

If it's true, as St. Paul says in his first letter to Timothy, that the love of money is the root of all evil, so one might say that the root of all good is generosity or grace. Grace, because such generosity is rooted in God as the infinite source of good, a resource that cannot be expended, and so generosity is rooted in faith, a sign, indeed, that one's faith is true. Paul states this quite clearly in his letter to the Corinthians with his immediate objective of raising money to send to the Christians in Rome in view but with faith in a generous God as the underlying principle that is being tested here.

*And there is no limit to the blessings which God can send you –  
he will make sure that you will always have all you need  
for yourselves in every possible circumstance, and still have  
something to spare for all sorts of good works.*

It's important to realise that the act of giving is not, firstly, an act in order to acquire something in return – a heavenly reward, even – but an act of faith, a giving because one is realising, or placing oneself, within the mystery of God: an act of trust. And the immediate consequence may not be one of reward at all but of fierce opposition, for any such giving, done in faith, threatens the world view of those who see any enrichment of others as a threat to their own in a world that is not entrusted to God but of a finite nature only.

St Lawrence dies a martyr for Christ and a witness to this basic dichotomy which runs through all of human history: whether to trust in the generosity of God – faith as a sort of death – or to trust, instead, in human riches only; and this is sometimes perversely for some taken as a sign of God's approval – a sort of quid pro quo; a trust, indeed, which is no trust at all; a faith with conditions attached. No, full faith is to enter a cycle of giving over which we have no control.

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