



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square

Wednesday, 11 October 2006

Simon and Jude

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, let us examine two of the Twelve Apostles: Simon the Cananaean and Jude Thaddaeus (not to be confused with Judas Iscariot). Let us look at them together, not only because they are always placed next to each other in the lists of the Twelve (cf. Mt 10: 3, 4; Mk 3: 18; Lk 6: 15; Acts 1: 13), but also because there is very little information about them, apart from the fact that the New Testament Canon preserves one Letter attributed to Jude Thaddaeus.

Simon is given a nickname that varies in the four lists: while Matthew and Mark describe him as a "Cananaean", Luke instead describes him as a "Zealot".

In fact, the two descriptions are equivalent because they mean the same thing: indeed, in Hebrew the verb *qanà'* means "to be jealous, ardent" and can be said both of God, since he is jealous with regard to his Chosen People (cf. Ex 20: 5), and of men who burn with zeal in serving the one God with unreserved devotion, such as Elijah (cf. I Kgs 19: 10).

Thus, it is highly likely that even if this Simon was not exactly a member of the nationalist movement of Zealots, he was at least marked by passionate attachment to his Jewish identity, hence, for God, his People and divine Law.

If this was the case, Simon was worlds apart from Matthew, who, on the contrary, had an activity behind him as a tax collector that was frowned upon as entirely impure. This shows that Jesus called his disciples and collaborators, without exception, from the most varied social and religious

backgrounds.

It was people who interested him, not social classes or labels! And the best thing is that in the group of his followers, despite their differences, they all lived side by side, overcoming imaginable difficulties: indeed, what bound them together was Jesus himself, in whom they all found themselves united with one another.

This is clearly a lesson for us who are often inclined to accentuate differences and even contrasts, forgetting that in Jesus Christ we are given the strength to get the better of our continual conflicts.

Let us also bear in mind that the group of the Twelve is the prefiguration of the Church, where there must be room for all charisms, peoples and races, all human qualities that find their composition and unity in communion with Jesus.

Then with regard to Jude Thaddaeus, this is what tradition has called him, combining two different names: in fact, whereas Matthew and Mark call him simply "Thaddaeus" (Mt 10: 3; Mk 3: 18), Luke calls him "Judas, the son of James" (Lk 6: 16; Acts 1: 13).

The nickname "Thaddaeus" is of uncertain origin and is explained either as coming from the Aramaic, *taddà'*, which means "breast" and would therefore suggest "magnanimous", or as an abbreviation of a Greek name, such as "Teodòro, Teòdoto".

Very little about him has come down to us. John alone mentions a question he addressed to Jesus at the Last Supper: Thaddaeus says to the Lord: "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?".

This is a very timely question which we also address to the Lord: why did not the Risen One reveal himself to his enemies in his full glory in order to show that it is God who is victorious? Why did he only manifest himself to his disciples? Jesus' answer is mysterious and profound. The Lord says: "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (Jn 14: 22-23).

This means that the Risen One must be seen, must be perceived also by the heart, in a way so that God may take up his abode within us. The Lord does not appear as a thing. He desires to enter our lives, and therefore his manifestation is a manifestation that implies and presupposes an open heart. Only in this way do we see the Risen One.

The paternity of one of those New Testament Letters known as "catholic", since they are not addressed to a specific local Church but intended for a far wider circle, has been attributed to Jude Thaddaeus. Actually, it is addressed "to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ" (v. 1).

A major concern of this writing is to put Christians on guard against those who make a pretext of God's grace to excuse their own licentiousness and corrupt their brethren with unacceptable teachings, introducing division within the Church "in their dreamings" (v. 8).

This is how Jude defines their doctrine and particular ideas. He even compares them to fallen angels and, mincing no words, says that "they walk in the way of Cain" (v. 11).

Furthermore, he brands them mercilessly as "waterless clouds, carried along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars for whom the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved for ever" (vv. 12-13).

Today, perhaps, we are no longer accustomed to using language that is so polemic, yet that tells us something important. In the midst of all the temptations that exist, with all the currents of modern life, we must preserve our faith's identity. Of course, the way of indulgence and dialogue, on which the Second Vatican Council happily set out, should certainly be followed firmly and consistently.

But this path of dialogue, while so necessary, must not make us forget our duty to rethink and to highlight just as forcefully the main and indispensable aspects of our Christian identity. Moreover, it is essential to keep clearly in mind that our identity requires strength, clarity and courage in light of the contradictions of the world in which we live.

Thus, the text of the Letter continues: "But you, beloved" - he is speaking to all of us -, "build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And convince some, who doubt..." (vv. 20-22).

The Letter ends with these most beautiful words: "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen" (vv. 24-25).

It is easy to see that the author of these lines lived to the full his own faith, to which realities as great as moral integrity and joy, trust and lastly praise belong, since it is all motivated solely by the goodness of our one God and the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, may both Simon the Cananaean and Jude Thaddeus help us to rediscover the beauty of the Christian faith ever anew and to live it without tiring, knowing how to bear a strong and at the same time peaceful witness to it.

To special groups

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I offer a warm welcome to all the English-speaking groups, pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience, especially the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate. I pray that your stay in Rome will renew your faith and that the Lord will keep you strong in your Christian identity, following the example of the Apostles Simon and Jude. May God bless you all!

Lastly, I greet the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newly-weds*. Today, the Liturgy commemorates my venerable Predecessor Bl. John XXIII, who served Christ and the Church with exemplary dedication, doing his best with constant concern for the salvation of souls. May his protection support you, dear *young people*, in the effort of daily faithfulness to Christ; may it encourage you, dear *sick people*, not to lose trust in the hour of trial and suffering; may it help you, dear *newly-weds*, to make your family a school of growth in love of God and others.

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