

26. January 2022

## Rekindling the gift of God

**2 Tim 1:1-8**

*Reading for the memorial of Saints Timothy and Titus*

*From Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God in accordance with his promise of life in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, dear son of mine. Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus our Lord. Night and day I thank God whom I serve with a pure conscience as my ancestors did. I remember you in my prayers constantly night and day; I remember your tears and long to see you again to complete my joy. I also remember your sincere faith, a faith which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure dwells also in you. That is why I am reminding you now to fan into a flame the gift of God that you possess through the laying on of my hands. God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power and love and self-control. So you are never to be ashamed of witnessing to our Lord, or ashamed of me for being his prisoner; but share in my hardships for the sake of the gospel, relying on the power of God*

These words of St. Paul are not addressed exclusively to Timothy; they are addressed to all those who are called to respond to the Lord's mission. In a special way, they are addressed to those to whom the Church has entrusted the mission of shepherding God's flock, of exhorting, comforting, instructing, strengthening it... They are to proclaim the Word of God fearlessly in this time, even though the world has moved so far away from the Lord. The Gospel is to be proclaimed ever anew, seeking the ways that God shows to touch hearts. It must even be proclaimed "in season and out of season" (cf. 2 Tim 4:2), although the spirit of prudence will teach us in every circumstance to choose the right words to reach people more easily. What must in no way happen is that we fail to proclaim God's saving truth because of human respects or because of a false conception of having to adapt to the world.

However, the words of St. Paul that we have heard today do not only apply to bishops and priests, who have a special mission in the Church, but to all Christians, for we are all called to be witnesses of the Gospel and to spread the light of Christ. We should therefore reflect on how we can apply today's reading on a personal level.

Let us focus on these significant words: "*I am reminding you now to fan into a flame the gift of God that you possess through the laying on of my hands*". We have received the gift of baptism and confirmation, and perhaps one or another of us has consecrated himself or herself to the Virgin Mary. Perhaps we have promised

something to God on a private level. In all these realities, God is present through grace. And now it is a matter of making this grace effective in our lives.

In the end, this is the great question of our spiritual life: How do we handle the grace that has been entrusted to us? What do we do with the time we have received for our earthly life? How do we respond to the love that God offers us day by day in superabundance?

St. Paul speaks of "fan into a flame the gift of God", and this same word is also used in the sense of "rekindling a flame or a fire". It is therefore a very apt comparison, for we often identify the Holy Spirit with fire. God has already given us everything and will continue to add more and more. This fire of love must burn! This happens through prayer, the reception of the sacraments, the way of holiness.... If we want to rekindle the gift of God, as Paul advised Timothy, we need to let the Holy Spirit work even more... The fire does not yet burn sufficiently!

The Apostle Paul gives us here criteria to evaluate how the fire is burning within us: Is it a spirit of timidity or recklessness that lives in us? Are we ashamed to confess the Lord? If the answer is yes, it would indicate that the fire of the Spirit is not well lit and needs more wood.

In the face of the great distress and disorientation we are currently experiencing, this reading is an urgent invitation to allow God's grace to unfold fully in our lives. We need to examine carefully where perhaps we have neglected, and allow the Holy Spirit to revive us.