

## **HOMILY AT COMMON PRAYER FRIDAY JUNE 4**

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**Theme of the day: Gratitude**

2 Timothy 1:1-14

We listened today to the first 14 verses of the second Epistle addressed by St. Apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy. It is not the first contact between the mentor and his disciple and even not the first epistle addressed to him. That is why St. Paul who called himself "an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God" began immediately with the message he wanted to bring to his "beloved child," the message which is clearly expressed in the verses 13-14: "Hold the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us."

But before we focus on this message, let us have a look on the verses before and try to understand the context behind of this epistle and of this message. It seems that St. Paul wrote to Timothy in a difficult moment of his mission. St. Paul recalls Timothy`s "tears" and makes mention of a "spirit of cowardice" (v. 7) which is clearly present in this moment in Timothy`s life.

St. Paul knows that Timothy needs to be encouraged in his mission and he is ready to do it. His words of encouragement speak not only to Timothy, but also to all those who are called "with a holy calling" (v. 9), to all those involved in spreading the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the centuries, to all the world.

The main strength of Timothy is "the power of God" (v. 8) which lives in him. That is why St. Paul reminds him "to rekindle the gift of God that is within you" (v. 6). The rekindled power and gift of God was the source of strength helping the Apostles to announce the Resurrected Christ to the world. The power

and gift of God made the Christians in the first centuries ready to die with joy confessing their belief in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is the same power and gift of God that brought strength to all those who preached the Gospel in these last 100 years through out the entire world. The power and gift of God supported Christians of all confessions while they suffered abuse from totalitarian and atheists regimes, from intolerant ideologies, or even from other Christian, because of their witness and commitment to the Gospel.

Alongside the strength from God, St. Paul mentions and values also the strength which may come from Christian to Christian through fellowship in Christ. Timothy is encouraged by St. Paul, who knows to appreciate his "sincere faith", to also appreciate the support and strong faith of his grandmother and his mother (v. 5). Preaching the Gospel is not an individual mission, but a communitarian concern, an ecclessiological charge. St. Paul was aware of this reality. The Church throughout the centuries was aware of this. And last but certainly not least, those who called the Edinburgh Conference 100 years ago were aware of it.

Timothy and all missionaries can and must be good guardians of the "good treasure" entrusted to them because we are ensured that it is guarded by our Savior Jesus Christ to whom it actually belongs. He is the One who brought it into the world for our salvation. He is the One who appointed for its Gospel heralds, Apostles and teachers like St. Paul, Timothy and all those called for this.

He is the One Who sent the "Holy Spirit living in us" (v. 14) to help and assist us in holding and guarding the Gospel. Holding and guarding the Gospel does not mean hiding it or keeping it away from the world, rather it means preaching it in the way it has been entrusted to us; without changing, modifying or altering its nature. This is the challenge we have as missionaries: to bring

the Gospel to everyone but to hold and keep it unmodified; to be aware that while preaching it we may suffer

More than this, we are called to suffer for it (v. 8), but in spite of this we are asked to be joyful. How is this possible? Humanly this is not possible. Or even more than that, it is nonsense, it is a frenzy, it is just "not according to our words" (v. 9). But if we look to the words of St. Paul to his "beloved child" then, yes, this is possible "in our Lord Jesus Christ", "with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us" (v. 14) Who bring us from God "a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline" (v. 7).

Dear friends, sisters and brothers, missionaries of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world today,

Let us not forget that the Lord Jesus Christ has stirred up in Christians a deep yearning for unity. He has enabled us to see that this longing, is found among so many Christians of different tradition, is a sign that this Spirit has been at work in all of us, prompting us to recognize that in this too we must obey his will. When we look up, we now see brothers and sisters, from other Christian communities, offering us gifts that are the fruits of grace.

Painfully, often too slowly, we have acknowledged how much already unites us through our baptism into Christ and the faith we profess. Hesitantly, then with increasing confidence we have said to one another: let us not settle here, " let us journey on our way, and I will go alongside you". The Lord's own prayer is being answered : he has opened the way for us through his blood and his Spirit in guiding us along that way. His most precious gift will be when we do indeed dwell together in unity.

There is no turning back now. This road leads to the fullness of communion with one another and with the Blessed Trinity. Let us encourage one another to persevere in this search for full visible unity among Christians. Such a

unity of faith and life will make possible a profoundly common witness, no longer married by division, discord and rivalry. If there is one communion among Christians, who truly live and experience their healing and reconciliation, the world will see the truth of our worlds proclaiming Jesus Christ as the one the Father has sent, their Lord as well as ours.

“He who has promised is faithful”, so we can hold fast to this hope without wavering. Even while the Lord has been revealing to us what we already share he has been urging us to go the whole way with him, to be fully united in his truth and in his love with the Father and the Holy Spirit. We can rightly fill responsible for each other since we see that we are brothers and sisters. We can give encouragement, pray together, explore our differences and work for their healing, provoke one another to love and to hear afresh the call to deeper conversation.

### **Prayer**

Father, on the very night your Son offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins he prayed that we and all who would come to believe in him might be one, as you are in him and he in you. Hasten the day when your will is done and we are so completely one that the world may believe in Jesus Christ whom you have sent. So may all woman and man know that you love them as much as you love your only Son. Help us by your Holy Spirit to persevere courageously and confidently along this way together, through Christ our Lord. Amen

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