

The Golden Legend: St. James the Greater

The pilgrimage to Santiago (James) de Compostela is one of the three great Catholic pilgrimages. The end is the tomb of the apostle Saint James, James the Greater, situated in the crypt of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia (Spain).

The pilgrimage to Compostela ranks among the three most important pilgrimages of Christianity, after Jerusalem and Rome. But it was only after the taking of Granada in 1492, under the Catholic reign of King Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella the Catholic, that Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia, pope from 1492 to 1503) declared that Compostela was, with Rome and Jerusalem, one of the "three great pilgrimages of Christianity".

The Compostelan Holy Year or Jubilee (Xacobeo) takes place every time that the feast of Saint James (Feast of the apostle), the 25th of July, falls on a Sunday, which happens four times every twenty-eight years. This happens with a regular sequence every 5-6-11-6 years. It results that in every century there are fourteen Jubilee Years. They have been in 1999, 2004, 2010 and the next holy year will be 2021.

*For this occasion we present to you the life of the apostle,
as it was related by James of Voragine between 1261 and 1266.*

Interpretation of his name.

This James the apostle is said James the son of Zebedee, brother of S. John the Evangelist and Boanerges, that is the son of thunder, and James the Greater. He was said James, son of Zebedee, not only in flesh but by the signification of the name, for Zebedee is interpreted "giving" or "given", and James gave himself to God by martyrdom of death, and he is given to us by God for a special patron. He is said James, brother of John, not only by flesh but by similitude of manners. For they both were of one zeal and of one quest and of one will. They were of one zeal to avenge our Lord, for when the Samaritans would not receive Jesus Christ, James and John said: "If it pleases thee, Lord, let fire descend from heaven and destroy them". They were of like quest to learn, for these two were they that demanded of our Lord about the Day of Judgment and other things to come. And they were of one will, as they asked that one of them might sit at the right side of Him

and the other on His left side. He was said the son of thunder because of the sound of his predication, for he frightened the evil and excited the slothful, and by the highness of his preaching he did marvels in converting them to the faith. We can apply to him what Bede saith of S. John, that he thundered so loud, that if he had thundered a little louder, the entire world might not have comprised him. He is said James the Greater, like as that other James is said James the Lesser. First by reason of his calling, for he was first called by Jesus Christ; secondly by reason of familiarity, for Jesus Christ was seen to have greater familiarity with him than with James the Lesser. Like as it appeared at the raising of the maid, and at His holy transfiguration. Thirdly, by reason of his suffering. For among all the apostles he was the first that suffered death. As he may be said Greater because he was first called to be an apostle, he may also have this name as he was the first called to everlasting glory.

Fight against the Magicians

James the apostle, son of Zebedee, preached after the ascension of our Lord in Judea and Samaria, and afterwards he was sent into Spain to sow there the word of Jesus Christ. But when he was there he profited but little, for he had converted unto Christ's law but nine disciples, of whom he left two there, to preach the word of God, and he took the other seven with him and returned again into Judea. Master John Belet saith that he converted there but one man only, and when afterwards he preached the word of God in Judea, there was an enchanter named Hermogenes with the Pharisees, which sent Philetus his disciple to S. James to overcome him before all men, and to prove his preaching false. But the apostle overcame him before all men with clear reasoning, and did many miracles before him. Philetus then returned to Hermogenes, and proved the doctrine of James to be true, and recited to him his miracles, and said that he would be his disciple, and desired and counseled Hermogenes in like wise to be his disciple. Then Hermogenes was angry, and by his craft and enchantments he made Philetus in such wise that he might not move, and said: "Now we shall see if thy James may save thee".

