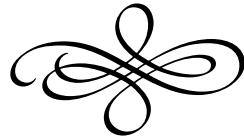


Thus ended Lawrence's fervent prayer,
Thus ended, too, his earthly life:
With these last words his eager soul
Escaped with joy from carnal chains.

Some noble Romans, who were led
By his amazing fortitude
To faith in Christ, then bore away
The hero's body from the scene.

Glory to God for All Things!



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Saint Lawrence of Rome, Deacon Martyr

- 2 *Troparion & Kontakion*
- 3 *Life of St. Lawrence*
- 8 *Prayer to Our Patron Saint*
- 9 *Miracles of St. Lawrence*
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St. Lawrence Orthodox Christian Church
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Hymns to Saint Lawrence

Troparion Tone 3

Radiant with the Holy Spirit as a living coal,
you burned the thorns of idolatry,
O Lawrence, martyr and deacon of Christ.
Like spiritual incense you were a burnt offering
to Him who magnified you;
you were perfected in the fire, O godly-minded one.
Deliver all who acclaim you from the attacks of the enemy.

Kontakion Tone 2

Kindling your heart with divine fire,
you utterly reduced the fire of the passions to ashes.
O God-bearing martyr Lawrence,
you are the confirmation of athletes;
and in the midst of your sufferings you cried out in faith:
“Nothing can separate me from the love of Christ!”

Thus spoke the prefect. At his nod
Forthwith the executioner
Stripped off the holy martyr’s robes
And laid him bound upon the pyre.

... (*Prudentius writes that the “martyr’s face was luminous” and that “round it shone a glorious light” but notes that this phenomenon was only visible to the baptized. Similarly, he writes, “the very odor given forth by holy Lawrence’s burning flesh was noxious to the unredeemed but to the faithful a nectar sweet.” The poet then presents the final moments in the life of Lawrence in a song of praise and triumph that has resounded through the centuries.*)

When slow, consuming heat had seared
The flesh of Lawrence for a space,
He calmly from his gridiron made
This terse proposal to the judge:

“Pray turn my body, on one side
Already broiled sufficiently,
And see how well your Vulcan’s fire
Has wrought its cruel punishment.”

The prefect bade him to be turned.
Then Lawrence spoke: “I am well baked,
And whether better cooked or raw,
Make trial by a taste of me.”

He said these words in way of jest;
Then raising shining eyes to heaven
And sighing deeply, thus he prayed
With pity for unholy Rome.

... (*Lawrence prays for the salvation of all, calling on the aid of Ss. Peter and Paul, who were martyred there as well.*)

. . . (Lawrence assembles the poor and invites the prefect to view the “wondrous riches of our God.”)

The prefect deigns to follow him;
The sacred portal soon they reach,
Where stands a ghastly multitude
Of poor drawn up in grim array.

The air is rent with cries for alms;
The prefect shudders in dismay,
And turns on Lawrence glaring eyes,
With threats of dreadful punishment.

. . . (Lawrence urges him to consider a more sublime reality.)

“These poor of ours are sick and lame,
But beautiful and whole within.
They bear with them a spirit fair
And free from taint and misery.

. . .

“These humble paupers you despise
And look upon as vile outcasts,
Their ulcerous limbs will lay aside
And put on bodies incorrupt,

“When freed at last from tainted flesh
Their souls, from chains of earth released,
Will shine resplendent with new life
In their celestial fatherland.

“Not foul and shabby, or infirm,
As now they seem to scornful eyes,
But fair, in radiant vesture clad,
With crowns of gold upon their heads.”

. . . (Lawrence is condemned to torture.)

Saint Lawrence, Deacon Martyr

+ AD 258

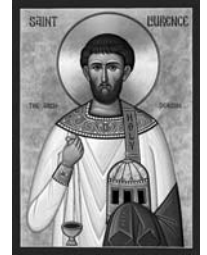
Few martyrs in the church are as famous as the glorious St. Lawrence, in whose praises the most illustrious among the Orthodox fathers of the West have exerted their eloquence, and whose triumph the whole church joins in a body to honor with universal joy and devotion.

St. Lawrence was born in Spain during the third century, at Osca, a town in Aragon, near the foot of the Pyrenees. As a youth he was sent to Saragoza to complete his studies. It was there that he first encountered the future Bishop Sixtus, who was a Greek and a teacher in the most renowned center of learning at the time. Between master and disciple a communion of life and friendship grew.

In time, Sixtus and Lawrence joined a migratory wave from Spain to Rome. When Sixtus was elevated to patriarch in 257, he ordained Lawrence deacon, and though Lawrence was still young, appointed him the first among the seven deacons who served in the patriarchal church; therefore he is called archdeacon of Rome. This was a position of great trust, which included the care of the treasury and riches of the church, and the distribution of alms among the poor.

