

# PASTORAL LETTERS TO TIMOTHY and TITUS



**I**t is impossible to present Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, the so-called Pastoral Letters, without dealing first with their authenticity. For over a century, many specialists have deemed it proven that they were not Paul's but that they were written after the death of the apostles Peter and Paul, under the cover of their authority, to deal with the problems of a new generation of Christians.

However, all the hypotheses attributing these letters to a disciple of Paul writing long after him also raise serious objections. We will more readily accept their authenticity if we notice that they contain many medical terms which lead us to discern the collaboration of Luke, the physician (Col 4:14). Luke was with Paul when he wrote the second letter to Timothy (4:11). On the other hand, these letters are not only meant for Paul's assistants; they could also be a type of circular letter that Paul wrote upon their request to help them to structure and to discipline the communities.

These three letters are addressed to pastors of souls, more precisely to two close collaborators of Paul and this is why, as a whole, they are

called Pastoral Epistles. Like Paul, his delegates Timothy and Titus were like itinerant ministers. Although they did not enjoy the title of apostles (they were more like evangelists: 2 Tim 4:5; Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11), they had authority over the local churches and they were particularly interested in the guidelines concerning the choice and responsibilities of their ministers or pastors.

So the organization of the Church is based on two types of ministries. The first, with Timothy and Titus as examples, extends the mission of the apostles and it enjoys apostolic authority. The others remain involved with the community that presented them to exercise their responsibilities (see Acts 6:1-5 and 1 Tim 5:22). Whether they are called *episcopos* (overseers), *presbyters* (elders) or *deacons* (in charge of serving), these ministers who perform a special role for the proclamation of the word and the Eucharist, continue to belong to their families and the community.

We will have to strive to understand this complementarity, considering the evolution of the Latin Church. Within a few centuries, it unified these very different ministries within the framework of a hierarchized clergy. See the commentaries on Numbers 4:1 and Hebrews 9:1 on this topic.

The choice of the people responsible for the churches was not the only objective of these letters. They provide guidelines for the life of Christian communities as they no longer expect an imminent return of Christ and they have to learn how to persevere. They also insist on fidelity to the *tradition* of the apostles. For the Greeks, the Christian message was just as difficult to accept, as it was for the Jews, and even people of goodwill heard the message (and distorted it), just as we do, through their own way of thinking. Some wanted to do better than the apostles, to choose what fit or did not fit the perspectives of their own culture. In the end, some people were taking the liberty of teaching their own doctrine. People are quick to replace the imitation of Christ by eloquent speeches!

Therefore, the successors of the apostles had to defend the doctrine—this term comes up more than once—that they had received and Paul reminds them that the cult of the word of God goes hand in hand with the fidelity to the message received from the apostles.

# FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY



**1** <sup>1</sup>From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by command of God, our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, our hope, <sup>2</sup>to Timothy, my true son in the faith.

May God the Father, and Christ Jesus, our Lord, give you grace, mercy, and peace.

## **False teachers**

<sup>3</sup>When I left for Macedonia, I urged you to remain in Ephesus to warn certain persons not to teach false doctrine, <sup>4</sup>or to concern themselves with fables and endless genealogies. These give rise to discussions rather than promoting a better service of God through faith. <sup>5</sup>The aim of our warning is love, which comes from a pure mind, a good conscience and sincere faith.

<sup>6</sup>Some have turned away from such motivation and have strayed into useless discussions. <sup>7</sup>They claim to be teachers of the law when, in fact, they understand neither what they say nor the things they speak about.

<sup>8</sup>We know that the law is good, as long as it serves its purpose. <sup>9</sup>The law is not for the righteous, but for the lawless, and for the wicked and sinful, for those who do not respect God, and religion, for those who kill their parents, for murderers, <sup>10</sup>for those who indulge in unlawful sex and homosexuality, for kidnappers and exploiters, for liars and perjurers, and for all that is contrary to sound doctrine, <sup>11</sup>to the gospel of the God of glory and happiness which was entrusted to me.

<sup>12</sup>I give thanks to Christ Jesus, our Lord, who is my strength, who has considered me trustworthy, and appointed me to his service, <sup>13</sup>although I had been a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a fanatical enemy. However, he took mercy on me because I did not know what I was doing when I

opposed the faith; <sup>14</sup>and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, together with faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

<sup>15</sup>This saying is true and worthy of belief: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first. <sup>16</sup>Because of that, I was forgiven; Christ Jesus wanted to display his utmost patience so that I might be an example for all who are to believe, and obtain eternal life. <sup>17</sup>To the King of ages, the only God who lives beyond every perishable and visible creation—to him, be honor and glory forever. Amen!

