

AUGUST 10, 2019
Feast of St. Lawrence, Deacon & Martyr
Jn. 12: 24-26

OUR CHALLENGE AND OUR MISSION

Today, we are celebrating the Feast of St. Lawrence, one of the seven deacons of Rome under Pope Sixtus II. During that time, Christians were persecuted by Roman Emperor Valerian.

According to the Christian tradition, Deacon Lawrence, knowing that the fervor of Valerians' hatred was extending to all Christians who owned property, began to give it all away. He distributed the money and treasures of the Church to the city's poor, believing the clear admonition of the Savior that they were blessed and especially loved by Him. Valerian heard the news and wanted the treasure to satisfy his unbridled lust for worldly power. So, he offered Deacon Lawrence a way out of sure death. If he would show him where the Church's great gold and silver were located, he would issue an order of clemency, sparing his life so that he could continue his work. Valerian was delighted when the deacon asked for three days to gather all the gold and silver of the Church together in one central place! After three days, Deacon Lawrence presented him with the true gold and silver of the Church, the poor! The emperor was filled with rage! Beheading was not enough for this Christian Deacon. He ordered Deacon Lawrence to be burned alive, in public, on a griddle. It is said to this day that all of Rome became Christian as a result of the faithful life, and the death, of this one humble deacon. He was buried in a cemetery on the Via Tiburtina. On that spot, Constantine would later build a Basilica. Catholic Online: Saints and Angels

There is a great paradox or irony in our gospel for today. Death leads to life and when we "die" to our selves, we "rise" to new life in Jesus Christ. What is the meaning of

"dying to oneself"? It means nothing but what is contrary to God's will must be "crucified", "liquidated" or "put to death". God always gives us grace to say "YES" to Him, to His will and to reject whatever is opposing to his loving plan for our lives.

My sisters and brothers, the Lord is reminding us today that we must follow Him always, do His will and wherever He is, we must also be, and the reward will be the honor to be with His Father, our Father. His instruction is very clear: "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour." This is what St. Lawrence did: he offered himself to Christ by shedding his life for the sake of the Kingdom. We are also called to offer our daily sacrifices, our daily Christian lives and participation in the life of the Church as we continue the redemptive work of Jesus. St. Lawrence offered himself completely to Jesus Christ - and shows us the way to do the same. So, let us ask ourselves, how do we die everyday for the sake of Christ? Do we always trust the Lord, deny myself and follow the Lord? This will be our challenge and our mission.