



## St. Jude Thaddeus

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### PATRON OF HOPE AND OF DIFFICULT CAUSES

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Of all the wonders devout people have attributed to St. Jude over the years, perhaps the greatest is that so very many people are so devoted to St. Jude. Even though great saints of the church—St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and particularly St. Bernard of Clairvaux—wrote admiringly of St. Jude, and others such as St. Bridget of Sweden were known to be devoted to him, devotion to St. Jude did not become widespread until the 20th century. Some believe that St. Jude was neglected because people confused him with Judas Iscariot, Christ’s betrayer. Whatever the reason, popular devotion to St. Jude is not only a recent phenomenon but, remarkably, has grown to be the strongest devotion to a saint in the Catholic Church, other than devotion to Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

#### **Who Is St. Jude?**

Who is this St. Jude who inspires such confidence and devotion, this saint to whom so many persons turn for help today?

St. Jude—one of the Twelve Apostles and brother of James the Less—is a mysterious figure in many ways. He moves in and out of the gospel story as a quiet background figure—almost as if he were deliberately seeking to submerge his own personality in that of Christ rather than draw any attention to himself. This very obscurity is one of the reasons why he remained unknown and forgotten for so many centuries.

Yet over the span of time since the life and death of Jesus and his Apostles, a considerable amount of tradition and legend has been built up around the life of St. Jude, and historians are able to piece together many fragments of information to give at least an understandable picture of this great saint. It is not our purpose here to give an exact or scientific history of St. Jude, although we have carefully sifted the data available on him. Rather it is our aim to present a devotional work for the instruction of the reader.

In the Gospels, St. Jude is linked with St. James the Less as a “brother of the Lord”—an expression which in Jewish usage can mean a very close relative or cousin. When the people of Nazareth observed the great wisdom and miraculous power that came forth from Jesus, they began to ask one another in amazement and disbelief: “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, a brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon?” (Mark 6:3, Matt. 13:35). From this it seems clear that Judas or Jude was well known in and about Nazareth. In the list of the Twelve Apostles in Mark’s Gospel, James the son of Alphaeus appears in conjunction with Jude (Mark 3:18, Matt. 10:3). The Epistle attributed to St. Jude also refers to him as “a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James” (Jude 1:1). Perhaps this is why Luke calls him “Judas of James,” with the unaccustomed meaning of Jude, the brother (rather than son) of James, since James was a better-known and highly respected figure in the mother church of Jerusalem (Luke 6:16, Acts 1:13).

Another gospel passage reveals that the mother of James and Jude was called Mary, that she had followed Jesus during his itinerant ministry through Galilee, and finally that she had witnessed the crucifixion and death of the Savior (Mark 15:40, Matt. 17:56). Thus Mary the mother of James and Jude was not only a relative of the Lord but also remained his faithful disciple even to his death on the cross. In John’s Gospel we find a certain Mary, the wife of Clopas, standing with the Sorrowful Mother beneath the cross (John 19:25). In one of many attempts to harmonize the different gospel accounts, some have tried to show that Mary of Clopas was the same person as the mother of James and Joses (and therefore of Jude). Against this notion there stands the fact that the father of James and Jude is always called Alphaeus, and there is nothing in the Gospels that entitles us to think that he had two names. Besides, not only was Mary a very common name, but it is also clear that the list of women who witnessed the Passion of the Lord is incomplete and varies in each gospel tradition. At any rate, we know that Mary the mother of James and Jude was present at the passion and death of the Lord and that, in the Gospel of John, not only the Mother of Jesus but also the other women who accompanied her were presented as model believers.

In the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, Jude is called “Thaddaeus,” perhaps to distinguish him from the traitor, Judas Iscariot, since Judas and Jude are the same name, both in Aramaic (Yehuda) and in Greek (Cloudas). In some early copies of Matthew’s Gospel, Jude is also called “Lebbaeus.” The name “Thaddaeus” seems to come from the Aramaic word *Taddal*, meaning “the broadchested (generous or courageous) man,” while “Lebbaeus,” from the Hebrew word *feb* (heart), means “hearty” or “of the heart,” so that both names may be different ways of saying almost the same thing.