<sup>18</sup>Timothy, my son, I command you to fight the good fight, fulfilling the prophetic words pronounced over you. <sup>19</sup>Hold onto faith and a good conscience, unlike those who, ignoring conscience, have finally wrecked their faith. <sup>20</sup>Among them are Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

### 1 TIMOTHY 1:1-20

**Read:** As time passes and leaders change, there is a great need to be sure that teaching remains faithful and does not become distorted. Paul speaks about the need for laws to control evil. He speaks about God's mercy toward sinners, using himself as an example.

**Reflect:** Are the teachings you have received about Jesus and Christian life based on the Gospel? In your opinion, what is the most important teaching of Jesus? How has God been merciful to you?

**Pray:** Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with wisdom so that your heart and mind strengthens your trust in Christ Jesus and remains open to a deeper understanding of his teachings.

**Act:** Deepen your knowledge of Jesus and his Gospel. Commit to some spiritual reading. If possible, join a bible study.

**2**<sup>1</sup>First of all, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, <sup>2</sup>for rulers of states and all in authority, that we may enjoy a quiet and peaceful life in godliness and respect. <sup>3</sup>This is good and pleases God. <sup>4</sup>For he wants all to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth. <sup>5</sup>As there is one God, there is one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, <sup>6</sup>who gave

his life for the redemption of all. This is the testimony, given in its proper time, <sup>7</sup>and of this God has made me apostle and herald. I am not lying, I am telling the truth: He made me teacher of the nations regarding faith and truth.

<sup>8</sup>I want the men in every place to lift pure hands in prayer to heaven, without anger and dissension.

<sup>9</sup>Let women dress with simplicity and modesty, not adorned with fancy hairstyles, gold, jewels, and expensive clothes, <sup>10</sup>but with good works, as is fitting for women serving God. <sup>11</sup>Let a woman quietly receive instruction and be submissive. <sup>12</sup>I allow no woman to teach, or to have authority over men. Let them be quiet. <sup>13</sup>For Adam was created first and then Eve. <sup>14</sup>Adam was not deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and fell into sin. <sup>15</sup>But she will be saved through motherhood, provided that her life be orderly and holy, in faith and love.

### 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-15

**Read:** Paul urges the community that petitions, intercessions, and thanksgiving are made for everyone. The role of women in this passage is not meant to be taken literally. It reflects the limitations of his time, not to the eternal truth of the Gospel. Both men and women should pray, and their faith be expressed in everyday life.

**Reflect:** Do you always pray every day? Do you pray for your government officials in spite of political differences? What is it that you expect mainly from God? What do you think about the participation of women in the life of the Church? What should the Church do to protect and enhance the rights of women?

**Pray:** Present to the Lord all your worries and anxieties. Trust in Him; with his help, we can overcome everything. Ask the Holy Spirit to renew the hearts and minds of the members of your community so that the dignity and place of women be always respected and valued.

**Act:** Reserve a time for prayer every day. Invite your people to accompany you.

## Regarding overseers and deacons

**3**<sup>1</sup>If someone aspires to the overseer's ministry, he is without a doubt looking for a noble task. <sup>2</sup>It is necessary that the overseer (or bishop) be beyond reproach, the husband of one wife, responsible, judicious, of good manners, hospitable, and skillful in teaching. <sup>3</sup>He must not be addicted to wine, or quarrelsome, but gentle and peaceful, and not a lover of money, <sup>4</sup>but a man whose household is well managed, with obedient and well-mannered children. <sup>5</sup>If he cannot govern his own house, how can he lead the assembly of God?

<sup>6</sup>He must not be a recent convert, lest he becomes conceited and falls into the same condemnation as the devil. <sup>7</sup>Moreover, he must enjoy a good reputation among the outsiders, lest people speak evil about him and he falls into the snare of the devil.

<sup>8</sup>Deacons, likewise, must be serious and sincere, and moderate in drinking wine, not greedy for money; <sup>9</sup>they must keep the mystery of faith with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup>Let them be first tried and, if found blameless, be accepted as deacons. <sup>11</sup>In the same way, the women must be conscientious, not given to gossip, but reserved and trustworthy.

