

The others

Commemoration of Simon and Jude

October 28, 2020

The Very Rev. Patrick Raymond

An entry that I read this afternoon from a 'lives of the saints' volume began by saying, "*Both Simon and Jude were ordinary men ...*" I almost stopped reading. The statement was merely conjecture. What makes a person 'ordinary' or 'extraordinary' in his or her time?

The author was, I believe, confusing ordinary and obscure. Simon and Jude were among the twelve Apostles. Nothing ordinary. But they were not in the inner circle. They had no speaking parts in any gospel. The short New Testament letter attributed to Jude is given a place that to some might suggest 'honorable mention,' toward the end, the last letter before Revelation. To boost his credibility, he introduces himself in the first verse as '*the brother of James.*'

The lives of the saints entry that I read continued with a credible paragraph about the names of Simon and Jude. Simon was known as 'Simon the Zealot'. If describing his temperament, he was not ordinary. 'Zealot' may also have referred to a religious affiliation prior to his following Jesus. In any case, the designation was and is used to distinguish him from Simon Peter.

Jude was also called Jude Thaddeus, likely to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot.

We all know what it's like to be in a group with two Mikes or two Sarahs. One inevitably becomes the Alpha Mike or Sara - or just Mike, Sara - and then there's the 'other Mike,' the 'other Sarah.' And such may have been the case with Simon and Jude.

Contemplating this in conjunction with Simon and Jude got me thinking more generally and subtly about 'other people.' Many of us know the names of at least some Olympic gold medal winners - Michael Phelps or Simone Biles, for instance. But consider for a moment all of the towering, extraordinary commitments and skills of those who won the silver or bronze medals in the same events. How many of their names ever registered for us?

We remember Van Cliburn's triumph in the 1963 Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. But who else competed? Were or are their remarkable visions and performances nullified because they didn't win, didn't make the global headlines? I think not.

If asked to name the 12 Apostles, could we? We'd get Peter and James and John, and ... Would we even remember Simon the Zealot and Jude Thaddeus? Probably not.

Most of us, most of the time, even at our best, are the 'other' Simons and Judes in our circles, our professions, our communities, our families. We are the 'other Patrick,' the 'other David.' We are rarely if ever the ones who make the headlines, write the bestseller, become the bishop or win the gold medals.

Even if obscure, we need not be ordinary. But in any case, whether ordinary or extraordinary by whatever standard, what we may wish to weigh in ourselves and value in others is faithfulness, knowing our best gifts and putting them to the best use, whether seen or unseen, and aspiring, as Simon and Jude apparently did, to make our best contributions to the good of the whole, for the glory of God, in the company of the Apostles - and all the 'other' saints. *Amen.*