

Our Father (RHX-CHA-2)  
 Holy, Holy (RHX)  
 (DEC-10)

PREF. APOST.

That prayer's the Preface for the Prayer of the Eucharist on the feast-days of apostles. <sup>This coming Wednesday, 25th is the celebration-day of one of the Apostles, and I'd like to devote these few minutes</sup> There was an apostle's feast-day not so long ago, when I'd intended devoting these few minutes to reflections on an idea suggested by his name.

[Last Sunday's Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord reminded me again - for] James, you remember, was one of the three apostles Jesus took with Him to witness that strange mysterious event we call the Transfiguration. <sup>He was also close to Him in the Garden of Gethsemane.</sup> The other two companions on that occasion we're more familiar with, I suppose: Peter, and James' brother John. Beyond what's in the gospels about him (and he evidently was very close to Jesus), what do you know about James? Well, it wasn't he but another James among our Lord's disciples who wrote that lively and forceful, down-to-earth letter that's among the N.T. books and writings, the Letter of St James. The James who was with Jesus on Tabor and in Gethsemane garden became the leader of the church in Jerusalem later, and was martyred by Herod sometime about 42 or 44 AD. - murdered, none like it, is a deliberate attempt to make trouble for and in the young Christian community at Jerusalem. That was the beginning of persecution in the history of the church. But maybe what James' name most easily suggests is pilgrimages - at least that's what <sup>comes</sup> came to my European mind <sup>when I hear his name</sup> [on his feast-day some weeks ago]. For all thro' the Middle Ages in Europe, and since then too, Compostella in Spain was the centre and goal of pilgrimages made in honour of St James, to visit his last, supposed, resting-place. And his name was given to other cities and places too, some of which also became pilgrimage places. The pilgrimage to Compostella was quite a thing in its day - and

has left its mark on the social and geographical history of Europe. Of course it became something of an industry too (like tourist-centres today), and its relics could be found everywhere, incidentally providing archaeologists with lots of, sometimes important, material. But it was no easy pilgrimage, especially for the ordinary people who made it out of devotion, faith and prayer. They were taking real risks. Today travel is so easy, and not too uncomfortable; its risks are more likely to be caused by accidents or gross human negligence. Maybe that's one reason pilgrimages have gone out of fashion. They're certainly not thought so much of now ... and yet, maybe there is something we could learn from the idea. ✓ We may not be so keen on going on pilgrimages, yet we are pilgrims, the church we belong to is a pilgrim church. God's people have remembered this over many centuries or been forcibly reminded; and recently again it's been stressed. [St James, who was there, learned that the glory of Christ he'd seen and wanted to remain with on Mt Tabor was a glimpse into the future, that hope through faith is a condition of <sup>Christian</sup> ~~human~~ life.] Rather than a once-in-a-lifetime journey of devotion and hardship, the whole of life is itself a journey, with the ups and downs and the effort and hardship any physical journey is exposed to. The scenery must change, there is a <sup>destination</sup> goal, there's progress to be made in all sorts of ways - and it's not just a journey for each of us on our own but one we make in the company of others, in the company of Christ. There's no way, really, of standing still in life; whether we're really getting anywhere, or even know where we're going is another question. [Think about it a while now, listening to this music from Spain, from the Mozarabic liturgy, the Medieval



Misa Flarenc  
s 2.

pilgrims to St James of Compostella would likely have met.

MUSIC

PRAYERS

The pilgrims

to Compostella, or anywhere else for that matter, knew where they were going: sure they lost their way at times, and many never got there. But faith kept them going and helped them put up with and overcome all the difficulties. This is perhaps where the parallel between the pilgrimages of old and the pilgrimages where Christian life is begun to break down. So many people today don't know where they're going, or don't <sup>perhaps</sup> even much care: [and some keep telling us there's nowhere to go — that this is it and we'd better just make the best of it.] And there are so many detours and side-roads and supposed short-cuts, each with its tour-guide cajoling us to go his way. And many people have found they've lost their way and don't know where to turn, where to look even for directions. St James in his day thought he'd got a short-cut too; but he learned that Christ his friend & master and teacher is the only way, that he had to follow Him to reach the goal of being forever with God in love. We could ask St James in prayer to help us all on our individual pilgrimages, to help our community not to lose the way, but to keep on, despite discouragement and difficulty, to find and follow the directions Christ is giving us all the time. We could ask his intercession too for all those people who have strayed or lost their way, where faith and hope has grown weak; and for all those people who don't know there is anywhere to go; [and for ourselves that we don't lose sight of the glory of Christ which St James was privileged to see in the Transfiguration of our Lord.

end?