



Pastoral Letters to Timothy and Titus

Cultural changes taking place in all areas of existence also affect the Church. In the beliefs and practices we have been taught, not all comes from Christ, and consequently, many things may change. There is nevertheless a risk of distorting authentic faith. Where then is the rule of faith, to which all our opinions must submit?

This problem already arose in the Church when in 64-67 A.D. Peter and Paul died as martyrs in Rome. The Church, especially in the West, no longer had these witnesses of Christ capable of proclaiming both his deeds and his words. It was as difficult for the Greeks to accept the Christian message as it was for the Jews, and even those of good will among the listeners understood the message – as we do today – through their own ways of thinking, distorting it in proportion to the prejudices of their time.

Then came an opportunity for people eager to discuss, to recount in a better way than did the apostles, even to say what they had not said, and some even took the liberty of teaching their own doctrine. How quickly the imitation of Christ could be replaced by theories and discourses on religion!

So it was that the successors of the apostles had to defend the doctrine they had received from them. At the same time they had to take care in the choice and in the formation of the ministers of the Church for these would have to keep the genuine message. Such are the concerns that we find in these letters to Timothy and Titus.

These letters of similar origin are entitled Paul's letters. Both the form and content of these letters show that they are not from him. They must have been written in the pressure of circumstances we have just mentioned about 90-100 A.D. It was thought well to place this teaching of the Church under the authority of Paul and doubtless some more personal paragraphs written by him have been inserted: in several passages, we certainly find Paul's counsels to Timothy and Titus or to other of his assistants.

These three letters of Timothy and Titus are called "pastoral letters" because they address Church shepherds. They truly deserve this name for still another reason that is not always perceived. They are addressed to Paul's delegates who, although they did not enjoy the title of apostles, were like the itinerant ministers and had authority over the local churches. They are reminded of their missionary ideal for they had devoted their life to Christ and to preaching the Word. Yet at the same time they are ordered to watch over the Church local ministers. Whether they are bishops, elders or deacons, they were elected by the community and spent part of their time in leading and in teaching their brothers and sisters; they also celebrated the sacred sacraments of the Church, baptism, Eucharist and the anointing of the sick.

So we find here two kinds of ministries which complement one another to fulfill the pastoral duties. The first, of which Timothy and Titus are examples extends the mission of the apostles, follows the patterns of their consecrated life and enjoys apostolic authority. The second, trained themselves within the community which elected them. Today we would speak of lay ministers, for they go on belonging to their family and community, although they have been ordained by a laying on of hands and have been accepted or acknowledged by the apostolic authority. We shall strive to understand this complementarity because the subsequent evolution of Latin Church unified these very different ministries in the span of some centuries framing them into one hierarchical clergy. See on this point Num 4:1 and Heb 9:1. New Testament witnesses the different organizations of the early Church in the many cultural areas of Roman Empire. For a part it wanted to be and to remain the Church founded on the apostles, on the other hand, it took example of the Jewish communities with their elders. Afterwards the ministries would evolve or become fixed according to the needs and the social context.

1 ¹From Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by a command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, ²to Timothy, my true son in the faith.

^{Acts 16:1} ^{Tit 1:4} May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy and peace.

False teachers

^{Tit 1:14} ^{3:9} ³When I left for Macedonia I urged you to remain in Ephesus to warn certain persons not to teach false doctrine ⁴or to concern themselves with fables and endless genealogies. These give rise to discussions rather than promoting a better service of God through faith. ⁵The aim of our warning is love which comes from a pure mind, a good conscience and sincere faith.

⁶Some have turned away from such a motivation and have strayed into useless discussions. ⁷They claim to be teachers of the Law when, in fact, they understand neither what they say nor the things they speak about.

^{Rom 1:29} ^{1Cor 6:9} ^{Gal 5:23} ^{2Cor 4:4} ⁸We know that the Law is good, as long as it serves its purpose. ⁹The Law is not for the righteous, but for the lawless and for the wicked and sinful, for those who do not respect God and religion, for those who kill their parents, for murderers, ¹⁰for those who indulge in unlawful sex and homosexuality, for kidnappers and exploiters, for liars and perjurers and for all that is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹to the Gospel of the God of glory and happiness, which was entrusted to me.

¹²I give thanks to Christ Jesus, our Lord, who is my strength, who has considered me trustworthy and appointed me to his service, ¹³although I had been a blasphemer, a persecutor and a rabid enemy. However he took mercy on me because I did not know what I was doing when I opposed the faith; ¹⁴and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, together with faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵This saying is true and worthy of belief: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first.

¹⁶Because of that I was forgiven; Christ Jesus wanted to display his utmost patience so that I might be an example for all who are to believe and obtain eternal life. ¹⁷To the King of ages, the only God who lives beyond every perishable and visible creation – to him be honor and glory forever. Amen!

¹⁸Timothy, my son, I command you to fight the good fight, fulfilling the prophetic words pronounced over you. ¹⁹Hold onto faith and a good conscience, unlike those who, ignoring conscience, have finally wrecked their faith. ²⁰Among them are Hymeneus and Alexander whom I have delivered to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

2 ¹First of all I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone, ²for rulers of states and all in authority, that we may enjoy a quiet and peaceful life in godliness and respect. ³This is good

• **1.3** In this first chapter we have a mixture of various topics: it practically repeats what Paul said in other letters where the commentaries have already been given.

We will note only what refers to false prophets. Since the apostles who had seen Christ were dead, some people forgot that all of faith is based on what Christ taught. Instead of reading and actually living the Gospel, certain people began to discuss and work out religious theories. See Introduction to Colossians.

The aim of our warning is love which comes from a pure mind (v. 5). Timothy must be firm in eliminating these discussions that weaken the Church and prevent development of the love

that saves people. Even bloody wars came out of sterile religious arguments. The center of the paragraph is doubtless verse 15: *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*. The new masters remain with their theories instead of facing the reality of sin. It is the reality of our sin that makes the grace of God a grace, and our salvation a true salvation.

• **2.1** Heading the rules for every category of believers, we find rules for the community assemblies with two outstanding points:

- praying for rulers;
- the behavior of women in church.

