

THE STORY OF SALVATION

Reflections on the Old and New
Testament murals at
St. Peter Catholic Church,
Lincoln, Nebraska



**ST. PETER
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Old Testament Murals

Altar



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Entrance

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Introduction

Old Testament Murals

The formal canonization of saints developed long after the founding of the Church. But this development grew out of a tradition practiced from the very beginning, in which righteous exemplars were celebrated by Christian communities in the same way we now venerate those established to be saints. As the process of canonization emerged, causes for those in most recent memory were naturally opened first. This is why most Old and New Testament figures (including the Blessed Virgin Mary) have not yet formally been canonized. This disparity has more to do with timing (the faithful who had died most recently were naturally closer to mind) than with the judgement by the community that those who died further back—the biblical heroes and heroines of the faith, for instance—were less significant. For the vast majority of figures the Bible presents positively, their presence with God for eternity should simply and rightly be granted—our Blessed Mother most obviously.

The nave of St. Peter Catholic Church is adorned on both sides with a family album of individual portraits of holiness. So we have adopted this language for our descriptions of what one sees when looking upward—as if into heaven itself. This booklet can be used as a guide for meditation and veneration, as well as for further study with Bible in hand. For these portraits direct our attention not only toward the commonly known merits of the figures in them, but as well toward the literary details of the biblical stories which reveal points of even deeper significance.

1 Adam and Eve



Portrait of Humility and Hope

Genesis 1-5

Adam and Eve

The Old Testament was originally written in the language of Hebrew, and often, Hebrew names make important points in the testimonies of this part of the Bible; they tell miniature stories within larger stories. The Hebrew name *Adam* means “man,” and forms a wordplay with *adamah*, which means “ground.” *Adam* is brought forth from *adamah*, reminding us of the place from which we come (God’s creative activity with the dust of the ground; Gen 2:7), as well as the place to which we will return (Gen 3:19; “Remember that you are dust . . .” we hear on Ash Wednesday). But this return to the ground is not the end of all things. The Hebrew name *Eve* means “life,” a hope-filled clarification in Genesis 3:20, following the tragic turn of events in the garden earlier.

Adam and Eve were created “in God’s image” (Gen 1:26-28) and blessed as “image bearers” with important roles in regard to the rest of humanity, as well as to the rest of God’s nonhuman but still “very good” creation (Gen 1:31). Thus their lives—and the lives of all human persons—point to important truths about God and his intentions with the world he made: not least, that God values physical, embodied life! And that he means for the world he created to be a place made fit for him to take up residence within it.

Sadly, the sin of Adam and Eve corrupted the image they bore, and has pervaded the whole world with enmity and strife. Yet while they are pictured here in their shame, the ground from which Adam came and to which he and we all return is also the place out of which God will bring life and salvation. Fittingly, the memorial of Adam and Eve is traditionally celebrated on December 24, at the dawning of the entrance of the new and greater Adam from the life of the new and greater Eve. By his own death and return to the ground and resurrection from it, the new Adam renders it possible for us once again to bear the image of God before all the world, preparing it by his grace to be the kingdom for which this world was made, so it will be *on earth* as it is in heaven.

2 Noah



Portrait of Rest

Genesis 5-10;
1 Peter 3:17-22

Noah

Noah's name means "rest." In his day, the world God had made to be good and beautiful and true—i.e., rightly ordered and directed, like an arrow that is "straight and true"—had become full of sin; corrupted and ugly. And God had in mind for Noah to play a special role in his plan to address this problem. Noah's father Lamech anticipated this when he named his son, explaining that "this one shall bring us relief" (Gen 5:29).

Noah is pictured here with the Ark of Salvation, in which he and his family, along with representatives from all the creatures God had made "were brought safely through water" (1 Pet 3:20) as God baptized his good but fallen creation. Noah holds a dove, which represents the completion of the washing, just as it does when Jesus himself is baptized by John (Matt 3:16).

After Noah and his family and all the creatures went out from the ark, Noah built an altar to the LORD, offering up some of the clean animals and birds. So pleasing was this to the LORD that he commits never again to destroy the earth with a flood. He solemnly establishes a covenant between himself and Noah and his family and the whole earth, putting the bow in the clouds as a sign that he will always remember this covenant. Lamech was right. Noah had brought relief from the tension between God and God's creation, forever.

