



Successful Faith in a Family of Sinful Saints

Feast of Saints Simon and Jude, Apostles

Ephesians 2:19-22

Luke 6:12-19

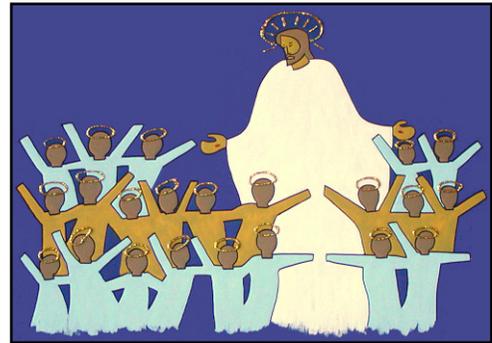
You and I are members of the same imperfect household. It's a growing family, often a squabbling family, that includes the saints in heaven as well as the unfinished saints who still live on earth. In Ephesians 2:19-22, St. Paul says that we form a building, the foundation of which is the apostles and prophets. The cornerstone is Jesus, and he keeps our Church from falling apart despite our human failings, divisions, and weaknesses.

In Luke 6:12-19, Jesus discerns which of his disciples should be trained as future leaders of the Church. Today we celebrate the sainthood of two: Simon who was called a Zealot because he was zealous about obeying both Jewish law and Canaanite law, and Jude (or Judas) the son of James and a relative of Jesus.

They are both good examples of how Christians can be so imperfect yet so very effective in ministry.

Jude had a pastoral approach to ministry. He wrote his New Testament letter after experiencing hardships in his ministry. His letter includes a strong encouragement to persevere in difficulties. However, he didn't always have this wisdom. Back at the Last Supper, he had tried to convince Jesus to show himself to the whole world after his resurrection (see John 14:22). Wouldn't that have made Jude's work as an evangelizer much easier!

Successful ministry is neither easy nor convenient. And praise God for that! It's the trials and hardships, when used for the glory of God, that



produce the compassion — the pastoral approach — that's found in those who are leader-servants like Christ.

Simon had a legalistic approach to ministry. He promoted scrupulous obedience to religious and civil laws. But he learned that the Law of Love is the bottom line and the highest goal of all other laws, rules, and regulations. Jesus taught him that a successful evangelizer meets people where they're at and then lovingly invites them to conversion.

Whenever we look at any Church law from the angle of its loving benefits, we can lead others to those benefits without forcing obedience through scoldings and threats of hell. Legalistic obedience doesn't convert hearts to God's love. Compassionate outreach produces a humble response, which then opens the sinner to learn the real value of Church laws, which then produces obedience.

We all belong to an imperfect household, but the Church has survived 2000 years of scandals and divisions and other human failings, because Jesus is the cornerstone. We are all at different stages of holiness and spiritual growth, but we are equally siblings in God's family, held together by the unitive presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist — Hey Saint Jude! Jesus IS showing himself to the whole world, post-resurrection!