

OCTOBER 28 2024 FATHER BERTAIO

So, today, as we heard at the beginning of the Mass, we celebrate this great feast of these two amazing men, both Simon and St. Jude. Little is known about Simon and Jude apart from their listing in the Gospel that we just read, as being among the twelve chosen by Jesus, the Lord.

There are a couple of things that I have learned that I would like to share with you. First, Simon, also known as the Zealot, had much devotion to the Jewish law until he was called by the Lord and gave his whole heart to preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as we heard a few moments ago. St. Jude, also called Thaddeus, was the Judas at the Last Supper who asked the Lord why He showed Himself only to the disciples and not to the world.

One key fact to note is that for many centuries, St. Jude was scarcely venerated because people confused him with Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Jesus. Today, we venerate St. Jude as the patron saint of desperate or impossible causes. Both of these men were martyred at the same time. These two men, chosen like the others, were also known by Christ and given the beautiful and important task of continuing His work. They are symbols—symbols that we, too, should continue today.

The symbol of the apostles is to preach the Gospel of Christ. Like the apostles, we should always take our lead from Christ, to be like Him, and to react like Him in everything that happens. These men were active symbols of the faith and unity that all of us are called to uphold, even today in our everyday lives. How, you might ask? Most importantly, through faith in Jesus Christ and by living out the sacramental life we

inherited centuries ago, a life we received through the grace of our baptism.

This grace, though we were likely too young to remember it, entered our lives and made us members of the Christian Church, followers of Christ, regardless of how young we were. This mission, begun at our baptism, continues as we grow. Every time we receive the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus, it strengthens us. Even more, we are strengthened when we avail ourselves of the sacrament of reconciliation, to be wiped clean and remain faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

It is also key to share the message of Jesus with people we know and even with those we don't. It could be, for example, a family member who might be with you right now, or someone you haven't seen in a while—perhaps a coworker or a neighbor. We must speak the words of Jesus and be kind to all people, as Jesus was kind to us.

Kindness. Recently, this past summer, I spent a few weeks in my birthplace in Portugal, on the beautiful island of Terceira. I met people I did not recognize, people I hadn't seen in decades. Many times, we'd gather in groups, and I was always kind, regardless of whether I knew them or not. I made an effort to be kind because, though I don't mean to boast, it's simply my nature to be kind, even to strangers. Many told me, "The priesthood suits you well." I thought, "What does that mean?"

As they explained, I was surprised to hear them comment that they remembered me from over fifty years ago. They said I had been an example, someone who never fought back when picked on. It was a compliment, acknowledging that I had always treated others the way I

wanted to be treated—with kindness. As a friend used to say, "Treat someone with kindness, and their unkindness will melt away."

Be kind to others. Be Christ to others. It isn't easy, but it is possible. You might also know that this coming Friday, the Church celebrates the Feast of All Saints. This is when we honor all those men and women who, during their lives on Earth, were examples of God's love for each of us. Each day of the year, we celebrate various saints and ask for their intercession with the Lord for our needs.

My dear friends in Christ, you might be sitting there thinking, "I'll never be a saint." That's okay. Not all of us are called to sainthood. Not all of us are called to be apostles or preachers. However, all of us are called to be the image of Jesus to someone else. It doesn't take much to be kind to someone. Just think twice before responding negatively to someone or about something. Smile when someone says something negative about you and say, "I'm glad that God loves you as He loves me."

Be yourself. Be kind, be patient, be loving. As we approach the Feast of All Saints, think of someone you know or have read about who was always kind to others. Perhaps Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Saint Padre Pio, or Saint Carlo Acutis. Think of someone who imitates Jesus, and strive to do the same in your life. Amen.