

# The Grilled Saint

*by* Bill Yarrow

I celebrate Saint Lawrence  
who was broiled on a gridiron  
and whose seaway is impressive.  
He is the patron saint of curriers  
those who dress, finish and color leather  
to make it strong, flexible waterproof, and pretty.  
For conspiring to hide Church documents, librarians also claim him.  
When asked to turn over the Church's riches  
he brought before the Roman prefect the poor, blind, ragged and  
infirm.  
*These*, he said, *are the true treasures of the Church*  
at which point they seized him and placed him atop burning coals.

After some time he is reputed to have remarked,  
*Turn me over. I'm done on this side.*  
Thus he is claimed not only by cooks and chefs  
but also by comedians.

But was he really that droll as he was being burned alive?

The Reverend Patrick Joseph Healy argues  
this was all the result of an innocuous error  
the unwitting omission of the letter p  
by which the solemn formula  
for announcing the death of a martyr  
—*passus est*—  
was made to read *assus est*  
*passus est* meaning he suffered  
*assus est* meaning he was roasted

That's how the disparaging proverb  
*he's as lazy as Lawrence*

got started and spread across the centuries  
for that was what his tormentors said about the martyr  
as he lay supine on the burning grill  
a man apathetic and listless  
*too indolent, they thought, even to wriggle.*

