

St Simon & St Jude, Apostles
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In the Name of the living God: Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Amen.

Not that I am an expert on either popular culture or things romantic, but I have watched enough movies and read enough fairy tales and known enough couples to have heard that opposites attract.

The engaged-to-be-married socialite who falls for the scruffy boy in steerage.

The ghastly beast of a prince who charms the local beauty.

Or, as in the case of my own parents, the Homecoming queen who marries the skinny kid with glasses. (True story!)

We *like* stories like these; we *want* to believe they can be true. And they have their power because we know, deep down, they often aren't.

Any kid with a set of magnets can tell you that opposites attract, but most of us know it's rarely that simple when people get involved.

Protons and electrons, matter and dark matter may be the very foundation of the world in which we live, but go to Ohio or North Carolina this weekend, or to the football pitch tomorrow afternoon (to see Westcott demolish Ridley), and you'll see---shall we say---examples of less harmonious polarity.

Difference can be quite an intoxicating thing---especially in the Church.

Simon and Jude were perhaps the early church's first odd couple.

One of the earliest traditions about the two apostles was that they were an unlikely pair, men of quite opposite temperaments: Simon the zealous, Jude the magnanimous.

Simon, it seems, was the tempestuous and hot-headed one. Luke calls him "the zealot," and while that may mean he was at one time associated with violent resistance to Rome, it seems more likely a play on the Aramaic word for Cananean, which is how Matthew and Mark describe him.

In fact, one legend even suggests that Simon was the bridegroom from the wedding feast at Cana. The miraculous wine tasted so good, the story goes, that Simon picked up, left his new wife, and followed Jesus. *That's zeal!*

Jude had quite the opposite reputation. He was the even-tempered, thoughtful and faithful one---so faithful that he came to be regarded as the patron saint of lost causes. His nickname, Thaddeus, suggests a man who'd picked up a few stones along the way: Jude the "big-chested" we might call him, the Thomas Aquinas of the Twelve. Thoughtful, even-tempered . . . Certainly not to be confused, most scholars agree, with the rather more polemical author of today's epistle.

And yet, somehow, these two, Simon and Jude, end up together. How that happened is something of a mystery, but I like the way one writer puts it:

*"Without one another, Simon and Jude would likely have been martyred far earlier in their lives. Together they were a formidable pair, each bearing the gifts necessary to the life of the other. Jude was always there to mediate and reconcile the abrasions created by Simon's zeal; Simon was always there to speak on behalf of Jude and protect him from those who would take advantage of his gentleness."*¹

"Together they were a formidable pair, each bearing the gifts necessary to the life of the other."

That is a remarkable thing to say about any two people.

But it is even more remarkable to believe it could be true for us as well.

Think for a minute of all the difficult relationships in our lives where these words really could be Gospel for us.

How might our Church, for instance, change if we stopped trying to find our unity in uniformity, and instead sought unity in common calling, or common mission?

Or, closer to home (and I don't mean to offend), how might this theological federation, or Yale Divinity School, be renewed by seeing, in our diversity, a chance to "bear the gifts necessary to the life of the other"?

¹ Sam Portaro. *Brightest and Best: A Companion to the Lesser Feasts and Fasts*. (Cambridge, Mass: Cowley Publications, 1998), 191.

Because---and let's be honest here---conflict, diversity and tension *have always been with us Church folk*. (As my family would say.) *And they will always be with us*. It was true for the author of the Epistle of Jude, mired in second century struggles against Gnosticism, and it is true today.

But lest that sound like bad news, I think we're given the example of Simon and Jude as a kind of antidote to despair.

They, together, give us a model of how we, together, might move forward in faithfulness.

Finding their identity in the Body of Christ, with one head and many members, they recognized their different styles----their complementarity----as a gift from God.

Trusting that the same Spirit endowed them with different gifts, they were unable to say, one to another, "I have no need of you..."

Following the example of Christ crucified, they offered the best of themselves in order to build up the Other.

Tonight, Simon and Jude are our patrons.

I suspect Ridley and Westcott are on their hearts because we, together, like it or not, are the future of the Church of England and of the Anglican Communion --- we must show what it is to "bear the gifts necessary to the life of the other."

And the whole Federation, too --- for the Federation is nothing less than an outward and visible sign of the breadth of the contemporary church. As we learn what it is to be one, so may the Church . . .

And I wouldn't be surprised if Simon and Jude, martyred together in Persia, also pray tonight for the Christian and Muslim leaders who meet to pursue "common word" and inter-faith dialogue in a world desperate for reconciliation and understanding.

None of those goals are easy. Some might even call them lost causes, worthy of Jude. But I disagree.

None of these---none of these are lost causes because they are not lost to God. God holds them close to his heart, and so should we.

And because efforts at reconciliation are close to God's heart, God's Spirit equips us with all the grace, patience and forbearance we need to stick it out. Indeed, to preserve relationships we, on our own, might otherwise abandon.

God will give us *everything* we need
to keep on our hearts
that which is on his.

Doubt that's true? Just ask Simon and Jude.