

Our first reading draws from St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy. St. Paul's two letters to Timothy are grouped together as Pastoral Epistles. In these letters, we essentially see a pastor's heart, a father in the faith speaking to his son.

Paul is at the end of his life when writing these letters. He has completed three missionary journeys to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ that have been brutally difficult. Paul has "competed well and kept the faith." (2 Tim. 4:7) Now, Paul is in Rome where he has been imprisoned with chains for the truth of the Gospel.

Under these conditions, we wonder if Paul knew the end of his life was near. In prison, Paul picks up his pen to write to his dear companion and friend, Timothy, whom he put in charge as the bishop of Ephesus to watch over the Church.

Timothy is a young man and a little timid. Chained for the gospel, then, Paul may have been worried about the youth as another wave of persecution looked to be on the way. Consequently, Paul picks up the pen one last time to write to his old friend to encourage him in his faith.

In this letter, we hear Paul say the following to his spiritual son:

- Take your share of suffering for the sake of the Gospel;
- Guard the truth and do not be timid about your youth;
- Find worthy men to pass on the priestly ministry who can succeed you;
- Remain faithful to what you have learned and believed;
- Take encouragement from the Scripture for it is "inspired by God and useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness." In other words, read the Scriptures.

2 Timothy reads somewhat like a "last will and testament" from the Apostle Paul to his most beloved companion, Timothy. The letter displays a deep concern for handing on the correct faith to the next generation.

I encourage you to take some time and read this beautiful little letter! Do you have a shepherd's heart like Paul? Furthermore, if you are parents, do you deeply desire that your own children, and grandchildren, live the faith? Like Paul, may we ourselves be good role models, stay close to Jesus in the Church and do all we can to pass on our beautiful Catholic faith!