

**Homily – Mass with Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher
St. Mark the Evangelist Church – January 26, 2024**

All humans, including Christians, are weak, and the saints are no exception. At times, it is weakness which prevails in our mood, especially in contrast with our calling to apostolic work. Our weakness may reveal itself through discouragement, selfishness, or in many other ways. We know we are all called to be missionary disciples, but apostolic work – the announcement of the gospel – is annoying. The first one it bothers is the apostle her or himself. Hence the Beatitudes. That is why, as a way of to check on ourselves, it is always advisable to ask: Who is bothered by our apostolic work these days and why? How much do I bother to renew my personal encounter with the living Jesus, so I can announce Him? That renewal begins by exercising memory.

Grateful memory is essential for us. It is the very reason there are holy places, which we are called to protect. Pope Francis reminds us that history does not vanish. (quote) “Prayer, because it is nourished by the gift of God present and at work in our lives, must always be marked by remembrance. The memory of God’s works is central to the experience of the covenant between God and his people. God wished to enter history, and so our prayer is interwoven with memories. We think back not only on his revealed Word, but also on our own lives, the lives of others, and all that the Lord has done in his Church.” (end of quote). As we become mindful of all the blessings we have received from the Lord, we find much mercy. This also increases our awareness that God never forgets us, and so, through our grateful memory, the Holy Spirit instills in us operating hope for a better future.

Saints Timothy – whose memorial we celebrate today together with Titus’ – and Paul, set a good example in our first reading today.

Calling Timothy “my dear child,” Saint Paul speaks to both his heart and his intellect. “I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day. I yearn to see you again, recalling your tears, so that I may be filled with joy...” (2Tim). The text suggests that apostolic work has brought Timothy to tears. Then Paul reminds him of the faith of his mother and his grandmother. After that, the teacher gives the disciple reasons to regain strength and “stir into flame the gift of God,” which Timothy received through the imposition of Paul’s hands. The only way we can find that strength to bear our share of hardship for the Gospel is through Jesus.

Paul, Titus, Timothy, as do all Christians, share a threefold calling. First, to sow the seed by announcing the gospel, even with words if necessary. Second, to help the seed sprout and bear fruit. Third, to help others be good soil. Individual work is not enough. We need to engage in teamwork. However, not even that is enough. Only God can provide the seed, the soil, the water, the strength to look after the plant, and even the fruit. We must always acknowledge our gifts for the Holy Spirit to bear fruit through our work. The only source of true wisdom and strength is the Holy Spirit, who makes Jesus present in our lives and our world. So, Paul’s encouragement to Timothy is also addressed to us, that we may be encouraged not to let our guard down in our apostolic resolve. As we look back, let us always be aware of the insignificance of our input for the job, in contrast with God’s gift. God never forgets about us. The dynamics of the Kingdom are larger than us. Rather than being a source of discouragement, that is precisely where our hope lies. It is not our kingdom for which we work; it is the Kingdom of God.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe renew our resolve as apostles.