3

Abraham

(Abram)



Portrait of Fatherhood

Genesis 11:26–25:11;
Hebrews 6:13–7:10; 11:8–19

Abraham

Abraham's name means "father of a multitude." He was previously called 'Abram' ("exalted father"), but God changed his name as a sign of the covenant he made with Abraham to make him the patriarch of a multitude of nations (Gen 17:1-5) and to bless all the families of the earth in him and by him (Gen 12:1-3). He is pictured here looking up at stars he is unable to count (Gen 15:5), representing the bounty of the offspring the LORD was faithful to bring forth from him despite his old age (Heb 11:12).

Abraham believed in the resurrection of the dead long before the first Easter. When God tested Abraham by instructing him to offer up his son Isaac on the mountain, Abraham assured his younger servants who accompanied them on the journey that he and Isaac would both return after they had gone up the mountain to worship (Gen 22:5; Heb 11:19). In the moment of his obedience, Abraham was interrupted before he could complete the offering of his beloved son. But just exactly who it was that called out to him to stay his hand remains a mystery. A tradition of interpreting this episode among the early Fathers of the Church (e.g., Justin Martyr, Irenaeus) holds that the voice belonged to none other than the second person of the Trinity—the pre-incarnate Christ, who explains that he knows now that Abraham reveres *God*, because Abraham has not even withheld the son of promise from *him*, the mystery speaker.

Abraham names the place "The LORD will see to it," which has a double meaning: where the LORD "sees to it," there will the LORD "be seen" (Gen 22:14). We are among those whom God has brought forth in fulfillment of his covenant promises; numbered among the many families of the earth God is blessing in and through Abraham. And as we bring our sacrifices to the Mass for the healing of our souls and the salvation of the world, may we see *the LORD* in the moment *he sees to it*.

4

Jacob

(Israel)



Portrait of God's Beloved Son

Genesis 25:19–49:33

It is sometimes said that Jacob's name means "deceiver" in Hebrew, from his decision to cheat his older brother Esau out of his birthright and his blessing. Others note that his name comes from the observation that he followed his brother Esau out of the womb, grasping his heel. But one night, Jacob encountered a mysterious man with whom he wrestled until morning (Gen 32:22-30). Jacob refused to let the man go until he had received a blessing from him, whereupon the man changed Jacob's name to 'Israel', because he had "striven with God and with men and . . . prevailed" (v. 28). When the man would not tell Jacob his own name, Jacob realized what had happened, and in whose company he had been, and called the place 'Peniel', which means "face of God," because he had just seen God as a *man* face to face, and lived.

Jacob is pictured here with the ladder he saw in a dream, stretching from the place where he lay asleep with his head on a rock up to heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it (Gen 28:10-22). Above the ladder can be seen the presence of the LORD, who speaks out to him, identifying himself as "the God of Abraham, your father" (though Isaac is in fact Jacob's immediate father). Jacob wakes in holy fear, realizing that it was not merely a dream, but that the LORD is truly present where he lay his head to rest on the rock—that "this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (v. 17).

Sometimes the ritual nature of the Mass may lull us into participating unmindfully, so that we're just "going through the motions." Let us pray that in those moments, something will jar us awake to realize that the LORD is truly in this place; that it *is in reality the house of God, the very gate of heaven.*

5

Moses the Prophet of God



Portrait of God's Instruction

The Books of Exodus, Leviticus,
Numbers, and Deuteronomy

Moses is credited as the main author of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, the first five books of the Bible known as the 'Torah' (Hebrew: "instruction," "law"), the 'Pentateuch' (five-fold book), or the 'Law of Moses'. In Exodus 3, God chose Moses specially as the one to whom he would disclose his name, 'Yahweh', which, in good Hebrew name fashion, actually gathers up a whole story. The meaning of 'Yahweh' has to do with "seeing the affliction" of his people, "hearing their cries" of distress, "knowing their sufferings," and "coming down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians" (Exod 3:7-8). And Moses is learning that he is to be the one Yahweh will use to carry out this mission. To Moses' question, "What name shall I tell them belongs to the one who sent me?", Yahweh responds again with a statement instead of the single word we anticipate when someone asks about a name: "I AM WHO I AM . . ." as if to say, "*I am who I am revealing myself to be as seer, hearer, knower, and deliverer* in the events of the Exodus, when I perform these miraculous signs and wonders and bring my people to myself." But then finally, Moses is given a single word: "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The LORD [Hebrew: *Yahweh*], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever . . ." (v. 15).