The Emperor Valerian, in 257, published his edicts against the church, which he foolishly thought he was able to destroy, not knowing it to be the work of the Almighty. His hope was that by cutting off the shepherds he might disperse the flock, so he commanded all bishops, priests, and deacons to be put to death without delay. The holy patriarch Sixtus was apprehended the following year.

St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, preserved an account of the death of St. Sixtus in one of his letters. Commenting on the situation of great uncertainty and unease in which the church found herself because of increasing hostility towards Christians, he notes: “The Emperor Valerian has consigned to the Senate a decree by which he has determined that all Bishops, Priests and Deacons will be immediately put to death. . . . I com-



municate to you that Sixtus suffered martyrdom on August 6th together with four Deacons while they were in a cemetery. The Roman authorities have established a norm according to which all Christians who have been denounced must be executed and their goods confiscated by the Imperial treasury.” The cemetery to which the holy St. Cyprian alludes is that of St. Callixtus. Sixtus was captured there while celebrating the Divine Liturgy. He was buried in the same cemetery after his martyrdom.

As Sixtus was led to execution, his deacon Lawrence, who followed him weeping and judging himself ill-treated because he was not to die with him, said to him, “Father, where are you going without your son? To where are you going, O holy priest, without your deacon? Never before did you desire to offer sacrifice without me, your servant. In what way have I displeased you? Have you found me wanting to my duty? Try me now, and see, whether you chose an unfit servant for dispensing the blood of the Lord.”

Lawrence could not without holy envy behold his bishop going to martyrdom, and himself left behind. From the love of God and an earnest longing to be with Christ, he condemned liberty and life, and thought of no other honor but that of suffering for his Lord. Therefore he regarded the world as nothing, and accounted it his happiness to leave it, that he might come to the enjoyment of his God. For this reason he grieved to see himself still free, was desirous to be in chains, and was impatient for torture.

The holy patriarch, at the sight of his grief, was moved to tenderness and compassion, and comforting him, he answered, “I do not leave you, my son. We are spared on account of our weakness and old age. But a greater trial and a more glorious victory are reserved for you, who are stout and in the vigor of youth. You will follow me in three days.” He then commanded Lawrence immediately to distribute among the poor the treasure of the church which was committed to his care, lest the poor should be robbed of their care if it should fall into the hands of their persecutors.

Lawrence was full of joy, hearing that he should so soon be called to God, and set out immediately to seek all the poor widows and orphans, and distribute among them all the money of the church; he even sold the sacred vessels to increase the sum, employing it all in like manner.

The prefect of Rome soon sent for Lawrence and said to him,

He guarded well the sacred rites
And kept in trust with faithful keys
The precious treasure of the Church,
Dispensing riches vowed to God.

. . . (*Lawrence speaks to his bishop.*)

The Pontiff Sixtus, from the cross
On which he hung, saw at its foot
His deacon Lawrence weeping sore,
And these prophetic words he spoke:

“Let tears of sorrow cease to flow
At my departure from this life;
My brother, I but lead the way,
And you will follow in three days.”

. . . (*The prefect summons Lawrence to court, and he gives his reply.*)

“Our church is very rich,” he said.
“I must confess that it has wealth;
Our treasuries are filled with gold
Not found elsewhere in all the world.”

. . . (*Lawrence agrees to surrender the treasure and is dismissed from the court to carry out his task.*)

He hastens through the city streets,
And in three days he gathers up
The poor and sick, a mighty throng
Of all in need of kindly alms.

. . .

He sought in every public square
The needy who were wont to be
Fed from the stores of Mother Church,
And he as steward knew them well.

Hymns of Prudentius

Aurelius Prudentius Clemens was an Orthodox Christian poet, born in the Roman province of Tarraconensis (now northern Spain) in the city of Calahorra in 348. Prudentius practiced law and was twice provincial governor, before the emperor Theodosius I summoned him to court. Towards the end of his life, Prudentius retired from public life to become an ascetic, fasting until evening and abstaining entirely from animal food. Prudentius later collected the Christian poems written during this period and added a preface, which he himself dated 405.

The poetry of Prudentius is influenced by early Christian authors, such as Tertullian and St. Ambrose, as well as by Holy Scripture and the acts of the martyrs. His Christmas plainsong hymn, *Divinum Mysterium* (“Of the Father’s Love Begotten”), and the hymn for Epiphany, *O sola magnarum urbium* (“Earth Has Many a Noble City”), both from the *Cathemerinon*, are still in use today. The allegorical *Psychomachia*, however, is his most influential work and became the inspiration and wellspring of medieval allegorical literature.

