

Reflection for Saturday 16th May 2020

One of the aspects that strikes me when reading the Acts of the Apostles is the extent of Saint Paul's missionary journeys. He seems to cover considerable distances with a certain urgency. It helps me to understand his saying "***With me Christ's love is a compelling motive.***" One senses the zeal and love Paul has for sharing the Good News. Towards the end of his life he would say: "***I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith.***" (2 Timothy 5-6)

In today's reading Saint Paul enlists the help of Timothy, whom he wanted to have him as a travelling companion. Later Paul would write two of the most instructive and encouraging letters to Timothy that form part of the New Testament Epistles. Known as Paul's Pastoral Epistles, because they deal with the pastoral care that needs to be exercised in the Church, he encourages Timothy to "***fan into a flame the gift God gave you when I laid hands upon you.***" This indicates that Saint Paul Ordained Timothy to the priesthood by the laying on of hands. It appears that Timothy was at times a little timid because of his being so young; however, Paul encourages him not to let people disregard him because he is young. "***Accept the strength, my dear Son, that comes from the grace of Christ Jesus. put up with your share of difficulties, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.***" (2 Timothy 2: 1 and 3).

Another aspect that I find very instructive is the way in which Saint Luke, the author of Acts, speaks of Saint Paul and the Apostles submitting to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Twice in today's first reading we hear how they "***had been told by the Holy Spirit not to preach the word in Asia***", and shortly afterwards we read that they had thought to cross into Bithynia "***but as the spirit of Jesus would not allow them.***"

This degree of sensitivity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit reveals hearts that are in tune with the love of Christ. It also reveals a dependency on the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit in all their endeavours.

This Friday begins the Novena of Prayer to the Holy Spirit, ending on the Feast of Pentecost, the Birthday of the Church. May I suggest that you use some of the hymns of the Holy Spirit during these nine days to prepare ourselves for His work of renewal and transformation.

Let us surrender our entire lives to the creative work of the Holy Spirit, whom we first received at our Baptism. Let us prepare for this great feast day of the coming of the Holy Spirit afresh in our world and in our own lives.

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest,
And in our hearts take up thy rest;
Come with thy grace and heav'nly aid
To fill the hearts which thou hast made.

To ev'ry sense thy light impart
And shed thy love in ev'ry heart.
To our weak flesh thy strength supply:
Unfailing courage from on high.