

As some of you know, the last of our WW2 veterans will be laid to rest this Weds. Several WW2 Vets have been in this congregation, of the greatest generation of Americans who ever lived. Like one who had several dogfights in his P51 Mustang, one day he flew fighter escort for a B29 squadron, and witnessed the atomic explosion at 20K feet. Or one, a chief mechanic for P38's, who bragged "we never lost one of our pilots." In conversation, they didn't say, I flew, I landed on the beaches, I went into battle. It was always, "we" fought, we landed, we served. The best of "us" never made it home. Not I, but We, Us. The character of those who fought.

So also true for the Church. We, we are called to stand together. We are in a far greater battle. Scripture calls you -whether you're alive now or those before us- "saints." Never singular, always plural. Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father", not my Father. The Creeds in the original Latin, "We believe in One God." And on this side of eternity, we are always the Church militant, the Church in warfare.

Today we thank God for the life of St. Timothy. Two books of Scripture bear his name, though he didn't write them. He's a disciple of St. Paul, who ordained him. Paul's letters to Timothy, provide not only rich doctrinal statements, the utmost of sound teaching but also key instruction for Pastors, how they are to serve, as well guidance for all Christian.

In that sense, we are all Timothy – we are called to stand together, to make the good confession of faith, how we live Christian.

It's written, **He Timothy, was well spoken of by the brothers.** That should strike you for a moment, of how others speak of you, what words do they use to describe you... no, not the words you think. Studies prove this: we have a much higher opinion of ourselves than we truly are. Lord have mercy on us. We all have much work to do regarding how others speak of us.

Timothy preached the gospel in season and out of season, rebuked and exhorted, and died while carrying out his calling. You, in the same warfare. Paul tells all of us Timothys -be prepared, **flee evil things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Fight.** Paul wrote this from prison, reminds him, reminds us, we are at war. The Christian faith is not a hobby or something to makes us feel good. CS Lewis famously said, "I don't need a religion to make me feel good, any good bottle of scotch could do that."

The faith is a fight, battle, warfare; we serve in the church militant, in whatever rank, vocation God has placed us; a matter of life and death. The stakes eternal. No room for apathy. As with any war, lives depend upon our readiness for battle, diligence, preparedness, our ability to carry out our callings under fire.

How sad when pastors provide entertainment instead of fortification; how horrific when laypeople want pampered instead of hardened for battle. How

tragic when we forget the enemy is lurking about the perimeter, attacks us, our families, our marriages, anyone, without warning, without mercy.

War all around you, how can you enter the fray without preparing for battle with home devotions, study of the Word, foremost Divine Services? Like going into battle without gear, like trying beat back a tank with a stick.

Paul warns Timothy, Timothys, **Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you are called. Remember who you are.** The lure of the world, the devil -seduce you to lay down your arms, give up, lies, never satisfy; leads to death. The Word of the Lord never fails, never changes. In spirit of what you see or think or dismiss – the Word of the Lord is more powerful weapon than anything known to man. The same force, power of **Let there be light**, is **I baptize you**- as with Emmett today. Power of: **This is My body, My blood, I forgive you** and it is. This Word, power beyond your thoughts, even forgive your sins. give life. Can change the hearts, minds, even of those you've given up on.

War rages, Satan attacks, we are wounded; Jesus said I am the physician, so this is place, a hospital to bind up wounds, that you be sustain in the war; a place to prepared, ready you for what lies ahead. He works through us; continues to fortify us in Word, Sacraments.

We take casualties, suffer setbacks; sometimes we gain ground, miracles happen that beat back the crafts, assaults of evil one. At times we think or see that this all doesn't matter, or it's a lost cause. You could not be more wrong. You fight. Do not give up or give in, never surrender. Fight.

This faith -solely upon Christ- is our reason for living, through which His righteousness is your righteousness. We link arms with Timothy, Paul, the holy apostles, the martyrs, all the saints, known/unknown, ancient/modern, living/dead -confession of the cross, our eyes fixed firmly on Him; until the day we become the Church triumphant. And we can talk with WW2 Vets again.

Our Lord tells you **Stay awake!** Just a finite time to carry out the work our Lord has given you to do – works He prepared for you before the foundation of the world, works that glorify Him, serve your neighbor.

The Lord did not give you the privilege to be born in the greatest generation, but you've been given such a privilege in these times to stand for His truth. What a time to be in His church. Lower your head in repentance. And then keep your head-up, in spite of the world around you. Lift up your head, you've been given such a privilege to speak, confess Christ to a lost, dying world with no hope.

What an honor the Lord bestowed to you, upon us, perhaps unlike any time for the Church since first three centuries, this time of warfare, you are never alone, We, us and He will not abandon, forsake you. He binds up your wounds from the battle. He has won the war. He keeps His promise. The gates of hell cannot prevail against His Church or you. They cannot win. He wins the fight for you, for us.