<sup>12</sup>A deacon must be the husband of one wife, and must know how to guide his children and manage his household. <sup>13</sup>Those who serve well as deacons will win honorable rank, with authority to speak of Christian faith.

<sup>14</sup>I give you these instructions, although I hope I will see you soon. <sup>15</sup>If I delay, you will know how you ought to conduct yourself in the household of God, that is the Church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth. <sup>16</sup>How great, indeed, is the mystery of divine blessing!

*He was shown in the flesh  
and sanctified by the spirit;  
presented to the angels  
and proclaimed to all nations.  
The world believed in him:  
He was taken up in glory!*

**4**<sup>1</sup>The Spirit tells us clearly that in the last days some will defect from the faith, and follow deceitful spirits and devilish doctrines, <sup>2</sup>led by lying hypocrites whose consciences have been branded with the stamp of infamy.

<sup>3</sup>These persons forbid marriage, and condemn the use of certain foods, which God created for those who know the truth, and which the believers receive with thanksgiving. <sup>4</sup>Everything created by God is good, and all food is lawful; nothing is to be rejected, if we receive it with thanksgiving, <sup>5</sup>for it is blessed with the word of God and prayer and made holy.

<sup>6</sup>If you explain these things to the brothers and sisters, you will prove to be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished by the teachings of faith and the sound doctrine that you have followed. <sup>7</sup>Reject irreligious fables and old wives' tales. Train yourself in godliness. <sup>8</sup>Physical training is of limited value; godliness, instead, is useful in every way, holding promise for the present life and for the life to come. <sup>9</sup>Here, you have a sure doctrine you can trust. <sup>10</sup>We toil and endure, because we trust in the living God, the Savior of all, especially of those who believe.

### Advice to Timothy

<sup>11</sup>Command and teach these things. <sup>12</sup>Let no one reproach you on account of your youth. Be a model to the believers in the way you speak and act, in your love, your faith and purity of life. <sup>13</sup>Devote yourself to reading, preaching, and teaching until I come.

<sup>14</sup>Do not neglect the spiritual gift conferred on you with prophetic words when the elders laid their hands upon you. <sup>15</sup>Think about it, and practice it, so that your progress may be seen by all. <sup>16</sup>Take heed of yourself and attend to your teaching. Be steadfast in doing this and you will save both yourself and your hearers.

#### 1 TIMOTHY 3:1—4:16

**Read:** Paul offers practical advice to those who serve in leadership positions in the Church. Their lives should reflect the gospel.

**Reflect:** What is your role in your domestic Church, that is, your family? How do you show it to your people? How do you train yourself in godliness?

**Pray:** Ask for the help of the Holy Spirit that your life may always be a witness of service and devotion to others. Ask also that your Christian community members may always be free from

aspiring for titles and privileges and give priority to live the Gospel of Jesus.

**Act:** Go to your parish and offer your services for whatever needs they may have.

## The widows in the Church

**5**<sup>1</sup>Do not rebuke an older man; on the contrary, advise him as if he were your father. Treat the young as your brothers, <sup>2</sup>the elder women as mothers, and the young girls as your sisters, with great purity.

<sup>3</sup>Take care of widows who are really widows. <sup>4</sup>If a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn their family duties and give their parents financial help. This is correct and pleases God.

<sup>5</sup>A true widow is one who, on being left alone, has set her hope on God, praying day and night to God, and asking him for help. <sup>6</sup>On the contrary, a widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. <sup>7</sup>Warn them about this that they may be blameless. <sup>8</sup>Those who do not take care of their own, especially those of their household, have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers.

<sup>9</sup>Let no one be put on the list of widows unless she is sixty years old and has been married only once. <sup>10</sup>She must be commended for her good works and the education of her children. Has she offered hospitality, washed the feet of the saints, helped the suffering and practiced other good deeds?

<sup>11</sup>Do not accept younger widows; they may have other desires than for Christ and want to marry; <sup>12</sup>then they deserve condemnation for breaking their first commitment. <sup>13</sup>Besides, they form the habit of being idle, going from house to house. And it is not just idleness! They become gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.

<sup>14</sup>So I want young widows to marry and have children, to rule their household and give adversaries no grounds for criticism. <sup>15</sup>Some have already strayed to follow Satan. <sup>16</sup>If any Christian woman has widows in her family, let her assist them; in this way, the church will not be burdened and may assist those who are truly widows.