Justin Martyr and Irenaeus both held that the voice Moses heard from the burning bush in Exodus 3:4 ("Moses, Moses!") is the same voice Abraham heard on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22:11 ("Abraham, Abraham!"). If the Fathers are right, then although we meet the incarnate Jesus for the first time in the New Testament, we hear his voice long before then, resounding throughout the texts of the Old Testament.

Moses is pictured here holding the Ten Commandments with his hand raised to the sky (see Exod 19–20). The direction of his



gesture is significant in at least two ways: 1) the unseeable, untouchable, seemingly inaccessible God who led his people out of Egypt in pillars of cloud and fire *has now descended to be present on the Mountain*; and 2) Moses has been “in touch” with God and has received the words of God which he now brings to the people. So his hand motions in both directions, uniting what just took place on the mountain with the people below. This is God’s way of acting: even when his face remains hidden, he makes himself visible in those he elects for the special task of bringing his words toward his people in order to talk with them. This way of acting should look familiar. At every Mass, the priest stands before us “in the person of Christ” and explains the words which come from the God who is deeply invested in his people—who sees us, hears us, knows us, and comes into our world to save us.

6

Joshua

the Successor
of Moses



Portrait of God's Salvation

The Book of Joshua

Joshua's name (Hebrew: *Ye[ho]shua*) means "Yahweh Saves," and is thus identical with the meaning of Jesus' name (Hebrew: *Yeshua*), as the angel explains to Joseph in a dream (Matt 1:21). Joshua stands for us as an "icon" or "figure" whose life and history point to a deeper reality. The book of Joshua (we do not know who wrote it) "figures" Joshua in the form of Jesus as the leader of God's covenant people, and the land of Canaan as a figure of heaven. In this light, the movement of the Israelites led by Joshua from the wilderness through the Jordan into Canaan is "figured" in the form of Christ on Holy Saturday, gathering all the waiting souls—from Adam to the thief on the cross—and leading them from Hades, "over the Jordan" of a formerly uncrossable chasm to Heaven, whose gate Christ unlocks for the first time.

This "figural" reading is the kind of biblical interpretation practiced by the early Fathers of the Church, which takes note of similarities throughout Sacred Scripture (sometimes called "types" or "typologies") and sees in them God's self-involvement, whereby he who is the author both of the text and of the history about which it speaks, orders history to unfold according to his very good purposes, and the text to tell us all about it.

Joshua is pictured with the Ark of the Covenant in the background; sword in his right hand; scroll in his left. The Ark is Yahweh's presence with Joshua: "Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you . . . I will not leave you or forsake you" (Josh 1:5); his sword represents his courage: "Be strong and courageous" (Josh 1:6); the scroll represents God's revelation and instruction as found in Genesis–Deuteronomy: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night . . ." (Josh 1:8). Consistently and continually pondering God's instruction is the path to blessing of a true and lasting sort (Pss 1:1-3). We hear God's instruction at each Mass. We enjoy his presence with us in Word and Sacrament. And from these, we draw courage for life ahead with the one who does not leave or forsake.

7

Deborah the Judge



Portrait of God's Deliverance

Judges 4:1–5:31

Deborah

Deborah was a prophetess of Israel, as well as an actual judge. The “judges,” as we learn in the book bearing their name, were used by God to deliver Israel from the hands of their enemies who mistreated them, so that justice might be restored. Most of the judges are cast as military heroes, including Jael, another woman who features prominently in the story of Deborah (see Judg 4:17-22). But Deborah’s strength is as a prophetess who hears from the LORD and mediates what she hears with wisdom. “She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment” (Judg 3:5).

