

OUR LADY OF MEDJUGORJE'S MESSAGE OF JULY 25, 2007

“Dear children! Today, on the day of the Patron of your Parish, I call you to imitate the lives of the Saints. May they be, for you, an example and encouragement to a life of holiness. May prayer for you be like the air you breathe in and not a burden. Little children, God will reveal His love to you and you will experience the joy that you are my beloved. God will bless you and give you an abundance of grace. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

St. James Church, Medjugorje

A. St. James (The Greater) – Patron of St. James Church, Medjugorje

1. Life. According to the Gospel of John, when Our Lord started His public ministry near the Sea of Galilee (perhaps Bethsaida), two of His earliest disciples called were John and James (the Greater), sons of Zebedee the fisherman and his wife, Salome. Because of their fiery spirit and impetuosity in wanting to destroy a Samaritan village that was inhospitable, they received the name Boanerges or “Sons of Thunder.” Together with Peter, they were members of the inner circle of Jesus’ special band of Apostles. These three were the only ones: 1) To witness His Transfiguration on Mount Tabor; 2) To witness the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead; and 3) To accompany Jesus during His Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane on the eve of His Passion. It is said that he traveled to Spain to preach the Gospel, but after some years he returned to Jerusalem, taking an active part in the Church there. He was the first of the Apostles to die for Christ, being beheaded under King Herod Agrippa I in 44 A.D. (Acts 12:1)
2. Mary’s First Apparition: Saragossa, Spain

Bishop Theodoeret of Cyr, theologian and Church Father from Antioch (393-465 A.D.) mentioned that one of the Apostles had reached as far as Spain, but he did not say who it was. The Breviary of the Apostles (6th Century) said that St. James the Greater preached in Spain.

However, we do know from the writings of the Venerable Mary of Jesus of Agreda, a 16th century Spanish Franciscan nun and mystic, that James Zebedee went to Iberia (now Spain and Portugal), which he and his disciples evangelized from 33 A.D. to 40 A.D. He first established a foundation in Galicia, an ancient Celtic kingdom in the Northwest of Spain, which the Romans called “Finis Terrae” or “The End of the Earth.” He later journeyed to the Roman fortress town of Caesar Augustus in the Northeast, now Saragossa. There, on the night of January 2, 40 A.D., James and his followers, a bit disheartened by their lack of success, began praying on the banks of the Ebro River. Suddenly they heard angelic singing and saw a ball of brilliant light carrying the Blessed Virgin seated on a

throne. She told St. James to build a small chapel in her honor, and to place in it the small alabaster pillar the angels brought with them. Then he should return to Jerusalem.

3. Mary's Great Shrine: Saint Iago (St. James) de Compostela

St. James became the Patron of Spain and some years after his martyrdom his remains were brought back to Galicia (Compostela). They were discovered by a hermit in 812 A.D. and quickly Compostela became an important shrine drawing people from all over Europe. St. James appeared to 15 different Spanish monarchs, guiding them, until finally the Muslims were driven out of Iberia October 12, 1492 – the same date Christopher Columbus discovered the New World. October 12 is the Feast of Our Lady of the Pillar, a national feast celebrated by Hispanics throughout the world.

B. Imitate the Life of Your Patron.

1. Firm Faith. St. James apparently had his mother, Salome, approach Jesus and ask for the first places in His Kingdom, on His right and on His left, for himself and his brother, John. The problem is that he completely mis-read Jesus. The popular conception of the time was that the Messiah would come with power and might and establish His Kingdom. James fell right into this attitude, and since he was the cousin of Jesus he deemed it was fitting and proper that he be given first consideration. Jesus corrected this false attitude and prophesied that indeed James would drink the cup that He was to drink. James must have been very humbled by this new view of the Kingdom; he entered into a new spirit, a spirit of Faith, and ended up being the first Apostle to be martyred.

At the beginning of the apparitions at Medjugorje, the visionaries kept asking Our Lady what she wanted of the priests and of the people. Our Lady always gave the same answer: that they believe firmly. There are many prophecies about a severe persecution to come and a firm Faith like that of St. James will be necessary.

2. Conversion. St. James certainly did a complete about face. If St. Thomas went East to India, to the end of the earth at that time, St. James went West to Iberia, to the western end of the earth. He had a complete change of heart; instead of seeking something for himself, he forgot himself and went all out in search of the salvation of his neighbor in far distant lands.

In the message of July, Our Lady said that the Father wants the salvation of everyone on this earth. That will take place if we put aside our own priorities and interests and begin by reaching out to those around us as we pray intently for the conversion of all sinners.

3. Prayer. Prayer seems to be the key in the life of St. James. He witnessed the power of prayer in the life of Jesus as he climbed the mountain of the

Transfiguration and beheld the dramatic change in Jesus. Climbing the mountain has always been a symbol of growth in prayer in the Bible, and Our Lady asks us to make this climb with her and under her leadership. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told James to “watch and pray” lest he fall into the temptation of failing in this mission. When the going got tough in Iberia, James and his followers turned immediately to prayer on the banks of the Ebro River and Our Lady immediately came into their lives. So also with us. As the visionaries have said so often: there is only one message in Medjugorje, and that is Prayer

C. Mary, Mother of the Church.

1. James was very special to Jesus, because he chose him to be one of the twelve Apostles and then further complimented him by drawing him into the special circle of the big three: Peter, James and John.

James was also very special to Our Blessed Mother, because he received the very first apparition from her. At Medjugorje, Our Blessed Mother said that it was the very last apparition by her on earth. And the visionaries add that it is also the most important.

We are very special to Our Blessed Mother, because we have been specially chosen by God and by her to be a central part of the grand finale of salvation history. We belong to the inner circle of Our Lord and of Our Blessed Mother.

2. We should thank God every day for calling us to such a great mission. We should ask St. James to bless us with his gifts of Faith, Conversion, and Prayer. We should beg Our Blessed Mother never to leave us for a moment.

-Rev. Robert Hughes, S.M.