

The Ordination of Timothy (27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14—The Laying on of Hands

⁶ Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; ⁷ for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control. ⁸ Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but *share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God*, ⁹ who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, ¹⁰ and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹ For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹² and therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me. ¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; ¹⁴ guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. (1 Tim 6:11-16)

1. Gift: rekindle the “gift” (Greek *charisma*) of God (1:6)
2. Laying on of Hands: through the “laying on” (Greek *epithesis*) of Paul’s hands (1:6)
 - a. Blessings: Israel blesses Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen 48:14)
 - b. Consecration: Levites have “hands” laid on them (Num 8:5-11)
 - c. Sacrifice: Levites “lay their hands” on bulls (Num 8:12-13)
 - d. Commission: Moses “laid hands” on Joshua (Num 27:18-23; Deut 34:9)
 - e. Ordination: later rabbinic “laying on of hands” (Hebrew *semikhah*)

Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the council of elders (Greek *presbyterion*) laid their hands upon you. (1 Tim 4:14)

3. Suffering: Paul calls Timothy to “suffer” for the sake of “the gospel” (1:8)
4. Vocation: a holy “calling” (Greek *klēsis*; Latin *vocatio*); by “grace,” not “works” (1:9)
5. Cruciformity: Paul suffers as “preacher,” “apostle,” and “teacher” (1:11)
6. Truth: guard the “truth” that has been “entrusted” to you (1:14)

Living Tradition

Ambrosiaster: “Paul urges Timothy to nurture his spirit with eagerness of mind, rejoicing in his faith, *just as he once rejoiced in the newness of his ordination.*” (Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on the Second Letter to Timothy*; trans. P. Gorday)

Council of Trent: Since from the testimony of Scripture, apostolic tradition, and the

unanimous agreement of the Fathers it is clear that grace is conferred by sacred ordination..., *no one ought to doubt that orders is truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the Holy Church. For the apostle says: "I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands..."* [2 Tim 1:6].” (Council of Trent, Session 23, Chapter 3; trans. R. Fastiggi and A. E. Nash).¹

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

1. What are the Jewish roots of Paul’s act of “laying hands” on Timothy (2 Tim 1:6)? What is its sacramental significance in our own day?

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.

¹ In Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals* (43rd ed.; ed. Peter Hünermann; trans. R. Fastiggi and A. E. Nash; San Francisco: Ignatius, 2012),