I urge that petitions be made (v. 1). Paul

Rom 3:29
2P
3:9
Jn 17:3
Mt 20:28
Is 53:11
Gal 4:4
Acts 9:15
Gal 2:7
Eph 3:1

and pleases God. ⁴For he wants all to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth. ⁵As there is one God, there is one mediator between God and human-kind, Christ Jesus, himself human, ⁶who gave his life for the redemption of all. This is the testimony, given in its proper time, ⁷and of this, God has made me apostle and herald. I am not lying, I am telling the truth: He made me teacher of the nations regarding faith and truth.

⁸I want the men in every place to lift pure hands in prayer to heaven without anger and dissension.

1P 3:2
1Cor 14:34
Gen 2:18
1Cor 11:8
Gen 3:6

⁹Let women dress with simplicity and modesty, not adorned with fancy hairstyles, gold, jewels and expensive clothes, ¹⁰but with good works, as is fitting for women serving God. ¹¹Let a woman quietly receive instruction and be submissive. ¹²I allow no woman to teach or to have authority over men. Let them be quiet. ¹³For Adam was created first and then Eve. ¹⁴Adam was not deceived; it was the woman who

was deceived and fell into sin. ¹⁵But she will be saved through motherhood, provided that her life be orderly and holy, in faith and love.

Regarding overseers and deacons

Tit 1:6
3:12
Tit 2:6
2Tim 2:24

3 ¹If someone aspires to the overseer's ministry, he is without a doubt looking for a noble task. ²It is necessary that the overseer (or bishop) be beyond reproach, the husband of one wife, responsible, judicious, of good manners, hospitable and skillful in teaching. ³He must not be addicted to wine or quarrelsome, but gentle and peaceful, and not a lover of money, ⁴but a man whose household is well-managed, with obedient and well-mannered children. ⁵If he cannot govern his own house, how can he lead the assembly of God?

⁶He must not be a recent convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the same condemnation as the devil. ⁷Moreover he must enjoy a good reputation among the outsiders, lest people

wants Christians to be in solidarity with their compatriots, loyal toward their nation and praying for them. In spite of its sins and superstitions, the pagan world was religious. Religion accompanied their every action. This explains why, some years later, Christians were persecuted as rebels and traitors because they did not worship the emperor, nor his gods. Perhaps this insistence on prayer for rulers is due to the fact that the paragraph was written when there already was some suspicion about Christians: it was necessary to remove these suspicions.

Faithfulness to Christ does not prevent loyalty to the nation unless the nation becomes an idol, and this happens when, in the name of the nation, people are asked to obey its rulers blindly. We cannot give up criticizing their errors, nor stop considering as our brothers and sisters those who do not agree with us.

We should *pray for rulers*. Does that mean that we cannot look for more honest and better rulers? Of course, we can: see Romans 13.

Verses 9-14 concern women, and to understand why the letter is so strict, we must recall that there was a lot of talk about freedom in the Church, and there were abuses.

On the other hand, we always have a hard time accepting the demands of the Gospel when society teaches us something different. Jesus' attitude regarding women was revolutionary and liberating, and at the beginning, the Church followed his example (see 1 Cor 7). Before long,

they went back to the usual way of giving a very limited place in society to women and that applied also in their religious assemblies.

In the whole history of the Church there was a great respect for the dignity of women and there were many initiatives favoring them; yet there were few periods when women enjoyed equality with men. In many places women were more emancipated during the Middle Ages than closer to our times, in the 19th century. Likewise, in urban societies dealing with business, in the world and in the Church, women occupied a place very different from that granted them in more closed societies.

In fact, the Church alone does not change the world and society until people have learned to know the human reality better.

This passage, reminding us of 1 Cor 11:1-10 and 14:34, opposes women's emancipation with the same biblical arguments commonly used by the Jewish masters.

God wants all to be saved. Paul repeats in his own way the passage from the last words of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel: the Gospel must be preached to everyone, to all the nations. Perhaps only a minority will believe but this evangelization is necessary so that all humanity may reach the goal fixed by God.

• **3.1** Here Paul deals with leaders, bishops and deacons (see commentary on Titus 1:6 and Phil 1:1).

speaking evil about him and he fall into the snare of the devil.

Phil 1:1 ⁸Deacons, likewise, must be serious and sincere and moderate in drinking wine, not greedy for money, ⁹they must keep the mystery of faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰Let them be first tried and, if found blameless, be accepted as deacons. ¹¹In the same way the women must be conscientious, not given to gossip, but reserved and trustworthy.

Rom 16:25 ¹²A deacon must be husband of one wife, and must know how to guide his children and manage his household.
Tit 2:3 ¹³Those who serve well as deacons will win honorable rank, with authority to speak of Christian faith.

Eph 2:19 • ¹⁴I give you these instructions, although I hope I will see you soon. ¹⁵If I delay, you will know how you ought to conduct yourself in the household of God, that is, the Church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth. ¹⁶How great indeed is the mystery of divine blessing!

Jn 1:14 *He was shown in the flesh*
16:10 *and sanctified by the Spirit;*
Rom 1:4 *presented to the angels*
1P 1:12 *and proclaimed to all nations.*
Mk 16:19 *The world believed in him:*
Acts 1:9 *He was taken up in glory!*

• 14. This short paragraph reminds us that, if indeed we are in charge of the Church of God, we are neither its founders nor its masters. The Church was born through a merciful intervention of God, when he decided that his Son should identify with the human race, as is expressed in this short poem.

Here we use *divine blessing* (v. 16) for a word that we translated elsewhere as “piety” or “religion” (see 2:2; 4:7; 6:3; 5, 6; 2 Tim 3:5 and Titus 1:1). In those years, the word was mostly used to mean a loving attitude toward the Father and neighbors, characteristic of true believers who simply imitate God’s example.