His works give evidence of a profound knowledge of Orthodox doctrine and a wide acquaintance with patristic literature. He visited Rome, probably between the years 401 and 403, made pilgrimages to the tombs of the martyrs of Rome, and read the inscriptions in the catacombs and basilicas, including the famous epigram for St. Lawrence by Patriarch Damasus (366–383), defender against Arianism. As his final work, Prudentius wrote a series of poems about the martyrs, a work he considered preparation for his own death. He reposed in Spain some time after 405, possibly around 413.

Following are excerpts from the “Hymn in Honor of the Passion of the Blessed Martyr Lawrence”:

First of the seven ministers
Who nearest to the altar stand,
Levite in holy orders high
And eminent above the rest.



“Christians often complain that we treat you with cruelty; but no tortures are thought of here; I only inquire mildly after your charge. I am informed that your priests offer their divine sacrifices in vessels of gold, that the sacred blood is received in silver cups, and that in your evening services you have candles fitted in golden candlesticks. Bring to me these concealed treasures; the prince has need of them for the maintenance of his troops. I am told that, according to your doctrine, you must render to Caesar the things that belong to him. I do not think that your God causes money to be coined; he brought none into the world with him; he only brought words. Give us therefore the money, and be rich in words.”

Lawrence replied, without showing any concern, “The church is indeed rich, nor has the emperor any treasure equal to what it possesses. I will show you its treasures; but allow me a little time to set everything in order, and to make an inventory.”

The prefect did not understand of what treasure Lawrence spoke, but imagining he possessed much hidden wealth, was satisfied with this answer and granted him three days.

During this interval, Lawrence went all over the city, seeking out in every street the poor who were supported by the church, and with whom no other was so well acquainted. On the third day he gathered together a great number of them before the church and placed them in rows, the decrepit, the blind, the lame, the maimed, the lepers, orphans, widows, and virgins; then he went to the prefect, invited him to come and see the treasure of the church, and conducted him to the place.

The prefect, astonished to see such a number of poor wretches, who made a horrid sight, turned to the holy deacon with looks full of disorder and threatenings, and asked him what all this meant, and where the treasures were which he had promised to show him.

Lawrence answered, "What are you displeased at? The gold that you so eagerly desire is a vile metal, and serves to incite men to all manner of crimes. The light of heaven is the true gold, which these poor objects enjoy. Their bodily weakness and sufferings are the source of their patience and virtue; vices and passions are the real diseases by which the great ones of the world are often most truly miserable and despicable. Behold in these poor persons the treasures which I promised to show you; to which I will add pearls and precious stones, those widows and consecrated virgins, which are the church's crown, by which it is pleasing to Christ; it has no other riches; make use then of them for the advantage of Rome, of the emperor, and yourself." In this way he exhorted him to redeem his sins by sincere repentance and almsgiving, and showed him where the church placed its treasure.

However, the earthly-minded man was far from forming so noble an idea of what he saw, the sight of which offended his carnal eyes, and he cried out in a flight of rage, "Do you mock me? Is it in this way that the sacred crests of the Roman power are insulted? I know that you desire to die; that is your frenzy and vanity: but you shall not die immediately, as you imagine. I will protract your tortures, that your death may be the more bitter as it shall be slower. You shall die by inches."

Then he caused a great gridiron to be made ready and live coals to be thrown under it, that the martyr might be slowly burnt. Lawrence was stripped, stretched out, and bound with chains upon this iron bed, which broiled his flesh little by little. To the Christians watching, his face appeared to be as that of the newly baptized, surrounded with a beautiful extraordinary light, and his broiled body to emit a sweet, pleasant smell. The martyr felt none of the torments of the persecutor, so vehement was his desire of possessing Christ, and while his body broiled in the material flames, the fire of divine love, which was far more active within his breast, made him to disregard the pain. Having the law of God before his



guileless guardian of the sanctuary, that the church's 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 entirely safe for they had been spent on a holy cause.

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, the deacon's faith in Christ, with which he was rich, since he could find no material hoard of money in his possession. He orders Lawrence to renounce Christ, and prepares to ply the deacon's stout courage with frightful tortures: and, when the threats 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.

Yet you gain nothing, you prevail not at all, O savage cruelty! His mortal frame is released from your devices, and, when Lawrence departs to heaven, you are vanquished. The flame of Christ's love could not be overcome by your flames and the fire which burnt outside was less keen than that which blazed within his heart. You did but serve the martyr in your rage, O persecutor: you did but swell his reward by adding to his pain. For what did your cunning devise, which did not contribute 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 shines, and Rome has become as famous in Lawrence 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 godly 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. Amen.

On the Feast of St. Lawrence by St. Leo the Great, Patriarch of Rome

While the height of all virtues, dearly-beloved, and the fullness of all righteousness is born of that love by which God and one's neighbor is loved, surely in none is this love found more conspicuous and brighter than in the blessed martyrs; they who are near to our Lord Jesus, who died for all men, by the imitation of His love in their suffering. For although that Love, by which the Lord has redeemed us, cannot be equaled by the effort of any man (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. No model is more useful in teaching God's people than that of the martyrs. Eloquence may make intercession easy, reasoning may effectually persuade; but examples are stronger than words, and there is more teaching in practice than in precept.

