

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2018  
The Feast of Simon & Jude - Year B

Deuteronomy 32:1-4

Psalm 19:1-6

Jude 1-3,17-25

Luke 6:12-19

**In the name of the Trinity; Creator, Redeemer, and Life-Giver...**

What is it that we do on a day such as this, when we pause to remember the life, ministry and, ultimately, the sacrifice of these two Apostles - Saint Simon and Saint Jude? Well, in a sense it is all about them, as we remember them and celebrate their selfless dedication to the witness of Christ. But that is not all - perhaps even more importantly we are called to look at our own witness and ministry, in the light of this feast day, and to see again the ways in which we are gifted and called.

St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians that he was “the least of all apostles.” But I suspect that Simon & Jude may have disputed that fact. I feel a bit sorry for them, really - granted, there are at least a few churches which bear the name St Jude’s, but I was not aware of any churches named after St Simon. In fact, a quick search revealed one Anglican Church in Canberra and one Catholic Church in Melbourne, and these, seemingly, are the only two in Australia which bear Simon’s name as their patron Saint!! Definitely the lowest number amongst the twelve disciples.

It’s also been observed by some commentators that Simon and Jude seem to come last in more ways than one. In all four of the New Testament lists of the twelve apostles, their names always take the tenth and eleventh place—right before Judas Iscariot, the traitor.

Their feast day is the last commemoration of apostles in the church year. After Simon and Jude on October 28th, we have All Saints on November 1st, and then a new church year starts on Advent Sunday at the beginning of December. Herbert O'Driscoll comments that it seems as though Simon and Jude were put into the Church calendar almost as an afterthought.

Simon and Jude were named among the twelve apostles in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Simon is called 'the Zealot', probably because he belonged to a nationalist resistance movement opposing the Roman occupation forces. There is no indication in the gospels whether Simon moved from the Zealot or Zionist party to be a follower of Christ or, on the other hand, if after the resurrection he became a supporter of that group, seeing it as a response to God's call to proclaim the kingdom.

Luke describes Jude as the son of James, while the Letter of Jude has him as the brother of James, neither of which negates the other, given the peculiarities of first century naming traditions. It seems he is the same person as Thaddæus, which may have been a last name. Owing to the similarity of his name to that of Judas Iscariot, Jude was rarely invoked in prayer and it seems likely that because of this, interceding through him was seen as a final resort when all else failed. He became known, therefore, as the patron saint of lost causes.

But for the lack of any real information about them during Christ's ministry, it is what these two did after Jesus's death that makes us remember and celebrate them. Because they were able to make the leap from religious fanaticism to passion for the way of Jesus who suffered and died.

Their passion for the kingdom of God led to passionate action. The question of how we direct our zeal and passion is a topical issue in the world today, and faces each one of us. Simon and Jude's conversion to becoming passionate disciples was testimony to the power of the gospel to transform their pattern of living. They give us an example of zeal for God to emulate.

They are associated with the proclamation of the gospel in several countries in the Middle East and Africa, from Libya to Armenia. If you look at a map to see where these two very ordinary men travelled for the sake of the gospel, their stories become remarkable. Even with Roman roads, travel was not easy in those days and they did not have the protection of Roman citizenship which made life marginally easier for Paul.

Tradition tells us that they both ended up in Persia where they were martyred around 65CE, Simon (rather gruesomely) by being sawn in two, and Jude crucified and speared with javelins.

So, today we celebrate two passionate Apostles. And it prompts the question for us, especially as we are in the midst of our Planned giving program - what are you passionate about? Most of us are fairly ordinary people who want to be faithful to God day by day and who have things about which we are passionate. Our faith should be among them. In the midst of ordinary life, what is God calling you to do with your passions? Are you willing to follow Simon and Jude in forsaking everything for the sake of the gospel?

That question, and its answer, affects decisions about our whole lives: careers, money, time, commitments, and decisions. What gifts and passions has God given you that you can use to proclaim the gospel? Now is the perfect opportunity to ask yourself how you can offer your gifts and passions to God. For those of us who have made decisions that shape our lives, are we open to God asking us, even late in life, to do something new? Or if life has become humdrum, maybe we need to rediscover our passions if they have been lost in the routine plod of daily life.

Our Creed reminds us that we are part of one holy, catholic and *Apostolic* Church. This means that our faith is built upon those, like Simon and Jude, who have gone before us - that we must build on their passionate response to God, and bring the Good news to people in our own generation.

Simon and Jude may be last among the apostles, but as Jesus says, the first shall be last and the last shall be first. And so today we give Simon and Jude first place as we commemorate them on their feast day. If it weren't for Simon, Jude, and all the other apostles, we wouldn't have a Christian faith to believe in or a Christian Church to belong to. It falls to us, then, to guard and cherish the apostolic heritage that we've received from them; and to pass it on with all care to those who come after us.

In the name of God. Amen