Deborah is pictured here with a battle axe and shield, but they lie against a stone on the ground, ungrasped. Instead, her hands are up as she sings forth a song of joy in extraordinary detail, magnifying the LORD for the victory he has granted his people (Judg 5:2-31). Though much longer, Deborah’s song stands as a prototype of Mary’s Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). And in her counsel both to Israel (Judg 4:4-5) and to Barak (Judg 4:6-7, 9, 14), which in essence is to *do the will of the LORD*, Deborah is a figure of Mary, whose counsel is the same: “Do whatever he tells you” (John 2:5). Each of these women teaches us about the other, which means that the story of Deborah in Judges 4–5 provides additional valuable information about our Blessed Mother *that cannot be found in the accounts of her in the New Testament*. In fact, Deborah is only one of many other women in the Old Testament whose stories shine clarifying light on the significance of our Blessed Mother. So we must do as the early Christians did, beginning with Mary! We must return to the Old Testament again and again to discover the richness in God’s ways as the Old Testament stories present it.

8

David



Portrait of a Shepherd

1-2 Samuel;
1-2 Chronicles; Psalms

David is pictured with a sling, handsome and “ruddy” (1 Sam 16:12; meaning, with reddish hair and complexion), protecting his flock of sheep in the background from an aggressor just out of view in the foreground. The modesty of his weapon—with it he vanquishes not only wild animals, but a giant Philistine champion (see the defeat of Goliath in 1 Sam 17)—implies his dependence on God’s faithfulness. David shows a characteristic tendency to turn to God before he acts impetuously. Thus, his successes are credited to God instead of to his own ingenuity or intelligence, and he became a man after God’s own heart. His tragically foolish decision with Bathsheba later in his reign demonstrates the consequence for failing to turn to God, and the death of David’s son shows the gravity of the matter.

In his book, *The Kingdom of God as Liturgical Empire* (Baker, 2012), Scott Hahn suggests that “Chronicles could be called the book of David. It is the world’s family history written in a Davidic key, beginning in the deceptively simple genealogical lists . . . that progressively narrow the world’s family tree into a single branch—the line of the family of David” (44).

The aim of the “Chronicler” is “to show that David and his kingdom represent the summit of Israel’s history and the agency through which God intends to fulfill his covenant with Abraham and bestow blessing upon the world” (Hahn, 44). As the culmination and recapitulation of biblical history, Chronicles “envisions the kingdom of Israel as a liturgical empire—an empire that will exercise its dominion, not through military might or economic supremacy, but through the blessings of the liturgy celebrated in the temple and through the wisdom taught by its kings” (Hahn, 106). And of those kings, David stands at the zenith. We could say that moving into the Bible’s historical books after Deuteronomy, Israel’s history prior to David leads up to him, and everything after him flows away, with successive kings measured against the standard of his reign, so that the symphony of biblical history is written “in the key of David.”

9

Elijah the Prophet



Portrait of Steadfastness

1 Kings 17–2 Kings 2

Elijah

Elijah's name means "My God is Yahweh." He is pictured in a chariot of fire, pulled to heaven by a trinity of horses. He is one of two saints assumed into heaven prior to our Blessed Mother (Enoch is the other, see Gen 5:24; Sir 44:16; and 49:14; for Elijah see 2 Kgs 2:11; and 1 Macc 2:58).

Elijah was a prophet and miracle worker during a time when the rulers of God's people had corrupted themselves and turned the hearts of the people away from the true God, Yahweh, to the false Canaanite storm god, Baal. As a prophet, Elijah spoke God's truth to power during the reigns of the especially wicked kings, Ahab (and his wife, Jezebel) and Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, who followed in the ways of his father, committing evil in the sight of the LORD.

Elijah is most famous for the showdown on Mount Carmel which he himself initiated to establish publicly before all the people which deity was the true God, and which was the imposter merely propped up by his deluded followers (1 Kgs 18:17-40). It stands as one of the most dramatic *and* humorous *and* deadly serious confrontations in the entire canon of Sacred Scripture.

Elijah is an example for us of steadfastness to the true God in the face of overwhelming cultural opinion to the contrary—*sometimes even the opinion of those who identify as the community of the faithful.*

10 **Isaiah**
the Prophet



Portrait of Evangelization

The Book of Isaiah;
2 Kings 19–20

Isaiah's name means "Yahweh is Salvation." He was a prophet from approximately 740-697 B.C., during the reigns of four successive kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. God instructed him to preach a message that would not be understood, but would in fact harden the hearts of those who heard it. He is pictured holding the unreadable testimony he requests to be "sealed up" among his disciples in his left hand (Isa 8:16-17), and a tree saw in his right hand—the trophy of his martyrdom.