As a cousin of Jesus, Jude must have been born and raised very near the Lord. They both lived in or about Nazareth (Mark 6:3). Although we do not know which of them was born first, they must have been about the same age. Both of them very likely played together in the house of Joseph or Alphaeus; both went frequently to synagogue services with their parents; both of them opened up to Life, to the beauty of the Galilean fields, to the song of the birds, to the emotions of adolescence. Jesus, we are told, grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and His people (Luke 2:52). His humanity unfolded in the inner light that led him to an immense love and respect for his heavenly Father. Jude must have been a witness to this perfectly human growth of Jesus.

Like every good Jew of his day, Jude must have learned a trade. The Jewish people have always felt the need to contribute to the development of the created world through the work of their hands. Besides, social conditions made it necessary for most people to work hard to sustain a modest living. We do not know what Jude’s trade was. One day Jesus must have heard the good news that his cousin Jude was getting married. Marriage was a religious duty in the eyes of the Jews, and it was customary

for a man to marry sometime around his 18th birthday. Later church tradition, which constantly presented John as the virginal disciple, also noted that all the other members of the group of the Twelve Apostles were married men. Jesus doubtless attended the wedding festivities with the relatives and friends of the groom. The bride, decked out in jewels and modestly covered with a veil, was brought to Jude's house amid singing and dancing. People came and went. Jesus must have smiled at the happiness of his cousin. Later, the sound and cries of children would ring through the house of the son of Alphaeus.

### **Disciple and Friend of Jesus**

When Jesus was about 30 years old, he left his family and went off to Judea where a prophet, John, had begun preaching the nearness of the "Day of the Lord," and was baptizing those who accepted his message of repentance. Jesus, too, was baptized by John in the river Jordan. Shortly afterward he returned to Galilee to begin his itinerant ministry. He proclaimed the coming of the reign of God—God's decisive intervention in human history to save all people—and called people to conversion in order to receive God's gracious offer. It was a liberating message which stressed, in a way quite different from John's fiery preaching, the revelation of God's mercy. Jesus declared the forgiveness of sins and healed multitudes of sick people. Truly the grace of God was becoming visible in their midst.

Jesus soon began looking for fellow workers in this task of proclaiming God's love. A group of Galileans, both men and women, began following him—they became his disciples. Among them was St. Jude and Mary, Jude's mother, who came and went, ministering to Jesus, the Master. Jude had to make the sacrifice of leaving his wife and their young children. From this time on, Jude, because he believed in the message of Jesus, was before all else his disciple. With Peter, the two Jameses, John, Mary Magdalen, and other women like the widow of Chuza, Jude learned a great deal from Jesus about the mercy and providence of the heavenly Father, about generosity, about love of neighbor, and especially about love for sinners, the outcast, and the sick. With Jesus, he entered not only synagogues, but also the houses of tax collectors. He traveled the dusty roads of Galilee and the surrounding country, and sat with Jesus alongside the Lake of Gennesaret. Frequently he had to protect his cousin from the crowds that enthusiastically pressed against him. This was his period of formation for the apostleship.

Jude now became, more deeply than ever before, a friend of Jesus. Mark tells us that Jesus called the Twelve Apostles "that they might be with him" (Mark 3:14). There was a deep bond of communion between Jesus and these men who shared his work and his weariness, and looked forward with faith and hope toward the reign of divine grace. Mark says that on one occasion Jesus stated that his real family was made up of people like his disciples, the men and women who were doing God's will—who accepted his message that the Father wills to save us (Mark 3:34-35). Jude had moved on from being a relative of Jesus according to the flesh and had become his brother in the Spirit.

### **The Ministry of God's Grace**

One day Jesus called the Twelve Apostles together and sent them out on the roads to proclaim the coming of God's kingdom and manifest that kingdom visibly by healing the sick (Mark 6:7, Matt. 10:6-8). They went their way two by two. We do not know who Jude's companion was during this first ministry. In towns and villages they proclaimed God's gracious offer of salvation and called their listeners to conversion. They healed the sick and accepted the hospitality of those who received them, but would accept no recompense for their ministry. They addressed their message above all to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And, naturally, they spoke of Jesus.

