

July 25, 2025

Daily Reflections



FEAST OF ST. JAMES, APOSTLE

By Sister Christine Hilliard, CSJ

Reflection

Today is the feast day of James, an apostle and the patron saint of Spain. In Spain he is known as “Santiago.” Many years ago a shrine was built in his honor at a place named Compostela. It became a popular destination for pilgrims from all over Europe. They wore hats with the shell of a scallop attached. The seashell was a reminder that James was a fisherman before he responded to Jesus’ invitation to follow him. Pilgrims wearing the shell were given hospitality wherever they went along the road to Compostela. It was such a popular pilgrimage that James is considered the patron saint of pilgrims.

Today’s gospel reminds us that James and his brother John (feast day December 27) were sons of Zebedee, a fisherman in Galilee. One day Jesus was walking along the seashore of the Sea of Galilee as these brothers were mending their family fishing nets. He invited them to join him. We are told: “...immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him.”

Two men named James became apostles. Today's James is known as "James the Greater" while the other is designated as "James the Less" (feast day May 3). Perhaps the titles indicate which James we know the most about from the gospel accounts. With John and Peter, the gospels mention this James as a witness to some of Jesus' miracles such as the cure of Peter's mother-in-law and the raising of Jairus' daughter. This James was also present at the Transfiguration and he was in the garden of Gethsemane on the night of the Last Supper. Chapter 12 of Acts of the Apostles records that James was martyred. After being arrested in Jerusalem, he was executed with a sword by order of King Herod Agrippa.

Today's Gospel

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached him with her sons and did him homage, wishing to ask him for something. He said to her, "What do you wish?" She answered him, "Command that these two sons of mine sit, one at your right and the other at your left, in your kingdom." Jesus said in reply, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?" They said to him, "We can." He replied, "My cup you will indeed drink, but to sit at my right and at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." When the ten heard this, they became indignant at the two brothers. But Jesus summoned them and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for all."

MATTHEW 20:20-28



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For Pondering

- Do you know anyone who has walked the Camino de Santiago? What have they shared about their pilgrimage experience that has inspired you?
 - Imagine that you have the opportunity to sit down and have a conversation with James. What would you talk about? Is there a question about his time with Jesus and his community of apostles that you are eager to ask him?
 - What "wisdom" does James share with you about following Jesus?
 - "Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant." -- How does your life reflect this?
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