As tradition has it, shortly after Hezekiah died and was succeeded by Manasseh, who did not walk in the ways of the LORD as Hezekiah had done before him, Isaiah saw the situation for what it was, and departed toward the desert with a group of fellow prophets. He is pursued by a band of *false* prophets who had wrongly accused him of treason before King Manasseh, who subsequently ordered his execution. They eventually found Isaiah hiding inside a hollowed-out tree, and cut it down with him in it, sawing him in two (Hebrews 11:32, 37 allude to this).

Like Elijah who preached in the north, Isaiah is a model of steadfastness in the south, despite the unpopularity of his message that God will hold his people to the terms of the covenant—painful though it may be—and will achieve in and through their suffering the ultimate aim of every covenant God makes, all the way back to Abraham: namely, to bless all the families of the earth by bringing them face to face with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

11

Esther



Portrait of Wisdom and Courage

The Book of Esther

Esther was a Jewess who found herself in the right place at the right time, and truly rose to the occasion. But even heroines and heroes benefit from the counsel of trusted friends and advisors and—as in this case—relatives. What was the issue? The evil Haman, grand vizier to the Persian King Ahasuerus, had noticed that Mordecai, one of the captives from Jerusalem, refused to bow down in homage to him at the castle gate. So greatly did this vex Haman that he convinced the king that the Jews in the land were a threat to the empire, and plotted to exterminate the entire race. The stakes could not be higher! If Haman's plot does not fail, the line of David, through which Jesus the Messiah comes into the world, will be exterminated. The complicating factor is that Mordecai had raised Esther as if she were his own daughter after her parents died, and while Haman had set his vengeful eye on Mordecai, Esther's extraordinary beauty had captured the eye of the king!

Through a series of intensely ironic events, Esther parlays her position to bring salvation to God's people. Was it human ingenuity or divine intervention? Well, both, as usual. God did what he so often does: he spoke *through* Mordecai to empower Esther: "For if you keep silent at this time," Mordecai explains, "relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esth 4:14).

In her wisdom, Esther is a figure of our Blessed Mother, pictured regally, wearing the royal diadem which King Ahasuerus had removed from the former queen, Vashti, and placed on Esther instead. The real message of the book's testimony about Esther, Mordecai, Haman, the king, and the Jewish people who are exiled and vulnerable in a foreign land, is that God is the grand mover of hearts and impulses which result in the survival of the people he has chosen to be his own. Not much has changed. Our dependence upon God's providential oversight is absolute. Even our ingenuity is but a tool of God's larger ingenuity. So it is imperative that we follow Esther's wisdom (see Esth 4:15-16), dedicating our fasts and devotions in service to *whatever God's plans may be* (see John 2:5).

12 Judas Maccabeus



Portrait of Zeal

1-2 Maccabees

Judas Maccabeus

Judas was the third son of the priest, Mattathias. Mattathias had seen the blasphemies being committed in Jerusalem (a problem within) and the increasingly troublesome interference from marauding forces (a problem without) and designated Judas to be the new leader of a band of guerrilla warriors in the year 167/166 B.C.. 'Maccabeus' is actually Judas' nickname. Popularly, it is understood to mean "hammer" for his crushing prowess in battle against the enemies of God. Others have argued that it is actually an acronym, in which the main parts of 'Ma-cca-bee' represent together the battle-cry in the song of Moses found in Exodus 15:11: "*Mi kamokah baelim, O Yhwh?*" ("*Who is like you among the gods, O LORD?*"). Lending weight to this theory are the actual details surrounding the Battle for Emmaus (see 1 Macc 4:1-11), in which Judas exhorts his troops, "Remember how our fathers were saved at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh with his forces pursued them. Let us cry to heaven, to see whether he will favor us and remember his covenant with our fathers and crush this army before us today!"

Judas' victories afforded a respite during which he turned his attention to the terrible condition of the ruined city of Jerusalem, and in particular the Temple which had been desecrated and neglected. Overcome with zeal for God's house, Judas appointed a body of armed men to hold in check the Syrian garrison still occupying the citadel, and set about renovating and purifying the sanctuary with the help and counsel of the priests.