Their experience must have been much like that of the 70 disciples of whom Luke alone gives an account (Luke 10:17-20). They came back from their mission tired but also jubilant; they had seen that the demons submitted to them and that the sick had been healed when they invoked the name of Jesus.

## Poor, Weak Disciples

But there also came a day when Jesus set out resolutely on the road to Jerusalem. The disciples began to be worried because they had caught the sound of something ominous in Jesus' words. One of them, Peter, tried to dissuade him from going there. But in the end, Jude, like all the rest, followed behind him. In Jerusalem they witnessed the entry of Jesus into the holy city and the temple. They prepared the Passover meal and sat with the Lord at table for the last time. With this meal, Jesus wished to symbolize the grace of the banquet in the reign of God, and in it he would definitively link himself with his disciples before the Father. "This bread that I am breaking is my body; this cup of wine is my blood; eat, drink." John writes that Jude was the one who asked Jesus the question that has stayed in the minds of Christians through the ages: "Lord, how is it that you mean to manifest yourself to us alone and not to the world?" (John 14:22). Jesus answered him by telling of the Father's love for all who loved his Son (John 14:23). Certainly, at the time, neither Jude nor the others could understand the deep meaning of those loving words and gestures. Later, after Jesus had been lifted up and they had received the Spirit, they would understand them. A few hours later Jesus was taken; Jude, his cousin, feared for his own life and went into hiding. But Jude's mother and the other women who stood by the Blessed Mother remained to be witnesses to the tragedy of the cross. Women would be the first to bring to the men (who had gone into hiding) the message of the Resurrection.

## Life and Legends

At this point, the lives of the men and women who accompanied Jesus in his ministry tend to disappear in the shadows. Something is known about Peter and James the Less. Much less is known about the others. But the background to which they devoted the rest of their lives is well known. We know that the disciples became increasingly aware that they now formed the People of God in its definitive state. Their hope centered on the Lord's return, an event which they thought would happen soon. The disciples of hellenistic language and mindset, less attached to the Jewish customs, suffered persecution; and Stephen was stoned to death. St. Jude gathered often with other witnesses of the Resurrection and the rest of the believers to commemorate Jesus' ministry and to celebrate the eucharistic meal. The presence of the Risen Jesus was vividly experienced. Some of the disciples, mostly hellenists who had problems in Jerusalem, began to evangelize the Samaria. Soon the difficult problem arose of the incorporation of the gentiles into the Church formed by Jews. The war of rebellion against Rome and the destruction of Jerusalem were very painful events for St. Jude and the other disciples, but the experience helped them to understand the universal mission of the Church.

From this time on, St. Jude's life is colored by certain legends. One of the most famous refers to the healing of the leper Abagaro, king of Edessa, in Mesopotamia. We are told that the renown of the healings worked by Jesus had reached the king. Abagaro sent a certain Ananias to invite Jesus to visit him. Jesus, so the story has it, exhorted Abagaro to have faith and promised that later one of his disciples would visit the king. Abagaro, encouraged by the answer, sent a painter to make a portrait of Jesus, but the poor artist was unable to paint. Jesus, moved by compassion, passed a cloak over his face and his portrait was imprinted on it. This is parallel with the tradition of Jesus' imprint on Veronica's veil. This popular tradition does not say who brought Jesus' portrait to Abagaro. But it states that St. Jude himself went to Edessa. His preaching and numerous healings ended in many conversions to the Gospel. This tradition is already found, about 325 AD, in one of the earliest historians of the Church, Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea. Eusebius states that he had translated it from Syriac to Greek (*Ecclesiastical History*, I, ch. 13; II, ch. 1).

