



# St. Leo The Great

## ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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

**Parish Secretary: Magda Nowak 905-655-3286 x 101**

### OFFICE HOURS:

Monday to Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Closed for Lunch from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m.

Friday Office Closed.

### DAILY MASS SCHEDULE:

Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 8:30 a.m.

Wednesday 7:00 p.m.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament – Friday 7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (followed by 8:30 a.m. Mass)

### SUNDAY MASS SCHEDULE:

Saturday 4:30 p.m. Youth Mass

Sunday 9:00 a.m. (with Children's Liturgy JK, SK, Grade 1 & 2) & 11:00 a.m.

### SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

Saturdays 3:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. or anytime by appointment.

### SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM:

Please download the Baptism Information Kit and Registration Form from the parish website, [www.stleothegreat.ca](http://www.stleothegreat.ca)

### SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE:

The Archdiocese of Toronto requires that you contact your parish priest at least one year in advance of the planned date of your wedding and that you participate in a marriage preparation course. Please call the Parish Office.

### PARISH REGISTRATION:

All families attending St. Leo's are requested to register with the parish.

Registration forms are available in the vestibule of the church.

### LOCAL HOSPITALS AND EMERGENCY PASTORAL VISITATION

If you or someone in your family is in the Oshawa, Whitby or Port Perry Hospitals and would like to have a priest (for serious reasons) visit the person who is sick for Anointing of the Sick, Last Rites, Confession or Communion, please note that there is a full-time Catholic Priest assigned to these three hospitals at various times of the week. Simply ask hospital staff to inquire as to whether *Father Pius Alejo* is present in the hospital (or when he will be). If Father Pius Alejo is not available and there is an emergency requiring a Catholic priest, please call St. Leo the Great Parish at 905-655-3286 and when prompted, press "8" and leave your message. Fr. Charles will receive your message (if he is available) and return your call. If there is no emergency but you would like to speak to Fr. Charles, please call the parish office and leave a message with the parish secretary at 905-655-3286 x 101.

I recently received a request that I write something about the topic of 'Despair' for the bulletin and immediately I thought of a Youtube video I had watched earlier this year by author Andrew Klavan who had written such well known books as *True Crime*, *The Great Good Thing* and *The Last Thing I Remember*. The Youtube video, first published on Oct. 22, 2017, was his conversion story and I ended up typing it out but didn't do anything with it.... Until now! Enjoy. FrC

#### ANDREW KLAVAN: "I MET MESSIAH".

"I'm Andrew Klavan.

I got the worst possible mark in every class in Hebrew school and my father used to say "They can't flunk you out of being Jewish", but, I came very close, I came very close. By the time I was Bar mitzvah'd I was so completely estranged from this entire tradition, I didn't want to do it at all – it meant nothing to me. I gave in, I had to, I was forced to be Bar mitzvah'd and say these things that I didn't believe. So, I ad libbed the Hebrew in my Bar mitzvah because, like I really barely learned the portion of the Torah I was supposed to read. I was making up Hebrew words to get through it. I would do anything I could to get through. And at that time when you had a bar Mitzvah, people just piled presents on you; savings bonds, money, thousands and thousands of dollars' worth of jewellery that I got from my bar Mitzvah and I put it all in this big leather box, which I also got from my bar Mitzvah. It was the first time I ever had any wealth that was my own. I was thirteen years old and I was very excited by it. And so I had this box and I would keep it in this little closet in my room and every now and again I would take it out and kind of stare at this – I never wore a lot of jewellery – but I would stare at this wealth that I had accumulated. But over the course of, let's call it the next six months, the joy of this wealth started to seep out of me. I began to feel that I had done a truly hypocritical thing. These are ill-gotten gains. I was bought-off. I let someone give me money to say what I did not believe. I kind of naturally had a sense that God was there but I hated the hypocrisy. I hated the fact that I'd been bullied into something; I hated the fact that I'd been bought-off.

And it started to dawn on me that it must have been very important to me that I had lied about God specifically. And one night, I waited until the entire house had gone to bed, and I took out this box full of thousands of dollars' worth of jewellery and I crept outside and I stuffed it in the garbage because I felt so bad about it. I remember I could feel the broken egg shells and the coffee grounds on my arm because I shoved it down deep and I was afraid someone might find it before they would throw the garbage away. And in the morning the garbage men came and they took the garbage and this jewellery and they threw it away. And that was meant to be the end of my religious life.

