

Memorial of Saints Timothy and Titus

January 26

II Tm 1:1-8 or
Ti 1:1-5
Ps 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 7-8a, 10
Mk 4:26-34

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Sowing the Seeds of Faith

Last summer, in August 2006, when I came back here to the house after a pastoral year, I was very impressed with the garden and deck outside our dining room. The deck was verdant and green with tomatoes; sunflowers; small red chili peppers which are native to Southeast Asia, planted by our maintenance man, Boa; and even a pineapple plant which Tom took care of. All these plants started as small seeds and grew to become food-bearing plants. On the same note, Mark's Gospel talks about a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, but when it springs forth, it becomes the largest of plants with large branches in which birds can find shade.

Faith is like a mustard seed. It starts out as a small gift from God. God plants the seeds of faith in our hearts, in our souls. As we grow and mature, so does our faith in God. Since faith is a gift from God, we must also share this with others. As co-creators and co-heirs of God's kingdom, we help to plant and harvest the seeds of faith in other people. The best way to share our faith is simply by living faith-filled lives: by doing good works, by helping others, through prayer, by loving and forgiving as God has loved us and forgiven us time and time again.

The saints and bishops we remember today, Timothy and Titus, had this special role of planting the seeds of faith in the people they ministered to. Timothy was a convert of Paul in the year 47 and joined him in his apostolic work. During the 15 years that they worked together, Timothy not only became Paul's disciple but also one of his most faithful and trusted friends. He was with Paul when he founded the Church in Corinth (in Greece) and was later installed by Paul as bishop of the Church in Ephesus, now part of western Turkey. Timothy was also sent to difficult missions by Paul – often during times of great troubles in the local churches which Paul founded.

Titus was also a fellow missionary and disciple and close friend of Paul's. When great difficulties arose in the Christian community at Corinth, Paul sent Titus there and he was successful in smoothing things out. Titus was also an administrator for the Church on the island of Crete, where he organized the community, corrected abuses and appointed priest-bishops.

Through the ministries of Timothy and Titus, we get a glimpse of the life of the early Church, which included great zeal in the life of the apostolate, great communion in Christ and great friendship. Yet there is always the problem of human nature and the unglamorous details of daily life, including quarrels with other people and fears within themselves. Timothy and Titus used a great deal of charity and patience to handle life's ups and downs. Through it all, the love of Christ sustained them. As the reading from the second letter to Timothy states, "Bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God." This they were able to do. This is what faith is all about – trusting in God, doing the best work and good deeds that we can and again trusting in God, leaving the rest to him.

I would like to share a quote from the letter to Titus (3:4-8): “But when the kindness and generous love of God our Savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. This saying is trustworthy.”