

Today we remember James, who was a brother of Jesus, a witness to his resurrection, and a leader of the Church in Jerusalem. He is not mentioned in any of the gospels, which suggests that he did not follow his brother or take part in his journey to the cross. But when Saint Paul wrote his First Letter to the Corinthians, he made this note: after the resurrection Jesus "appeared to [Peter], then to the Twelve; then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time. . . .; *then he appeared to James*, then to all the apostles." The risen Lord chose his own brother to be one of the original witnesses to his resurrection; and this fact, together with his kinship to Jesus, gave James special authority among the other disciples. He came to be recognized as the equal of Peter and John in the leadership of the Church.

James and many other disciples of his brother still considered themselves Jews, still worshipped in the Temple, and still tried to obey the law of Moses. As a result they were suspicious of Saint Paul and his mission to the gentiles. They believed that the gospel was only for Jews, and that pagans first had to be circumcised according to Jewish law before they could be baptized and considered disciples of Christ. Paul taught just the opposite — that pagans had free access to Christ through faith and baptism. The controversy threatened to divide the whole Church, so Paul went up to Jerusalem and argued the case with James and the other "pillars" of the Jerusalem church. In the end James accepted Paul's arguments and acknowledged that his mission to the non-Jewish nations was indeed the work of God. As Paul wrote: "James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised." Thus, James is honoured for his reconciling wisdom, as one who overcame his own prejudices in order to preserve the unity of the fledgling Church.

Sentence

This is an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.
John 1.47 (RSV)

Collect

Let your people, O God,
continually cherish the memory of James,
who was a pillar in your Church
supporting its witness to the resurrection;
and grant that,
following his example in the work of reconciliation,
we may bring all who are at variance and enmity
to peace and perfect unity in your Son;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Readings

Acts 15.12-22a Psalm 1

Refrain Happy are they who delight in the Lord.
Matthew 13.53-58

Prayer over the Gifts

Lord God,
who made your servant James
a pillar of your Church at Jerusalem,
grant that we who offer these gifts
may dwell in the bond of mutual peace.
We ask this through Jesus Christ the Lord.

Preface of All Saints

Prayer after Communion

Giver of redemption,
who taught your servant James,
the brother of our Lord,
to seek the way of reconciliation,
keep us in the unity afforded by this sacrament,
that we may never give occasion for strife
and be ready in the service of peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.