

## July 24 St James the Greater

*Observed 25 July*



This Saint James and his brother Saint John are the fishermen sons of Zebedee, who were among the very first followers of Jesus. They remained among his closest followers, with him in many critical moments, such as on the Mount of the Transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsamane.

The brothers were nicknamed Boanerges, ‘Sons of Thunder’. When hr gave James and John this nickname, Jesus seems to have been reacting to their impetuosity. With the very common names of James and John, it helped to have a nickname to set them apart. As when he called Simon ‘Cephas’ (‘Peter’) the nickname seems to be an expression of affection. But perhaps like ‘Cephas’ it was also meant as a challenge. If Boanerges was meant as a challenge, an invitation to James and John, it is probably because traditionally thunder had been referred to as the voice of God. If James and John were to be the Sons of the Voice of God, perhaps Jesus was challenging them to bring the Voice of God to the people. Just as he told them that they would no longer catch fish, but would instead catch people, Jesus is saying that in this way they are no longer sons of Zebedee the fisherman, but sons of the Voice of God, with all of the responsibilities that entails. Perhaps it was another way of saying the same thing, calling them from their previous ordinary lives, to the lives of leaders in the new Kingdom.

James did not have long to live out this vocation, since he was the first of the Apostles to be executed. But that is not the end of his story as a Son of the Voice of God. After the crucifixion, tradition has James go off to the Roman province of Iberia (now Spain) to spread the Good News of Christ. When he returned to Judea, the king beheaded him to please the rowdy mob. So he was bringing God’s voice first through evangelism and then through martyrdom. But of more lasting impact has been the resting place of James’ mortal remains in Compostela in Spain.

For centuries the Camino de Santiago, the Way of Saint James, has been one of the most used and revered pilgrimages in the world. Countless people have walked or ridden along this route to gain their shell. They have found in the camaraderie of pilgrims, and the experience of meditative journey their own experiences of the voice of God in their hearts.

*Lessons*        Jeremiah 45:1-5; Psalm 7:1-10; Acts 11:27-12:3; Matthew 20:20-28

*Collect*        O gracious God, we remember before you today your servant and apostle James, first among the Twelve to suffer martyrdom for the Name of Jesus Christ; and we pray that you will pour out upon the leaders of your Church that spirit of self-denying service by which alone they may have true authority among your people; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.