The Mass Readings Explained

Introduction to 1 Thessalonians (29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5—The Opening of the Letter

¹ *Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy*, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. ² We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, ³ remembering before *our God and Father* your work of *faith* and labor of *love* and steadfastness of *hope* in *our Lord Jesus Christ*. ⁴ For we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you; ⁵ for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and *in the Holy Spirit* and with full conviction. (1 Thessalonians 1:1-5)

Introduction to 1 Thessalonians

- 1. Authorship: "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy" (1 Thess 1:1)
- 2. <u>Date</u>: ca. A.D. 51 (traditional)
 - a. During Paul's time in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:1-28)
 - b. Widely regarded as the first letter to be written by Paul

3. <u>Audience</u>: "the church of the Thessalonians" (1 Thess 1:1)

- a. Thessalonica: a Greek city (not a Roman colony like Philippi)
- b. Greek City: named after Alexander the Great's half-sister (ca. 315 B.C.)
- c. Jewish Synagogue: Paul goes there first to preach "Christ" (Acts 17:2-3)
- d. Mission: some success with Jews, and with Gentile God'-fearers (Acts 17:4)
- e. Jewish Opposition: Paul dragged before authorities by Jason (Acts 17:5)
- f. Political Charge: could be treated high treason:

These men who have turned the world (Greek oikoumen \bar{e}) upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them; and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king (Greek Basilea heteron), Jesus. (Acts 17:6-7)

g. Flight: Paul and Silas flee to the nearby city of Beroea (Acts 16:10)

4. Purpose:

- a. Thanksgiving for "Faith" of Thessalonians (1 Thess 1:1-10)
- b. Visit: Paul reflects on his visit to Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:1-20)
- c. Timothy's Visit: Paul sent to check in on them (1 Thess 3:1-13)
- d. Exhortation: to live in Holiness (1 Thess 4:1-12)
- e. Eschatology: encouragement b/c Christians have "died" (1 Thess 4:13-5:11)
- f. Leaders: respect for leaders (1 Thess 5:12-28)
- 5. Lectionary: Ordinary Time, follows the letter to the Romans

Year A

Dr. Brant Pitre The Mass Readings Explained

1 Thessalonians 1-5, Excerpts (29th-33rd Sundays in Ordinary Time)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (29th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. What is distinctive about the Church in Thessalonica?

For Further Reading

- St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
- 2. Peter Gorday, ed. *Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IX; Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 2000).
- 3. Nathan Eubank, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019).