It is from this legendary account that the traditional portrayal of St. Jude with a picture of Christ over his heart is taken. And it is fitting that the forgotten saint, whose early life was undoubtedly filled with many personal contacts with Jesus, should be depicted throughout the centuries with an image of his cousin and master close to his heart.

## **Adventure in Persia**

Another of the stories about St. Jude tells of the time he and St. Simon—whose feast is celebrated with St. Jude's on October 28—were in Persia.

At that time, the commander-in-chief of the Babylonian armies, General Varardach, was preparing to battle powerful invaders from India. As was the custom, through his court magicians Zaroos and Arfaxat, the general appealed to the pagan gods for information about the outcome of the impending military engagement, but there was no answer. Because they believed the gods were silent because Simon and Jude were in the area, the magicians asked Varardach to bring the two Apostles before the court.

“What is your mission here?” demanded the Babylonian general.

“We are servants of Jesus Christ and we have come for your eternal salvation,” they answered.

“You are very powerful, for you have silenced our gods,” said Varardach, “so I ask you to tell me what the outcome of the battle will be.”

The Apostles refused to answer, but gave permission for the idols to respond this time to the magicians' questions. The answer of the false gods was that there would be a long, hard war with much suffering and death on both sides.

Fearfully, the general turned to the Apostles, who reassured him, “Your idols lie, for tomorrow at this same hour, emissaries from your adversary will come asking for peace on your terms.”

Not knowing which way to turn in the face of these conflicting stories, Varardach ordered both the Apostles and the magicians held until the following day to see whether Simon and Jude were right.

As the two Apostles predicted, ambassadors of peace came from the enemy at the same hour asking for a treaty of peace on the general's conditions.

“Free these men,” Varardach commanded, indicating Simon and Jude, and he added, “Put Zaroos and Arfaxat to death.”

“No, spare them,” insisted the Apostles. “We come to give life, not to destroy it.”

Startled by the manner of Simon and Jude, and impressed by their refusal to accept any reward for their services, Varardach brought them to the court of the Babylonian king.

Again the two Apostles met the opposition and demoniacal magic of Zaroos and Arfaxat, who, despite the fact that Simon and Jude had saved their lives, hated the two disciples of Christ because they had overcome their pagan gods. But in the presence of the entire Persian court, the two saints overcame the power of the sorcerers and remained many months in Persia—converting the king and thousands of his people, as well as healing many sick and helping many others in Christ's name.

## **The Last Journey**

According to the popular traditions we have been following, St. Jude continued to make missionary journeys for many more years, converting vast numbers of people in Mesopotamia, Armenia, Persia, and possibly even southern Russia.

During the last journey his divine cousin was to send him on, an idolatrous mob, probably incited by Zaroos and Arfaxat, set upon him, bludgeoning him to death with clubs. Today, nearly 20 centuries later, the Apostle is still pictured with a club in memory of his martyrdom.

Another symbol sometimes associated with St. Jude is the axe, since after being clubbed to death he was decapitated with an axe. A flame is also frequently shown hovering over St. Jude's head, symbolizing the fact that he was one of the Apostles on whom the Holy Spirit descended as tongues of flame; it also stands for the gift of tongues which the Apostles were given at that time.

For centuries now, the bodies of both Simon and Jude have lain in the mother church of Christendom, St. Peter's in Rome. As far back as 1548, we have a record that Pope Paul III granted a plenary indulgence to all those who visited St. Jude's tomb on his feast day, October 28.

The historian Eusebius, this time citing Hegesippus (d. 180 AD), transmits a tradition relating to the grandsons of Jude. It seems that the Emperor Domitian learned that there were members of the

family of Jesus (and hence of the line of David) living in Palestine. He called them to appear before him and questioned them as to their position in life and their beliefs. They were small farmers who earned their living and paid their taxes by cultivating small plots of land. When Domitian asked them for information about Christ and his kingdom, Jude's descendants replied that Christ's was a spiritual kingdom. The emperor let them go free, and shortly afterwards the persecution of the Christians ceased. When they returned to their homeland, the grandsons of Jude resumed their mission of leading local churches in Palestine, where they were known and respected as relatives and witnesses of the Lord (*Ecclesiastical History*, III, 20).

