

from **The Golden Legend, A.D. 1275**
by **Jacobus de Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa**

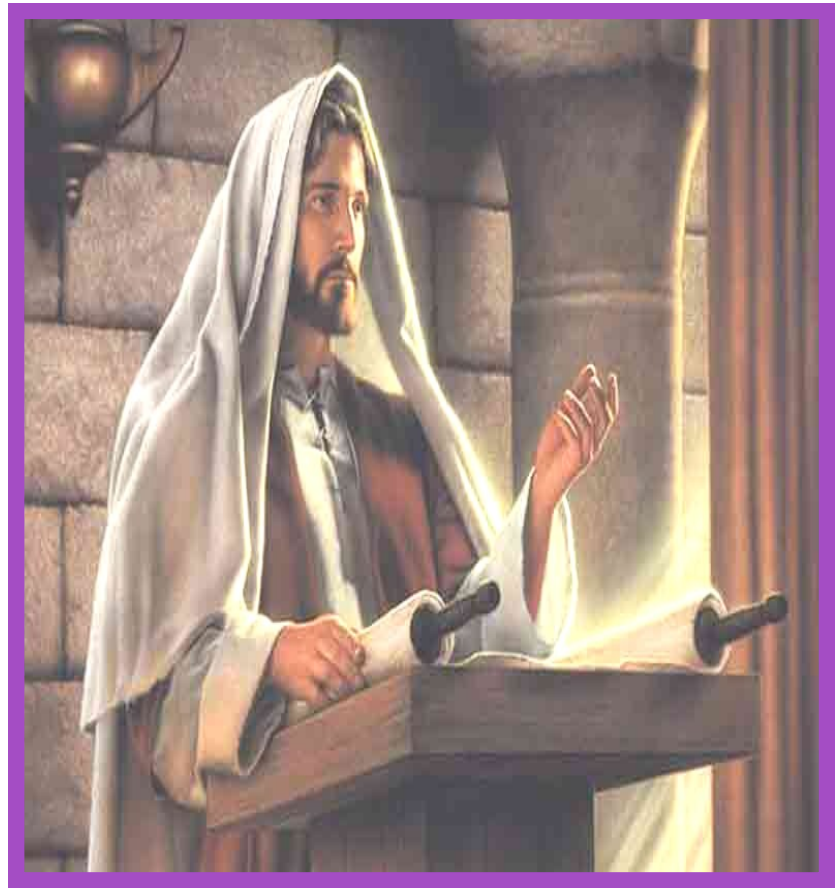
"I shall not leave thee, my son, but greater strife's and battles be due to thee for the faith of Jesus Christ. We, as old men, have taken more lighter battle, and to thee as to a young man shall remain a more glorious battle of which thou shalt triumph and have victory of the tyrant, and shalt follow me within three days." Then he delivered to him all the treasures, commanding him that he should give them to churches and poor people. And the blessed man sought the poor people night and day, and gave to each of them that as was needful, and came to the house of an old woman, which had hid in her house many Christian men and women, and long she had had the headache, and St. Laurence laid his hand upon her head, and anon she was healed of the ache and pain. And he washed the feet of the poor people and gave to each of them alms. The same night he went to the house of a Christian man and found therein a blind man, and gave to him his sight by the sign of the cross. And when the blessed Sixtus would not consent to Decius, ne offer to the idols, he commanded that he should be led forth and beheaded...

... And the ministers despoiled him, and laid him stretched out upon a gridiron of iron, and laid burning coals under, and held him with forks of iron. Then said Laurence to Valerianus: Learn, thou cursed wretch, that thy coals give to me refreshing of coldness, and make ready to thee torment perdurable, and our Lord knoweth that I, being accused, have not forsaken him, and when I was demanded I confessed him Christ, and I being roasted give thankings unto God. And after this he said with a glad cheer unto Decius, Thou cursed wretch, thou hast roasted that one side, turn that other, and eat. And then he, rendering thankings to our Lord, said: I thank thee, Lord Jesus Christ, for I have deserved to enter into thy gates.



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SERMON ON
THE FEAST OF SAINT LAWRENCE
FROM THE FATHER'S OF THE CHURCH
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JESUS, OUR FIRST PREACHER!

