

Homily
Feast of St. Lawrence, Deacon & Martyr
August 10, 2022

Joy of joys! What a beautiful feast day! What Jesus tells us in today's Gospel, St. Lawrence put into practice in the most frightful and glorious way. Jesus tells His disciples, "Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life."

We must die to ourselves and live for Christ. Sounds simple and delightful, but not easy or painless. In all His teaching, Jesus stresses that we must look to heaven, for that is where our home is. We are just travelers on this earth, making our way best that we can.

And what a great example we have in St. Lawrence, deacon in the third century, one of seven deacons serving with Pope St. Sixtus II who was martyred just three days before Lawrence.

I could spend an hour sharing Lawrence's story, but let's focus on the highlights. Lawrence loved and was devoted to Sixtus. He had an ever-joyful heart. He served at the altar, administered the goods of the Church, and served the poor. When then emperor Valerian, who had heard of the Church's wealth, came for those treasures, Valerian martyred Sixtus and four of his deacons.

Coming after Lawrence next, Lawrence asked Valerian to give him three days to gather all the precious gold and silver of the Church. On time, he delivered the treasures of the Church; the poor, the orphaned, the widowed, the sick. During those three days, he gave away the material wealth of the Church to the poor and needy. Needless to say, the emperor was not amused.

Lawrence suffered greater torture than his brothers, tied to a grill and slow-burned. But God graced him in his trials. Lawrence joked with his executioners and the cruel tyrant, converting many of them.

At one point, he is credited with saying, "Turn me over; I'm done on this side." It is believed his martyrdom began the conversion of Rome. We don't have to die the type of death Lawrence experienced, but we must die to ourselves.

It is in our selfishness that we take our focus off our all loving and all good God and focus on something less good. We embrace distractions that become like gods – like money or things that money can buy. Money is not evil, it's the love of money that is the root of all evil. I know I focus on too many things that are not keeping me on the right path. I need to let God be my distraction. I need to make God my focus. In this way, I die to myself and live for God.

It's so easy to say, but so hard to put into practice. This world is hard and unforgiving and sometimes cruel. That's why we come to Mass, listen to God's Word, receive God truly, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, and go forth to glorify God by our lives.

Today, we remember Lawrence and we try to embrace his example. Turn me over, world; I'm done on this side.