The Church is the *pillar and foundation of the truth*. We must understand this phrase as referring to the concepts of that time: from above, from a world in which everything is truth, God lowers his Truth to the earth, as a column or a visible sign on which we can lean. In spite of all the infidelities of the Church, God uses it to preserve true knowledge of the Father, the Son and the Spirit in the world. Without this knowl-

Mt 24:23 **4** • ¹The Spirit tells us clearly that in the last days some will defect from the faith and follow deceitful spirits and devilish doctrines, ²led by lying hypocrites whose conscience has been branded with the stamp of infamy.

2Tim 3:1 ³These persons forbid marriage and condemn the use of certain foods which God created for those who know the truth, and which the believers receive with thanksgiving. ⁴Everything created by God is good, and all food is lawful; nothing is to be rejected if we receive it with thanksgiving, ⁵for it is blessed with the word of God and prayer, and made holy.

Col 2:16 ⁶If you explain these things to the brothers and sisters, you will prove to be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished by the teachings of faith and the sound doctrine that you have followed. ⁷Reject irreligious fables and old wives’ tales. Train yourself in godliness. ⁸Physical training is of limited value; godliness, instead, is useful in every way, holding promise for the present life and for the life to come. ⁹Here you have a sure doctrine you can trust. ¹⁰We toil and endure because we trust in the living God, the Savior of all, especially of those who believe.

edge, people cannot be free, nor can humanity reach its maturity.

• 4.1 After the death of the apostles, new masters who tamper with the faith appear in the Church.

One of the numerous errors of these people is to despise all that comes from the body: they condemn marriage, forbid meat and wine. Concerning marriage, see the Introduction to Colossians. For those who said matter comes from evil powers whereas souls come from God who is good, having children was to imprison in an evil body souls which later would have to be saved. This is why they condemned, not sexual relations but marriage and procreation. In this contempt of the body and of a nature created by God, there is nothing Christian (see Col 2:23).

In the last days (v. 1): these are the days beginning with Jesus’ resurrection and stretching to his second coming (Heb 1:2; James 5:3).

The Spirit tells us clearly. The prophets of the Church often predicted that people would

Advice to Timothy

• ¹¹ Command and teach these things. ¹² Let no one reproach you on account of your youth. Be a model to the believers in the way you speak and act, in your love, your faith and purity of life. ¹³ Devote yourself to reading, preaching and teaching, until I come.

^{2Tim} ^{1:6} ¹⁴ Do not neglect the spiritual gift conferred on you with prophetic words when the elders laid their hands upon you. ¹⁵ Think about it and practice it so that your progress may be seen by all. ¹⁶ Take heed of yourself and attend to your teaching. Be steadfast in doing this and you will save both yourself and your hearers.

The widows in the Church

^{Lev} ^{19:32} **5** • ¹ Do not rebuke an older man; on the contrary, advise him as if he were your father. Treat the young as

your brothers, ² the elder women as mothers and the young girls as your sisters, with great purity.

³ Take care of widows who are really widows. ⁴ If a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn their family duties and give their parents financial help. This is correct and pleases God.

⁵ A true widow is one who, in being left alone, has set her hope in God, praying day and night to God and asking him for help. ⁶ On the contrary, a widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. ⁷ Warn them about this that they may be blameless. ⁸ Those who do not take care of their own, especially those of their household, have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers.

⁹ Let no one be put on the list of widows unless she is sixty years old

come to preach their own theories, and not authentic faith.

The believers receive with thanksgiving. From the beginning, it was the custom in Christian families to give thanks to God at the family meal.

Train yourself in godliness (v. 7). Here we have another danger. Contrary to teachers who despise life and want us to live as strange characters, there are others who are totally absorbed in external things. In the Greco-Roman world there was much enthusiasm for sports and races. Without despising the body we are asked to check if we give each part the importance it deserves and the time corresponding to it.

• 11. Faced with all these false teachers, Timothy must be an example of a true apostle.

Let no one reproach you on account of your youth. Usually, in the Christian communities and in the Jewish ones, the leaders were older men. This is why they were called “elders” or “presbyters” (which means the same thing). Timothy, who is visiting the church on behalf of Paul, has authority over these elders, even though he is much younger than they are. The example of his sincere faith and profound knowledge of the Bible will be his strength.

Do not neglect the spiritual gift (v. 14). If someone was named to a ministry or an official position in the church, this was considered as a spiritual gift: for example, presbyters, deacons, bishops, prophets. While other gifts, such as healing the sick, came directly from the Holy Spirit, ministries were received through a laying on of hands. An apostle or a prophet would lay his hands on the candidate to transfer to him the

authority that he had received in a similar way. Thus, in the Church, every leader receives his authority from Christ through a succession of people going back to the apostles.

On this occasion the prophets present would also address the candidate with exhortations and warnings (see 1:18).

Devote yourself to reading, preaching and teaching until I come. This counsel is always valid. To be steadfast in reading and study is what costs most in the majority of liberal professions. Very few people are courageous enough to persevere in study once they have passed their examinations. This is so, even in the Church. The “pastors,” clergy and lay, are constantly tempted in thinking such and such an activity is pastorally useful, that leisure is “relaxing” even at the cost of postponing study and meditation on the Word. The Church is always lacking people able to express their faith creatively – a gift that springs from spiritual knowledge and habitual contact with the Word of God: smiles, goodwill and psychology cannot replace this charism.

• 5.1 From the beginning, women had their own unique role in the Church. Some of them, called widows occupied an official position.

Paul sees three kinds of widows: some did not need help from the Church because they had relatives; others did need Church assistance. Finally, there were some, with or without the help of the Church, who were in charge of certain functions.

They deserve condemnation... (v. 12). This means that by leaving her position and marrying, the “widow” of the third category broke a

Lk
2:37Rev
3:1

Jn 13:14
Heb 13:2
and has been married only once. ¹⁰She must be commended for her good works and the education of her children. Has she offered hospitality to, washed the feet of the saints, helped the suffering and practiced other good deeds?

¹¹Do not accept younger widows; they may have other desires than for Christ and want to marry; ¹²then they deserve condemnation for breaking their first commitment. ¹³Besides they form the habit of being idle, going from house to house. And it is not just idleness! They become gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.