I loved stories. I wanted to be a writer for as long as I can remember. I loved tough guy stories because I didn't get along with my father. I needed a male role model and I turned to stories by Ernest Hemingway and the tough guy detective stories of Raymond Chandler and the Maltese Falcon by Dashiell Hammett, you know, these tough detectives. And I thought these are the kinds of men I want to be like. These are the guys who walk in a corrupt world but they carry this kind of integrity inside themselves. As I studied literature I realized that Jesus was at the centre of all of Western literature and I should find out about this. I went into my bedroom and I closed the door and I started to read the Gospel according to St. Luke. One of

the funny things about the Gospel is that people have this concept of gentle Jesus, meek and mild. If you can go into the Gospel and find a place where gentle Jesus, meek and mild, exists, I will pay you to see it because, Jesus is a hard man. He walks into these deadly situations, even when they are threatening him with death, he just says what he has to say and, that to me - especially in this world of lies - that to me is so important, such a great model for any man.

And my father liked to sabotage anything that I did, so like if he heard me writing, if he heard me typing, he would always break in on me and try to mess up my concentration. And so, one day while I'm reading this (Gospel) he walked in without knocking; he threw open the door and he caught me reading the Gospel according to St. Luke. Now, you have to think about this for a minute, right? I'm fifteen years old. He could have walked in on me with a girl – I was doing that kind of stuff, but he walked in on me reading the Gospel according to St. Luke, and he was furious! I mean, the rage came out of him in little bits because he was trying not to let it out, but it kept bubbling up out of him like hot tar, and he couldn't stop, he was cursing at me, he was using fowl language and he would keep bursting out. We went in to have dinner and we sat down and it kept coming out and coming out. And I'm trying to explain to him that I'm not reading it for religious purposes, I'm reading it for literary purposes. I just wanted to know what all these guys were writing about. And he pointed his finger at my nose and he said, "If you ever convert I will disown you; I'll disown you!"

There was only one ambition that I had: I wanted to be a novelist, that was what I wanted. I applied to the University of California at Berkley because it was so far away from my New York home. And I went into the first of my terrible, terrible depressions. I called them the bollah because they would appear like that throwing thing that would appear out of nowhere and wrap itself around my throat and choke me with this sorrow and I was torn up. I was so broken and crazy inside that I didn't understand how to communicate with other people, how to write stories. I knew I had a talent for writing stories but I couldn't write stories that people liked because my mind was so messed up and I was so full of rage and twistedness and it didn't appear – I wasn't like a crazy person – you looked at me and you would have thought, "Well, he seems like a really put-together guy", but I was not. I was really broken inside. And I didn't know I was going insane. I didn't realize I was going mad because I had that romance of the intellectual. An intellectual is miserable, an intellectual faces things, he tells the truth, he looks life in the eye. And life is meaningless and life is death, and because he sees these things he's a man of sorrow, and so I thought I was just a typical intellectual, you know. It's like that song, "It's hip to be miserable when you're young and intellectual". That's what I thought I was. But I was in so much pain I did begin crying out to God in this kind of sick, superstitious way. I remember trying all these kind of spiritual experiments to try and get clear.

I published a novel when I was about twenty-six and the book didn't sell, I couldn't publish it, and it just died. It was such an experience of grief I didn't even feel the grief, and I just started to unravel. And at the same time my wife had become pregnant. I'm trying to write and I'm picking up a little bit of money but we're slowly going broke and I'm slowly going crazy. I'm just going crazy. My books became unreadable. My writing,

I'd always prided myself on these clean, clear American prose and suddenly I was writing these convoluted sentences that nobody could understand. I not only couldn't sell my books anymore, I couldn't even get an agent; I couldn't do anything, I was just frozen and so depressed.

One night I was in my bedroom and my wife was outside. Sometimes she would sleep on the couch so I could work in the bedroom because that's where my desk was. My little baby daughter was in her nursery. I was drinking, not heavily, but I was drinking a Scotch and smoking cigarettes and I was thinking about killing myself. I had had suicidal thoughts before but this was different; this was the real deal. I was sitting there thinking, "I don't know how to live! I do not know how to live!" And there was a radio playing a baseball game, the Metz game, and it was just playing in the background. I wasn't listening to it, I was just sitting and thinking about throwing myself off the roof, 'cause, I don't know, we lived on an eight, ten storey building and I was thinking, "I could just walk up there and everybody would be happier. My wife would be better off. My daughter would be better off. I don't know how to live!"

