

Living the Word: I Thessalonians 1.1-10

In this reading from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul shares three characteristics he appreciates about the Thessalonian believers. First he mentions their 'work of faith': Paul blesses these believers because of the works that they do as a result of their faith, which are important to us as Christians. Second, Paul refers to their 'labour of love': this reminds us that it is hard work loving others, but it is what Christ commands us to do. Finally, Paul refers to their 'steadfastness of hope': in English, 'hope' can often seem a bit uncertain, perhaps like wishful thinking. Yet Biblical hope is 'sure and certain', the idea that we have assurance in the future because of who God is. What that means is that the problems we currently face do not daunt us, because we see beyond the moment, even to eternity, and this helps us in the midst of trials and difficulties. These three characteristics can only be lived out by noting the last phrase of verse 3, 'in the Lord Jesus Christ', because it is Christ who gives us these three graces when we are baptized. As we grow, we must therefore foster them by living them, just as those Christians in the Church at Thessalonica did.

Saints and Heroes: SS Simon and Jude

On 28th October the Church keeps the Feast of SS Simon and Jude. They were two of the Twelve Apostles called by Jesus in the Gospels to witness and share in his earthly ministry. There is not much known about these two saints, but we do know that they were two of the Twelve, and that they were therefore present throughout the narrative found in the Gospel, including at the Last Supper, on Easter Sunday, and on Pentecost. It is believed that they were sent to preach the Gospel in Persia and Mesopotamia, where they were martyred. St Jude, also known as St Thaddeus, is believed to have written the short epistle in the New Testament that bears his name. In Christian iconography Jude is often shown with an engineer's set square because he holds the honour of being an architect of the house of God through the writing of his Apostolic Epistle. St Jude is also the patron saint of lost causes. Jude was a cousin of Jesus: Jude's father Cleophas (or Alpheus) was the brother of St Joseph, the husband of Mary. Even less is known of St Simon. Also known as Simon the Zealot, tradition has it that he was martyred by being sawn in half and so is often seen holding a saw. The principal relics of SS Simon and Jude are held in St Peter's Basilica Rome, and in Saint-Sernin in Toulouse.

22nd October 2023

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary
Time



In today's Gospel the Pharisees try to trap Jesus once again. Should God's followers pay taxes to Caesar? If he answers yes, the Jews will think he is in collusion with Rome; if he answers no, then Rome might seek to kill Jesus. Of course, the answer for Jesus is that we give to Caesar, or the state, that which is rightfully theirs, but likewise we give to God what belongs to him. In doing so, Jesus avoids the trap question: by not saying whether the taxes should be paid, but also reminds everyone that God is above all, even Caesar. We are left in Jesus' answer asking "what belongs to whom?". It is difficult to see anything in Jesus' teaching that suggests anything other than everything belongs to God. The question for us: are we prepared to pay it?

Today's Gospel: St. Matthew 22:15-22

From the Fathers

The root of all evil is covetousness. Many who have coveted riches have turned aside from the faith and encountered affliction. But I will encounter you, you who are truly poor, because although you were rich, for my sake you became poor. Lord, when I meditate on your poverty, whatever I may look at loses attraction for me. So give me something eternal, grant me a foretaste of eternity.

From, 'Sermons, 14, 7' by Augustine of Hippo, Bishop, 354-430