When the renovation was completed, the new Temple service was inaugurated by a feast of rededication which lasted eight days, and it was decreed that in memory of this event an annual feast of eight days should be celebrated (1 Maccabees 4:36-59; 2 Maccabees 10:1-8; John 10:22). Judas is picture holding the Menorah—the lamp whose one-day supply of oil miraculously lasted all eight days of the celebration, which we know as *Hanukkah*.

New Testament Murals

The Apostles

Altar



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Preface

New Testament Murals

The Church has traditionally associated the description of the heavens declaring the glory of God with the work of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ carried out by the Apostles, whose “voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Pss 19:4). Christ’s love compelled them to carry out their mission day and night for the love of God and neighbor. Now seated on thrones in heaven as Jesus had promised them (Luke 22:28-30), the lives of these men and the explanations of their roles and teachings as they are given in Sacred Scripture may be viewed as portraits for us to ponder, to take to heart, and to imitate. As we draw near to them, we will see that their experiences were more similar to ours than we may have realized. For the same grace that made the apostles courageous witnesses is offered to us today by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments. So let us pray that we will follow Jesus and the Apostles as we go forth, making disciples of all those whom God brings our way, and teaching them to obey all that he has taught us (Matt 28:19-20a).

13

Saint Peter

(Simon)



Portrait of Contrition, Apostle to Rome

Died A.D. 64 by Crucifixion upside down in Rome

Matthew 16:15-19; First and Second Peter

Saint Peter

Our Patron, Peter, was a humble fisherman before Jesus called Peter to follow him. Born as Simon in Galilee, he boldly confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the son of the living God, whereupon Christ renamed him Peter ('rock') and gave to him the keys of the kingdom, authorizing him to "bind and loose" (Matt 16:13-19). As Rock, Jesus entrusted to Peter the role of being the first steward of the Church on earth, the Pope. His office wasn't founded on his strength of faith, or his intelligence, or even his own steadfastness, but on his surrender to the author of the faith, and on that author's commitment to his own plan for Peter. For us, he is a portrait of contrition, for as many times as Peter sinned against the Lord (rebuking him about his mission and crucifixion, denying Jesus three times, the numerous instances in which he is slow or even resistant to understand), he returned to the abode of mercy found in Jesus' Most Sacred Heart. Peter, believing himself unworthy to die in the same manner as the Lord, asked to be crucified upside down.

Patron Saint of

Popes, Fishermen, and Bridge-Builders

14

Saint John



Portrait of Love, Apostle to Turkey

Died A.D. 100 naturally in exile in Turkey

Mark 1:19-20; Gospel of John (especially 21:20-24); 1, 2, and 3 John; Revelation

Saint John

John, the beloved disciple, was the brother of St. James the Greater and the author of the Gospel of John. He also wrote the letters of First, Second, and Third John and the Book of Revelation to the parishes in modern-day Turkey. John found his resting place in the Sacred Heart of Jesus (see John 13:23), and it was from that abode he learned divine love. John is often associated with an eagle because the theology of his gospel soars above the other gospels. In his writings, we see grace upon grace enacted (John 1:16) as this humble fisherman shows disciples what it means to love both God and neighbor. According to tradition, John was the only apostle who was not martyred. He lovingly took care of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, until her Assumption. He was eventually exiled to the island of Patmos, where he dwelled in a cave and had the extraordinary vision about which we read in his last book, Revelation.

Patron Saint of

Love, Authors, Burn Victims, and
the land of Turkey

15

Saint James the Greater

(son of Zebedee; son of Thunder)



Portrait of Courage, Apostle to Spain

Died A.D. 44 by beheading in Jerusalem

Matthew 4:18-20; 20:20-23;
Mark 9:2-8; Acts 12:1-5

Saint James the Greater

James and his brother John were mending their nets when Jesus called them (Matt 4:18-20). James in particular was elected by Jesus to witness specific events that would shape his future ministry: the raising of Jairus' daughter, the Transfiguration, and Jesus' distress in the Garden of Gethsemane. In James, the Lord found a man with a heart full of zeal and nobility, but redirected his ambitions from the pursuit of earthly glory to the pursuit of heavenly glory by holding up for him and his brother, John, the call to serve. James was a missionary to Spain and preached to the farthest ends of the known world. And as the first apostle to be martyred in A.D. 44 by Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:2), he is a portrait of courage.