In the baseball game the Metz had a player that I just loved, named Gary Carter. And Gary Carter was a devout Christian. And whenever they would interview him after a game, you know, "How did it feel when you hit a home run?", he would say, "Oh, praise Jesus! Oh, Jesus, I'm so happy I hit that home run!" And I used to think, "Oh, Gary stop!" It went right up my spine; it was like someone had dropped a worm down my back, you know, and Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. And after the game, I'm sitting there considering suicide, a drink in one hand and a cigarette in the other, and after the game, Carter won the game by beating out a single to First Base. In other words, he hit a ground ball and he ran so fast that the throw was late and he got to First Base before the throw, which was amazing because Carter's knees were gone, he was a catcher and he spent all of his time squatting, he had terrible knees. So after the game, the interviewer came up to him and said, "How could you run so fast when your knees were so bad?" And if Carter in that moment had said, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus", I wouldn't have heard it, I was in no way ready for that. I had pushed God completely out of my life. But he didn't. What he said was, "*Sometimes, you just have to play in pain.*" I heard that and I remember thinking, "Well, I can do that. I'm a tough guy, I've always been a tough guy and I can play in pain." And that was the answer: How do you live? Sometimes you've got to play in pain.


I think about that a lot these days that this Christian ball-player, who was clearly given these words by God to speak to me, that he didn't use God's name, that I wouldn't have heard God's name. That God, the King of the Universe, put himself out of the picture to reach me. That's a kind of humility that you don't see in a lot of people.

Anyway, that was the last time I ever thought of suicide. I was reading a book, a sea-adventure story, great book by Patrick O'Brien, a great author. At the end of this chapter, the character's name was Mattron, it said, "Mattron said a quick prayer and fell asleep." And I thought, "Well, if he can say a prayer - because he was a very intellectual character, I really loved him in this series of books and I really identified with his character, I thought, "If he can say a prayer, I can say a prayer." Here I was, my career was going great, I had married this woman I just adored. I had two children I just adored. I was so happy

that I had come through this period of pain and emotional breakdown and had changed everything in my life. And so I said a three-word prayer. I said, "*Thank you, God.*" And I went to sleep.

The next morning I woke up and everything had changed. I was suddenly more alive. I suddenly saw everything more clearly. I had been trying to see things clearly since I was a little boy. I remember as a child, thinking, "I can't get past my daydreams, I can't past my own thoughts and suddenly, there it was, there it was, everything was beautiful. I could see my wife's face, I could see the coffee in the cup. I went out into London, one of the most beautiful cities on the earth, and I could see the city and it was all clear, and I realized, it was that prayer; those three words, and it was kind of an intellectual experiment for me, but for God it was the life line that he needed, it was the connection he was looking for. What I had been looking for in my life as a writer, as an artist, I had been looking to being directly connected to life. You can't be directly connected to life until you're connected to God because god is the source of life, not just the source of life from the beginning from Creation, but the source of life right now, right this minute. And you can't know God - He's just too big for the mind - unless you know Him through Christ who is a man like you. I was connected to the world. I had life in abundance, that great promise, that great promise. *I want you to live and I want you to live abundantly*, God was saying to me.

You know, my father was afraid that by embracing Christ I would be leaving Judaism behind, but weirdly, I never really felt connected to my Judaism until I found Jesus. When I found Jesus, that was the first time I started to think, Oh, oh, that's what all that stuff in the bible meant; that's why there were those traditions, that's why there were those passages that never meant anything to me before. I always had a connection with my cultural Judaism. I always knew I was a Jew and was happy and at peace with that, but I never understood the religious aspects of it until Jesus came into my life. It's absolutely true. Until I was baptized, I don't think I was a Jew. And it has been a remarkable adventure. I don't even know how to communicate the way all of life makes sense now. It's the difference between sailing in absolute darkness on a stormy sea, and sailing in darkness on a stormy sea but you can see the North star so you know where you're going. And suddenly the storm doesn't bother you. Suddenly the darkness doesn't bother you because you know exactly where you're headed and you've got that star to lead you."



**Mass Intentions**  
FOR THE WEEK

**Tuesday, November 12<sup>th</sup>**  
8:30 a.m. † Elizabeth Kerr

**Wednesday, November 13<sup>th</sup>**  
7:00 p.m.

**Thursday, November 14<sup>th</sup>**  
8:30 a.m.

**Friday, November 15<sup>th</sup>**  
8:30 a.m. † Alexandra Quinn  
† Melanie Ranchigoda

**Saturday, November 16<sup>th</sup>**  
4:30 p.m. Intentions of Veronica Tuzi

**Sunday, November 17<sup>th</sup>**  
9:00 a.m. † John Mullaney  
11:00 a.m. † Alex Mitchell




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