

The Spiritual Athlete (26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

1 Timothy 6:11-16—The Spiritual Athlete

¹¹ But as for you, man of God, shun all this; *aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.* ¹² *Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.* ¹³ In the presence of God who gives life to all things, and of *Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession,* ¹⁴ *I charge you to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ;* ¹⁵ and this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. (1 Tim 6:11-16)

1. Virtues: “aim” at acquiring virtues (6:11)

- a. “righteousness”
- b. “godliness”
- c. “faith”
- d. “love”
- e. “steadfastness”
- f. “gentleness”

2. Spiritual Contest: “fight” or “contest” or “competition” (Greek *agōna*) (6:12)

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵ *Every athlete* (Greek *ho agōnizomenos*) *exercises self-control in all things.* They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; ²⁷ but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. (1 Cor 9:24-27)

3. Good Confession: the “confession” or “profession” (Greek *homologia*) (6:12)

4. Testimony: Christ’s “confession” (Gk *homologia*) before Pilate (6:13; Luke 22:1-3)

5. Epiphany: the “appearing” (Greek *epiphania*) of Christ (6:14)

Living Tradition

Tertullian: In like manner, O blessed, consider whatever is hard in your present situation as an exercise of your powers of mind and body. *You are about to enter a noble contest in which the living God acts the part of superintendent and the Holy Spirit is your trainer, a contest whose crown is eternity, whose prize is angelic nature, citizenship in heaven for ever and ever.* (Tertullian, *To the Martyrs* 3.3; trans. R. Deferari)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

1. What are the implications of Paul's use of spiritual "athletics" to describe spiritual battle?

For Further Reading

1. George T. Montague, S.M. *First and Second Timothy, Titus*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008.
2. Peter Gorday, *Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2000.