## Regarding the presbyters

<sup>17</sup>Let the elders who preside well receive double compensation, especially



those who labor in preaching and teaching. <sup>18</sup>Scripture says: *Do not muzzle the ox while it threshes grain*, and: *The worker deserves his wages*.

<sup>19</sup>Do not accept accusations against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>20</sup>If he continues to sin, rebuke him in the presence of the community, as a warning to the rest.

<sup>21</sup>I urge you, in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and of the holy angels, to obey these rules with impartiality, without making distinctions.

<sup>22</sup>Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, thus becoming an accomplice in the sins of others. Keep yourself free from blame. <sup>24</sup>The sins of some people are plain to see, even before they are examined; the sins of others are known only later on. <sup>25</sup>Likewise, good deeds are conspicuous; even when they are not, they cannot remain hidden.

<sup>23</sup>(Do not drink only water but take a little wine to help your digestion, because of your frequent illness.)

**6**<sup>1</sup>Let those who are slaves always show respect to their masters, so that no one may speak ill of God and his teaching. <sup>2</sup>Those whose masters are Christians should not show less respect, under the pretext that they are members of the church. On the contrary, they must give a better service, since they are doing good works on behalf of believers and dear friends.

### 1 TIMOTHY 5:1—6:2a

**Read:** Paul continues to offer practical advice for service to the community (about widows, the elderly, presbyters, slaves). Underlying these advices there is a sense of justice, prudence, and compassion.

**Reflect:** A lot of attention is given to widows because in that day they, like many elderly who could no longer work, had no means of support. Attention to the vulnerable is important in Christian life. The comments about women reflect the prejudices of the day and should not be read literally.

**Pray:** Pray for yourself and for your parish that you be generous and concerned about those in need.

**Act:** Visit an elderly relative or neighbor and listen to their stories. Ask if your parish has a ministry to nursing homes.

## Love of money

Teach and stress these things. <sup>3</sup>Whoever teaches in some other way, not following the sound teaching of our Lord Christ Jesus, and true religious instruction, <sup>4</sup>is conceited and understands nothing. This one is crazy about controversies and discussions that result in envy, insults, <sup>5</sup>blows and constant arguments between people of depraved minds, and far from the truth. For them, religion is merely for financial gain.

<sup>6</sup>In reality, religion is a treasure, if we are content with what we have. <sup>7</sup>We brought nothing into the world and we will leave it with nothing. <sup>8</sup>Let us then be content with having food and clothing. <sup>9</sup>Those who strive to be rich fall into temptations and traps. A lot of foolish and harmful ambitions plunge them into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup>Indeed, the love of money is the root of every evil. Because of this greed, some have wandered away from the faith, bringing on themselves afflictions of every kind.

<sup>11</sup>But you, man of God, shun all this. Strive to be holy and godly. Live in faith and love, with endurance and gentleness. <sup>12</sup>Fight the good fight of faith and win everlasting life, to which you were called when you made the good profession of faith in the presence of so many witnesses.

<sup>13</sup>Now, in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Jesus Christ, who expressed before Pontius Pilate the authentic profession of faith: <sup>14</sup>preserve the message revealed to all. Keep yourself pure and blameless until the glorious coming of Christ Jesus, our Lord, <sup>15</sup>who God will bring about at the proper time; he, the magnificent sovereign, King of kings and Lord of lords. <sup>16</sup>To him, alone immortal, who lives in unapproachable light, and whom no one has ever seen or can see, to him be honor and power, for ever and ever. Amen!

<sup>17</sup>Command the rich of this world not to be arrogant, or to put their trust in the uncertainty of wealth. Let them, rather, trust in God who generously gives us all we need for our happiness. <sup>18</sup>Let them do good, be rich in good deeds, and be generous; let them share with others. <sup>19</sup>In this way, they shall heap up a sound capital for the future, and gain true life.

<sup>20</sup>Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you; avoid useless and profane words, as well as discussions arising from false knowledge.

<sup>21</sup>Some have lost the faith in accepting such knowledge.

The grace of God be with you all.

**1 TIMOTHY 6:2b-21**

**Read:** Finally, Paul admonishes Timothy not to fall for riches for “the love of money is the root of every evil.” A man of God strives for justice, faith, and love. Thus, Paul also recommends that Timothy helps the rich people put their trust in God and not on the material things they have accumulated.

**Reflect:** How does love of money lead to evil today? How does it affect you? To be rich in good works, generous and ready to share is Paul’s advice, in what ways is this part of your spiritual life?

