

## **Homily For Tuesday of the 19th Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1**

### **St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - August 10, 2021**

#### **Feast of St. Lawrence, Deacon and Martyr**

**2 Corinthians 9:6-10** "Do not give reluctantly or under compulsion. God loves a cheerful giver."

**Psalm 112:1-9** "It is well with those who deal generously. Their righteousness endures forever."

**John 12:24-26** "Those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

### **Total Commitment**

#### **Introduction**

There is a very old joke, which sounds like it is for children but is really very adult in its meaning. A chicken is telling a pig how wonderful she is for her contributions to the bacon and eggs breakfast that people eat. The pig replies that for the chicken it is a contribution but, for a pig, it is a total commitment. The chicken gives from what it has. The pig has to die for my bacon and eggs.

The Second Vatican Council of the Church, during the 1960s, restored the original diaconate, the ordination of deacons to serve. I can attest that there is a certain joy in contributing to the work of the Church, serving alongside wonderful lay people and priests, in the days of Lawrence the Deacon, it was often a total commitment. Martyrdom was always a near and present possibility.

#### **The Deacon Martyr**

Even by the early 4th century, by the time of the Emperor Constantine, Lawrence's feast day was next in importance only to those of Saints Peter and Paul. There is no full account of his martyrdom, but much evidence from those times provide stories about different aspects of his passion. He was one of the seven deacons of the Church of Rome at that time. He always served at the masses celebrated by Pope Sixtus II. He was responsible for the administration of the goods of the Church and the responsibility of caring for the poor.

During the persecution of Emperor Valerian, the Pope and four deacons were martyred. When the Pope was arrested and about to be executed, Deacon Lawrence lamented to him that he should be with him. Pope Sixtus predicted that Lawrence would follow in three days (always a significant number). Just like Jesus had told Peter that he would be martyred, Pope Sixtus told Lawrence.

When he was arrested, they ordered him to surrender the treasures of the Church. Lawrence asked for two days time to gather them, which they granted. Lawrence gathered together the poor and the sick whom he had supported, bringing them to the judge and saying, "Here are the treasures of the Church!" This enraged those who were there and Lawrence was tortured. Legend tells us that, when he was placed on a glowing red hot gridiron, he joked with his executioners, "Now you may turn me over, my body is roasted enough on this side." I suppose that is why Lawrence is the patron saint, not only of deacons and of the poor, but also of comedians.

All of today's readings provide profound insights into what it means to serve God first, and to love those whom God loves, especially the poor.

### **Psalm**

Psalm 112 is about the righteous man who gives to those who need, who lends what he has. This psalm is not without context. Psalm 111, just before it, is about the righteousness of God, who is full of mercy and abounding in steadfast love. What we see in Psalm 112, then, is how the righteous person isn't just doing good to others but is imitating God.

### **Corinthians**

Paul is admonishing the Corinthians to charity. Many of them were wealthy or at least had enough for themselves, but they were resisting sharing even with other believers what they had. Paul tells them that if they sow the seed of generosity, they will receive much more in return from God who is generous. Not money and goods but a life rich in joy in this world and eternal life following it.

Paul uses an expression that I used to hear a lot when I was young. The Lord loves a cheerful giver. This meant that we were supposed to be happy to be helping others with what we give. It also means that we recognize how much God has given us.

People who are content with what they have are without the anxiety of losing what they have or of trying to gain what they don't have. Capitalism tells us to be always looking for more. But, if you believe you have enough, giving is easy.

## **John**

Jesus is so generous to us. The seed grain is analogy for himself. He will fall by death in the ground then be raised up. It is written into nature into our life, if we give of our generously and even sacrificially, God will bless that generosity.

In other passages, Jesus speaks of the fundamental choice between the world and God (Matthew 10:39; Mark 8:35–36). A person cannot cling to worldly things and still make God their top priority. The symbolism is that of a seed being planted, then growing to maturity. Those who seek to truly follow Christ have to—as it would seem to the world—lose everything. The end result, however, is exactly what the seed—the believer—was always intended for, which is something greater and more glorious.

It's important to understand the narrow context of Jesus' words here. The point is not that only those who live in deliberate poverty will be saved. Nor is it that a person must perform the right kind of actions in order to be with God in eternity. Rather, this is a reference to a person's state of mind. This is why Jesus uses the dichotomy of "love" and "hate," with respect to one's earthly life. Just as Jesus was not commanding people to objectively "hate" their family (Luke 14:26), He is not telling us to objectively "hate" our lives. Rather, He's saying that we ought to put 100% of our priority, emphasis, and effort into the will of God. Those who want to cling to the world, instead of Christ, demonstrate that they "love" the world too much to sincerely follow Him.

## Call To Action

Today might be a day to make a donation to the poor or to support our St. Vincent de Paul efforts locally. Let us remember to pray for those poor around the world. Let us ask God to help us be cheerful givers and to consider our commitment to the God who, in Jesus Christ, held nothing back from us, who made his commitment to us total.

## Key Scripture Passages

**Entrance Antiphon:** *Blessed Lawrence gave himself up for the treasure of the Church.*

**Collect:** *O God, grant that we may love what St. Lawrence loved and put into practice what he taught.*

**2 Corinthians:** *Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. By always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, "They scatter abroad, they give to the poor; their righteousness endures forever." God who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.*

**Psalms:** *Happy the merciful who give to those in need. It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice. For the righteous will never be moved. They will be remembered forever. They have distributed freely. They have given to the poor. Their righteousness endures forever. Their name is exalted in honour.*

**John:** *Jesus said to his disciples, "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain. But, if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*