## **The Letter of Jude**

Among the New Testament writing inspired by the Holy Spirit to be the nourishment and norm of our faith is a letter attributed to "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James." It is addressed to "those who have been called by God; who have found love in God the Father, and have been guarded safely in Jesus Christ"—in other words, to all Christians (Jude 1:1). In the Bible, this letter is the next-to-last book in the New Testament and comes directly after all the other Epistles and before the book of Revelation. It is a short book, consisting of a single chapter made up of 25 verses. Rather than an Epistle, it is really an exhortation to stand firm in the faith of Christ against those who would distort or deny that faith.

Modern biblical scholars have pointed out that there are good reasons for holding that this letter could not have been written by an Apostle: 1) it alludes to predictions made by the Apostles as something belonging to the past (Jude 1:17-18), and 2) it regards the doctrine of the faith as something already fixed and delivered (Jude 1:3). For this reason, scholars have come up with basically two solutions to the question of the authorship of this Epistle. Some make a distinction between Jude, the brother of James, who wrote the letter, and Jude, one of the Twelve Apostles. Others suggest that some of the letters attributed to Apostles were really written after their death by disciples who wished to keep apostolic teaching alive in the church. Since there is no convincing argument that distinguishes two Judes, it is probably best to view this letter as a continuation by a disciple of the preaching and exhortations of the Apostle and relative of Christ. Some recommendations in the Letter of Jude are repeated in the second letter attributed to Peter.

The author of the letter introduces himself as an Apostle and servant of Jesus Christ. Apostles are people who belong to the Lord Jesus in a very special way because they have been chosen by Jesus for a special ministry in the church. The author also identifies himself as a brother of James, who was well known for the role he played in the mother church of Jerusalem and for the martyrdom that crowned his ministry. Jude defends the Christian faith against certain forms of thought (gnosticism) that had begun to infiltrate it. He insists on constancy in the faith that Christians have received and warns against the superstitious cult of angels which gnosticism was spreading, a cult that sometimes placed these spirits above Christ himself.

The letter goes on to exhort the faithful to lead a fully Christian life characterized by the following elements: 1) holding to the faith as the foundation of all, and 2) praying in the Spirit. Here Jude touches on something deeply felt in the first Christian communities and a matter on which Paul insisted: prayer is always the work of the Spirit, who dwells in our hearts. Christians do not pray in the Spirit only when they pray in tongues (a common charismatic phenomenon in the early church), but also whenever they allow themselves to be shaped and led by the Spirit of the Lord. The letter also mentions a third, and in many ways more interesting, element: its exhortation to look to the apostolate. All Christians are called to confirm those doubting in the faith, to save their neighbor from the fire of condemnation, and to deal pityingly but prudently with those who cast doubt upon our faith (Jude 1:22-23). Some have seen in this letter an echo and an expansion of the question Jude put to Christ in the Gospel according to John: Lord, why do you not disclose yourself to the world? In that question, by the way, Saints Cyril of Jerusalem and Cyril of Alexandria felt that they discerned

the apostolic zeal of the Lord's cousin. The Letter of Jude certainly reveals a great love of God and a tender devotion toward Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Place of the Saints in the Church**

After this quick sketch of the life of St. Jude and a review of the popular traditions that surround his memory in the church, there is little cause to wonder why he has inspired such great devotion. Jude was a tireless disciple who gave himself continually to the cause of Christ. He was always near to Jesus—not only as a relative, but as a disciple and an Apostle who led and encouraged Christian churches.

Some people have doubts about the rightness of expressing such a devotion through invocations or novenas. Others seem to fear that, in showing devotion to a saint, however close that saint may have been to Jesus, people will concentrate attention on the saint rather than on Christ. In fact, however, this latter case must be rare. Christians know that there is but one mediator, Christ Jesus, who continually prays for us to the Father.

