proceeded with their program of events, things would have been very different for the city of Rome and indeed the Church!

Saint Leo was very much for uniformity of liturgical practice, which still seems to be a problem for the Church today. We can all take heed from Saint Leo and apply paragraph 24 of *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, which reminds the priest (and all of us) that we are servants of the liturgy, and we must not "add, remove, or change anything in the celebration of the Mass."

At the same time, Saint Leo was a peacemaker and just as he had unity in liturgical life, he ensured unity in his daily living. We too, must ensure that we are peacemakers and do our best to prevent major disasters from happening, so that our presence at the Eucharist is reflected once we have been dismissed from there.

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Collect

O God, who never allow the gates of hell to prevail against your Church, firmly founded on the apostolic rock, grant her, we pray, that through the intercession of Pope Saint Leo, she may stand firm in your truth and know the protection of lasting peace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel

Matthew 16:13-19

You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said 'the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.'

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Antiphon

Peter said to Jesus: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
And Jesus replied: You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.

Hymn for the Memorial of Saint Leo the Great

Shepherd of many,
Pope Leo, the Great,
Christ's Vicar on earth,
guarding the gate;
keeping invaders
from entering Rome,
allowing peace to
dwell in his home.

As you remind us,
we are one body
by our faith in Christ,
Who sets us free.
For God has chosen
us to be His heirs,
serving our neighbours
sharing their cares.

Christ is both human
and He is divine:
is what you taught them
chiding wrong signs.
For God has made us
as His work of art
and in His work here
we must take part.

Saint Leo you strove
to unify all,
the sheep of your flock
who answered your call.
May we serve Christ's Church
with faith in His Word,
so that His Gospel
on earth be heard.

Text: Chris deSilva and Alessio
Loiacono
Tune: Bunnesan

Other Music Suggestion

[O God, You Search Me](#) (Bernadette Farrell)

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