James, they cried, howling in the air and saying: "James the apostle of God have pity on us, for we burn before our time has come". To whom James said: "Wherefore come ye to me?" And they said: "Hermogenes hath sent us to thee and to Philetus to bring you to him, and the angel of God hath bound us with chains of fire and tormenteth us". And James said: "The angel of God shall unbind you and bring him to me bound, but hurt him not". Then they went and took Hermogenes and bound his hands, and brought him so bound to S. James, and they said to Hermogenes: "Thou hast sent us thither where we were strongly tormented and grievously bound". And then said they to S. James: "Give to us power against him that we may avenge his wrongdoings against you and our scorching". And James said to them: "Lo! Here is Philetus before you, why take ye him not"? They answered: "We may not touch him, not even as much as a flea that is in thy couch". Then said James to Philetus: "To the end that thou do good for evil, like as Christ bade us, unbind him". And then Hermogenes was all confused. And James said to him: "Go thy way freely where thou wilt, for it appertaineth not to our discipline that any be converted against his will", and Hermogenes



The Pilgrimage to Saint James of Compostela

The pilgrimage to Saint James of Compostela began when the tomb of the apostle was miraculously discovered in Galicia about the year 800. This tomb had been rediscovered by the hermit Pelayo (or Pelagius) who had had a revelation in his sleep. He had been guided by a star in the sky, from which comes one of the etymologies put forward for Compostela: Campus Stellae or area of the star.

Tomb of St. James the apostle

After investigation, the Church of the region declared that the tomb in question was of James the Apostle, brother of John the Evangelist and the first apostle martyr of Christianity. The first writings mentioning the preaching of James in Spain go back to the VII century. They had been taken up again in the XII century



Then Philetus sent his servant to S. James and let him have knowledge hereof. Then S. James sent to him his sudary or head cover and said: "Say to him that our Lord redresseth them that be hurt, and unbindeth them that be enmeshed"; and as soon as he was said this and touched the sudary, he was unbound and loosed from all the enchanting of Hermogenes, and arose up and went joyfully to S. James. Then Hermogenes was angry, and called many devils, and commanded them that they bring to him S. James bound, and Philetus with him, to avenge him on them, so that S. James' disciples might not dare insult him anymore. Then when the devils came towards S.

said to him: "I know well the ire of the devils, but if thou give to me somewhat of thine that I may have with me, they shall slay me". Then S. James gave to him his staff. Then he went and brought to the apostle all his books of his false craft and enchanting to be burnt. But S. James, because the odour of the burning might do evil or harm to some fools, he made them to be cast into the sea. And after he had cast his books into the sea he returned, and holding his feet said: "O thou deliverer of souls, receive me penitent, and him that hath sustained till now calumnies of thee". And then he began to be perfect in the dread of God, so that many virtues were done by him afterward.

His Martyrdom

And when the Jews saw Hermogenes converted they were all moved of envy, and went unto S. James and blamed him because he preached Christ crucified. And he proved clearly the coming and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ in such way that many believed in our Lord. Abiathar, who was High Priest that year, moved the people against him, and then they put a cord about his neck and brought him to Herod Agrippa. And when he was led to be beheaded by the commandment of Herod, a man having the palsy cried to him. And he gave him health and said: "In the name of Jesus Christ, for whom I am led to be beheaded, arise thou and be all whole, and bless our Lord thy Maker". And soon he arose and was all whole. A scribe named Josias, which put the cord about his neck and drew him, seeing this miracle fell down to his feet and demanded of him forgiveness and that he might be christened; and when Abiathar saw that, he made him to be taken, and said to him: "But if thou curse the name of Christ thou shalt be beheaded with him". To whom Josias said: "Be thou accursed, and accursed be all thy years, and the name of our Lord Jesus Christ be blessed world without end".

church hath established that his feast shall be hal- lowed in the eighth kalends of August, whereas is the most fitting time.

Queen Lupa and S. James' sepulture in Spain

And as Master John Beleth saith, who wrote about this translation diligently: "When the blessed S. James was beheaded, his disciples took the body away by night for fear of the Jews, and brought it into a ship, and committed unto the will of our Lord the sepulture of it, and went with- al into the ship without sail or rudder. And by the conduct of the angel of our Lord they arrived in Galicia in the realm of Lupa". Indeed, there was in Spain a queen that had as name, and also by de- serving of her life, Lupa, which is as much to say in English as a she-wolf. And then the disciples of S. James took out his body and laid it upon a great stone. And soon the stone received the body into it as it had been soften wax, and made to the body a stone as it were a sepulcher. Then the disciples went to Lupa the queen, and said to her: "Our Lord Jesus Christ hath sent to thee the body of his disciple, so that him that thou would not receive alive thou shalt receive dead", and then they re- cited to her the miracle in order; how they were



and incorporated into the Codex Calixtinus. The apostle James had left the Near East in the 1st century with the mission to preach the word of Christ in the West even into the Iberian Peninsula. Having returned to Palestine, he was beheaded by command of King Herod Agrippa. His remains, gathered up by his companions, were carried away in a small boat. Guided by an angel, the craft crossed the Strait of Gibraltar before it ran onto the coast of Galicia.