Perhaps it would be fitting and useful to recall here the common consensus of Christian communities, not only in the Catholic Church but in other faiths, concerning the matter of invoking the saints. This will help set devotion to St. Jude in proper perspective, so that Catholics may develop the kind of devotion that will be acceptable to St. Jude himself and to Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

The saints are above all models of Christian life. They are disciples of Christ in whom grace has developed to such a degree that they are able to rise above common human weaknesses. They are products of God's grace. Their entry into glory has not separated them from us; on the contrary, it has made them enter even more deeply into our lives at their very source. This is the universal teaching on the Communion of Saints. The saints belong to our family, the family of Christ, and for this very reason they intercede for us before God. Their intercession adds nothing to that of Christ. On the contrary, it is the risen Lord himself who associates them in his own intercession. When we invoke the saints, we join them in their prayer and we project the example of their faith, hope, and love onto our needs. We recognize that what we ask can only be granted ultimately by Christ.

This is precisely what all Christians confess when they affirm in the Apostles' Creed that they believe in the Communion of Saints. The church is composed of one mystical body, whose head is Christ and whose members are the faithful on earth, the souls in purgatory, and the saints in heaven. We pray for the souls in purgatory and, in turn, the saints in heaven intercede for us before God's mercy.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that "when we look at the lives of those who have faithfully followed Christ, we are inspired with a new reason for seeking the city which is to come. . . . In the lives of those who shared in our humanity and yet were transformed into especially successful images of Christ, God vividly manifests to men His presence and His face."

Incorporating within its own the teaching of the Council of Trent, Vatican II says that "It is supremely fitting that we love those friends and fellow heirs of Jesus Christ, who are also our brothers and extraordinary benefactors, that we render due thanks to God for them and suppliantly invoke them and have recourse to their prayers, their power and help in obtaining benefits from God through His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who is our sole Redeemer and Savior."

### **Personal Devotion to a Saint**

From frequent references in the Holy Scripture and from the teaching of the early Fathers of the Church, we know that it is appropriate to ask the saints for their help in obtaining favors from our Lord. As St. Jerome put it, "If the Apostles and Martyrs, while still in the body, can pray for others at a time when they must still be anxious for themselves, how much more after their crowns, victories, and triumphs are won. . . . Shall their power be less after having begun to be with Christ?"

A personal devotion to a particular saint, such as St. Jude, is easily understandable then in view of the Church's teachings about the intercession and invocation of the saints. Among the many saints to whom we might turn for assistance, we tend to choose those whose lives or virtues particularly appeal

to us. Mothers are likely to turn to the Blessed Virgin and fathers to St. Joseph; those in “impossible” situations today turn to St. Jude.

The heart of devotion to the saints, however, is imitation. Merely to attempt to use the power of the saints to intercede for us without any change in our own lives is opposed to the whole idea of venerating the saints. One of the main reasons why the church encourages devotion to the saints is that we may more closely imitate their virtues.

By recalling the life of St. Jude, for instance, we remember the faith and devotion to Christ he revealed in his untiring ministry and in his trials. Should we be put to the test or tempted, our devotion to St. Jude will give us strength and will quickly lead us to turn to him for assistance. There is every reason to believe that our prayer will be heard.

To give depth and breadth to our devotion to St. Jude, we must take time in the quiet of our heart to attempt to build up a real and living picture of the saint in our minds. He was a human being, first of all, not a plaster saint. He had the advantage of actual companionship with Christ, but this did not make him less human. And we, too, are privileged to have a real companionship with Jesus ourselves in faith, prayer, the celebration of the Eucharist, and in the service of the poor and the suffering, with whom Jesus identifies himself.

In addition, Jude’s long years of trial and dedication followed the Ascension of our Lord, when the Saint of the Impossible was living in the midst of a society often more openly pagan and secular than our own. The temptations he faced were not paper temptations that he miraculously overcame.

He had to say no when saying no was difficult to do. He had to perfect the life of grace within his soul by prayer and penance, just as you and I. It was necessary for him to learn to take rebuffs, insults, and criticism in a spirit of acceptance for the sake of Christ. Throughout all his trials and tribulations, only his perfect willingness to accept the will of God sustained him. By meditating on the life of St. Jude we can learn much about the manner in which we, too, can lead a life of holiness.

