

Saint James Saturday 25 July



About Saint James

Saint James the Greater (one of the “sons of thunder”), was the brother of Saint John and, like him, a fisherman. He was one of the three witnesses to the Transfiguration of Jesus (together with Saint Peter and Saint John), the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5: 2-43), and one of those who slept through most of the Agony in the Garden. He was the first of the apostles to be martyred. He was beheaded by King Herod Agrippa I to please the Jewish opponents of Christianity. He was buried in Jerusalem, and nothing more is known about him until the ninth century.

During the ninth century we learn of a tradition that the relics of St James were brought to Spain sometime after his martyrdom, and his shrine at Compostela in Galicia grew in importance until it became the greatest pilgrimage centre in western Europe. In every country there are churches of St James and known, well-trodden pilgrim routes. In Paris, the Tour St Jacques marks the start of the route and the Rue St Jacques points straight towards Compostela. It is on this site of Compostela that the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela is built. The scallop-shell, the emblem of St James, has become the emblem of pilgrims generally, and is still carried by pilgrims today.

In 1987 the pilgrimage routes to Compostela were designated by the Council of Europe as historical cultural routes of international importance. The Confraternity of St James continues to work to restore and upgrade the refuges on a route which is still in active pilgrim use today.

What can we learn from Saint James' life?

Whilst we really don't know a lot about Saint James' life, we do know that he was one of the privileged three that Jesus allowed to see his Transfiguration, the raising of the daughter of Jairus and the agony in the garden. Knowing that James was privileged we should think about those times in our life that we get privileges – the people in our families, the friends we have, the opportunities we have had. At the moment travel is out the question. Some people never get to step outside their backyard. For those of us who have, we should ask ourselves the question; how has my travel broadened my knowledge and helped me and others?

James was also the first apostle to be martyred. As an apostle he was a witness to Christ. Let us never be afraid to witness to Christ in a world that is deeply divided.

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Collect

Almighty ever-living God,
who consecrated the first fruits of your Apostles
by the blood of Saint James,
grant, we pray,
that your Church may be strengthened by his confession of faith
and constantly sustained by his protection.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Matthew 20; 20-28

'Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?'

The mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons
to make a request of him,

and bowed low; and he said to her, 'What is it you want?'

She said to him,

'Promise that these two sons of mine
may sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your kingdom.'

'You do not know what you are asking' Jesus answered.

'Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?'

They replied, 'We can.'

'Very well,' he said 'you shall drink my cup,
but as for seats at my right hand and my left,
these are not mine to grant;

they belong to those to whom they have been allotted by my Father.'

When the other ten heard this they were indignant with the two brothers.

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But Jesus called them to him and said,
'You know that among the pagans the rulers lord it over them,
and their great men make their authority felt.
This is not to happen among you.
No; anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant,
and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave,
just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

Antiphon

They drank the chalice of the Lord,
and became the friends of God.

Hymn for the Feast of Saint James

O Lord, for James, we praise You,
who fell to Herod's sword.
He drank the cup of suffering
and thus fulfilled Your word.
Lord, curb our vain impatience
for glory and for fame,
equip us for such sufferings
as glory for Your Name.

You chose the "sons of thunder"
O Lord, to follow You;
and to them You would reveal
Your teachings that were true.
To follow You requires,
to take the lowest place,
so that in heav'nly glory
we'll see You face to face.

O James, the first apostle
to die by being slain,
in this way you would suffer
and heaven's reward gain.
You followed Christ, the Saviour,
saw Him rise from the dead,
so may we also witness
like you, His Gospel spread.

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Verse 1 – CWBII #423

Verses 2 and 3 - Chris deSilva and Alessio Loiacono

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Music Links to the Scripture Readings

[Earthen Vessels](#) St Louis Jesuits John Foley SJ

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