Tit 2:2
¹⁴So I want young widows to marry and have children, to rule their household and give adversaries no grounds for criticism. ¹⁵Some have already strayed to follow Satan. ¹⁶If any Christian woman has widows in her family, let her assist them; in this way the church will not be burdened and may assist those who are truly widows.

Regarding the presbyters

1Thes 5:12
Dt 25:4
1Cor 9:9
Lk 10:7
• ¹⁷Let the elders who preside well receive double compensation, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸Scripture says: *Do not muzzle the ox while it threshes grain, and: The worker deserves his wages.*

Dt 17:6
2Cor 13:1
¹⁹Do not accept accusations against an elder except on the evidence of two

or three witnesses. ²⁰If he continues to sin, rebuke him in the presence of the community, as a warning to the rest.

²¹I urge you, in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and of the holy angels, to obey these rules with impartiality, without making distinctions. ²²Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, thus becoming an accomplice in the sins of others. Keep yourself free from blame. ²⁴The sins of some people are plain to see, even before they are examined; the sins of others are known only later on. ²⁵Likewise good deeds are conspicuous; even when they are not, they cannot remain hidden.

²³(Do not drink only water but take a little wine to help your digestion, because of your frequent illness.)

6 ¹Let those who are slaves always show respect to their masters, so that no one may speak ill of God and his teaching. ²Those whose masters are Christians should not show less respect under the pretext that they are members of the church. On the contrary, they must give a better service since they are doing good works on behalf of believers and dear friends.

Love of money

Teach and stress these things. ³Whoever teaches in some other way, not following the sound teaching of our

commitment she had made publicly. The “widows” were dedicated to the service of Christ in the same way as religious women of today.

A true widow is she who has set her hope on God. We should read what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7 concerning the greater freedom celibates have to serve the Lord. Every baptized person is called to belong totally to Christ. If, through circumstances of life, we are alone again and free from family responsibilities, this may be an invitation from God to dedicate ourselves completely to the service of the Church and to constant prayer.

If today retired Christians looked into their lives in the light of God’s presence, the Church would have more leaders and missionaries than are necessary.

- 17. Paul speaks again of the *elders* or

“presbyters” who are in charge of the local community. Paul wants the community to help its leaders spiritually and financially.

We have already noted that the *elders* who were in charge of the community and who presided at the Eucharist were chosen from the most esteemed believers. This paragraph shows that the primary service expected from them was the preaching of the Word.

They deserve double compensation. It is rather astonishing to see that in many parishes the council consists of more lay people competent in social or material matters than persons of the Word, learned or prophetic, capable of giving life to the community.

They must fulfill their duties. *Rebuke him in the presence of the community as a warning to the rest:* the first Christians were no angels. Sometimes their enthusiastic and sincere faith

Gal 1:8
2Tim 1:13
Lord Christ Jesus and true religious instruction, ⁴is conceited and understands nothing. This one is crazy about controversies and discussions that result in envy, insults, ⁵blows and constant arguments between people of depraved minds and far from the truth. For them, religion is merely for financial gain.

Phil 4:11
Ecl 5:14
Heb 13:5
⁶In reality, religion is a treasure if we are content with what we have. ⁷We brought nothing into the world and we will leave it with nothing. ⁸Let us then be content with having food and clothing. ⁹Those who strive to be rich fall into temptations and traps. A lot of foolish and harmful ambitions plunge them into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰Indeed, the love of money is the root of every evil. Because of this greed, some have wandered away from the faith, bringing on themselves afflictions of every kind.

¹¹But you, man of God, shun all this. Strive to be holy and godly. Live in faith and love, with endurance and gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of faith and win everlasting life to which you were called when you made the good profession of faith in the presence of so many witnesses.

Jn 18:36
¹³Now, in the presence of God who

gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who gave the good testimony before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴I command you to keep the commandment. Keep yourself pure and blameless until the glorious coming of Christ Jesus, our Lord, ¹⁵which God will bring about at the proper time, he, the magnificent sovereign, King of kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁶To him, alone immortal, who lives in unapproachable light and whom no one has ever seen or can see, to him be honor and power for ever and ever. Amen!

¹⁷Command the rich of this world not to be arrogant or to put their trust in the uncertainty of wealth. Let them rather trust in God who generously gives us all we need for our happiness. ¹⁸Let them do good, be rich in good deeds and be generous; let them share with others. ¹⁹In this way, they shall heap up a sound capital for the future and gain true life.

²⁰Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you; avoid useless and profane words, as well as discussions arising from false knowledge. ²¹Some have lost the faith in accepting such knowledge.

The grace of God be with you all.

needed strong discipline in order for them to remain faithful to their commitments. Besides when have leaders of communities not caused problems?

In 5:18 note the quotation of the Gospel: “the worker deserves his wages” (Lk 10:7). This passage shows us that when this letter was written, towards the year 90, the Gospels were already considered “Scripture.”

At the beginning and end of the chapter, the author insists on faithfulness to tradition. Faith is not a doctrine that can be adapted to one’s tastes. Leaders are required to have a respectful and humble attitude towards this treasure entrusted to them to be transmitted to others. We can already see two faults:

- instead of deepening faith, some multiply words;
- some replace surrender to God’s Word with a critical attitude that attempts to judge faith and decide if it agrees with their own ideas.

Money is mentioned twice (6:10 and 6:17-19). After the first years of enthusiastic faith, the

Church finds that, even for believers, everything is lost when love for money persists. That is the drama in certain countries where solid Christian groups have been caught up with the best of society in the pursuit of money: faith continues to be important for them but this faith only motivates fidelity to religious practice. Money that has become our security lessens our trust in God (6:10) and isolates us from others.

The pastors of the Church should be the most aware of the danger (6:11). Salvation for them will be to place themselves in the less secure areas of life and society, where an act of faith is constantly necessary to overcome difficulties and joyously accept sacrifices (v. 12). It is not in seeking first of all our personal fulfillment that we become *God’s agent* and a witness of Christ, as he himself has been the witness of the Father (6:13).

Paul calls upon Timothy to avoid all those dangers and remain true to faith and free from greed. By doing so, he will be “a man of God,” a witness of Christ.

