



FRIENDS

August
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"Can We Drink from His Cup..."

A group from Scotland in front of the Cathedral of St. James, Santiago de Compostela

Dear Friends,

As priests of the Missionary Society of St. James, we naturally hold a devotion to this great apostle, whose Feast Day is celebrated on July 25. Scripture shows that James was among the very first disciples to be called by Jesus. Along with Peter and John, he formed Christ's inner circle, witnessing exclusive moments of glory like the Transfiguration and hours of deep darkness in the Garden of

*The Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle
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Gethsemane. Yet, despite this proximity, James and his brother John harbored raw human ambition. By asking for the highest positions in the Kingdom, they revealed a fundamental misunderstanding of Jesus' true mission. Jesus responded with a piercing question: "*Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?*" Confidently, they replied that they could. And indeed, James did. Historical tradition tells us that following the dispersion of the apostles, James travelled to the very edge of the known Roman Empire—the Iberian Peninsula—to preach the Gospel. However, by 40 AD, he found himself severely discouraged by a lack of converts.

According to a centuries-old tradition cherished by the Church in Spain, James found himself severely discouraged by the slow growth of the Gospel along the banks of the Ebro River in Zaragoza. It is here that ancient accounts place a pivotal moment of grace: a spiritual encounter with the Virgin Mary on a pillar of stone, which comforted him and restored his apostolic zeal. While modern historians note that written records of this specific apparition emerged centuries later, the enduring presence of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar stands as a historical monument to a deeper truth—that the early missionaries faced profound isolation, and it was only through divine consolation and a deep connection to the Mother of the Church that they found the strength to persevere. Renewed by this encounter, James made the arduous journey back to Jerusalem to resume his public, fearless preaching. He was soon swept up in King Herod Agrippa I's violent persecution of the early Church.

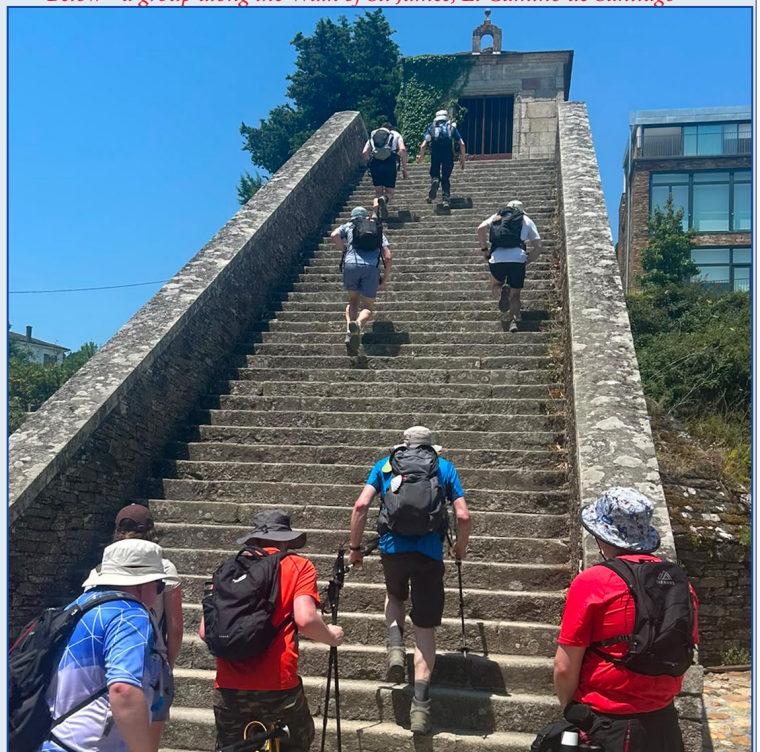


The Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar, Zaragoza, Spain



A painting of St. James crossing the Andes Mountains, which hangs on the walls of the Missionary's Center House in Peru.

Below - a group along the Walk of St. James, El Camino de Santiago



The second century theologian, Clement of Alexandria, records that the legal guard who arrested James was so moved by the apostle's absolute calmness and unwavering faith during his trial that he experienced an instant conversion. On the way to the execution site, the guard publicly confessed his new faith. Condemned to die alongside the apostle, the man asked James for forgiveness. James paused, said, "Peace be to thee, brother," and kissed him. Moments later, both were beheaded by the same sword, making James the first of the Twelve Apostles to be martyred. Because local laws forbade his burial, friends of James secretly carried his body away on a stone boat, sailing across the Mediterranean back to Galicia, Spain, to bury him in a hidden tomb. Nearly 800 years later, around 813 AD, a hermit named Pelagius discovered the forgotten mausoleum after witnessing extraordinary lights and showers of stars over the clearing. The site was named Compostela (Campus Stellae, "Field of the Star"), evolving into the world-famous pilgrimage site we know today. The missionaries, members and alumni of the St. James Society, know first-hand that the life of St. James is not a romantic legend, but a blueprint for the gritty reality of missionary life—labour which continues on the ground here in Peru. James began his journey with a human desire for success and recognition, but Christ systematically stripped that away through failure, suffering, and exhaustion. James stood on the shores of Spain facing the modern missionary's greatest enemy: discouragement. He poured his life out, only to see zero fruit.

Inevitably, across the history of the St James Missionary Society, some of the priests working in South America, far away from their homelands, will have experienced from time to time a sense of isolation in vast cities or remote villages. We can question our impact when the structural poverty and cultural shifts around us become very challenging.



The directional signs along the Camino



Yet it is precisely in those moments, when St. James reminds us that the mission does not belong to us, but to Christ. Ultimately, James's greatest missionary success didn't come from a crowded stadium or a massive numbers report; it came at the very end, when his personal endurance and radical peace converted his own executioner. For the St. James Society today, Peru remains our mission field. But the question James poses to us across the centuries is clear: *are we still willing to drink from the cup?* Are we willing to measure our missionary success not by immediate results, but by our fidelity to the cross? We look to our patron not just as a figure of history, but as a brother in the trenches, inspiring us to push past discouragement, to embrace the hidden sacrifices of our ministry, and to remain steadfast witnesses to the end. *Saint James the Apostle, pray for us.....for those missionaries to Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru across the years, on whose shoulders we stand, and for our ongoing mission in Latin America today.* ~ Fr. Simon Cadwallader

Photos From the Walk of St. James, El Camino de Santiago, Spain.



With Every Good Wish in Christ,

Rev. David Costello, Director



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