First Church

Theodomire, bishop of Ira-Flavla (today Padron), acknowledged this tomb to be that of St. James in 835 and King Alphonus II of Asturias built a church there. However, it wasn't until the year 1884 that Pope Leo XIII confirmed by his authority, in the apostolic letter Deus omnipotens, the recognition of the relics of St. James by the archbishop of Compostela.



Then Abiathar commanded to smite him on the mouth with fists, and sent a message to Herod, and got consent that he should be beheaded with James. And when they should be beheaded both, S. James desired a potful of water of him that should smite off their heads, and therewith he baptized Josias, and then soon they were both beheaded and suffered martyrdom. S. James was beheaded the eighth kalends of April on our Lady's day of the Annunciation (March 25), and the eighth kalends of August (July 25) he was translated to Compostella. And the third kalends of January he was buried, for the making of his sepulcher was from August unto January, and therefore the

come without any sail nor rudder to the ship, and they required of her a fitting place for his holy sepulture. And when the queen heard this, she sent them unto a right cruel man, by treachery and by guile, as Master Beleth saith, and some say it was to the king of Spain, to have his consent of this matter, and he took them and put them in prison. And when he was at dinner the angel of our Lord opened the prison and let them escape away all free. And when he knew it, he sent hastily knights after, to take them, and as these knights passed to go over a bridge, the bridge brake and overthrew, and they fell in the water and were drowned. And when he heard that, he repented

and doubted for himself and for his people, and sent after them, praying them to return, and that he would do like as they would themselves. And then they returned and converted the people of that city unto the faith of God. And when Lupa the queen heard this, she was much sorrowful, and when they came again to her they told to her the agreement of the king. She answered: "Take the oxen that I have in yonder mountain, and join ye and yoke them to my cart or chariot, and bring ye then the body of your master, and build ye for him such a place as ye will", and this she said to them in guile and mockery, for she knew well that there were no oxen but wild bulls, and supposed that they should never join them to her chariot, and if they were so joined and yoked to the chariot, they would run hither and thither, and should break the chariot, and throw down the body and slay them. But there is no wisdom against God. And then they, that knew nothing of the evil courage of the queen, went up on the mountain, and found there a dragon casting fire at them, and that ran on them. And they made the sign of the cross and he brake in two pieces. And then they made

blessed S. James, so that S. James appeared to him and said: "Come and follow me into Galicia", and then his bonds brake and S. James vanished away. And he went up into the high tower with his bonds in his neck, and sprang down without hurting, and it was well sixty cubits of height. And as Bede saith: "There was a man that had done a foul sin, of which the bishop doubted to absolve him, and sent him to S. James with a schedule in which the sin was written; and when he had laid the schedule upon the altar, on the day of S. James he prayed S. James, that by his merits his sin might be forgiven and effaced. And after, he opened the schedule and found the sin effaced and struck out. And then he thanked God and S. James".

A speedy trip with S. James

Thirty men of Lorraine went together on pilgrimage to S. James about the year of our Lord a thousand and sixty-three, and all made faith to other that every man should abide and serve each other in all that shall happen by the way, except one, who would make no covenant. It happened

Pilgrimage

Following the trading routes of their epoch, the pilgrims to Saint James, from all ranks, but especially nobles, ecclesiastics and merchants, went to Galicia. The kings of Navarre and of Leon improved the roads and constructed bridges so as to facilitate trading and the repopulation of northern Spain, once the Saracens had been driven out.

Four routes

The last book incorporated into the Codex Calixtinus is attributed to a monk of Poitiers, Aimery Picaud. He indicates there are basically four routes to Compostela in France, of which three merge at Ostabat in the



Atlantic Pyrenees, then at Puente la Reyna in Spain, to form the French path.

