

The Martyrdom of Paul (30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18—Paul the Martyr

⁶ *For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come.* ⁷ *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.* ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. [⁹ Do your best to come to me soon. ¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you; for he is very useful in serving me. ¹² Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. ¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will requite him for his deeds. ¹⁵ Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.] ¹⁶ At my first defense no one took my part; all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! ¹⁷ *But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength to proclaim the message fully, that all the Gentiles might hear it.* So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ *The Lord will rescue me from every evil and save me for his heavenly kingdom.* To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen. (2 Tim 4:6-8, 16-18)

1. Martyrdom: Paul is “on the point of being sacrificed” (4:6)
2. Departure: the time of Paul’s “departure” (=death) is close (4:6)
3. Spiritual Athlete: he has fought the “good fight” (Greek *kalon agōna*) (4:7)
4. Reward: the “crown of righteousness” (4:8)

Living Tradition

Jerome: *In the twenty-fifth year after our Lord's passion, that is the second of Nero, at the time when Festus Procurator of Judea succeeded Felix, [Paul] was sent bound to Rome, and remaining for two years in free custody, disputed daily with the Jews concerning the advent of Christ.* It ought to be said that at the first defence, the power of Nero having not yet been confirmed, nor his wickedness broken forth to such a degree as the histories relate concerning him, *Paul was dismissed by Nero, that the gospel of Christ might be preached also in the West.* As he himself writes in the second epistle to Timothy, at the time when he was about to be put to death dictating his epistle as he did while in chains; “At my first defence no one took my part, ...but the Lord stood by me and strengthened me..., and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion” [4:16]—clearly indicating Nero as lion on account of his cruelty. And directly following he says “The Lord delivered me from the month of the lion” and again shortly “The Lord delivered me from every evil work and saved me unto his heavenly kingdom,” [4:18] *for indeed he felt within himself that his martyrdom was near at hand,* for in the same epistle he announced “for I am already being offered and the time of my departure is at hand” [4:6] *He then, in the fourteenth year of Nero on the same day with Peter, was*

beheaded at Rome for Christ's sake and was buried in the Ostian way, the twenty-seventh year after our Lord's passion. (Lives of Illustrious Men 5; trans. NPNF)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

1. How was Paul ultimately martyred for Christ? Why does he described his impending martyrdom as a “sacrifice” (2 Tim 4:6)?

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.