And how gloriously strong in this most excellent manner of doctrine that the blessed martyr Lawrence is, whose memory we commemorate today. Even his persecutors were able to feel his faith, 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 rulers 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 Lawrence the deacon, who was preeminent 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 his true religion. And so this man, so greedy of money and such a foe to the truth, arms himself with a double weapon: with avarice to plunder the gold, and with impiety to capture Christ. Therefore he demands of Lawrence, the

eyes, he esteemed his torments to be refreshment and a comfort.

Such was the tranquility and peace of mind which he enjoyed amidst his torments that having suffered a long time, he turned to the judge and said to him, with a cheerful and smiling countenance, "Let my body be now turned; one side is broiled enough." When, by the prefect's order, the executioner had turned him, he said, "It is cooked enough, you may now eat."

The prefect insulted him in return, but the martyr continued in earnest prayer, with sighs and tears imploring the divine mercy with his last breath for the conversion of the ungodly. The saint having finished his prayer, and completed his holy offering, lifting up his eyes towards heaven, he gave up his spirit.

Several senators who were present at his death were so powerfully moved by his tender and heroic fortitude and piety that they became Christians upon the spot. These noblemen took up the martyr's body on their shoulders and gave it an honorable burial in the Veran field, near the road to Tibur, on the 10th of August, in 258. It is known that he was buried in the cemetery of Cyriaca *in agro Verano* on the Via Tiburtina.

St. Lawrence's death was the death of idolatry in Rome, which, from that time, began more significantly to decline. From the moment of his burial, the faithful venerate his tomb with great devotion and fervor, commending themselves in all their needs to his patronage. An incredible number of miracles have been worked through the intercession of St. Lawrence.

From the third century, the feast of St. Lawrence has been kept faithfully. Within fifty years of his martyrdom, the Christian emperor Constantine had a patriarchal church built over his tomb, on the road to Tibur; one of five churches where the patriarch of Rome celebrated regularly, the site now known as the church of St. Lawrence-outside-the-Walls. By the fifth century, the church had established his feast with a vigil, a weeklong after-feast and leave-taking. By the sixth century, the feast of St. Lawrence was one of the most celebrated Orthodox feasts throughout Western Europe. For centuries the Perseid meteor shower coinciding with his feast has been referred to as the "Tears of St. Lawrence."



The holy martyrdom of St. Lawrence and the power of his intercession on our behalf is hailed and testified to in the writings of St. Gregory of Tours, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Austin, St. Leo, St. Fulgentius, St. Optatus, Eusebius, and the fourth-century Orthodox poet Prudentius.

The San Lorenzo Valley (Santa Cruz County, California) received the name of this great Orthodox saint from the Portola Expedition on October 17, 1769. St. Lawrence Orthodox Church, Felton, California, celebrates his feast on the Sunday nearest August 10 (Old Calendar).

Prayer to our Patron Saint

O saint of God, Lawrence, deacon martyr, pray to God for me, for my home and my family. Amen.

Pray to God for me, O Saint Lawrence, well-pleasing to God, for I readily recommend myself to you, who are the speedy helper and intercessor for my soul. Amen.



St. Lawrence Church today

Addendum

Miracles of St. Lawrence

Early on, the life and miracles of St. Lawrence were collected in a work entitled, *The Acts of St. Lawrence*, which is now lost. The earliest existing documentation of miracles associated with St. Lawrence is found in the writings of St. Gregory of Tours (538–594). Miracles that occurred during St. Gregory’s lifetime include:

“A priest named Fr. Sanctulus was rebuilding a church of St. Lawrence, which had been attacked and burnt, and hired many workmen to accomplish the job. At one point during the construction, he found himself with nothing to feed them. He prayed to St. Lawrence for help, and looking in his basket he found a fresh, white loaf of bread, it seemed to him too small to feed the workmen, but in faith he began to serve it to the men. While he broke the bread, it so multiplied that that his workmen fed from it for ten days.

“Once a certain priest was repairing the church of St. Lawrence, and one of the essential beams was found to be too short for its span, therefore the priest prayed to St. Lawrence asking that the saint who had seen to the well-being of the poor would help him in his poverty of good lumber. And the beam grew in length so suddenly and significantly that it had to be cut for it was too long. The priest took the remainder, parted it into many pieces which he distributed among the faithful and by venerating the wood many were healed.”

The holy Bishop Fortunatus of Poitiers (530–600), a contemporary of St. Gregory, a poet and the hymnographer who wrote the services for St. Martin of Tours, witnessed a man suffering greatly with a toothache who only touched this wood and was instantly healed.