

## **Reflection for the Feast of Simon and Jude**

FIRST READING: Ephesians 2:19-22

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians:

Brothers and sisters: You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 19:2-3, 4-5

***Their message goes out through all the earth.***

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day pours out the word to day, and night to night imparts knowledge.

***Their message goes out through all the earth.***

Not a word nor a discourse whose voice is not heard; Through all the earth their voice resounds, and to the ends of the world, their message.

***Their message goes out through all the earth.***

GOSPEL: Luke 6:12-16

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke:

Jesus went up to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. When day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also named Apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called a Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

The Gospel of the Lord.

## **Reflection for the Feast of Simon and Jude**

When we celebrate the feasts of the apostles, I steer clear of the legends and tales that come to us through Tradition. I like to stay focused on what we read in scripture. Who these people were is restricted to scant text in the New Testament. From what we have read in the gospel, there is some ambivalence among the twelve. There are, in fact, two Simons, two James's, and two Judases. Which of the pairs of Judas and Simon do we celebrate today? Fortunately, Luke's gospel has further identified these men. The Simon of today's feast is not the one nicknamed Peter (or Rocky, if we translate the Greek name into English). This is Simon, the political zealot. Certainly we do not celebrate the Judas who was the traitor to Jesus, but still was critical for

Jesus to complete his mission to die on the cross to save us. It must be the other Judas, son of, yet another, James. We call him Jude to distinguish this Judas from Jesus' betrayer.

Here, in Luke's gospel we know something about these men more than their names. Granted, it's not very much aside from familial and political affiliation. Luke's gospel has not even noted the filial relationship of the Zebedee boys, the first James and John. He hasn't told us what they do for a living. Zealotry, though, is something we can understand. In our day with division in politics, ethnicity, those masked, unmasked, vaccinated and unvaccinated, we know what kind of guy this Judas could be. A zealot can be difficult to like. There may be a contemporary lesson in Jesus' choice of Simon the Zealot. Since political zealotry is difficult to bear, how did one of these guys succeed in preaching Jesus? The love of God transformed him to love back. God is part of all those we don't and think we can't love. Seek God in them for they reflect God as we do. In loving them, we love God. We can love the ones we don't like because God has loved us. What we lack, we can find in God's presence.

From this, we learn that Jesus has not picked the "cream of the crop." Was his discernment flawed as he picked these guys? Especially the one who would hand Jesus over for execution? Perhaps in this list of flawed and, perhaps, broken men we can understand Jesus mission a bit better. He did not come for the perfect and those we call saints. He came to save sinners like the twelve people he chose as apostles. He came to heal their broken flaws and to transform them into his holy ones that we call saints. Holiness is not just a quality for those dead who now live forever in Christ, holiness is lived now. Only God is holy and in God's presence we become holy too. God never leaves us; holiness is nearer than our breath.

From this group of disciples, which are followers who seek to become like their leader and learn from him, he chose those who would become his missionaries, which is what the word "apostles" means in Greek. People who are sinners, who have critical flaws, and have a great need for God's saving grace, became, in today's gospel, the very ones to give witness to Jesus and to proclaim the good news of God's love that we call the gospel. Their mission and message, by God's grace, are now ours.

They would eventually receive God's gift of faith, salvation and forgiveness. Their very flaws would show forth the glory and grace of God as it works with, in and through the believers in Jesus. Remember, as the narrative of the gospel unfolds as we read it, Jesus has not yet fulfilled his mission. He's still the living body he was born with; not the body that has revealed God's glory in the resurrection. He still seems to be Jesus, the guy from Nazareth in Galilee, not the Son of God, Messiah, Savior, Lord and Eternal Word. We read this story from a post Easter and Pentecost perspective. These twelve men had yet to experience the things in which we believe.

From this perspective, Paul's words in Ephesians have a powerful impact. In the post Easter, post Pentecost, and baptized Church, we have the faith, passed on through the generations by the grace of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in Jesus our savior. We are no longer strangers. We are brothers and sisters in and with Christ. We may stills seek Jesus, but are no longer sojourners. We have found our home in Jesus' Church with each other. By faith we received our baptism. In baptism we received the promise of salvation. And as people saved by the blood of Jesus we are made holy through the presence of God.

Paul has also put today's feast into perspective. It's about the faith and witness of these two ordinary and flawed men that God has taken as the means of our having faith. We have received the same faith in Jesus by God's grace. We now share in Simon and Jude's mission to proclaim the good news of the gospel. As we can read in the gospel of John chapter three verse sixteen taken from the Revised English Bible, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may not perish but have eternal life." God is love; infinite, eternal and unconditional. This love God shares with us to share with others as the apostles have shared it with us. Now God works through the ordinary and flawed people we are. Through our faith and baptism, Simon and Jude's mission is now ours. We are among God's apostles in mission. As we gather together to receive Jesus' body and blood, we gather in Jesus name and in God's presence, we are holy ones.

May we live remembering God never leaves us.

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