

---

## *Let It Shine!*

**An Evensong meditation by the Rev. Canon David Boyd  
The Feast of Leo of Rome**

For this Boy Scout, there are few pleasures as sublime as waking up on a chilly morning, emerging from the cozy confines of a sleeping bag, and venturing outside the tent to begin a new day camping in the woods. Even better when the smell of smoke still hangs in the air, evoking memories of the campfire the night before, memories of camaraderie and warmth shared around the flames. Walking through the gray-blue haze of the pre-dawn light, stretching and creaking from a night spent on the ground, I would approach the campsite's fire ring, sifting through the remains of the fire, searching the ashes for still smoldering embers to fuel today's blaze. Hopefully, I would find just enough red coals to push together into a pile, feed it some kindling, and make a much needed hot chocolate on the newly-fanned flames. Soon enough, other scouts would emerge from their tents, drawn like moths to the allure of warmth and light in the dark, frigid woods.

"Rekindle the gift of God that is within you...; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline."

Do you have a fire burning within you? Paul sure thinks so, if fire is an apt metaphor for faith! Writing to his protegee in ministry, Timothy, Paul offers a word of encouragement to a dear friend who is struggling with bouts of fear and anxiety. Paul had seen Timothy's faith blazing in Ephesus, the community Timothy served as its first bishop. However, all kinds of pressure from within and without, threats from the Roman Empire and questions of self-doubt smothered Timothy's faith down to embers, smoldering under the ashes. Concerned about his friend and partner in ministry, Paul wrote to Timothy to remind him that his feelings of fear are not from God, but that the winds of the Holy Spirit are blowing through his life to bring him back to a place of phoenix-like faith.

Why do we sometimes retreat to a place of timidity in times of discomfort and challenge? On one level, it's biological; one survival strategy is to curl up and close out for protection and self-preservation. We do what is necessary to prevent the world from putting out our fire, our faith, our light. Rejection and loss strike at our tender hearts and we shut down. A natural, human reaction, but Paul reminds us that there is a difference between tending a flame and abandoning the fire all together. Anxiety is not something God puts in our hearts. A spirit of timidity and fear keeps us from experiencing the glow of God's glory.

Instead, Paul tells us, God has given us a spirit of power, and love, and self-control. This is the spirit that animated the apostles and the martyrs, the saints of the early Church like St. Leo of Rome, and it still animates us today. Like heat, fuel, and oxygen for a fire, the spirit given to us by God contains three essential elements that sustain us through any hardship the world can throw at us.

First, power. This is a spirit that burns like a bonfire, so bright as to be indiscriminate about who its light falls on. It roars with a prophetic voice, inviting anyone who encounters it to turn away from darkness and bask in its brilliance. The power of this spirit catches quickly, burns hot, and endures through the dark nights of our souls.

This spirit not only burns with intensity, but also radiates a tender warmth. Love defines this spirit, inviting every child of God to come out of the cold and be warmed. This is a spirit that gathers friends and strangers together for community and companionship, that crackles with laughter and joy, a spirit that leads people to sing together, to pray together, to share a cup of cheer together.

And yet we need some kind of fire ring, some boundaries, lest we be consumed by this fiery spirit! Faith, when

it truly takes hold, can feel like an uncontainable blaze within us—a passion for God's goodness, a deep concern for justice, and a desire to serve with all we have. But even the most profound passion needs direction, the way a fire needs a fire ring to give it purpose without letting it spread unchecked. Our faith is no different. We are called to burn brightly, but without the self-control that Paul mentions, our zeal can consume us and, worse yet, scorch those around us. Practices of self-control such as prayer, fasting, and scriptural study act as our fire ring, allowing our faith to grow stronger without growing too wild. These practices keep the fire of faith controlled, contained, and purposeful, channeling our energy toward godly goals and allowing our witness to be powerful, yet safe and life-giving. Without self-control, faith can become fanaticism, zeal without love—a fire with no boundaries, one that threatens to consume rather than to heal.

If you were here this morning at 10am, then you witnessed the fullness of this spirit first hand at the ceremonial groundbreaking for the Good Faith Chapel! How fitting that the spirit of Good Faith would show up to celebrate the chapel dedicated in its honor! It was a festival of hard hats and shovels, a celebration of hope and expectation, a moment of consecration, of setting aside for the purposes of God. The chapel will be a place where all are welcome to come and encounter God, to be warmed by the light of Christ's love. It will be a place for prayer, for praise, for the sharing of burdens and joys—a place for the flames of our faith to burn brightly together. And in this place, our spirit of Good Faith will continue to grow and spread, guiding us to serve not only one another but also those who haven't yet encountered this light. Whether you have a faith that burns like a bonfire or you are just rediscovering the embers of a faith you thought long buried under the ashes, this chapel, this Cathedral is a place for you. Appropriately, we concluded the groundbreaking with a song, a song that captures the spirit of Good Faith and serves this evening as an invitation to us all: "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine... Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!"