

August 10, 2020
Monday of the 19th Week
St. Lawrence, Deacon & Martyr
2 Cor 9:6-10
Ps 112:1-2, 5-6, 7-8, 9
Jn 12:24-36

GOD SMILES AT CHEERFUL GIVER!

The crumbling, old church building needed remodeling, so the priest made an impassioned appeal, looking directly at the richest man in town. At the end of the message, the rich man stood up and announced, "**Father, I will contribute \$1,000.**" Just then, plaster fell from the ceiling and struck the rich man on the shoulder. He promptly stood again and shouted, "**Father, I will increase my donation to \$5,000.**" Before he could sit back down, another plaster fell on him again, and again he virtually screamed, "**Father, I will double my last pledge.**"

He sat down, and a larger chunk of plaster fell hitting him on the head. He stood once more and yelled, "**Father, I will give \$20,000!**" This prompted the Deacon to shout, "**Hit him again, Lord! Hit him again!**"

Is the rich man generous and joyful in his giving? Not really. **Why?** It is simply because his giving is listless, lacking in energy. Based on his initial response, he lacks the motivation to share generously. If the plasters did not fall on him, **do you think he will give the \$20,000?**

As Catholic Christians, we believe that everything is God's gifts to us. The gifts given must not stop to us. It must be shared generously with others especially to those who have less or have nothing at all. It is like 'paying forward.' It is doing an "act of random kindness." We know that such act creates a ripple effect of goodness in the society, not to mention the smile put in the faces of the recipient.

Last year, I was with a group of friends eating our lunch at one of the restaurants at Rice Street. When we were finished eating, my friend asked for the bill. To our surprised it was already paid. We asked the server who paid it and she told us the guys who were seating four tables away from us. We looked and the guys were no longer there. They finished their lunch earlier than us and we were not able to thank them. We did not know them. I was pretty sure they did not know us well. I was certain though that it was an 'act of random kindness,' a 'pay it forward act' calling us to do the same to others. Personally, what they did to us was a 'generous and cheerful sharing of their blessings.' God, for sure, was smiling at them that day for they did not hesitate to put smiles on others.

Is God smiling at us when we give? St. Paul reminds us that our loving God smiles at us when we give cheerfully. God smiles at us when we give in abundance because we recognized he gives us abundantly. God smiles at us when we freely, generously, and lovingly share our blessings to others. Aside from St. Paul's reminder, our responsorial psalm: "**Blessed the man who is gracious and lends to those in need.**" reiterates to us the good thing happens to generous and cheerful giver.

We commemorate today the **Feast of St. Lawrence**. He was not a priest. He was a deacon known for his charitable works. He truly cared for the poor. During the persecution of Christians in Rome, Emperor Valerian got angrier towards Lawrence because the latter gave away all the Church's properties and distributed the money and treasures of the Church to help alleviate the situations of the poor. When he was asked by the Emperor, Lawrence presented the poor and characterized them as the treasures of the Church. Lawrence was not only cheerful and generous in caring for the poor but also courageous and faithful. His generosity was clearly manifested when he willingly accepted the death sentence of Emperor Valerian for being a Catholic Christian. St. Lawrence was, literally, a '**grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies, but produces much fruit.**' Surely, God was smiling at Lawrence for he gave his life cheerfully for others.

In this Mass, we ask the intercession of St. Lawrence to guide in our giving. May his intercession help us to be cheerful and generous givers of God's blessings to others.

St. Lawrence, pray for us!