

## ***St Lawrence: Losing His life for Jesus***

August 10, 2022

The esteem in which the Church holds Lawrence is seen in the fact that today's celebration ranks as a feast. We know very little about his life. He is one of those whose martyrdom made a deep and lasting impression on the early Church. Celebration of his feast day spread rapidly.

He was a Roman deacon under Pope Saint Sixtus II. Four days after this pope was put to death, Lawrence and four clerics suffered martyrdom, probably during the persecution of the Emperor Valerian.

A well-known legend has persisted from earliest times. As deacon in Rome, Lawrence was charged with the responsibility for the material goods of the Church, and the distribution of alms to the poor. When Lawrence knew he would be arrested like the pope, he sought out the poor, widows, and orphans of Rome and gave them all the money he had on hand, selling even the sacred vessels of the altar to increase the sum. When the prefect of Rome heard of this, he imagined that the Christians must have considerable treasure. He sent for Lawrence and said, "You Christians say we are cruel to you, but that is not what I have in mind. I am told that your priests offer in gold, that the sacred blood is received in silver cups, that you have golden candlesticks at your evening services. Now, your doctrine says you must render to Caesar what is his. Bring these treasures—the emperor needs them to maintain his forces. God does not cause money to be counted: He brought none of it into the world with him—only words. Give me the money, therefore, and be rich in words."

Lawrence replied that the Church was indeed rich. "I will show you a valuable part. But give me time to set everything in order and make an inventory." After three days he gathered a great number of blind, lame, maimed, leprous, orphaned, and widowed persons and put them in rows. When the prefect arrived, Lawrence simply said, "These are the treasure of the Church."

The prefect was so angry he told Lawrence that he would indeed have his wish to die—but it would be by inches. He had a great gridiron prepared with coals beneath it, and had Lawrence's body placed on it. After the martyr had suffered the pain for a long time, the legend concludes, he made his famous cheerful remark, "It is well done. Turn me over!"

St Lawrence embodied a Christ like character expressed in the reading from 2 Corinthians where St. Paul says that God loves a cheerful giver. The word of cheerful would better be translated hilarious. St Lawrence embodied in his life this kind of exuberance, even in the face of such opposition from the Roman Prefect.

St Lawrence was someone whose life was given totally to the service of Jesus and his Church. His was a single minded life that trusted everything into the care of Jesus. That his feast day is marked all these centuries later is a testimony to the lasting influence of his witness on the Church and how his life can be an inspiration to us.

Regardless of what the world might say and even be contemptuous towards the Church we can trust that if we choose to live generous and joyous lives that there will be an increase in what St. Paul calls the "harvest of righteousness". What these means is that through the challenges we face, that like St. Lawrence, we can become ever more like Jesus.

This theme is celebrated in today's psalm when we declared:

***They are not afraid of evil tidings;  
their hearts are firm, secure in the LORD.  
8 Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid;  
in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.  
9 They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor;  
their righteousness endures forever;  
their horn is exalted in honor. <sup>1</sup>***

What the saints, like Lawrence believed was the teaching Jesus stated when he said that it is in losing our lives that we truly find them. Lawrence is remembered today because he so conscientiously believed this and was willing to die for this.

May we be encouraged by his example to sow generously a cheerful disposition that sees in each day the opportunity to live purposefully and confidently for God.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#) (Ps 112:7–9). (1989). Thomas Nelson Publishers.