Devotion without imitation is really not devotion at all, but only a hollow mockery of what our Lord intends to achieve through his saints. The saints have been given to us as examples of the ways in which it is possible to achieve sanctity. To some extent each has special virtues which attract us, sometimes because of our own particular deficiencies, other times because we recognize that the virtues in question are necessary if we ever hope one day to join the saints in heaven for an eternity of blessing the Holy Trinity.

This means that especially during a novena to a particular saint—during the nine days of special prayers and devotions in which we seek a special favor through the saint’s intercession of our Lord—we must make a special effort to imitate the saint’s outstanding virtues.

A novena is not just a quick means of attempting to gain a particular favor; it is a period of special devotion to a saint and a time set aside to attempt to make the saint’s major virtues a part of our own spiritual life through practice. Viewed in this light, novenas can play an important part in our spiritual development.

The great French churchman, Bossuet, sums up true devotion to the saints when he writes: “The Christian must imitate that which he honors. Everything that is the object of our [devotion] must be the model of our life. . . This is the constant tradition and doctrine of the Catholic Church, that the most essential part in honoring the saints is to imitate their examples.”

## **Devotion to St. Jude**

It is surprising that devotion to St. Jude should have spread so rapidly in modern times. In the church of the Fathers and in the high Middle Ages, devotions to the Twelve Apostles and to Paul were very alive. Their statues greeted the faithful on the porch of the Romanesque church and basilica, or surrounded Christ in the apse behind the altar. St. Peter and St. Paul, of course, emerged in this widespread devotion to the Apostles. It was not until the late Middle Ages that St. Jude was remembered in a particular way by some prominent saints.

The renowned St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who died in 1153 and who was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1830, is reputed to have had a strong personal dedication to the Saint of the Impossible.

Another saint of the Middle Ages with a great devotion to St. Jude was St. Bridget of Sweden, who was born at the turn of the 14th century and canonized at the end of the same century.

St. Bridget is known for the many visions she had which have been passed on to us through her revelations. In one vision, our Lord told the Swedish holy woman to turn to St. Jude with a great deal of confidence, for, said the Lord, "In accordance with his surname, Thaddeus, the amiable, loving, he will show himself most willing to give help."

In another vision, Christ commanded St. Bridget to dedicate an altar in her church to St. Jude. "The fifth altar," he said, "must be for Thaddeus who, with the purity of his heart, will undoubtedly conquer the devil."

Although devotion to St. Jude never completely died out, it is difficult to trace from the time of the Middle Ages to the 19th century. If only because Jude was one of the Apostles, it is quite likely that there has always been some form of public devotion to him even though at times it may not have been widespread.

The publication of various books in Italy and Spain on St. Jude during the 19th century indicates a renewed interest in devotion to this powerful saint.

### **Modern Devotion to St. Jude**

The first important manifestation of widespread public veneration of St. Jude in the western hemisphere took place in 1911 in Chile. There the Claretian Missionaries, founded by St. Anthony Claret in Spain less than a century before, built a large shrine to the Apostle, a shrine which still attracts many petitioners even today. And from this shrine in Chile, devotion has spread to all the South American countries.

In the United States, a shrine to St. Jude also was established by the Claretian Missionaries in Chicago in 1929. Called the National Shrine of St. Jude, it was the first major shrine dedicated to him in this country.

The story of this shrine and how it came to be is in itself an indication of how devotion to St. Jude has grown unusually quickly since the early twentieth century. In 1923, Claretian Father James Tort, then stationed in Prescott, Arizona, came across a prayer card to St. Jude and began his personal devotion to the Patron of Difficult or Hopeless Causes. Not long after this, he was assigned to build Our Lady of Guadalupe Church on Chicago's southeast side. A parishioner ultimately donated a statue of St. Jude to the church, and in 1927 it was placed in the church along with a statue of the Little Flower.

