

THE PASTOR'S CORNER

OCTOBER 28TH: The Feast of Ss. Simon & Jude, Apostles

One of the statues adorning the west wall of St. Thomas of Canterbury Church is a representation of St. Jude. I've noticed, after any particular Sunday, he does not get as much attention as our other shrines which is understandable given that he's "competing" with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Divine Mercy, and Our Lady. There is a certain logic as well in the inattention given him as he is one of two apostles, celebrating the same feast day with St. Simon the Apostle, whose names disappear from any record, scripture or otherwise, after Pentecost. The New Testament does preserve one letter attributed to Jude Thaddeus. He is mentioned in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark as "Thaddaeus"; St. Luke refers to him as "Judas, the son of James"; he is not to be confused with Judas the Iscariot. Pope Benedict XVI, in a general audience given from Rome in October 11, 2006 (© Copyright 2006-Libreria Editrice Vaticana) noted Thaddeus was a 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.*" He is mentioned in the Gospel of John as asking Jesus: "Lord, how is it you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?"

St. Simon, who appears in every listing of the apostles in the Gospels next to St. Jude, is known as the Cananaean. Matthew and Mark describe him as "the Cananaean" while Luke writes of him as "Zealot." Pope Benedict XVI in his customary precision noted that the descriptions are really have the same meaning, because "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. I Kgs 19: 10)." He goes on to suggest the likelihood that Simon may have been a member of the nationalist movement of Zealots, and that the disciple's passion for his Jewish identity is what moved him to choose Simon as one of the twelve. It is interesting to compare Simon to Matthew, the lone Jewish author of the Gospels, whose status as a tax collector made him a pariah.

This shows, Benedict said, 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.

Benedict continues,

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.

Why then, following Jude's question did Jesus only show himself to his disciple? Benedict explains:

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.

Both saints may be obscure, but the mystery of Christ's choice of each to hand-on on his words and deeds in the power of the Holy Spirit suggests that we imitate their "magnanimity" or "generosity" and their zeal. Pope Benedict reminds us that the letter St. Jude writes is addressed to us: "But you beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And convince some, who doubt..." (vv. 20-22).

Repeating for us the very last words of the letter, "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen" (vv. 24-25), Pope Benedict makes St. Jude and St. Simon as relevant to us as the other apostles:

"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."