

**Compete Well For the Faith**

Dear friends in Christ,

One of the blessings we have in our faith is the presence of so great cloud of witnesses, the saints, that inspire us every day. During this time of the year, we celebrate many saints that vividly illustrate how universal the Church really is: Bohemian ruler, Wenceslaus, and Filipino husband and father, Lawrence Ruiz, and his martyred companions from Japan (both on September 28) ... great biblical scholar, Jerome (September 30) ... the cloistered missionary-at-heart, Thérèse of Liseux (October 1) ... Indiana foundress, Theodora Guerin (October 3) ... beloved Francis of Assisi (October 4) ... Louisiana pastor and missionary, Francis Seelos (October 5) ... Carthusian founder, Bruno (October 6). These days remind us that holiness isn't confined to one way of life, gender, or historical period.

St. Paul, in today's second reading, was urging his young disciple Timothy to "pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life to which you were called when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses (1 Tim 6:11-12)." We know that Paul was reminding his young coworker that his position within the Church demanded total dedication to God and a faithful witness to Christ.

Just like Timothy, each of us has a part to play in the mission of the Church. We have a vocation. We see this vocation lived out in the lives of the saints we celebrate in these days. Because of this, we understand that Paul's words to Timothy are also addressed to each one of us: we must seek those things that are of God and "compete well for the faith." This means that we are called to persevere in living out our individual, unique vocation of service to God and to one another. This probably won't mean we will be martyred like Wenceslaus and Lawrence Ruiz or be called to a cloistered life like Thérèse or Bruno, but it does mean that we have to be willing to go outside of ourselves and live lives of service and sacrifice.

Today's Gospel — the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man — offers us an insight into what this sacrifice and service mean. Competing "well for the faith" — living our call to be disciples, to manifest the presence of Christ in the world — doesn't allow for selfish ambition, apathy, complacency, or indifference to the plight of others. We do not need the saints to rise from the dead to tell us what to do and how to help others. If we do not pay attention to the Scriptures and learn from the example of the saints' lives, we will not be impressed by the appearance of someone from the dead.

As we come to the table of the Eucharist, we ask Jesus Christ to open our eyes of faith to believe in the mission he has given each of us and fill our hearts with a strong desire to carry it out.

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