Dt 10:17
Ps 136:3
Rev 17:14

Ex 33:20
Jn 1:18

Lk 12:16

Mt 6:20

2Tim 2:18



What we have said in the Introduction to the First Letter to Timothy is equally suitable for this second letter. It is supposed to have been written by Paul from his prison in Rome, shortly before his death. There is no reason for doubting the authenticity of a few details that Paul gives on his situation while awaiting his sentence. As for the rest, both Paul and Timothy are only pseudonyms: the counsels and the warnings are actually those the unknown author wanted to give the ministers of the Church, some decades after the death of the apostle.

1 ¹From Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of his promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus, ²to my dear son Timothy.

May grace, mercy and peace be with you from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

God did not give us a spirit of bashfulness

Acts 26:4
Phil 3:5 ³I give thanks to God whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my ancestors did, as I remember you constantly, day and night, in my prayers. ⁴I recall your tears and I long to see you that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, ⁵so like the faith of your grandmother Lois and of your mother Eunice, which I am sure you have inherited.

1Tim 4:14
Rom 8:15 ⁶For this reason I invite you to fan into a flame the gift of God you received through the laying on of my hands. ⁷For God did not confer on us a

spirit of bashfulness, but of strength, love and good judgment. ⁸Do not be ashamed of testifying to our Lord, nor of seeing me in chains. On the contrary, do your share in laboring for the Gospel with the strength of God. ⁹He saved us and called us – a calling which proceeds from his holiness. This did not depend on our merits, but on his generosity and his own initiative. This calling given to us from all time in Christ Jesus ¹⁰has just been manifested with the glorious appearance of Christ Jesus, our Lord, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light in his Gospel. ¹¹Of this message I was made herald, apostle and teacher.

¹²For its sake I now suffer this trial, but I am not ashamed, for I know in whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is capable of taking care of all I have entrusted to him until that day.

¹³Follow the pattern of the sound

Eph 2:8
Tit 3:5

Tit 2:11

Heb 2:14
1Tim 2:7

1Tim 6:20

doctrine which you have heard from me, concerning faith and love in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Keep this precious deposit with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives within us.

¹⁵You know that all from the province of Asia have deserted me, especially Phygelus and Hermogenes.

^{4:16} ¹⁶May God bless the household of Onesiphoras, for he often came to visit me and was not ashamed of my chains. ¹⁷On the contrary, on arriving in Rome he searched for me until he found me. ¹⁸May the Lord grant that he find mercy from the Lord on that day. You well know all the services he rendered at Ephesus.

Labor like a good soldier of Christ

2 • ¹You, my son, be strong with the grace you have in Christ Jesus. ²Entrust to reliable people everything you have learned from me in the presence of many witnesses, that they may instruct others.

³Labor like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴No soldier gets involved in civilian trade; the soldier's aim is to please his commanding officer. ⁵No athlete is crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶And again, the farmer who tills the land is the first to enjoy the fruits of the harvest. ⁷Think over what I am telling you; the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

⁸Remember Christ Jesus, risen from the dead, Jesus, son of David, as preached in my Gospel. ⁹For this Gospel I labor and even wear chains like an evildoer, but the word of God is not chained. ¹⁰And so I bear everything for the sake of the chosen people, that they, too, may obtain the salvation given to us in Christ Jesus and share eternal glory. ¹¹This statement is true:

If we have died with him, we shall also live with him;

¹²If we endure with him, we shall reign with him;

• **1.6** *Fan into a flame the gift you received.* See 1 Tim 4:14. Paul tries to give his own energy to Timothy and he reminds him of God's love and promises.

The sound doctrine... the precious deposit... which you have heard from me (13-14): see 1 Tim 1:3. The doctrine of the faith cannot be altered, but neither can it be put in storage. It must be lived, which brings into play our creativity as well as that of the Holy Spirit that lets it be rediscovered each day.

He saved us and called us: see Eph 2:8-10.

He is capable of taking care of all I have entrusted to him (v. 12). These words invite us to remember the exact meaning of the word "faith." In Hebrew, for the Old Testament, the word "faith" had the same root as "to be firm," or "to lean on something." In Greek, the word that has become "faith" signifies both the trust that could be had in a debtor, and the guarantee given to the creditor. So Paul considers all his apostolic life as the deposit he has placed in God's hands. Like Paul a person of faith is not deceived by the mirages of a happy life but prefers to use his life in an often thankless labor and persevere as if he already saw what couldn't yet be seen (Heb 11:27).

• **2.1** *Entrust to reliable people* (v. 2). We have seen in Paul's first missions that he took care to establish elders in each community (Acts 14:23; see also Titus 1:6). They must be able to

preserve the faith in full. We often give more importance to immediate effectiveness of our actions rather than to doctrinal exactitude. In the long run, there is never an error that is not paid for. Saint Irenaeus affirms that the primary mission of the Church is to maintain in the world a true knowledge of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. See however the com. on Galatians 2:5.

Then Paul invites Timothy to surrender completely, with the assurance that his efforts will be rewarded.

Be strong with the grace you have in Christ Jesus, Christ's witness must be courageous and strong, as the messenger of the victorious Christ. His own conviction will convince others. He must avoid the many ways of wasting time and getting off track in his mission: idle conversations devoid of value. Things that do not promote a better service of God (1 Tim 1:4): false religious problems unrelated to real life.

No soldier gets involved (v. 4). It happened at times that Paul earned his living while preaching (2 Cor 11:9; 2 Thes 3:7), but now here the letter speaks for those who waste their time in working for a living when the community has the duty of seeing to their needs. For a minister of the Church, work can be a way of placing oneself in the world and in the midst of people; but it could also be a way of escaping the difficulties and humiliations of every apostolic task.

1Cor
9:6

1Cor
9:25

Acts
13:30
Rom
1:4

Eph
3:1
Phil
1:13

Rom
8:17

Mt 10:33
Num 23:19
1Cor 1:9
If we deny him, he will also deny us;
¹³ If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful for he cannot deny himself.

