

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time – St Teresa of Avila – 10.19.2025

With the onset of the internet, and social media, I'm not so sure how many of us still write letters. I do, and I like to send cards too. It's so much more personal.

We know that in Biblical times, letters were THE way of communicating, apart from in-person conversations. That's why the Bible contains 21 letters, or epistles as they are called. These epistles are foundational for Christian theology, pastoral practice, and daily discipleship.

In our second reading today, Paul writes this letter from prison, knowing his earthly mission is nearing its end. Timothy, his spiritual son, is ministering in Ephesus—a city marked by paganism, false teachers, and cultural hostility to the Gospel. Paul's tone is urgent, tender, and deeply pastoral. He's not just passing the baton; he's anchoring Timothy in the Word that endures.

This passage is a charge: remain faithful, proclaim boldly, and let Scripture shape every part of your life. We hear it in the words:

Remain faithful to what you have learned...

Paul appeals to Timothy's memory—his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois, who taught him the Scriptures from childhood. Faith is not just intellectual assent; it's relational and rooted in tradition.

I think our reading today encourages us to honor the people who formed us in our faith. Faith is inherited, yes, but it must also be chosen anew.

It's so interesting to me the number of you who are grandparents who come to St Teresa's with your grandchildren, even and especially those who are teens. At our Confirmation ceremonies a few weeks ago, I was thrilled to see how many grandparents served as sponsors for our young people.

In many families, grandparents play a quietly powerful role in passing on faith. While parents are typically seen as the first teachers of faith, research and Church tradition increasingly affirm that grandparents are often the most consistent and spiritually influential figures in a child's life. Here's why their role is so vital:

- They embody faith lived over time—through joys, losses, and ordinary days. Your example often speaks louder than any catechism.
- They offer spiritual stability in a rapidly changing world. When parents are sometimes overwhelmed or distant from the Church, grandparents often step in as anchors of prayer and tradition.
- They connect generations to the Church's memory. As Pope Francis once said, *Many people can testify that they owe their initiation into the Christian life to their grandparents.*

Paul's letter also tells us that all Scripture is inspired by God. The fancy Greek word *theopneustos* means "God-breathed." Scripture is not merely a useful collection of words written in a fancy book. It is divine in origin and transformative in effect.

It's a good time also to be reminded that Scripture is not a tool for argument—it's a mirror, a compass, and a lifeline. It teaches, corrects, and trains us for righteousness and for good, honest living.

Paul gives his spiritual godson Timothy a charge ... and he gives the same one to us today, **proclaim the word... whether convenient or inconvenient.**

Paul's charge is bold: preach and teach with persistence, even when it's unpopular. Convince, rebuke, encourage—with patience and teaching. And that charge is not just for clergy. Every baptized Christian is called to proclaim the Word—in homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

So, it begs the question this weekend, how are we doing with this?

And how do we overcome the challenges of our own world?

Our society is much like Paul's - marked by secularism, false teachers, and cultural hostility to the Gospel.

The first reading from Exodus tells us that:

As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight...

Moses' raised hands signal that victory comes not from military might, but from divine intervention. It's a physical act of surrender and trust—acknowledging that the battle belongs to the Lord.

Moses isn't just commanding from a hilltop—he's praying. His uplifted arms become a visible prayer, pleading for God's help. Moses' fatigue shows that even spiritual leaders need help. We are reminded too that passing on faith is challenging and at times, even wearying, and we need God's help because of the many challenges we face:

- We know that growing numbers of people believe that truth is what I feel. Many young people now see truth as subjective and personal, rather than revealed and universal. And this shift undermines Scripture's authority and makes faith seem like one option among many lifestyle choices.
- Many of our time suffer from digital distraction and shallow formation. Further, constant connectivity leaves little room for silence, reflection, or deep catechesis. Faith formation competes with algorithms, entertainment, and instant gratification.

- Some have said we live a consumer Christianity where Church is often approached like a product: *What do I get out of it?* This mindset resists commitment, sacrifice, and community accountability.
- A final challenge to passing on faith is the notion of isolation and individualism. Faith is increasingly privatized: “My personal spirituality” replaces communal worship and shared mission. Many feel disconnected from parish life or distrust institutional religion – and in different circumstances, they’re not to blame.

In the Exodus reading, Aaron and Hur’s support symbolizes the Church’s call to uphold one another in prayer and mission. It’s a model of shared leadership and mutual encouragement. It’s what we are called to do too!

The hands of Moses had to remain raised. Momentary trust wasn’t enough—ongoing dependence was required. Jesus’ teaching in Luke reminds us about praying always and not losing heart.

So this weekend, especially when you feel frustrated or challenged about passing on our faith: Remember **you are not alone**. You are part of a Church that remembers, a Word that endures, and a mission that matters.

Blessings!

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