

Homily based on the readings from August 10, 2026 (2 Corinthians 9.6-10; John 12.24-26)

God loves a cheerful giver. While not many people would bother arguing against this statement, at a certain level it is profoundly countercultural. The overriding message within our society – from all sides of the political spectrum – is that whatever wealth we possess should be used *primarily* for our own benefit. If we have money, we buy a house. If we have more money, we buy a nicer house. If anything is left over, we might consider putting a small amount into the poor box or the collection plate. Nevertheless, that is not what God is expecting from any of us. While we must certainly take care of our own material needs and those of our families, the *reason* God gives us whatever he does is not to take care of *ourselves* – but other people. As usual, the Catechism explains this point succinctly:

The ownership of any property makes its holder a *steward* of Providence, with the task of making it fruitful and communicating its benefits to *others*. (2404)

In other words, regardless of the size of our salary or the depth of our bank account, we are only *caretakers* of the resources the Lord has entrusted to us. The reward of a Christian life is not found in *possessing* things, but in *giving* them away.

There is perhaps no clearer example of this principle than Saint Lawrence – the saint whose feast we celebrate today. On August 6 of the year 258, Pope Sixtus II was beheaded on the orders of the Emperor Valerian, along with four of the seven deacons of Rome. Two more deacons were beheaded later the same day. As the last surviving deacon, Lawrence had complete control over the Church's earthly resources. He was commanded by a Roman prefect to surrender all these riches to the emperor. With what little time he had, Lawrence sold everything he could and donated the proceeds to the poor. Showing up

at the appointed time, he pointed to the sick and the destitute of the city, declaring: “Here are the treasures of the Church. You see, the Church is truly rich, far richer than your emperor!” – a remark that soon led to his own (uniquely gruesome) execution. Even though Lawrence certainly intended to frustrate his tyrannical oppressors, he also provided the rest of us with a valuable lesson. While the Church’s physical possessions – our holy relics, our priceless works of art, our majestic buildings – are all extremely important to our mission and ministry, they are ultimately a means to an end: caring for the spiritual and temporal needs of the people around us. *Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.*

The underlying message, of course, is that anything we possess here on earth is, at best, a tool for helping other people and, at worst, a dangerous distraction. This principle is articulated, with absolute clarity, in today’s Gospel:

Whoever loves his life loses it,
and whoever hates his life in this world
will preserve it for eternal life.

Again, while many people would eagerly affirm this statement in *theory*, it is much harder to understand how to live it out in *practice*. The saints – particularly those who were blessed to receive the crown of martyrdom – provide us with a concrete roadmap. We may never wind up facing the same circumstances as Lawrence and his fellow deacons, but we can always learn from their example. In the end, we need to remember that nothing on earth is more precious than our Christian faith, and that no punishment the world devises can *ever* deprive us of our heavenly reward.