Do not fight over words

• ¹⁴ Remind your people of these things and urge them in the presence of God not to fight over words, which does no good, but only ruins those who listen. ¹⁵ Be for God an active and proved minister, a blameless worker correctly handling the word of truth. ¹⁶ Do not take part in useless conversations, alien to the faith. This leads to a greater impiety. ¹⁷ Such teaching spreads like gangrene: I am thinking of Hymeneus and Philetus. ¹⁸ They strayed from the truth, holding that resurrection has already taken place; and with this they upset the faith of some. ¹⁹ But the solid foundations laid by God are not shaken; on them it is written: *The Lord knows those who are his, and: Let him who confesses the name of the Lord turn away from evil.*

Rom 9:21
²⁰ In a large house we find not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay. Some are reserved for special uses, others, for ordinary ones. ²¹ All who clean themselves of what I speak of, will become a noble vessel, useful to the Lord, prepared for any holy purpose.

²² So shun the passions of youth and seek righteousness, faith, love and

peace, together with those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart. ²³ Avoid stupid and senseless discussions, since such are the cause of misunderstanding. ²⁴ God's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to all, always teaching and patient with those who do not understand, ²⁵ gently correct opponents; perhaps God may grant them to repent and discover the truth, ²⁶ withdrawing them from the snare of the devil who held them captive to his own will.

3 • ¹ Be quite sure that there will be difficult times in the last days. ² People will become selfish, lovers of money, boastful, conceited, gossips, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy. ³ They will be unable to love and to forgive; they will be slanderers, without self-control, cruel, enemies of good, ⁴ traitors, shameless, full of pride, more in love with pleasure than with God. ⁵ They will keep the appearance of piety, while rejecting its demands. Keep away from such people.

⁶ Of the same kind are those who enter houses and captivate weak women, full of sins, swayed by all kinds of passion, ⁷ who are always learning but never grasping knowledge of the truth. ⁸ These people of corrupt mind and false faith oppose the truth just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. ⁹ Yet they may not go very far, for their

• 14. Return to the experiences of the apostolic worker. In time the converted are tested: some make progress and others are lost. The apostle should not be astonished: no fall, no scandal can shake *the solid foundations laid by God* (v. 19): the Church will never be defeated.

They hold that the resurrection has already taken place (v. 18). Faith in the resurrection was accepted with as much difficulty in those times as it is today, and many wanted to keep the word without being embarrassed by a God who shatters our way of thinking. Perhaps those named here held that a spiritual resurrection took place at baptism and there was nothing more to hope for after death. On this subject, see in the Gospel of John the precision given in 5:28 immediately following 5:25.

• 3.1 *In the last days* (v. 1): see 1 Tim 4:1. Even the presence of evil in the Church should not surprise us.

The paragraph 14-17 gives us in a few words a full message on biblical meditation: *the Scriptures will give you wisdom* (v. 15). Biblical meditation is the best means of making faith mature (15-17). When these lines were written Scripture was essentially the Old Testament, but already the Church possessed and considered as *Scripture* several Gospels and some of Paul's letters.

Just before the mention of Scripture we read: *Continue with what you have learned – knowing from whom you received it.* "Tradition" means precisely what we receive from our elders. The reading of the Bible is inseparable from the "Tradition of the Apostles," which is

folly will be clear to all, as in the case of those two.

¹⁰You, instead, have closely followed my teaching, my way of life, my projects, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹persecutions and sufferings. You know what happened to me at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. How many trials I had to bear! Yet the Lord rescued me from them all. ¹²All who want to serve God in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³while evil persons and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

¹⁴As for you, continue with what you have learned and what has been entrusted to you, knowing from whom you received it. ¹⁵Besides, you have known the Scriptures from childhood; they will give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, refuting error, for correcting and training in Christian life. ¹⁷Through Scripture the man of God is made expert and thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Preach the Word

4 • ¹In the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by the hope I have of his coming and his kingdom, I urge you ²to preach the Word, in sea-

son and out of season, reproving, rebuking or advising, always with patience and providing instruction. ³For the time is coming when people will no longer endure sound doctrine but following their passions they will surround themselves with teachers to please their itching ears. ⁴And they will abandon the truth to hear fables. ⁵So be prudent, do not mind your labor, give yourself to your work as an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

⁶As for me, I am already poured out as a libation, and the moment of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Now there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness with which the Lord, the just judge, will reward me on that day; and not only me, but all those who have longed for his glorious coming.

Final greetings

⁹Do your best to come to me quickly. ¹⁰You must know that Demas has deserted me for the love of this world: he returned to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹Only Luke remains with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is a useful helper in my work. ¹²I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

¹³Bring with you the cloak I left at

the "Tradition of the Church," and it is a way of understanding the Bible, just as Jesus immediately after his resurrection opened to his apostles a new way of reading salvation history. This tradition is the second support of faith.

All Scripture is inspired by God (v. 16) and there we look for a message from God to his people rather than an occasion for personal speculation. The same Spirit that directs the Church has equally inspired the biblical authors.

For many years, we spoke of the "inspiration" of the Bible, not so much to encourage the reading of it in the family or community, but to affirm the fact of it being without error. It was also because some people saw contradictions between Bible and science. These problems have partly disappeared. Each book is as the human authors wrote it, reflecting their culture and their limitations (before the coming of

Christ, faith had not attained full maturity; before rational science, people could not express themselves according to scientific views). The entire book is also from God and every text is part of a definitive message. It is there we find the truth of God, and not in the exactitude of details and literary form, which we necessarily must adapt to our modern language.

Above all we must remember that the Word of God is the normal nourishment of faith. It is not only *useful for teaching*: Bible reading has the value of a sacrament for the faithful. No preaching, no catechism even though "biblical" can replace the frequent meditative reading of the word of God for the development of faith.

• **4.1 Preach the Word** (v. 2): this is Paul's last advice. It must be the first concern of the Church and of any church leader.

Paul knows that he will not be freed and that

Acts
13:50
14:5
14:19

Jn
15:20
Acts
14:22
1Thes
3:4

Rom
15:4
2P
1:21

1Tim
4:1

Phil
2:17

1Tim
1:18
6:12

1Cor
9:25
Phil
3:14
1P
5:4
Rev
2:10

Col
4:14

Col
4:10

Troas, in Carpos' house and also the scrolls, especially the parchments.

