

We know very little about Simon and Jude. Even the *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* seems to muddle the details. In one account in which they are listed together, Jude is associated with a ship and Simon with a fish. Simon is commonly associated with a boat *and* a fish but in another separate entry dealing only with Simon the dictionary does not mention the fish. Similarly, with the lists of apostles in the New Testament, none of them fully agree and even Luke's second list in Acts differs from his list in the gospel. To add to the confusion, in the *Letter to the Ephesians*, we have the apostles and prophets named as the foundation of the Church envisaged as a building, but in his *First Letter to the Corinthians* Paul names Jesus Christ as the one foundation. Such inconsistencies trouble my desire to have everything cut and dried, following a logic that I can sign up to.

And something of this tension was present in a recent safeguarding zoom meeting which all 'leaders' in the Church are now required to attend. The first image on the screen was of a church in the form of a pyramid with the laity at the bottom; priests, deacons and religious in the next layer; bishops in the next; cardinals in the next, with the Pope at the top and God above all that: the very image of the Church which has helped facilitate abuse in the first place. And not a sign of Christ or, for that matter, of the apostles and prophets, anywhere. All analogies, of course, limp – and I wonder, being in the middle of a book on Teresa of Avila, whether the problem stems, not only from the unknowability of the facts of history and our inability to depict them, but from the essential fact of the unknowability of God. Or, as Peter Tyler says in his exploration of Teresa's deliberate use of ambiguity:

With the advent of modernism the desire has always been to concretise or 'pin down' Teresa's gossamer-like prose so that it fits into the dominating categories of whichever interpreter she happens to find herself in the hands of – whether they be psychological, sociological or literary (and one might add 'theological'). Such brutal concretisation will always, I suggest, end in failure, as her gentle contradictions reflect the spiritual life – forever just beyond categorisation.
Teresa of Avila: Doctor of the Soul p. 74.

This, of course, is where prayer comes in, as Jesus prayed alone on the mountain and, even then, didn't get it quite right – according to the logical mind.

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