

This weekend is my youngest niece's seventh birthday. Sadly, I'll miss the big party because I'll be out in the Thumb for weekend Masses. Nonetheless, on Monday I went shopping for her. And as is the usual practice at stores these days, they asked if I wanted a gift receipt. Gift receipts are great - somewhere embedded in that little bar-code is your entire transaction. And the recipient of the gift never knows if you paid full-price, a discounted price, or even if you got it off of a clearance rack. All they know is the store you bought it at - just in case you didn't get something they liked.

Today is the Memorial of Ss. Timothy and Titus; two young bishops. There are three short books in Scripture that are letters from St. Paul to these saints - two letters to Timothy, and one to Titus.

We heard from the Second Letter of St. Paul to Timothy in the first reading, where Paul admonishes Timothy to be bold when he says:

*... I remind you to stir into flame
the gift of God that you have ...
For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice
but rather of power and love and self-control.
So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord,
but bear your share of hardship for the Gospel
with the strength that comes from God.*

We all receive gifts from God through both natural grace and through the Sacraments. Yet often we act as though we're ashamed about using His gifts of grace. Maybe we were hoping for a gift receipt?

Yet St. Paul admonishes St. Timothy - and us as well to utilize our gifts - to stir them into flame ... and to not be ashamed. Rather, we are to boldly go forward - carrying our cross, and proudly giving our testimony in God's strength.

Let us pray for our own spiritual gifts - which God has so generously given us - to be stirred into flame that we might go forth from this liturgy strengthened by the Eucharist with the grace, mercy, and peace that come from God alone.