

Commentary for September **I Timothy 2:1-8**

The two letters of St. Paul to Timothy and the one he wrote to Titus are known as the "Pastoral Epistles". They show us how the early Church tried to live a Christian life after the pioneering work of the Apostles, and at times they are rather touching.

Timothy was a disciple and companion of Paul whom the latter had left in charge of one of his church communities. This first letter is a mixture of doctrine, advice on how to run the diocese (such as, *I Tim 4:12* – don't take any nonsense from the clergy!), and human affection and care (such as, *I Tim 5:23* – take a little wine for your stomach problems. The poor chap probably had an ulcer worrying about his job!).

This section is part of Paul's instruction for the liturgical activities of the Christian community. Jewish communities had prayed for their pagan rulers for centuries, and the Church continued this custom, but Paul gave it a vital twist. That twist was the Cross of Jesus Christ. It is clear that Paul is not writing about remembering to pray for the civil authorities simply in a form of Bidding Prayer. He is talking about the whole act of worship – petitions, intercessions, thanksgiving – involving the whole body and mind. Christians should direct their whole identity to God through their only mediator, Jesus Christ. Through the liturgy they make Christ's sacrifice available to everyone in the world.

The Cross proves that God wants everyone to be saved. As we read the letter, Paul's instruction applies to us as much as it did to the Christians in Timothy's diocese. When we take part in the Sunday Liturgy, we are sharing in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross on Calvary. That offering was for the whole world. We should reflect how our participation helps to make it available to those around us and to the whole world.