Father Bernie Lindley

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Church

This is Father Bernie Lindley from St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, for Voices.

Today is the feast day for St. Lawrence, Archdeacon of Rome and Martyr. Lawrence was born in the year 225 in Spain. When Pope Sixtus the Second was consecrated in the year 257, Lawrence was ordained a deacon and put in charge of the treasury and riches of the Church as well as the distribution of alms to the poor.

At the beginning of August 258, the Emperor Valerian issued an edict that all Christian bishops, priests, and deacons should immediately be put to death and their goods confiscated and put into the Imperial Treasury. Pope Sixtus the Second was captured on August 6th and executed.

After the death of Sixtus, the prefect of Rome demanded that Lawrence turn over the riches of the Church. Lawrence responded that it would take him three days to gather the wealth. The prefect agreed to allow Lawrence the time he needed. But, rather than gather the wealth to turn it over to the Romans, Lawrence quickly distributed as much church property to the poor as possible.

On the third day, at the head of a small delegation, he presented himself to the prefect, and when ordered to deliver the treasures of the Church he presented the indigent, the crippled, the blind, and the suffering, and declared that these were the true treasures of the Church. One account records him declaring to the prefect, "The Church is truly rich, far richer than your emperor."

The prefect was enraged and ordered a great gridiron prepared with hot coals beneath it, and had Lawrence placed on it. This is why St. Lawrence is often associated with a gridiron in artistic depictions. After the martyr had suffered pain for a long time, according to legend, he cheerfully declared: "I'm well done. Turn me over!" This is why St. Lawrence is now the patron saint of cooks, chefs, and comedians.