Scallop shells

The pilgrims have the custom of bringing back as proof of their journey some scallop shells, which they attach to their coat or to their hat, from whence the name shells of Saint James has been given to these mollusks. The

the sign of the cross upon the bulls, and soon they were meek as lambs. Then they took them and yoked them to the chariot, and took the body of S. James with the stone that they had laid it on, and laid on the chariot, and the wild bulls without governing or driving of anybody drew it forth unto the middle of the palace of the queen Lupa. And when she saw this she was abashed and believed and was christened, and delivered to them all that they demanded, and dedicated her palace into a church and endowed it greatly, and after ended her life in good works.

Miracle of the effaced sins

Bernard, a man of the diocese of Mutina, as Calixtus the pope saith, was taken and enchained and put into a deep tower, and called always the

that one of them was sick and his fellows abode and waited on him fifteen days, and at last they all left him, save he that promised not, who abode by him and kept him at the foot of Mount St. Michael. And when it drew to night the sick man died, and when it was night, the man that was alive was sore afraid for the place which was solitary, and for the presence of the dead body, and for the cruelty of the Barbarians, and for the darkness of the night that came on. But soon S. James appeared to him in likeness of a man on horseback and comforted him and said: "Give me that dead body before me, and leap thou up behind me on my horse". And so they rode all that night a fifteen-day journey, so that they were on the morning to see the sun rising at Montoya, which is but half a league from S. James. Then S. James

left them both, commanding him that was alive, that he should assemble the canons of S. James to bury this pilgrim, and that he should say to his fellows that because they had broken their faith their pilgrimage availed them not. And he did his commandment, and when his fellows came they marveled how he had so fast gone, and he told to them all that S. James had said and done.

S. James saves the victims of cruel men

And as Calixtus the pope reports, there was a man of Germany, and he went with his son to S. James about the year 1090, and came to Toulouse to be lodged, and their host made them drunk. Then the host took a cup of silver and put it in their trunk. And on the morn, when they were gone, he followed them as thieves, and bare them on hand that they had stolen his cup, and said that they should be punished if the cup were found on them. And he found it in the trunk, and soon they were brought to judgment. And then the sentence was given, that all that they had should be given to the host, and that one of them should be hanged. And then the father would have died for

voutly S. James into his help. And S. James appeared to him before them that kept him, and they awoke, and he brought him into the highest of the tower, and soon the tower bowed down so low that the top was even with the ground. And he went, without leaping, and unbound of his irons. Then his keepers followed after, but they had no power to see him.

When the Devil looks like S. James

Hugo de S. Victor reports that the devil appeared in likeness of S. James to a pilgrim, and told to him many things of the unhappiness of the world, and said to him that he should be well blessed if he slew himself in the honour of him. And soon he took a knife and slew himself; and then the host in whose house he was lodged was held suspect, and was sore afraid to be put to death for this. Then he who was dead revived again, and said that the devil had caused him to slay himself, and brought him into great torments. And S. James ran, and brought him before the throne of the judge, and when the devils accused him, he got that he should be restored to his life.

shell of Saint James was the sign at the end of the trip that it was a new man who returned to the country. It became one of the recognizable characteristics of the pilgrim, with the pilgrim's staff, the pouch, and the wide-rimmed hat. The shell was sometimes engraved in the stone on walls or on tops of pillars in churches.



Pilgrims booklet

The travel booklet of the pilgrim is a

document which looks like a passport. It has two functions: to permit its carrier to prove he is a pilgrim, and thus to benefit from the advantages accorded to them, especially the access to lodging, and to obtain at each stopping place a stamp with the indication of the date of passage, permitting its carrier to prove the route traveled. This proof permits him to obtain the Compostela certificate upon arriving at Compostela.

Compostela certificate

The condition is to have traveled at least the last 100 kilometers on foot (or 200 km by bicycle) and to have had it stamped in their pilgrim's travel booklet.

his son and the son for the father. At last the son was hanged, and the father went forth weeping on his pilgrimage to S. James, and came again thirty-six days after, and then went to see his son, and cried and wept, but the son which was hanged began to comfort him and said to his father: "Right sweet father, weep no more, for I was never so well at ease, for the blessed S. James hath always sustained me and held me up, and hath fed me with sweetness of heaven"; and when the father heard him speak, he ran soon to the city and did so much that the people came, and his son was taken down all whole, as though he had never had harm, and the host was hanged who had put the cup in the trunk.