At the same time a public novena was begun to the Little Flower for vocations, and one to St. Jude for assistance in completing the parish church. The statue of the Little Flower was placed in the most prominent position at the front of the church, while the statue of St. Jude was placed to one side.

Amazingly, however, a spontaneous turning of the parishioners to St. Jude manifested itself so much that within a few months the statue of St. Jude was given the more prominent position. Later in the year, the first solemn public novena to the saint, which ended on his feast day, drew such attention that hundreds of persons were unable to get into the church for the services on the last day.

Two years later, in 1929, the shrine was canonically erected and the Holy See officially granted the National Shrine of St. Jude plenary indulgences for many feasts throughout the year and an indulgence for each prayer recited in honor of St. Jude at the shrine.

The same year, the St. Jude League was begun. This organization has hundreds of thousands of members in this country (and other nations as well) and represents the continuing interest of all those persons devoted to the forgotten saint—who is forgotten no longer.

As a special part of the St. Jude League, in 1930, with Father Tort as chaplain, the Catholic police officers of Chicago formed the Police Branch of the St. Jude League, taking the patron of desperate cases as their own patron and protector.

Over the years, many other shrines and publications devoted to St. Jude have sprung up. Father Joachim De Prada, CMF, late director of the shrine, once noted that “there are probably more churches in the United States today being dedicated to St. Jude than to any other single saint, with the exception of the Blessed Virgin.”

News about devotion to St. Jude comes to the Claretians daily from all over the world. And the continuing spread of interest in the Saint of the Impossible—the Patron of Hope and of Difficult Causes—after more than half a century indicates that the hand of Providence is at work. The change that St. Jude has wrought in the spiritual lives of many thousands of people substantiates this belief.

Once again the apostolic zeal of St. Jude is being felt in the world—20 centuries later—as a widely practiced public devotion to him encourages many to turn to him and emulate his apostolic virtues. He is many things to many people. It is not quite clear how this title of the Saint of the Impossible first was attached to him, but he is surely that.

Not only those in great need of hope or with desperate causes, however, find solace and strength through his intercession on their behalf with our Lord. He is also a patron for all those in the 21st century who are attempting to imitate his zeal in preaching the word of God under difficult circumstances. He is equally a patron of missionaries in difficult fields and of lay people trying to teach by their word and their lives in a secular society. And to all, he is a model of Christ’s disciples.

As a friend of our Redeemer, he is our friend. And if we desire the friendship of Christ, we shall find him an eager intercessor, anxious to help prepare us for a closer union with our Savior, a union of will which will begin here on earth and find its ultimate fulfillment in eternity.

St. Jude, pray for us!

### Prayer to St. Jude

Most holy Apostle, St. Jude, faithful servant and friend of Jesus,  
the Church honors and invokes you universally as the patron of hope.

Please intercede on my behalf. Make use of that particular privilege  
given to you to bring hope, comfort, and help where they are needed most.

Come to my assistance in this great need that I may receive the consolation  
and help of heaven as I work with my challenges, particularly (*here make your request*).

I praise God with you and all the saints forever.

I promise, blessed St. Jude, to be ever mindful of this great favor,  
to always honor you as my special and powerful patron,  
and to gratefully encourage devotion to you. Amen.

**The Claretians established the St. Jude League in 1929** to be a nonprofit organization of non-Claretian teams committed to expanding the Claretian programs of hope and change, in addition to fostering the devotion to St. Jude in the U.S. It provides support operations for several U.S. Claretian ministries. These ministries are primarily

- fostering and maintaining a devotion to St. Jude, the patron saint of hope, throughout the U.S.;
- social-justice and community development programs within high-poverty, urban, Hispanic communities;
- publishing periodicals and materials to help Catholics live their faith in the U.S. today; and
- publishing bilingual periodicals and materials to support Hispanic ministry and leadership development in the Catholic Church.

The mission of the St. Jude League is the development of robust business and ministry support operations for these Claretian ministries. This includes growing the financial base to fund and the talent base to support and expand the powerful ministries of hope, justice, education, social service, violence prevention, and development in the communities the Claretians serve.