**Pray:** Ask that God may always be in our heart so that you may be a generous and good person. Give Him thanks for all the gifts you have received.

**Act:** Make today a gesture of service and generosity, be it in your home or in the parish community, that it may show that you have your hope in God and not in material possessions.

## SECOND LETTER TO TIMOTHY



**R**ead the introduction to the first letter to Timothy. While the first letter to Timothy showed us that Paul was still free to move about, he wrote this letter from one of his prisons. Which one? One of Paul's remarks about the Christians who assisted him (2 Tim 1:17) seems to suggest Rome. That would be around the years 61–63 A.D., or even later, during Paul's second captivity in Rome shortly before he was condemned to death. However, this traditional interpretation was based on a bad translation of this passage. The themes of this letter show that it must have been written from Caesarea where Paul was detained before Governor Felix (Acts 24). The letter would have come only a few months after the first one.

Paul speaks about his being a prisoner, a new situation that threatens to be ongoing. Then he focuses his attention on the place of failure and suffering within God's plan. The apparent failure of many Christian lives after a conversion and promising beginnings and the suffering of the apostle in chains on account of the Gospel. At times, he envisions the

worst and appears ready to sacrifice his life, as in Philippians 1:20. But at other times, he comes back to the conviction that we also read in Philippians 1:19: this captivity forms part of his mission and it will enable him to bear witness to the Gospel before the highest authorities of the Roman Empire.

Some people think Paul could not have written Chapter 3: it seems foreign to Paul's style and his concerns. We can easily compare 2 Timothy 3:1-5 with two paragraphs of Romans 1:29-32 and 3:10-19 and see that there is nothing new here. And the rest of this chapter takes up what we read in Romans 15:5 and 13. The style of this chapter might be surprising if it had been a letter meant to remain private, but this is certainly not the case. Even though he was addressing Timothy, Paul knew that the letter, not devoid of rhetoric, would be read.

Let us not forget that since leaving Miletus and even more after his arrest in the temple (Acts 21:27), Paul had turned the page. He had said goodbye to the Jewish world as well as to the Greek world that he knew and loved. He was not mistaken to foresee a rather dark future.

Timothy was the first and the most loved of Paul's assistants. Paul would like to pass on to him his own strength and apostolic conviction. Therefore, Paul reminds him that meditation and knowledge of the word of God form the foundation of a life of faith and of apostolic activity.

## SECOND LETTER TO **TIMOTHY**



**1** <sup>1</sup>From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, for the sake of his promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup>to my dear son Timothy.

May grace, mercy, and peace be with you from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **God did not give us a spirit of bashfulness**

<sup>3</sup>I give thanks to God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my ancestors did as I remember you constantly, day and night, in my prayers. <sup>4</sup>I recall your tears and I long to see you that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, <sup>5</sup>so like the faith of your grandmother Lois and of your mother Eunice, which I am sure you have inherited.

<sup>6</sup>For this reason, I invite you to fan into a flame the gift of God you received through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup>For God did not confer on us a spirit of fearfulness, but of strength, love, and good judgment. <sup>8</sup>Do not be ashamed of testifying to our Lord, nor of seeing me in chains. On the contrary, do your share in laboring for the gospel with the strength of God. <sup>9</sup>He saved us and called us—a calling which proceeds from his holiness. This did not depend on our merits but on his generosity and his own initiative. This calling, given to us in Christ Jesus before time began <sup>10</sup>has just been manifested by the glorious appearance of Christ Jesus, our Lord, who destroyed death, and brought life and immortality to light in his gospel. <sup>11</sup>Of this message, I was made herald, apostle, and teacher.

<sup>12</sup>For its sake, I now suffer this trial, but I am not ashamed, for I know in whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is capable of taking care of all I have entrusted to him, until that day.

<sup>13</sup>Follow the pattern of the sound doctrine, which you have heard from

me concerning faith and love in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup>Keep this precious deposit with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives within us.

<sup>15</sup>You must know that those from Asia have turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. <sup>16</sup>May the Lord show his mercy to the household of Onesiphorus because he often comforted me and was not ashamed when he found out that I was in prison. <sup>17</sup>On the contrary, he showed courage, searched for me and found me. <sup>18</sup>May the Lord grant that he find mercy on that day. You know better than I, all the services he rendered in Ephesus.