A merchant was despoiled by a tyrant and was wrongfully put in prison. And he called much de-

There was a young man of the country of Lyons, as Hugh the abbot of Cluny witnesseth, that was accustomed to go often to S. James, and the night before he should go there he fell in fornication. And the next day he went forth. On a night it happened that the devil appeared to him in likeness of S. James, and said to him: "Knowest thou who I am"? And he answered: "Nay". And the devil said to him: "I am James the apostle, whom thou hast used to visit every year, and I am glad for thy devotion. But it is not long since thou, in going out of thy house, fell in fornication, and hast presumed to come, not confessed thereof, wherefore thy pilgrimage may neither please God nor me. It appertaineth not to do so, for who that will come to me in pilgrimage, he must first show his sins by contrition and by confession, and after, by going on

pilgrimage, punish them and make satisfaction". And this said, the devil vanished away. Then the young man was in great anguish, and disposed himself to return home again to his house and confess his sins, and then to begin again his journey. And then the devil appeared to him again in likeness of the apostle, and warned him in no wise to do so, but said to him: "This sin may in no wise be forgiven but if he cut off his members generative. But yet he should be more blessed if he killed himself, and be a martyr for the sake of him". And he, that same night, when his fellows slept, took a knife and cut off his genitals, and with the same knife smote himself into the belly. And his fellows awoke, and when they saw this thing they were sore afraid and soon fled away lest they should be taken as suspect of the homicide. And after, as they made ready his pit to bury him in, he revived again, and then they were all abashed and fled away. And he called them again, and told all that was befallen to him, saying: "When I at the suggestion of the devil had slain myself, the devils took me and led me towards Rome, and soon S.

hundred, would escape the mortality that was in France, and would visit S. James, and he took his wife and children and went thither. And when they came to Pampelona his wife died, and his host took from him all his money and his mare, upon which his children were carried. And this man, that thus went all discomfited, and carried his children on his shoulders, and led one after him, was in great anguish and sorrow. Then came a man to him, upon an ass, which had pity on him, and lent to him his ass to bear his children. And when he came to S. James, and had done what he would, and prayed, S. James appeared to him, and demanded if he knew him, and he said nay. And S. James said to him: "I am James the apostle, who have lent thee mine ass, and yet I shall lend him to thee to return. And I let thee know that thine host is fallen from a balcony and is dead. And thou shalt have again all that he hath taken from thee". And when all this was done, he returned joyous with his children to his house. And as soon as his children were taken off from the ass, it was not known where it became.



First Holy Year

It seems that the first holy year dates back to Beranger de Landore in 1322, when he was able to take possession of the cathedral of Compostela. Named archbishop of Compostela in 1318, it took him in fact four years to take possession of his see, disputed by a Galician. In 1322, a year when July 25th was a Sunday, he could finally "celebrate his first solemn Mass on the altar of the apostle". It seems very plausible that he had been the founder of a jubilee year at Compostela in order to perpetuate the remembrance of that Sunday by attracting pilgrims from the entire Christian world.

Plenary indulgence

To obtain the plenary indulgence, one must fulfill the following conditions: visit the cathedral of Saint James of Compostela, say some prayers, receive the sacraments of confession and Holy Communion.

James came after us, and blamed strongly the devils of their fallacy. And when they had long strived together, S. James constrained them to come into a meadow, where the Blessed Virgin sat speaking with many saints. And the blessed S. James complained for me, and then she blamed strongly the devils, and commanded that I should be restored again to my life. And then S. James took me, and rendered to me my life again, like as you see". And three days after his wounds were whole, and there appeared nothing but the traces where the wounds were, and then he reprised again his journey, and found his fellows, and recited to them all this in order.

