

Feast of St Simon and Jude

October 28 2020

Names in His Story

If you were to go through the Bible you would discover there are more than 1792 men's names and more than 176 woman's names. This tells us that the names of people really matter in the biblical story. I like to say the reason for this is because our stories, which involve each of our names, are all joined to His Story.

On certain days of the Christian Year we are invited to highlight certain names, as we celebrate the saints whose lives were joined to the Jesus story in a special way. Today the names of Jude and Simon are brought into the forefront.

Jude is so named by *Luke* and *Acts*. *Matthew* and *Mark* call him Thaddeus. He is not mentioned elsewhere in the *Gospels*, except of course where all the apostles are mentioned.

Simon is mentioned on all four lists of the apostles. On two of them he is called "the Zealot." The Zealots were a Jewish sect that represented an extreme form of Jewish nationalism. For them, the messianic promise of the Old Testament meant that the Jews were to be a free and independent nation. God alone was their king, and any payment of taxes to the Romans—the very domination of the Romans—was a blasphemy against God. No doubt some of the Zealots were the spiritual heirs of the Maccabees, carrying on their ideals of religion and independence. But many were the counterparts of modern terrorists. They raided and killed, attacking both foreigners and "collaborating" Jews. They were chiefly responsible for the rebellion against Rome which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

As in the case of all the apostles except for Peter, James and John, we are faced with men who are really unknown, and we are struck by the fact that their holiness is simply taken to be a gift of Jesus Christ. He chose some unlikely people: a former Zealot, a former (crooked) tax collector, an impetuous fisherman, two "sons of thunder," and a man named Judas Iscariot.

It is a reminder that we cannot receive too often. Holiness does not depend on human merit, culture, personality, effort, or achievement. It is entirely God's creation and gift. God needs no Zealots to bring about the kingdom by force. Jude, like all the saints, is the saint of the impossible: Only God can create his divine life in human beings. And God wills to do so, for all of us.

It is this idea that so inspired St. Paul to affirm that all of our names matter because we are citizens of an eternal country that is the household of God. In knowing that ultimately our citizenship is in heaven is to then inspire us to be active citizens of this country of Canada, and province of Alberta.

What we must always keep in mind is that our fundamental identity is not as Canadians but as those who as members of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. It is this community and not Canada or any other nation that is built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

What will this dwelling place ultimately be like? It will be that place where all will be centred on the Lord Jesus Christ. He called the Twelve to himself and named them his Apostles, Jesus then sent them out to draw other people to himself. This too is our calling. For each of us was named in baptism in relation to Jesus' name. We are on His list and therefore forever joined with the name of Jesus. Whatever our vocation, be it student, homemaker, professional, labourer, politician or priest, it is as we see our stories being joined to His-Story that we can live each day aware of our part in God's saving work

The author C.S Lewis captured this vividly in an essay entitled "The Weight of Glory"

"There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously - no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption."¹

St Jude and St Simon although unknown to us, other than their names, and the latter's revolutionary past, came to realize this insight with great clarity.

May we likewise be fully engaged in living life purposefully and well now, infused by the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, remember that everything we do here below is to serve the end of that city that is above.

And remember your name matters because it is joined to His Name and your story, of is part of His Story and history.

¹ <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/42142-there-are-no-ordinary-people-you-have-never-talked-to>