

Day Three: Fidelity (continued)

St. Jude, as one of the Apostles, was part of the initial structure of the Church as formed by Christ. Many of the truths Christ preached were difficult for a faithful Jew like St. Jude to accept, and the Gospels are filled with examples of the Apostles struggling with or even misunderstanding the words of Christ. When confronted by Jesus with the concept of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, many abandoned Him. St. Jude and the Apostles stood by Him, realizing as St. Peter said, “You have the words of eternal life.” (Jn 6:68) While the Resurrection confirmed his faith, it is likely that St. Jude continued to have moments of doubt and difficulty. St. Peter was commanded by Christ to “strengthen the brethren.” (Lk 22:32) As a fellow-leader of the early community of the faithful, St. Jude was also guided by and drew much strength from the Holy Spirit.

Whatever doubts St. Jude may have had, his faith remained firm in the end. He had learned from following the Lord that prayer with openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit is a sure cure for doubt. We can draw courage from his example and learn how to deal with our own doubts. By trusting the Lord, trusting the Church, praying and seeking illumination and understanding, our doubts can be transformed into stronger and firmer faith.

“It is also difficult to accept some truths, because the truths of faith are of two kinds; some pleasant, others unpalatable to our spirit. But faith is not just a question of believing in the things that God has revealed, but in Him who deserves our faith, who has loved us so much and done so much for our sake.” (Pope John Paul I, September 13, 1978)

St. Jude, your faith was tested yet confirmed when you saw and ate with the Risen Christ. Through your years of ministry following the Ascension, you remained faithful to Your Lord in good times and bad. Show us how to keep our hearts and minds fixed on Him, and by your intercession, help us gain the strength to weather the trials of life and stand unshaken through the many tests and challenges, until at last we see that same Risen Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Day Four: Hope

Keep yourselves within the love of God and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you eternal life. (Jude 21)

Good Friday found St. Jude huddled with the other Apostles, fearful for his life and in total confusion. His entire world had crashed around him, and there was no foreseeable light at the end of the tunnel. The Apostolic band was lost – without comfort and without any reasonable hope. How incredible must have been St. Jude’s joy when he first saw the Risen Lord! From the depth of despair to indescribable joy.

In all of our lives we face situations that can cause us to lose hope. When we focus on things of this world alone, despair

can become our closest companion. The specters of war, of disease, of earthquake or natural disaster, the betrayal of friends, the loss of employment, the ending of a cherished relationship – all shake the foundation of our hope. What St. Jude learned in seeing the Risen Lord is that He truly is the source of all hope, and in Him, our hope is never confounded. God has a way of resolving those situations that can cause us to despair – not necessarily in the manner we would wish, but always to our benefit. Like St. Jude, place your trust in God, hope in the Lord, and be prepared for unexpected, and indescribable joy.

“This is the perfection of the virtue of poverty, it is perfect hope, to have lost all created joy, and to lean on God alone.” (Bl. Columba Marmion, *Union with God*)

St. Jude, your life and apostolic ministry serve as a witness to hope. As patron of impossible cases, you have been invoked countless times by those close to despair, and your intercession has so often won for them the graces they desire. We turn to you, great friend of Christ, that your intercession might win for us a rekindling of the hope that strengthens us when the world seems bleak and our problems unremitting. Be for us a beacon of hope and guide us to the place where all consolation resides, the bosom of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Day Five: Religion

To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, authority and power, before all ages, now and for ever. (Jude 25)

These days, it is common in conversation to hear people describe themselves as “spiritual, but not religious.” Many in our society have rejected the idea of what they refer to as “organized religion,” and pick and choose aspects of different religious beliefs and traditions that fit in with their own feelings. How far from that view stands St. Jude! St. Jude was raised in the Jewish faith, and all indications are that he was an observant Jew who recognized that religious belief is not dependent upon something within ourselves, but rather on objective truths that stand over and above us. In coming to know Jesus, he came to know that Christ Himself was the Son of God, the Messiah he had been taught to expect and wait for. Jesus Christ was, and is, Truth Incarnate.

