

ST JAMES – JULY 25th



St James, the elder brother of St John, was one of the first disciples called by Jesus. With his brother and St Peter he belonged to the privileged group of three who witnessed the transfiguration. He was also the first of the twelve to suffer martyrdom, beheaded by Herod Agrippa in 44AD.

Since the 7th Century legends have associated him with Spain: some

that he preached there before his death, others saying that his body was translated to the town of Compostela, in the North West of Spain. These legends receive little credence today, but Santiago de Compostela, which houses his supposed tomb, has long been a great centre for pilgrimage, and every year pilgrims make their way, often on foot, from all parts of Spain, and from many other parts



of Europe. Because of this, James is often depicted as a pilgrim. Thus the 14th century picture from the workshop of Simone Martini shows him carrying a staff, and his cockleshell badge has been the emblem of pilgrims since the Middle Ages. Rembrandt's wonderful picture shows a pilgrim at the end of his journey: travel stained and weather beaten, but, above all, deep in prayer and worship.



Also shown are the Cathedral at Compostella, and the interior of St James' Church in



Göttingen, one of the many churches around Europe which are traditional starting points for the pilgrimage. Priscilla and I were in Göttingen earlier this year and were much struck by the unusual coloured effects on the columns which seem to make them dance.