

THE ORTHODOX WEEKLY BULETIN . . . VESTAL, CLIFFWOOD, NEW JERSEY

THE UNIQUE ROLE OF APOSTLES & BISHOPS

The episcopate forms a unique body in the Church which Jesus founded. Our Bishops are entrusted with the great responsibility of governing the Church, and in the preservation and promotion of the Gospel of our Lord.

But we must remember that Bishops are SUCCESSORS of the Apostles of Christ. The 12 Apostles were a special group. Our Lord Himself selected and trained them for their work. And when one of them defected, care was taken to obtain a successor so that the group would continue intact. The original 12 consecrated their successors and the line of Bishops has continued unbroken to our day. This “APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION” is one of the hallmarks of our Church.

Although we are all more familiar with the original 12, our Lord also selected a group of 70 “lesser” apostles. The 12 generally remained at Christ’s side while the 70 preceded Him at the places He visited. They assisted in spreading the Word of God in the region. While they suffered much and were tortured, their firm faith helped illuminate the unbelievers.

SAINT THADDEUS is among this larger group of 70. He was a disciple of St. John the Baptist. He is not to be confused with Apostle Jude Thaddeus of the 12. Following our Lord’s glorious Ascension, Thaddeus was sent to Edessa, to help heal Prince Avgar of his Leprosy. After the royals’ complete healing and baptism, Avgar wanted his people to come to the knowledge of the One True God. They cast away their idols and unclean living to embrace the Christian faith.