Religion is that virtue which puts the worship of God into authentic practice. Much of the Epistle of St. Jude is concerned with ensuring that the Christian community attend to the worship of God. That worship should not become merely a formality, but should be worship in Spirit and in Truth. (Jn 4:24) Our own worship of God, our frequent celebration of the Holy Eucharist, our celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, our prayer with our fellow-Christians – our practice of the virtue of religion, should be founded not on

Day Five: Religion (continued)

fear, but out of love and desire to give ourselves to God fully and devoutly. Our coming together as a worshipping community of faith, to support each other and offer to God our common worship, is our exercise of the virtue of religion. Our spirituality *is* religious, for it recognizes the debt of honor we owe to God, who has given us so much.

“It is evident that lordship belongs to God in a special and singular way, because He made all things, and has supreme dominion over all. Consequently a special kind of service is due to Him, which is known as religion.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa II-II q. 81, a. 1, ad 3)

St. Jude, as a child you learned the precepts of the Jewish religion; as a disciple of Christ, you accepted Him as the fulfillment of the messianic promise. With your fellow Apostles you worshipped the Lord in the Temple, in the synagogues, and in the homes of the faithful, attending that human need to worship God. Guide us by your example to be ever more faithful in serving God through our liturgy and private prayer and intercede for us that we may one day stand with you and all the saints, praising God before His Holy Throne where He reigns, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen

Day Six: Family

Jude, servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James; to those who are called, to those who are dear to God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ. (Jude 1)

St. Jude is described as a kinsman of Jesus. Various traditions contradict each other on the precise nature of this kinship but we need not be concerned with those details. Suffice it to say that St. Jude was related to Jesus – he was in relationship with the Lord. The Gospels do not record every detail of the years that Jesus and His Apostles travelled through the Holy Land, preaching, and healing and witnessing. We have no written record of their long conversations as the campfires smoldered, or the periods of amicable silence as the apostolic band kicked up sand as they walked on a dusty road. We do not know the “in-jokes” or the childhood memories they discussed, or the common sorrow they shared when a mutual friend or relative died. But in our own human experience, we understand that bond of kinship.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus transformed and broadened St. Jude’s understanding of relationships, but it did not destroy his particular bonds to his own family. Our families are important to us too, whatever form they take. Families can be a source of support for our faith, or a source of challenge – a bond of love or a memory of pain. Yet it is within our family and our circle of relationships that we are formed. Our families and friends can also be the place in which God asks us to preach His Name.

“The plan for the spiritual life of the laity should take its particular character from their married or family state or their single or widowed state, from their state of health, and from

their professional and social activity. They should not cease to develop earnestly the qualities and talents bestowed on them in accord with these conditions of life, and they should make use of the gifts which they have received from the Holy Spirit.” (Vatican II, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 4)

St. Jude, as a kinsman of the Lord, and even more poignantly, as a member of the Apostolic band, you knew the joy of being regularly in Christ’s presence. You also knew the struggles that we all face in our families and our close relationships. By your example, help us to work for peace in our families and strengthen our bonds of friendship. By your intercession, draw us all, with our families and friends, closer to Jesus, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Day Seven: Martyrdom

I felt that I must write to you encouraging you to fight hard for the faith which has been once and for all entrusted to God’s holy people. (Jude 3)

The traditions about St. Jude agree that he was martyred for his faith in Christ, even though they disagree on the location and details of that martyrdom. Martyrdom can seem a distant thing to us in our modern lives. Even though Pope John Paul II spoke of the 20th century as the “century of martyrs” (October 29, 2005), it can seem a distant and foreign thing to be asked to die for our faith. If Christian history shows us anything, however, it shows us that periods of martyrdom can appear anywhere, at anytime. Ultimately, however, we might not be called to lay down our lives for our faith like St. Jude, but we are called to *be willing* to lay down our lives for Christ.

Martyrdom is also not always one glorious instant. Martyrdom – witnessing to Christ and being willing to do so to the point of death – can be a lifelong process of bearing wrongs patiently, of patiently enduring the insults of friends and colleagues who insult our Church; of sacrificing our comfort in order to do what we know to be right; of not hiding our beliefs and being unashamed to call ourselves disciples of Christ. It can mean standing up for the unborn, the poor, the marginalized. These are all the types of martyrdom that are more familiar to us, and call us to have the same type of courage and faith that allowed St. Jude to profess Christ, even though it meant giving up his own life.