¹⁴Alexander the metalworker has caused me great harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. ¹⁵Distrust him for he has been very much opposed to our preaching.

¹⁶At my first hearing in court no one supported me; all deserted me. May the Lord not hold it against them. ¹⁷But the Lord was at my side, giving me strength to proclaim the Word fully, and let all the pagans hear it. So I was

rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will save me from all evil, bringing me to his heavenly kingdom. Glory to him for ever and ever. Amen!

¹⁹Greetings to Prisca and Aquila and to the family of Onesiphorus. ²⁰Erastus remained in Corinth. I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.

²¹Try to come here before the winter. Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters send you greetings. ²²The Lord be with your spirit.

May grace be with you all.

^{Mt}
^{10:19}
^{Phil}
^{1:19}

^{Dn}
^{6:23}

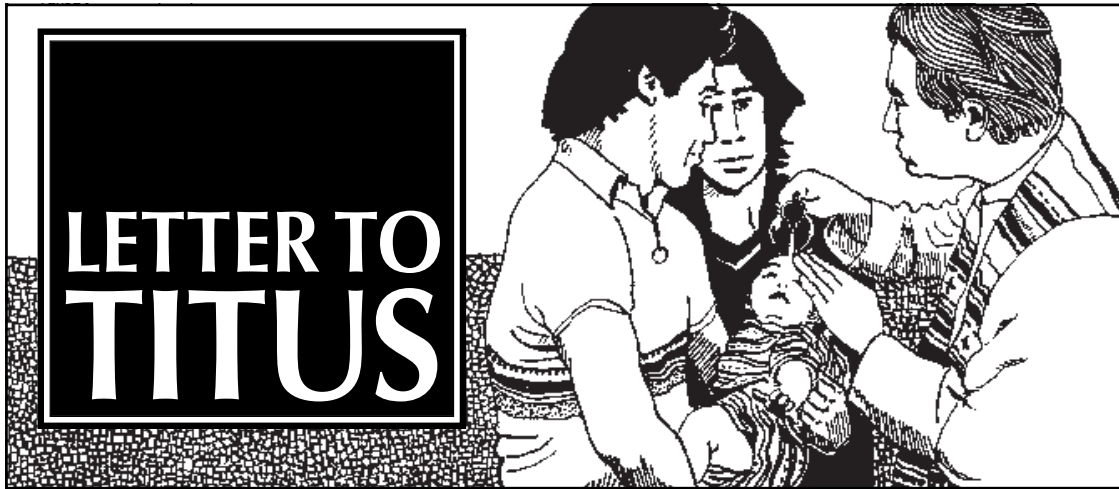
^{Acts}
^{18:2}

^{Acts}
^{19:22}
^{20:4}

he will be condemned to death. He embraces his own sacrifice just as Jesus did.

We find the comparison of the soldier and the athlete that Paul liked so much. In those days

athletes received a crown of laurels as a symbol of immortality: *As for me the time of sacrifice has arrived, and the moment of my departure has come.*



Like Timothy, Titus is one of Paul’s assistants officially consecrated to the service of the Gospel, who visited the churches with the very authority of Paul.

The commentary will be brief since this letter is very similar to the two letters to Timothy.

1 ¹From Paul, servant of God, apostle of Christ Jesus, at the service of God’s chosen people, so that they may believe and reach the knowledge of truth and godliness.

²Tim
2:13

²The eternal life we are waiting for was promised from the very beginning by God who never lies, ³and as the appointed time had come, he made it known through the message entrusted to me by a command of God, our Savior.

⁴Greetings to you, Titus, my true son in the faith we share. May grace and peace be with you from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

On the elders of the Church

¹Tim
3:2

• ⁵I left you in Crete because I wanted you to put right what was defective and appoint elders in every town, following my instructions. ⁶They must be blameless, married only once, whose children are believers and not

open to the charge of being immoral and rebellious. ⁷Since the overseer (or bishop) is the steward of God’s house, he must be beyond reproach: not proud, hot-headed, over-fond of wine, quarrelsome or greedy for gain.

⁸On the contrary he must be hospitable, a lover of what is good, wise, upright, devout and self-controlled. ⁹He must hold to the message of faith just as it was taught, so that, in his turn, he may teach sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

¹⁰You know that there are many rebellious minds, talkers of nonsense, deceivers, especially the party of the circumcised. ¹¹They have to be silenced when they go around disturbing whole families, teaching for low gain what should not be taught. ¹²A Cretan, one of their own prophets has said, “Cretans: always liars, wicked beasts and lazy gluttons.” ¹³This is true. For

Heb
3:2
1P
5:2

¹Tim
1:10

¹Tim
4:1

• **1.5** Titus had to organize the churches of Crete with leaders in every city.

We do not know if the title *overseer* (in Greek, *episcopos*, from which comes bishop) was given to all these elders or presbyters, or if the title was reserved for those with executive duties. After a while, there was only one bishop in charge of the entire community. After the apostles’ death,

bishops served as their representatives and ruled the Church with the same authority.

What Paul says here about the requirements for a presbyter or bishop is the same as what we have in 1 Timothy. We may note the following:
– *Married only once*. Obviously it is not necessary to be married, but as men of a certain age, usually married, were the ones who were conse-

this reason rebuke them sharply if you want them to have a sound faith ¹⁴ instead of heeding Jewish fables and practices of people who reject the truth.

¹⁵To the pure everything is pure; to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure: their minds and consciences have been defiled. ¹⁶They pretend to know God but deny him with their deeds. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Live as responsible persons

2 ¹Let your words strengthen sound doctrine. ²Tell the older men to be sober, serious, wise, sound in faith, love and perseverance.

³The older women in like manner must behave as befits holy women, not given to gossiping or drinking wine, ⁴but as good counselors, able to teach younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵to be judicious and chaste, to take care of their households, to be kind and submissive to their husbands, lest our faith be attacked.

⁶Encourage the young men to be self-controlled. ⁷Set them an example by your own way of doing. Let your teaching be earnest and sincere, ⁸and your preaching beyond reproach. Then your opponents will feel ashamed and will have nothing to criticize.