## 2 TIMOTHY 1:1-18

**Read:** Paul expresses his affection and admiration for Timothy. He anticipates that Timothy, like Paul is doing now, experience hardships. His advice is “Follow the pattern of the sound doctrine which you have heard from me, concerning faith, and love in Christ Jesus. Keep this precious deposit, with the help of the Holy Spirit, who lives within us.”

**Reflect:** Paul expresses gratitude for Timothy and his mother and grandmother. Who are the women who have strengthened your faith? When you experience hardship, how does faith help you?

**Pray:** Offer a prayer of thanks for those who brought you to believe and those that help you believe. As Paul said, pray for the spirit of power, love and self-discipline in times of hardship.

**Act:** It is good to pray for people who help you believe, but it would be really good if you could say or write a word of appreciation for them. That would strengthen them.

## Labor like a good soldier of Christ

**2**<sup>1</sup>You, my son, be strong with the grace you have in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>Entrust to reliable people everything you have learned from me in the presence of many witnesses that they may instruct others.

<sup>3</sup>Labor like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup>No soldier gets involved in civilian trade; the soldier’s aim is to please his commanding officer.

<sup>5</sup>No athlete is crowned unless he competes according to the rules. <sup>6</sup>And again, the farmer who tills the land is the first to enjoy the fruits of the

harvest. <sup>7</sup>Think over what I am telling you; the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

<sup>8</sup>Remember Christ Jesus, risen from the dead, Jesus, son of David, as preached in my gospel. <sup>9</sup>For this gospel, I labor and even wear chains like an evildoer, but the word of God is not chained. <sup>10</sup>And so, I bear everything for the sake of the chosen people, that they too may obtain the salvation given to us, in Christ Jesus, and share eternal glory. <sup>11</sup>This statement is true:

*If we have died with him, we shall also live with him;*

*<sup>12</sup>If we endure with him, we shall reign with him;*

*If we deny him, he will also deny us;*

*<sup>13</sup>If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful for he cannot deny himself.*

### **Do not fight over words**

<sup>14</sup>Remind your people of these things, and urge them in the presence of God, not to fight over words, which does no good, but only ruins those who listen. <sup>15</sup>Be for God, an active and proven minister, a blameless worker, correctly handling the word of truth. <sup>16</sup>Do not take part in useless conversations, alien to the faith. This leads to a greater impiety. <sup>17</sup>Such teaching spreads like gangrene: I am thinking of Hymeneus and Philetus. <sup>18</sup>They strayed from the truth, holding that the resurrection has already taken place; and with this, they upset the faith of some. <sup>19</sup>But the solid foundations laid by God are not shaken; on them, it is written: *The Lord knows those who are his, and: Let him who confesses the name of the Lord turn away from evil.*

<sup>20</sup>In a large house, we find, not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay. Some are reserved for special uses, others for ordinary ones. <sup>21</sup>All who clean themselves of what I speak of will become a noble vessel, useful to the Lord, prepared for any holy purpose.

<sup>22</sup>So shun the passions of youth and seek righteousness, faith, love, and peace, together with those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart. <sup>23</sup>Avoid stupid and senseless discussions since such are the causes of misunderstanding. <sup>24</sup>God's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to all, always teaching, and patient with those who do not understand, <sup>25</sup>and gently correcting opponents; perhaps God may grant them to repent and discover the truth, <sup>26</sup>withdrawing them from the snare of the devil who held them captive to his own will.



**2 TIMOTHY 2:1-26**

**Read:** Paul uses many metaphors to encourage Timothy: a soldier, an athlete, a farmer, his own experience, the experience of Jesus, even a kitchen! He is to pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace and gentleness.

**Reflect:** Do any of the metaphors used strike a note with you? Paul cautions against wrangling over words, being quarrelsome, and gossiping. How do these ruin a church community?

**Pray:** Ask from the Lord the grace to be able to share with the members of your community the faith you have received, so that your life and the life of your family may be a living witness of the Gospel.

**Act:** Engage yourself in the evangelizing work in your parish. Offer personal and economic support to the works of your church community.

**3**<sup>1</sup>Be quite sure that there will be difficult times in the last days. <sup>2</sup>People will become selfish, lovers of money, boastful, conceited, gossipers, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, impious. <sup>3</sup>They will be unable to love and to forgive; they will be slanderers, without self-control, cruel, enemies of good, <sup>4</sup>traitors, shameless, full of pride, more in love with pleasure than with God. <sup>5</sup>They will keep the appearance of piety while rejecting its demands. Keep away from such people.

