

One

James the Less

Today is the Feast of the Apostle St. James the Less (Not to be confused with James the Greater, the brother of St. John). The Apostle James we celebrate today was a cousin of Jesus and the first Bishop of Jerusalem.

He preached the gospel with exceptional zeal in Jerusalem for over thirty years, and he inspired many people to become Christian speaking always with a burning faith “of that Door, which is Jesus crucified,” is the way through which all must pass to reach God the Father.

His successes were met with fierce opposition by the leaders of the Jews who wanted to kill him. In 62 AD, a group of furious scribes and Pharisees demanded that James renounce Jesus, and when he flatly refused, they apprehended him and hurled him down from the pinnacle of the Temple to an angry mob below. Still alive, the mob began to stone him, and as he prayed for their forgiveness, he was bludgeoned to death with clubs. He is now buried in the Cathedral of St. James in the Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem.

Two

James was the first bishop of Jerusalem.

Here is something interesting to think about, Martin Luther was the founder of the Lutheran church, Jean Calvin of the Presbyterian, Henry VIII of the Anglican and Episcopalian, while most Greek and Russian Orthodox would claim St. Paul or John or Andrew as their founders. But the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus and actually began in Jerusalem. Jesus gave us all the essential elements of the Catholic

Church right from the beginning: the Eucharist and the Mass, the Pope and Bishops and structure of the Church, his teaching and his Mother Mary to be Our Mother.

From the time of the Resurrection, the Upper Room was considered the first Catholic Church, the Church of the Apostles. In 68 AD, the Christian community fled to Pella in Jordan, being warned by God that Rome was about to destroy Jerusalem. In 73 AD, they returned and built a Catholic Church on the spot of the Upper Room on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. Epiphanius, a writer in the late 300s relates that in 130 AD, the Emperor Hadrian found Jerusalem in ruins “except for a few houses and the little church of God that was the Upper Room.”

Jesus also established the structure and government of the Catholic Church, making Peter the Head of the Church, the first Pope, and the Apostles all Bishops. After James the Greater, the brother of John was put to death by Herod and Peter was imprisoned and then miraculously released by Angels, Peter made his way to Rome and established the Catholic Church there.

However, it is well documented by Hegesippus, the second century historian, and after that Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and St. Jerome that before Peter departed for Rome, he consecrated James to be the Bishop of Jerusalem.

People sometimes say we ought to get back to a pure form of Christianity like it was at the beginning. Well, the history of the Catholic Church in Jerusalem from the very beginning shows us exactly what the Church was like, and it looks like the Catholic Church of today with its essential ingredients of the Eucharist and the Mass as the essential form of worship and thanksgiving to God; with the Pope and the Bishops who teach and hand down the teaching of Jesus without error; with devotion

to Mary, knowing that Jesus left her as our Mother to continue to form us to be like him; and with the essential mission to evangelize – to help everyone to transforming union with Jesus.

Three

In chapter three of his letter, James writes of the great power and danger of gossip., “Think how small a flame can set fire to a huge forest; the tongue is a flame like that. Among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a whole wicked world in itself: it infects the whole body; catching fire itself from hell, it sets fire to the whole wheel of creation...nobody can tame the tongue - it is a pest that will not keep still, full of deadly poison. We use it to bless the Lord and Father, but we also use it to curse men who are made in God's image: the blessing and the curse come out of the same mouth.”

St. James says, “if you can control your tongue; you will have mastery over yourself.”

Four

Gossip can be a violation of justice, *even if* what you are saying is true, it's a violation of justice to speak truths without legitimate cause.

Aquinas says this can be mortal sin if done knowingly and willingly because it is a grave matter. Why? Because it is mortal sin to kill someone unjustly and one's reputation is almost as valuable as their life – so to kill a person's reputation is like committing murder.

St. Francis de Sales in the Introduction to the Devout Life ch 29, “Slander or Gossip is a kind of murder, for we have three lives: the spiritual, which consists in the grace of God; the physical, which depend upon the soul; and the social, which consists in our good name. Sin

deprives us of the first, death takes away the second, and slander robs us of the third.”

The slanderer, by one blow of his tongue, commits three murders. He kills not only his own soul, and the soul of him that hears him, but also, by a spiritual murder, takes away the social life of the person slandered.

Gossip is a kind of terrorism because terrorism is indiscriminate. Gossip has such collateral damage that there is no way of knowing where it will end or who will be harmed.

Five

Gossip often comes from envy

However, we can conquer envy and gossip with Goodwill.

1. Want good for others: even competitors, even enemies
2. Think good of others: give them the benefit of the doubt
3. Always speak well of others: every person has the right to a good reputation

So, I challenge you to try, just for one day, not gossip.