

When we bring ourselves to the altar, we bring ourselves as a sacrifice: not a dead sacrifice but living, still living, that is, for others. We know very little of St Lawrence except that he was killed as a Christian in the year 258 during the persecution of Valerian, perhaps on a gridiron, roasted to death, but more likely by the sword, the custom of the day. And we know that he was a deacon with a special ministry to the poor, known then for his life of service, of sacrifice for others as much as for that final sacrifice of his body – the culminating sacrifice of his life. And this says something to *us* about *our* preparation for death. It's not something, I suspect, we ever lose our fear of. Beware the person who is completely unafraid. But it is something we can learn to fear less through our daily practice of self-giving: that daily tussle we might have, to be generous in this or that action, the temptation to withdraw, to turn away the person in need, to send them somewhere else because we are busy or tired or suspicious of their real need. No, that person is all part of the one picture, telling us, not only about ourselves, but something about God and God's infinite capacity to give and keep on giving- the flow of grace we step into as we approach the altar of our sacrifice and place ourselves on it with Christ.

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