“The end for which we are created invites us to walk a road that is surely sown with a lot of thorns, but it is not sad; through even the sorrow, it is illuminated by joy.” (Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati)

Day Seven: Martyrdom (cont'd)

St. Jude, you suffered for your ministry of the Word, even to the point of death. In laying down your life for the Gospel, you have provided us with an example to follow. May we develop such a love for Christ, and such a spirit of devotion for His people, that we become willing to lay down our lives and endure such suffering as God deigns to allow. May your intercession provide us with the courage to face the hatred of all those who are opposed to Christ and transform it, as you did, into a shower of grace, so that we may one day stand triumphant with you in the presence of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

Day Eight: Healing

Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance. (Jude 2)

St. Jude is well known and invoked as the patron of impossible cases. In many instances there have been miracles worked by his intercession, and many attribute marvelous and inexplicable healings to St. Jude's prayers. We should not be surprised that someone who walked daily with Jesus and saw Him healing the sick should himself have an interest in the sufferings of humanity. We turn to St. Jude still today and ask his intercession for our healing, and the healing of those dear to us. We ask for miracles, and we know that God hears our prayers, even when the answer differs from our expectations. Still, emboldened by Our Lord, we can expect miracles.

Yet we should not forget that we are disciples of the Lord too. We have been called to follow the same path trod by St. Jude. Though we were not present when Jesus restored the sight of Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52), we still have seen the Lord, in His Eucharistic Presence. We have had Christ's healing touch forgive our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We have experienced or witnessed the grace of healing given in the Anointing of the Sick. We, like St. Jude, are called to be healers as well. We are called to go out into a broken world and be agents of healing, in mind, body and spirit.

"Just as the Resurrection transformed Christ's wounds into a source of healing and salvation, so for every sick person the light of the risen Christ is a confirmation that the way of fidelity to God can triumph in the gift of self until the Cross and can transform illness itself into a source of joy and resurrection." (John Paul II, August 6, 1999)

St. Jude, you know well the brokenness of our human condition. Countless miracles are attributed to your intercession, showing your concern for suffering humanity. You witnessed Christ healing the sick, the deaf, the blind, and those troubled in mind and body. You saw Him conquer even death. May your example remind us to bring the healing message of the Gospel to the sick and suffering around us, and may your intercession bring to us and our beloved the healing and the thirst for the Kingdom, where Christ lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Day Nine: Evangelization

But remember, my dear friends, what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. (Jude 17)

At the Ascension, Jesus Christ entrusted His Apostles with the task of preaching the Gospel and making disciples of all nations (Mt 28:16-20) That mission is still not complete. St. Jude travelled, tradition tells us, to various places throughout the Middle East, proclaiming the salvation won for us by Christ. He converted many and built up the foundation of the Church.

In our own time, recent Popes have recognized that, in the Western world in particular, there has developed a lack of enthusiasm for the task of evangelization. We are accustomed to thinking of our society as a Christian society, and so the notion of preaching the Gospel has become seen as something people do in foreign, exotic places. And yet, how many of us have friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even family members who do not know Jesus. Most have heard of Him, it is true, but do they truly know the Lord? If they do not, what is our responsibility to make Him known to them? Do we not have the same baptism that St. Jude had? Have we not received the same Holy Spirit?

The task of evangelization is not just entrusted to a special class of missionaries within the Church, and it is not confined to foreign and exotic lands. We all, according to our charisms and ability, have a part to play in proclaiming the Gospel message, even when it is uncomfortable or daunting. He will give us strength. We must break down the walls of ignorance and the misconceptions people have about the Lord and introduce Him to them. We must support and encourage each other, praying for one another and supporting one another in our regular worship. The task of evangelization is ours, no less than it was St. Jude's.

"The moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the mission to the nations. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples." (Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio, December 7, 1990)

St. Jude, called by Christ, emboldened by His Resurrection and empowered by the Holy Spirit, you went out to lands unknown to you and preached the Gospel. In our own day, we do not have to go as far to find those who do not know the Lord. Teach us to use the charisms and talents God has given us to spread the saving message of the Gospel in our homes, our neighborhoods, and our workplaces. By your intercession, strengthen our resolve to make known Jesus Christ, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

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