

OCTOBER 28, 2019 Monday of the 30th Week of Ordinary Time

Feast of Saints Simon and Jude, Apostles

Eph 2:19-22

Ps 19:2-5

Lk 6:12-19

The liturgy continues the series of feasts of the apostles, reminding us today of two who are almost unknown and whose relics are venerated in the Basilica of St. Peter, near the altar of St. Joseph. Those Twelve, symbol of a whole new people, were called by Jesus not out of consideration for their quality and merit, but, Luke says, from a night of prayer, of intense communion with the Father, as though to draw abundantly from him that Spirit who would be given to those who would be called, making them apostles. Luke, in his Gospel accounts, shows us on numerous occasions how important for Jesus was prayer, that encounter of intimate and loving dialogue with his Heavenly Father.

On some occasions, Luke stops to describe these episodes and even the content of Jesus' prayers, so that each disciple can learn to pray, listening to what the Lord has to say and doing what he commands, rather than merely multiplying useless words to ask God to satisfy all his selfish demands. Authentic Christian prayer is born in God. It motivates our action, transforms our existence, and turns us back to God with feelings of gratitude, filial obedience, self-offering, and solidarity with others. Luke underlines how all the crucial decisions of the life of Jesus were made in a context of prayer, from baptism – or we could even go back to his infancy – up to Gethsemane and the cross.

In today's Gospel reading, we contemplate Jesus spending the whole night in prayer, because he is about to make a choice that will forever strengthen his bond with his disciples. It is a definitive commitment, because with the Twelve he will establish his messianic community. He will choose the twelve pillars on which he will build, as promised by the prophets, the people of the new covenant, the Church. For this people, and for all humanity, he will shed his blood, consciously and freely, for the forgiveness of sins. The "apostles" – the word that means "sent" – are chosen before Christ's Passion-Death-Resurrection, but it is only after Easter and Pentecost that their mission will unfold its full potential, fulfilling itself completely. Before this time, though, they are called to be formed and prepared for what awaits them when the Master

will be made present in the Spirit. Prayer therefore reveals itself as the soul of mission, that is, the faithful and effective presence of God in the action of his Church for the salvation of the world to which it has been sent.

Pope Benedict XVI had this to say about the faith and vocation of the holy apostles Simon the Cananaean and Jude Thaddaeus in his General Audience of October 11, 2006:

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, let us examine two of the Twelve Apostles: Simon the Cananaean and Jude Thaddaeus (not to be confused with Judas Iscariot). Let us look at them together, not only because they are always placed next to each other in the lists of the Twelve (cf. Mt 10:3,4; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13), but also because there is very little information about them, apart from the fact that the New Testament Canon preserves one Letter attributed to Jude Thaddaeus. Simon is given a nickname that varies in the four lists: while Matthew and Mark describe him as a "Cananaean," Luke instead describes him as a "Zealot." In fact, the two descriptions are equivalent because they mean the same thing: indeed, in Hebrew the verb qanà' means "to be jealous, ardent" and can be said both of God, since he is jealous with regard to his Chosen People (cf. Ex 20:5), and of men who burn with zeal in serving the one God with unreserved devotion, such as Elijah (cf. 1 Kgs 19:10).

Thus, it is highly likely that even if this Simon was not exactly a member of the nationalist movement of Zealots, he was at least marked by passionate attachment to his Jewish identity, hence, for God, his People and divine Law.

If this was the case, Simon was worlds apart from Matthew, who, on the contrary, had an activity behind him as a tax collector that was frowned upon as entirely impure. This shows that Jesus called his disciples and collaborators, without exception, from the most varied social and religious backgrounds.

It was people who interested him, not social classes or labels! And the best thing is that in the group of his followers, despite their differences, they all lived side by side, overcoming imaginable difficulties: indeed, what bound them together was Jesus himself, in whom they all found themselves united with one another.

This is clearly a lesson for us who are often inclined to accentuate differences and even contrasts, forgetting that in Jesus Christ we are given the strength to get the better of our continual conflicts.

Let us also bear in mind that the group of the Twelve is the prefiguration of the Church, where there must be room for all charisms, peoples and races, all human qualities that find their composition and unity in communion with Jesus.

Then with regard to Jude Thaddaeus, this is what tradition has called him, combining two different names: in fact, whereas Matthew and Mark call him simply “Thaddaeus” (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18), Luke calls him “Judas, the son of James” (Lk 6:16; Acts 1:13).

The nickname “Thaddaeus” is of uncertain origin and is explained either as coming from the Aramaic, *taddà’*, which means “breast” and would therefore suggest “magnanimous,” or as an abbreviation of a Greek name, such as “Teodòro, Teòdoto.”

Very little about him has come down to us. John alone mentions a question he addressed to Jesus at the Last Supper: Thaddaeus says to the Lord: “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?”

This is a very timely question which we also address to the Lord: why did not the Risen One reveal himself to his enemies in his full glory in order to show that it is God who is victorious? Why did he only manifest himself to his disciples? Jesus’ answer is mysterious and profound. The Lord says: “If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn 14:22-23).

This means that the Risen One must be seen, must be perceived also by the heart, in a way so that God may take up his abode within us. The Lord does not appear as a thing. He desires to enter our lives, and therefore his manifestation is a manifestation that implies and presupposes an open heart. Only in this way do we see the Risen One.

The paternity of one of those New Testament Letters known as “catholic,” since they are not addressed to a specific local Church but intended for a far wider circle, has been attributed to Jude Thaddaeus. Actually, it is addressed “to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ” (v. 1).

A major concern of this writing is to put Christians on guard against those who make a pretext of God’s grace to excuse their own licentiousness and corrupt their brethren with unacceptable teachings, introducing division within the Church “in their dreaming’s” (v. 8).

This is how Jude defines their doctrine and particular ideas. He even compares them to fallen angels and, mincing no words, says that “they walk in the way of Cain” (v. 11).

Furthermore, he brands them mercilessly as “waterless clouds, carried along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars for whom the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved for ever” (vv. 12-13). . .

It is easy to see that the author of these lines lived to the full his own faith, to which realities as great as moral integrity and joy, trust and lastly praise belong, since it is all motivated solely by the goodness of our one God and the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, may both Simon the Cananaean and Jude Thaddeus help us to rediscover the beauty of the Christian faith ever anew and to live it without tiring, knowing how to bear a strong and at the same time peaceful witness to it.