

Leo had a strong conviction for the importance of the Bishop of Rome and took a strong stance on leadership. He set the precedent. The church and her top leaders have to be a sign of Christ's presence in the world. Leo the great displayed endless dedication in his role as pope. He worked tirelessly as Peter's successor guiding his bishops as equals in the episcopacy and he had a faithful devotion to St. Peter to assist him. Known as one of the best administrative pope's of the ancient church, he tried to counteract rampant heresies such as Arianism, Pelagianism, Nestorianism, Manichaeism and others to empower us with true Christian beliefs and practices.

If we could summarize in one sentence the doctrines of the Catholic Church we could borrow Leo's words: "Our Redeemer's visible presence has passed into the sacraments." What Leo is imparting to us about the sacraments when he tells of His visible presence is profound and hardly expressible. Human remembrance is in the memory. Divine remembrance is not only in the past. It is yesterday, but also today and tomorrow. St. Leo also saw a summary of the entire Christian faith related to Mary: "the entirety of the faithful professes its belief in God the father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his only son, born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. By these beliefs, the machinations of all heretics are destroyed." Leo defines that the Lord's miraculous birth poses no threat to the reality of Jesus' human nature.

*(Excerpted from: doctorsofthecatholicchurch.com)

******The significance of Leo's pontificate lies in his assertion of the universal jurisdiction of the Roman Bishop, as expressed in his letters and still more in his 96 extant orations. This assertion is commonly referred to as the doctrine of Petrine supremacy. The church is built on Peter, Peter participates in everything which is Christ's; what other apostles had in common with him they have through him. What is true of Peter is true also of his successors.

***(Excerpted from: en.wikipedia.org)

Pope Saint Leo the Great

Feast Day April 11



***St. Peter and St. Paul above the serene St. Leo the Great
Who went forth to face Attila and his Huns.***

by Raphael, The Vatican Library

Pope St. Leo the Great

*Pope Saint Leo I was born circa 391 and died on November 10, 461. He was the Pope from September 29, 442 until his death. There are only two doctors of the church who were Popes. The first was Leo and the second was Gregory. They are both called “the great” because of the great struggles and heroic courage they showed in meeting the difficulties of their day, as well as in their virtues and in their charity that they showed to all as they lived out their faith.

Leo’s greatness is evident from his roles as peacemaker amidst terror, unifier amidst controversy, and pastoral concern amidst war, diseases, and famine. For two decades during his pontificate the powers of terrorists and hell attacked and plundered Rome and its citizens. Leo believed and trusted in God through the intercession of St. Peter, the Rock of the Church, and Jesus Christ. It was He who gave Peter and his successors that power over all mortals who would challenge his church on earth. In addition to writing, and exemplifying a unified document for the church, Leo acted in the role of peacemaker which was rare in his day. He met, nearly single-handedly, Attila the Hun, “the terror of the world” and showed him God’s own enormous and terrible power. Leo is called the doctor of the unity of the church.

St. Leo was born in Tuscany, near Rome. As a young man he assisted Africans, and then in 418, met St. Augustine who was then in the full flowering of his genius as Bishop of Hippo in Africa. In his writings Leo gives us the remedy that he possessed to help us meet the challenges of the power of evil, its temptations and its many enemies that confront us. He informs us that those who will clash with visible or invisible forces must arm themselves with 1) persistence and perseverance in prayer; 2) fasting; and 3) almsgiving. Through our weakness we sin but we will be pardoned for our sins and obtain forgiveness when we exercise the above three golden remedies.

Charities in almsgiving covers a multitude of sins; fasting is the one special mortification that the devil and evil is defenseless against; genuine prayer will unite us to God in love and empower us to keep our wills united with the holy will of God amidst repeated failures.

Due to the wars, terrorists and immense problems that Leo faced, he strongly advocated corporal and spiritual works of mercy toward others to show true Christianity. When in the year 452, Attila the Hun was advancing towards Rome, Leo in his papal robes, entered Attila’s camp and stood before the King of the Huns. The Pope threatened Attila with the power which was his from Peter, the Prince of the apostles, if he did not turn back and leave Italy unmolested. Attila yielded before Leo, the Pope, and left Rome. Asked by his servants why he left Rome, Attila responded that he was in great fear, for there had appeared in the air above the Pope’s head a figure in the dress of a priest, holding in his hand a drawn sword with which he made as if to kill him unless he consented to do as Leo asked. The figure was that of Peter!

Leo had a diversified background and held various offices in the church before he became pope. Manichaeism which held that there are two gods was the prevalent heresy and Leo attacked it vigorously in his sermons. He also spoke out against pagan festivals and called for the closing of their temples. Due to Leo’s influence, Rome became the “city of the Pope.” Leo is famous for his five-minute sermons. He emphasized almsgiving and other social aspects of Christian living. He built many churches, wrote many letters and expressed true values.