

August 10th: Feast of Saint Lawrence, Deacon and Martyr

Gospel text (Jn 12:24-26): Jesus said to his disciples: “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me.”

“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be”

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Today, the Church —through the liturgy of the Eucharist celebrating the Feast of Saint Lawrence, the Roman martyr— reminds us that there is "a consistent witness which all Christians must daily be ready to make, even at the cost of suffering and grave sacrifice." (Saint John Paul II).

Moral law is saintly and must not be violated. This assertion, certainly contrasts with the relativistic environment abounding nowadays, whereby we tend to easily adapt ethical demands to our personal comfort or to our own weaknesses. We shall certainly not find anyone admitting: —I am immoral; —I am without a conscience; —I am a person who is untruthful... Anyone admitting these facts would automatically and immediately disqualify himself.

The definite question would therefore be: what moral, what conscience and what truth are we talking about? It is evident that social peace and a healthy coexistence cannot be based on a “moral à la carte”, where each one chooses his own way, without bearing in mind the inclinations and aspirations the Creator has set out for us. This “moral”, far from leading us through the “paths of righteousness” towards the “green pastures” the Good Shepherd desires for our nature (cf. Ps 23:1-3), would irreparably take us to the quicksand of the “moral relativism”, where absolutely everything can be debated, agreed upon and justified.

Martyrs are the final testimony to the saintliness of the moral law: there are basic demands of love that accept neither exceptions nor adaptations. In fact, Saint John Paul II reminds us that “in the New Testament we find many examples of followers of Christ... that accepted persecution and death rather than perform the idolatrous act of burning incense before the statue of the Emperor.”

In the Roman environment of Emperor Valerian, the deacon “Saint Lawrence loved Christ in life, and imitated Christ unto death” (Saint Augustine). And, once again, we see confirmed that “the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (Jn 12:25). Fortunately, the memory of Saint Lawrence will perpetually remain as a signal to us, following Christ is worth offering our life rather than admitting frivolous interpretations of his path.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Saint Lawrence loved Christ during his life, he imitated him in his death. The best proof we can give of our love is to imitate his example, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.” (Saint Augustine)
- “As he was entrusted with the charities of the Church to the poor of Rome, Deacon Lawrence was allowed some time to collect the treasures of the Church and hand them over to the authorities. But St. Lawrence distributed all the available money to the poor and then presented them to the authorities as the real treasure of the Church.” (Benedict XVI)
- “Another difficulty, especially for those who sincerely want to pray, is dryness (...). If dryness is due to the lack of roots, because the word has fallen on rocky soil, the battle requires conversion.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2,731)