

28. October 2023

Feast of St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles  
Reflection on the Church

Eph 2:19-22

*Brothers: you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow-citizens with the holy people of God and part of God's household. You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. Every structure knit together in him grows into a holy temple in the Lord; and you too, in him, are being built up into a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit.*

On this day on which we celebrate the Feast of two Apostles, it is worth meditating a little on the Church.

The Church is not a human institution; it is founded by God Himself and forms a living Body of the faithful. It is important that we emphasise again and again the supernatural character of the Church, which proceeds from the Lord Himself, who is its Head (Col 1:18). We are the living members of the Mystical Body of Christ, called to cooperate so that the building up which God has begun may be completed.

The Church has a great mission, for it is in her that the Kingdom of God begins to make itself present. All men are to be led back to the house of our loving Father and to abide eternally in His Kingdom. This thought reminds us that the Church is not only made up of its visible members, but that the Church militant forms a unity with the Church triumphant and the Church purgative.

Sometimes a distinction is also made between those who are baptised and thus formally belong to the Church, but do not lead a life in conformity with their faith; and those who, on the other hand, lead a coherent life, but, for various reasons, have not been able to enter officially into the Church. Following the reflections of St. Augustine in this regard, we can say that the latter do belong to the Church, while the former do not fulfil the inner conditions for it.

We can be very grateful that God has left us a visible Church, and that He has preserved it over the centuries. Time and again throughout history, attempts have been made to relegate the Church to its spiritual dimension, considering it only as an invisible reality. However, the Church with its visible hierarchy corresponds to the incarnation of the

Son of God in the Person of Jesus.

Unfortunately, we have to note that the original Christian unity has been lost to a large extent, so that the witness has been overshadowed. Errors, enmities and rivalry have scattered the flock, causing it to lose that unity under one visible Shepherd and the fraternal fellowship.

For some decades now, attempts have been made to bring the flock closer together, to break down the barriers and to heal the wounds that have arisen. In this ecumenism, however, it must be borne in mind that there is a decline of faith both in the Church itself and in the ecclesial communities. Unity in the truth, which is the work of the Holy Spirit, has as a prerequisite that authentic faith is not permeated by error, and that moral convictions correspond to right doctrine. The Catholic Church cannot turn away from the truth or relativise it for the sake of a supposed unity.

The unity that the Lord wants among the members of the Church constitutes us as a dwelling place of God. He comes so close to us that He wants to dwell within us, and if we allow Him to enter our lives, we will become a temple of God in the Spirit. This applies to parishes, to communities, to families, called to be "domestic churches", as well as to each individual person.

If we ourselves become temples of the living God, we will understand even better how the Lord builds His Church. He wants to be present everywhere and to offer every person communion with Him. If people listen to our proclamation of the Gospel, then we become a bridge of the living God. In this way the other person will not only meet a witness who speaks to him about God and His Church, but someone in whom the Lord Himself is present and in whom He has already established His Church.

What a wonderful God we are privileged to serve, and how much He honours and loves us by wanting to make us temples of His glory!