

## **ST JUDE, APOSTLE**

The Apostle Jude, in his own Epistle, gives himself the title: "brother of James", which is the meaning of the name Thaddeus (or Lebbeus) by which Jude was also known. In the opinion of Catholic scriptural scholars, St Jude was the full brother of St James the Less who was regarded as Christ's first cousin. On this reckoning, then, St Jude too would be counted a first cousin of Our Lord.

The New Testament lists Jude as an Apostle but tells us little else about him. It does, however, record a question which he put to Jesus just after the Last Supper when Our Lord promised to manifest Himself to those who heard Him. St Jude wanted to know why he would not manifest Himself to the whole world. Jesus replied: "If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my father will love him and we will come to him and make our abode with him." (John, 14.22-13) In other words, we must merit the visit and manifestation of the father and Son by proving our practical love for them.

A Western tradition which is recognized in the Roman liturgy tells us that St Jude exercised his apostolic ministry in Mesopotamia, then joined St Simon in Persia, where they preached together, made many conversions and were martyred. Eusebius quotes a story about two grandsons of St Jude who were questioned by the Emperor Domitian who was alarmed by the report that they were of the royal house of David. Seeing them to be poor men who sought a kingdom not of this world, Domitian let them go. In our own day, St Jude is perhaps most popularly known as the patron of "desperate cases".

He is believed to have been martyred in Persia or Syria around 65 A.D. The axe or club that he is often shown holding in pictures symbolizes the way in which he was killed. Truly, he paid the ultimate price for his faith. After his death his body was brought back to Rome and was placed in a crypt beneath St. Peter's Basilica, which people visit to this day.

St. Jude is traditionally depicted carrying the image of Jesus in his hand or close to his chest. This idea comes from a Biblical story in which King Abgar of Edessa (a city located in what is now southeast Turkey) asked Jesus to cure him of leprosy and sent an artist to bring him a drawing of Jesus. Impressed with Abgar's great faith, Jesus pressed his face into a cloth and gave it to St. Jude to take to Abgar. Upon seeing Jesus' image, The King was cured and he converted to Christianity along with most of the people under

his rule. This cloth is believed to be the famous Shroud of Jesus which is currently on display in Turin, Italy.

St. Jude is often shown in paintings with a flame around his head. This represents his presence at Pentecost, when he received the Holy Spirit with the other apostles.

In the Middle Ages, St. Bernard of Clairvaux (France) was a renowned devotee of St. Jude, as was St. Bridget of Sweden who, in a vision, was encouraged by Jesus to turn to St. Jude with faith and confidence. He told her that, in accordance with Jude's surname, Thaddeus (which means generous, courageous, and kind), "he will show himself to be the most willing to give you help."

Devotion to St. Jude began again in earnest in the 1800's, starting in Italy and Spain, spreading to South America, and finally to the U.S. (originally in the Chicago area) in the 1920's. Novena prayers to St. Jude helped people, especially newly-arrived immigrants from Europe, deal with the pressures caused by the Great Depression, Second World War, and the changing workplace and family life.

Why has devotion to St. Jude continued to grow to the present day?

In spite of (or possibly because of) all the advances human society has made, human beings find themselves under incredible stress and have difficulty coping at one time or another. Increasingly, people are finding that technology and other man-made innovations are unable to provide comfort and hope when it is truly needed, so millions of people around the world turn to St. Jude when they feel the most helpless and alone. St. Jude has proven to be a true friend and a beacon of hope to those who call on him--always willing to help and seek help no matter how desperate the need. And in today's tumultuous times, we need him more than ever.

We celebrate his feast day on October 28.