

Feast of Saints Simon and Jude

Homily of Bishop Barres

St. Agnes Cathedral

October 28, 2020

Today we celebrate the Feast of Saints Simon and Jude, Apostles. Preface II of the Apostles reads: “For you have built your Church to stand firm on apostolic foundations, to be a lasting sign of your holiness on earth and offer all humanity your heavenly teaching.” Luke 12 shows Our Lord going up the mountain to pray and then choosing and calling the 12 Apostles. St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians states that the Church is “built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone.”

As Catholics we believe in the doctrine of Apostolic Succession, namely, that there is an unbroken line through the centuries from the first Apostles chosen by Christ to the Bishops of today, a line which assures the Church a “communion of faith and life with her origin.”¹ As Christ was sent as the Father’s Emissary, so Our Lord in turn sent others to continue his mission, and they chose others to succeed themselves. The Scriptures make this clear. By this gift of God, the Church “was and remains built on ‘the foundation of the Apostles.’”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that “with the help of the Spirit dwelling in her, the Church keeps and hands on the teaching, the ‘good deposit,’ the salutary words she has heard from the [ones first chosen].” Further, through the gift of Apostolic Succession, “[the Church] continues to be taught, sanctified, and guided by the apostles until Christ’s return, through their successors in pastoral office: the college of bishops, ‘assisted by priests, in union with the successor of Peter, the Church’s supreme pastor.’” (857)

Bishops stand in this line of Apostolic Succession. Bishops, “Successors of the Apostles (*Apostolorum Successores*) by divine institution...are constituted as Pastors of the Church when the Holy Spirit is conferred upon them at their episcopal ordination, and they receive the task of teaching, sanctifying and governing in

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 863.

hierarchical communion with the Successor of Peter and with the other members of the Episcopal College...

The title ‘Successors of the Apostles’ lies at the root of the pastoral ministry of the Bishop and of his mission in the Church and it clearly defines the figure of the Bishop and his mission. Bishops, as members of the episcopal College which is the successor of the Apostolic College, are intimately united to Jesus Christ, who continues to choose and to send out his Apostles. As a successor of the Apostles, by virtue of his episcopal ordination and through hierarchical communion, the Bishop is the visible principle and the guarantee of unity in his particular Church...

As successors of the Apostles, Bishops receive the grace and the responsibility to safeguard the mark of apostolicity in the Church. In order that the living Gospel might always be preserved in its entirety in the Church, the Apostles left Bishops as their successors, entrusting to them their own Magisterial task. This is why Bishops, generation after generation, are called to safeguard and to hand on Sacred Scripture and to promote the *Traditio*, that is the proclamation of the one Gospel upon the new questions that are constantly presented by changing historical circumstances... Bishops, moreover, are responsible for sanctifying and governing the People of God *cum et sub Petro*, with missionary dynamism...’’²

Mary, Queen of the Apostles, pray for us!

St. Peter, pray for us!

Sts. Simon and Jude, pray for us!

All Apostles and all Saint Successors of the Apostles, pray for us!

² Congregation for Bishops, *Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004) 5-6. Portions of this homily were used in Bishop Barres’ Sunday, October 25, 2020 homily at St. Agnes Cathedral.