



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

We owe it all to women

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There is no timidity or shame in being Christians, for faith is “a spirit of power and love and self-control”. This was Pope Francis’ teaching from the liturgical commemoration of Sts Titus and Timothy, disciples of the Apostle of the peoples.

Celebrating Mass at Santa Marta on Monday morning, the Pontiff paused particularly on the First Reading, taken from the Second Letter of Paul to Timothy (1:1-8). He emphasized that the Christian faith gives us “the power to live, when we rekindle this gift of God. It gives us love, it gives us charity”, in order “to render the faith fruitful. And it gives us the spirit of self-control: that is, knowing that we are not able to do all that we want” since “on our journey we must go onward and look for the ways, the means to carry it forward”.

At the beginning of the homily, the Pope pointed out that Bishops Timothy and Titus are like sons to Paul, who “loves both of them very much”. The Apostle speaks of Timothy’s “sincere faith” (2 Tim 1:5), in other words, “a noble faith”. Moreover, according to Francis, the original text could be translated as a “faith without hypocrisy”, a “faith in the true sense”. Basically, “like a good wine which, after many years, is ‘up front’, noble”.

The Pontiff then recalled that Paul also reveals the origin of Timothy’s faith. He received it, in fact, from his grandmother Lois and from his mother Eunice. Because, Pope Francis remarked, it is “the

mothers, the grandmothers who pass down the faith”.

On this point, Francis clarified that “it’s one thing to pass down the faith and another thing to teach the truths of the faith”. Indeed “faith is a gift. Faith cannot be studied. We study the truths of the faith in order to understand it better, but faith is never reached by studying. Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, it’s a gift, which goes beyond any preparation”. Regarding this aspect the Pope noted that Timothy was a young bishop, for in the First Reading Paul says to him: “Let no one despise your youth” (1 Tim 4:12). It is likely “that someone, seeing how young he was”, would scorn him, posing arguments such as: “This youngster who comes to command here...”. But, Francis continued, “the Holy Spirit chose him”. And thus, “this young bishop” hears Paul say: “remember where your faith comes from, who gave it to you, the Holy Spirit, through your mother and grandmother”.

Pope Francis then recalled “the beautiful work of mothers and grandmothers, the beautiful service of those women who act as mothers and the women in the family — she might even be a housekeeper, maybe an aunt — in passing on the faith”.

Then returning to the sincerity of Timothy’s faith praised by Paul, the Pontiff noted that the theme of safeguarding the *depositum fidei* returns in both the First and Second Letters: “Guard the faith. The faith is to be guarded”, he said, emphasizing the words of the Apostle: “Beloved Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter, the empty worldly chatter” (cf. 1 Tim 6:20).

The Bishop of Rome underscored above all the expression: “guard what has been entrusted to you” and he recalled that “this is our duty. We have all received the gift of faith. We must guard it, at least that it not be watered down, that it continue to be strong with the power of the Holy Spirit who gave it to us”.

In this regard, Paul recommended to “rekindle the gift of God” (2 Tim 1:6). After all, Francis said, “if we don’t take care, every day, to rekindle this gift of God which is the faith”, it “weakens, it becomes watered down, and ends up being a culture: ‘Yes, yes, I’m a Christian, yes...’, only a culture. Or a gnosis, an awareness: ‘Yes, I know all the matters of the faith well, I know the catechism well’. But, the Pope asked, “how do you live your faith? This is the importance of rekindling this gift every day: to keep it alive”.

Then came a warning against “the spirit of timidity and shame”. Indeed, “for God did not give us a spirit of timidity. The spirit of timidity goes against the gift of faith, it doesn’t allow it to grow, to go forward, to become great”. And shame is the sin of those who say: “Yes, I have faith, but I cover it up, so it isn’t plainly seen...”. It is, the Pontiff stated, “like that ‘rosewater’ faith, as our forebears would say. Because I’m ashamed to live it boldly”. But, he emphasized, “this is not faith”.

Building on these premises the Pope thought that “it would be a good assignment today for all of us to take up this Second Letter of Paul to Timothy and read it. It’s really short, it’s easy to read, but it’s so beautiful. An elderly bishop’s advice to a young bishop; he advises him to lead his Church forward: such as guarding the deposit [of faith], such as remembering that faith is a gift, that was given to me by the Holy Spirit through my mother, my grandmother, and so many women who have helped”.

But why, Francis asked, “is it primarily women who pass on the faith”? The answer is found once again in the testimony of the Blessed Virgin: “Simply because the one who brought us Jesus is a woman. It is the way that Jesus chose. He wanted to have a mother: even the gift of faith passes through women”, as it passed “to Jesus through Mary”.

The Pope thus arrived at his concluding exhortation: “Think about this and if you are able, read this most beautiful Second Letter to Timothy. And let us ask the Lord for the grace to have sincere faith, a faith which is not negotiated according to the opportunities that are presented. A faith which I try every day to rekindle, or at least which I ask the Holy Spirit to rekindle, and which thus bears great fruit”. He then invited us to take home “this advice from Paul to Timothy: ‘O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you’, in other words, guard this gift”.