

Second Hand Preacher

30th Sunday of Ordinary Time

October 23, 2016

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

The other day a woman showed me a tattered page from a notebook. It was the plan for her funeral Mass. It had the ministers, readings, and songs all laid out. It showed her faithfulness to the end. The plan will save her grieving family the trouble of coming up with the liturgy and hopefully it will free them up to grieve and think about life without her. The liturgy is essentially for them as we as a church picture making the journey from this life to the next. This liturgy is part of the last address she is allowing her family to hear. My prayer is that she will be able to say goodbye to her loved ones before she dies. If not, this liturgy can be her legacy.

This passage seems like a last hurrah of faith from Paul to his friend Timothy and Timothy's community. Paul uses athletic imagery to show how he will triumph against evil in this life and join Jesus in Heaven in the next. He is going to finish the race. Paul wants those who read this to follow in his way. This is not Paul's way alone, but a path laid out by Jesus in the revelation Jesus gave to Paul. Paul was charged with proclaiming the faith to the Gentiles, which make up the community that Timothy serves. Even though Paul is a Jew, he spreads his words to all that some may follow and complete the race that Paul has chosen to finish.

We have a race to finish as well. Our life is given meaning by the proclamation of the Word of God and the living out of the sacraments. We are so blessed to have the letters of Paul to use as a guiding force in our life of faith. Our lives aren't easy, but we need to keep our eyes on the prize that matters. Each of us will someday go before our maker at the completion of the death to life journey. Paul calls us to enter the end of our lives with the certainty of knowing that this life is not an end, but the beginning of what is to become of us. We as Christians hope on the illumination of Heaven. It isn't just about living good lives; we do not earn our ticket to heaven just by following the rules. We make our way to Heaven because of a relationship that we hold both individually and communally in this life. Our hope is to join the communion of saints in the life to come. We don't enter into this odyssey alone. We have a community of believers praying for us on earth and the saints and angels praying for us in Heaven. Jesus is there granting us mercy if we truly believe in him with all our hearts and that will complete the race.