



ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

Sunday October 27, 2013 Trinity XXII
St. Simon and St. Jude

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠**

The passage selected for the sermon this morning is taken from the Epistle:

“Ye are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.” Ephesians 2:19-20

This week, we celebrate the Feast of St. Simon and St. Jude the Apostles. Next Sunday we will celebrate the Feast of All Saints. These two weeks of Scripture devoted to the subject of Saints, give us an opportunity to delve in depth into the questions of Sainthood and our relationship with the Saints in the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Blessed Company of All Faithful people.

So, what exactly is a Saint? We know examples of Saints, some of which we especially cherish and venerate, the ones whose names we share, or after whom our Churches are named. We can and should read their biographies, and yet, a saint is not merely a holy person in history. Saintliness is a godly gift, a destiny fulfilled, but more importantly a destiny that is shared. It is shared with us, because we too have the same destiny, and we are not only tied to the saints, but also supported by them as we struggle along the journey that they have already completed. Saintliness is the original intention of God for man.

St. Simon was called Simon Zelotes, or the Zealot, to distinguish him from St. Peter. The Zealots were the first Palestinian terrorists. He was hardly an obvious candidate for an Apostle or a Saint, which should be a consolation for us, because if he could

make a saint from Simon, there is certainly hope for us. His ministry started in Samaria and carried him to Persia, Southern Europe, and even Spain.

St. Jude, also known as Thaddeus, was the brother of James the Less, one of three sets of brothers of the 12 Apostles. He is the author of the Epistle that bears his name. He was either a cousin of Jesus or a younger brother. Like Simon Zelotes, there is record of his preaching across Southern Europe and Samaria. There are multiple accounts of each of their deaths by martyrdom in many different locations, but Western Tradition generally agrees they were martyred together in Persia.

St Jude and St Simon were Apostles, and it is by the Apostles that Jesus reaches to us through history, to nourish our saintliness and to direct our destiny. Apostles are men of with a particular and unique charism, or spiritual gift. To these men was given the privilege of close witness to Jesus in His public Ministry. The Apostles, through Peter, were the first to proclaim Him as the Messiah, and the thrones of the twelve tribes of the Chosen people were reserved for them in heaven. It was to the Apostles that the parables were explained. It was the Apostles that were given the Great Commission after the Resurrection. “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (St. Matthew 28:19-20)

The New Testament is Apostolic, meaning that it is witness written by or under the authority of the Apostles (with St. Paul writing as an Apostle born

out of time, but a true witness and Apostle.) The Apostles were sealed in their witness, by the Holy Ghost, at Pentecost. As an Apostolic Church, we believe their witness to be unfailingly true, and their teaching to be both absolutely true and the standard by which any doctrine of Scripture is tested. Our Bishops are the Apostolic heirs, receiving the charism of the Apostles by laying on of hands, in a succession that goes back to the original twelve.

As Apostles, Simon and Jude had unique gifts, but as Saints, they have gifts that they also share with us. First, they were chosen. Jesus called them, individually and by name, to be saved. They were baptized by faith in their profession of the true identity of Jesus Christ, and were sealed in that Baptism by the Holy Ghost at the Pentecost. Like them, we too are chosen, by birth or by grace, individually and by name to be consecrated as first fruits, by the profession of our faith in the Trinity at our baptism. The power to witness to that profession is given to us by the Holy Spirit at our Confirmation when we are anointed and hands are laid upon us. The Bishop who officiates shares with us the same charismatic grace that was given to the Apostles at Pentecost.

The second effectual grace that is given to us and which is demonstrable in the lives of St. Simon and St. Jude is perseverance. A saint is someone, who once restored by Baptism to Salvation, perseveres in their faith by grace, doing God's will instead of their own.

That doesn't mean the saints lived perfect lives. In fact, perseverance is the courage to try again and again to do well and please God after we fail and sin. It's not how many times we fall, but how many times we get back up and on the path that demonstrates perseverance. The lives of the saints were not perfect either, and their histories are given to us for an example, and for hope.

St. Simon and St. Jude sinned after they were chosen. At the moment they were required to proclaim Jesus Christ as Messiah, in the face of the angry mob in Gethsamane, they joined Peter, John, and the other great Apostle/Saints and deserted our Lord. They ran away in fear, loving their own lives more than the Lord.

But three days later, as they cowered in fear for their own lives in the upper room, and panicked over wild and crazy rumors that the Lord was no longer in His tomb, they were confronted by the very friend they had deserted, the Messiah they had proclaimed. Imagine what it felt like to face Jesus, knowing you deserted Him at the Cross, and betrayed your every vow to honor and obey Him. Really

imagine it. Imagine it because that is the same encounter we will have at our own meeting with Jesus as we cross through the door of death. Imagine that meeting, and our own failings and selfishness and sin, and be hopeful. We can have hope for that meeting because we know how the meeting of the Resurrected Lord with the cowards of the upper room went.

Jesus looked at Simon, Jude, Peter John, and the other 7, and said unto them, "Peace be unto you. As my Father hath sent me, even so I send you. (St. John 20:21) " He forgives them their sin, and directs them to persevere in their commission. And knowing that as men, they could not overcome the world and fulfill their vocation on their own, He promised them the grace of the Holy Spirit to keep them on their path until they fulfill their destiny to be united with Him in heaven.

So, we are taught that Saints are those that receive the grace to persevere in their faith, despite our temptations and failures. Our immediate reward for that perseverance, is the reward that Jesus promised the Apostle's in today's Gospel. "I have chosen you out of this world, therefore the world hateth you." And "if they have persecuted me, they will persecute you." (St. John 15:18-20). We are robed in red today, because the world persecuted St. Simon and Jude, and all the Apostles, because they bore witness to the Truth, to Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. In our own lives, if we would be saints ourselves, and witness to the Truth, we too will be persecuted. The world is loathe to let us go. We will be confronted, tempted and some even will be killed for that faith. But, like St. Simon and St. Jude, the Holy Spirit is with us. We will not be tempted above that we can withstand. And we, like the Apostle's can face our tempters and persecutors in peace, that peace that passes all understanding, because we know that though the world threatens and frightens us with death, that Jesus has made death nothing more than the door to eternal life with Him. When we reach that door, we will take off these red robes of suffering and sacrifice, and we will be robed in white robes of Glory and ecstatic Joy.

Next week, we will talk about what we know of Saints and the grace they receive when they pass this life. We will be robed in white, as they are, and we will celebrate their joy in the Glory of Jesus Christ, and anticipate our own joy, when we, too, join the Company of Saints in heaven.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen