

Reflection Monday Week 17 St James 2022

St James (? - 44) the brother of St John and, like him, a fisherman. He was a witness at the Transfiguration and one who slept through most of the Agony in the Garden. He was the first apostle to be martyred, beheaded by King Herod Agrippa I. He was buried in Jerusalem. Nothing more is known about him until the 9th century. There is a tradition that the relics of St James were brought to Spain after his martyrdom, and his shrine at Compostela in Galicia grew in importance, becoming the greatest pilgrimage centre in western Europe. In Paris, the Tour St Jacques marks the start of the pilgrimage route. Rue St Jacques points straight towards Compostela. In England, the pilgrim routes lead from all parts of the country to the major ports. This network of routes is testimony that many made this pilgrimage. The scallop-shell, the emblem of St James, has become the emblem of pilgrims generally. In 1987 the pilgrimage routes to Compostela were designated by the Council of Europe as historical cultural routes of international importance.

James certainly drank from the same Chalice as Jesus and lost his life in service of the community and family of believers that he loved in Jerusalem. Herod Agrippa like all people who fail to use their power justly beheaded the very person who made his kingly realm a safer and more loving place to be. The people he served unjustly became the instrument of his downfall! St James, however, continues to inspire and encourage the followers of Christ.

O faithful Apostle, St. James, because of your fervent and generous heart Jesus chose you to witness His glory on Mount Tabor and His agony in Gethsemane. Obtain for us strength and consolation in the unending struggles of life, that, having constantly and generously followed Jesus, we may overcome life's difficulties and join you in heaven. Amen.