AUGUST 10TH

Sermon LXXXV

On the Feast of Saint Lawrence, Martyr by Pope Saint Leo the Great

The Example of the Martyrs is Most Valuable Whilst the height of all virtues, dearly-beloved, and the fullness of all righteousness is born of that love, where-with God and one's neighbor is loved, surely in none is this love found more conspicuous and brighter than in the blessed martyrs; who are as near to our Lord Jesus, Who died for all men, in the imitation of His love, as in the likeness of their suffering. For, although that Love, wherewith the Lord has redeemed us, can-not be equaled by any man's kindness, because it is one thing that a man who is doomed to die one day should die for a righteous man, and another that One Who is free from the debt of sin should lay down His life for the wicked : yet the martyrs also have done great service to all men, in that the Lord Who gave them boldness, has used it to show that the penalty of death and the pain of the cross need not be terrible to any of His followers, but might be imitated by many of them. If therefore no good man is good for himself alone, and no wise man's wisdom befriends himself only, and the nature of true virtue is such that it leads many away from the dark error on which its light is shed, no model is more useful in teaching God's people than that of the martyrs. Eloquence may make inter-cession easy, reasoning may effectually persuade; but yet examples are stronger than words, and there is more teaching in practice than in precept

The Saint's Martyrdom Described. And how gloriously strong in this most excellent manner of doctrine the blessed martyr Laurentius is, by whose sufferings today is marked, even his persecutors were able to feel, when they found that his wondrous courage, born principally of love for Christ, not only did not yield itself, but also strengthened others by the example of his endurance. For when the fury of the gentile potentates was raging against Christ's most chosen members, and attacked those especially who were of priestly rank, the wicked persecutor's wrath was vented on Laurentius the deacon, who was pre-eminent not only in the performance of the sacred rites, but also in the management of the church's property , promising himself double spoil from one man's capture: for if he forced him to surrender the sacred treasures, he would also drive him out of the pale of true religion. And so this man, so greedy of money and such a foe to the truth, arms himself with double weapon: with avarice to plunder the gold; with impiety to carry off Christ. He demands of the guileless guardian of the sanctuary that the church wealth on which his greedy mind was set should be brought to him. But the holy deacon showed him where he had them stored, by pointing to

the many troops of poor saints, in the feeding and clothing of whom he had a store of riches which he could not lose, and which were the more entirely safe that the money had been spent on so holy a cause.

Description of His Sufferings Continued. The baffled plunderer, therefore, frets, and blazing out into hatred of a religion, which had put riches to such a use, determines to pillage a still greater treasure by carrying off that sacred deposit, wherewith he was enriched, as he could find no solid hoard of money in his possession. He orders Laurentius to renounce Christ, and prepares to ply the deacon's stout courage with frightful tortures: and, when the first elicit nothing, fiercer follow. His limbs, torn and mangled by many cutting blows, are commanded to be broiled upon the fire in an iron framework, which was of itself already hot enough to burn him, and on which his limbs were turned from time to time, to make the torment fiercer, and the death more lingering.

Laurentius Has Conquered His Persecutor. Thou gainest nothing, thou prevailest nothing, O savage cruelty. His mortal frame is released from thy devices, and, when Laurentius departs to heaven, thou art vanquished. The flame of Christ's love could not be overcome by thy flames, and the fire which burnt outside was less keen than that which blazed within. Thou didst but serve the martyr in thy rage, O persecutor: thou didst but swell the reward in adding to the pain. For what did thy cunning devise, which did not redound to the conqueror's glory, when even the instruments of torture were counted as part of the triumph? Let us rejoice, then, dearly-beloved, with spiritual joy, and make our boast over the happy end of this illustrious man in the Lord, Who is "wonderful in His saints," in whom He has given us a support and an example, and has so spread abroad his glory throughout the world, that, from the rising of the sun to its going down, the brightness of his deacon's light doth shine, and Rome is become as famous in Laurentius as Jerusalem was ennobled by Stephen. By his prayer and intercession we trust at all times to be assisted; that, because all, as the Apostle says, "who wish to live holily in Christ, suffer persecution," we may be strengthened with the spirit of love, and be fortified to overcome all temptations by the perseverance of steadfast faith. Through our Lord Jesus Christ...