

St. James, Apostle of the Lord (2026)

St. James, together with his brother John, was among the first apostles called by the Lord along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, where they worked as fishermen.

He is often known as *James the Greater*—not because of any superiority, but simply to distinguish him from the other apostle named James, the son of Alphaeus, remembered as *James the Lesser*.

James belonged to that small circle of three—Peter, James, and John—who were invited to witness moments of extraordinary grace: the Transfiguration on the holy mountain, the raising of Jairus' daughter, and the agony of Our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane. Few disciples were drawn so close to the mystery of Christ.

Several years ago, during a pilgrimage to Spain, I had the privilege of praying before the relics of St. James in the great cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. Standing there, I felt the weight of his witness—the courage of a man who followed Christ all the way to the end.

Yet in today's Gospel, the most striking figure may not be James or John, but their mother. She approaches Jesus with a bold request, and she does so within earshot of the other ten apostles, who quickly become *indignant*—a polite word for outrage, resentment, and wounded pride.

We sometimes imagine the apostles as selfless and serene, but here they reveal very human hearts. One suspects they wished their own mothers had been present that day, for they too desired honor and distinction.

Jesus, however, turns the moment into a lesson—not for their mother, but for James and John themselves. “You do not know what you are asking,” He tells them. “Can you drink the chalice that I am going to drink?” And with youthful confidence they answer, “We can.”

But how could they possibly understand the depth of the chalice Christ would drink?

We are not so different. We often tell God “yes” with enthusiasm, convinced we can accomplish whatever He asks. Yet how quickly we slip into doing things our own way—and how often we discover our limits, our frailty, and our need for grace.

Because what most often messes us up in life is the picture in our head of how it’s supposed to be.