

In these days of mis- or disinformation it can be difficult to get a purchase on the truth: to really know where someone is coming from; what the merits are, perhaps, of this protest or that; what is the underlying nature or purpose. We have an excerpt today from St Paul's second letter to the Corinthians which, out of context, appears to give a sound theological basis to the concept of God as gift, of God as the supplier of all our needs, while its more immediate purpose is to raise money for the collection he wishes to send to the poor of the Church at Jerusalem. Paul, in this respect, is a very eloquent and, presumably, effective raiser of funds with the danger, of course, that all fund-raising has of paying our way into heaven instead of paying attention to the more immediate generosity needed from our neighbours. This is a danger preachers also face, in leaving the more immediate work of serving their respective communities to their deacons, their volunteers or their servers. This is money as the root of all evil and yet a necessary evil to be handled with care. All this said in the context of St. Lawrence, noted for his great generosity in the service of the poor, so much so that the entrance antiphon in the old missal will say:

*Today let us honour St. Lawrence who spent himself for the poor.
Thus he merited to suffer martyrdom....*

The edge of this is somewhat taken off in the present missal by saying:

for this he earned the suffering of martyrdom..

but still a concept difficult to grasp for the modern mind. Surely no one in their right mind wants to earn or merit martyrdom? But the gospel makes it clear that this is where service of God aka service of the poor will take us. We have, in a sense, to be taken as fools in our generosity. Now, try telling that to the Charity Commission.

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