

Pope: Love for Scripture Key for Evangelization

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Pope offers St. Lawrence of Brindisi as a Model of Effective Preaching

VATICAN CITY, MARCH 23, 2011 (Zenit).-

The vast and diverse accomplishments of St. Lawrence of Brindisi were all inspired in his great love for sacred Scripture, says Benedict XVI.

The Pope affirmed this today when he focused on St. Lawrence (1559-1619) during the general audience, held in St. Peter's Square. His Italian-language address continued with the catecheses cycle on the doctors of the Church.

The Holy Father mentioned how this Capuchin friar was able to reach people of all walks of life.

"An effective preacher, [Lawrence] thoroughly knew not only the Bible but also rabbinical literature, such that rabbis themselves were amazed and admiring, manifesting to him their esteem and respect," the Pontiff explained. "A theologian versed in sacred Scripture and the fathers of the Church, he was also able to illustrate in an exemplary way the Catholic doctrine to Christians who, above all in Germany, had followed the Reformation."

Benedict XVI reflected that Lawrence's success emphasizes a lesson for today: that Scripture "read in the Tradition of the Church, is an irreplaceable element of fundamental importance."

The Pope suggested St. Lawrence as a model for the new evangelization, saying that also today this effort "needs well-prepared, zealous and courageous apostles, so that the light and beauty of the Gospel will prevail over the cultural orientations of ethical relativism and religious indifference, and transform various ways of thinking and of acting into a genuine Christian humanism."

Sweeter than honey

Though Lawrence gained great success in the apostolate, the Holy Father emphasized his "spiritual life of exceptional fervor."

Lawrence dedicated much time to prayer and the Mass, the Pope said, noting that sometimes his Masses took hours as the saint penetrated the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord.

"With the unmistakable ardor of his style, Lawrence moreover exhorted everyone, not just priests, to cultivate the life of prayer because through it we speak to God and God speaks to us," the Holy Father continued.

He cited Lawrence's exhortation: "O, if we only considered this reality! [...] Namely that God is really present to us when we speak to him by praying; that he really listens to our prayer, even if we only pray with the heart and mind. And that not only is he present and listens to us, but that he can and desires to willingly comply, and with the greatest pleasure, to our requests."

The Bishop of Rome concluded his reflection by "underscoring that all [Lawrence's] activity was inspired in his great love for sacred Scripture, which he knew in great part by heart, and by the conviction that the listening and acceptance of the Word of God produces an interior transformation that leads us to holiness."

The Holy Father recalled Lawrence's description of the Word of God as "light for the intellect and fire for the will, so that man can know and love God."

"For the interior man," the Capuchin wrote, "who through grace lives from the Spirit of God, it is bread and water, but bread that is sweeter than honey and water that is better than wine and milk. ... It is a hammer against a hard heart obstinate in vices. It is a sword against the flesh, the world and the devil, to destroy every sin."