<sup>6</sup>Of the same kind are those who enter houses and captivate weak women full of sins, swayed by all kinds of passion, <sup>7</sup>who are always learning, but never grasping the knowledge of the truth. <sup>8</sup>These people of corrupt mind and false faith oppose the truth, just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. <sup>9</sup>Yet, they may not go very far, for their folly will be clear to all, as in the case of those two.

<sup>10</sup>You, instead, have closely followed my teaching, my way of life, my projects, faith, patience, love, endurance, <sup>11</sup>persecutions, and sufferings. You know what happened to me at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. How many trials I had to bear! Yet, the Lord rescued me from them all. <sup>12</sup>All who want to serve God, in Christ Jesus, will be persecuted; <sup>13</sup>while evil

persons and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

<sup>14</sup>As for you, continue with what you have learned and what has been entrusted to you, knowing from whom you received it. <sup>15</sup>Besides, you have known the Scriptures from childhood; they will give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is inspired by God, and is useful for teaching, refuting error, for correcting and training in Christian life. <sup>17</sup>Through Scripture, the man of God is made expert and thoroughly equipped for every good work.

### Preach the word

**4**<sup>1</sup>In the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by the hope I have of his coming and his kingdom, I urge you <sup>2</sup>to preach the word in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking, or advising, always with patience, and providing instruction. <sup>3</sup>For the time is coming when people will no longer endure sound doctrine, but, following their passions, they will surround themselves with teachers to please their itching ears. <sup>4</sup>And they will abandon the truth to hear fables. <sup>5</sup>So be prudent, do not mind your labor, give yourself to your work as an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

#### 2 TIMOTHY 3:1—4:5

**Read:** Timothy is warned to avoid people who are lovers of themselves and of money and selfish in the way they act with others. When persecuted he should find strength in the Scripture. In good and bad times Christians must proclaim the message of Jesus Christ.

**Reflect:** How do you keep your faith when other Christians, especially leaders, do not live in a way that is faithful to the gospel?

**Pray:** Give thanks to God for the leaders and ministers of your community, especially your parish priest. Ask that he may: "Preach the word, in season and out of season...give yourself to your work as an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (4:2-5). Ask also for yourself that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, you can actively collaborate in the life of your parish.

**Act:** All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, correction and training in righteousness. Set aside time to read and study the Bible.

<sup>6</sup>As for me, I am already poured out as a libation and the moment of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>Now, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness with which the Lord, the just judge, will reward me on that day, and not only me but all those who have longed for his glorious coming.

### **Final greetings**

<sup>9</sup>Do your best to come to me quickly. <sup>10</sup>You must know that Demas has deserted me for the love of this world: he returned to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup>Only Luke remains with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is a useful helper in my work. <sup>12</sup>I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

<sup>13</sup>Bring with you the cloak I left at Troas, in Carpos' house, and also the scrolls, especially the parchments. <sup>14</sup>Alexander, the metalworker, has caused me great harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. <sup>15</sup>Distrust him, for he has been very much opposed to our preaching.

<sup>16</sup>At my first hearing in court, no one supported me; all deserted me. May the Lord not hold it against them. <sup>17</sup>But the Lord was at my side, giving me the strength to proclaim the word fully and let all the pagans hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. <sup>18</sup>The Lord will save me from all evil, bringing me to his heavenly kingdom. Glory to him for ever and ever. Amen!

<sup>19</sup>Greetings to Prisca and Aquila, and to the family of Onesiphorus. <sup>20</sup>Erastus remained in Corinth. I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.

<sup>21</sup>Try to come here before the winter. Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers and sisters send you greetings. <sup>22</sup>The Lord be with your spirit.

May grace be with you all.

**2 TIMOTHY 4:6-22**

**Read:** Paul realizes his time is limited: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” His hope is completely in the Lord. But he is not alone; together with him are Lucas, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers and sisters.

**Reflect:** Do you know people who have given up everything for the announcement of the Gospel? Does their life example help you to deepen your faith and Christian life? Do you consider yourself an active member of your community? If you were the parish priest: What would you expect from the members of the community? Do you support the pastoral activity of your parish or diocese?

**Pray:** Give thanks to God for all the people who give witness to the Gospel with their lives. Pray for all the ordained ministers of the Church, that the example of Paul may help them to be faithful and generous in their service.

**Act:** “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” Live so these words are your own.