

Homily  
Memorial of Saint Callistus I, Pope and Martyr  
Monday of the 28<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time  
October 14, 2024

Saint Callistus led a multi-faceted, convoluted life. He was born into slavery, became a prisoner because he lost money entrusted to him, released as a freeman due to the compassion of the empress towards Christians, entrusted to the care of the pope, ordained a deacon and later elected pope. Probably because of his widely varied experiences, he was known for his leniency and mercy towards those who were penitent, which led some to object, including Tertullian and Hippolytus, who believed in a more stringent approach to sinfulness. He taught about the importance of repentance. He evangelized; he faced calumny and persecution with courage. During his reign as pope, a Christian persecution broke out; he was arrested, starved for a week, tortured, and then thrown into a deep well with a stone around his neck. Pope Callistus died for his faith. What little we know of his life remains an inspiration today, and his merciful commitment to repentant sinners shines forth as the law of Christ and the ongoing practice of the Church.

Jesus instructs His Apostles about servant-leadership, about the greatest being the one who serves, not lording it over others. This takes humility, looking outside ourselves. This is difficult for most people to understand, much less embrace. Most people, myself included, aren't fans of authority. My experience has been that most in authority jump to conclusions and are quick to make judgements. And then, when I am honest with myself, I, too, tend to jump to conclusions and make quick judgements more often than I am lenient or merciful. It's easy to point fingers, but it is always good to remember that when I point a finger at someone else, three fingers are pointed back at me.

As we can learn from Saint Callistus, mercy is two-sided. We need to be convinced of God's mercy toward us, and we need to show that same depth of mercy toward others. It is then we embrace true humility, the humility God calls us to. And eventually we can join with St. Callistus and all the angels and saints in heaven rejoicing in God's love and peace.