Patron Saint of

Spain, Equestrians, and Woodcarvers

16 Saint Andrew



**Portrait of Evangelization;
Apostle to Russia, Ukraine, and Greece**

Died A.D. 60 by crucifixion in Greece

Matthew 4:18-20; John 1:35-42; 12:20-22

Saint Andrew

Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist before he heard his teacher identify Jesus as the “Lamb of God.” He then became the first to lead others to meet Jesus. In the Gospel of John (1:35-42), we see Andrew bring his brother Peter to Jesus with the conviction that Jesus is the Messiah (i.e., the “anointed one,” the Christ). Jesus called Peter and Andrew to follow him at the same time, along with James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Matt 4:18-20). The recorded deeds of St. Andrew in the Bible are few, and he left no written words for us. He was the only apostle of those first four not to be present at the Transfiguration. But he saw and believed Jesus to be the Messiah before they had, and as a result, he is often credited with being the first evangelist, bearing witness to the glory of Christ. He was crucified on an X-shaped cross in Greece.

Patron Saint of

Scotland, Russia, Greece, and Fishermen

17 **Saint Matthew**
(Levi)



**Portrait of Redemption,
Apostle to Ethiopia**

Died 1st Century A.D. in Ethiopia

The Gospel of Matthew, especially 9:9-13;
Luke 5:27-30

Saint Matthew

As Jesus was walking by Matthew's tax collection post, he called Matthew to be his disciple, whereupon Matthew rose up from his station and welcomed the Lord with renewed vision and strength. Matthew is a portrait of redemption for us because we see the Lord redirect him back to his original dignity and mission as a Jew. As a tax collector, Matthew would have been despised by his Jewish brethren. But as an apostle and evangelist, he wrote his gospel especially for them to show that Jesus is the Christ.

Patron Saint of

Accountants, Bankers, Tax Collectors,
and Civil Servants

18

Saint Philip



**Portrait of Unity,
Apostle to the Balkans and France**

Died A.D. 80 by crucifixion in Turkey

John 1:43-51; 12:20-26; 14:8-11

Saint Philip

Jesus gave his disciples a description of the Father's house because of Philip's deep desire to see the Father. John recounts in his gospel the assurance Jesus provides, in response to Philip's question, that the individual who has encountered him has seen the Father! Philip is a portrait of unity for us in the way he consistently brought others to the Lord from diverse backgrounds. For example, Philip is the one who brought a resistant Nathanael and a group of pagan Greeks to encounter Jesus. He is pictured with his foot on a dragon. According to one tradition, he slew it after it came forth from an idol to Mars which he toppled while completing missionary work in Scythia (modern-day Balkans).

Patron Saint of

Cape Verde, Hatters, and Pastry Chefs

19

Saint James the Less

(son of Alphaeus)



**Portrait of Permanence,
Apostle to Jerusalem**

Died A.D. 62 by clubbing in Jerusalem

Mark 6:3; Acts 15:13-29; 1 Corinthians 15:7

Saint James the Less

Following many centuries after Eliakim (see Isa 22:23), James the Less became a “peg in a secure place” when he was appointed the first bishop of Jerusalem. As the son of Cleopas (also called Alphaeus) and Mary (the sister of our Blessed Mother), James was Jesus’ cousin, identified by Paul as a “brother” of the Lord (Gal 1:19; since there is no word for ‘cousin’ in Greek, Paul uses ‘brother’ instead). He shared in the ministry of apostleship, and his words and deeds in Scripture present him as a portrait of permanence by showing both 1) the primacy of Peter’s place among the apostles; and 2) the unique role of the holy city for all peoples. James, himself a Jew, was martyred at the hands of his countrymen, which created the seedbed for the martyrs in Zion.

