

**SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER**  
**Saint Simon and Saint Jude, Apostles (October 28)<sup>1</sup>**

**Lessons:<sup>2</sup>**

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the twelfth Verse of the third Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.<sup>3</sup>

“Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith [SETH] the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith [SETH] the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children, saith [SETH] the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith [SETH] the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the twelfth Verse of the sixth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke.<sup>4</sup>

“... And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

“And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus [*al-FEE-uss*], and Simon called Zelotes [*zih-LOW-tease*], And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

“And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

### **Homily:**

We know very little about the two saints honored on this day, except that they were Apostles, and Simon had been some sort of Zealot before he followed Christ, while this Jude, or Judas, was not Iscariot. They traveled together, in later years, into Persia, we are told.

The observance of the feast of *Saint Simon and Saint Jude, Apostles*, provides an opportunity to look at how the Church *continues* the Apostolic ministry in every age, and will continue the Apostolic ministry until the Last Day when Christ will return and raise the dead. That is what these readings tell us, and what the Collect draws our attention to. Until 1928, and only here in the United States, the Epistle for this day was not from Ephesians, but rather the first eight verses of the Epistle of Jude where we find these famous words, “*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was*

We had a choice to make, both as a church body and as individuals who have entered it: We could be among those St. Paul spoke of as “*having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*”, about whom he directed us, “*from such turn away*”,<sup>6</sup> or we could “*earnestly contend for the Faith once delivered to the saints*.” And, however rough the ride may have been at times, or will be, it is well worth it. We are built on Christ’s own foundation; we are “*an holy temple in the Lord... builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*.” This gives us the enmity of the world, but also the powerful life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit. The Apostolic ministry is, even now, the ministry of Christ in His Church, a present reality through which the Word of Life is Incarnate through His Body the Church. That is what the Scriptures for this day teach us. The Church is still Apostolic, in every meaningful way.

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The Rev’d Robert Hart<sup>7</sup>  
October 28, 2009

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<sup>1</sup> Preached at the Provincial Synod Mass of the Anglican Catholic Church, October, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> *An Alternative Calendar (1928) with Lesson Proper for Holy-Days*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, WITH THE ADDITIONS AND DEVIATIONS PROPOSED IN 1928 56 (Canterbury Press 2008); *Lessons Proper for Holy Days*, A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xliv (South Africa 1954); *Lessons Proper for Holy-Days*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xliii (CIPBC 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 3:12-18 (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> St. Luke 6:12-19 (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 20:7.

<sup>6</sup> II Timothy 3:5 (KJV).

<sup>7</sup> Rector, St. Benedict’s Anglican Catholic Church, Chapel Hill, NC.

be truly Apostolic. For the Church is not merely in its origins Apostolic; it is in its life Apostolic, in its power Apostolic, and in the proclamation of the Gospel committed to her, the Church is Apostolic in calling all men everywhere to repent. We are built on that foundation, and on no other, *“for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”*

As St. John wrote, in the opening of his first Epistle:

*“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew [SHOW] unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”*

The Christ with whom we have fellowship, is the same Christ whose Incarnation touches us even now in the sacramental life within the fellowship passed on through all generations of the Church. The Man Who they saw and heard, and who they touched with their hands, who lived, died and lives again evermore, is present with us. The foundation is not some ideal to read about, but a living reality here and now.

We can approach our mission as Catholic Christians in the Anglican tradition in one of two ways. One way is to see Apostolic Succession as merely historical; the other is to see it as present, with Apostolic ministry continuing here and now. The gifts of grace that God still gives to the whole Church through our bishops, are not mere formalities; they are the means whereby we realize the words we have heard today: *“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.”*

*needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”*

The Collect for today, however, always drew from the words in Ephesians, *“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.”* It is good to think upon both of these passages of Scripture in light of the Gospel portion we have heard, with particular attention to these words: *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me.”*

We need to think about all of these words, because St. Paul, St. Jude brother of St. James, and our Lord Jesus Christ have described the life we are living here and now in this world. It is a life of enmity from the world, for we do not belong to this world, but also life empowered by the Holy Spirit. We do not need to belong to this world, because we are part of something better, with a foundation that is, even though quite ancient, always new. Only those who are baptized into Christ’s death and raised to walk in newness of life can be the living stones that make up this, the temple of the Lord, *“an habitation of God through the Spirit.”* Because the world hates us, all the wrath of the world, the flesh and the Devil force us to contend for the Faith once delivered to the saints; we are given no period of rest from the war unless and until we are granted to sleep before the dead in Christ rise first, on the Last Day.

A Biblical word not found in today's readings, but relevant to them, is the word, "*tribulation*." Some of our Evangelical friends believe in a fairly recently-concocted theory of Biblical interpretation, that they will be, as they say, "raptured away", and the world will suffer "the Great Tribulation." This theory has never made sense to me, because what the world suffers cannot be called tribulation—wrath, yes, not tribulation; tribulation is the fiery trial of our faith, more precious than gold.

In fact, the symbolic period of three and a half years, or "a time, times and half a time" or "forty-two months", comes from the Book of Numbers, and the forty-two encampments of Israel before they entered the Land of Promise; and as such symbolizes the entire time that the Church has been and will remain in this world. It does not symbolize some special period near the end, certainly not some period without the Church.

Those who think they may be spared tribulation as a reward for their faith are living in an ungodly fantasy. In many other countries of the real world, Christians live with persecution, sometimes to the death; indeed, it is our comfort in the West that is the exception to the rule. One Coptic man told me, in early 2005, that he and his father were in America with refugee status because, "in Egypt," he told me, "the mass killing of Christians goes on all the time."

Try telling those persecuted Christians that American Evangelicals will be spared tribulation because of their faith, and see how sane they think you are. "*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you,*" said our Lord Jesus. And so, it does. To have the Faith at all requires that we earnestly contend for the Faith, that same Faith that was once delivered to the saints.

Our foundation is the truth of salvation that has been revealed by God. To be built upon the Apostles and Prophets rightly makes us think of the Scriptures, and speaks of Antiquity. The first man called a prophet (נביא, *nabiy'*) is our father,

Abraham.<sup>5</sup> The foundation upon which we are built goes back through the people of Israel to that nomadic patriarch, and the revelation given to him, and his faith by which all of us who are in Christ are his children and heirs.

The revelation of God through all the prophets, from Moses to the later prophets of Scripture, all points to one Man Who would come, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostles continued the work through the same Holy Ghost who spake by the prophets. Their words also point to one Man, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostles could speak of the same mysteries with the veil taken away. The Virgin foretold by Isaiah *had* conceived and borne a son, who is Immanuel, God Incarnate with us even now by His Spirit. The soul of the Suffering Servant, foretold as well, had already been made a sacrifice for sin, and He had already risen to prolong His days, so that the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

The New Covenant foretold by Jeremiah, that mysterious New Covenant in which the Law is written on our hearts and our sins forgiven, had been established in His blood, as He revealed in the night in which He was betrayed. So the Apostles completed the foundation, Christ Himself the chief cornerstone; and no other foundation, says St. Paul, can any man lay. The foundation is the revelation of God fulfilled in Christ, revelation about Him, and a temple of living stones—you and me—built on Him.

We Anglicans say much about Apostolic Succession, as we ought. Our bishops trace their Apostolic Succession back to those same men to whom the risen Christ personally, in His resurrected and glorious body of flesh and bone, gave the charge when He breathed on them the Holy Spirit, and sent them into the world. And their only strength against the enmity of the world was the power of that same Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit who supplies all things needed by the Church for her to