Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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August 9, 2021

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“Where I am, there also will my servant be” (John 12:26).

2 Cor 9:6-10; John 12:24-26

There aren’t many comedians among the saints, especially the martyrs, but St. Lawrence, a third century deacon executed under the emperor Valerian, comes close. Deacons provided practical service to the community and attacking them was an effective way to disrupt the churches. Lawrence was also targeted because it was rumored that he handled church finances. Persecution has always had its rewards for local officials ready to confiscate the property of victims.

Lawrence, aka "Crazy Larry," was arrested and brought before a magistrate who ordered him to produce the “treasures of the church.” He enraged the court by rounding up and presenting the city’s poor. Condemned to be burned to death on a grill, Lawrence is said to have asked his torturers to turn him over because he was done on one side. Humor apparently rated alongside heroics when preserving examples worthy of canonization. Paul writes in today’s first reading that “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7). Holiness was also clearly indicated in the lives of saints who served their communities faithfully when it cost them their lives.

Jesus asks no less of his disciples. We are to be ready to sow our lives like seed on the ground if we want to enter eternal life. To accomplish this, we first must place our lives in circumstances that require us to empty ourselves to serve others. It is more than an idea or spiritual program. Sainthood is hands-on work, letting your time, treasure and talent slip away from you into the needs of others. It is real death to self to serve the common good from which springs every true harvest of holiness.

Jesus’ words are sometimes misread by us. We surrender to service trusting that Jesus will always be with us to grace our good works. But he does not say, “I will always be with my servants.” He says, “Where I am, there also will my servant be.” We commit to going wherever Jesus is to do what Jesus is doing, not the other way around. We do not get to design our lives of service or pick and choose how we will die with Christ in order to rise with him. We must instead follow him wherever he is at work in our corner of the world, ready to serve those he wants to serve through our efforts.

Under these terms and not our own, we quickly come to understand why it is important to have a sense of humor if we want to be one of Jesus’ disciples.

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