When S. James lends his mount

And as Calixtus the pope reports, there was a Frenchman, about the year of our Lord eleven

Three knights and the miraculous bread

Three knights of the diocese of Lyons went to S. James, and one of them was required of a poor woman for the love of S. James to bear her sack upon his horse; and he bare it. After, he found a man sick, and set him on his horse, and took the burden off the man, and the sack of the said woman, and followed his horse afoot. But he was so broken with the heat of the sun, and with labour to go afoot, that when he came to S. James in Galicia, he was strongly sick. And during three days, his fellows prayed and advised him as to the health of his soul, which three days he lay speechless, and his fellows abiding his death. The fourth he sighed greatly, and said: "I thank God and S. James, for I am delivered by his merits. When I would have done that which ye warned and admonished me, the devils came to me and strained

me so sore that I might not do nothing that appertained to the health of my soul. And I heard you well but I might not answer. And then the blessed came, and brought in his left hand the sack of the woman, and in the right hand the bourdon of the poor pilgrim that I helped by the way, and held the bourdon for a spear, and the sack for a shield, and so assailed the devils as all angry, and lift up the bourdon, and so frightened the devils that they fled away; and thus S. James hath delivered me by his holy grace, and hath rendered to me my speech again. Call me the priest, for I may not be long in this life, it is time to amend our trespasses toward our Lord". And then he turned himself to one of his fellows, and said to him: "Friend, ride no more with thy lord, for certainly he is damned, and shall perish shortly by evil death, and therefore leave his company", and then he died. And when he was buried, his two fellow knights returned, and that other said to his master this that he had said to him, and he took no notice and refused to amend himself. And soon after he was smitten with a spear in battle and died.

be sold, but always the chains with which he was bound loosened. And when he had been sold fourteen times he was bound with double chains. Then he called S. James to his help, and S. James appeared to him and said: "Because thou wert in my church, and thou asked nothing by the health of thy soul, but demanded only the deliverance of thy body, therefore thou hast fallen in this peril. But because our Lord is merciful, he hath sent me to buy thee. And soon his chains brake, and he, bearing a part of the chains, passed by the countries and castles of the Saracens, and came home into his own country in the sight of all men, which were abashed of the miracle. For when any man would have taken him, as soon as they saw the chain they were afraid and fled. And when the lions and other beasts would have ran on him, in the deserts whereon he went, when they saw the chain they were so afraid they fled away.

It happened in the year 1238 in a castle named Prato, between Florence and Pistoia, that a young man of feeble mind, deceived by the advice of an old man who wanted to gain to himself his in-

Jubilee

The jubilee lasts one year, starting from the opening of the Holy Door of the cathedral, the 31st of December before the holy year, which symbolically marks the beginning of the grand ceremonies which would later take place. This door is only opened at the time of the Compostelan Jubilee Year.

Pilgrimage 2010

The Saint James Pilgrimage will be organized this year from Canada from July 28th to August 14. The pilgrimage will start at Burgos and follow the French path to Compostelle. (about 400 km) Pilgrims should be able to walk 25 km per day and to carry everything they need in their backpacks. Lodging in hostels and tents.

For more information please contact the Priory of Toronto: (416) 251-0499



And as Calixtus the pope saith, there was a man of Viriliac who went to S. James, and his money failed him by the way. And he had shame to beg and ask alms, and he laid under a tree, and dreamed that S. James fed him. And when he awoke he found a loaf, baked under ashes, at his head, and with that loaf he lived fifteen days till he came again to his own place, and ate sufficiently twice a day of the same loaf, and always on the morn he found it whole in his satchel.

When S. James frees prisoners

Also the same Calixtus reports that a burgess of the city of Barcelona went to S. James about the year of our Lord eleven hundred, and required only that he should never be taken by any enemies, and as he returned by Sicily he was taken in the sea by Saracens, and led often to fairs to

heritance, set fire in the corn of his tutor which had charge to keep him. Then he was taken, and convicted of this trespass, and was judged to be drawn and burnt. Then he confessed his sins, and avowed himself to S. James. And when he had been long drawn in his shirt upon a stony way, he was neither hurt in his body or in his shirt. Then he was bound to a stake, and fagots and bushes were set about him, and fire put thereto, which fire burnt the wood and his bonds, and he always called on S. James, and there was no hurt of burning found in his shirt nor in his body, and when they would have cast him again into the fire, he was taken away from them by S. James, the apostle of God, to whom be given laud and praising.