

## Homily for January 26<sup>th</sup> 2017

Today the Church in her wisdom celebrates the fruit of St. Paul's conversion – the conversion and commissioning of two of Paul's most trusted companions, Saints Timothy and Titus.

Timothy was born in Lystra, Asia Minor, of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father. During Saint Paul's first trip to that city, Timothy was converted to the Faith. He was totally devoted to the Apostle. It seems that Timothy was quite young at the time since Saint Paul pleads with the believers in Corinth to treat the disciple with respect. Timothy was also fairly young when he was appointed bishop of Ephesus. Tradition tells us that he died a martyr's death in that city.

Titus was one of Saint Paul's most valued disciples. The son of pagan parents, he seems surely to have been converted by the Apostle himself. In the pastoral letters Saint Paul describes Titus as a strong defender of the truth against the false teachers and erroneous doctrines of the day. Titus was nearly a 100 years old when he died in the year 105.

One of the central themes that we see expressed in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus is also articulated in today's Collect where the Church prays:

*O God, who adorned Saints Timothy and Titus with apostolic virtues, grant, through the intercession of them both that living justly and devoutly in this present age, we may merit to reach our heavenly homeland.*

To live justly is to treat others with the honour and respect that is their due. To live devoutly is to treat God with the honour and respect He is due.

In the reading from 2 Timothy we see both of these dimensions of a virtuous life expressed.

Listen to the respect with which Paul addresses Timothy:

*To Timothy, my beloved child: I thank God whom I serve with a clear conscience, as did my fathers, when I remember you constantly in my prayers. 4 As I remember your tears, I long night and day to see you, that I may be filled with joy. 5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you.*

Capture the tenderness of Paul's approach, his intentional prayers and affirmation of Timothy's struggle – the tears mentioned – and supporting the sincerity of his faith. This is a wonderful expression of how we live justly with others, addressing them with care and dignity, not denying their struggles, while at the same time encouraging them in the faith. To live justly in this way moves naturally into words addressing devotion to God.

*For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; 7 for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control.*

For Timothy giving God the respect due to him was to be renewed in his vocational work as the Bishop of Ephesus. The tears referred to already perhaps resulted from struggles he was facing in his vocation. Notice that Paul encourages Timothy to see this as an opportunity to not only renew his commitment to his vocation but to also remember the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of renewal and encouragement. Such empowering will allow Timothy to take to heart Paul's final encouragement in today's reading:

***Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but take your share of suffering for the gospel in the power of God***

Timothy would testify to the point of his own martyrdom for Jesus.

Because Paul so encouraged both Timothy and Titus to such just and devout living they were able to live such focused and dedicated lives.

May we be inspired to the same justice and devotion and so merit to join them in our heavenly homeland.

Saints Timothy and Titus pray for us!