

THE APOSTLES' SYMBOLS

Including Mathias and Paul. See also, the Twelve Apostles, "The Apostles in Scriptures," as well as stories of their deaths, which symbols often reflect.



Andrew

According to tradition, Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped (saltire) cross; he is sometimes pictured as an old man with long white hair and beard, holding the Gospel and leaning on a saltire.



Bartholomew (Nathanael?)

The flaying knives represent the manner of Bartholomew's death; he was flayed alive..



James the Great (of Compostella)

The scallop shells are pictured because the Spanish coast was said to abound in them; they represent pilgrimage and James's missionary zeal. He is also represented by a pilgrim's staff (as a patron of pilgrims) and gourd bottle.



James the Less (Son of Alphaeus)

One Legend said that James the Lesser suffered a terrible martyrdom by being sawed apart; another symbol is the fuller's pole (struck in the head).



John

An early story of John drinking from a poisoned chalice and coming to no harm..



Judas Iscariot

Judas is represented with a bag (he held the common purse, from which he would steal, John 12:6).



Jude (Thaddeus)

Jude probably traveled by ship on his missionary journeys with Simon; he is variously represented with a club, staff, and carpenter's square (his trade).



Matthew (Levi)

The three purses represent Matthew's work as a tax collector before Jesus called him (Matthew 10:3). He is also represented with a hatchet or halberd and is pictured as a bearded old man, accompanied by an angel dictating the Gospel.



Peter

The crossed keys represent Peter's authority (given by Christ). At times he is pictured as a bald old man with flowing beard, clad in white mantle and blue tunic, holding Scripture.



Philip

The loaves of bread on either side of the cross remind us of Philip's comment at the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (John 6:5-7). Another representation is a staff (upon which he was suspended by the neck from a pillar), surrounded with a cross.



Simon

A fish (occupation) rests on a book; in a similar way, Simon became a great fisher of people through the message of the gospel.



Thomas

The carpenter's square stands for the church Thomas is said to have built with his own hands in India; the spear or lance is a sign of the purported manner of his death.



Paul

Paul is represented by an open Bible (the new Law he preached) and the sword of the Spirit; he is pictured as being short and bald with a bushy beard..



Matthias

Matthias, chosen to take the place of Judas, is symbolized by a battle-ax, with which he was said to be beheaded, and an open Bible.