

Commentary for October

II Timothy 1:6-8,13-14

The 2nd Letter to Timothy is usually reckoned to be St. Paul's last letter. In it Paul shows that he is aware of his approaching death and he seems to look forward to it with some relief and satisfaction. He writes, "The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (*II Tim 4:6-7*). He sounds rather lonely and tired, but he is certainly not discouraged because he is writing to encourage Timothy to persevere as he has done himself.

I find it hard to read this letter without thinking that Paul was just the teeniest bit disappointed with his young helper. In his earlier letter to Timothy, Paul had urged him not to let others take advantage of him because of his youth. Now he writes, "God's gift was not a spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power, and love, and self-control". In other words, "Stop letting everyone walk all over you. Get up and show them what it's all about!"

This reading gives us the clearest indication in the New Testament about the Sacrament of Holy Order. Paul laid his hands on Timothy to share his mission with him and pass it on, the mission that Paul himself had received from Jesus. It was Jesus who gave Paul the energy for his mission – the Spirit of power, and love, and self-control – and that is what he has passed on to Timothy.

Perhaps we can reflect on two things. First, we can think about how we regard those whom God has chosen and put in positions of responsibility in His Church, to ensure that sound apostolic teaching is preserved and shared. And second, we can recognise that each of us has a role in the Church and we have each received the same Holy Spirit. What would St. Paul say to *us*? Do we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us, and to work in and through us? Or do we usually opt for the easier life? What is it that we should be doing as Christians in our society?