

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jan 26th 2016

Memorial of Saints Timothy and Titus, Bishops

It seems the moment the Christmas holiday concluded retailers were stocking their shelves in anticipation of the Valentine's Day holiday in February. Although the schedule seems ambitious, the abundance of Valentine's colors and shapes are welcome on a cold January day. During one of my errands I saw a display of red, pink or white rectangular boxes each with an opening in the top. I quickly recognized these as a manufactured version of the shoe box valentine receptacles we made in grade school. The sharing of valentines was quite the production. How I carefully strategized which friend would get which valentine! As we are a couple of weeks from Valentine's Day I am determined to engage that same care expressing my love and appreciation to my dear friends near and far.

In today's first reading St. Paul models how to show care for a friend as he expresses his affection for his dear and trusted friend Timothy. Paul writes: "As 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, as I recall your sincere faith." Paul also tells Timothy: "For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control."

These words from Paul challenge me. While it will be fun to reconnect with some old friends and let the friends I see frequently know how much I appreciate them, I wonder how I can take the gifts from God to support these friends in living their faith. Paul's charge to Timothy inspires me: "I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God." Just the other day I was talking with a colleague about daily challenges of practicing prayerful discernment when making important decisions in our roles at work. There were aspects of that conversation which initially felt risky and then I embraced the flame of the gift of God and allowed myself to be open to whatever God was showing me. Supporting one another in serving the kingdom of God helps put the tasks at work in perspective and helps build a trusting friendship.

Paul also inspires me to ask myself these questions: How am I a trustworthy friend? Do I create the opportunity to do as the Psalm calls to "Announce God's salvation day after day?" How can I be present to a friend, colleague or family member who views things differently than I do? What can I do to remind those in my life to appreciate the gifts of grace, mercy and peace from God the Father? When am I open to an abiding friendship in God as Paul and Timothy shared?

Today and every day I pray for inspiration to Proclaim God's marvelous deeds!

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