

On behalf of all of us at the cathedral, I extend my condolences to the members of Lawrence's family and the friends who are grieving his death. Just six years ago many of you gathered here for Marcella's funeral. I feel honored to join you today as we offer prayers for both of them that, as they enjoyed 56 years of married life together, they may enjoy eternal life together with each other and with Christ.

Somebody like Lawrence leaves a big hole in a family. He took care of his own siblings while growing up and instilled a strong work ethic in his own children later on. He fought for our country in the Korean war, putting his life on the line, and the army decorated him with many medals before he settled into his work at Ford Motor.

People especially remember Lawrence's compassion for others and his hospitality for guests. It is easy to see why the family thought that the gospel we just heard would be so fitting for his funeral. He gave personal care to many of those who were hungry, thirsty and in any need. He made people feel at home; he made them feel like family; he made them feel loved.

Such compassion is a hallmark of those who follow Jesus Christ. Jesus clearly expected mercy in his disciples, and he demonstrated it by his own words and deeds. From what we can tell, the first disciples were not always the best disciples. Many of them did not get along. You can expect that in any group, no matter how close they are, whether they are family, neighbors, church, club members, or even citizens of our great country. People in tight community experience love, but they also experience differences.

You can hear about the differences of the early church in a book like the First Letter of John, which supplied today's second reading. We can tell from this brief passage that some of the first disciples did not love one another; they had to be reminded that this was expected of them. But those who love find union with one another and especially with God, who is the source of love. John describes it this way: "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers." People who love are already experiencing the joys of eternity, even before they die.

We Christians learn that kind of loving from Christ. After all, as St. John writes, Christ "laid down his life for us." That is how we learned what love is. Because of this, John says, "we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."

Lawrence's family remembers him as a man who valued love. He lived it. He taught it. In doing so, he was already experiencing the best that heaven offers. Today we thank God for Lawrence's life and for the example he gave. Let us pray that God will fulfill the promise in which Lawrence and Marcella both believed, the gift of eternal life for those who love in the way of Christ.