

Homily – Wednesday of the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time – Memorial of Saint Boniface – Televised Mass with Senior Staff – June 5, 2024

Saint Boniface, whose feast we celebrate today, displayed extraordinary courage and dedication in spreading the Gospel. Despite knowing the dangers he faced, he chose to trust in God's providence. For instance, he famously cut down the allegedly sacred oak of Thor to demonstrate the powerlessness of pagan gods. His martyrdom at the hands of pagan Frisians is a testament to his unwavering faith and commitment. Like Saint Paul, he knew in whom he had believed and was confident in God's power.

Today's readings offer us a powerful reminder of the courage, strength, and love that come from our faith in Jesus. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, we hear these inspiring words: *“stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control.”* (2 Tm). These words remind us of the gifts of Holy Spirit, urging us to rekindle and ignite our faith, especially in challenging times. Just as Paul encouraged Timothy, we are called to embolden our faith and embrace our Christian duty with courage and love.

Let us bring to mind our brothers and sisters in places where Christians face severe persecution. Despite the threat of violence and death, they continue to worship and proclaim their faith. Their resilience – and steadfastness are living embodiments of the spirit of power, love, and self-control of which Paul speaks. Similarly, the plight of migrants and refugees fleeing persecution for their faith reminds us of the cost of discipleship. They leave everything behind, driven by the hope of practicing their faith freely and finding safety for their families. Their journeys are perilous, yet their faith remains

unshaken, inspiring us to be more compassionate and supportive of those in need.

Closer to home, we find everyday heroes in parents and guardians who instill Christian values in their children despite societal pressures. Their quiet, persistent efforts to nurture faith and integrity in their families are profound acts of courage and love. They embody the spirit of self-control and dedication in their daily sacrifices. How can we stir into flame the gift of God within us? How can we support one another in our faith journeys?

“I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God,” says Paul. (2 Tm). Pope Francis often refers to the importance of memory. He says: *“The memory of love received rekindles hope and inspires people to embark upon a new journey in life. Even amid pain and suffering, once we have received the balm of love, we find the courage needed to keep moving forward: we find the strength to believe that all is not lost, and that a different future is possible.”*

We are reminded not to be ashamed to witness to our Lord. Fed by the Bread of Life, we must stand firm in our faith. Just as Saint Boniface and many others have shown, our love for Christ must be evident in our actions. This includes caring for the weak, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and supporting those who have lost their livelihoods. This is made possible as we embrace the discipline of prayer, scripture reading, and the sacraments. Like Paul, let us pray constantly for one another. Let us offer words of encouragement and support to those who are struggling, reminding them of the power and love of God that dwells within them.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe help us “stir into flame the gift of God” within us.