

Reflection Tuesday Week 19 St Laurence 2021

St Laurence (- 258) was one of the seven deacons of the Church of Rome and executed on 10th August 258, four days after Sixtus II and his companions. Little is known of his life: he was probably a Spaniard from Toledo. A basilica was built over Laurence's tomb fifty years after his death, by the Emperor Constantine, and the anniversary of his martyrdom was kept as a solemn feast. By the 6th century, it was one of the most important feasts throughout much of western Christendom. It is said that Lawrence gave the church's treasures to the poor and the sick before his arrest. Although Laurence was probably beheaded, St. Ambrose of Milan and the Latin poet Prudentius, claimed he was roasted to death on a gridiron, remarking to his torturers at one point, "I am cooked on that side; turn me over, and eat." Many conversions to Christianity throughout Rome reportedly followed Laurence's death, including those of several senators witnessing his execution. The Basilica of San Lorenzo Fuori le Mura (St. Lawrence Outside the Walls), Rome, was built over his burial place.

The fame of Laurence lies in the effect he had on people's lives. One of his particular gifts would appear to be his humour. He was obviously a cheerful giver as mentioned by St Paul. *He was free in alms-giving, and gave to the poor: his good deeds will never be forgotten.* And, as Jesus suggests he had a far, far greater influence on the whole church after he death than he had during his life, impressive as that obviously was. We ask St Laurence to help us be generous and joyful in our giving and service of others as he was.