⁹Teach slaves to be subject to their masters, and to give satisfaction in every respect, instead of arguing. ¹⁰They must not steal from them but be trustworthy. In this way they will draw everyone to admire the doctrine of God our Savior.

¹¹For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹²teaching us to reject an irreligious way of life and worldly greed, and to live in this world as responsible persons, upright and serving God, ¹³while we await our blessed hope – the glorious manifestation of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus. ¹⁴He gave himself for us, to redeem us from every evil and to purify a people he wanted to be his own and dedicated to what is good.

¹⁵Teach these things, encourage and

crated, Paul is here considering the frequent case of Christians who had been divorced and remarried several times while they were still pagans.

– *He must be blameless*, not he alone but his family as well. His fitness to preside is essential to his vocation, and he will not be accepted by the community if his background gives an unfavorable witness.

– *He must be hospitable*. The Church is communion more than organization. Everyone must be welcomed and feel at home in the house of the presbyter or the bishop. He must also welcome the brothers and elders from other districts in order to assure unity and communion among different communities. The human balance in this *bishop* is then part of his vocation: he cannot be a man of uneven character whose interventions could wound, whose authority ignores the elementary rules of social contact and respect of persons: although known for their faith, Church leaders are often reproached for not knowing how to act in a human way.

The paragraph 2-16 is a cautionary measure against the return to a religion of practices and abstinences inspired by Jewish law. *To the pure, everything is pure*: in the spirit of Mt 15:11 and Rom 14:20. That will never mean to say that our intentions (our intentions are always pure!) justify our actions. That would be to forget that the tree (the desire urging us to act) is judged by its

fruit; these cannot be justified if they are contrary to the will of God manifested in the Law.

• **2.1** Here, there is a reminder of the duties of the faithful according to their situation in life. In the society of the time, far simpler than ours, all was reduced to slaves or the free, men or women, young or old. In our age, it would be necessary to ask people to look more closely at their responsibilities in life.

There is insistence on our duty to bear fruit: the following paragraph will say that if Christ has sacrificed himself for us, such a sacrifice must not remain fruitless.

God Savior has revealed his loving plan to all (v. 11). Here Paul returns to the essence of the Christian message: it is a gift of God and so it must produce the fruits of goodness and reconciliation and draw people away from the self-centeredness which paralyzes them.

He gave himself for us (v. 14). As in Eph 5:25 and 1 Cor 11:25, Jesus' sacrifice is primarily to purify those who become his people. In fact, it is by looking at Jesus that, little by little, we let go of what is evil and violent in us.

Teaching us to reject an irreligious way of life (v. 12). God brings us to purify our motives and our hearts.

– *Responsible*, because the practice of Christian living brings us to a more serious attitude.

Mt
15:11
23:25
Rom
14:14

1Tim
5:1

1Tim
3:11

Eph
5:22
Col
3:18

1P
2:15

Eph
6:5
1Tim
6:1

1Jn
2:16

1Cor
1:7
Phil
3:20

Ex
19:5
Eph
5:25

1Tim
4:12

reprove with all authority. Let no one despise you.

3 • ¹Remind the believers to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient and to be ready for every good work. ²Tell them to insult no one; they must not be quarrelsome but gentle and understanding with everyone.

³We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient and misled. We were slaves of our desires, seeking pleasures of every kind. We lived in malice and envy, hateful and hating each other. ⁴But God our Savior revealed his eminent goodness and love for humankind ⁵and saved us, not because of good deeds we may have done but for the sake of his own mercy, to the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit ⁶poured over us through Christ Jesus our Savior, ⁷so that having been justified of his grace we should become heirs in hope of eternal life.

• ⁸This is the truth. I want you to insist on these things, for those who

believe in God must excel in good deeds; that is what matters and is profitable to us. ⁹Avoid stupid arguments, discussions about genealogies and quarrels about the Law, for they are useless and unimportant.

¹⁰If anyone promotes sects in the church, warn him once and then a second time. If he still continues, break with him, ¹¹knowing that such a person is misled and sinful and stands self-condemned.

¹²When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, try to come to me at Nicopolis as soon as possible, for I have decided to spend the winter there. ¹³Do your best to send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way soon, and see to it that they have everything they need. ¹⁴Our people must learn to be outstanding in good works and to face urgent needs, instead of remaining idle and useless.

¹⁵All who are with me send greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with you all.

– *Just with others* by being primarily just with God.

– *Serving God*: this means first of all being sincere with God.

• **3.1** Speaking to the first Christian generation, Paul had underscored the transformation of the one who has been converted: becoming Christian involved breaking away from the past. In the following generation, while the Church was being established in various provinces of the Roman Empire, the hope of an imminent return of Christ began to decline. Thus, if the Church is called to last, it is important for the Christian to appear, first of all, as a model of an ordered and just life. Since obedience was then the pillar of family and social life, this letter insists that the believer must obey from the heart in every aspect that is not opposed to his faith.

In the teaching of the New Testament, it will be easy to speak of contradictions, or opportunism: here, social loyalty and family virtues; or else ignoring one's father and mother. Actually, they

are not contradictory: obedience coming from the heart as long as there is no opposition to the will of God, but a complete rejection of dependence when a human authority presumes to replace God, disregarding the conscience and rights of a person.

What remains here is an insistence on social virtues; it was the same in 2:5; 2:10 and also 1 Tim 2:2 and 2:11.

• 8. Possible translations for the word Paul uses here are "sects" or "heresies" (v. 10): they are two aspects of a Greek word that means "selection." Instead of accepting the faith as the Church transmits it, a heretic chooses what seems most important to her and what she likes the most. She rejects part of the message and leaves the Church taking with her disciples to form her own group. In preferring her own judgment to the doctrine of the Church, she loses the in-depth faith attitude; she destroys unity and condemns herself, even though she keeps a major part of the message.

Rom
13:1
1Tim
2:2
1P
2:13

Eph
2:5
5:8

Eph
2:8
5:26
2Tim
1:9
Rom
3:24
8:17

2Tim
2:14

Mt
18:15