

Homily for August 9, 2020

My Brothers and Sisters:

Every year in the Liturgy of the Hours, on the Feast Day of Saint Lawrence, the Office of Readings offers a homily by Saint Augustine. Two Years ago we put that in the Bulletin. I think it would be a very good Homily for this Year. And so, as I sometimes do, I step aside and use the words of one of the great preachers and teachers in the Church's history to speak of God on the Feast of a Great Martyr, and Our Patron.

From a sermon by Saint Augustine, bishop

The Roman Church commends to us today the anniversary of the triumph of Saint Lawrence. For on this day he trod the furious pagan world underfoot and flung aside its allurements, and so gained victory over Satan's attack on his faith.

As you have often heard, Lawrence was a deacon of the Church at Rome. There he ministered the sacred blood of Christ; there for the sake of Christ's name he poured out his own blood. Saint John the apostle was evidently teaching us about the mystery of the Lord's Supper when he wrote: *Just as Christ laid down his life for us, so we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* My brethren, Lawrence understood this and, understanding, he acted on it. Just as he had partaken of a gift of self at the table of the Lord, so he prepared to offer such a gift. In his life he loved Christ; in his death he followed in his footsteps.

Brethren, we too must imitate Christ if we truly love him. We shall not be able render better return on that love than by modeling our lives on his. *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps.* In saying this, the apostle Peter seems to have understood that Christ suffered only for those who follow in his steps, in the sense that Christ's passion is of no avail to those who do not. The holy martyrs followed Christ even to shedding their life's blood, even to reproducing

the very likeness of his passion. They followed him, but not they alone. It is not true that the bridge was broken after the martyrs crossed; nor is it true that after they had drunk from it, the fountain of eternal life dried up.

I tell you again and again, my brethren, that in the Lord's garden are to be found not only the roses of his martyrs. In it there are also the lilies of the virgins, the ivy of wedded couples, and the violets of widows. On no account may any class of people despair, thinking that God has not called them. Christ suffered for all. What the Scriptures say of him is true: *He desires all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.*

Let us understand, then, how a Christian must follow Christ even though he does not shed his blood for him, and his faith is not called upon to undergo the great test of the martyr's sufferings. The apostle Paul says of Christ our Lord: *Though he was in the form of God he did not consider equality with God a prize to be clung to. How unrivaled his majesty! But he emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave, made in the likeness of men, and presenting himself in human form. How deep his humility!*

Christ humbled himself. Christian, that is what you must make your own. *Christ became obedient.* How is it that you are proud? When this humbling experience was completed and death itself lay conquered, Christ ascended into heaven. Let us follow him there, for we hear Paul saying: *If you have been raised with Christ, you must lift your thoughts on high, where Christ now sits at the right hand of God.*

=-=-=-=-=