DUODECIM APOSTOLI

The Twelve Apostles

Chosen by Christ from among His disciples, the Twelve were sent — *apostolos* means "one who is sent" — to preach the Gospel to every nation. Upon them, with Peter at their head, He built His Church, and the bishops are their successors (CCC 857–862). All but St. John sealed their witness with martyrdom.

"You have not chosen me: but I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit." — John 15:16



St. Peter

Prince of the Apostles

FEAST June 29
DIED Crucified head-down, Rome, c. 64–67
PREACHED Judea, Antioch, Asia Minor, Rome

Simon the fisherman, renamed Cephas, "the Rock," and given the keys of the Kingdom. First Bishop of Rome and visible head of the Church.

SYMBOLS
Keys of heaven, inverted cross

PATRON OF
the Popes, fishermen



St. Andrew

The First-Called

FEAST November 30
DIED Crucified on an X-shaped cross, Patras
PREACHED Scythia (Black Sea), Thrace, Greece

Peter's brother, first a disciple of John the Baptist, who brought Simon to Jesus. He preached in Greece and around the Black Sea.

SYMBOLS
Saltire (X) cross, fishing net

PATRON OF
Scotland, Russia, fishermen



St. James

the Greater, son of Zebedee

FEAST July 25
DIED Beheaded by Herod, Jerusalem, 44
PREACHED Judea, Samaria; Spain (tradition)

With Peter and John he saw the Transfiguration and the agony in the garden. The first Apostle to die for Christ (Acts 12:2); venerated at Compostela.

SYMBOLS
Pilgrim's staff, scallop shell

PATRON OF
Spain, pilgrims



St. John

The Beloved Disciple

FEAST December 27
DIED In old age, Ephesus, c. 100 — the only Apostle not martyred
PREACHED Jerusalem, Asia Minor; exiled to Patmos

Author of the Fourth Gospel, three Epistles and the Apocalypse. At the Cross, Christ gave him His Mother. He survived a cauldron of boiling oil.

SYMBOLS
Chalice with a serpent, eagle

PATRON OF
theologians, writers, friendship



St. Philip

of Bethsaida

FEAST May 11 (traditional)
DIED Crucified, Hierapolis in Phrygia
PREACHED Greece, Phrygia, Scythia (tradition)

He brought Nathanael to Christ, and at the Last Supper begged, "Lord, show us the Father." He preached in Phrygia.

SYMBOLS
Tall cross, loaves of bread

PATRON OF
Uruguay, hatters, pastry cooks



St. Bartholomew

called Nathanael

FEAST August 24
DIED Flayed alive and beheaded, Armenia
PREACHED India, Mesopotamia, Armenia

Praised by Christ as "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." Tradition says he preached in India and Armenia.

SYMBOLS
Flaying knife

PATRON OF
Armenia, tanners



St. Matthew

Apostle and Evangelist

FEAST September 21
DIED Slain by the sword at the altar, Ethiopia (tradition)
PREACHED Judea, Ethiopia, Persia

Levi the tax collector, who rose from his customs table at Christ's call. He wrote the first Gospel for the Jewish faithful.

SYMBOLS
Winged man, halberd, money bag

PATRON OF
bankers, accountants



St. Thomas

Didymus, "the Twin"

FEAST December 21 (traditional)
DIED Pierced by a lance, Mylapore, India
PREACHED Parthia (Persia), India

He doubted the Resurrection until he touched the wounds, then confessed, "My Lord and my God!" He carried the faith to India.

SYMBOLS
Lance, builder's square

PATRON OF
India, architects



St. James

the Less, "brother of the Lord"

FEAST May 11 (traditional)
DIED Cast from the Temple and clubbed, 62
PREACHED Jerusalem and Judea

Son of Alphaeus, a kinsman of Our Lord, first Bishop of Jerusalem and author of the Epistle of St. James.

SYMBOLS
Fuller's club

PATRON OF
pharmacists, fullers



St. Simon

the Zealot

FEAST October 28
DIED Sawn in two, Persia (tradition)
PREACHED Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia

Called "the Zealot" or "the Cananaean." Tradition holds that he preached with St. Jude in Persia, where both won the martyr's crown.

SYMBOLS
Saw, book

PATRON OF
woodcutters, tanners



St. Jude

Thaddeus

FEAST October 28
DIED Slain with an axe, Persia (tradition)
PREACHED Judea, Mesopotamia, Persia, Armenia

Brother of St. James the Less and author of the Epistle of St. Jude. He is beloved as the helper of those in desperate need.

SYMBOLS
Axe or club, image of Christ

PATRON OF
desperate cases, lost causes



St. Matthias

chosen by lot

FEAST February 24 (traditional)
DIED Stoned and beheaded (tradition)
PREACHED Judea, Cappadocia, Colchis (Georgia)

A disciple since Christ's baptism, chosen after the Ascension to take the place of Judas Iscariot among the Twelve (Acts 1:21–26).

SYMBOLS
Axe, lots

PATRON OF
carpenters, tailors

Peter Paul Rubens, Apostolado, c. 1611 · Museo del Prado, Madrid — St. Jude: Anthony van Dyck, c. 1620 · Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

St. Paul, Apostle of the Gentiles

Not one of the Twelve, yet called by the risen Christ on the road to Damascus and honored as an Apostle with St. Peter on June 29 (and on his own on June 30). His fourteen Epistles form much of the New Testament. Beheaded at Rome under Nero.

"One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic"

The Church is apostolic because she is built on the foundation of the Apostles, keeps their teaching, and is governed by their successors, the bishops, in union with the successor of Peter. Their feasts, spread across the calendar, ring the whole liturgical year.