

“We do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Jesus” (2 Cor 4:5). Today is the Memorial of Lawrence of Brindisi, a Doctor of the Church noted for his preaching. His sermons rely heavily on scriptural quotations to illustrate his teaching.

As a bright and talented student, he had a knack for learning languages and was able to read the biblical texts in their original language. Lawrence had an excellent knowledge of the languages Jesus spoke, Hebrew and Aramaic. He gave the credit to God for his gift with languages. “At the request of Pope Clement VIII, he spent much time preaching to the Jews in Italy. So excellent was his knowledge of Hebrew, the rabbis felt sure he was a Jew who had become a Christian.”<sup>i</sup>

As a scholar, he tried to learn from the master. “Remembering the sufferings of Jesus Christ, he could not refrain from tears. He honored Mary, the Mother of God, with a very tender love, and to her he ascribed whatever he had received from Christ. Greatly devoted to prayer, he used whatever time he could for it and was often lifted up in ecstasy. He was famous for the gift of prophecy and the reading of hearts.”<sup>ii</sup>

Lawrence was born in 1559 and entered studies for the priesthood with the Capuchin Franciscans in Venice at the age of 16. Completing his studies in Padua, he was ordained at the age of 23. He lived in the era after the Council of Trent and the Counter Reformation. As one would expect, much of his ministry involved defending the faith.

With the Protestant Reformation, many Christians of that era taught “Scripture interprets Scripture.” The rallying cry of sola scriptura was used to argue against the Catholic faith. Lawrence’s intimate knowledge of scripture and his love of the Catholic faith enabled him to teach the theological traditions of Catholicism by showing how Catholic tradition had rock solid biblical roots.

In addition to his scholarly gifts, Lawrence also had a great sensitivity for understanding people. The Capuchin Franciscans recognized his gifts and elected him to govern the province of Tuscany at the age of 31. “He had the combination of brilliance, human compassion, and administrative skill needed to carry out his duties. In rapid succession he was promoted by his fellow Capuchins and was elected minister general of the Capuchins in 1602. In this position he was responsible for great growth and geographical expansion of the Order.”<sup>iii</sup>

Today’s Gospel is very fitting. Jesus tells the parable of the sower and the seeds: “Some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold” (Mk 4:8). With his gift for languages, his prayerful reflection of scripture, his sensitive understanding of human nature, and his willingness to engage everyone with the fruit of his prayer and study, Lawrence of Brindisi sowed the Word of God wherever he could amidst thorns, rocky ground, and fertile soil. One never knows exactly how others understand the seeds we sow, so we are called to sow constantly that the Lord may help word of God to grow in others that it may bear rich fruit thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.

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<sup>i</sup> [franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-lawrence-of-brindisi](http://franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-lawrence-of-brindisi)

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=7266>

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid, Franciscan Media