Patron Saint of

Pharmacists, Fullers, and Uruguay

20

Saint Jude Thaddeus

(Judas)



Portrait of Humility, Apostle to Persia

Died A.D. 65 by stabbing in Persia

Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:14-19;
Luke 6:13-16; John 14:22

Saint Jude Thaddeus

Luke calls him Judas in his gospel, as does John in his. But this Judas is not to be confused with Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus. It is believed that Matthew and Mark named this Judas Thaddeus, to avoid the confusion about his identity. This is the Judas who wrote the Letter of Jude, the second-to-last book in the Bible. For anyone who has ever faced wrongful association or defamation, Jude is a kindred spirit and an example of humility. He is the patron of lost causes, both because of his humility and because of the tradition that he healed King Abgar of an incurable disease after being sent by Jesus. He is pictured with a spear: his trophy of grace by which he was martyred in Persia.

Patron Saint of

Armenia, Lost Causes and Desperate
Situations, and Hospitals

21

Saint Simon

(Simon the Zealot,
Simon the Canaanite)



Portrait of Zeal, Apostle to Britain

Died A.D. 65 by division in Britain

Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:14-19; Luke 6:13-16

Saint Simon

Luke in his gospel describes Simon as “the zealot.” He came from a group of individuals who steadfastly and vigorously followed the Mosaic Law because of their love of God. Where the Pharisees and the other strict adherents of the law failed to see Jesus as the Law-Giver in the flesh, Simon saw with the eyes of faith the one who came to fulfill and uphold the Old Testament Law. Tradition suggests that Simon was a partner with John in the Middle East before traveling to proclaim the Gospel on the British Isles. He is pictured with a saw, his trophy of grace. This instrument of torture and murder reminds us that Christian zeal demands our whole self; while our own bodies may be divided, the body of Christ will not.

Patron Saint of

Curriers, Sawyers, and Tanners

22 Saint Thomas



Portrait of Assurance, Apostle to India

Died A.D. 72 by being gored in India

Luke 6:13-16; John 14:1-6; 20:24-29

Saint Thomas

“Doubting Thomas” is the famous nickname given to Thomas due to his incredulity about Jesus’ resurrection, having been absent when Jesus first appeared to other apostles. The Gospels present a man who shows us where to find truth and fulfillment. It was his request to Jesus to be shown the Father that gives us the sure saying from our Lord, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6). St. Thomas’ own life is a reminder to us that Jesus meets us in the reasonableness of faith, drawing us close enough to himself to be touched. Thomas preached the Gospel in India as well as in Iran and Turkmenistan. He is pictured with a framing square for his work in building up the Church, which brought about his martyrdom at the hands of hostile kings.

Patron Saint of

Architects and Christians in India

23

Saint Bartholomew

(Nathanael)



**Portrait of Integrity,
Apostle to Persia**

Died A.D. 69-71 by being flayed in Armenia

Matthew 10:3; John 1:43-51; 21:2

Saint Bartholomew

The Gospel of John records Bartholomew's first encounter with Jesus. From the beginning he spoke his mind, but was humble enough to change it (John 1:43-51). He is a portrait of integrity for us in the way he put his own opinions to the side and allowed Jesus to reform him toward maturity and knowledge. Then by virtue of this maturity and knowledge, he was equipped to make the difficult but courageous journey into the desert to preach to the people of Persia. According to tradition, he was skinned alive in modern-day Armenia. Bartholomew is often depicted with a knife and his skin: his trophies of grace.

Patron Saint of

Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Dermatology
and Skin Diseases

24

Saint Paul

(Saul)



Portrait of Conversion, Apostle to the Gentiles

Died A.D. 62-65 by beheading in Rome

Acts 9:1-31; Ephesians 3:1-13; 1 Timothy 1:12-17

The Apostle Paul is a portrait of conversion. His words and testimonies recorded in the New Testament serve as a reminder for every disciple of Jesus that no person is beyond redemption. As Saul, he persecuted the Church until he underwent a life-changing encounter with the Lord Jesus. From that moment on, Paul resolved to know and to preach “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). As the Apostle to the Gentiles (the foreign/pagan nations), Paul established Christian communities throughout Asia and the Mediterranean. He gave the ultimate witness to Jesus with his life in Rome after he was able to preach to the court of the Roman Empire. Paul is often depicted holding a sword. The instrument of martyrdom for so many Christians under his guidance as ‘Saul’ became a trophy of the victory of grace in his own martyrdom.

Patron Saint of

Missionaries, Theologians, Evangelists,
and Gentile Christians

